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## Pioneer Landscape Paintings In Australia And The United States

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# PIONEER LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS IN AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES

R. LESLIE HEATHCOTE

The European invasion of Australia and the American West in the nineteenth century brought a massive transformation of landscapes in the two continents through conflict with the indigenous populations and by the introduction of new and more intensive systems of resource use. As historians and historical geographers have acknowledged, the invasion was generally well documented, not only by the more literate pioneers and contemporaries but also, more importantly for any statistical analysis, by the emerging bureaucracies that administered the transfers of lands and collected the facts of land settlement, which the new societies saw as evidence of the success of the invasion.

Along with the scratch of pens and, later, the clatter of typewriters came the scrape of the artist's brush, pen, and palette knife, and the click of camera shutters. Historians of art

and photography have recognized the concern for landscape in the nineteenth century; geographers have seen the artists' efforts as sources for study of the process of land settlement, providing two types of data, typographical and perceptual. Pioneer paintings contain information on land cover and land use for specific locations or areas and instances or periods of time, as well as information on contemporary knowledge of and attitudes to the landscapes depicted and, by inference, to the environment from which they were abstracted. Most of the studies have also pointed out the limitations of the sources, particularly those of the medium itself—the conventions and styles associated with landscape painting, the problem of the biases inherent in the system of artistic patronage, and the question of the extent to which the artist is representative of wider contemporary views.<sup>1</sup>

Although much information on pioneer landscape paintings is available in the art histories of Australia and the United States, as yet no comparative study has appeared. The aim of this article is to provide a preliminary comparative analysis of landscape paintings as sources of information about the pioneer landscapes of Australia and the western United

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States in the nineteenth century. The focus is on the landscapes not only at the time of the European invasion but also as transformed by that invasion.

#### PIONEERING IN AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES, 1800-1900

A comprehensive study would need to establish in considerable detail both what we now know of the landscapes of 1800 and the process of their transformation so that this information might be compared with the knowledge gained from landscape paintings. The present analysis, however, is limited to a brief indication of some relevant points.

In terms of terrain, natural vegetation, and climate, there are obvious parallels and major contrasts between the interiors of the two continents. The relative aridity and relatively flat surfaces of Australia—the “wide brown land” of the poets—contrast sharply with the more varied terrains, climates, and ecosystems of the United States. Generally speaking, the indigenous groups showed similar contrasts, between the relatively uniform cultures of the Australian aborigines and the more varied and “resilient” cultures of the American Indians.

There were some interesting parallels, however. In both areas, the Europeans moved out from the woodlands onto the drier grassland plains of the interior, where they had to modify institutions and resource management systems that had evolved in more humid environments. In both areas, occupation by Europeans resulted in more intensive uses of pastoral, agricultural, and mining resources, which required a significant transformation of the environment. By 1900 the transformation process was already well developed and the products established. The result was a new mix of people on the land, greatly increased population densities, new geometries of human artifacts, new patterns of land use, new systems of communication, and new flows of goods, people, and services.

The two countries showed many similarities in this transformation, particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but we need to

keep in mind the differences also. By 1800 and even more so by 1900, there were vast differences in population size between the two nations. In Australia in 1900 the European population was 3.8 million; in the United States, 76 million. By 1900 approximately 54 percent of Australia was still unoccupied by European settlers compared with about 16 percent of the United States. Australian development had been dominated by British tradition, the American by a much more complex cultural mix. Australia had been the “quiet Continent”; the conflicts with the indigenes were short (but bloody) skirmishes—no Custer’s Last Stand here, and no Civil War, only the Eureka Stockade fracas.

What did the artists make of it all?

#### THE PRISTINE LANDSCAPE

A review of the vast array of paintings of the landscapes of interior Australia and the United States, before they were significantly modified by invading Europeans, offers evidence of two contrasting themes. On the one hand was a concern for landscape as a *phenomenon*, as a subject for study in its own right, and therefore, a concern for detailed, systematic, and often scientific description of the landscape as a whole and of its component parts. On the other hand was the concern for landscape as a *symbol*—an image representing a philosophy or theory about the relationships between man and nature. The one approach offers valuable topographic evidence, while the other provides insights into the contemporary perceptions of the environment.

#### THE PRISTINE LANDSCAPE AS PHENOMENON

The European concern for rationalism and scientific inquiry in the eighteenth century had been stimulated by the “discovery” of the South Pacific and the rediscovery of the fascination of the older “New World” interiors of the Americas. Both led to Alexander von Humboldt’s call to arms to the landscape painters to

portray these new wonders.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, to find evidence of a detached, external, descriptive view of the exotic phenomena in these unconquered interiors. Four themes might be recognized: first, the role of landscape paintings in the actual process of exploration; second, their depiction of the indigenous inhabitants; third, their role in the documentation of time in the landscape; and fourth, their role in illustrating the spaciousness of the new scenes.

Exploration in the continental interiors in the nineteenth century relied upon graphic illustrations almost as much as literary descriptions. With increasing frequency in the first half of the century, the land explorers followed the example of the marine explorers of late eighteenth century by including artists among their parties or contributing their own sketches to their reports. Several of the military explorers were themselves trained as topographic surveyors or draftsmen. In the United States the first official exploring party to take along artists seems to have been the Long Expedition in 1819, but thereafter (until the photographers began to take over their role from the mid-century onward) the artists were a regular component.<sup>4</sup>

The first role of the artists appears to have been to provide terrain sketches—profiles of hills and plains—with the same basic function as the outlines of the coastal features by naval artists, namely, to identify locations named on the ground. Most of these began as pen-and-pencil sketches, but some were translated into lithographic views that were included in final reports, in some cases as separate paintings.<sup>5</sup>

As an example of the use of paintings for scientific description of components of the landscape, the work of two eminent ornithologists can be cited. In the United States John James Audubon (1785–1851) produced *The Birds of America* in four volumes from 1827 to 1838, a work that included 435 colored plates, often showing the birds in their natural settings. In the year the last volume appeared, John Gould (1804–81) arrived in Australia, and his equivalent masterpiece, *The Birds of*

*Australia*, was published in thirty-six parts from 1840 to 1848, including 681 colored plates (many by his wife). In both cases the publications were the result of extensive private explorations, and even their method of financial support—by advance private subscriptions—was similar.

