

Critique of a Thesis Proposal: "Romanticism and the Early European Perception of Australia"

This thesis proposal is very broad in ambition, attempting to tie in a European intellectual movement with the more mundane business of running a gaol and exploring a land on the other side of the planet. Considering the amount of material available in the journals of the five explorers, and the correspondence of the many Governors, there is easily scope for a 12,000 - 15,000 word dissertation; perhaps even a little too much.

The proposed outline is conducive to a structured argument, most naturally along the lines of the "adversative", "exploitative", "disjunctive", and "constitutive" paradigm. An introduction would include the argument concerning some sort of Romanticism stowing away on the First Fleet. Under each of the viewpoints concerning the landscape relevant players would be found to illustrate the particular angle, and with the constitutive section Romanticism could be reintroduced as a factor. This structure could alternatively be subsumed within separate sections relating to the explorers and the Governors.

Only the patience and the persistence of the investigator would seem to limit the resources for this dissertation. A reasonable point of departure would be the early chapters of books which collect important Australian historical documents, (Clarke, Ward and Robertson) and those excerpting from the journals of explorers. (Fitzpatrick, Jennings, Lee, Miller) For the explorers, leads from these compilations could be followed back to the original journals. Charles Sturt's rampant production of books from the last century, for example, are largely available in facsimile or reprint, and can be found in the Fryer library. Materials concerning the thoughts of the early Governors of the colony are preserved in Bladen's Historical Records of New South Wales and the equally daunting and

dusty volumes of the Historical Records of Australia. The use of a secondary historical source would be essential to guide the search and perhaps obviate the need to survey the entirety of the massive volumes involved. Other vital sources could be found in the Australian Historical Records Register, which is available on microfiche at University of Queensland Central Library.

The component of the dissertation concerning the change in the relationship to the land noted over the early years of Australian settlement is feasible, overflowing with resources and logically lending itself to a structured argument. The stated intention of the thesis however, rests on the very shaky premise that an embryonic form of Romanticism came with the early settlers, was extinguished by the "shock of the new" and was rekindled by a growing familiarity with the new environment. It seems far more likely that no such romantic baggage came with the motley crew who settled New South Wales, their initial reactions, be they adversative, exploitative or disjunctive, being just understandable reactions to the land, requiring no Romantic background. If the evidence indeed showed a change in attitude after 1810 towards a constitutive reaction to the landscape, then this could be used as an argument that Romantic ideas spread to the colonies later on and were important in the change. Alternatively the thesis could be with benefit altered to make the Romanticism but a minor component and leave the bulk of the dissertation to simply examine the changing the standpoints of the early Governors and explorers to the Australian landscape.

Appendix 1

a) Introduction

Adversative relationships

Exploitative relationships

Disjunctive relationships

Constitutive relationships

Conclusion

b) Introduction

The Governors' View of the Land

The Explorers' View of the Land

Romanticism and the Constitutive View of the Landscape

Conclusion

Appendix 2

Jennings, Margaret Jean Australia's Explorers: A Collection of Contemporary Documents. Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1966.

Millar, Ann "I See No End To Traveling": Journals of Australian Explorers 1813-76. Sydney: Bay Books, 1986.

Appendix 3

Australian Historical Records Register. Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1989.

Historical Records of Australia. Sydney: Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1914-25.

Appendix 4

Possible supervisors: J. Strugnell

A.J. Lawson

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- Jennings, Margaret Jean Australian Explorers: A Collection of Contemporary Documents. Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1966.
- Lee, Ida Early Explorers in Australia: From the Log-books and Journals, including the Diary of Allan Cunningham Botanist, from March 1, 1817, to November 19, 1818. London: Methuen, 1925.
- Millar, Ann "I See No End To Traveling": Journals of Australian Explorers 1813-76. Sydney, Bay Books, 1986.
- Sturt, Charles Two Expeditions into the Interior of South Australia During the Years 1828, 1829, and 1831: With Observations on the Soil, Climate, and General Resources of the Colony of New South Wales. Lane Cove, New South Wales: Doubleday Australia, 1982.
- . The Mount Byron Expedition 1839. Adelaide, Sullivan's Cove, 1982.
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Ward, Russell and John Robertson Such Was Life: Select Documents in Australian Social History, Vol. 1. 1788-1850. Chippendale, New South Wales: Alternative Publishing Co-op, 1978.