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Keith Jennings
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*"Thesis' includes 'treatise', 'dissertation' and other similar productions.
Australian Ballads:  
The Social Function of British and Irish Transportation Broadsides, 
Popular Convict Verse and Goldfield Songs.

by 
Philip Butterss

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of 
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To my mother and father
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SS "Chanson, George". *The Sydney Songster.* Sydney: Roberts, [c. 1865].


Introduction

Many different titles have been used to describe the British and Irish transportation broadsides, popular convict verse and goldfield songs examined in this thesis. These include "folksong and ballad", "traditional songs", "bush ballads", "bush songs", "traditional bush ballads", "old bush songs", "popular ballads" and "colonial ballads".¹ Yet none of these terms adequately covers all the material discussed. Many of the texts are not ballads; many are not "folksongs"; many are not songs; some are neither songs nor ballads; many are not "colonial"; many are not traditional; and many have no connection with the bush. In spite of this, there is some agreement that the transportation broadsides, convict verse and goldfield songs are components of a larger body of loosely related verse. For example, the two most widely circulated collections of "Australian ballads" — Old Bush Songs and The Penguin Book of Australian Ballads — include a number of items drawn from each area.²

This study of "Australian ballads" takes its title from the latter of these two books, while recognizing that neither the term "Australian" nor the term "ballad" is without problems. The broadsides discussed in part one are generally only "Australian" in the very limited sense of having transportation to Australia as part of their subject matter. Much of the convict verse examined in part two falls outside the strictest definition of ballad because it was not sung and because it has only a minimal

narrative structure. And many of the goldfield songs have insufficient narrative to be regarded as ballads in a strict sense. As will become evident, the extent to which the three bodies of verse formed part of a tradition is rather limited. Only a few pieces of convict verse can be shown to rely on British and Irish transportation broadsides as models, and the goldfield songs have their origins not in the verse composed by convicts but in English music hall songs and British and Irish broadsides about emigration to Australia. But the three groups are linked in their membership of a larger corpus of popular verse about Australia, and deserve to be studied together because of this.

The most influential scholarly work that has looked closely at the ballads is Russel Ward’s *The Australian Legend*. This thesis is not an attempt to examine the material in terms of a "bush ethos" or as elements in the construction of an Australian type, legend, myth, or dream, as Ward and those who have followed him have done. It is an attempt to suggest the ways which the material loosely described as "Australian ballads" might have functioned in its initial social context. Paul Gillen notes correctly that "Today the original meanings of many of the songs have been sunk into nationalist myth-making". Radical nationalist historians and those involved in the revival of interest in "folk music" since the 1950s have used the songs to construct a version of Australian identity which stresses egalitarian and anti-authoritarian attitudes, a version of Australian identity sometimes bearing little relationship to the earliest social functions of the ballads. It is possible, however, to fill in some of the historical background to the production and consumption of the material and to offer tentative suggestions as to how the ballads might have operated for the audiences which first used them. Often it has been necessary to try to establish basic information about the


composition of and audience for the texts, and there is much which remains obscure about their origins and provenance.

As has been mentioned, the British and Irish broadsides, convict verse and goldfield songs are linked by their status as popular culture and it is theory developed in the study of popular culture that has proved most useful for analysing the social function of these texts. Although there is a growing body of folklore theory and much interesting research in Australian folklore is becoming available, the material dealt with in this thesis did not all fit very well into such a framework. Folklorists have sometimes rejected the broadsides as an object of study because of their urban and commercial nature, although, as the discussion of transportation broadsides shows, another approach has been to stress their closeness to "folksong". The goldfield songs have been much more uniformly rejected because almost all of them were composed and performed only by professional entertainers. For a long time Australian folklorists followed nineteenth-century models, where the most highly valued items were anonymous songs and verse which circulated in an oral tradition. More recently there has been a shift towards a definition of folklore as the informal culture of small groups, and this approach allows folklorists to deal with contemporary expressive culture as well as with traditional folklore. Recent definitions — for example the framework established in Graham Seal's *The Hidden Culture* — may accommodate the mass-produced broadsides which were often performed informally as part of small group culture, but the fact that most of the goldfield songs were only consumed by large audiences in the relatively formal setting of a concert hall probably excludes them from strictly-defined folklore studies. On the other hand, the term "popular culture" is broad enough to encompass the three areas addressed in this thesis, and theory

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developed in the field of popular culture studies provides a useful framework for the analysis of Australian ballads.

The thesis is concerned with verse that is "popular" in two senses which often, but not always, overlap. It deals with an aspect of culture which is popular in that it is consumed by a variety of social groups without access to economic, political and cultural power. But within the popular culture defined in this way, the thesis focuses on ballads, songs and verse which are popular in the sense of widely consumed, because it is this material which has struck a chord with its audience and which is therefore most likely to reveal information about their concerns.

It should be stated from the outset that although a considerable portion of the broadside ballads, convict verse and goldfield songs addressed in this thesis do have extant tunes, it has not been possible to examine these. Clearly the tune of a song or ballad can sometimes carry an important component of its meaning. As a partial justification for not examining the tunes, however, it should be noted that, at least for English folksong and ballad, it seems that the singers considered the words were more important than the tunes, even if the early collectors were primarily interested in the tunes and often did not bother to record the texts. The degree to which tunes were interchangeable, also suggests that the words should given precedence in a discussion a song's meaning. Roger Covell points out that "song tunes are more given to chameleon-like qualities than we sometimes care to think.... it is a characteristic of most folk singing that it colours the tune with the words and not the other way around".

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9 Roger Covell, Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society (Melbourne: Sun, 1967), 44.
The Theoretical Framework

Until relatively recently popular culture has rarely been regarded as worthy of attention at all, and if it has been addressed as an object of serious study, that study has generally been an attempt to bring its negative aspects to light. In the work of high cultural critics such as F.R. Leavis, popular culture has been seen as aesthetically debased and a vehicle for morally corrupting influences, while in the work of Marxist critics of the Frankfurt school such as Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, it has been attacked as nothing more than a purveyor of dominant ideology. A more optimistic response by those on the left has been to valorize popular culture in an indiscriminate way. In America the discipline of Popular Culture Studies which emerged in the 1960s as part of a broader American Studies movement tended, with considerable enthusiasm, to celebrate popular culture as the "voice of the people". In Australia a variant of this approach has been seen, at times, in the work of John Docker, whose praise of some popular material and criticism of the Frankfurt school have led others to describe his attitudes as "workerist". An uncritical populism which regards the material covered by the term "Australian ballads" as more consistently oppositional than the evidence allows, has characterized the early stages of the revival of interest in "folk" music during the 1950s, and can still be seen in

10 Tony Bennett, "Introduction: Popular Culture and the Turn to Gramsci", in Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott, eds., Popular Culture and Social Relations (Milton Keynes: Open UP, 1986), xi.


relatively recent publications such as John Meredith and Rex Whalan's *Frank the Poet* and Meredith's *The Wild Colonial Boy*.\(^{13}\)

Others have argued for a more subtle conception of popular culture that can accommodate both of these extreme views, each of which is misleadingly one-sided in isolation. The resulting position recognizes, on the one hand, that dominant culture is not merely a monolith imposed on subordinate groups; that it must be present in forms acceptable to those groups, forms which may also contain oppositional elements. On the other hand it recognizes that oppositional culture exists in the context of dominant ideology's often considerable incursions into popular culture. As Tony Bennett suggests, popular culture is thus seen to consist of cultural forms and practices where "dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural values and ideologies meet and intermingle, in different mixes and permutations, vying with one another".\(^{14}\) In *Social Semiotics*, Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress stress that conflicting meanings coexist:

> Society is typically constituted by structures and relations of power, exercised or resisted; it is characterized by conflict as well as cohesion, so that the structures of meaning at all levels, from dominant ideological forms to local acts of meaning will show traces of contradiction, ambiguity, polysemy in various proportions, by various means.\(^{15}\)

Such an approach is of value here because it is broad enough to include the convict verse which has been seen as the authentic "voice of the people", along with the broadside ballads that have sometimes been rejected as the products of the entertainment industry, and also the goldfield songs which have been much more commonly rejected as manufactured for "the people". But its real value lies in its being subtle enough to show that where pessimistic views of popular culture might expect to

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find cultural items that merely purvey dominant ideology, there are a number of ways in which that ideology has been contested, and, similarly where optimistic views might expect consistently oppositional attitudes, the items often reveal strong traces of dominant ideology.

Winfried Fluck has recently argued that popular culture can usefully be seen as a "mode of socialization". Fluck suggests that popular culture has two functions, the second of which is more important:

Its socializing influence ... is not restricted to offering models of behavior for imitation and serving as a source of social knowledge. What is much more significant in terms of social function is that it enacts tensions and conflicts with existing values and meanings in such a way that the recipient is able to explain and to accommodate them within the social and cultural context in which he or she is living.¹⁶

Such a broad explanation of the way in which popular culture operates for its audience proved particularly helpful in discussing the songs of the goldfields, songs which dealt with a wide range of subjects. Part three argues that the songs produced by entertainers on the goldfields can be seen as agents of socialization, both assisting new arrivals to assimilate into a particular colonial culture, a process which the songs themselves refer to as "getting colonized", and more importantly, enacting tensions, conflicts, fears and frustrations experienced by their audience, and attempting to resolve them.

Martha Vicinus suggested, more than a decade and a half ago, that the British broadside industry as a whole was helping to socialize its audience into appropriate ways of behaviour for an urban and industrial society.¹⁷ Parts one and two of this thesis argue that the relatively small group of broadsides about transportation to Australia were often acting to socialize their audience by transmitting and reinforcing

¹⁶ Fluck, "Popular Culture as a Mode of Socialization", 40.
particular ideological notions, rather than by enacting and resolving tensions and conflicts. Antonio Gramsci's account of the relationship between hegemony and coercion is a useful tool for explaining the ways that the British and Irish transportation broadsides and the popular convict verse was operating for its audience. Gramsci argues that a ruling group is dominant in two ways — through coercion and through hegemony. In this context hegemony involves an "active consent" to the ruling group's dominance, a condition achieved when ways of seeing the world which support that group's position permeate the whole culture, and make its power appear legitimate and natural. Hegemony in this sense is constructed, often unconsciously, in many diverse ways including religion, family life, education, charity, philanthropy, social work, poor relief, and also through a variety of leisure activities. Gramsci points out that in a period of crisis in authority, the passive control of hegemony is insufficient for the ruling group to retain its position and it must resort to coercive measures. The concepts of hegemony and coercion have an obvious relevance for the study of the British and Irish transportation broadsides and the verse composed by convicts themselves. In Britain the years of transportation saw the state maintaining its power through a shifting mix of coercion and hegemony, while in Ireland a much greater degree of force was necessary to retain control. Transportation was a significant element in the coercive arsenal available to the British state in both those sites of ballad production, while the penal colony in Australia resulting from transportation was itself founded on coercion.


20 Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 275-76.
Part One. British and Irish Transportation Broadsides.

Come all you wild and wicked youths, wherever you may be,
I pray you give attention and listen unto me,
The fate of us poor transports as you shall understand,
The hardships that we undergo upon Van Dieman's land.

"Young Henry the Poacher"
Chapter 1
British Transportation Broadsides and Crime

Australia first appeared as a subject of popular poetry in the British and Irish broadside ballads which offered their audiences various versions of transportation to Botany Bay and Van Diemen's Land.¹ Two specific problems have characterized twentieth-century views of these broadsides, and both have hampered an investigation of the way the corpus might have operated for its original audience. The first is the failure to fully distinguish between ballads composed about convicts and ballads composed by convicts, with the result that much material produced by people outside the convict system has been seen as representing the views of convicts themselves. The second (and closely related) tendency has been for twentieth-century readers to regard the texts in the light of their own horror at the brutality of the convict system, and therefore to read them as critiques of the system's violence. In a recent discussion, Paul Gillen exhibits both of these tendencies, evidently believing that the British broadside "Van Dieman's Land" was composed by a convict or convicts, and regarding it as one of the "'treason songs', which could not be sung in public".²


² "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32. This is the spelling used in virtually all of the broadsides of that title and will therefore be used throughout this thesis. Original spelling and punctuation is retained in all quotations. Paul Gillen, "Mightier than the Sword!", in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, eds., Constructing a Culture, A People's History of Australia Since 1788 Series, (Fitzroy/Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988), 190-91. John Manifold argues unconvincingly that "Van Dieman's Land" and "Isle de France" might have been composed in Australia, Who Wrote the Ballads? Notes on Australian Folksong (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1964), 33-35. Manifold restates his argument about "Van Dieman's Land" in John
Similarly, Robert Hughes takes the title of *The Fatal Shore* from "Van Dieman's Land" and quotes lines from that ballad as an epigraph illustrating his evocation of the system's violence. In fact, if the British broadsides are seen in their original context, it becomes clear that most of them were far from critical of the transportation system. That the transportation ballads are not biographical or autobiographical accounts is evident from their sometimes blatant inaccuracies and from the fact that even the few speakers who are named can only very rarely be authenticated. Anne Conlon's study of convict narratives discusses five broadside ballads whose authors are given as "William Dale", "James Revell", "John Jackson" (in fact another ballad about "James Revell"), "Charlotte W...", and "Elizabeth Watson" but none of these can be identified as a genuine convict.

The failure to distinguish fully between broadsides about transportation and material composed by convicts is evident even in the work of some twentieth-century commentators who are well aware of the circumstances in which they were produced. These accounts acknowledge that the descriptions of convict life in the transportation ballads are rarely, if ever, at first hand, but nevertheless present them as at least partial reflections of convict life. For example, Hugh Anderson's *Farewell to Old England*, subtitled *A Broadside History of Early Australia*, uncritically uses many British and Irish transportation ballads to narrate the story of the convict years. Although the broadsides were clearly composed in Britain and Ireland, Cliff Hanna will only go so

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5 *FOE*. 
far as to say that "those broadside ballads concerned with Australia are not, in a strict sense, indigenous". He suggests that "in professing to speak for the convicts they offer contemporary impressions of the initial colonial feelings". As will become apparent, however, the attitudes which the bulk of the British transportation broadsides express are markedly different from those contained in the extant popular verse produced by convicts themselves.

Russel Ward gives a more sophisticated account of the ballads about transportees, seeing them again as a reflection, but this time as a reflection of the attitudes of the group which produced and consumed them. He argues that the songs sung by "the urban and rural labouring classes from which most of the convicts were drawn... were usually interchangeable, and there is little doubt but that they mirrored faithfully the social outlook of those who sang them". But there are a number of problems with the notion of reflection. For the purposes of this discussion, to see a text as a reflection ignores the fact that it is not merely an artefact but a communication, something performing an active social function. In fact Ward quotes a mid-nineteenth-century Ragged School master who sees the broadsides as shaping rather than just mirroring the attitudes of their audience:

The form of literature which best suits the alley is the ballad — a striking proof of the influence which poetry combined with music possesses over the human mind, even when most hardened and depraved ... and the people are influenced by their ballads to an extent which a casual observer would not readily credit.

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8 For a useful discussion of the metaphors of "reflection" and "mediation" see Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), 95-97.

Although she does not deal with transportation ballads in any detail, Martha Vicinus examinates broadsides as part of her study of the growth of working-class literacy and she too assigns a social function to the ballads, arguing that street literature was important in "socializing and politicizing those who found their old habits and customs inappropriate, but who had not yet internalized the new patterns of behaviour and attitudes of an urban and industrial society".\textsuperscript{10} The transportation ballads were not static objects but played an active social role, and chapters 1 and 2 will argue that, in Britain at least, the broadsides about transportation tended to reinforce the existing social order in a variety of ways.\textsuperscript{11}

A number of methodological problems arise for any study of the broadsides. It is difficult to be sure how popular or how representative the extant ballads are, for example it is conceivable that the people whose collections are now in the libraries of Britain, Ireland and Australia, may have played some sort of censoring role in rejecting material containing ideas with which they did not agree. Nevertheless, there is no question that broadsides as a whole were a widely consumed form and Ron Edwards has suggested that at least "Van Dieman's Land" was one of the most popular of all broadsides.\textsuperscript{12} Very few of the transportation ballads were dated, and the printers' common practice of reissuing material and reworking old material, both from their own and their rivals' stocks, makes for much confusion. A few ballads have internal evidence which can suggest a date; sometimes introductory passages provide a date, at least for the particular version they introduce; and some extant printers' catalogues are themselves dated, but overall the textual history of the broadside ballads is very


\textsuperscript{11} This is in contrast to the Ragged School master who found "the principles introduced into these ballads most immoral, and dangerous to society". Significantly, the transportation ballad which the schoolmaster quotes from is not a British but an Irish broadside, "Erin's Lovely Home". Quoted in Ward, \textit{Australian Legend}, 24, 28.

\textsuperscript{12} "Van Dieman's Land", \textit{CM}, 32.
murky. In spite of these difficulties it is possible to make broad generalizations about the social functions of the transportation broadsides. We can assume that in most cases they had their initial audiences during the years of transportation and we can make some suggestions about the way they operated in that broad context. It is first necessary to sketch a brief sociology of the broadsides.

Producers and Consumers of the Broadsides

Some critics who have been involved in the twentieth-century revival of interest in "folk music" seem anxious to portray the broadsides as "folk song". For example A.L. Lloyd over-emphasizes the rural nature of their audience, asserting that in the eighteenth century, "With the coming of newspapers ... the broadside ceased to interest the 'polite' classes and became more and more exclusively associated with farmhands and farriers, milkmaids and muckmen". In fact the broadsides were the most widely-read printed matter among the urban poor until the mass production of the "penny dreadful" in the 1820s and 1830s. It was not until later in the nineteenth century, with the increasing separation of work and leisure, when entertainment in the cities became increasingly compartmentalized into something that went on inside and at night, that hawkers and chaunters were forced into the country to make a living. Ward accepts the broadsides' urban and commercial nature but still proposes a strong similarity with "folk song" when he argues that producers and consumers belonged to an organic community:

13 Hanna, "The Ballads", has begun the difficult task of establishing a chronology for transportation and emigration broadsides.


Although in the first half of the nineteenth century many, perhaps most, ballads were especially written for the market by professional street ballad-singers or 'chaunters', it would be a mistake to imagine that therefore they were not folk-songs but self-conscious, literary work. The chanters were poor, semi-literate men who shared fully the living conditions and attitudes of their customers.\footnote{Australian Legend, 24.}

Although the broadsides belonged firmly within the confines of popular culture, their audience must have been broader than just the poor and semi-literate. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century, Henry Mayhew indicates that ballad mongers felt it profitable to ply their wares very widely indeed: "Few of the residents in London — but chiefly those in the quieter streets — have not been aroused, and most frequently in the evening, by a hurly-burly on each side of the street".\footnote{Henry Mayhew, \textit{London Labour and the London Poor}, 4 vols. (1861-62; New York: Dover, 1968), 1: 221.} The broadsides could have an enormous circulation. Charles Hindley gives some sales figures for "Execution Ballads":

\begin{verbatim}
Of Rush's murder ....................2,500,000 copies.
Of the Mannings .....................2,500,000 
Of Courvoisier ......................1,666,000 
Of Greenacre .......................1,650,000 
Of Corder (Maria Marten) ..........1,166,000 
Of the Five Pirates (Flowery Land) ....290,000 
Of Müller ..........................280,000 
Of Constance Kent (trial only) ....150,000 
Of Jeffery (1866) .................60,000 
Of Forward (Ramsgate) ...........30,000 \footnote{Charles Hindley, \textit{Curiosities of Street Literature}, 2 vols. (1871; London: The Broadsheet King, 1966), 2: 159.}
\end{verbatim}

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the printing of broadsides was flourishing throughout England. In London there were at least seventy-five establishments printing broadsides and chapbooks. Hindley notes that "the printers and publishers of 'Gallows' Literature in general, and 'The Seven Dials Press' in particular, must have reaped a golden harvest for many a long day, even when sold to
the street-folks at the low rate of 3d. per long dozen. There was enough demand for broadsides to make at least some printers rich and to support the operations of a considerable number. Catnach and Pitts did very well out of the business and in the immediate vicinity of Seven Dials there were at least eight others of the same trade. The publishers' expenses were minimal and they could make enormous profits. Songwriters were paid little (usually a shilling a song, regardless of how many copies were printed) and the paper was cheap. Catnach apparently made over five hundred pounds by printing the "Full, True, and Particular Account of the Murder of Weare" and subsequent accounts of his murderer, Thurtell's trial and execution. Hindley estimates that at his retirement Catnach had managed to "rake and scrape together" some five or six thousand pounds, although his fortune was generally believed to be more in the order of ten thousand pounds. There is no question that the motivation for producing the broadsides was commercial and that the producers could reap large rewards, but the ballads, once in circulation, could perform social functions unrelated to the intentions of the owners of the presses.

19 Curiosities, 2: 159.


British Warning Ballads, Transportation, and Private Property

Richard White, basing his analysis on a broad range of popular material, has argued that descriptions of life in the penal colonies assisted the major purpose of transportation itself — the deterrence of crime:

an image of exaggerated horror was an essential element in the penal system of the day, which was based on the belief that the severity of punishment, rather than the likelihood of being caught, was the most effective deterrent to crime. Fear of the consequences was the basis of the whole system of morality, and Botany Bay became one of the most fearful consequences. Along with Hell and the gallows, Botany Bay was used to frighten children into being good and displaying the great virtues of the day, industry, temperance and humility.... Hell and Botany Bay were supposed to have the same effect on the working class, to keep them sober, industrious and humble.23

The most common type of transportation ballad to come off the broadside presses in Britain was a moral tale which urged its audience to listen and be warned. Ballads that either tell this tale, or focus on an aspect of it, make up about thirty of the forty or so British transportation ballads in the published collections. And, more significantly, this group contains the most frequently collected ballads, so that they make up something like ninety per cent of the British texts.24 The warning ballads contain varying numbers of the following elements:

Introductory "Come all ye ..."
Reference to good parents and up-bringing
Reason for crime
Unruly behaviour
Description of crime
Capture
Sentencing
Coach trip
Grief of parents or loved ones


24 Hanna is soon to publish a collection of broadsides which will probably increase the known corpus of transportation broadsides but is unlikely to radically alter the rough percentages given here.
Voyage
Physical hardships of convict life
Suffering of an exile
Alleviation
Explicit Warning
Return

The way that the transportation ballads operated can be illuminated more precisely by an examination of the role of transportation in English law, a role that was established during the eighteenth century. The preamble to the Transportation Act of 1718 shows the early relevance of transportation to the control of crimes against property. It states that the purpose of transportation was to deter crime and to provide labour for the colonies and it specifies that the transportees should be those convicted of "grand or petit larceny or any felonious stealing or taking of money or goods and chattels, either from the person, or the house of any other". ²⁵

Protection of property was extremely important in the changes to English law during the eighteenth century. In the introduction to Albion's Fatal Tree the contributors write:

From one aspect it appears as if 'crime' multiplied.... From another aspect it appears as if it is not just a matter of 'crime' enlarging but equally of a property-conscious oligarchy redefining, through its legislative power, activities, use-rights in common or woods, perquisites in industry, as thefts or offences. ²⁶

Douglas Hay suggests that the ruling class, which he identifies as an alliance between the monarchy, aristocracy, gentry and large merchants, organized its power in the state. Throughout the eighteenth century, parliament passed act after act to protect property from theft or malicious damage by threatening offenders against property with


a sentence of death. In 1688 there were about fifty capital statutes but by 1820 there were over two hundred.\textsuperscript{27} Although the death sentence was the centre-piece of the law's protection of property, transportation was essential for its operation. In fact transportation was interchangeable with capital punishment and the state used the death penalty sparingly.\textsuperscript{28} Hay points out that:

in spite of the growth in trade and population, the increasing number of convictions for theft, and the continual creation of new capital statutes throughout the eighteenth century, the number of executions for offences against property remained relatively stable, especially after 1750. The numbers of executions did not increase to match the number of convictions because of the increasing use of the royal pardon, by which transportation could be substituted for hanging, on the recommendation of the judges.\textsuperscript{29}

The number of executions remained sufficient to instil fear in the populace without causing massive outcry against the legal system's brutality.\textsuperscript{30} Transportation, then, was an important way of achieving what Hay argues was the radical redefinition of property that those who controlled the state were arranging in their own interests. The hangman's noose was used to make an example of a certain number of offenders against property, and transportation took up the slack. When the decision was made to send convicts to Australia, transportation was an important part of the state's apparatus for controlling crimes against property and it retained that function throughout its operation. According to Lloyd Robson's analysis of the convicts sent to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, offences against property were the primary reason for


\textsuperscript{28} Radzinowicz, A History of English Criminal Law, 4: 96.

\textsuperscript{29} "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law", 22.

\textsuperscript{30} Hay, "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law", 57.
transportation. Of his sample of male convicts, 81% were in this category, as were 82% of the women.\textsuperscript{31}

When the warning ballads refer to specific crimes these are almost always crimes against property: ten are concerned with thefts, two are about poaching, in two the crime is highway robbery, and one describes a case of forgery. All of these ballads operate to reinforce transportation's deterrence of crimes against property by transmitting a description of the possible consequences of crime to what could be an extremely wide audience. Three of them have specific warnings involving crimes against property. "... Transportation Explained" examines the fate of an urban thief, finishing with the lines:

May youth take warning e'er it be too late,  
Lest they should share my hard and unhappy fate.  
To see many dying with hunger, pain, and grief,  
And buried like dogs because they prov'd a thief.

May all young men with speed their lives amend  
And take my advice as one that is their friend,  
For tho' so slight of it you may make here  
Hard will be your lot if you are once sent there.\textsuperscript{32}

"Van Dieman's Land" warned against poaching which infringed against what the aristocracy and landed gentry had defined as their property rights. We will see later that poaching could be a form of social protest and that the ballads warning against poaching, as well as operating to assist in the control of crimes against property, had a corresponding implication for reinforcing a broader social order. The explicit admonition in "Van Dieman's Land" comes with its powerful last verses:


\textsuperscript{32} "... Transportation Explained", \textit{FOE}, 99-102.
For fourteen years is a long time — that is our fatal doom,
For nothing else but poaching — God knows thats all we have done
You would leave off dog, gun, snare, and poaching every man,
If you did but know the hardships upon Van Dieman's Land.