Since landscape paintings were likely to be the “end of the line” of the creative process in the depiction of topography by the explorers, and since the time needed for their full coloration and composition was usually available only in the studio, we need to know how the process of transformation from field sketches to final lithographs or engravings was achieved and what the cost was in terms of accuracy. Occasionally the art historians have provided clues, as with the engraver’s transformation of the Kern brothers’ field studies, but we need a geographical study to try to establish, for example, the role of landscape paintings in the models of the acquisition of regional knowledge proposed by John L. Allen and John D. Overton.<sup>6</sup>

Along with the contact with the indigenous populations that exploration provided came paintings depicting their appearance, life-styles, customs, and equipment. Scientific curiosity seems to have been matched by a concern to preserve a dwindling phenomenon and a vision of the native peoples as the philosophers’ “noble savages.” Whether we turn to George Catlin “hunting Indians with a paintbrush” or Charles Bird King and John Neagle “portraying Plains Indians for posterity” in the United States, or to George French Angas and Samuel Thomas Gill portraying the “last camping grounds of a dying race” in Australia, the results were major contributions to knowledge of the human component of the pristine landscape.<sup>7</sup> With their ability to capture the detailed colors and textures of skin, clothing, campsites, and habitats, these paintings provide a major source for ethnographic research.

While there is no Australian equivalent of the National Indian Portrait Gallery in the United States, a series of portraits of indigenous Tasmanians were made before the population died out.<sup>8</sup> Of the original indigenes’ life-styles

and the impact of the invading culture, however, there is a comparable abundance of material in Australia, enough to provide the basis for two recent overviews.<sup>9</sup>

While the indigenes were seen as representatives of past time in need of study and preservation, at least on paper, their habitat was itself recognized to be of ancient origin. In the contemporary debate on the origin of earth and the growing discipline of geology, this habitat was seen to be potentially valuable to scientists. Mary Rabbitt's recent study of the origins of the United States Geological Survey makes extensive use of the contemporary topographic studies made by both government and private explorers as part of the process of learning about the basic geological origins of the terrain.<sup>10</sup> There is no equivalent study for Australia, but the work of the early geologists, such as the Rev. William Branwhite Clarke (1798-1878) and Charles Gould (1834-93) shows a similar use of sketches to assist in geological mapping.<sup>11</sup> The greater age of the larger proportion of the Australian land surface, however, posed problems that had to await the development of new techniques—the geodetic survey, satellite imagery, and rock dating by isotopes.

One characteristic of the pristine landscapes that disturbed observers in both countries was the lack of historical association with the landscape. The lack, in particular, of substantial ruins from past civilizations disturbed the romantics. In the United States, although depicted by the artists, the Mound Builders' structures of the Mississippi Valley do not seem to have sufficed, nor did the Indian ruins in the Southwest (probably because of their discovery by the Anglos late in the century, when the romantic philosophies were less prevalent). Australian romantics had even less immediately obvious relics to stimulate them. For the Americans, David Lowenthal claims that "the grandeur of their natural landscapes more than compensated for the lack of historical associations," and Roderick Nash has suggested that "in the absence of an environment consecrated by thousands of years of

history, the natural landscape was the naturalists' trump."<sup>12</sup>

In Australia similar reactions can be documented. A Melbourne newspaper critic reviewing Louis Buvelot's paintings in 1867 commented that Australian scenery, "howsoever beautiful," had "no human interest." It lacked "the consecration and charm which springs from association." "The past," he went on, "owes nothing—as in older countries—to the present." By creating a picturesque beauty, Buvelot's paintings, it was thought, somewhat offset this lack—or "blank past," as another commentator had put it.<sup>13</sup>

The dimensions of the newly acquired territories posed problems for artists who were intent upon topographical rendition. The size of the vertical relief in the mountains and the horizontal sweep of the plains posed practical problems. To depict true scale dimensions was difficult because of the loss of detail required by the degree of reduction that was necessary. This conflict, in part the result of the contrast between the circular field of our optical vision and the oblong shape of "landscape," is fundamental to all landscape graphics, but the bulk of the Rocky Mountains and Sierras and the apparently limitless sweep of the prairie and the Australian plains and tablelands made the task even worse in the continental interiors.<sup>14</sup>

One solution that was adopted for both frontiers was the "panoramic style"—the high viewpoint providing an almost oblique aerial coverage with multiple fixed vanishing points. This approach could cope reasonably well with the views within the mountains, the artist from his peak surveying the valleys and peaks opposite, and for the views from the mountains out to the plains. Thus Thomas Cole's "The Ox-bow" (1846) initiated the type in the eastern United States, and Augustus Earle and Eugen Von Guérard used the technique in the ranges of eastern Australia.<sup>15</sup> The true panorama or circular painting, depicting a 360° view of the landscape in specially built rotundas, was used apparently more often to depict the *transformed* landscape, because of the technical need to give the illusion of the proximity of the

foreground to the observer. Hence the subjects were, in James Flexner's words, mostly "the man-made huddles" of new settlements set in the transformed landscapes.<sup>16</sup> For Australia, Augustus Earle's drawings of Sydney and Hobart, sent to and repainted by Robert Burford, were exhibited in the London panorama in 1829–30.<sup>17</sup>

Linear, rolled versions of the panorama plus accompanying lectures seem to have been used to depict the length of the Mississippi in the 1840s. Exaggerated accounts of their size reflected the concern for size as an attribute of the scenery.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly, considering its relatively puny dimensions, the Australian Murray-Darling river system does not seem to have inspired the panorama artists.