No if I had a thousand pounds laid down all in my hand,
I'd give it all for liberty, if that I could command:
Again to England I'd return, and be a happy man.
And bid adieu to poaching and to Van Dieman's Land.33

Hay notes the way the eighteenth-century legal system adapted to meet new threats to property:

Perhaps the most dramatic change in the organizational structure of British capital was the growth of promissory notes on banks as a medium of exchange, and the increase in negotiable paper of all kinds. This new creation was exposed to fraud in many ways never foreseen by the ancient criminal law. The result was a rash of capital statutes against forgeries and frauds of all kinds, laws which multiplied towards the end of the century.34

"Lament of Thomas Monk" addresses this new problem, telling the tale of a respectable citizen who was transported "for forging and uttering". It too warns that private property should be respected:

My dear friends and neighbours take warning in time,
And never be tempted by glittering coin,
Be content with your own and no other man's crave,
Or like me, you may fill a poor felons grave.35

Ward dismisses the social role of these and the other explicit warnings in the transportation ballads lightly, regarding the broadsides' admonitions about the consequences of crime as "conventional moralizing ... as little more than part of the rogues' professional stock-in-trade".36 White partly follows Ward but recognizes the social implications of the popular accounts of transportation:

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33 "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32.
34 "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law", 21.
35 "Lament of Thomas Monk", CM, 70.
36 Australian Legend, 28.
Such works were often clothed in conventional morality but, as with tabloid journalism today, the prime purpose was a commercial one. Their claims to moral respectability were often transparent. They purported to be dissuading the dissolute from their guilty practices, showing how easy it was to be led astray. They ended with penitent heroes hoping that their experiences would be a warning to others. The opportunity which this offered for titillating details of low life is apparent.... Yet they reinforced the moral and economic function of Botany Bay as a weapon in the control of working-class crime in Britain.37

Although the explicit warnings in these ballads did often use conventional expressions, this is no reason to discount their role as warnings against crime. The presence in their structure of a number of other elements whose implicit function was to reinforce transportation's deterrence of crime, along with the popularity of at least some of their number, suggests that their social role cannot be ignored. Indeed, the formulaic nature of their structure may suggest that the broadside producers had hit on a narrative which struck a chord in their audience, a narrative which it was profitable to reproduce time and time again with only minor variations. The transportation broadsides publicized the possible consequences of crime, highlighting the pain of leaving native land and loved ones, the danger and distance of the voyage to the penal colonies, and the physical and emotional hardships to be endured there.

37 Inventing Australia, 20.
Implicit Deterrence in the Warning Ballads

Many of the warning ballads directed their attention to the pain of parting from loved ones and doing so was one of the methods by which they offered an implicit warning against crime. "Botany Bay" which graphically depicts the parents' suffering is unusual in using the mother's words to underline the consequences of criminal activity:

To see my aged father dear,  
As he stood at the bar,  
Likewise my tender mother,  
Her old grey locks to tear,  
In tearing of her old grey locks,  
These words to me did say,  
O son, O son, what have you done,  
That you're going to Botany Bay.\(^{38}\)

The family is shown grieving when one of its members is transported for committing a crime in a number of other ballads. Sometimes these descriptions reach what modern audiences may regard as the heights of melodrama yet they underline what was an important part of the meaning of transportation. In "The Convict Maid" the transportee's mother and lover cry when the judge reads the sentence while in "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale" the transportee's parents farewell their son with tears running "down their cheeks ... like rain". "... Transportation Explained" shows the transportee's parents fainting on the shore and weeping as their son boards ship and in "The Bristol Prentice Boy" the transportee's father is "frantic wild" when farewelling his son. The "aged parents" in "The Transport's Farewell" cry bitterly: "O must we with bleeding hearts bid our boy good-bye" and when their son goes down on his knees to beg their blessing the mother faints while the father tears out "his

\(^{38}\) "Botany Bay", CM, 26.
ancient hair". Later we will see that the family is important at another point in the warning structure, operating as an extra-legal method to control behaviour when the ballads describe the transportee's return to Britain.

Perhaps the most graphic account of the hardships of separation appears in "The Convict's Child". This ballad contains few of the elements in a warning ballad listed above and may therefore not certainly belong to that group but it clearly operates to publicize this aspect of transportation, describing a parting between a convict and his wife and child where the man dies of grief:

They tore the infant from his arms,
Then dragged him from the shore,
He wildly gazed around the beach,
But saw his child no more.
The vessel sail'd — the convict fell —
In dying anguish wild,
'Tis done, the fatal struggle's o'er,
Alas, my only child.  

The woman remains sobbing on the shore with their child in her arms.

A few of the warning ballads refer to the coach trip from gaol to the convict ship. This element allows a description of the transportee's last look at his or her native town or friends or family. In "Female Transport" the speaker says:

It hurt my heart when on a coach my native town passed by.
To see so many I did know it made me heave a sigh.

The friends standing around the coach are able to give "no relief" in "James Raeburn". And the transportee in "Mother Don't You Cry for Me" addresses the ballad's


40 "The Convict's Child", CM, 57.

41 "Female Transport", CM, 20.
audience, explaining that he will never forget the sorrow of bidding adieu and seeing his mother burst into tears as the coach hurried away from the prison.42

Other warning ballads underline the transportee's own sorrow at leaving loved ones and native land. "Young Henry the Poacher" has its speaker often looking behind him during the voyage, bitterly regretting that he has been uprooted from the "cottage of contentment", his father "who tore his hoary hair", and his "tender mother". A verse in "Van Dieman's Land" shows the transportee in the penal colony, suffering the pangs of exile:

Oft times when I do slumber, I have a pleasant dream,
With my sweet girl sitting near me close by a purling stream
Thro' England I've been roaming, with her at my command,
And waken broken-hearted upon Van Dieman's Land.43

The voyage to the southern hemisphere was an important element in producing an implicit warning in a number of transportation ballads and different aspects of the journey could be brought into focus. "Female Transport" talks of the rough sea with waves as high as mountains; "The Affectionate Transports" describes the "heavy storms of wind and rain"; in "... Transportation Explained" ten of the convicts die on the voyage, and five die in "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel". "Young Henry the Poacher" has a verse which stresses the distance of the colonies from Britain:

The ship that bore us from the land the Speedwell was by name,
For full five months and upwards boys we ploughed the raging main;
Neither land nor harbour could we see believe it is no lie,
All around us one black water boys above us one blue sky.44

42 "James Raeburn", CM, 72; "Mother Don't You Cry for Me", CM, 56.

43 "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40; "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32.

Although not always full warnings, a group of ballads about convict vessels which become shipwrecked work to underline, in sensational fashion, the extreme dangers that the journey to and from the penal colonies could entail. "The Melancholy Loss of the Amphitrite" describes a "dreadful storm" and expresses sorrow at the wreck of a convict ship bound for Botany Bay in which one hundred and thirty-three of the hundred and thirty-six on board died. "Dreadful Shipwreck of the Flora Transport" tells of Jane Cardonnell whose lover was transported and pardoned only to be swept overboard during the return voyage. Jane becomes mad with grief and ends up confined to Bedlam.45

"Melancholy News of the Convict Ship George the Third" is more closely related to the warning ballads whose function it reinforces, and is worth examining in a little more detail. The opening third of this ballad uses motifs common in the warning group:

Farewell, dear friend and comrades all,
On England's fertile soil,
No more I'll view your cheering smiles,
In slavery's hardest toil.
Farewell, my mother, dearest friend,
For ever fare you well,
May you enjoy all happiness
While on earth you dwell.

If thy advice I had listen'd to,
I ne'er would have gone astray,
To work in chains in a foreign land,
'Neath the sun's burning rays.46

Having mentioned both the physical and emotional suffering of a convict it moves on to give details of the shipwreck near the mouth of the Derwent, describing the victims


46 "Melancholy News of the Convict Ship George the Third", POE, 155-56.
clinging to the wreck, the mothers embracing their children and sinking underneath the waves, and others crying for the forgiveness of their sins.

But the most significant elements in constructing an implicit warning against crime were those referring to life in the penal colonies. The hard labour which the convicts were forced to undertake was commonly described, with the speakers often likening their treatment to that of animals. "Van Dieman's Land" relates the way the convicts were received on their arrival in the colony:

The first day we landed upon the fatal shore,
The planters came around us — their [sic] might be 20 score,
They rank'd us up like horses and sold us out of hand,
They yok'd us in a plough, brave boys, to plough Van Dieman's Land.47

In a similar fashion "Young Henry the Poacher" refers to convicts "Some chain'd unto a harrow, and others to a plough". They are arranged "two and two like horses in a team, / Their driver he stood over them, with his Melackey cane". In "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel" the buyers examine the convicts "like horses" to see if they are sound. This motif is coupled with a description of the harsh Australian environment in "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale":

Like beasts of burden we did toil,
Beneath the burning sun,
And not one comfort in the world
When labour it was done.48

"... Transportation Explained" tells of the cruelty of the transportee's treatment without going into detail, but again likening it to the treatment of animals:

Most shocking hardships then I did endure,
No dog was ever curs'd so hard before,
More pity on a brute many has bestow'd,
Than our cruel driver to poer [sic] transports show'd.49

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47 "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32.
48 "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40; "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel", TL, 54; "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale", FOE, 96-98.
The long hours which the convicts worked are often mentioned. The speaker in "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale" complains that although the transportees work from dawn to night their labour is never completed, and in "Female Transport" the convicts "labour hard from mom till night until [their] bones do ache". The labour required of the convicts in "... Transportation Explained" is worth quoting in full:

Then with many sufferers I was forc'd to go,  
To work with an ax with a spade or hoe,  
At day break each morning the work begun,  
And lasted hard until the sitting [sic] sun.

Then alas, when our hard task was done,  
Away unto a mill each must be gone,  
Till twelve or one o'clock a grinding corn,  
And flog'd if not up at day next morn.50

Ballads sometimes referred to the convicts' inadequate food, clothing and shelter. "Van Dieman's Land" tells of cottages that were "built of clods and clay" and of the "rotten straw for bedding". In "Young Henry the Poacher" the convicts are described as having no covering for feet or head, with only "a leathern frock and linsey drawers". Their rough clothing is also described in "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel" and "... Transportation Explained". In "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale" the coarse, hard food is noted along with the bed of straw. And "... Transportation Explained" has its transportees starving but unable to complain:

Tho' hunger pierc'd us, if one word we'd say,  
Flog'd at a whipping [sic] post we was next day,  
And if a transport will steal while there,  
They are hang'd direct thro' their law severe.51

It continues to tell about the many who had dropped beside their spades, having starved to death "Thro' want and bruises while their wounds ... bled".


51 "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32; "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40; "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel", TL, 54; "... Transportation Explained", FOE, 99-102; "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale", FOE, 96-98; "... Transportation Explained", FOE, 99-102.
The harsh discipline used in the penal colonies is mentioned in surprisingly few ballads and we will see later that the absence of such descriptions may be related to one of the legitimations of the transportation system. "Female Transport" gives some specific detail:

They chain'd us up two by two and wipt [sic] and lash'd along.  
They cut off our provisions if we do the least thing wrong.  
They march us in the burning sun until our feet are sore,  
So hard's our lot now we are got upon Van Dieman's Shore.52

A little later the same ballad refers to the "savage governors upon Van Dieman's Shore". In "... Transportation Explained" the convicts "were flogg'd severe" if they murmured. And the speaker in "Mother Don't You Cry for Me" urges that others be told of the cruel governors.53

Some of the warning-structure ballads focused on the strange and dangerous environment in the penal colonies. "Van Dieman's Land" mentions the need to have a fire lit at night to drive off the wolves and tigers. Another version of the same ballad has the following even more surprising lines:

The place that we did land,  
It was on a foreign shore,  
The negroes gathered round us,  
About fifty thousand or more.54

And later in this text it is "the Turks and Tigers" which make sleeping difficult. Similarly "Female Transport" refers to the "dreadful beasts" which roar around the convicts' cots, while the wind whistles in the speaker's ears. In "The Affectionate Transports" the wolves and tigers at the Swan River kill the speaker's lover and "drag ... her lifeless to their den".55

52 "Female Transport", CM, 20.  
53 "... Transportation Explained", FOE, 99-102; "Mother Don't You Cry for Me", CM, 56.  
54 "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32; "Van Dieman's Land", TL, 28.  
But while elements such as the grief felt when transportees parted from loved ones, their sadness at leaving their native land, the distance and danger of the journey, the hard labour in the colonies, the inadequate food, clothing and shelter for the convicts, and the strange environment which they had to face all functioned implicitly to reinforce transportation's deterrence of crimes against property, the ballads about transportation had wider implications for the society that produced and consumed them.
Chapter 2

British Transportation Broadsides and Social Order

During the years 1788-1868, the period when convicts were transported to Australia, Britain experienced an extraordinary degree of social and political turmoil. It was a time of increasing crime, of growth in the successful prosecution of crime, and of increasing protest. Britain's transformation from a predominantly rural to a predominantly industrial society meant an increasingly polarized class-structure and it has been argued that most working people gradually came to feel an identity of interests against their rulers and employers.¹ The protests and protest movements during the period included Jacobinism; naval mutinies; Luddism; the Pentrich Rebellion; the radical rebellion of miners and weavers of Glasgow and Bonnymuir in 1820; the Cato Street Conspiracy; the "Captain Swing" riots with their rick-burning, wages rioting, and massive destruction of threshing machines; the Bristol Riots; Welsh industrial riots; Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union; the Battle of Bossenden Wood; the Welsh "Rebecca" riots; Chartist; and various types of marginal protest such as arson, poaching, destroying fences, and so on.²

These disturbances constitute what can be described as a series of "crises in authority". As we have seen, Gramsci suggests that a ruling group is dominant in two


ways — by coercion and hegemony, where the latter term involves a sort of "active consent" to the ruling group's dominance which is achieved when its power appears legitimate and natural. He also argues that in a period of crisis in authority, the ruling group must go beyond the passive control of hegemony and resort to coercive measures.³

In England during the period between 1788 and 1868 the state flexed its coercive muscles on many occasions. The army, the police, the legal system, the Poor Law, and the Riot Act were some of the measures used to control disorder.⁴ Transportation itself operated primarily to rid Britain and Ireland of habitual criminals, but it was also an important coercive apparatus. Convicts were drawn from all the protests and protest movements listed above, and Rudé calculates that the political and social protesters transported to Australia included 1,200 Britons (English, Scots and Welsh) and 2,250 Irish. One of the ways in which white Australia's convict origins have been distorted is by exaggerating the importance of political prisoners in the convict population and, so as not to do that here, it should be noted that social and political protesters made up only about one in forty-five of those transported to Australia, according to Rudé's figures.⁵ But while protesters may have been insignificant among transportees, transportation was significant among the methods used by the state to control disorder.


⁵ Protest and Punishment, 8-10.
John Stevenson notes that "In a period often characterised as peculiarly violent, one of the most significant lines of enquiry remains not why there were so many disturbances, but why there were fewer than might be expected". The transportation ballads may have been one of the many vehicles disseminating ideas that played a part in limiting disruption. Although they only specifically address protest crime on a few occasions, the ambit of their social function extends beyond habitual criminals to help reinforce more broadly a potentially shaky state power in a turbulent time. In Gramsci's terms, transportation itself is coercive while the ballads about transportation partly work to underline the power of this coercive apparatus and partly to promote a broader hegemony. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Patrick Colquhoun was aware of the possibility of transmitting hegemonic values in ballad form:

Even the common Ballad-singers in the streets might be rendered instruments useful under the control [sic] of a well-regulated Police, in giving a better turn to the minds of the lowest classes of the People. — They too must be amused, and why not, if they can be amused innocently? If through this medium they can be taught loyalty to the Sovereign, love to their Country, and obedience to the Laws, would it not be wise and politic to sanction it?

If in addition to this, moral lessons could occasionally be conveyed, shewing in language familiar to their habits, the advantages of Industry and Frugality — The pleasure of living independent of the Pawnbroker and the Publican — The disgrace and ruin attached to drunkenness and dishonesty, and the glory and happiness of a good Husband, a good Father, and an honest man, might it not reasonably be expected, that in a religious as well as a moral point of view, advantages would be gained, while the people were both instructed and amused?7

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7 Patrick Colquhoun, A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis (1795; London: Mawman et al., 1806), 348-49.
Although his suggestions involve a conscious, class-based effort to use the ballads as propaganda, an effort which never took place, the transportation ballads did transmit many of the values which concerned him.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{Origins of the Warning Ballads}

This hegemonic social role for the warning ballads was not a spontaneous phenomenon — its roots lie in a much earlier cultural form which played an important role in preserving state power. The immediate model for the transportation ballad with a warning structure was the "Sorrowful Lamentation" which purported to be the last words of a criminal condemned to be hanged. A good example of this enormously popular ballad narrative (although it was composed after many of the transportation broadsides) is "The Murder of Maria Marten" which Charles Hindley suggests sold 1,166,000 copies:

\begin{verbatim}
Come all you thoughtless young men, a warning take by me,
And think upon my unhappy fate to be hanged upon a tree;
My name is William Corder, to you I do declare,
I courted Maria Marten, most beautiful and fair.

I promised I would marry her upon a certain day,
Instead of that, I was resolved to take her life away.
I went into her father's house the 18th day of May,
Saying, my dear Maria, we will fix the wedding day.

If you will meet me at the Red-barn, as sure as I have life,
I will take you to Ipswich town, and there make you my wife;
I then went home and fetched my gun, my pickaxe and my spade,
I went into the Red-barn, and there I dug her grave.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{8} There were some deliberate efforts to influence working-class behaviour through popular media, notably Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tracts, Thompson, \textit{The Making of the English Working Class}, 60.
With heart so light, she thought no harm, to meet him she did go
He murdered her all in the barn, and laid her body low:
After the horrible deed was done, she lay weltering in her gore,
Her bleeding mangled body he buried beneath the Red-barn floor.

Now all things being silent, her spirit could not rest,
She appeared unto her mother, who suckled her at her breast;
For many a long month or more, her mind being sore oppress'd,
Neither night or day she could not take any rest.

Her mother's mind being so disturbed, she dreamt three nights o'er,
Her daughter she lay murdered beneath the Red-barn floor;
She sent the father to the barn, when he the ground did thrust,
And there he found his daughter mingling with the dust.

My trial is hard, I could not stand, most woeful was the sight,
When her jaw-bone was brought to prove, which pierced my heart quite;
Her aged father standing by, likewise his loving wife,
And in her grief her hair she tore, she scarcely could keep life.

Adieu, adieu, my loving friends, my glass is almost run,
On Monday next will be my last, when I am to be hang'd;
So you, young men, who do pass by, with pity look on me,
For murdering Maria Marten, I was hang'd upon the tree.9

Lloyd argues that "Sorrowful Lamentations" such as this were first composed in
1820 when a law was passed which stated that there should be a "reasonable time"
between trial and execution. He quotes a London chaunter who told Henry Mayhew
that before then "there wasn't no time for a Lamentation; sentence o' Friday and
scraggin' o' Monday. So we only had the Life, Trial and Execution". These were
more usually prose accounts, suggests Lloyd.10 However, there were first-person
lamentations in verse dating from much earlier than this. For example, Hindley
reprints a ballad titled "Luke Hutton's Lamentation", attributed to Hutton himself
and dated 1598. Its first verse is:


I am a poore prisoner condemned to dye,
Ah woe is me, woe is me, for my great folly!
Fast fettred in yrons in place where I lie.
Be warned yong wantons, hemp passeth green holly.
My parents were of good degree,
By whom I would not counselled be.
Lord Jesu forgive me, with mercy releeve me,
Receive, O sweet Saviour, my spirit unto thee.

And it concludes with a stern admonition:

Adue my loving friends, each one:
Ah woe is me, woe is me, for my great folly!
Thinke on my words when I am gone.
Be warned yong wantons, &c.
When on the ladder you shall me view,
Thinke I am neerer heaven then [sic] you.
Lord &c. 11

Alan Bold argues that the "Sorrowful Lamentations" were a corruption of "Last Goodnights", the defiant final words of a hero in the Scottish border ballads of the Child collection. He quotes a stanza from "Johnie Armstrong" as an example of this motif:

And God be withee, Kirsty, my son,
Whair thou sits on thy nurses knee!
But and thou live this hundred yeir,
Thy fathers better thoult never be. 12

Bold's argument is a good example of the sort of mistake which is made when literary form is examined to the exclusion of historical context. In fact the ultimate origin of ballads which purported to be the sorrowful words of a transported felon was in the public hangings several centuries earlier. J.A. Sharpe has studied seventeenth-century execution speeches as recorded in contemporary chapbooks and pamphlets. He argues that the executions were thoroughly ideological events, that the aspect considered most important was the speech delivered at the gallows by the condemned,

11 Curiosities, 2: 165.

and that the popular accounts of these speeches transmitted views about order that were favourable to the state:

The gallows literature illustrates the way in which the civil and religious authorities designed the execution spectacle to articulate a particular set of values, inculcate a certain behavioural model and bolster a social order perceived as threatened. Only a small number of people might witness an execution, but the pamphlet account was designed to reach a wider audience.\textsuperscript{13}

Sharpe locates the origin of the speech from the gallows in Tudor times, suggesting that it was probably condemned traitors who first made such speeches:

Condemned Tudor traitors normally delivered a set-piece speech at their execution, most of the themes of which corresponded with those expressed in the gallows speeches made by felons in the seventeenth century....

Obviously all regimes are concerned with the need to preserve order, but official statements on the subject were unusually strident and numerous in the century and a half which followed the Reformation. Given this, it is probably no coincidence that the "last dying speech" seems to have been a Tudor innovation. Confessions of guilt and expressions of repentance by condemned traitors probably first occurred on a regular basis in the early years of Henry VII and were apparently little known before then.\textsuperscript{14}

The accounts that Sharpe is writing about are prose reportings of execution speeches. Hindley reprints an example from the reign of Elizabeth I, about a century after Henry, titled "The DYING SPEECHES and EXECUTION of Thomas Salisbury, ... for High Treason, the 21st of September, 1586. Being drawn to the place of Execution". It begins:

Thomas Salisbury, Esq., since it hath pleased God to appoint this place for my end, I thank his infinite goodness for the same; I confess that I have deserved death, and that I have offended her Majesty, whom to forgive me I heartily beseech, with all others whom I have any way offended; I desire all true Catholicks [sic] to pray for me, and I desire them, as I beseech God they may, to endure with patience whatsoever shall be laid upon them, and


\textsuperscript{14} "Last Dying Speeches", 158, 164-65.
never to enter into any action of violence for remedy. Thus done, he cried in English and Latin, Father, forgive me.\textsuperscript{15}

The broadside proceeds to describe the execution, explaining that "The Queen being informed of the severity used in the executions the day before, and detesting such cruelty, gave express orders that these should be used more favourably; and accordingly they were permitted to hang till they were quite dead before they were cut down and bowell'd".\textsuperscript{16} Dying speeches such as this one were the origin of the ballads supposedly recording the last words of condemned criminals, which Catnach and the other nineteenth-century printers were to find so profitable. By then they were clearly not attempts to report. Albert Friedman points out that, although they were presented as first person accounts, the disguise was probably "more a convention than a deception".\textsuperscript{17} This "gallows literature" in turn was the direct model for transportation ballads which warned against crime.

Michel Foucault has discussed the social function of the "gallows speeches" and of the ballads which purported to be a criminal's last words, arguing that such street literature was "a double-sided discourse", part of which justified the system of "justice" but part of which also glorified the criminal:

The condemned man found himself transformed into a hero by the sheer extent of his widely advertised crimes, and sometimes the affirmation of his belated repentance. Against the law, against the rich, the powerful, the magistrates, the constabulary or the watch, against taxes and their collectors, he appeared to have waged a struggle with which one all too easily identified. The proclamation of these crimes blew up to epic proportions the tiny struggle that passed unperceived in every day life. If the condemned man was shown to be repentant, accepting the verdict, asking both God and man for forgiveness for his crimes, it was as if he

\textsuperscript{15} Curiosities, 2: 163.

\textsuperscript{16} Curiosities, 2: 163.

\textsuperscript{17} Albert B. Friedman, ed., The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World (1956; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 218.
had come through some process of purification: he died, in his own way, like a saint.¹⁸

Foucault's argument has only limited application to the British transportation broadsides. A few ballads are, to some extent "double-sided", and this is discussed in chapter 3, but most do not operate to valorize the criminal or the crime. Foucault is referring to ballads about particular well-known individuals but very few of the transportation broadsides fall into this category. More importantly, it is clear that a major part of the audience's interest in the broadsides is the lurid details which they contain. In the case of "gallows speeches" such as "Maria Marten", this interest is in the gory description of the crime and conceivably, in line with Foucault's argument, makes the criminal into some sort of "black hero". In the transportation broadsides, however, the crimes are dealt with quickly, and the ballads' lurid aspect lies in their description of the hardships suffered in the penal colonies. As has been suggested above, such accounts reinforce the warning against crime, rather than deterring from it or even directly opposing it, as they might in the "gallows speeches". The resulting discourse is much less "double-sided".

The British Warning Ballads and Transportation as Coercion

We have seen that transportation was an important apparatus in the state's attempts to control disorder. By continually publicizing the consequences of crime in the ways detailed in chapter 1, the ballads do more than explicitly and implicitly warn against non-protest crime. The descriptions of the various hardships of transportation work to underline the power of the transportation system as a method of coercion available for use in times of crisis. There are a number of other more specific ways that the ballads publicize the state's ability to deal with those who challenge its authority.

The warning ballads demonstrate the futility of any disobedience in their descriptions of the capture of the criminals. In fact the system of criminal law relied on terror rather than the likelihood of detection, but in the transportation ballads, capture and subsequent conviction are presented as inevitable, as an automatic result of committing crime. In "Van Dieman's Land" the sequence: crime, capture, transportation takes three lines to relate:

... three determin'd poachers, as the country well doth know
At night they were trepann'd by the keepers hid in sand,
And fourteen years transported were upon Van Dieman's Land.¹⁹

Several other ballads describe the rapidity with which capture follows crime. The speaker in "The Unhappy Transport" had a "very short" career as a criminal and the offenders in "Young Henry the Poacher" were "trepanned ... with speed". The law again acts very quickly in "Transported to Botany Bay ... Dreadful Hardships":

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Till I upon a fatal day,
Was drove to felony.
Straight unto Newgate was I sent,
My sentence to await.20

In "The Convict Maid" attempted crime is presented as having an inevitable and logical relationship with transportation:

To wed my lover, I did try
To take my master's property!
So, all my guilt was soon display'd,
And I became a convict maid.21

The description of the offenders' detention, and of the ritual surrounding trial and sentencing also underlines the power of the legal apparatus. "The Convict Maid" devotes two verses to the prison and courtroom:

Then I was soon to prison sent,
To wait, in fear, my punishment;
When at the bar I stood dismay'd —
Since doom'd to be a convict maid

At length the judge did me address.
Which filled with pain my aching breast,
To Botany Bay you will be convey'd,
For seven years a convict maid.

In "London 'Prentice Boy" the speaker is "barr'd in a lonesome cell". The speaker in "The Transport's Farewell" moves briefly to the historical present to describe the courtroom scene more dramatically: "The assizes then drew near, before the judge I stand"; and the offenders in "Young Henry the Poacher" are shown waiting "Like Job ... with patience" for the sentencing. "The Female Transport" describes the terror of hearing the sentence which is apparently shouted for effect:


My trial it approached fast, before the Judge I stood
And when the Judge sentence pass'd, it fairly chil'd [sic] my blood.
Crying you must be transported for 14 years or more
And go from hence across the seas, unto Van Dieman's shore.22

"Botany Bay" asserts the impossibility of a criminal undeservedly escaping the clutches of the law:

My character soon taken was,
And I was sent to jail,
My friends they tried to clear me,
But nothing could prevail,
At the Old Bailey Sessions,
The judge to me did say,
The jury has found you guilty,
You must go to Botany Bay.23

The power of the system is also underlined when the ballads detail the measures taken to prevent escape both during the journey and in the penal colonies. "James Raeburn" tells of the precautions taken on the trip from the prison to the ship:

'Tis quickly then we arose,
Put on our clothes of wae;
With heavy irons they bound us,
Least [sic] we should run away.

In "... Transportation Explained" the transportee explains that during the voyage to the penal colonies he and his fellow convicts were "chain'd in irons lest [they] should rebel" and the same precaution is taken for a later boat trip to his new master's house.

In the related ballad "The Unhappy Transport ... James Revel" the convicts are kept below deck on the voyage to the colonies, again to prevent rebellion, and the speaker must wear chains on the journey to his master's house to prevent him escaping.24

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23 "Botany Bay", CM, 26.