The optical distortions and the rule of perspective inherent in these techniques raises the question of their topographical accuracy. Flexner has suggested that the Mississippi panoramas were so large that realism was impossible. An overall view would be that they were accurate in parts, wherever accuracy was felt to be important, but they would need corroborative evidence for the details of specific locations.

This problem of site accuracy was tackled by some artists in a different manner. Instead of trying to capture the detail of one site, they synthesized in their paintings the characteristics of several sites to create a picture typifying a region. Perhaps the best example of this for the pristine landscape of the United States is Alfred Bierstadt's "The Rocky Mountains" (1863).<sup>19</sup> As his biographer notes, it had topographic elements but the whole was something different: "[Bierstadt] had taken the mountain range of his 'Wind River Country', exaggerated it, dramatized it, added glaciers, a waterfall and an Indian camp—all in a juxtaposition quite unknown to those who know the Wind River Range—and created his masterpiece."<sup>20</sup> The masterpiece was a regional image of the Rocky Mountains closely related to the synthesis of regional landscapes that artists had been encouraged by Alexander von Humboldt to create for the education of Europeans in the geography of the "New Worlds."

I have not been able to find a nineteenth-century equivalent from the Australian painters, but Margaret Preston's "Blue Mountains Theme" (1941) is on the same principle.<sup>21</sup>

#### THE PRISTINE LANDSCAPE AS SYMBOL

The artists' concern for the phenomena of the pristine landscape was matched by their concern for the landscape as philosophical symbol. Through the paintings the landscape assumes a role, providing the observer with a message—religious, moral, social, or political. Several themes appear to be common to both the American and Australian frontiers: the landscape as primeval wilderness; as Garden of Eden; as aesthetic; and as national symbol.

Artists seem to have reacted both positively and negatively to their interpretation of the pristine landscapes as primeval wilderness. The lack of evidence of historical associations, which caused the adverse reaction of the romantics in both countries, was also the origin of a melancholic view of the wilderness. In Australia, the desolation and solitude of the "bush" had a "weird melancholy."<sup>22</sup> Even Charles Darwin found the woodlands desolate and untidy.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the country's most honored historian, Manning Clark, sees melancholia as a feature of Australian history, the melancholy of an environment never effectively conquered by its invaders.<sup>24</sup> In both Australia and the United States, art historians have suggested that the occurrence in the landscape paintings of a dead tree theme further illustrates this melancholic view of the wilderness.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the lack of human imprint was seen by some as a positive feature. Commenting upon Frederic Edwin Church's "Twilight in the Wilderness," Matthew Baigell suggests that it depicted "an uncorrupted nature" completing "its daily cycle untouched by human existence."<sup>26</sup> A spacious, uncluttered wilderness depicted by the artists gave some observers the "room to breathe," while the "visual representation of a unique space-feeling" was one of the challenges facing artists

of the panoramic style.<sup>27</sup> From this euphoria it was but a short step to the landscape as Garden of Eden before the Fall.

Landscape paintings provide evidence of both a religious and a philosophical appraisal of the landscape as the first home of man—the Garden of Eden. As inhabitants of that landscape, the indigenes were seen as examples of Jean Jacques Rousseau's noble savages; the landscape offered evidence of God in Nature, and the sublimity and grandeur of its vistas belittled the puny activities of mankind.

In the United States the artists' interest in the indigenes continued throughout the nineteenth century. The Plains Indians in particular appealed to the artists, who found the Indian physiognomy very suitable for portraiture and their exotic culture dramatically attractive. Their image as noble savages survived and even developed from contact with the invaders.

In Australia the appraisal of the aborigines as noble savages was much shorter, generally restricted to the latter part of the eighteenth century and first few years of the nineteenth. Although the process was not the "instant degeneration" that Geoffrey Dutton suggests, the destruction of the aboriginal culture was rapid and their plight the subject of cartoons from the mid-1820s to the nationalist *Bulletin* magazine of the 1880s and beyond. From noble savages they had become figures of fun, and there seems to have been no widespread concern for the preservation of their culture equivalent to that evident in the work of Karl Bodmer, George Catlin, and Alfred Miller.<sup>28</sup>

The pristine landscape seen as God's image seems to have developed particularly in the United States. In Kynaston McShire's words, "God in nature and God as nature were virtually interchangeable."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the most obvious example was Thomas Moran's "Mountain of the Holy Cross" (1874), showing the cross formed by snow in the gullies on one of the Rocky Mountain peaks. To produce the painting he had to distort or rather create the scene from an imaginary viewpoint.<sup>30</sup> The aim was an emotional experience, similar perhaps to that voiced by the art critic of the *New*

*York Evening Post* a decade earlier, when confronted by Bierstadt's "The Rocky Mountains."<sup>31</sup> Australian examples are more muted, although William Charles Piguenit and Eugen von Guérard painted impressive mountain scenes, and the latter had links of style with Caspar David Friedrich and the German Romantic School.<sup>32</sup>

Such an emotional experience also resulted from one very obvious artistic method of coping with the size of the subject matter of the new landscapes: for the big country the artists painted big pictures. Bierstadt's "The Rocky Mountains" was over 36 square feet of canvas; Moran's first version of "The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone" (1872), which hung in the lobby of the U.S. Senate, was 84 square feet, and a later "improved" version a massive 112 square feet. By comparison, the Australian canvases were modest in size.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the obvious reaction to landscape size and the suggestion that buyers in the 1870s, at least in the United States, were preferring larger canvases, the artists' response seems also to have been an effort to convey the image of nature's grandeur and its religious significance with the paintings as "excellent vehicles for sermons."<sup>34</sup>

The implied attraction of the Garden of Eden image was in part aesthetic. The "romantic rebellion" of the latter half of the eighteenth century in Europe had sparked off great debates on aesthetics and the picturesque.<sup>35</sup> The debates spread to the pioneer landscape where, as we have seen, the relative relief of the mountains and the sweep of the plains offered the basic components, which the locals claimed were the equivalent of any in Europe. Drawing upon their European training, the artists of the pioneer landscape created romantic scenes to rival those of their teachers. Both Bierstadt for the United States and Von Guérard for Australia, for example, had trained at the Düsseldorf School of Painting in Germany, and Thomas Cole and Nicholas Chevalier had similar European experience. John Glover came to Tasmania in 1831 at the age of 65 with a reputation in England to rival Turner's and

set to work in the new landscape with renewed vigor.