Two ballads about shipwrecks refer to repression on the way to the penal colonies. The "Melancholy News of the Convict Ship George the Third" tells of the guard at the hatchway to prevent convicts escaping from the hold while water poured into their quarters. "The Loss of the Convict Ship" has the crew launching their longboats to save themselves while the convicts are "bolted" below, and the captain threatens to "shoot the very first man / that attempts to gain his liberty".\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{The British Warning Ballads and Hegemony}

As well as publicizing the power of an important component in the state's efforts to control political unrest, the British transportation broadsides operated to promote social order by transmitting hegemonic values of obedience and conformity. This can be seen first in the way their warnings are broadened — these tend to be a general warning against what is seen as anti-social, disorderly behaviour rather than a specific warning against particular crimes. The wider targets of most of the warning ballads can be referred to at three points in the structure — the introduction, the description of the transportees' activities prior to the crime, and the explicit warning.\textsuperscript{26}

In the introductions the reference of the warning ballads is broadened to, for example, "all you wild and wicked youths, wherever you may be" in "Young Henry the Poacher"; "You London maids" in "The Convict Maid"; "each wild and rakish blade" in "The Bristol Prentice Boy"; "all you wild young fellows wherever you may be" in "The Transport's Farewell"; "all you wild young chaps who live both far and

\textsuperscript{25} The "Melancholy News of the Convict Ship George the Third", \textit{FOE}, 155-56; "The Loss of the Convict Ship", \textit{FOE}, 159-60.

\textsuperscript{26} Sometimes the explicit warning occurs in the introduction.
near" in "London 'Prentice Boy" and, interestingly, "Ye true sons of freedom" in "The Transport's Return".27

In those ballads where a specific crime is mentioned, the speaker often makes a broader confession of unruliness, usually immediately prior to describing the crime. Often the ballads propose a direct relationship between the speaker's associates and his or her capture and transportation. In "Young Henry the Poacher" the speaker is led astray by "bad company" which "prov'd [his] destiny", and one of the versions of "The Female Transport" has the lines:

'Till enticed by bad company along with many more
It led to my discovery upon my native shore.28

Other ballads depict a life of general dissipation. "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale" tells how "base companions" destroyed the "Bright prospects" of its speaker and proceeds to describe his drunkenness at night, his idleness during the day, and the fact that he stayed away from home for whole months at a time. He didn't listen to his parents "tears nor sighs" because "vice had steel'd" his heart. "... Transportation Explained" has its speaker dwelling with "wicked company", rambling widely, and following courses "most wild", with strong liquor preventing any thought of fear. The "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel" gives a very similar account. In "The Bristol Prentice Boy" part of the prelude to crime and transportation was roving to playhouses every night, while the speaker in "The Black Velvet Band" is deceived by a woman who proposes that he become a "flash boy", drinking, gaming and plundering.29


28 "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40; "The Female Transport", TL, 10.

A few of the ballads which fit into the warning group mention no specific crime and so are immediately broader in reference. As we have seen, one version of "Female Transport" simply has its speaker captured and transported because she was "enticed by bad company". The transportee in "Mother Don't You Cry for Me" merely "broke the laws" and "James Raeburn" also mentions no particular crime. The text of "Botany Bay" gives a brief life-story of the speaker but at the point where the crime must have taken place there are only the lines:

Till I became a roving blade
Which proved my destiny.

My character soon taken was,
And I was sent to jail.30

It has an explicit warning which is similarly general:

Come all you young men of learning,
And a warning take by me,
I'd have you quit night walking,
And shun bad company,
I'd have you quit night walking,
Or else you'll rue the day,
When you are transported,
And going to Botany Bay.

Although nearly two thirds of the ballads which do refer to a specific crime have an explicit warning, we have already seen that only three of those warnings were against specific crimes. In other texts such as "Botany Bay" the warning is broader in reference than the crime described in the body of the ballad. "Female Transport" warns:

Come all you young men and maidens do bad company foresake [sic].
If tongue could tell our overthrow it would make your hearts to ache.
You girls I pray be ruled by me you[r] wicked ways give o'er
For fear like us you spend your days upon Van Dieman's shore.

30 "Female Transport", TL, 10; "Mother Don't You Cry for Me", CM, 56; "James Raeburn", CM, 72; "Botany Bay", CM, 26.
"London 'Prentice Boy" advises "all you wild young people" to "shun bad company".
"Young Henry the Poacher" has the chorus: "Young men, all now beware, / Lest you are drawn into a snare", and other versions have variations on this. The "snare" is evidently the "bad company" which "beguil'd" the speaker and "prov'd [his] destiny".
"... Transportation Explained" urges "all young men" to "with speed their lives amend" and "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel" urges "Young men, take pains your lives all to amend". Even in "The Black Velvet Band" the warning recommends conformity of a sort:

Young men, by my fate take a warning, from all those gay ladie[s] refrain,
And seek for a neat little woman that wears her hair parted quite plain.31

It is clear, then, that the warning-structure ballads are not just addressing specific crimes against property and helping to deter their audience from committing those particular crimes — the audience they ostensibly warn, the behaviour they warn against, and the explicit warnings they give, combine to broaden their ambit to all disorderly behaviour. And they operate to encourage obedience and conformity in other ways as well.

The warning ballads often propose behaviour patterns alternative to those of the transportee. They can mention the persona's honest parents and upbringing, and then demonstrate that to move outside this code has automatic and severe consequences.

"The Transport's Farewell" has the parents warning their son against bad influences:

I was brought up in tenderness, my parents fond delight,
They never could be happy but when I was in their sight;
They nourished my tender years and oft to me would say,
Avoid all evil company, least [sic] they lead you astray.

"Young Henry the Poacher" refers to the speaker's parents rearing him "tenderly" and giving him "good learning", and in "Botany Bay" there is the same reference to

"honest parents" rearing the future transportee "tenderly". In "Mother Don't You Cry for Me" the speaker remembers the "fond caresses" he received when he was his "mother's joy", before he "broke the laws". "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale" has its speaker described as "An honest farmer's son". Again the generalizing tendency can be seen in the way his parents taught him "All wicked ways to shun". The parents are also important in presenting his obedient and conformist role in the work-force as desirable — he tells how his "sole delight" was to excel at his trade and to serve his master "day and night":

This comforted my parents dear,
And gladden'd hearts had they,
For till I reach'd my eighteenth year
I never went astray.

In "... Transportation Explained" the speaker's "honest parents" sent him to "the best of schools" and implored him not to be involved with "wicked company". The parents in "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel" "took great delight" in their son, educating him well, and finding "comfort" from him when he was happily bound as an apprentice. In "Female Transport" the lack of a strong home life is given as the reason the speaker became a criminal — her mother died when she was young and so she got her "reins too soon". No blame is attached to her father because we are told that he reared her "tenderly".32

Unlike the execution ballads which were their immediate predecessor, the transportation ballads were structurally suited to the criminal's reformation, but in practice this possibility is rarely realized. The transportee is occasionally allowed to return but only in very limited circumstances. This structural component enables the presentation of a pattern of behaviour which is much more than just non-criminal. In all but one of the instances where a convict returns, the persona voluntarily puts

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32 "The Transport's Farewell", TL, 42; "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40; "Botany Bay", CM, 26; "Mother Don't You Cry for Me", CM, 56; "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale", FOE, 96-98; "... Transportation Explained", FOE, 99-102; "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel", TL, 54; "Female Transport", CM, 20.
him/herself within structures which control anti-social behaviour — religion and the family. In "The Unhappy Transport ... James Revel" the transportee has agreed that his transportation was just; he has suffered deeply; and he has prayed that he might see his "native land once more", and that through the Lord's "gracious mercy" he might amend his life and "be a comfort" to his friends. After serving his full sentence he returns, not to a life of crime but to his family. In "Transportation Explained" the transportee also suffers severe consequences for his crimes and asks for help from God:

Helpless and sick there I was left alone,  
Then to the Lord I have made my moan,  
Repenting for my past wicked race,  
Which brought me to suffer in that barb'rous place.

It pleas'd the Lord who saw my grief and woe,  
To restore my health and did compassion shew,  
For his gracious mercy was my daily prayer,  
To save my life while I transported were.

In this ballad the return to England becomes a continuation of the suffering process because his "wicked life" has broken the hearts of his "tender mother and father" and he himself is "disabl'd unfit to work for bread". But he remains devout:

Yet I hope the Lord will direct my mind,  
To love and praise him to be inclin'd,  
For all the dangers he has brought me through,  
When I was in sickness and in hardships too.33

In "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale" the speaker regards his sentence to transportation as merciful because he had first been sentenced to death. Like the two ballads above he serves his full fourteen years "In toil and misery", and again the power of God is affirmed when it is "Heaven" which spares his life and lets him see his home once more. The transportee is allowed to return but only to filial duties:

Found my aged mother dear
Alive, — and it shall be
My chief delight, my constant
Her comfort for to be.

"Transported to Botany Bay ... Dreadful Hardships" shows heaven sparing the persona in a wreck on the way back to England. The ballad has made much of her estrangement from her family and she too now returns to them. She fears that she will be disowned but her father "took the weary wanderer home, / Who long had gone astray". In "Mother Don't You Cry for Me" the convict returns to embrace his mother, saying: "O, my mother cheer up and don't cry, / Your child though once undutiful may bless you e're [sic] you die". In "Botany Bay" the return is only a hope or wish, but it serves a similar function. The ballad's last verse tells of the speaker's desire for a life of conformity:

There is a girl in Manchester.
A girl I know full well,
And if ever I get my liberty,
Along with her I'll dwell,
O then I mean to marry her,
And no more to go astray,
I'll shun all evil company,
And bid adieu to Botany Bay.34

"The Affectionate Transports" is the only ballad where a convict escapes but he does so in similar terms to the ballads which depict their subject's return to Britain. (We will see below that he had been forced into crime in the first place and that the woman who was responsible had been killed.) The transportee recognizes the legal system's authority and is grateful for the "great mercy" that the judge showed him. He has recognized the existence of providence by admitting that his fate "was ordained so to be". And when later he finds himself drifting he prays:

34 "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale", EOE, 96-98; "Transported to Botany Bay ... Dreadful Hardships", Collison, The Story of Street Literature, 73-75; "Mother Don't You Cry for Me", CM, 56; "Botany Bay", CM, 26.
I was six days as you shall know,
Toss'd by the billows too [sic] and fro,
No land nor light then could I see,
So I pray'd to God to think on me.\textsuperscript{35}

The next day a ship rescues him and takes him to America.

\textbf{Crimes Against Employers in the British Warning Ballads}

The British transportation ballads are very clearly working to promote a broader social order when they warn against crimes which may be directed at a distorted version of the rising bourgeoisie. Almost half of the warning ballads deal in some way with the transportee's relationship with his or her employer. Three ballads are about apprentices who steal from their masters — "London Prentice Boy", "The Bristol Prentice Boy" and "The Transport's Farewell". Three further ballads, "The Black Velvet Band", "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale", and "The Unhappy Transport ... James Revel" concern transported apprentices. "The Convict Maid" tells of an attempted crime against an employer. And "The Affectionate Transports" has this structure embedded within it.\textsuperscript{36}

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that apprenticeship could be industrial capitalism's most inhuman face. Apprentices were important in the early stages of the industrial revolution when owners of rural cotton mills used large numbers of child paupers obtained from the Poor Law authorities. These children were bound as apprentices from the ages of seven to twenty-one, frequently working shifts of twelve, fifteen or more hours, and conditions in the factories and the housing provided were

\textsuperscript{35} "The Affectionate Transports", \textit{CM}, 50.

often terrible. Punishments were harsh and many of the apprentices died of fever and ill-treatment. Even the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act introduced by Sir Robert Peel the elder in 1902, which provided for education of apprentices and much-improved working and living conditions, was not successful in bettering their lot because the inspectors were not strict enough. Pauline Gregg writes:

The initial impact of the Industrial Revolution was upon three groups of people — the handicraftsmen, flung high and dry between the tides of the old and the new industry; the manufacturers who rose to wealth, and whose sons would ride to power, on the back of the Industrial Revolution; and the little pauper apprentices, whose labour guided the machinery of the early stages of industrialism.  

The Reports of the Children's Employment Commission in 1843 showed how conditions for apprentices, especially orphans or the children of the very poor, were still, in many trades, often extremely harsh. Apprenticeship could mean being bound from seven years old to twenty-one, working in a factory but learning no skill, making one part of an article over and over for long hours in appallingly cramped and unhealthy conditions, and all this for no wages. Yet, as apprentices were regarded as legally indentured, the penalty for leaving this employment was gaol.

The apprentice ballads present an ideal version of apprenticeship, often no longer accurate for the society which they depict. Although these and other related broadsides deal with the relationship between employer and employee in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, they are very careful to hide the possibility of a conflict of interests between the two groups. They do this in two ways. The first is that although the crime is committed by an employee its cause is displaced onto his or her lover; it never springs from low or non-existent wages or from poverty or from resentment about working conditions. In "The Convict Maid" the woman steals from her master so that


she can wed her lover. The apprentice ballads portray a temptress figure with expensive tastes urging the employee to commit the crime. "The Transport's Farewell" has its speaker describe his fall in detail:

My parents bound me 'prentice, all in fair Devonshire,  
To a linendraper, the truth you soon shall hear;  
I bore an excellent character, my master loved me well,  
Till in a harlot's company unfortunately I fell.

In the gayest of splendour I maintained this lofty dame,  
But when my money was spent she treated me with disdain;  
She said, go rob your master, he has it in great store,  
If some money you don't get, pray see my face no more.

The woman in "London 'Prentice Boy" is a force even more destructive of the good relationship between employee and employer, giving the apprentice a knife and urging him to kill his master. When he refuses she goads him:

She scorned and said, begone from me — you know what you have done,  
If gold you do not bring to me your race will soon be run;  
On boldly go, I'll shelter thee, if him you will destroy,  
So take this knife and end his life, you London apprentice boy.

The woman's role as deceiver continues during the trial where "drest in silks and satins ... She tried to swear away the life of the London apprentice boy". The temptress figure in "The Bristol Prentice Boy" "did basely decoy" the transportee. In this ballad the legal system recognizes the woman's role, with the jury urging mercy because "The prentice boy has been betray'd", and the judge sentencing her to accompany the youth whom she had led astray to Van Diemen's Land. In "The Affectionate Transports" a woman robs her employer hoping to be able to free her lover who has been sentenced to transportation. He had been forced into highway robbery "to maintain her fine and gay".39

The second way that the possibility of conflict is obscured is by presenting the relationship between employer and employee very favourably, giving a version of

apprenticeship more widely appropriate before industrialization. The strong relationship between master and apprentice is being asserted in spite of the way that apprentices were treated as employees, in the face of the emerging working-class solidarity against those with power, and in the face of the growing trade union movement. Shaw points out that "Prosecution was normally left to the individual who had suffered loss; but he had to collect his own witnesses, and could not recover his costs until 1818, and then only in cases of felony", but the ballads present a very different story. In "The Transport's Farewell" the master loved his apprentice well, the apprentice regards him as "the best of masters", and the employer is actually shown appearing in court while shedding "floods of tears" and calling for mercy. In "London Prentice Boy" the master was "good and kind, to the London apprentice boy", who resists the woman's suggestions, stating that to be a London apprentice is to behave properly:

It was on the 14th of July a girl to me did say,
Keep up your heart — from me depart, your master for to slay;
A knife she gave me in my hand my master to destroy,
But I said, no! that I will not do, I'm a London apprentice boy.

This group of ballads sets the carefree life of an apprentice against wicked ways in Britain and the hardships of convict life in the colonies. "The Convict Maid" does not go as far as the apprentice ballads but it still mentions the "innocence" and "joy" which the speaker felt before committing her crime. "The Bristol Prentice Boy" ostensibly reminds those indulging in the unruliness which is shown to result in transportation that the life of an apprentice is a happy one:

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41 "The Transport's Farewell", TL, 42; "London Prentice Boy", CM, 60.
Attend each wild and rakish blade,
When I was fourteen years of age,
My mind then ran on scenes of joy,
When bound a Bristol Prentice boy.

After he has been transported, the speaker in "London Prentice Boy" is treated better than many convicts, but even this can operate to underline how good life had been as an apprentice:

Our governor he noticed me and gave me slight employ,
But still I think on happy days, when a London apprentice boy....

I have a situation which few that's here enjoy,
But ne'er again can free remain, like a London apprentice boy.42

The two ballads in this group which do not stress the unified interests of employer and employee have, as if to compensate, particularly strong warnings. Again in both of these the crime is displaced — the criminal is a woman who commits the crime to assist a lover. However, the theft is not committed under pressure from the lover and so the criminal is more at fault, and must apparently suffer more. In "The Convict Maid", although the transported is not successful in trying to take her "master's property", there is no softening of the torments of transportation. The sufferings include both physical hardships and grief at exile from friends and home, and the speaker thinks that she "will die a convict maid". The woman in "The Affectionate Transports" receives a brutal retribution for her crime — the most brutal event in all the transportation ballads. Like "Van Dieman's Land" this ballad has wild animals but they do not just stop convicts from sleeping at night, they kill her and drag her "lifeless to their den".43

Three related ballads stress the happy relationship between master and apprentice even though the crime which they deal with is not directed against the employer. The


speaker in "The Unhappy Transport ... James Revel" describes the harmony of conformity:

Unto a tin-man I was a prentice bound,
My master and my mistress's [sic] good I found,
Who lik'd me well, my business I did mind,
From me my parents comfort then did find.

"The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale" describes the perfect employee, immediately prior to his being led astray by bad companions who destroy his "Bright prospects":

My master he did like me well,
For 'twas my sole delight,
That in my trade I should excell,
And serve him day and night.44

"The Black Velvet Band" is related to the apprentice ballads in several ways. It tells, essentially, the story of an apprentice betrayed by a woman. Again the apprentice portrays his life as happy and promising — "I spent many hours in comfort and pleasure in that little town: / At length future prospects were blighted". Again a sexually attractive woman lures the apprentice away from conformity to a "flash" life of "drinking and gaming". This ballad seems to be essentially a variant of the apprentice structure where the threatening possibility of an apprentice robbing his master, above blamed onto a woman, is further euphemized into the woman robbing a "gentleman". The good but deceived apprentice is transported, this time for a crime he did not commit.45

The success of the ideological onslaught accompanying the rise of industrial capitalism, of which these ballads are a small example, can be seen in the fact that by the 1830s and 1840s contemporary observers commonly noted the way in which English industrial workers differed from Irish co-workers in their regularity, their

44 "The Unhappy Transport ... James Revel", TL, 54; "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale", FOE, 96-98.

45 "The Black Velvet Band", CM, 22.
methodical approach to labour, and perhaps by "the repression ... of the capacity to relax in the old, uninhibited ways".\textsuperscript{46}

**British Political Protesters**

Two British ballads deal directly with the state's use of transportation to control disorder, both providing an ultimately hegemonic version of radical political action. "The Transport's Return" tells the story of a man transported for his part in the rebellion of miners and weavers at Bonnymuir, near Glasgow and "The Last Farewell to England of Frost, Williams and Jones" tells of three Chartists, transported for their part in the Newport insurrection.\textsuperscript{47} Both have elements of sympathy for the convicts and for their causes but both finally veer away from political activity.

"The Transport's Return" divides into two sections. The first describes a meeting where the transportee and his fellow activists tell their grievances, and it relates the gathering's subsequent disruption by the armed forces. Sympathy clearly lies with those attending the meeting who are presented as merely responding to the fact that the country was "in a sad state at the time", while the soldiers who disrupt the meeting are described as "bloodthirsty". However, in other ways this version of events is hegemonic in that it both plays down the significance of the rebellion at Bonnymuir and implies that the country is no longer "in a sad state".

The second section of the ballad then begins implicitly justifying the state's actions by presenting transportation as a positive experience, the speaker working as a servant to an English gentleman and finally returning home with "plenty of silver and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism", *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 91.
\item \textsuperscript{47} "The Transport's Return", *CM*, 54; "The Last Farewell to England of Frost, Williams and Jones", *CM*, 73. For a discussion of the Chartist insurrection see Jones, *The Last Rising*.
\end{itemize}
gold". It ends with a significant shift away from the early sections where political activity was treated as normal acceptable behaviour. Any possible future subversion is dissolved into filial piety. Two verses focusing on the transportee's desire to return to his native land are followed by five which detail his reunion with his mother. He tells her that he will cherish her in her old age and that all her sorrows are now over — he has returned to be a dutiful son.

It is hard to explain fully the speaker's shift from political action to filial duty and the attempt reveals what might be termed a fissure in the text. Even the logistics of getting someone who had been transported for sedition back to Britain are not without apparent contradictions. The speaker has said that he was one of forty-five who were "banished away, / As exiles for life and to Botany Bay" and yet he has been away from Glasgow only "these twelve years and more". He is shown working as a servant to an English gentleman for nine years. When this master dies the convict's status becomes doubtful. He is shown "engaged for three years to serve" a sea captain but there is no mention of pardon or remission and he later returns home merely when the idea "enter[s his] brain". A ballad whose starting point is rebellion has difficulty rationalizing a transition to obedience and conformity.

"The Last Farewell to England of Frost, Williams and Jones" details the support for the three activists. It tells that when they were tried for treason and condemned to die there was great outcry culminating in the commuting of the sentence to transportation, and it also describes the massive support when tens of thousands of "Every rank in all conditions" petitioned for a free pardon. But it is ultimately a warning against political activity. It begins with the transportees lamenting that they are to leave their wives, children, friends, and native land for ever. They are shown regretting the Newport uprising for which they were convicted:
Sad was the day we drew together,
Thousands of men from far and near,
Which caused grief and consternation,
In every part of Monmouthshire.
The fatal day we'll long remember,
Which caused distress on every mind.

They say that they will often think of Monmouthshire "While in slavery ... pining".
And the ballad comes close to an explicit warning with the activists wishing that they
had realized what hardships their actions would lead to:

Happy with our wives and children,
We on our native land might be.
If the length of our misfortunes,
We could only once foresee.

It continues with a description of the lamentations of "Many an orphan and its mother"
but significantly they are not lamenting the fact that Frost, Williams and Jones have
been transported but the action for which they were transported:

For the third of last November
When their fathers went astray,
Tens of thousands will remember
The sad disasters of the day.

And the last verse holds an implicit warning for the ballad's audience:

We will conclude our mournful ditty,
Which fills our aching hearts with pain
Shed for us a tear of pity —
We never shall return again;
And when we've reached our destination,
O'er the seas through storms and gales,
O may you live at home in comfort,
While we lament in New South Wales.
Legitimations in the British Transportation Ballads

As well as working to assist the deterrence of crimes against property, to underline the power of one of the state's repressive apparatuses, and to promote hegemonic values of obedience and conformity, the British transportation ballads operated to legitimize both the legal system and the way the transportation system operated.

Hay has shown that, in the eighteenth century, "majesty", "justice" and "mercy" were three important aspects of "English law as ideology". We have seen that the transportation broadsides make some reference to the law's majesty in their descriptions of the court room scene. Their common assertion of the law's justice and mercy, put into the mouth of the transportee for added emphasis, helped to legitimize the operation of a legal system that was far from just and merciful. "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale" asserts both aspects:

At Newgate I was tried and cast,
My guilt was plain and clear,
Sentence of death on me was pass'd
But Mercy my life did spare.

For 14 years to New South Wales
I was streightway [sic] to go,
Thus Justice did at last prevail
And brought me very low.

The speaker in "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel" states that the sentence of transportation is "A just reward for all my actions base". The judge in "The Affectionate Transports" showed "great mercy", in having the criminal "death recorded" and so subsequently transported rather than executed. "... Transportation Explained" has two references to "justice" stopping the criminal career, and it also

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48 "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law", 26-49.

49 For a detailed analysis of ways in which the operation of English criminal law was neither just nor merciful see Hay, "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law", 17-63.
alludes to the mercy of a legal system which twice pardoned the speaker under false names.\textsuperscript{50}

An important aspect of the myth of "justice" was the belief that all were equal before the law. Hannah More stressed that particular myth in her anti-Jacobin pamphlets as a way of arguing that the English already had the equality that the French had been fighting for in the Revolution\textsuperscript{51}. "The Lament of Thomas Monk" helps to reinforce the belief when it describes the transportation of a man who had known "position and fame", having been "Alderman, Magistrate, Lieutenant and Mayor".\textsuperscript{52}

The transportation ballads helped to legitimize the operation of the transportation system itself by obscuring its violence. They did this in several ways. White has argued that the brutality of the convict system was essential to its operation, and that this aspect was widely known:

Its horror and depravity were well-publicised in England. Lurid descriptions of floggings and chain gangs were both a macabre entertainment and a warning to the working class.\textsuperscript{3} Also popular in England were accounts of the general drunkenness and immorality in the settlements, of the vicious murders sometimes carried out in the hope of being hanged, and of cases of cannibalism among convicts. Pathetic attempts to escape by walking over the hills to China were widely reported, as was the amazing and terrible story of Mary Bryant and her companions who got as far as Timor in an open boat.\textsuperscript{53}

In fact descriptions of floggings and chain gangs were rare in the warning ballads, and the other evidence of brutality to which White alludes is absent. As well as this a number of them have an element where the hardships of transportation are somehow alleviated — an apparent contradiction of the warning function. It is true

\textsuperscript{50} "The Unhappy Transport ... William Dale", \textit{FOE}, 96-98; "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel", \textit{TL}, 54; "... Transportation Explained", \textit{FOE}, 99-102; "The Affectionate Transports", \textit{CM}, 50.

\textsuperscript{51} Hay, "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law", 34.

\textsuperscript{52} "The Lament of Thomas Monk", \textit{CM}, 70.

that stories about the prosperity which could result from transportation were also widely known and the somewhat incongruous presence of an alleviation of convict suffering in the popular ballads, side by side with descriptions of the hardships of convict life, reflects the glaringly inconsistent picture of transportation which was current in England.

The explanation for the somewhat surprising lack of reference to flogging, chain gangs, murder and so on may be that the transportation ballads are a product of a transitional time in the history of punishment. During the period of transportation there was a movement from a focus on the public spectacle of punishment towards punishment as the most hidden part of the penal process. Violence changed from being a glorification of the legal system's strength to being an element of the system that was necessary but difficult to account for.54 This new ambivalence towards the violence of the transportation system might explain an otherwise peculiar feature of the warning ballads but, in any case, we are here concerned with the function rather than the source of the motif.