The concern for the picturesque seems to have developed in both countries about the same time. In the United States as early as 1820 a volume entitled *Picturesque Views of the American Scene* was planned. The aim was to show the "wild grandeur" of the mountains, waterfalls, and forests, all at least the equal of scenery elsewhere. Between 1819 and 1821 in Australia, Governor Lachlan Macquarie employed Joseph Lycett to make drawings of the colonial landscapes, which were eventually published in 1824–25 as *Views in Australia*. These were "picturesque" scenes with hunters chasing kangaroos and emus across the plains; stockmen with their dogs; the "sundowner" with his swag; and bushrangers—or "banditti," as Lycett called them—around their campfire.<sup>36</sup> They represented some of the first human activities in the pristine landscapes and already included evidence of the transformations of that landscape.

One component of the graphic and literary depiction of the picturesque landscape in Australia that does not seem to have been as common in the United States was the use of the analogy with the English park landscape. The open woodlands with grass undercover on the interior slopes of the eastern highlands and the coastal plain in South Australia reminded many visitors of a well-trimmed parkland adjacent to an English stately home. An overabundance could produce monotony, as Anthony Trollope observed in 1874, but it had a charm based presumably not only on its aesthetic but on implied social qualities.<sup>37</sup> In the new republic, such class sentiments might not have been so willingly accepted.

The Declaration of Independence came twelve years before the first European settlers arrived in Australia, and while representative government was awarded to the eastern Australian colonies in 1855, the creation of the nation had to await federation in 1901. If we are to look for evidence of a "national" landscape flowing from the artists' brushes, therefore, we might expect a considerable time gap

on either side of the Pacific. In fact the gap is less than expected.

There are two questions here. The first is: when did the first evidence of a national school of landscape painting appear? and second: what components of the natural landscape were identified by that school? On the development of national schools of art, the art historians seem generally to agree. For the United States, Flexner cites his "Native School" as beginning in 1825 with the emergence of the landscape painter Thomas Cole and ending with the death of Winslow Homer in 1910. Baigell concurs with the general dates and the concern for American landscapes over the period. For Australia, the critics seem to agree that the Heidelberg School of 1885–90 (named after a suburb of Melbourne that was the home base for the innovative artists) created a distinctive Australian school of painting.<sup>38</sup>

In the United States the innovation lay in the treatment, not the subject matter itself. The Hudson River School typically portrayed the clear, stable atmosphere of northeastern America, in contrast to the soft light of the European atmosphere. The aim was "not intimacy but size, not intensive cultivation but loveliness" and "the gently lyrical communication with wild nature of contented man in a prospering nation."<sup>39</sup> There were in fact no variations in the weather of such landscapes.

In Australia the French Impressionistic style was adopted, but Bernard Smith claims that the school attempted to apply impressionistic principles to a different set of visual and social conditions.<sup>40</sup> Whether a distinctive landscape emerged as a national symbol is less easy to say. If we argue that there is always some link, however tenuous, between the artists' creation and the topography, we cannot expect one picture to convey the multiple topographies of the regions of the continents. But there may be some possibilities of a synthesis, as suggested previously—a concern for summary characteristics of the environment.

One such positive characteristic is the concern for terrain in the United States, particularly the juxtaposition of mountains and plain, with



the implication of movement from one to the other—the Way West, in fact. In Australia the concern seems to be more for vegetation—the play of light on leaf and trunk, producing what Smith calls “a naturalistic interpretation of the sunlit landscape,” and reflecting a concern for the sun in art and literature during the last two decades of the century as a symbol of Australia itself.<sup>41</sup> Whether the above contrast would stand up to more careful analysis, I don’t know, but the continued popularity of the Currier and Ives prints in the United States and the sun-dappled gums that continue to adorn butchers’ calendars in Australia should not be overlooked.

#### THE TRANSFORMED LANDSCAPE

The transformation of the pristine landscape in the nineteenth century was illustrated in both a topographic and perceptual manner. The facts of land settlement were documented but they often had a message—a signal of intent, a declaration of purpose—which is just as important to any study of that transformational process.

Perhaps because of the nature of landscape painting as a medium, there are more paintings of the results of the transformation than of the processes that produced those results—in many cases, rapid changes that were not observed by painters. For example, there seem to be fewer paintings of the clearance of the woods than of the clearings *in* the woods; fewer paintings of the turning of the first sod than of the resultant harvests. However, by retaining elements of the earlier landscape, particularly the vegetation, the static pictures often convey the idea of change.<sup>42</sup>

In both the United States and Australia, common themes occur: the transformation is associated with conflict, man with man and man with nature; productive land use and permanent settlements are emphasized; nature is tamed in the gardens and confined in the broad acres by Newtonian geometries; the rural scene is Arcadian. The message is clear:

to show and convince from what slender beginnings, and in how few years, the primeval forest . . . may be converted into plains . . . covered with bleating flocks, lowing herds and waving corn; may become the smiling seats of industry and the social arts, and be changed from a mournful and desolate wilderness, into the cheerful village, the busy town, and the crowded city.<sup>43</sup>

That the transformation was not achieved without a struggle is obvious from the contemporary paintings. The conflict between the invaders and the indigenes was common to both countries, while the conflict between rival European invaders was peculiar to the United States. The conflicts with the American Indians became one aspect of a romantic theme of danger and held a popular appeal dating in the West, according to Ewers, from 1866, when *Harper's Weekly* published an engraving of a Cheyenne attack in 1865 on the coach carrying their artist Theodore R. Davis west. As Ewers points out, however, the artists were not present when the Indians won their greatest victories, and many of the events were like the many variations of Custer's Last Stand—comfortably and safely compiled from hindsight.<sup>44</sup>

The first recorded painting of the Australian aborigines shows two of them advancing to combat, but the subsequent conflicts rarely had the large-scale bravura of the American plains episodes and were more often skirmishes between whites (or native police) and blacks, or the insidious workings of disease and poisoned rations.<sup>45</sup> The bushrangers—highway robbers—did receive some coverage, but armed conflict between whites in Australia was relatively rare in reality and as a theme in landscape paintings.<sup>46</sup>

Conflict with nature was a different story. Evidence of concern for the hazards of life can be found on both frontiers. Whether of an “intensive” or “pervasive” type, the hazards were documented.<sup>47</sup> In the United States, a blizzard of the plains is shown in Charles M. Russell's “Waiting for the Chinook” (1887) and in the Currier and Ives engraving of a trans-continental train, “Snowbound”; the prairie

fire in the pristine landscape by Catlin, "Prairie Meadows Burning" (1830), preceded the genre painting by Jefferson(?) Beardsley, "Prairie Fire" (1857).<sup>48</sup> Even Thomas Cole of the Hudson River School painted "Tornado in an American Forest," and Paul Frenzeny and Jules Tavernier made an engraving titled "A Prairie Windstorm" (1873).<sup>49</sup>

In Australia, not surprisingly, the two hazards of drought and bushfire were prominent themes. William Strutt's painting of dead horses, "Martyrs of the Road" (ca. 1852), caught the impact of drought, as did the frantic stockman in Tom Roberts's "The Break-away" (1891). Strutt also painted a monumental canvas, "Black Thursday" (42" x 135"), on a particular bushfire in Victoria in 1851.<sup>50</sup>

While the pictures of the transformed landscape generally conveyed a message of success and of hope for the future, the threat of disaster was never far away. Lonely graves were a theme common to both frontiers, as Frank McCubbin's "Bush Burial" (1890) and W. Whiteredge's "Graves of Travellers, Ft. Kearney 1866" illustrate.<sup>51</sup>

Whether set against each other or their environment, the pioneers themselves were the subject of the painters, and the depiction of people in the landscape was a common theme on both frontiers. While a recent study has pointed out that Australia did not produce a wealth of portraits comparable to those painted in America, whether as "conflict against oblivion" or as propaganda for a successful conquest, there are abundant examples of landscapes in which the people depicted are as important as their settings.<sup>52</sup>

The heroic cavalcades of the explorers setting out in military style to conquer the unknown, as in Samuel T. Gill's "The Departure of Sturt from Adelaide, 1844"; the poses of the mountain men; and the cautious advance of the first emigrants, as in George C. Bingham's "Daniel Boone escorting a Band of Pioneers into the Western Country" (1851-52)—all of these must be set against the sequel, the mundane toil of settlers civilizing the frontier lands. Most of Bingham's other paintings

have such subjects, as do Charles Nahl's paintings of Californian miners, while in Australia, Tom Roberts's contemporary paintings of pastoral labor and McCubbin's triptych "The Pioneer" (1904) have similar themes.<sup>53</sup>

The transformation of the landscape was essentially an attempt to increase its productivity, and the concern given to productive landscapes is not therefore surprising. Considerable efforts went into portraying (presumably mainly on commission) the homesteads and estates of the successful settlers. The properties were usually farms, but in Australia prior to 1850, many of the paintings depicted pastoral stations, since that was where the money for commissions lay. Often the artist seems to have deliberately created a scene reminiscent of the immigrants' home landscape. Ronald Rees's comment that such paintings were deliberate attempts to shield settlers "from the harsh realities of their new lives" and had a "soporific" function may be true, but they also made a defiant statement by recording a landscape that was intended to be permanent (despite its youthfulness) and successful (whatever the reality or the future might be). It was also a rural Arcadia; industry, although already fouling the streams and rivers, was generally ignored. Even Bingham was careful to omit the evidence of mechanization—his river folk knew rafts but not the contemporary steamboat. The exceptions were the paintings of the gold-mining activities, where the defeated and ravaged earth was clearly indicated.<sup>54</sup>

John B. Jackson's identification of a Newtonian geometry in the eastern American pioneer landscape is equally valid for the remainder of the United States and for the interior of Australia.<sup>55</sup> The imprint of the surveyor's order on the land was evident in most views of the transformed rural and urban landscapes. The gridiron of fences in the illustrations of farms in *American Folk Painting*; the importance of formal gardens—as controlled nature—in the pictures of pastoral homesteads in Australia; and the ultimate grid of the urban areas as *Cities on Stone* are dramatic statements of intent as well as achievement.<sup>56</sup>

In this context, the visual role of the railway line as a linear feature cutting across and through the sinuous surfaces of nature has perhaps an added significance. Certainly it both provides direction and implies control in Currier and Ives's "Across the Continent, Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way" (1869). In Australia, the Zig-Zag switchback of the main line from Sydney inland across the Blue Mountains was seen as a major technological triumph and was illustrated by both local and visiting artists.<sup>57</sup>

The ordering, delimiting, and traversing of space, which was central to the settlement process in both countries, implied that the patterns of the new landscapes existed on the drawing boards before they were imprinted upon the land. The artists were illustrating the basic intention behind the transformation of the landscape.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS

Paintings not only reflect the ideas and attitudes of the artists, of their patrons, and possibly of a wider group of the general public; they may also help create some of those attitudes and help to draw attention to certain aspects of the environment that otherwise would be overlooked. In Paul Klee's words, "art does not reproduce what can be seen, it makes things visible."<sup>58</sup>

The close two-way relationship between the philosophers and artists of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been suggested for the Europeans in the South Seas by Bernard Smith and for the Americans by Flexner. Recent studies have proposed that Alexander von Humboldt's concern for landscape painting resulted from his contact with William Hodges's paintings, either of the Ganges or from Cook's second voyage.<sup>59</sup> Given the philosophical linkages of art and literature, the next step is the demonstration of the links between those philosophies and man-land relations—a theme to which geographers might profitably contribute.