In fact many of these ballads manage a balancing act between obscuring, at least to some extent, the brutal nature of transportation while retaining the warning. "Young Henry the Poacher" is a good example of this balance. The ballad works perfectly as a warning with its description of the convict's fellow sufferers "some chained to the harrow and some to the plough", inadequately clothed, having a driver with a Malacca cane standing over them. But Young Henry himself does relatively well in the transportation lottery, being chosen by a gentleman as a book-keeper and having a master who likes him well. He is able to say that his "joys were out of measure".55


55 "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40.
A number of other ballads share this feature. "Van Dieman's Land" has a verse devoted to Ann Summers who had been transported for fourteen years. The convicts' master bought her freedom, married her and in turn she gave the speaker and his fellows "good usage". The transportee in the "London 'Prentice Boy" is fortunate enough to be noticed by the governor and given "slight employ". In "Mother Don't You Cry for Me", after the persona has described both his physical hardships and his suffering as an exile, he discovers that the queen has pardoned him and he is overcome by joy. Even in "The Unhappy Transport ... James Revel", the most prolonged description of the unpleasantness of convict life is followed by some alleviation for the convict. His cruel master dies and he is bought by a gentleman who subsequently carries out the kindness promised in these lines:

He said he would not use me as a slave,
But as a servant, if I'd well behave;
And if I pleas'd him, when my time expir'd
He'd send me home again, if I requir'd.\(^{56}\)

The other way that the brutal nature of the convict system is obscured is when the experience of transportation is reduced to the sadness involved in parting from a loved one. Like the descriptions of convict good fortune this feature of the ballads was, of course, rooted in the experiences of many prisoners, but its effect was to divert attention from the floggings, chain gangs and so on, towards a fact of convict life which still had force as a warning but which did not damn the system. "Botany Bay" is a ballad which both warns against crime and obscures the brutalities of convict life. It opens with an explicit warning that "all young men of learning" should "quit night walking, / And shun bad company", but the only mention of life as a transportee is a reference to the possibility of a return to "a girl in Manchester". Similarly "James Raeburn" addresses only the parting from mother, father and sweetheart. It too finishes with a hope for a resolution to that parting:

\(^{56}\) "Van Dieman's Land", \textit{CM}, 32; "London 'Prentice Boy", \textit{CM}, 60; "Mother Don't You Cry for Me", \textit{CM}, 56; "The Unhappy Transport ... James Revel", \textit{TL}, 54.
If e'er we chance to meet again,
I hope we'll meet above,
Where Halleluiah will sung,
And all is precious love.
Where no earthly judge will judge us,
But he that rule's us all,
So farewell unto the hills and dales
Of Caledonia.  

There is another diverse group of British ballads which are closely related to the warning group but which may fall outside it. They are essentially love songs using transportation as the device that separates the lovers. In one way they address a specific negative aspect of transportation and, in publicizing this, may contain an implicit reinforcement of its deterrent function. However, by focusing primarily, and in some cases solely, on the sufferings involved in parting from loved ones, they also tend to obscure the convict system's coercive nature. If physical hardships are mentioned the reference is brief and this group also often offers resolutions to the separation which transportation has become.

"Justices and Old Bailey" has elements of a warning structure but probably remains more a love song. The first verse is at least half in the voice of a woman lamenting the fact that her convict lover is to be transported. The voice becomes the male convict's and most of the ballad focuses on his sadness at being parted from his true love. In the second verse he denies the relevance of both the pain of leaving one's native land and the strange environment to be encountered in the penal colonies, elements which are important in producing the warning in a number of ballads:

To go to a strange country don't grieve me,
Nor leaving old England behind,
It's all for the sake of my Polly love,
And leaving my parents behind.

57 "Botany Bay", CM, 26; "James Raeburn", CM, 72.
There is one verse which is quite explicit about the physical hardships of transportation and therefore contains something of an implicit warning, but even this is related to separation from the loved one:

How hard is the place of confinement,
That keeps me from my hearts [sic] delight,
Cold chains and cold irons surround me,
And a plank for my pillow at night.

Three of the seven verses offer possible resolutions to the separation. Verse four is addressed to "Dear Polly", his lover, and he suggests that seven years transportation "will be but a moment / When returned to the girl I adore". The fifth verse indicates that transportation may have considerable rewards and again alludes to a reunion, with the transportee crossing "the salt seas" bringing "Stores of riches". And the seventh returns to this theme, although here the speaker admits that the resolution is only wishful thinking:

How often I wished that the eagle
Would lend me her wings, I would fly,
Then I'd fly to the arms of my Polly
And in her soft bosom I'd lie.58

"Botany Bay" gives a very euphemized version of transportation. It begins after the convicts' sentencing and focuses on the grieves of soon-to-be-separated lovers during a progression of scenes up to the beginning of their voyage to the penal colony. When the turnkey comes one of the convicts asks to be allowed to bid his love farewell. One girl approaches the convicts bringing her "dear lad" money while another demands to know "where are you going, / To take my love away". In the coach the convicts sit "All with an aching heart" and while they travel through London the ballad digresses to say:

But when we do get there,
Some letters we will write,
Unto our native land,
To our sweethearts and wives.59

"Landed in Botany Bay" treats transportation as separation from a lover, detailing the feelings of a convict who has arrived in Botany Bay. The ballad's first verse makes its single brief reference to the physical hardships of convict life, suggesting that these are insignificant in comparison to the sufferings of parted lovers:

My dear girl I am landed in Botany Bay,  
Never more to thy arms to return,  
Tho' I like a negro do labour all day,  
Tis for thee I am mostly concerned.

Its chorus says that "The pain had been less if condemned for to die, /Than banished from her I adore". It mentions his tears which fell and mingled with the ink on the page of his letter to her, and also the pain which he felt when he came to seal it with the seal which he had received from her as a present. He recalls the grief felt by all the prisoners when the ships set sail from Botany Bay, bemoaning the fact that they had "Bid adieu to their sweethearts and wives". Whereas the convicts in "Female Transport" often wished never to wake to meet their "savage governors", he finishes praying to the thunder above to send a ball down on his head so that he "never more might heave a sigh".60

"Disconsolate Maid" describes a meeting between the speaker and a woman who is at Portsmouth dock mourning that her lover has been "banish'd" to Botany Bay. The ballad mourns only the separation that transportation involves, and it too finishes with a resolution to that separation:

When she had end'd her complaint,  
She rose up for to go,  
O then I said, "My pretty maid,  
Come tell to me your woe."

59 "Botany Bay", CM, 31.

60 "Landed in Botany Bay", CM, 46; "Female Transport", CM, 20.
"O no kind sir, that can not be,
For I can no longer stay,
For I'll go follow my true love
That's gone to Botany Bay."\textsuperscript{61}

"Ten Thousand Miles Away" also grossly distorts the sort of treatment a convict could expect. Transportation is described variously as "tak[ing] a trip on a government ship" and "doing the grand in a distant land". The whole ballad is jokily concerned with the ending of the separation. Its chorus is:

So blow the winds, I, O,
A roving I will go,
I'll stay no more on England's shore
So let the music play,
I start by the morning train,
To cross the raging main,
For I'm on the move to my own true love,
Ten thousand miles away.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{61} "Disconsolate Maid", \textit{FQE}, 147-48.

\textsuperscript{62} "Ten Thousand Miles Away", \textit{CM}, 13.
Transportation Ballads and Patriarchy

The final way that the transportation ballads operate to promote existing norms is in their legitimation of patriarchy and their reinforcement of notions that support a social order in which power is held by men. This function cuts across the class distinctions that have been the basis of the discussion so far, and therefore the ways in which the ballads uphold patriarchy do not fit into the pattern of coercion and hegemony already outlined. Nevertheless, it is important to examine this aspect of their social function. Their treatment of gender relations also cuts across the important differences between British and Irish broadsides and it is best to discuss both together.

Although women were probably responsible for saving the traditional ballads of the Child collection from virtual extinction by passing them from mother to daughter, they did not have such a role in the production and transmission of the broadsides which, it seems, were written, printed and distributed almost entirely by men. Consequently whereas the traditional ballads often assigned women important roles and sometimes exhibited a female point of view, the transportation broadsides operated to uphold patriarchy. Women are the central figures in only three transportation ballads, "The Convict Maid", "Female Transport" and "Transported to Botany Bay ... Terrible Hardships". These three ballads operate to reinforce patriarchal attitudes as do the other ballads where women are depicted, and as does the very fact that they are so invisible in the transportation ballads as a whole. Unlike the coercive and hegemonic aspects of the transportation ballads, the broadsides' patriarchal nature is not matched by elements of resistance to patriarchy, presumably because women were excluded from their production.


64 "The Convict Maid", C.M., 15; "Female Transport", C.M., 20; "Transported to Botany Bay ... Terrible Hardships", Collison, The Story of Street Literature, 73-75.
The women in the transportation ballads are often very shadowy figures. Sometimes they appear as one of a list of items which the male speaker has left behind in Britain or Ireland. Usually the woman left behind is undescibed and often even unnamed, operating merely as a symbol of exile, for example in "Justices and Old Bailey" where the male convict wishes to be reunited with his "Polly love". "Ten Thousand Miles Away" is unusual in referring to a female convict who has been parted from her lover but it shows the strength of the male viewpoint in these ballads when, in spite of this inversion, it still focuses on the man, describing his wish to be with his true love rather than the convict's wish to return to her lover.65

"The Convict's Child" provides a useful summary of the role which the broadsides promote for women. The title shows the ballad's viewpoint, assigning the child to the male convict. It proceeds to describe his death from the grief of parting with his son without reference to his sadness at leaving his wife, although she grieves as required. It is not until the last verse that she appears, defined in relationship to the man, and promising to devote her life to her son:

The widow sobbed alone,
Her tears might flow in vain,
That bitter morn her husband fell,
She ne'er could see again.
She pressed her infant to her breast,
Again she saw him smile,
I'll live for that dear boy, she cried,
Alas, my only child.66

Such selfless attention to the needs of men is a feature of the representation of women in a number of ballads. We have already seen that women were shown as grieving mothers, fainting in their sons' arms, tearing out their grey hair, weeping bitterly and then waiting patiently at home for the return of their offspring at the end of their sentences. They were allowed another nurturing role in the penal colonies — that

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of alleviating the punishment inflicted on the male convicts. In "Van Dieman's Land" the convict master, and in one version the captain on the voyage, marries a convict maid who gives the convicts "good usage", and in "Young Henry the Poacher" the convict meets up with a woman who it seems had been a lover in Britain.67

Women are also shown with their attention directed towards men when they are presented in the role of lover. As we have seen, in "Botany Bay" grieving women approach the convicts as they are being taken from the cells to begin the voyage to Botany Bay, asking permission to bid their loved ones goodbye and giving them money. The Irish broadside, "Erin's Lovely Home", has the woman promising to wait faithfully for the man's return.68

Other transportation ballads operate to reinforce the notion that women are dependent on men. The speaker in "Mrs. Mitchel's Lament for Her Husband", a ballad about an Irish rebel which has been put into the mouth of a woman, expresses her sadness at her husband's transportation. Its first verse does so in very patriarchal terms, depicting a woman who is helpless without her husband:

I am an unhappy female in grief I'm left bewailing,
The loss of my husband that's gone;
My Mitchel has left me in grief for to mourn,
And all pleasures for ever has flown.
No female in Ireland was ever yet seen,
So lonesome and unhappy in Erin the green,
Quite distracted I'll wander since he is not seen,
Oh! Mitchel — will I e'er see you more?69

A couple of ballads about shipwrecks focus on the suffering of women during the voyages to and from the colonies, using the stereotype of helpless women and children to make the wreck seem more tragic. "Melancholy News of the Convict Ship

67 "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32, TL, 28; "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40.
68 "Botany Bay", CM, 31; "Erin's Lovely Home", TL, 52.
69 "Mrs. Mitchel's Lament for Her Husband", TL, 64.
George the Third", although describing a shipwreck where, in fact, 127 male (and no female) convicts were drowned,\textsuperscript{70} shows:

\begin{quote}
Mothers and their children young,
Clasp'd in love's embrace,
When sinking underneath the waves,
Ne'er more to see each face.
\end{quote}

"Dreadful Shipwreck of the Flora Transport" focuses on Jane Cardonnell whose husband is swept overboard during a storm, again asserting a woman's inability to cope in the absence of her husband. She is driven to madness, and cuts "from ear to ear" the throat of a seaman whom she thought had killed her husband, then tries to suicide, and ends the ballad confined in Bedlam.\textsuperscript{71}

The transportation broadsides also present a frequently misogynous view of women who are active and threatening. Women are often blamed for the transportation of a male convict, sometimes rather inconsistently. Although "The Irish Transport" is primarily about a convict missing his lover, it has one rather incongruous verse which claims that a woman is responsible for his situation:

\begin{quote}
Oft times have I wonder'd how young women love young men,
And oft times have I wonder'd how young men love them,
Since a woman has been my ruin and my sad downfall,
Which has caused me to lie between lime and stone walls.
\end{quote}

"The Croppy Boy" again presents a woman as the reason for the male convict's transportation. In spite of the fact that, in common with other members of a group of Irish ballads discussed in chapter 4, the convict is transported through the machinations of the woman's father, the ballad explains:

\textsuperscript{70} Shaw, Convicts and the Colonies, 116.

\textsuperscript{71} "Melancholy News of the Convict Ship George the Third", \textit{FOE}, 155-56; "Dreadful Shipwreck of the Flora Transport", \textit{FOE}, 161-64.
Once [he] had loved [a] young female,  
But falsely she did him disown,  
Which drove him to that foreign nation,  
And banished him far from his home.\textsuperscript{72}

The two extremes of behaviour attributed to women are very clear in the ballads' treatment of women's sexuality. In "Botany Bay, A New Song" women can be either "good natur'd wives" and "young virgins" on the one hand, or "wenches" who "lead debauch'd lives" and "night walking strumpets ... corrupters of youth" on the other.\textsuperscript{73}

The transportation ballads' viewpoint is also made obvious in the male fears which riddle the texts, women's sexuality often being portrayed as threatening. In "The Girl I Left Behind Me" the persona has to tell the "bonny lasses" in Van Diemen's Land that they will not "bind" him and that he will return to the girl he left behind. We have already seen how women in the ballads about transported apprentices were depicted as temptresses, sexually attractive women whose desire for an expensive life-style seduced young men into crime. The women were presented as greedy, manipulative and merciless, a wicked influence of which men must beware. The most popular of this group was "The Black Velvet Band", a ballad which tells of a male convict's transportation for a sexually manipulative woman's crime. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to suggest that the admonition to "beware of a black velvet band" has vaginal associations, at least at some level.\textsuperscript{74}

"Transported to Botany Bay ... Terrible Hardships", operates to help control women's sexual independence providing a moral tale which warns against a lack of restraint. It tells the story of "Elizabeth Watson", describing how she left her father's house to live with a man who promised to marry her but who left her "plunged in distress, / For all the vows he made". She was soon "forc'd upon the town" and was


\textsuperscript{73} "Botany Bay, A New Song", \textit{FOE}, 33-35.

\textsuperscript{74} "The Girl I Left Behind Me" (\textit{CM}, 52; "The Black Velvet Band", \textit{CM}, 22.
later driven to felony. Although in this instance the man is clearly the instigator, its warning is explicitly against sexual activity outside wedlock:

Ye maids while beauty's in its prime,
Of perjur'd youths beware,
Who oft with studied, base design
Deceive the easy fair.
Tis sweet to view, when May has drest,
The fair and flow'ry brake,
But ah! beneath its rosy vest
It hides the vengeful snake.75

We have already seen that women are the criminals on the two occasions when the crime against the employer is not displaced onto a lover — in "The Convict Maid" and "The Affectionate Transports" — and we have seen that the independence of the two women in these ballads is rewarded with particularly brutal retributions. Other ballads deal with independent action by women in different ways. "Female Transport" has a speaker who "entered to highway robbery along with many more" but such bold action is apparently too threatening and in another version she is merely "enticed by bad company along with many more". In this ballad too there is no alleviation for the speaker's suffering and the rough sea, the chains and lashings, the poor provisions and burning sun, the hard labour, mouldy beds, dreadful beasts and "savage governor" are all mentioned.76

The other way that the ballads deal with women taking independent action is to make it unthreatening by focusing it on a man. "Disconsolate Maid" is one of the few ballads where a woman is shown taking decisive action. It presents a stereotype of a "comely maid" wringing her hands and mourning that her love has been banished to Botany Bay, and finishes with her resolving to follow him. Two Irish ballads show resourceful women standing up to their families and winning back their lovers who

75 "Transported to Botany Bay ... Terrible Hardships", Collison, The Story of Street Literature, 73-75.

have been transported away from them. Both implicitly acknowledge that this sort of action is outside the normal bounds of behaviour for women by having the women dress as men, and both have the women end up as wife in another nuclear family. In "A Lady's Love and Loyalty for her Sweetheart" the woman's determination results in her winning back her lover. She boldly tells her father that he cannot make such a decision for her:

Indeed I'll marry Richard the same I'll not deny,
And if I do not gain him, my life I will destroy,
There's no man in Great Britain but him I do adore,
And I will surely follow him unto Van Dieman's shore.

She dresses as a sailor to follow her love but her father finds her, brings her home again and locks her in a room. Solidarity between women triumphs:

[I] consulted with my servant maid as you may understand,
[That] if she proved true we'd go unto Van Dieman's land.

The two of them succeed in sailing to Van Diemen’s Land but both end up married — the speaker to her Richard, and the servant to "a man of high degree". 77

In "A New Song Called the Navan Lovers" the woman dresses like a man, takes a steampacket to America and, not finding her transported lover there, proceeds to travel to New South Wales where she is successful. She buys him as a servant and they return to family life. Not only does she bear a son but their wealth is for his benefit:

This couple they were married all in their bloom
By the bonny water side near Navan town,
Now they have a son and gold for him in store
In spite of cruel parents she brought her love safe home. 78


78 "A New Song Called the Navan Lovers", TL, 50.
So far we have seen that the transportation ballads do more than just assist in the deterrence of crime. The transportation ballads help to reinforce social order both by underlining the state's coercive power and by publicizing hegemonic notions such as the advisability of conformity, the united interests of employers and employees, the futility of political agitation, and the legitimacy of the legal system. They also operate to reinforce and legitimize patriarchal values. But this is only part of the story.
Chapter 3
Resistance in the British Transportation Broadsides

In spite of the dominant culture's considerable incursions into popular culture, its dominance was by no means complete, and even in the broadsides oppositional elements existed alongside notions which supported the position of those who had power. Some ballads offered contradictory and ambivalent messages, at times approaching Foucault's "double-sided discourse".¹ The British transportation ballads could, on occasions, operate to publicize views which were subversive of the transportation system as a deterrent both of protest and non-protest crime, a process which helped undermine the legitimations of both transportation and the legal system, and which worked against attempts to promote obedience and conformity. Three British ballads, "The Transport's Lamentation", "Farewell Address", and "The Prescot Poachers", took up the warning structure and subverted its usual function.²

"The Transport's Lamentation" and the closely related "Farewell Address" fit into a larger pattern of opposition to the upheaval caused by new technologies. They used an altered version of the warning-structure to express disagreement with aspects of the transportation system and to criticize injustices arising from the Industrial Revolution. "The Transport's Lamentation" has an introductory "Come all ye", a reason for the crime, a specific crime, a description of the sentencing, a description of the grief of the persona's family and even a reference to the rough voyage to the penal colonies. But it differs sharply from the warning ballads which share these elements,


² "The Transport's Lamentation", *FOE*, 72-73; "Farewell Address", *FOE*, 58-59; and "The Prescot Poachers", *CM*, 44.
in fact offering a critique of the reasons for transportation. The first verse stesses that
the speaker is not advocating crime but that there is a social explanation for it: "tho' crime is bad, yet poverty, makes many a man to be / A transport from his native land
across the raging sea".3

Its introductory address is directed towards unemployed tradesmen, a group
active in protest movements during the years of transportation, and the speaker's
transportation is attributed to "want of work". Having been unemployed for seven
months, having searched the country for work, and having applied to the overseer for
relief, he resolves to go on the highway to "rob some gentleman of gold all for to feed
the poor". The ballad then provides an analysis of the relationship between poverty
and crime:

the rich have no temptation but all things at command
It is for health or pleasure they leave their native land
But great distress & want of work, starvation & disease
Makes inmates for the prison & transports for the seas.

Both "The Transport's Lamentation" and "Farewell Address" finish with three
verses which offer a solution to crime caused by unemployment and poverty, the
former proposing that "our rulers make a law for man to earn his bread, / And earn
sufficient wages to keep his family fed". The several benefits from such a law are
outlined — judges would have less to do and half their wages could be "Devoted to the
public good", the prisons would soon be empty, and the transport ships could be used
to move corn and not men. The last verse reiterates that if poverty were done away
with "Instead of ... slaves we might have free and honest men". Both ballads criticize
the harshness of transportation, "Farewell Address" exclaiming:

Oh! 'tis a cruel sentence for a man to leave his wife,
His children, and his dearest friends, all dearer than his life;
To leave the land that gave him birth, to see it p'rhaps no more,
And drag a wretched life in chains, upon a distant shore.4

At times oppositional elements were present in a generally hegemonic ballad, producing a somewhat double-sided effect. Within the "Botany Bay" which warns against "night walking" there is a verse where sailors on the Thames show their support for the convicts and this tends to undermine the rest of the ballad's deterrent function:

And every ship that we passed by,
Gave us a cheer that day,
There goes a ship of clever hands,
They are bound to Botany Bay.5

Another version has the sailors saying they "are sorry" that the convicts are "going to Botany Bay". A different ballad with the same title has the Cockneys in London saying that "Its a pity such clever lads / Should go to Botany Bay" as the coach carrying the convicts goes past.6

Similarly the ballads that distort the brutality of transportation do not all work to legitimize the legal system. The "Disconsolate Maid", which reduces transportation to separation from a loved one, works to undermine the myth of the law's "mercy". The speaker proceeds to tell how her lover had fought "boldly [sic] for the King" but the recompense he got was to be "cast" for a shilling:

O cursed be that cruel day,
That robb'd me of my dear,
Confusion to the fatal laws,
For they are too severe.7

Ballads about poaching also illustrate the way that dominant and oppositional ideologies clash in the transportation ballads. Rudé argues that although usually arising merely from personal motives, poaching could, at times, be regarded as a form of social protest:

5 "Botany Bay", CM, 26.
It might be so in the sense that a poacher might be asserting his right as a free-born Englishman to fish in the river and hunt in the forest and to hell with the landlords' property rights and the gamekeepers who got in his way.

He estimates that up to a third of the poachers transported to Australia were protesters in this sense.8

There are two very widely-collected ballads which warn against poaching — "Van Dieman's Land", and "Young Henry the Poacher".9 The first of these expresses its approval of the crime, referring to the poachers as "gallant" and briefly describing poaching in favourable terms, although its overall effect is to demonstrate conclusively that the punishment is such that poaching should be avoided. "Young Henry the Poacher" has been re-situated and its structure has been partially appropriated to a different purpose in a broadside titled "The Prescot Poachers". The subverted version retains elements of the original warning structure — it is again addressed to "all you wild and wicked youths wherever you may be", the speaker says that he was "beguiled" by "bad company", and there is virtually the same description of the hardships of convict life as there was in "Young Henry the Poacher".10

But it is different in a couple of important respects. The crime has increased in magnitude from poaching on a squire's land to shooting a gamekeeper, a common event in battles between poachers and land-owners.11 More significantly a large part of the warning against poaching has been redirected. In "Young Henry the Poacher" the reason that the poachers' sentences were so severe was that some old offenders


9 "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32, and "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40.

10 "The Prescot Poachers", CM, 44.

were among the prisoners. Here it is because Shaw "turned Queen's evidence". An entire verse is devoted to cursing and blaming him:

That young Shaw may never prosper, and may he never thrive,
Nor anything he takes in hand, as long as he's alive;
And, upon the very ground he walks, that the grass may never grow,
Since he has proved our ruin, and caused our overthrow.

And the shift in the ballad's emphasis doesn't stop there. The chorus of "Young Henry the Poacher":

Young men, all now beware,
Lest you are drawn into a snare.

has become:

Young men all a warning take,
That Shaw may meet John Robert's fate.

It transpires that in "Sydney town" James Hunt, the speaker, reads to "John Roberts" who is "in his condemned cell". The chorus has become a warning against informing.12

A Scottish ballad, "Heather Jock" goes so far as to express admiration for poaching. Overall the ballad admires Heather Jock's daring, his rebellious nature, and particularly his poaching. He is described as a hero in terms reminiscent of a border ballad:

Heather Jock was stark and grim,
Faught wi' a' wad fecht wi' him ...
Nane could equal Heather Jock.13

The chorus privileges poaching as Jock's most important crime, and later his considerable poaching talents warrant a full, admiring verse:

12 "The Prescott Poachers", CM, 44; "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40.

Nane wi' Jock could draw a tricker,  
Mang the muir-fowl he was sicker;  
He watch'd the wild ducks at the springs,  
And hang'd the hares in hempen strings;  
Blazed the burns and spear'd the fish,  
Jock had mony a dainty dish;  
The best o' muir-fowl and black-cock  
Aye graced the board o' Heather Jock.

Several other transportation broadsides, in contrast to the warning ballads, work to transmit notions in opposition to conformity and obedience. "A New Flash Song" is devoted to George Barrington who was well-known as an emblem of anti-authoritarian behaviour in England. It addresses an audience expected to be favourable to Barrington:

Come all you blades of England I prithee draw near,  
And of the noted Barrington now quickly you shall hear,  
Who long time has been dreaded both in country and in town  
But now for the lag, lads, this blade he is knock'd down.¹⁴

Although the last verse suggests that the public can now move about safely because Barrington's "body is well secur'd", throughout the ballad he is held up for admiration. His crimes are presented as primarily directed against a privileged class. He picked pockets at "operas, balls, and playhouses". He frequented "every pitch'd battle ... / When the noblest of nobility was sure to be there ... / At horse races too on the gentry he would wait" and he "knap the ... lour" of a "wealthy old farmer". The crime for which he was captured was "drawing Mr. Townshend's watch, with three gold seals and chain". In contrast to the warning ballads the description of his trial and sentencing serves to present Barrington as a figure whose wit is to be admired:

But at the Old Baily the last sessions he was cast,  
Knock'd down for the lag is poor George now at last,  
The learned Judge and Jury with his patter did confound,  
But the evidence so clear and plain, Barrington was guilty found.

A few ballads operate to undermine transportation's deterrent function. In "The Jolly Lad's Trip to Botany Bay" the convict says that he and his fellows do not care "A

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¹⁴ "A New Flash Song", FOE, 62-63. This is one of the few transportation broadsides which, like the execution broadsides discussed by Foucault, focuses on the crime of its subject, but it is so favourable to Barrington that it is hardly double-sided.
fig for transportation”. Instead of stressing the hardships of life in the penal colonies, and in contrast to the twenty men to one woman described in “Van Dieman's Land”, this ballad explains that “many a pretty lass in Botany may be seen, / Who knows but she might be an Indian Queen, / Deck'd out in diamonds”. “The Jolly Lad's Trip to Botany Bay” also shows anti-authoritarian behaviour triumphing in the colonies. Power structures are inverted at Botany Bay where the convicts' first action on arrival is to choose a king who “may be the noted Barrington”.15

"Buffer, Don't You Cry for Me" shows an unconcerned felon convincing his “buffer” that although he is a criminal and deserves to be transported (he says he deserves a longer sentence) and although there will be hard times, transportation is nothing to get too upset about. The ballad is a light hearted look at the process — transportation is described as being "on ... [the] travel" and as a "berth ... under government". Overall the broadside celebrates a "flash" or non-conformist life-style — "sportive games ... knock-em-downs ... boozing kens ... singing naughty songs as well as dancing flash" — and is subversive of the way in which transportation promoted hegemonic notions of obedience. The speaker urges his buffer: "Oh my Hannah my flashy flaunting dame, / Do not change your manner love".16

Three comic ballads which tell of convicts returning to England combine a number of the above elements, operating partially to undermine transportation's deterrent function; to criticize the legal system, presenting it as a producer of criminals; and to work against attempts to promote obedience and conformity. "The Ticket of Leave Man" shows transportation turning an honest and diligent shoemaker into a criminal. The speaker unwittingly accepted a forged note from a ticket-of-leave man, was discovered when he went to cash the forgery, and an example was made of him, transporting him to Botany Bay for seven years. When he returns with a ticket-of-

15 "The Jolly Lad's Trip to Botany Bay", CM, 49; "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32.

16 "Buffer, Don't You Cry for Me", FOE, 75-76.
leave he finds that no one will employ him and suggests that he will be driven to crime, becoming "a thief and dishonest at last" like the forger who was the cause of his "present disgrace". This ballad also undermines transportation's deterrent role, presenting the penal authorities not as severe masters but as easy to fool:

    But every convict bear this in sight,
    May he again receive his Freedom, if he acts right,
    And the Government there my story did believe,
    And I had but one year and a Ticket of Leave.17

In a different ballad which is also called "The Ticket-of-Leave Man" and which is similar in several ways, the speaker again treats transportation lightly, saying that he was sent to Australia for the benefit of his health. He returns to England with a ticket-of-leave not to settle down to a life of conformity and obedience but just in time to attend a boxing match at which many watches go missing. Like Barrington his targets are privileged "tip-swells" and stealing from them "doesn't seem so low". The speaker likes to "hieve" and is "good to dip or crack a crib". In the final chorus he suggests that he is about to be transported again to Botany Bay but expects to return soon with another ticket-of-leave.18

"Penal Servitude!" makes fun of transportation like the two ballads above. The speaker introduces himself:

    I have just arrived from Australia,
    Where I have been for change of air;
    And, chaps, I have just come to tell you,
    That there is a lot of jolly living over there.19

The chorus goes to some length to depict life in the penal colonies — "Where they feed you, and they clothe you, / Better than a working man or soldier" — as superior to life in England. Again the speaker comments on the ease with which a ticket-of-leave can be obtained, having received a ten year sentence only four years previously. And

17 "The Ticket of Leave Man", CM, 64.
19 "Penal Servitude!", POE, 91-93.
again it is suggested that the system perpetuates crime with the London police making it too hard for a returned ticket-of-leave man to earn an honest living. The ballad makes fun of policeman saying "The Bobbies sometimes are very useful, / He can be either absent, deaf or blind". The ticket-of-leave man laughs to see thousands in the workhouse starving while he and his companions "live like lords in the jail", and he seems to blame crime on poor living conditions:

And while you keep your paupers in starvation
You're sure to be surrounded by coves like us.

"Botany Bay, A New Song" works against the legitimations of the legal system, particularly the myth of "justice". It is a satirical song offering a toast to the politicians who have devised a program of transportation to Botany Bay, referring to them as "our schemers above". The ballad agrees with the stated aims of transportation in the first verse:

Let us drink good health to our schemers above,
Who at length have contriv'd from this land to remove
Thieves, robbers and villains, they'll send 'em away,
To become a new people at Botany Bay. 20

But then follows a long list of others whose activities the ballad disapproves of and who, it suggests, should be sent to Botany Bay. The list includes those who "spunge [sic] on mankind", "fops / Who ... run into debt with design ne'er to pay", tradesmen who gamble, men who "run after wenches and lead debauch'd lives", prostitutes, "monopolisers who add to their store, / By cruel oppression and squeezing the poor", men who don't pay their tradesmen, seducers, and "shop-tax promoters". Overall the ballad suggests that transportation will not deal with many of those whom it should.

The penultimate verse sums up:

The hulks and the jails had some thousands in store,
But out of the jails are ten thousand times more,
Who live by fraud, cheating, vile tricks, and foul play,
Should all be sent over to Botany Bay.

20 "Botany Bay, A New Song", FOR, 33-35.
There have been two interesting attempts to explain the fact that the broadsides can perform both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic functions. If the period was in fact one where the English working class was coming "to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and as against their rulers and employers",\(^{21}\) the resistance in the broadsides might be easier to understand than the hegemonic elements. Vicinus, although not referring specifically to transportation ballads, looks to the producers to explain these contradictory political positions. She suggests that professional writers in London were isolated from working-class communities while full-time and part-time writers in the north were more likely to compose songs from a working people's point of view:

> While London writers did not usually hawk their own works, northern writers did. They built up a round of public houses and friendly neighbourhoods where they sang and sold their works. In many cases they became spokesmen for the working men of a particular trade and were expected to compose songs during strikes, hard times and festivals. In return they were kept supplied with beer and other necessities. The writer-singer was an essential member of many northern industrial communities in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\(^{22}\)

Ian Watson looks more to the owners of the presses and their attempts to cater for their market as the explanation for the broadsides' opposing political functions. He argues that the owners consciously tailored their product to appeal to the non-working class section of the market and he explains any "working-class sentiment" in the broadsides in two ways. First he suggests that the broadside presses sometimes pirated from working-class songs and did not always fully alter verses which might seem offensive to the non-working-class section of the audience. Secondly he believes that the owners were motivated only by a desire for profit and so would cash in on working-class sentiment, for example after a mining disaster or after the "Peterloo Massacre". He also has a conspiracy theory about "agent provocateur" material —


songs which promoted "anti-reform and anti-popular feelings, by calling for blood and revolution and thus confirming bourgeois prejudice and fear of the mob".23

In line with Watson's argument, Mayhew shows the control that the owners of the presses had over the material produced by the authors of street-ballads, an aspect of their production which belies Ward's attempt to portray them as "folk-song". He quotes one as saying:

Writing poetry is no comfort to me in my sickness. It might [be] if I could write just what I please. The printers like hanging subjects best, and I don't. But when any of them sends to order a copy of verses for a "Sorrowful Lamentation" of course I must supply them.24

But Mayhew also suggests that expectation of what might appeal to the audience was important among the diverse influences on what was produced:

It must be borne in mind that the street author is closely restricted in the quality of his effusion. It must be such as the patterers approve, as the chaunters can chant, the ballad-singers can sing, and — above all — such as street-buyers will buy.25

It is not possible to come to any sure conclusion as to the relative impact of composers, owners and consumers on the content of the broadsides — their influences were in any case linked. Another crucial element in the discussion, however, may be the extent to which hegemony already operated. Both Vicinus and Watson start from the premise that broadsides produced by working-class composers and those produced consciously for a working-class audience will be necessarily counter-hegemonic. They ignore the success of a hegemony operating in the interests of the aristocracy, gentry, merchants and increasingly of large manufacturing interests, a success which the broadsides reinforced. The degree to which ideas that supported the position of those in power had permeated the society could affect the content of the broadsides at

23 Ian Watson, Song and Democratic Culture in Britain: An Approach to Popular Culture in Social Movements, (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 16-17.


any of the three sites of influence — composition, ownership of the presses, and consumption. Composers, owners, and audience were all capable of expecting the broadsides to contain a version of transportation which reinforced the existing social order.
Chapter 4
Irish Transportation Broadsides

The years when convicts were transported to Australia were also years of social and political turmoil in Ireland. There too it was a period of increasing crime, a growth in the successful prosecution of crime, and of increasing protest. In Ireland most of the population lived in poverty, and disturbances arose both from Ireland’s colonial status and from the stagnation of the economy. Protest during the period of transportation included the agrarian revolt associated with the Defenders of Ireland in the 1780s and 1790s; the rebels of 1798 and 1803; the “land-and-tithe” war from the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the early 1840s, involving movements such as the Whiteboys and the Ribbonmen; the attempted rebellion of 1848; the Fenian movement and uprising of the 1860s; as well as a good deal of marginal protest such as arson and maiming cattle.¹

The 2,250 Irish political and social protesters transported to Australia included people drawn from all these protests and protest movements. In Ireland too, protesters accounted for only a small percentage of convicts — about one in seventeen of the 39,000 Irish transported to Australia, according to Rudé.² However, this is a considerably higher ratio than for British transportees. In Gramsci’s terms, the state’s greater reliance on coercion to maintain order in Ireland resulted from the lack of a hegemony which effectively secured its position. The Irish ballads about transportation are good evidence of the failure of dominant ideology to make the inroads into popular culture which it had in Britain. Only a handful of the extant

² Protest and Punishment, 8-10.
transportation ballads definitely printed in Ireland deal with their subject in the way that most of their British counterparts do. Where oppositional culture existed in only isolated instances in the extant British transportation ballads, it is the norm in the Irish texts, most of which fall into the category of "rebel song".

The broadsides were an Anglo-Irish form, having first been imported into Ireland from Britain in the seventeenth century. Georges-Denis Zimmerman suggests that the singing of political broadside ballads became popular in the cities during the eighteenth century, gradually spreading to rural areas as the English language replaced Irish. By the early nineteenth century, Anglo-Irish broadsides were as popular in the countryside as they had long been in the cities. During the transportation period there were broadsides printed in Athlone, Ballinamore, Belfast, Cork, Drogheda, Dublin, Johnstown (Kilkenny), Limerick, and Waterford. There are no reliable figures for the circulation of broadsides in Ireland although it seems likely that at least some of them could be extremely popular. A great number have certainly been lost. Zimmerman notes that when James Garland, author of "The Banished Defender", died in about 1842 roughly sixty of his songs were known, but today only two songs can be identified as his.3

In spite of their Anglo-Irish nature, the broadsides composed in Ireland must have been influenced, at least to some extent, by songs in Irish. Crofton Croker remembered having heard, in 1813, "rebellious song, in the Irish language, ... loudly vociferated, and received with yells of applause". But by 1855, George Petrie could write that political ballads in Irish "can now only be sought for in the dim and nearly forgotten traditions of the people".4 Three songs about transportation in the Irish language have survived, all dealing with the Connery brothers who were sent to

3 Georges-Denis Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion: Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs 1780–1900 (Dublin: Figgis, 1967), 9, 19-20, 322.
Australia for agrarian offences in the late 1830s. None of the three, however, was published as a broadside.\(^5\) It is likely that there were others in Irish which could not survive without the assistance of print. Zimmerman suggests that although the rhyme schemes employed in the Anglo-Irish ballads were much simpler than those used in Gaelic poetry, their occasional use of assonantal as well as full rhymes and of internal assonances may have been derived from that source, probably unconsciously.\(^6\) Broadsides ballads were also sometimes sung in the style used for songs in Irish. In 1852 W. Allingham described an Irish ballad singer performing in a sean nós or traditional fashion:

His vocal excellence consists in that he twirls every word several times round his tongue, wrapt in the notes of a soft, husky tremulous voice. In this style of gracing — which is considered highly artistic and for which, I believe, "humouring" is the country phrase — the words are delivered.\(^7\)

At least two of the broadside ballads about transportation are currently in the repertoire of sean nós singers — "Mitchel's Address to his Countrymen" and "Erin's Lovely Home".\(^8\)

As in Britain, ballads describing the execution of criminals and operating as a warning against crime were common in Ireland. Zimmerman observes that the "last dying speech" in prose was often sold on broadsides in Dublin at the beginning of the eighteenth century and that many nineteenth-century ballads told the same tale in verse. One early example of such a ballad, published in 1730, had the lengthy preamble: "The new song made on the Last Speech, Confession and Dying Words of Mr John Porter, and Mr. Richard Johnson, Gentleman, who were executed near St. Stephens Green,


\(^6\) *Songs of Irish Rebellion*, 105.


this present Saturday being the 12th of this instant December 1730, for the killing of Patrick Murphy the 21st of October last: whose deaths are much lamented". It has a typical admonitory stanza:

Let disobedient youths I pray draw near,
And listen to these lines I've penned here,
Pray mind them well, and by them you may shun,
The crime that has of late poor me undone.9

However, while execution ballads may have warned against crime, only a very few of the extant transportation ballads with a warning-structure were definitely printed in Ireland. One of these is "The Transport's Lament" which is a version of "Young Henry the Poacher", printed by Haly in Cork.10 There are also several texts of "Van Dieman's Land" that refer to Irish locations such as Nenagh, Galway town and Dublin, but those whose printer's marks have survived are British.11 In any case, Rudé states that no poachers were transported from Ireland,12 and this probably lessens the likelihood of either of these ballads flourishing there, and makes it almost certain that their original audience was not an Irish one. Only two other warning ballads were definitely printed in Ireland — "My Mother Don't You Cry" by J. McCoy of Jail-street, Waterford, and "A True History of Bernard Reilly" by J. Conolly of Ballinamore.13

The Bernard Reilly broadside has some details which give it an air at least of originality and perhaps of authenticity, but it also has a number of formulaic elements. Like many of the British warning ballads the speaker begins his life in happy conformity having been "sent to school and educated well". In accordance with that

9 Quoted in Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion, 93.
11 For example "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 37, 38.
12 Protest and Punishment, 6.
structure he begins a life of disorderly behaviour, becoming involved with a woman "of broken fame", turning to drink, and very soon developing into a thief and gambler. As is usual in the warning ballads, the legal system is shown to be both powerful and just, capturing the criminal with ease. The ballad continues with a rather formulaic descriptions of the judge's solemn words, the grief of the transportees' parents, and the long voyage to the colonies, but there are occasional details which may hint at a first hand, although exaggerated, experience:

Our food was bad and scanty too beside —
The sick men's soup and biscuit we'd divide,
On one half-pint of water in the day,
Our burning thirst at noon for to allay,
We could not stand upstrait [sic] nor lie at ease,
So we took cramps in both our arms and knees.

Like several British warning ballads, the settlers examine the prisoners as if they were animals and, as in "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel" and "... Transportation Explained", the day's labour in the fields is followed by grinding the master's corn until well into the night.14 The ballad has several passages where the convicts rue their lot and wish that they had remained in peaceful conformity:

Some of my old acquaintances here I met,
Whose cheeks in tears for their young days is wet,
They told me if they got at home once more,
Their former dreadful course they'd give o'er,
Lamenting that they brought their parents down,
With grief to their graves their deeds to crown,
And brought themselves to slavery and shame,
When they might have acquired an honest fame,
And might have lived in honesty and peace.

An unusual passage describes the career of a convict bushranger, demonstrating that escape is futile because absconders are rewarded with hanging. The ballad also tells of "Three men from Cavan and one from Leitrim town" who escaped to the woods and were found with "part of life remain[ing] in only one", because of the three weeks starvation which they have endured. On the other hand it is made clear that convicts

14 "The Unhappy Transport ... Life of James Revel", TL, 54; "... Transportation Explained", EOE, 99-102.
who conform can do very well for themselves. The speaker's master is an ex-convict transported from Dublin who counsels his charges to save their money for a passage back to Ireland, advice which the speaker follows. He eventually arrives in Ireland, ready to lead a life of conformity:

I hope my exile to me good sense to learn,  
In honesty my daily bread to earn,  
I have some money saved that will support,  
My aged mother, whose days are short ...  
Let this to all young men a caution be,  
To avoid night rambling and bad company,  
Lest they should meet the same unhappy fate,  
And rue like me when it might be too late.15

Although not itself a broadside, "The Irish Mail Robber" appears to be an amalgam of "The Irish Transport" and stock motifs from extant British warning broadsides. The speaker's father explicitly warns him against "night walking" and "bad company" but, in spite of this paternal advice, he embarks on a "wicked career" of drinking, gambling, and "rude wimming [sic]" which culminates in his transportation for a mail robbery.16 The rest of the thirty or so broadsides in the published collections, either with Irish printers' marks or dealing with convicts transported from Ireland, are to some degree critical of transportation.

Two ballads are partial reiterations of this warning structure. "The Sorrowful Lamentation of Those Poor Convicts" is framed in verses based on "Van Dieman's Land". It contains stock motifs such as the "aged mother" tearing her hair, and begins with a typical admonition:

Come all you youths of folly, a warning take by me,  
I hope you'll pay attention and listen unto me,  
Concerning those poor convicts that's to leave their native land,  
And go from thence across the seas unto Vandiamonds Land.17


16 "The Irish Mail Robber", Wright, ed., Irish Emigrant Ballads, 235; "The Irish Transport", CM, 47.

17 "The Sorrowful Lamentation of Those Poor Convicts", Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion, 230-31; "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32.
The ballad seems to be a lament for two groups of transportees, a father and son called O'Reilly from Cavan, and three Duffys from Westmeath who were sentenced in Mullingar. Unlike the warning ballads the convictions are unjust — the O'Reillys owe their transportation to an uncle who apparently had them falsely "sworn in as party men"; and the Duffys were "well respected by all the counterie / Until Hugh Irwin's daughter did prove their destiny". The ballad's last verse is an uneasy mixture between a warning against crime, and a hatred of "traitors" who have here perhaps become the "bad company" which other ballads often blamed for transportation:

Come all my friends and countrymen, take warning by me,  
I hope you quit night walking and shun bad company.  
Think upon those traitors that's swore our lives away,  
Which make us now for to lament across the raging sea.18

"The Loss of the Convict Ship" (subtitled "That Sailed from the Cove of Cork") is a shipwreck ballad that shares some features of the warning ballads. As well as focusing on one of the elements which implicitly functioned as a warning — the dangers of the voyage to the colonies it details the sorrow of leaving friends, relatives and native land. It differs, however, from warning ballads and shipwreck ballads in two ways. First, it implies that perhaps transportation was not deserved by these convicts, whom it describes as being merely prone "to foolishness", and whom it suggests were transported for only "petty crimes". Secondly, although it describes the elaborate efforts made be the captain to secure the prisoners, both bolting them down in the holds and threatening to shoot any who attempted to escape, this "dreadful cruelty" is resisted and overcome by a few of them:

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A valiant hero, Jones by name,
made one rush from the hold,
Followed by six others,
with courage stout and bold,
Regardless of their musket shots,
that came from ev'ry side,
They made their escape on a plank,
all on the ocean wide. 19

The rest of the extant broadsides with Irish printers' marks and those which deal
with Irish transportees are critical of transportation, either mildly undermining its
legitimacy in the case of a group of love songs, or more openly supporting resistance
to England's presence in Ireland in the case of ballads about rebels.

Political Crime in the Irish Transportation Ballads

Where only two British ballads addressed the transportation of political activists
and both operated to limit agitation, there are many Irish broadsides which treat
transported activists favourably. "The Boys of Malabaun" and "The Banished
Defender" probably refer to convicts transported for events connected with the uprising
of 1798. 20 Turlough Faolain suggests that "The Boys of Malabaun" describes the
transportation of several of a "small Defender squad" who resisted conscription. 21
"The Banished Defender" tells the story of a leader of Father Murphy's Shelmaliers,
who was taken the day after the battle of New Ross and transported to Australia.
Although it refers to some of the events of 1798, in the extant versions its speaker says
that he is "a convict in Van Diemen's Land" which had no settlement until 1803.
Zimmerman suggests that it was probably composed by James Garland who was

20 "The Boys of Malabaun", CM, 71; "The Banished Defender", Zimmerman, Songs of Irish
Rebellion, 173-74.
21 Turlough Faolain, Blood on the Harp: Irish Rebel History in Ballad (The Heritage) (New York:
Whitson, 1983), 266.
responsible for a number of "party songs" at the beginning of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{22} The largest group refer to the transportation of those involved in the Young Ireland movement, in particular John Mitchel and Thomas Meagher. And there are a couple, probably from a period after transportation had finished, that are concerned with members of the Fenian movement.

Ballads were often composed with an intention to modify public opinion, and some contemporary observers considered that they were successful. Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, several of the leaders of the 1848 uprising, and later, O'Donovan Rossa, Michael Davitt, Arthur Griffith and James Connolly all composed rebel songs.\textsuperscript{23} The Young Ireland movement's newspaper, The Nation, 11 March 1843 noted: "We furnish political songs to stimulate flagging zeal, or create it where it does not exist".\textsuperscript{24} And two decades earlier than this, "rebel songs" were widely disseminated in broadside form. Crofton Croker wrote:

> The songs of the people are always worth attention, and it appears to me extraordinary that the most positive treason should for many years past have been published in Ireland, apparently without notice. Of about four hundred popular ballads (chiefly printed at Limerick) which I purchased without selection, in 1821, more than one-third were of a rebellious tendency.\textsuperscript{25}

The authorities certainly regarded political ballads as dangerous in some circumstances. While Crofton Croker was surprised at the vehemence of many ballads sung openly on the streets in the early 1820s, at other times the dissemination of such material was actively suppressed. For example in 1831 Michael Grogan of Limerick was given three months jail for "printing and publishing a most scandalous libel, in the form of a ballad song with an intent to create sedition against the government and

\textsuperscript{22} Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion, 20.

\textsuperscript{23} Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion, 68.

\textsuperscript{24} Quoted in Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion, 75.

\textsuperscript{25} Researches, 329.
disunion between His Majesty's Protestant and Roman Catholic subjects". The magistrate said: "nothing can be more injurious than inflaming the minds of the lower orders by disseminating ballads and publications of that nature among them". The singers too were at times arrested, usually for "obstructing" but it was often made clear that seditious ballads were the cause.

The Irish ballads about the transportation of political offenders offer support to those who are involved in opposition to England's dominance of Ireland, and perhaps encourage others to become involved in that opposition. Primarily they underline the legitimacy of resistance, and present the English use of transportation to control political activism as illegitimate. But they also treat resisters as heroes, and perhaps therefore as role-models; encourage anti-informer feeling; and stress that English coercion is surmountable.

Where the British warning ballads had legitimized the legal system as just and merciful, the Irish transportation ballads are often very critical of the law and of English methods of controlling resistance. In "The Boys of Malabaun" the ballad's audience is warned to beware of "each wicked vile deceiver, / That has ordered transportation / For the boys of Malabaun". "Lament For WM. Doyle, James Kenna and Edward Sheafy" describes the evidence of the witnesses as perjury and the jury as "well packed", and "Granua's Lament for the Loss of Her Blackbird Mitchel" also refers to "a packed Jury". In "Trial and Sentence of Mitchell [sic]", the ballad hero is "unjustly tried / By a pick'd and pack'd jury" and is said to be "The victim of harsh and tyrannical law". The hero in "Burke's Farewell" is betrayed by "spies and informers" who make "false declarations" against him. "The Banished Defender" also blames transportation on "traitors" and "perjured prosecutors", although it mentions

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26 Dublin Evening Mail. 21 March 1831, quoted in Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion, 50.

27 Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion, 51.
the pike, pistol and shot which the transportee had in his possession at the time of capture.28

One comic ballad laughs at the police while showing the injustice of the Penal Laws. "The Original Peeler and the Goat" tells of a goat arrested for strolling at night. The goat protests:

Oh, mercy sir, the Goat replied, oh let me tell my story, O,
I am no rogue or Ribbonman, a Croppy, Whig or Tory, O;
Guilty not of any crime, petty or high treason, [O,]
Our tribe is wanting at this time, and 'tis the ranting season, O.29

It continues to act peacefully and politely but is accused of being absent from its dwelling place, "disorderly and idle", and of "insolence, and violent behaviour", and later of threatening the law officer with "two horny spears". The goat is told that it will be transported, the peeler explaining that there will be no trouble in gaining a conviction — "The magistrates will all consent, to sign your condemnation, O, / From thence to Cork you will be sent, for speedy transportation, O".

On the other hand these ballads place considerable emphasis on the justice of the political transportees' actions. The speaker in "The Convict on the Isle of France" was "Condemned an exile" merely because he "loved the shamorick [sic] green". "The Exile's Farewell" praises the "heroes [who] bounded, / To meet the foes of Liberty".30 "Lament For WM. Doyle, James Kenna and Edward Sheafy" probably deals with the transportation of members of the Young Ireland movement for taking part in an attack on the police barracks at Cappoquin.31 It presents Doyle, Kenna and Sheafy as


29 "The Original Peeler and the Goat", CM, 63.


31 "Lament For WM. Doyle, James Kenna and Edward Sheafy", TL, 61; Rudé, Protest and Punishment, 80, 100.
heroes, although their action is not described. Atypically "The Banished Defender" focuses on its speaker's religious beliefs as the reason for his trial, going into some detail about the doctrinal rectitude of the Roman Catholic Church, and pointing out that Moses and Elias prophesied that the church would be persecuted. Its speaker says that he was transported "For being a Roman Catholic, ... / And for fighting in defence of my God, my country, and my creed", and implies some parallel between himself and Christ whose "sentence was between two thieves".  

A number celebrate the patriotism and courage of those transported for their involvement in the Young Ireland movement's uprising of 1848. "Lines Written on the Melancholy Death of T.F. Meagher" depicts him as "a firm patriot [who] loved the cry of liberty" and his fellow resisters are described as "the patriots who stood by him". In "Granua's Lament for the Loss of Her Blackbird Mitchel" the rebel is transported because he fought for his country, and his loss is bewailed by "Injured Erin". The ballad is subtitled "The Irish Patriot" and its speaker is evidently Ireland itself. In "Mrs. Mitchel's Lament for her Husband", John Mitchel is again shown to have been transported "For the love of his country". The speaker explains that "It was not for dishonour my husband was banished, / ... And liberty still was his theme". "Trial and Sentence of Mitchell" explains that the rebel was transported for boldly advocating "The rights of his country":

A just cause he stated, and Erin's wrongs related,
And said she was united by tyrannical laws;
To measures they resorted, & the Patriot transported
For 14 long years — poor Erin-go-Bragh.  

"Lament For WM. Doyle, James Kenna and Edward Sheafy" works to promote anti-informer feeling and to warn against informing. The activists' transportation is

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33 "Lines Written on the Melancholy Death of T.F. Meagher", CM, 74; "Granua's Lament for the Loss of Her Blackbird Mitchel", TL, 64; "Mrs. Mitchel's Lament for her Husband", TL, 64; "Trial and Sentence of Mitchell", CM, 75.
blamed on "cursed informers and wicked villains that sent them far from their Native shore". Three verses are devoted to condemning a list of informers, past and present and the last verse promises some kind of revenge — "Those cursed informers in short will rue it, I tell you truly, mark what I say". On the other hand the ballad praises those who worked for the defence, asking God to bless them and wishing them "long life". "W. MacNamara's Lament for John Mitchell [sic]" suggests that after death the "perjured traitors [will] receive their merit — / No orange jury man can there be found". Even "A True History of Bernard Reilly", one of the few Irish ballads with a warning-structure, has a positive reference to solidarity against the legal system, with the speaker noting "But we, our companions would not betray, / Had we been sentenced on the tree to die". As he waits to be transported "unto Australia's distand [sic] land", the speaker in "Burke's Reprieve [sic]" curses the informer, Massey:

Into misery recommend him, and may wretchedness attend him,  
May he wander like a serpent for many a long mile,  
When sleeping or when waking, may his wicked heart be aching,  
And be scouted by the children of Erin's green Isle.34

The ballad points out that "the base informers" have paid for their perjury and are now "afraid / To show their perjured faces upon their native land", and it states that "upright men" will "slaughter" them "If they ever dare to venture on old Erin's lovely Isle".

The ballads which address political crime in Ireland also encourage resistance by hoping or asserting that opposition to England's domination can be successful. "The Exile's Farewell" expresses hope that the "show'r of freedom [will] lighten, / Those spirits, now so drooping low". "The Convict on the Isle of France" celebrates a resolution (although an unlikely one) to the transportation of an Irish patriot. The convict, either an escapee or the survivor of a shipwreck, is discovered by a coast-guard sympathetic to "those oppressed on Erin's shore", who arranges his pardon.