That the artists' products influenced the decision makers on some environmental matters seems clear enough. In the United States, the paintings of Bierstadt and Moran are claimed to have awakened American pride in the scenery of the West and a desire to preserve the best for posterity through the creation of the first national parks.<sup>60</sup> The artists' role in Australia, however, is less clear. Certainly the romantic paintings of the alpine scenery of the eastern highlands may have prepared the way for the Mount Kosciusko State (later National) Park, but this was not created until 1944. The popular recognition, and eventual reservation for public use, of parts of the Flinders Ranges of South Australia and the ranges of central Australia undoubtedly owe much to the images created by painters such as Hans Heyesen, Rex Battersbee, and the aboriginal Albert Namatjira, but again, the timing is later—from the mid-twentieth century onward.

One interesting sidelight is the extent to which the explorer's reaction to the aesthetics of the new landscapes was conditioned by contemporary taste in landscape painting. That there was an advantage in the Australian explorer's ability to describe the landscape to his superiors in picturesque terms has been shown by Robert Dixon, but there is also evidence that explorers responded positively or negatively to the landscape on aesthetic grounds.<sup>61</sup> In the Australian context, explorers such as Ernest Giles, Sir Thomas Mitchell, and Charles Sturt reacted positively to picturesque views, and in one case the South Australian surveyor general, George Goyder, let his delighted surprise at the view of an oasis in the desert influence his topographic description in a way he was to regret later.<sup>62</sup>

Depending upon the extent to which their paintings were available to the general public, the artists seem to have had some influence upon public attitudes to landscapes. In one sense their images often became the reality for the general public. This seems to have been the case for the images of the American Indians created by Catlin and Bodmer, images that have now become stereotypes. To demonstrate just

how successful the artists were in creating a national landscape image is difficult, however, and would require a study of, among other things, the contents of and attendance at exhibitions and galleries, the role of Art Union lotteries, and the themes of popular calendar illustrations and perhaps the pictures in hotel rooms. In addition, the extent of artistic borrowings from other nations would have to be considered.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, some authors have suggested that the paintings influenced population movements to the new lands. The Mississippi panoramas of the 1840s supposedly influenced some European migrants, and Bernard Smith claims that the convict forger Lycett's *Views in Australia* had a similar role.<sup>64</sup> For the tourist, Paul Shepard proposes that paintings and photographs were vital sources of information, preferred over the written word; promotional use of landscape illustrations on both sides of the Pacific in the latter half of the nineteenth century would seem to support his argument.<sup>65</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Nineteenth-century landscape paintings in Australia and the United States offer a variety of information on the facts and fancies surrounding pioneer land settlement in the continental interiors. In some cases the paintings provide a realistic image, intended as a scientific description of the landscape as a composite of phenomena. In other cases the paintings provide symbolic images of the landscape—clues in fact to contemporary philosophical concepts of relationships between man and nature. Both kinds of images can be found in the portrayal of the landscapes of both nations before and after their transformation by the invading European settlers. Indeed, the similarity of the subject matter and its treatment in landscape paintings on either side of the Pacific in the nineteenth century is one of the enduring impressions of this preliminary comparative study. Future comparative studies of pioneer settlement in the two nations will need to recognize not only the value of the

topographic and perceptual evidence provided by landscape paintings but also to be aware of the international parallels in the artists' images of the pioneer landscapes.

#### NOTES

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1. See Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1949), and for the historians, Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day*, rev. ed. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), especially chapter 6, "The Faithful Witness." For the geographers, see R. Leslie Heathcote, "The Artist as Geographer: Landscape Painting as a Source for Geographical Research," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch)* 73 (1972): 1–15; Ronald Rees, "Geography and Landscape Painting: An Introduction to a Neglected Field," *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 89 (1973): 147–57, and "Landscape in Art," in *Dimensions of Human Geography: Essays of Some Familiar and Neglected Themes*, ed. by Karl W. Butzer, University of Chicago, Department of Geography Research Paper no. 186 (Chicago, 1977), pp. 48–68.

2. For the United States, see John C. Ewers, *Artists of the Old West* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965); James T. Flexner, *That Wilder Image: The Painting of America's Native School from Thomas Cole to Winslow Homer* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962); Alan Gussow, *A Sense of Place: The Artist and the American Land* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth, 1971); and Robert Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850–1900* (New

York: Scribner's Sons, 1953). For Australia, see Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1966); Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist Painting in Australia to 1944* (Sydney: Alternative Publishing Cooperative, 1979); Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768-1850* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), and *Australian Painting, 1788-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

3. Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos*, vol. 2 (London: Bohn, 1849), pp. 451-54.

4. See William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Knopf, 1966), and Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West*.

5. For Australia, see Robert W. Dixon, "Mopping and Mowing in the Mulga," *Hemisphere* (Canberra) 22 (December 1978): 7-11, and for the United States, see Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West*.

6. The transformation is of the sketch of the Laguna Pueblo illustrated in Robert V. Hine, "The Kern Brothers and the Image of the West," *Desert Magazine*, October 1961, pp. 20-24, and reproduced in Heathcote, "The Artist as Geographer," p. 18. For the models, see John L. Allen, "An Analysis of the Exploratory Process: The Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806," *Geographical Review* 62 (1972): 13-39 and John D. Overton, "A Theory of Exploration," *Journal of Historical Geography* 7 (1981): 53-70.