Its last verse tells of him gaining his freedom once more on his "native isle". "Trial and Sentence of Mitchell" relates its hero's supposed brave words from the dock — "I nothing am fearing for the rights of old Erin" — and the ballad's audience is exhorted to "unite and petition, / For the freedom of Mitchell". "Granua's Lament for the Loss of Her Blackbird Mitchel" concludes hoping for Mitchel to burst his chains and return to "Erin's Isle", and hoping that Ireland will soon "triumph over base tyranny". "W. MacNamara's Lament for John Mitchell" describes the uprising of 1848 as "The work, great and grand, that was so long in hand", and it states that if "every man" had participated, then the green flag "Would now be seen on each rampart wall". In "Mitchel's Address to his Countrymen", the speaker's wife tells him that it is better to die for Ireland's rights "Than live in slavery", and in its final verse he urges the Irish to keep up their courage because it will soon be time to act. "Smith O'Brien's [sic] Farewell" and "Mitchel's Farewell to Ireland" both assert that the transportation system is not powerful enough to dominate the spirit of those who resist England's occupation.35

"Lines Written on the Melancholy Death of T.F. Meagher" draws a parallel between Meagher's actions in Ireland and America. It describes him as a patriot "Who proved himself an Irishman both here and on Columbias [sic] shore". His successes in America where "He fought and was victorious the slave born man to free" have obvious implications for Ireland. This is underlined in the speaker's vow: "Oh if his body can be found I'll bring it to his native shore, / And inter it with the patriots who stood by him in days of yore".36


36 "Lines Written on the Melancholy Death of T.F. Meagher", CM, 74.
"The Escape of Meagher" concentrates on his escape from Van Diemen's Land, describing an Irish victory over an English legal system, albeit on the other side of the world. The ballad is addressed to "You true Irish heroes" and offers a tale of encouragement, its chorus celebrating the failure of transportation to hold Meagher captive. Meagher escapes and the judge believes that he will lose his office if the convict is not recaptured. When the judge approaches the Chief of Police, he turns out to be Irish and refuses to pursue Meagher because he and the escapee are "of the one blood". Irish solidarity allows Meagher to escape and presumably causes the judge to lose his job. The convict receives a hero's welcome when he reaches New York.37

Irish Transportation Love Songs

There is also a group of ballads that are essentially love songs in which transportation is used as a device to separate the lovers. The usual structure involves a man's forced parting from a woman whose rich parents oppose a marriage between them. Transportation is not blamed on "the laws of England's hostile crown", as it is a poem composed by a convict in New South Wales,38 but it is presented as unjust nevertheless — as a contrivance on the part of the woman's father. "A Lady's Love and Loyalty for Her Sweetheart" is the most explicit about the reasons for transportation. The speaker is the woman whose lover is banished:

My father call'd me down, one day, and thus to me did say,
I hear you're courting Richard, come tell me now I pray,
Will you your friends disgrace with him of low degree,
Before you marry Richard, transported he shall be....

37 "The Escape of Meagher", TL, 62. Although it is not a broadside, "The Fenian's Escape", Wright, ed., Irish Emigrant Ballads, 211, also celebrates a group of Fenians overcoming the "Saxon fetters" and escaping from Western Australia to America.

38 Francis MacNamara, "Labouring with the Hoe", FP, 39.
My father in a short time had my love sent away,
[And] by his cruel perjury, the truth to tell I may,
[He] swore he robb'd him of his watch, likewise 200 pound,
[And] sent my darling on the sea which did me sore confound.\(^{39}\)

"A New Song Called The Navan Lovers" is spoken by the woman whose lover, a carpenter, has been transported because of the "false oaths" that her rich father swore against him, and the transportee in "The Croppy Boy" is banished for seven years "For nothing but loving a maid". In "Erin's Lovely Home" a poor man elopes with a woman, only to be discovered by her rich father. He is marched off to Omagh gaol and then "transported from Erin's lovely home". If "The Girl I Left Behind Me" is a transportation ballad, it is an extremely confused one, although it is clearly related to this group. The speaker is "bound for a foreign land, / Against [his] inclination" but his destination (called both "Sydney" and "Van Diemen's land") is described as "the land of liberty". We learn that his friends banished him for fear that he would wed his "darling".\(^{40}\)

The reason which this group of ballads give for transportation makes a resolution easier than in the ballads about crime or protest, and in each of them transportation ends or is to end favourably for the transportee. In "A Lady's Love and Loyalty for Her Sweetheart" the woman's determination enables a reunion. She dresses in a sailor's suit to "cross the raging main" but her father follows and catches her, locking her in a room. She escapes again, finds her lover in apparently good circumstances and the ballad's last words are "we both live happy in a foreign country". "The Croppy Boy" begins with the return of the transportee who has "The purest of gold on his fingers" and "Rich diamonds ... at his will, / And now he's at home in great splendour". It suggests that "the prayers of the faithful protected / The lad they call young Jemmy Coyle". In "A New Song Called The Navan Lovers", the woman's

\(^{39}\) "A Lady's Love and Loyalty for Her Sweetheart", \textit{CM}, 24.

determined action results in a reunion of the lovers. She takes 5,000 pounds, dresses like a man and goes by steampacket (presumably the latest in luxury travel) to America to search for her lover. Having had no luck, she continues to New South Wales where she meets her lover and buys his freedom. They sail back to Ireland, are married in Navan and now "they have a son and gold for him in store". In "Erin's Lovely Home" the woman says that she will wait for her lover's return, and in "The Girl I Left Behind Me" the speaker finishes saying that he will return to his "native home".

"The Newry Transport" and "The Irish Transport" seem to be a merging of the British warning ballad, "Justices and Old Bailey", with this group of Irish love songs. "The Newry Transport" begins very similarly to "Justices and Old Bailey" with the lines "Adieu to you judges and juries, / Your jails and your justices too". It also has one verse which reproduces a motif from the Irish love songs above:

My name it is William Delany —
In this country I'm very well known;
For the courting of a nobleman's daughter,
I'm banished from my native home.

Like "Justices and Old Bailey" the ballad offers a number of possible resolutions to the separation. The strongest is that "The time shall appear like a moment — / I'll return to the girl I adore". The speaker in "The Irish Transport" was "sent for a slave" to "some foreign country". As we have seen, this ballad contains a verse alien to "Justices and Old Bailey" and at least related to the above group:

Oft times have I wonder'd how young women love young men,
And oft times have I wonder'd how young men love them,
Since a woman has been my ruin and my sad downfall,
Which has caused me to lie between lime and stone walls.

And it too finishes with the expectation that they will be re-united because the speaker will soon "be set free" and he will "go straight home to Ireland [his] Polly love to see".


As well as illustrating the way that those with power manipulate the legal system for their own ends, this group of ballads has other political implications, with Irish nationalism never too far below the surface. A version of "Erin's Lovely Home" printed by Haly in Cork has a wood-cut above the text bearing the inscription "Erin Go Bragh" or "Ireland Forever". The title of "The Croppy Boy" is itself suggestive of Irish political activism, this meaning for the word "croppy" deriving from the practice of the rebels of 1798 who cropped their hair short to express sympathy with the French Revolution. In the ballad the animals of Ireland express their sympathy for the Irish victim:

The wild fowl in grief they did mourn,  
But new [sic] they did chorus quite shrill,  
To please young Jemmy once more,  
In the lovely sweet shades of Coothill.43

An indication of these love songs' closeness to the political ballads is present in two previously unnoticed broadsides, "A New Song Called William Donnelly" and "A New Song Called Erin Machree", both held in the National Library of Ireland. These ballads link the two genres, although both are primarily love songs. In the former, Donnelly is transported for fifteen years to Van Diemen's Land because of his political stance — "for being a bold United man" — instead of through the machinations of a rich father, and this necessitates other alterations to the love-song structure. The father is without a role and does not appear, while the daughter's position is taken by a rich woman who lives in Australia instead of Ireland. Her love for the convict becomes a way to turn transportation into a positive experience for a political transportee. An unfortunate sufferer is the servant girl whom he had loved in Ireland, a remnant of the daughter in the usual structure, who is now forgotten.44

44 A New Song Called William Donnelly, Broadside Ballads Collection, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, 116.
"A New Song Called Erin Machree" follows the pattern of the other love songs more closely, having as its hero a poor man who loves a woman of higher degree. However, this time it is not his poverty to which the woman's family objects, but the fact that he was "a Roman". The similarity between the false swearing by the rich father in most of these love songs and the perjury of the traitors in the more overtly political ballads is very clear here. The woman's family bribe a "false villain" to swear that the speaker is "a member of a rebel corps". As is typical, the system's iniquity is defeated by the lovers, this time with the woman obtaining a pardon from the Queen, becoming a Roman Catholic and the couple living happily in "Erin Machree".45

In Britain and Ireland the popular song of the transportation period was a site of conflict between ideologies. Although the British transportation broadsides tended to promote the dominant social order, there is evidence of resistance within them, and in Ireland oppositional culture far outweighed dominant culture. The transportation ballads were among the songs brought out to Australia by the convicts and were an important influence on some of the songs produced by convicts while they experienced the operation of the transportation system. The British naval surgeon Peter Cunningham's Two Year's in New South Wales contains a description of convicts embarking:

Before leaving the Hulk, the convicts are thoroughly clothed in new suits and ironed; and it is curious to observe with what nonchalance some of these fellows will turn the jingling of their chains into music whereto they dance and sing.46

45 A New Song Called Erin Machree, Broadside Ballads Collection, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, 137.

46 Peter Cunningham, Two Years in New South Wales, ed. David S. Macmillan (1827; Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1966), 290.
Cunningham encouraged singing because he believed that it was good for the convicts' health.\textsuperscript{47} Another surgeon, T.B. Wilson, aimed "never to permit the slightest slang expression to be used, nor flash songs to be sung, nor swearing". However, Wilson found that it was "nearly impossible to restrain their almost unconquerable propensity [for song and swearing] while below".\textsuperscript{48} Here popular culture is performing a different and more specific social function. The convicts are using song (and dance) to help cope with the hardships of their life — both the irons and the voyage — and, significantly, in the second instance they are singing in defiance of their masters. The convict ballads were to operate in a similar fashion, helping their audience to cope with the transportation system and enabling them to express and foster resistance to that system.

\textsuperscript{47} Cunningham records that on the voyage "Dancing is encouraged ... every afternoon, and they may sing all day long", \textit{Two Years in New South Wales}, 293.

Part Two. Popular Convict Verse.

"Resign to you — you cowardly dogs! a thing I ne'er will do,
For I'll fight this night with all my might," cried bold Jack Donahoo.
"I'd rather roam these hills and dales, like wolf or kangaroo,
Than work one hour for Government!" cried bold Jack Donahoo.

"Bold Jack Donahoo"
A.B. Paterson, ed., Old Bush Songs
Chapter 5
Popular Convict Verse: The Corpus

In Australia the balance between hegemony and coercion was very different from that in Britain and Ireland. Where the state resorted to repression when hegemony failed in Britain and Ireland, the colonies in Australia were founded on coercion. Nevertheless, alongside the violence of the convict settlements, there were also attempts to construct a hegemony. Bob Connell and Terry Irving note that the Anglican church was vocal in its advocacy of obedience, stability, repentance and strict morals, and its preaching was supplemented by the judgements of the magistrates, by the speeches of government officials, and by the contents of the newspapers.¹

No broadside press developed in Australia and it is difficult to decide exactly what falls into the category of popular poetry. At times the early colonial press has been presented as a continuation of the broadside — for example, Hugh Anderson writes:

The place occupied by the verse broadside in England was filled in this country by verses contributed to the newspapers. Taking the whole period of Australian history, a list of songs first printed in this way would include a large proportion of our "folksongs". If we limit ourselves to the years before the gold rushes, we find such choice pieces in the newspapers of the day as ... "The Exile of Erin", "Botany Bay Courtship"... In every way except in the manner of publication, such songs are identical with broadsides.²

It is true that the verse published in the Australian press contained values which were similar to those of the majority of the British broadsides, but it was different in important ways.

Most significantly, the ballads and poems published in the early newspapers were by no means clearly "popular" in the sense of being produced by or for those without access to economic, political and cultural power.\(^3\) The *Sydney Gazette* was a semi-official newspaper, a large part of whose role was to print government notices, and it was a mouth-piece for official ideology, particularly in the period between 1810 and 1821. As R.B. Walker has pointed out, it was "kept at Government house, and printed on a government press with government ink on government paper", and it was censored until 1824.\(^4\) John Byrnes suggests that, during the Macquarie years, church and state "were unanimous on patriotism, marriage, gambling, drinking and the need for Sunday worship", and the *Sydney Gazette* expressed official attitudes on these subjects.\(^5\) Other newspapers such as the *Australian* and the *Sydney Monitor* could, at times, sharply criticize the way the colony was governed, but the verse which the papers printed was almost always high cultural — directed towards an educated few. One such poem was the earliest extant ballad produced in Australia which appeared in the *Sydney Gazette* in April 1804. Although it was inspired by the most significant convict uprising, the rebellion of several hundred convicts at Castle Hill, it was far from a celebration of that event. "The Volunteers", subitled "A Ballad", was lavish in its praise for those ready to jump to the defence of the existing order:

When menac'd with civil commotion and noise,
Shall Britons inactively slumber?
Then away to the field, the bright musket to poise,
With courage, regardless of number.

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With patriot firmness the laws we'll maintain;
With spirit and vigor we'll brave the campaign;
Our women and children relinquish their fears,
And trust to the prowess of bold Volunteers.  

Occasionally the newspapers would print a piece written in the style of popular poetry. Where these had convicts as subject matter they have, in a few instances, been picked up by the folk revival, supplied with tunes and regarded as "folksong". One such ballad, "The Exile of Erin", long seen as an Irish convict's wistful thoughts of home, was actually written by the Rev. John Mcgarvie, a Scottish Presbyterian minister with literary aspirations. He had based the poem on his compatriot Thomas Campbell's "The Exile of Erin" which had been widely circulated in Britain and Ireland. There is no evidence, however, that the local version gained any popularity until it was re-published by Stewart and Keesing in 1957, and then taken up by the singers of the folk revival. The poems printed by the newspapers and magazines range from sentimental and sympathetic views of convict suffering such as Mcgarvie's, to poems like "Australian Courtship" and "The Happy Family", which were probably interpreted by their initial audience as ridiculing convict ways, in particular their perceived drinking and sexual habits. Verse such as this falls outside the scope of the present study as it is neither produced nor consumed by those groups without power.

6 "The Volunteers", Sydney Gazette, 8 April 1804, 3.

7 "The Exile of Erin", Sydney Gazette, 26 May 1829, 4. "M", to whom the poem is attributed, has been identified as the Rev. John Mcgarvie in Elizabeth Webby, Early Australian Poetry: An Annotated Bibliography (Sydney: Hale and Ironmonger, 1982), 12.

8 Campbell's ballad was sung in Australia at least by Rev. James Harold, one of the 1798 rebels, on the evening of his arrival in Sydney in 1800, Patrick O'Farrell, The Irish in Australia (Sydney: New South Wales UP, 1986), 33.


A few pieces attributed to convicts, and sometimes written in a style echoing the British and Irish broadside ballads, found their way into print, presumably because of the sentiments they expressed. They reflect their authors' idea of what literature should be, and are frequently statements of dominant ideology. An editor sarcastically titled one poem "A Poetical Gem", but made it clear that it was published because of its ideological position, explaining — "Though not possessed of any peculiar poetical merit, the lines convey a moral worthy of attention; and at the request of a friend who picked them up within the walls of the Factory, we give them a verbatim et literatim publicity". The poem ends with sentiments very much in keeping with those of the British warning ballads:

When landed I must be submissive & try
to shin [sic] ardent spirits and Bad Company
for if time will allow me I hope to return
Once more to Old England my Dear Native home.11

"An Address to Surgeon M'Clure" is a deferential piece, apparently composed by a convict praising the surgeon and captain of the vessel that brought him to the colony.12

Another ballad, attributed to an unidentified convict and described by its editor as "Rhyming Doggerel", has a chorus:

God bless the King, long may he reign
Whether it be afloat or on dry land;
And Lord save our fellow men from the dire pain
Of a transport to Norfolk Island.13

The verse about convict life which appeared in the poet's corners of newspapers for a non-popular audience also partially worked to legitimize another aspect of dominant culture, the extremely unequal power relationship between men and women. Not a single woman in Australia, whether convict or free, is mentioned in the popular

12 John Devon, "An Address to Surgeon M'Clure", Sydney Monitor, 7 September 1838, 2.
13 "Piracy of the Wellington or The Norfolk Islander's Lament", Australian, 14 December 1832, 4.
verse of the convict period and this is, to some extent at least, a result of what Anne Summers has identified as a stereotypical view of women prevalent in the colonies. She argues that men perceived convict women as nothing but whores or "damned whores" and that this stereotype was extended to apply to most women in the convict colonies:

It is difficult to ascertain how many [of the convict women] had been prostitutes before coming to Australia: Robson calculates that about one-fifth had engaged in full- or part-time prostitution. So the wholesale adoption of whoredom on coming to Australia has to be explained in terms of the social climate of this country and the expectations held of women. It was deemed necessary by both the local and the British authorities to have a supply of whores to keep the men, both convict and free, quiescent. The Whore stereotype was devised as a calculated sexist means of social control and then, to absolve those who benefited from it from having to admit to their actions, characterized as being the fault of the women who were damned by it.14

J.B. Hirst notes the way in which "respectable" colonists made fun of what they saw as the colony's depravity, as one way to come to terms with it and with the way they themselves were seen by outsiders.15 A number of the non-popular ballads composed about convicts from outside the convict system and published in the newspapers probably operated in this way, and some of these helped to perpetuate the "damned whore" stereotype. This is particularly clear in "The Happy Family" from the Sydney Gazette, 17 July 1832, where the folly of a settler who had married a female convict is illustrated:

For the lady was young, and the lady was fair,
And withal so wondrous gay,
That wherever a ball was, she was there
The pride of Botany Bay.
The first of her virtues was beauty you see,
And the Hundred and Second was chastity.


And yet I have sometimes heard it averred,  
How truly I cannot say,  
While the Forty-eighth and the Seventy-third  
Were quartered at Botany Bay,  
That this lady so fair had friends that were nearer,  
Than even the settler himself — and far dearer.16

Outside the medium of print, but widely disseminated at least in some cases, was a group of popular ballads including "Bold Jack Donahoe", "The Convict's Arrival" (better known as "Moreton Bay"), "The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig" and "The Ballad of Martin Cash". All of these have been attributed to the Irish poet Francis MacNamara, "Frank the Poet", some without evidence and none with complete certainty. There was also a body of popular convict verse which did not reach the newspapers. Some pieces were probably composed for merely personal consumption but others were intended for a wider audience, in particular the work of MacNamara.17

The only exception to the pattern just outlined is MacNamara's somewhat problematic poem, "A Dialogue between Two Hibernians in Botany Bay", published in the Sydney Gazette on 8 February 1840.18 It is possible that this piece fits into both groups by virtue of the fact that different audiences could have different interpretations. The body of the poem indicates that the conversation between two Irish convicts is comic in intent, like much of MacNamara's other work. In fact it is largely a nonsense poem, though the opening and closing segments express views which ostensibly oppose Irish resistance to English rule. If the "Dialogue" was performed to members of an Irish subculture in an English penal colony, these passages would not have been taken at face value. For that audience the poem could operate as a piece of distinctively


17 The two most useful sources of popular convict verse are John Meredith and Rex Whalan, Frank the Poet: The Life and Works of Francis MacNamara, Studies in Australian Folklore 1, (Melbourne: Red Rooster, 1979), hereafter referred to as EP, and John Meredith, The Wild Colonial Boy: Bushranger Jack Donahoe, 1806-1830, Studies in Australian Folklore 3, (Melbourne: Red Rooster, 1982), hereafter referred to as WCB.

18 "A Dialogue between Two Hibernians in Botany Bay", Sydney Gazette, 8 February 1840, 3.
Irish humour, containing some criticism of the coercion involved in the transportation system. For the different audience that the poem would reach via the Sydney Gazette, it might serve to confirm stereotypical views of the Irish, and Gazette readers would probably have interpreted the criticism of Daniel O'Connell and the White Boys in a more literal way.¹⁹

The popular poems and ballads produced during the convict period fall mainly into four rough types, all direct responses to the convict system. Two ballad groups address the prisoners' day-to-day lives, focusing either on the work demanded of them or the punishments they receive. Another type tells of the exploits of convicts who became bushrangers and these can be called "convict bushranger ballads" or "early bushranger ballads" to distinguish them from ballads about the bushrangers of the 1860s and later — Frank Gardiner, Ben Hall, Ned Kelly and so on. A fourth very small group of ballads about escapes from the convict system are in many ways similar to those about bushranging. In fact the dividing lines between these groups are often murky because of the ways in which they are interrelated, just as work, punishment, bushranging and escape were inextricably related for the convicts themselves. Some describe convicts being punished for indigence, while others show them escaping to sea or as bushrangers because of the exacting work or the severity of the punishments to which they were subjected.

Authorship of the Popular Verse from the Convict Period

When Marjorie Pizer published *Freedom on the Wallaby* in the early 1950s she wrote accurately that "Little of [Frank the Poet's] work and no authentic account of his life have yet been discovered".20 Since then, important research by John Meredith and Rex Whalan has rectified both of the gaps mentioned by Pizer. They have conclusively identified Frank the Poet as Francis MacNamara who arrived on the *Eliza* in 1832; they have provided a considerable amount of information about his convict experience; and they have compiled a list of "Works of Francis MacNamara" which contains seventeen items:

1 "Epigram on Solitary Confinement"
2 "Bold Jack Donahoe"
3 "The Convict's Arrival"
4 "Labouring with the Hoe"
5 "A Petition from the A. A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard"
6 "For the Company Underground"
7 "A Petition from the Chain Gang at Newcastle to Captain Furlong the Superintendent Praying Him to Dismiss a Scourger named Duffy from the Cookhouse and Appoint a Man in His Room"
8 "A Convict's Tour to Hell"
9 "A Dialogue between Two Hibernians in Botany Bay"
10 "Epigram of Introduction"
11 "The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig in Recherche Bay, Aug, 1829"
12 "The Ballad of Martin Cash"
13 "Epigram on Beef"
14 "Farewell to Tasmania"
15 (Calf Family History)
16 "Fine Copy of Man Was Made to Mourn"
17 "Mcquade's Curse".21

Numbers 15 and 16 are only examples of MacNamara's skill as a scribe, and so fall outside the discussion here. Most of the items which Meredith and Whalan attribute to

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21 PP. 29-66.
Frank the Poet seem likely to have been composed by him, although a few are open to question.

The pieces which are most certainly MacNamara's are those in a manuscript in the Mitchell Library that bears his autograph. These are "The Convict's Tour to Hell", "For the Company Underground", "A Petition from the Chain Gang", and "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River".22 "Labouring with the Hoe" is also in the Mitchell Library, in a manuscript marked by the name "Donall", and beneath the title is the inscription — "by Francis MacNamara, otherwise known as Frank the Poet".23 Some of its lines resemble part of "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River",24 and the style is similar to those which bear his autograph. "A Dialogue between Two Hibernians in Botany Bay" is printed in the Sydney Gazette on 8 February 1840 and is there attributed to Frank the Poet.25 The Adventures of Martin Cash attributes MacNamara with what Meredith and Whalan have titled the "Epigram on Solitary Confinement" and the "Epigram of Introduction", and these seem likely to be his, particularly given that a similar piece of extemporizing was reported from MacNamara's trial in Kilkenny.26 Two other short verses, "Farewell to Tasmania" and the "Epigram on Beef", are included in Meredith and Whalan's list. The first of these appears in a manuscript bearing the initials "M.H.", along with "The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig" and a shorter version of "A Convict's Tour to Hell", and is similar to


24 "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River", FP, 40-41; note to "Labouring with the Hoe", FP, 40.

25 "A Dialogue between Two Hibernians in Botany Bay", Sydney Gazette, 8 February 1840, 3.

the other short pieces. Less certain is the "Epigram on Beef" which has been attributed to MacNamara on several occasions but which is a variation of a type of verse that was widely known. A corrupt version of "The Convict's Arrival" is linked with MacNamara's name in a manuscript written by Jeremiah Shea which Meredith and Whalan suggest dates from about 1870.

In The Wild Colonial Boy Meredith discusses the suggestion that Frank the Poet was the author of one of the Jack Donahoe ballads. A novel written by John Shaw in the 1890s, called Captain Stormalong the Bushranger, describes one of its characters referring to Jack Donahoe and then going off to sleep "while crooning in an undertone the ballad in which Frank the Poet has preserved the legend of that noted bushranger". Meredith suggests that the ascription may be "based upon, or inspired by orally circulating legends of the period". He argues that because Shaw does not quote from the ballad it is not possible to identify which of the known Donahoe ballads this is. However, in other parts of the novel Shaw does quote lines from a ballad about Donahoe, for example, "There's a pill of lead as'll do you good, cried bold Jack Donahoe". It is quite possible that Shaw regarded Frank the Poet as the author of these lines. They do not belong to any of the extant Donahoe ballads.


30 Some of the following argument about MacNamara's authorship of Donahoe ballads has been published in Philip Butters, "The Less Rebellious Frank the Poet", Overland 112 (1988): 58-62.

31 John Shaw, Captain Stormalong the Bushranger (London: Routledge, 1898), 43-44.

32 WCB, 39-40.

33 Shaw, Captain Stormalong the Bushranger, 129.
In *Frank the Poet*, Meredith and Whalan do attribute a specific text of "Bold Jack Donahoe" to MacNamara. The only evidence for their ascription is the fact that this particular version rhymes "late" with "retreat". Meredith suggests that "Either Frank the Poet spoke with a broad brogue, or wished his readers to so", and he points to MacNamara's rhyming of "please" with "days".  

But the presence of this rhyme in the Donahoe ballad can be used to argue nothing more concrete than an Irish influence which could easily be the result of transmission rather than composition. Even if it could be shown to be the latter it would not adequately identify MacNamara.

In fact it looks likely that the "late / retrace" rhyme was the result of transmission, although this cannot be proved conclusively. The version which Meredith and Whalan attribute to MacNamara is one of three clearly related groups of ballads about Donahoe in *The Wild Colonial Boy*. The complex relationship between these different groups is discussed in detail in chapter 7, and it is sufficient to say, at this stage, that the version in which "late" is rhymed with "retrace" appears to be a variant of a prior version, the text of "Bold Jack Donahoe" published by A.B. Paterson.  

The relevant verse of the text which Meredith and Whalan attribute to MacNamara is as follows:

"Oh no," says cowardly Walmsley, "Your laws we'll not fulfil,  
You'll see there's eight or ten of them advancing on yon hill.  
If it comes to an engagement, you'll rue it when too late,  
So turn about and come with us — we'll form a quick retrace"

The Paterson version, finishes the corresponding verse with the lines:

And if we wait we'll be too late, the battle we will rue."
"Then begone from me, you cowardly dog," replied Jack Donahoe.

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34 PP. 31.
36 *WCB*, 54-55.
37 *WCB*, 56.
This may well represent an earlier text for two reasons. First, it reads as a more carefully crafted piece than the one Meredith and Whalan attribute to Frank the Poet. For example, each verse, except the first which is introductory, finishes with the words "Jack Donahoe" but the preceding part of the line is carefully varied: "It's there they lifted him the brave and bold ..."; "These were the four associates of bold ..."; "And in quick time they did advance to take ..."; "Than work one hour for Government," cried bold ..."; "For today I'll fight with all my might" cried bold..."; and so on. This feature is, of course, lost in the "late / retrace" rhyme.

Secondly, the Paterson version's status is given support by the earliest extant texts of the ballad, broadsides collected in Ireland, which seem likely to be based on an Australian original. These are very close in wording to the Paterson version and belong in the same group. Ron Edwards published five broadside versions of "Bold Jack Donahoe" in The Convict Maid, all of which have a verse close to the one which Meredith attributes to MacNamara but with the rhyme "rue / Donahoe" rather than "late / retrace".38

There have also been two attempts to identify the author of "Brave Donahue".39 A book by Thomas Walker, Felony of New South Wales, contains a story titled "Told Around the Bushrangers' Fire, by Will Jones, a Bushranger" in which the fictional Jones says that Donahue made up a song about himself that his men would sing "when safe and far enough away in the bush".40 Jones claims to have learnt the song from Walmsley. Meredith suggests that for this story too, although it "cannot be taken as fact, there is every possibility that [it was] actually based upon, or inspired by orally

38 CM, 77-81.
39 WCB, 40-41.
40 [Thomas Walker], Felony of New South Wales: Realistic Stories of the Early Days of the Convict Settlement of Botany Bay (Sydney: Dymock, 1891), 60-64.
circulating legends of the period".41 However, there seems very little likelihood that Donahoe composed a ballad about himself. The fact that it is written in the first person is not an adequate reason for attributing it to Donahoe, especially given the self-consciously literary style of "Brave Donahue".

Russel Ward makes the suggestion that the ballad could be the work of Frank the Poet because of undefined "internal evidence".42 As with Meredith and Whalan's arguing on the basis of rhyme, the text of this ballad shows nothing more concrete than the influence of Irish nationalism. It is quite conceivable that Frank the Poet might have composed a Donahoe ballad celebrating the career of a bushranger who had flourished a few years before MacNamara himself reached the colony, just as he seems to have celebrated the seizure of the Cyprus Brig which had similarly taken place before he reached Australia.43 MacNamara certainly admired the bushranger and referred to him in "A Convict's Tour to Hell".44 But it cannot be proved that he composed such a ballad, and it is certainly impossible to make a reasonable judgement about which of the extant Donahoe ballads might have been his work.

Meredith and Whalan's ascription of "The Ballad of Martin Cash" to Frank the Poet is also by no means certain, although again it is the sort of material that he could be expected to compose. It is recorded in the first edition of The Adventures of Martin Cash which, as has been noted, contains several references to Frank the Poet and his extempore verse.45 The Cash autobiography describes a copy of the ballad being handed to the bushranger while he was on board a vessel sailing to Norfolk Island at the end of 1844. The first mate who gave Cash the text of the ballad told him that "it

41 WCB, 40.
43 "The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig in Recherche Bay, Aug, 1829", FP, 55-56.
44 FP, 45-49.
was freely circulated through the colony".46 There is, however, no reference to the
authorship of this ballad. Meredith and Whalan acknowledge the lack of
documented evidence that the composition is MacNamara's, but ... feel
that the style is Frank the Poet's, and since Martin Cash was acquainted
with Frank, both having been confined at Port Arthur, it follows that the
poet would be aware of Cash's capture and trial. MacNamara was still at
Port Arthur when Cash was sent to Norfolk Island.47

There seems to be no basis at all in Meredith and Whalan's suggestion that
"Mcquade's Curse" is the work of Frank the Poet.48 In any case the piece falls outside
the scope of this chapter because there is no reason to think that it was composed
during the convict period.

It is not possible to identify the authors of any of the other popular ballads
produced during the convict period, although there have been occasional suggestions.
Cliff Hanna wonders whether "Jim Jones at Botany Bay" might be "mainly" the work
of Charles MacAlister, the squatter whose book of reminiscences is the sole source of
this ballad. Hanna suggests that "The uneven stanza pattern — ten lines in the first and
twelve in the second — is suspiciously like those in MacAlister's own ballads".49
MacAlister's Old Pioneering Days in the Sunny South contains a good deal of verse,
some of which is by well-known poets such as Pope and Gordon, some of which he
claims as his own, and some of which is traditional material that has been collected
elsewhere such as "The Old Bullock Dray".50 Certainly his text of "Jim Jones at
Botany Bay" includes features which are found in his own work such as the

46 Martin Cash, The Adventures of Martin Cash, 122-123.
47 FP, 61.
48 FP, 66.
49 Cliff Hanna, "The Ballads: Eighteenth Century to the Present", in Laurie Hergenhan et al., eds.,
50 Charles MacAlister, Old Pioneering Days in the Sunny South (1907; Sydney: Library of
contraction of "the" to "th", however, this is also how he records other material which is undoubtedly traditional. An alternative explanation for the uneven stanza pattern is simply that MacAlister (or his source) has not remembered all the lines of the original ballad. The version printed in The Penguin Australian Songbook includes an extra two lines which neatly turn the ballad into six stanzas each of four lines.\textsuperscript{51} MacAlister was not averse to admitting authorship and he claims a considerable proportion of the verse in his book as his own, but the introduction to "Jim Jones at Botany Bay" seems to suggest that he believed it to be composed by convicts:

Nor does it seem strange, moreover, that whatever attempts were made by the convicts to express their feelings in song, or verse should have been generally of a doleful character, such as the typical song of the convict days which ends this chapter.\textsuperscript{52}

Although he notes that MacAlister provides the name of an air for the ballad — "Irish Molly, Oh!", Hanna suggests that the text "reads more like a literary ballad than a song".\textsuperscript{53} However, Roger Covell points out that this tune is still available in current Irish collections,\textsuperscript{54} and "Jim Jones at Botany Bay" has proved a particularly popular song since the revival of interest in "folk music" which began in the 1950s. Its careful construction may, in fact, suggest that it was not MacAlister who composed it, because it seems more finely crafted than the poems which he attributes to himself. Another possibility is that MacAlister merely touched up a ballad which had been composed during the convict period.

\textsuperscript{51} John Manifold, comp., The Penguin Australian Songbook (Ringwood: Penguin, 1964), 12-13. Manifold claims that "This slightly fuller version was collected by John Meredith", 26. However the additional two lines probably first appeared in the version given in Frank Clune, Wild Colonial Boys (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948), 75. Clune lists Old Pioneering Days in the Sunny South as one of his sources for the book, and it seems likely that he or his literary collaborator, P.R. Stephensen (see Craig Munro, Wild Man of Letters: The Story of P.R. Stephensen (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1984), 239, 255), has added the extra lines.

\textsuperscript{52} Old Pioneering Days, 71.

\textsuperscript{53} Hanna, "The Ballads", 199.

\textsuperscript{54} Roger Covell, Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society (Melbourne: Sun, 1967), 43.
The Audience and Popularity of the Convict Verse

The initial audience and popularity of the ballads and poems produced during the convict period is difficult to ascertain. Material from a subculture at times in opposition to authority was unlikely to find its way into print, especially in the absence of a popular press and, as we have seen, it seems that only verse which was apparently unthreatening to dominant ideology appeared in the newspapers. Many items must have disappeared and others must have been more popular than the scanty remains might suggest. Cunningham refers to the existence of ballads about the exploits of bushrangers in the early or mid-1820s:

The vanity of being talked of, I verily believe, leads many foolish fellows to join in this kind of life, songs often being made about their exploits by their sympathising brethren.... It is the boast of most of them, that their names will live in the remembrance of the colony long after their exit from among us to some penal settlement, either in this world or the next; Riley, the captain of the Hunter's River banditti, vaunting that he should be long spoken of (whatever his fate might be), in fear by his enemies, and in admiration by his friends.55

The fact that none of these ballads has survived is sufficient to indicate that a great deal of important material has been lost, and that the number of times a ballad has been collected does not necessarily correlate with its popularity among its original audience. This point is underlined by the discovery in America of another bushranging ballad, "Johnny Troy", which has not survived in Australia.56

The "Bold Jack Donahoe" / "Wild Colonial Boy" group of ballads were undoubtedly extremely popular. Graham Seal has noted that these ballads, either

55 Peter Cunningham, Two Years in New South Wales, ed. David S. Macmillan (1827; Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1966), 282.

separately "or in an apparently infinite number of combinations, are probably the most widely sung of all Australian folksongs, judging from the frequency with which they have been collected". Other ballads which exist in several versions are likely to have been popular. "The Convict's Arrival" has been collected a number of times. Further evidence of its popularity is the fact that in 1879 "The Jerilderie Letter", attributed to Ned Kelly, paraphrased part of the ballad:

transported to Van Diemand's Land to pine their young lives away in starvation and misery among tyrants worse than the promised hell itself...

"The Convict's Arrival" has lines from which the above passage clearly derives:

He said, I have been a prisoner at Port MacQuarie,
At Norfolk Island and Emu Plain,
At Castle Hill and cursed Towngabbie —
And at all those places I've worked in chains.

But of all the places of condemnation,
In each penal station of New South Wales,
Moreton Bay I found no equal,
For excessive tyranny each day prevails.

"The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig in Recherche Bay, Aug, 1829" has also been collected from a number of sources. The Reverend John West writes about the composition and dissemination of this ballad in his History of Tasmania:

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58 FP, 31-38.


60 FP, 31-32.

61 FP, 55-58.
The capture of the *Cyprus* in Recherche Bay, on the voyage to Macquarie Harbour was a stirring episode in the history of transportation. It excited some interest in Great Britain, and was dramatized at a London theatre. The prisoners, who wage war with society, regarded the event with exultation; and long after, a song, composed by a sympathising poet, was propagated by oral tradition, and sung in chorus around the fires in the interior. This version of the story made the capture a triumph of the oppressed over their oppressors.62

In *The Adventures of Martin Cash* a sailor hands the bushranger a copy of "The Ballad of Martin Cash", claiming that "it was freely circulated through the colony, he having heard it sung a day or two after his arrival".63 However, this work is the only source for the ballad.

There is less evidence that the poems were widely disseminated. *The Adventures of Martin Cash* describes MacNamara reciting "a few extempore verses for the amusement of the company", a convict audience at Port Arthur on Christmas day, 1842.64 Cash also records the "Epigram on Solitary Confinement" in a way which suggests that he heard it independently of MacNamara's public performance, perhaps indicating that it had some oral circulation among convicts. And "A Convict's Tour to Hell" was known and performed by at least one convict who evidently knew other pieces of MacNamara's. The journal of Thomas Whitley records how Thomas Holdstock collected a version of the poem at Stroud from an "old hand" who had known Frank the Poet. It records that "This ancient who was totally illiterate had committed to memory some pieces of the Poet's work and was induced to recite the Tour piece — Holdstock writing from dictation".65

It is probably to be expected that most of the verse which was composed from a convict viewpoint and which addressed the labour and discipline that characterized


convict life, or which showed an interest in convicts who escaped from the authorities to live as bushrangers or to flee the colonies, would be composed by convicts, or perhaps ex-convicts, for an audience of their fellows. However, several of Frank the Poet's pieces are directed towards non-convicts. His "Epigram on Solitary Confinement" is addressed to Captain Murray, Superintendent of the Phoenix Hulk. "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard" is addressed to James Ebsworth, an acting Commissioner of the Australian Agricultural Company. "For the Company Underground" is addressed to "J Crosdale", apparently William Croasdill, Superintendent of the Australian Agricultural Company's Colliery Establishment at Newcastle. And "A Petition from the Chain Gang at Newcastle" is addressed to Captain Furlong, Superintendent of Chain Gangs at Newcastle from January 1838 until February 1840. Some of these pieces could well have reached their stated addressee, for example the verse to Captain Murray which is a plea for a reduced sentence, and possibly the petition to Captain Furlong which asks that a particular scourger not be appointed as a cook.66

On the other hand, although in most cases it cannot be proved, these poems probably did reach a convict audience. "For the Company Underground" is not the sort of message which the Superintendent of the Colliery Establishment is likely to have taken lightly, and may never have been intended for his ears. And it has already been suggested that this verse did, indeed, have a circulation among convicts. As is argued below, such poems would have had a particular relevance to a convict audience and, in some cases, for example "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard", would have been interpreted by that audience in a markedly different way from the person to whom they were addressed. Like the rest

of MacNamara's verse, they may well have reached a convict audience, and at least in some cases, could have been composed primarily for that target.67

The Dating of the Convict Verse

The earliest extant bushranging ballads are centred on the figure of John Donahoe, an Irish convict who operated as a bushranger from 1827-30. "Jim Jones at Botany Bay" could conceivably have been composed while Donahoe was at large because its final stanzas refer to the possibility of joining him in the bush.68 "Bold Jack Donahoe" may well have been composed after Donahoe's death, while interest in its subject matter was still strong. However, there is no evidence to provide a date for either of these texts. A number of the pieces composed by Francis MacNamara can be dated, usually from internal evidence. In "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in behalf of the Irish Bard" the poet's flock address "Most noble Ebsworth of Burrell" which, as Meredith and Whalan point out, must refer to James Ebsworth of Booral who was Acting Commissioner of the Australian Agricultural Company between March 1838 and April 1839.69 "A Convict's Tour to Hell", apparently in MacNamara's hand, is headed "Composed and Written October 23rd day, Anno 1839".70 Meredith and Whalan also suggest that "For the Company Underground" and "A Petition from the Chain Gang at Newcastle ..." were probably composed in


68 "Jim Jones at Botany Bay", OBS, 17-18.

69 FP, 40-41.

1839. The "A Dialogue between Two Hibernians in Botany Bay" was published in the Sydney Gazette in February 1840. Other poems and ballads by Frank the Poet were probably composed after he was sent to Van Diemen's Land in 1842. The earliest of the two ballads about convict escapes, "The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig in Recherche Bay, Aug, 1829" could have been one of these. If MacNamara was indeed its author, then the ballad was composed some time after the event as he did not arrive in Australia until 1832. It may well date from the period after he reached Port Arthur in 1842, and this would be in keeping with Rev. West's suggestion that the song which commemorated the event was composed "long after" it had taken place. The "Farewell to Tasmania", if it too was composed by MacNamara, could be dated to after he received his certificate of freedom in 1849.

The other escape ballad, "The Catalpa", was composed much later. It describes the escape of six Fenians from the Fremantle prison in April 1876. In some ways it falls outside the scope of this part of the thesis as it was composed after transportation to Australia had ended, but it deserves to be mentioned here as it deals with the escape of convicts who had been transported, and is in this sense a response to transportation.

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71 FP, 42, 44.

72 "A Dialogue between Two Hibernians in Botany Bay", Sydney Gazette, 8 February 1840, 3.

73 FP, 55-56.

74 Rev. John West, History of Tasmania, 425.

75 FP, 23, 62.

76 "The Catalpa", OBS, 26.
Models for the Popular Ballads of the Convict Period

Composers of convict ballads and verse sometimes used familiar structures and diction which they turned to their own ends. The British transportation ballads which warned against crime were the model for a number of the ballads produced during the convict period. In Britain the broadsides of this type were hegemonic in function but in Australia the structure was appropriated for radical purposes, as it had been on a few occasions in Britain. A number of transportation ballads which warned against crime and operated to promote obedience have been collected in Australia from an oral tradition. They include "Van Diemen's Land", "The London Apprentice Boy", and "Caledonia", which is a version of the broadside "James Raeburn".77 In addition to this, Keighley Goodchild mentioned that "The Black Velvet Band" was very popular in the 1880s and it has been collected a number of times.78

A significant proportion of the ballads composed during the convict period have drawn on this type of material. Shared motifs are to be expected in work which deals with similar subject matter, and much of the convict verse inevitably focuses on aspects of the transportation system also present in the British ballads. For example Francis MacNamara's "Labouring with the Hoe" mentions the rough voyage, the hardships of exile, and the arduous labour.79 But the links are sometimes more pronounced than this. Although it ends in effusive praise for those who took up arms against their guards, "The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig in Recherche Bay, Aug, 1829" begins with a verse which has links with the warning broadsides:


78 "The Black Velvet Band", Edwards, Big Book 29. There are obvious reasons for this ballad's popularity. It tells the story of a convict transported for someone else's crime, an attractive version of transportation for a society embarrassed by its convict origins.

79 "Labouring with the Hoe", EP, 39.
Come all you sons of freedom,
A chorus join with me,
I'll sing a song of heroes,
And glorious liberty
Some lads condemned from England
Sail'd to Van Diemens shore,
Their country, friends and parents,
Perhaps never to see more.  

The ballad uses stock motifs from earlier British ballads and hints at the influence of "Young Henry the Poacher" with the line "The hardships we'd to undergo". Singers must also have seen a close connection between the convict ballads and the warning ballads because another version beginning with a verse directly from "Van Dieman's Land" has been collected:

Poor Tom Brown from Nottingham,
Jack Williams and poor Joe,
They were three gallant poacher boys,
Their country all does know,
And by the laws of amalgamack [sic],
That you may understand,
Were fourteen years transported boys,
All to Van Diemens Land.  

"Jim Jones at Botany Bay" is worth quoting in full. It has a considerable number of the elements found in a warning ballad and deviates from that structure only in the last six lines. The warning has been partially put into the judge's mouth and partially replaced by a defiant ending:

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80 "The Seizure of the Cypruss Brig in Recherche Bay, Aug, 1829", FP, 55-56.

81 "Young Henry the Poacher", CM, 40.

82 "The Seizure of the Cypruss Brig in Recherche Bay, Aug, 1829", FP, 57. Cf. "Van Dieman's Land", CM, 32. Meredith and Whalan, FP, 58, suggest that "amalgamack" is a corruption of "an old Game Act".
O, listen for a moment lads, and hear me tell my tale —
How, o'er the sea from England's shore I was compelled to sail.
The jury says, "He's guilty, sir," and says the judge, says he —
"For life, Jim Jones, I'm sending you across the stormy sea;
And take my tip before you ship to join the Iron-gang,
Don't be too gay at Botany Bay, or else you'll surely hang —
Or else you'll hang," he says, says he — "and after that, Jim Jones,
High up upon the gallow-tree the crows will pick your bones —
You'll have no chance for mischief then; remember what I say,
They'll flog the poaching out of you, out there at Botany Bay."

The winds blew high upon the sea, and the pirates came along,
But the soldiers on our convict ship were full five hundred strong,
They opened fire and somehow drove that pirate ship away.
I'd have rather joined that pirate ship than come to Botany Bay:
For night and day the irons clang, and like poor galley slaves
We toil and toil, and when we die must fill dishonoured graves.

The last six lines subvert the warning structure and appropriate it to a very different function:

But by and by I'll break my chains: into the bush I'll go,
And join the brave bushrangers there — Jack Donahoo and Co.;
And some dark night when everything is silent in the town
I'll kill the tyrants, one and all, and shoot the floggers down:
I'll give the Law a little shock: remember what I say,
They'll yet regret they sent Jim Jones in chains to Botany Bay.83

Because most of the Irish transportation broadsides dwelt on events in Ireland,
even those which might have been printed early enough to provide a model for the convict verse did not often have narratives appropriate for that role. But this was not always so, and in fact the two Irish narrative shapes which focus on the transportation itself — the love song and the escape from a penal settlement — may have been used as models. "The Convict's Arrival" has its description of Moreton Bay framed in the structure of an Irish transportation love song, beginning with its speaker's transportation away from the "girl" he adores in Ireland:

83 "Jim Jones at Botany Bay", OBS, 17-18.
I am a native of the land of Erin,
And lately banished from that lovely shore,
I left behind my aged parents,
And the girl I adore.  

Although it differs from the Irish type which appears to be a partial model, it does not reverse that structure, and so finishes with its speaker's return across the ocean. The much later ballad celebrating the escape of Fenian prisoners aboard *The Catalpa* would fit very neatly with the Irish broadsides. Its heroes were banished "for defending their country" and the ballad gloats about political transportees defying the penal authorities and reaching America, very much like "The Escape of Meagher".  

Patrick O'Farrell has pointed out that some of the popular poetry, in particular that most clearly identified as MacNamara's, is closer to "the literary written tradition of the English (or Anglo-Irish) than the oral tradition of the Irish bard".  

MacNamara actually prefaxes "A Convict's Tour to Hell" with lines that he attributes (apparently incorrectly) to Jonathan Swift:

Nor can the foremost of the sons of men
Escape my ribald and licentious pen.

The poem is, like much of Swift's work, a verse satire. It uses the idea of a visit to hell, first known from Virgil's *Aeneid* and later used by Dante and others. Meredith and Whalan compare its opening with lines from "The Story of Orpheus; Burlesqued", once attributed to Swift, which makes use of the same idea:

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86 *The Irish in Australia*, 193.

Upon th' infernal king's highway,
He caper'd on, as who should say,
Since spouse has pass'd the Stygian ferry,
Since spouse is damn'd, I will be merry;
And wights who travel that way daily,
Jog on by his example gaily.
Thus scraping, he to hell advanced;
When he came there the devil danced;
All hell was with the frolic taken,
And with a huge huzza was shaken.  

The parallels between this passage and MacNamara's poem are striking. "A Convict's Tour to Hell" is about a prisoner "Whose valour had for years been tried / On the highway before he died". It also refers to "the Stygian lake", although this is not surprising, but it treats the arrival of Governor Darling in terms strongly reminiscent of the poem attributed to Swift:

At his arrival three cheers were given
Which rent I'm sure the highest Heaven ...
Drums were beating flags were hoisting
There never before was such rejoicing
Dancing singing joy or mirth
In Heaven above or on the earth.  

MacNamara's poetry also contains various stylistic features from an Anglo-Irish high cultural tradition which had found their way into Irish popular verse including broadsides, such as the use of classical and biblical allusions.

Some convict verse shared a more specific diction with the Irish transportation broadsides and rebel songs in general, the diction of Irish nationalism. Aspects of what might be termed a language of opposition were easily transported from an Irish context to an Australian one. "Tyrant" could refer to the English in Ireland or to harsh convict disciplinarians in Australia; "cropy" could be used of rebels in Ireland or of

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89 "A Convict's Tour to Hell", FP, 45-49.
bushrangers in Australia;90 and "Vinegar Hill" could be used to bring wider connotations to the rising at Castle Hill. Frank the Poet's "For the Company Underground" uses a reference to Daniel O'Connell, leader of the movement for Catholic emancipation, in expressing its speaker's determination not to work in the Australian Agricultural Company's mines at Newcastle:

When Christmas falls on the 1st of May
And O'Connell's King of England crown'd,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company underground.91

"Labouring with the Hoe" refers to transportation from Ireland in anti-English terms:

I was convicted by the laws
Of England's hostile crown,
Conveyed across those swelling seas
In slavery's fetters bound.
For ever banished from that shore
Where love and friendship grow
That loss of freedom to deplore
And work the labouring hoe.

And its last verse begins with what appears to be a plea to Irish rebels:

You generous sons of Erin's isle
Whose heart for glory burns,
Pity a wretched exile who
His long-lost country mourns.92

In the early bushranging ballads anti-Crown sentiments stemming from Irish nationalism mesh with, and are often indistinguishable from, those induced by experience of the convict system. One ballad shows Australian bushranging deriving directly from Irish nationalism. It presents Donahoe as carrying on the tradition of

91 EP, 41-42.
92 EP, 39.
Irish rebel leaders, "the Emmets, the Tones, and the Moores" and has the bushranger urging:

If Ireland lies groaning, a hand at her throat,
Which foreigners have from the recreants bought,
Forget not the lessons our fathers have taught.
Though our Isle's full of danger,
And held by the stranger,
Be brave and true. 93

The last verse is a defiant speech by Donahoe addressing the English as the strangers in Australia and linking bushranging with the fight for Irish liberty:

Then hurl me to crime and brand me with shame,
But think not to baulk me, my spirit to tame,
For I'll fight to the last in old Ireland's name,
Though I be a bushranger,
You still are the stranger,
And I'm Donahue.

93 "Brave Donahoe, WCR, 40-41."
"Bold Jack Donahoe" and the Irish Outlaw Tradition

Graham Seal has identified another model for the bushranger ballads produced in Australia, arguing that Australian bushrangers were seen, and to an extent presented themselves, as part of what he terms the "British Isles highwayman tradition". He points out that one of the versions of "Bold Jack Donahoe" explicitly connects Donahoe with his northern hemisphere predecessors:

There were Freincy, Grant, bold Robin Hood, and Brennan and O'Hare, But with Donahoe the bushranger none of them could compare.  

But although the portrayal of Australian bushrangers, both early and late, often shared a number of features with that of British highwaymen, the convict bushranger ballads, and "Bold Jack Donahoe" in particular, are much closer to a specifically Irish tradition. Seal suggests that British highwaymen are the enemies of "unscrupulous local oppressors", while they generally regarded the monarch as "justice and right personified" and he sees the convict bushrangers' antagonism towards the crown as an Australian adaptation. But such opposition was central to the way that a long line of Irish outlaws were popularly perceived.

John Donahoe, the historical figure, was transported for intent to commit a felony, but the most commonly collected versions of "Bold Jack Donahoe" have made their hero part of an Irish outlaw tradition by having him transported for highway robbery. Of the outlaws with whom Donahoe is linked in the list which Seal refers to above, Brennan and Freney (rather than Freincy) were both well-known in Ireland from the ballads, "Brennan on the Moor" and "Bold Captain Freney", which celebrated


95 Quoted in Seal, The Highwayman Tradition in Australia, n. pag.

96 The Highwayman Tradition in Australia, n. pag.

97 WCB, 1.
their heroes' exploits. In line with Seal's argument, each of these ballads had links with British ballads about Dick Turpin, and neither presented its hero opposing the crown. However, there were also prose accounts of these and other Irish tories, rapparees and highwaymen which were exceedingly popular in Ireland well into the nineteenth century and which characterized them as strongly opposed to the English crown. "Bold Jack Donahoe" is an Australian continuation of this tradition.

In Ireland, as in Australia, the language of the colonizing culture had much greater impact on that of the original inhabitants than vice versa and few Irish words passed into English. One of the those which made the transition was "tory", although its original sense has passed out of use and it has come to mean something rather the opposite. "Tory" has its origins in the Irish word tóir "pursuit", coming from either of two of that word's derivatives: tóraf "pursuer", "raider", or tóireach "pursued one", "outlaw".98 It was first used in the seventeenth century to describe groups of men involved in a haphazard armed resistance to the English. "Rapparee" has much the same meaning and is derived from an Irish word for the short wooden pike that the outlaws sometimes used as a weapon.99 The extent of the support they engendered, and the way that this threatened the Anglo-Irish, is illustrated in one of the statutes of the General Synod of the Irish Church summoned by Oliver Plunkett in 1670 which commanded priests:

to warn the faithful against aiding or countenancing the bodies of lawless bandits, who were called Tories, and under the pretence of defending the national rights, infested the country.100

The two most widely circulated works about these outlaws were John Cosgrave's A Genuine History of the Lives and Actions of the Most Notorious Irish

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98 I am indebted to Brian Somers of the Department of Medieval History at University College, Dublin, for this information.