7. See Ewers, *Artists of the Old West*, and Geoffrey Dutton, *White on Black: The Australian Aborigine Portrayed in Art* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1974).

8. See Eve Buscombe, *Australian Colonial Portraits* (Hobart, Tasmania: Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1979), p. 7.

9. See *The Tasmanian Aboriginal in Art* (Hobart, Tasmania: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1976) and Dutton, *White on Black*.

10. Mary C. Rabbitt, *Minerals, Lands, and Geology for the Common Defence and General Welfare*, vol. 1, *Before 1879* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979).

11. See biographies of Clarke in Douglas Pike, ed., *Australian Dictionary of Biography*,

vol. 3, 1851-1900 (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1969), pp. 420-22, and of Gould in Pike, ed., *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4, 1851-1890 (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1972), pp. 277-78.

12. See David Lowenthal, "The Bicentennial Landscape: A Mirror Held Up to See the Past," *Geographical Review* 67 (1977): 102, and Roderick Nash, "Qualitative Landscape Values: The Historical Perspective," in *Landscape Assessment: Values, Perceptions, and Resources*, ed. by E. H. Zube et al. (Stroudsburg, Pa.: Dowden, Hutchinson, and Ross, 1975), p. 14.

13. *Melbourne Argus*, 1 May 1867, quoted in Jocelyn Gray, "A New Vision: Louis Buvelot's Press in the 1870s," in *Studies in Australian Art*, ed. by Ann Galbally and Margaret Plant (Carlton, Victoria: University of Melbourne Press, 1978), p. 20; Samuel D. Bird, *On Australasian Climates and Their Influence in the Prevention and Arrest of Pulmonary Consumption* (London: Longman, 1863), p. 146.

14. See Cecil Gould, *Space in Landscape, Themes and Painters in the National Gallery*, no. 9 (London, 1974).

15. Cole's painting is illustrated in Flexner, *That Wilder Image*, p. 53, and Earle's "Kings Tableland, Blue Mountains, New South Wales, The Appearance of the New Road" (ca. 1826) is illustrated in James Gleeson, *Colonial Painters, 1788-1880* (Melbourne: Landsdowne, 1971), pp. 38-39. For examples by Von Guérard, see Candice Bruce, *Eugen von Guérard* (Canberra: Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1980).

16. Flexner, *That Wilder Image*, p. 248.

17. Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 18.

18. The largest was claimed to be four miles in length but was probably about three-quarters of a mile long and twelve feet high, according to Flexner, *That Wilder Image*, p. 249.

19. Illustrated in Gussow, *A Sense of Place*, frontispiece.

20. Gordon Hendricks, *Albert Bierstadt, Painter of the American West* (New York: Abrams, 1974), p. 149.

21. Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 2:456-57. Preston's painting is illustrated in Hugh Speirs, *Landscape Art and the Blue Mountains* (Chippendale,

N.S.W.: Alternative Publishing Coop. Ltd., 1981), p. 99.

22. See Bernard Smith, *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia*, chapter 5, "Hardship and Weird Melancholy" (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1975).

23. Noted in Bernard Smith, *The Antipodean Manifesto: Essays in Art and History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 162.

24. Murray McCaskill, Review of Manning Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol. 4, in *Journal of Historical Geography* 7 (October 1981): 435-38.

25. For the United States, see Matthew Baigell, *A History of American Painting* (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 122, and for Australia, see Bruce, *Eugen Von Guérard*, p. 14.

26. Baigell, *History of American Painting*, p. 140.

27. Kynaston McShire, ed., *The Natural Paradise: Painting in America, 1800-1950* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976), p. 42, and William Born, *American Landscape Painting: An Interpretation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1948).

28. See Smith, *European Vision*, and Dutton, *White on Black*.

29. McShire, *The Natural Paradise*, p. 69.

30. See illustration in Thurman Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1966), p. 48 ff., and Wilkins's comment on distortion, *ibid.*, p. 99.

31. The critic commented: "The King of the World is denied his subject's grandest confidence and stands dwarfed in the valley, mutely, hopelessly gazing whither Nature is closeted alone with God." *New York Evening Post*, June 1864, quoted by Hendricks, *Albert Bierstadt*, p. 149.

32. See Bruce, *Eugen Von Guérard*, and Smith, *Australian Painting*, pp. 58-60.

33. For example, Von Guérard's largest canvas, "Milford Sound . . ." of New Zealand (1877-79), was less than nineteen square feet, and his largest Australian scene, "Mt. Kosciusko from the Mount Hope Ranges" (1866), was almost seventeen square feet; see Bruce, *Eugen Von Guérard*, pp. 76 and 72, resp.

34. See Wilkins, *Thomas Moran*, p. 68, and Baigell, *History of American Painting*, p. 108.

35. Kenneth Clark, *The Romantic Rebellion: Romantic versus Classic Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 20.

36. For the United States, see Nash, "Qualitative Landscape Values," p. 14, and for Australia, see Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 21.

37. See Smith, *European Vision*, pp. 133-35, and Anthony Trollope, *New South Wales and Queensland* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874), p. 128.

38. For the United States see Flexner, *That Wilder Image*, p. xiii, and Baigell, *History of American Painting*, pp. 107-8. For Australia, see Smith, *Australian Painting*, and Hughes, *Art of Australia*.

39. Flexner, *That Wilder Image*, p. xiv.

40. Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 79.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

42. For the United States, see Ebenezer Mix's sketches 1 and 2, illustrated in D. Lowenthal, "The Pioneer Landscape: An American Dream," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2 (Winter 1982): 11-12. For Australia, see Thomas Turner's "Albion House Augusta 1836" in Barbara Chapman, *The Colonial Eye: A Topographical and Artistic Record of the Life and Landscape of Western Australia, 1798-1914* (Perth: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1979), p. 85.

43. James Wallis, *Historical Account of New South Wales*, 1821, quoted in Smith, *European Vision*, p. 179.

44. Ewers, *Artists of the Old West*, p. 195-96. For Custer's Last Stand, see Taft, *Artists and Illustrators*, plates 54-56.

45. See Dutton, *White on Black*, plate 1.

46. See William Strutt's "Bushrangers on the St. Kilda Road" (ca. 1887), illustrated in Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 36, and Tom Roberts's "Bailed Up" (1898), illustrated in Alan McCulloch, *The Golden Age of Australian Painting: Impressionism and the Heidelberg School* (Melbourne: Landsdowne, 1969), p. 79.

47. Intensive hazards such as wind- and rainstorms, floods, and avalanches, and pervasive hazards such as drought were distinguished in terms of the speed of their onset, energy release per unit area over time, and area affected. See Robert W. Kates, "The Australian Experience: Summary and Prospect" in *Natural Hazards in Australia*, ed. by R. Leslie Heathcote and Bruce G. Thom (Canberra: Australian Academy of Science, 1979), pp. 511-20.

48. Russell's sketch is illustrated in Ewers, *Artists of the Old West*, p. 226; the original Currier and Ives prints are held by the Museum of the City of New York; Catlin's painting is illustrated in Gussow, *A Sense of Place*, p. 71; and Beardsley's painting is in *The Western Frontier* (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 1966).

49. See Clara E. Sears, *Highlights among the Hudson River Artists* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1968), p. 16; Taft, *Artists and Illustrators*, p. 103.

50. For Strutt's "Martyrs," see Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 56, and for Robert's "Break-away," see R. Leslie Heathcote, "The Visions of Australia, 1770-1970" in *Australia as Human Setting*, ed. by Amos. Rapoport (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972), p. 88 ff. "Black Thursday" is illustrated in Gleeson, *Colonial Painters*, p. 77.

51. McCubbin's painting is in McCulloch, *The Golden Age of Australian Painting*, p. 49, and Whitteredge's in Gussow, *A Sense of Place*, p. 80-81.

52. See Buscombe, *Australian Colonial Portraits*, p. 6, and *The Painter and the New World: A Survey of Painting from 1564 to 1867 Marking the Founding of the Canadian Federation* (Montreal: Museum of Fine Arts, 1967).

53. Gill's painting is illustrated in Geoffrey Dutton, *Paintings of S. T. Gill* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1962), plate X; Bingham's painting is in Baigell, *History of American Painting*, p. 124; see Ewers, *Artists of the Old West* for Bingham's and Nahl's paintings; Roberts's painting is in Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 90, and the McCubbin work is in McCulloch, *The Golden Age*, p. 95.

54. Rees, "Landscape in Art," p. 62. Gold-mining scenes in California were among Nahl's paintings noted above, and for Australia, a good example is John Roper's "Gold Diggings, Ararat" (1854), illustrated in Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 36.

55. John B. Jackson, "The Order of a Landscape: Reason and Religion in Newtonian America" in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscape: Geographical Essays*, ed. by Donald W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 153-63.

56. Mary Black and Jean Lipman, *American Folk Painting* (New York: Bramhall House,

1966); Bruce, *Eugen Von Guérard*, p. 75; John W. Reys, *Cities on Stone: Nineteenth Century Lithograph Images of the Urban West* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Amon Carter Museum, 1976).

57. For Currier and Ives, see Born, *American Landscape Painting*, p. 88; for the Zig-Zag, see Gleeson, *Colonial Painters 1788-1880*, plates 56 and 57 by Conrad Martens; and Speirs, *Landscape Art and the Blue Mountains*, plates 32 and 33 by Carlos de Amezaga.

58. Attributed to Paul Klee in Geoffrey Barraclough, *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1967), p. 239.

59. Rees, "Landscape in Art," p. 54, favors the Ganges, while Walter Veit, ed., *Captain James Cook: Image and Impact, South Seas Discoveries and the World of Letters*, vol. 2, *The Pacific Syndrome: Conditions and Consequences* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1979), p. 42, favors Cook's voyages.

60. See Wilkins, *Thomas Moran*.

61. Dixon, "Mopping and Mowing."

62. See Heathcote, "The Visions of Australia," p. 93, and R. Leslie Heathcote, "Early European Perceptions of the Australian Landscape: The First Hundred Years" in *Man and Landscape in Australia: Towards an Ecological Vision*, ed. by George Seddon and Marie Davis (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976), pp. 41-42. For Goyder's error, see Michael Williams, "George Woodrofe Goyder: A Practical Geographer," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch)* 79 (1978): 4.

63. Flexner, *That Wilder Image*, p. xi, used gallery attendance figures in New York to suggest the popularity of painting from 1839 to 1851 compared with 1939 to 1951. The Art Union Lottery was inaugurated in New York in 1838 and was claimed to have created the first national audience for American artists; Edgar P. Richardson, *Painting in America from 1502 to the Present* (New York: Crowell, 1965), p. 214. In the 1880s, Australian artists in Sydney were using American prototypes for their pioneer landscapes, according to Leigh Astbury, "Tom Roberts *The Breakaway*: Myth and History," *Bulletin of the Art Gallery of South Australia* 38 (1980): 3.

64. See Born, *American Landscape Painting*,

p. 97, and Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 23.

65. Paul Shepard, *Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature* (New York: Knopf, 1967), pp. 136–37. For promotional use, see *Iron Horse West* (St. Paul:

Minnesota Museum of Art, Bicentennial Project of Burlington Northern Inc., 1976), and Andrew Garran, ed., *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*, 3 vols. (Sydney: Picturesque Atlas Pub. Co., 1886).