99 T. Crofton Croker, Researches in the South of Ireland (1824; Dublin: Irish Academic, 1981), 54.

100 Edward MacLysaght, Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century (1939; Dublin: Irish Academic, 1979), 286.
Highwaymen, Tories, and Rapparees (better known as A History of the Irish Rogues and Rapparees) and Freney's supposed autobiography, The Adventures of Captain Freney, both first published in the mid-eighteenth century and often reprinted. Observers in Ireland in the early part of the nineteenth century credited these cheaply printed books with enormous influence. John Edward Walsh named A History of the Irish Rogues and Rapparees as one of the two most popular texts used in "hedge schools" at the beginning of the nineteenth century and blamed it for destroying the children's "integrity and sense of right and wrong". He also mentioned Freney's autobiography as "one of the most popular school-books" and wrote that "if the moral conduct of a people is formed by the instruction of their early years, it is not difficult to account for the great laxity in the conduct of the lower orders in Ireland". In the early 1820s Crofton Croker described both the popularity of Cosgrave's book and the way that tales of outlaws were orally performed:

"A History of the Irish Rogues and Rapparees" is at present one of the most popular books among the peasantry, and has circulated to an extent that almost seems incredible; nor is it unusual to hear the adventures and escapes of highwaymen and outlaws recited by the lower orders with the greatest minuteness, and dwelt on with a surprising fondness.

Cosgrave's A History of the Irish Rogues and Rapparees consists of descriptions of a long series of outlaws who were popularly seen as heroes. Its opening page describes how Redmond O'Hanlon, the first of the tories, came from a family who had been dispossessed of a considerable estate by the English. According to this book, the wronged O'Hanlon was motivated by a desire both to be restored to his former status and for revenge, and eventually became the leader of a gang of fifty

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102 John Edward Walsh, Sketches of Ireland Sixty Years Ago (Dublin: McGlashan, 1847), 102-3, 106.

103 Researches in the South of Ireland, 55.
men. In the 1820s tories were regarded as people who, "perhaps urged by their loss of property and consequent distress — took up arms with a view of reprisal or revenge on those by whom they had been reduced to absolute ruin".

Nineteenth-century accounts of contemporary Irish outlaws were to consciously place their heroes in the same tradition. A very good example of this phenomenon appears in The Life and Adventures of Jeremiah Grant, Commonly Called Captain Grant, which related the adventures of a highwayman who was executed in 1816. In one passage Grant is said to have made members of his gang swear loyalty to him on copies of A History of the Irish Rogues and Rapparees or The Adventures of Captain Freney. Irish convicts transported to Australia were familiar with such tales of outlaws who refused to bow to the crown, and when "Bold Jack Donahoe" was composed, its hero was constructed in terms of such a tradition. The couplet quoted by Seal links Donahoe with Freney, Grant and Brennan.

"Bold Jack Donahoe" also belongs to the Irish outlaw tradition in a second sense, as can be seen in the way that the ballad was taken up again by the Irish. In fact the earliest surviving texts of "Bold Jack Donahoe" are broadsides with clear Irish associations and Ron Edwards's two collections of broadsides relating to Australia, The Convict Maid and The Transport's Lament, print six of these. The first question that the existence of broadside versions of "Bold Jack Donahoe" poses is whether the ballad was actually composed in Ireland and later brought to Australia, but if those published by Edwards are representative, the most likely explanation of the

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105 Crofton Croker, Researches in the South of Ireland, 53.

106 The Life and Adventures of Jeremiah Grant, Commonly Called Captain Grant (Dublin: Warren, 1844), 57.

107 CM, 77-81; TL, 68.
relationship between the Australian and Irish texts is that the broadsides were based on an Australian original.

All of the British and Irish broadsides in Edwards's collections contain inaccuracies which are not present in some of the Australian versions. They are all close to one of the versions of "Bold Jack Donahoe" first printed by A.B. Paterson in his collection, *Old Bush Songs*. Paterson's text gives the names of Donahoe's associates as "Macnamara, Underwood, Webber and Walmsley",¹⁰⁸ all of whom were well-known bushrangers in the late 1820s and all of whom were linked with Donahoe in government notices of rewards issued in 1830. One notice issued by the Colonial Secretary's Office on 31 May 1830 offers rewards for three offenders: "John Donohoe, ... William Underwood, ... John MacNamara". And a notice issued on 14 September 1830 offers a reward for "John Walmsley, or William Webber ... whom it appears were for some Months past the Companions of Donohoe in his Depredations".¹⁰⁹ However, the broadside texts, although they are earlier than Paterson's, all contain corrupt forms of these names. "The Adventures of Brave Jack O'Donough" gives the names of its hero's associates as "McNamara, Andrew Ward, Webber and Walmsley"; "The Adventures of Jack O'Donohoe" has "M'Murragh and Andrew Ward, Warber, and Wellesley"; and "Jack O'Donohoe" has "M'Murragh, Ward and Wellesley".¹¹⁰ If these broadsides are representative of the Irish material, their distortions point to an Australian original and, given Peter Cunningham's reference to sympathetic Australian ballads about the exploits of bushrangers in the


¹⁰⁹ Reprinted in WCB, 33.

mid-1820s, and the fact that Donahoe was such a widely-known and admired figure, it is extremely likely that "Bold Jack Donahoe" was composed in the colony.

It seems that an Australian original, used by its initial audience to express opposition to the coercion and arduous labour of the convict system, to gloat over the humiliation of the police and convict masters, and to sing the praises of someone who took up arms against them, has been adapted for a different purpose in the broadsides. Most of the versions of "Bold Jack Donahoe" collected in Australia would have an inbuilt relevance to an Irish nationalist movement opposed to the English but the broadsides appear to have been modified to increase that relevance. For example, in one broadside, Donahoe links his Irish blood with his determination to fight for liberty, while in another, the police are described as "the British crew" and the hero refuses to yield to them or "be their slave".

But the most significant modification has taken place in a later Irish redaction titled "Bold Jack O'Donoghue" which is attributed to John M'Carthy. Georges-Denis Zimmerman dates this broadside at about 1870. The most common Australian versions of "Bold Jack Donahoe" have their hero transported for highway robbery and soon returning to that career in New South Wales but this text presents Donahoe as an Irish rebel who was transported "For being a bold United boy" and who, on reaching Australia, "turned out as a Fenian boy as [he'd] often done before". Zimmerman identifies the Captain Mackey, included among Donahoe's associates, as William Mackey who commanded the Fenians at Ballyknockane, Co. Cork, in an

111 Peter Cunningham, Two Years in New South Wales, 282.

112 "Jack O'Donohoe", CM, 81.


114 "Bold Jack O'Donoghue", TR, 68.

115 George-Denis Zimmerman, Songs of Irish Rebellion: Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs 1780-1900 (Dublin, Figgis, 1967), 271.
attack on police barracks during the 1867 uprising, and who was sentenced to twelve years transportation in March 1868.116

A version of "Bold Jack Donahoe" collected by Alan and Gay Scott, and published in A Collector's Songbook, illustrates the final step in the interaction between the Irish outlaw tradition and Australian versions of the ballad — the introduction of some of these modifications into circulation in Australia. They recorded it in 1957 from the singing of the late Alex Beattie, Gay's uncle. He had learnt the song from his father, Robert Beattie, who had migrated from Ireland as a young man in the 1890s. The text which Alex Beattie sang is clearly related to the broadside redaction attributed to M'Carthy. Like that most nationalist of the broadsides, it includes Captain Mackey as one of Donahoe's associates and represents Underwood as "yonder woods". Somewhere in the process of transmission the crime for which its hero was transported has incongruously become "Being a wild colonial boy". Most importantly the text incorporates the perception that "Bold Jack Donahoe" belongs to a long Irish tradition of tories, rapparees and outlaws, and Donahoe is described as returning to his activities as a tory boy when he reaches Australia:

I'd been no longer than six months upon the Australian shore,
When I turned out as a Tory boy as I'd often done before,
There was MacNamara from yonder woods and Captain Mackie too,
They were the chief associates of Bold Jack Donahoe.117

116 Songs of Irish Rebellion. 271.

Chapter 6
Resistance in the Popular Convict Verse

The popular verse from the convict period was essentially a response to the forced labour and discipline which had always been the hallmarks of the convict system. But during the 1820s and 1830s, the years from which the earliest extant verse dates, a number of changes in the operation of the system and the composition of the colonies' population combined to form particularly fertile conditions for the production of popular, oppositional verse.

Throughout the convict period, the state had substantial coercive powers. In the analysis of transportation ballads, we saw that in Britain and Ireland during the period the state had possessed a strong arsenal of repressive measures of which transportation was an important component. Bob Connell and Terry Irving suggest that the settlement in Australia which resulted from transportation was provided with a much more prominent repressive arm than the state in Britain on which it was, of course, modelled. The marine garrison which arrived with Governor Phillip was replaced by the New South Wales Corps in 1791, and both these forces were used to fight skirmishes with the Aborigines and to hunt escaped convicts. The New South Wales Corps successfully put down the Castle Hill Rebellion in 1804. It was replaced by regular army units in 1810 and these also fought against blacks at the frontiers, and on several occasions conducted what Connell and Irving describe as "small guerilla campaigns" against convict bushrangers, particularly in Van Diemen's Land. The system soon had a police force, floggers and hangmen, and later a series of secondary settlements, beginning with Newcastle in the early 1800s, and then Port Arthur, Moreton Bay, and Norfolk Island. Statistical evidence has shown that probably 30 to 40 per cent of male convicts were flogged, and those figures take no account of what
Connell and Irving describe as the "the unofficial beatings, deprivation and abuse", which were of course not reported to the magistrates. The ultimate punishment was the death penalty and the governors held repeated public executions to remind the population of this fact.¹

After Commissioner Bigge's reports were submitted to Parliament in the early 1820s, a number of measures were introduced to make the system much more severe. Between 1826 and 1836, almost a quarter of the male convicts spent some time either at a penal settlement or in a chain gang. Governor Darling worked to make the penal settlements places of dread, particularly Norfolk Island, which he intended to gain a reputation as the extreme punishment short of death. The total number of floggings in the colony was not recorded until the 1830s and in 1835, a typical year, 7,103 were administered when the total convict population was 27,340.² Many of the ballads and poems produced during the period are a response to the coercive practices of the convict system, and Francis MacNamara himself had ample experience of the brutality which the penal authorities had at their disposal, as we will see below.

Another factor in the favourable conditions for producing oppositional verse may have been an increasing class polarization. There has been much discussion about the extent to which the convicts constituted a class. On the one hand Russel Ward suggests that conditions in Australia fostered certain positive values which the convicts had brought with them:

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¹ R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, Class Structure in Australian History: Documents, Narrative and Argument (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1980), 32-33, 45. Connell and Irving, 53, note that some homesteads in Tasmania still have ring-walls which had been built for defence against both blacks and bushrangers. Some of the following argument has been published in Philip Butters, "Convicted by the laws of England's hostile crown: Popular Convict Verse", in Oliver MacDonagh and W.F. Mandle, eds., Irish-Australian Studies: Papers Delivered at the Fifth Irish-Australian Conference (Canberra: ANU, 1989), 7-24.
First among these was a certain group or class solidarity indicated by the maxim that 'there is honour among thieves'. After all, this strong collectivist sentiment of group loyalty is, apart from his own individual cunning, the criminal's sole means of defence against the overwhelmingly powerful organs of state authority. On the other hand the very fact of his criminality presupposes his possession of unusually strong individualist leanings. He is, by definition, anti-social. But when the criminal becomes a long-term convict, his scope for exercising individual cunning is very severely limited, while the forces impelling him towards social, collectivist behaviour (within his own group) are correspondingly strengthened. All that we know about the convicts shows that this egalitarian class solidarity was the one human trait which usually remained to all but the most brutalized of them after the 'system' had done its best or its worst.³

On the other hand Humphrey McQueen argues that Australia had no class structure for at least the first fifty years, and that if any class position is to be given to convicts it must be lumpen-proletarian or petty-bourgeois. He suggests that the hatred of "officiousness and authority" which characterizes each group is "essentially bourgeois in origin and content and was well suited to the déclassé small proprietors, dispossessed labourers and professional criminals who made up the bulk of the convicts and who had shown their active acceptance of the ideology of capitalism — individual acquisitiveness". McQueen proceeds to provide a number of examples of the lack of group loyalty among convicts, pointing out that during the rebellion at Castle Hill, convicts at Parramatta sent the Governor an Address of Loyalty; noting the numbers of convicts who enlisted as police and soldiers; and reminding us that treachery marred almost every attempted rebellion.⁴

Connell and Irving have a compelling explanation for the undoubtedlshaky nature of solidarity among the convicts, arguing that what was clearly a campaign of "sustained official terror against convicts ... produced breakdowns of solidarity and betrayals, as in other situations such as prisons and concentration camps". They also point to divisions from differences in status and religion which were imported from

Britain and Ireland, and to the fact that some convicts had material successes by keeping out of trouble. While not suggesting that a "full-blown class society" existed during the convict period, Connell and Irving argue that the pastoral industry in the 1830s was the site of something approximating that opposition. They point out that the assignment process defined two groups, the working convicts and the pastoral gentry. The gentry were acutely aware of their social status and as the pastoral industry expanded so did their economic status:

By the 1830s, something approaching a regional ruling class had formed in the countryside of Van Diemen's Land and central New South Wales, with a common economic base, a common experience in the management of a mostly convict workforce, a firm consciousness of status, and political power in the countryside through the magistracy.

Another significant factor is that convict numbers increased dramatically following the rising level of class conflict in England after the Napoleonic Wars. For example, in 1810 there were 389 male and 121 female convicts from Britain and Ireland who arrived in New South Wales, and in 1815 the figures were 903 and 171 respectively. In both those years no convicts were transported directly to Van Diemen's Land, but in 1820 2,283 male and 296 female convicts arrived in New South Wales, and 1,347 male and 50 female convicts arrived in Van Diemen's Land.

For Irish convicts, the increased severity of the convict system and its emerging class polarization overlapped with the bond of nationality and with a political analysis that was profoundly antipathetic to the English penal authorities. The Irish played a considerable part in the popular ballads and poems produced in Australia during the convict period and virtually all of the extant material exhibits a strong Irish influence. As we have seen, the first known author of popular ballads was an Irish convict, and

5 Class Structure in Australian History, 48-49.
6 Class Structure in Australian History, 51.
7 Connell and Irving, Class Structure in Australian History, 33; Shaw, Convicts and the Colonies, 364-65.
so was the figure around whom the earliest extant bushranger ballads grew; the heroes of "The Ballad of Martin Cash" and "Johnny Troy" were Irish convicts who became bushrangers; and the earliest escape ballad was composed by MacNamara, while the later one celebrated Irish political prisoners.

Ward devotes a chapter of *The Australian Legend* to arguing that the Irish component in what he refers to as the "early Australian working class" was disproportionately large. Using figures from the censuses of 1841 and 1851 he calculates that the percentage of Roman Catholics indicates that during the 1840s there were proportionally about three times as many people of Irish descent in Australia as there were in what he terms "the British Isles". He suggests that Irish convicts and immigrants tended to join and remain members of the unskilled and semi-skilled sections of the workforce. Ward also notes that before 1851 the proportion of Irish in New South Wales was even higher than the figures for religions indicate, because between 1824 and about 1840 there seems to have been a deliberate policy not to send convicts directly from Ireland to Van Diemen's Land.8

Hirst, too, stresses the importance of the Irish among the convicts and offers convincing reasons for their strong sense of community:

Their nationality, religion, and, for the Gaelic speakers, their language marked them off from the English majority. They were on the whole less depraved and hardened in crime and so were more trusting of each other. They were older and more of the men were married. It was the Irish who took most advantage of the opportunity of bringing their wives and children to the colony. Irish clannishness showed itself in the passionate devotion to their priests, in the great wakes held after the execution of an Irishman and in the ballads which celebrated Donohoe's exploits and linked the convict's plight with Ireland's wrongs.9

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9 *Convict Society and Its Enemies*, 143-44.
Work and Punishment in the Convict Ballads

The popular verse of the convict period is essentially a response to the twin facts of convict life — hard physical labour and harsh discipline — but not all the material is as strongly oppositional as the radical nationalist version of convict history might suggest, or as the personal experiences of so many convicts, including Francis MacNamara, might be expected to produce. In A New Britannia Humphrey McQueen has gone so far as to use lines from "The Convict's Arrival" to represent one of the extremes of convict behaviour — "the expectant acceptance of those who made their prosperous way".10

"Labouring with the Hoe" addresses the general problem of the exertions that convict masters could demand of their workforce. Essentially it is a lament which describes the physical hardship of forced labour and the emotional suffering of exile, and then provides some sort of consolation for its audience.11 The particularly arduous nature of tilling the soil with a hoe is illustrated in regulations of 1829 whose purpose was to make the penal settlements harsher. They stipulated that, as far as possible, convicts were to be employed "exclusively in Agricultural operations, ... the use of the Hoe and the Spade shall be as much as possible adopted, ... the Plough given up and no Working Cattle are to be employed in operations which can be effected by Men and Hand Carts". Convicts were to be "steadily and constantly employed at Hard Labour from Sun Rise to Sun Set".12

The poem refers to the sufferings of an exile, comparing Ireland, "Where love and friendship grow", with the loss of freedom experienced while working "the labouring hoe". The convict's social position and living conditions are described —

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10 McQueen, A New Britannia, 136.
11 "Labouring with the Hoe", EP, 39.
12 Quoted in Shaw, Convicts and the Colonies, 204.
"Despised, rejected and oppressed" and clad "In tattered rags". Its final stanza offers a weak consolation for the convict's hardships, with his asking for pity from his compatriots and begging or praying that heaven may give him freedom:

You generous sons of Erin's isle
Whose heart for glory burns,
Pity a wretched exile who
His long-lost country mourns;
Restore me, Heaven to liberty
Whilst I lie here below
Untie that clue of bondage
And release me from the hoe.\(^{13}\)

A number of the extant poems and ballads address the coercive methods of the penal authorities, practices which were often closely related to work. Connell and Irving indicate the extent to which convict discipline was used to control labour:

As the records of punishments show, penal authority in Australia had, via assignment, become the tool of labour discipline for capitalist enterprise. Such offences as 'insolence and neglect', 'neglect of duty', 'disobedience of orders and absenting', 'feigning sick', 'threatening his overseer' and 'general bad conduct', were typical charges against assigned servants, all liable to be punished by public flogging.\(^{14}\)

About half of the entries in the Trial Book at Moreton Bay were for offences connected with work.\(^{15}\) Lloyd Robson points out that the prisoners who came to Van Diemen's Land after 1840, when assignment was replaced by a probation system, were less likely to be punished than those who arrived during the years of assignment, and he suggests that one reason for this was that they were no longer "continually under the eyes of a master who had a close interest in their work".\(^{16}\) Shaw notes that although flogging may have been less frequent for assigned servants than for convicts on

\(^{13}\) "Labouring with the Hoe", FP. 39.

\(^{14}\) Class Structure in Australian History, 45.


\(^{16}\) Lloyd Robson, The Convict Settlers of Australia: An Enquiry into the Origin and Character of the Convicts Transported to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 1787-1852 (Melbourne: Melbourne UP), 92-93.
government establishments, it was still too common, and he quotes a contemporary observer who wrote that, to many landowners, a convict was merely "a slave, a machine for making money by ... merciless over working". 17 This close relationship between punishment and labour is expressed in the popular verse of the convict period. For example, the speaker in "Labouring with the Hoe" is flogged for "wilful negligence" when he refuses to work, and in the same poem the employer of convict labour offers his charges these alternatives: "Take scourging, convicts for your choice / Or work the labouring hoe". 18

"The Convict's Arrival", perhaps better known as "Moreton Bay", is a powerful critique of the violence meted out to convicts in the places of secondary punishment, but it offers a particularly passive response to that violence. The convict is told that the worst of the penal settlements is Moreton Bay where "excessive tyranny each day prevails" and the poem graphically depicts some of the brutality:

Our overseers and superintendents
All these cursed tyrants language we must obey,
Or else at the triangles our flesh is mangled,
That is our wages at Moreton Bay.
For three long years I've been beastly treated;
Heavy irons each day I wore,
My poor back from flogging has been lacerated,
And oftimes [sic] painted with crimson gore. 19

Two resolutions to this suffering are offered but neither is very strong. The first is that "kind providence" comes to the aid of the convicts when "a native black" kills Captain Logan, the Superintendent at Moreton Bay, referred to in the ballad as "tyrant" and "monster". A particularly nasty source of grievance is thus eliminated through

17 Convicts and the Colonies, 224. Hirst suggests that, in general, flogging was used in an attempt to keep convicts working not because "tyrants" were making excessive demands of their charges but because it was easy to evade work, Convict Society and Its Enemies, 68.

18 "Labouring with the Hoe", FP, 39.

interference by an outside agent rather than the convicts' own actions. The journal of a convict, Jeremiah Shea, which is thought to have been written down in 1870, contains a version of "The Convict's Arrival" that is more explicit in showing Logan's death as divine retribution:

That God did see my sore afflictions
And to this tyrant gave a fatal stroke.  

The second resolution is merely that the term of transportation will expire. In the last verse of "The Convict's Arrival" the speaker refers both to the suffering and to its eventual ending, and concludes with a not very inspiring exhortation:

Now that I've got once more to cross the ocean,
And leave this place called Moreton Bay,
Where many a man from downright starvation
Lies mouldering today beneath the clay.
Fellow prisoners be exhilarated,
And your former sufferings don't bear in mind,
For it's when from bondage you are extricated
We will leave those tyrants far, far behind.  

The criticisms of the system's labour and discipline show that poems like these are not merely conformist statements of dominant ideology, as were those printed in colonial newspapers. Yet they seem to operate to secure consent for the existing order, soothing potential convict dissent by a reminder that sentences will expire, and by asserting that through prayer or petition justice will eventually be done. But the poems and songs produced and consumed by the convict population were capable of containing a much stronger response to the conditions under which their audience lived.

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20 It was rumoured that Logan's death was engineered by convicts who persuaded the blacks to avenge their wrongs, PP, 33, but the ballad gives no hint of this.


Connell and Irving have argued that because of the state's overwhelming coercive power, convict resistance tended to be pitched at a level that would not attract major sanctions. They point out that the response of the convict workforce to coercion was "the classic response of forced labour, the slow-down". The early governors were furious at the convicts' refusal to work hard enough to produce crops even when there were severe food shortages. The records of punishments often show "neglect of duty" charges which represent the slow-down, and the settlers' complaints about convict laziness, and the frequent calculations of how many convicts gave the work value of one free labourer, also indicate the widespread use of this tactic. Connell and Irving's definition of resistance is a broad one:

There were other forms of resistance in the workplace and in private life, other ways of clogging up the system or wringing something out of it. The convict clerks in the government stores in King's period had an organised scheme of fraud based on forgery of the governor's initials. Resistance could be expressed in non-cooperation with minor officials, especially the 'bloody traps', the police. It could be expressed in speech and private habit; this is the explanation of the constant complaints of convicts' insolence, foul language and viciousness made by colonial gentlefolk (including 'gentleman convicts'), who were particularly scandalised by the convict women. A mocking hostility to the pretensions of authority comes through in the folklore of the convicts, such as their few surviving songs, and in many incidents recorded in the newspapers and the courts.  

They point out that such resistance is good evidence of a widespread solidarity among convicts, at least among large sections of the convict population:

The slow-down, like most other forms of labour action, is ineffective unless done on a mass scale; cheating on authority will be discovered unless others support and conceal it; maintaining a 'criminal' subculture in opposition to official morality is by definition a collective act.

23 *Class Structure in Australian History*. 47.

A couple of poems about work contain passing references to resistance of this less overt type. "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard", although it tells of Frank the Poet's supposed diligence and attention to his master's wishes, alludes to elements of a subculture opposed to the orderly operation of the convict system. It refers to "The truant like negligence ... / Of all the neighbouring swains" and it mentions "other shepherds gambling ... / On cards and dominoes. More specifically, the third verse of "Labouring with the Hoe" gives a version of the charge of "wilful negligence" from the convicts' point of view, asserting that it is a result of the difficulty of the work, but also implying that compulsion has played a part:

Growing weary from compulsive toil
Beneath the noontide sun,
While drops of sweat bedew the soil
My task remains undone.
I'm flogged for wilful negligence
Or the tyrants call it so,
Ah, what a doleful recompense
For labouring with the hoe.

There is good evidence that at least some of the verse sung and recited by the convicts was composed to express and perhaps encourage opposition to the convict system. Frank the Poet's attitude towards authority, and also the way he saw his work are summed up in his "Epigram of Introduction":

My name is Frank MacNamara,
A native of Cashell, County Tipperary,
Sworn to be a tyrant's foe
And while I've life I'll crow.

26 "Labouring with the Hoe", PP. 39.
27 "Epigram of Introduction", PP. 54. Meredith and Whalan suggest, rather fancifully, that "According to records in the State Archives Office, he evidently used it on official occasions when giving his particulars to police, gaolers etc.", PP. 54.
In Frank the Poet, Meredith and Whalan argue that although MacNamara was convicted of larceny for stealing a plaid, this may not have been the true reason for his transportation. Meredith restates this position in an article in Overland, writing that some lines in one of the poems suggest that "the charge may have been falsified, and that the real reason for his banishment was that he belonged to one of the illegal political organisations known as Ribbon Lodges, most likely that called the White Boys Association". The poem concerned is "A Dialogue between Two Hibernians in Botany Bay". Meredith and Whalan recount that when they first examined "this rather odd set of verses" they doubted that it was MacNamara’s work. They continue:

Closer study revealed that the apparently superficial verse might be a cleverly coded message intended for associates in the colony or back at home. Publication in the official Government organ of the colony would make circulation of the message an easy matter. Members of a ribbon secret society were known to each other by certain secret signs and passwords which were frequently changed and some of the specimens of which were of a singularly absurd and ludicrous character.

We felt that the poem may be a cryptogram, in which phrases following certain key words could be strung together to form a message. There are a number of obvious problems with this line of reasoning. It seems hardly credible that MacNamara would use the Sydney Gazette to communicate secretly with associates in the colony, let alone in Ireland. What were the messages and why use such an apparently unlikely vehicle? Meredith and Whalan are unable to show that there is a link between the twin facts that the poem is "odd" and that ribbon societies used passwords which were sometimes "ludicrous". And even if the poem could

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30 Ep. 51-53.

31 Ep. 53-54.
somehow demonstrate that Frank the Poet was a member of one of these organizations it could not show that this had anything to do with his transportation.

On the other hand, given the details of MacNamara’s life as a convict, it is not surprising that his work often expressed resistance. He arrived in Sydney in September and three months later was sentenced to six months gaol for an undisclosed offence. This was the first of a long list of punishments which indicate his refusal to conform to the authorities’ wishes. In the following 8 years he was flogged fourteen times, receiving a total of six hundred and fifty lashes; he served a total of three and a half years of hard labour in the iron-gangs; thirteen days in solitary confinement; and three months on a treadmill.\textsuperscript{32} Meredith and Whalan show that MacNamara was flogged on 24 June 1833 for absconding, and was sent to the Phoenix Hulk on 3 September 1833 for the same offence. He was again sent to the Phoenix Hulk on 16 March 1836 and tried to run away five times but was captured on each occasion. He absconded from the Australian Agricultural Company to avoid working in their coalmines in Newcastle. In 1842 he escaped from custody and was apprehended near Razorback Mountain as one of “five notorious bushrangers”.\textsuperscript{33}

Some evidence exists that the authorities regarded the singing and recitation of ballads composed during the convict period as expressing and encouraging resistance. There is a very strong tradition that the singing of "Bold Jack Donahoe" was officially banned by the government. No documentary proof of the passing of such a law exists, however, Ward suggests that unofficial censorship may have continued as late as the 1890s. He quotes an old bushman who referred to convict and bushranger songs as “treason songs” and claimed to remember their being suppressed by the police.\textsuperscript{34} The commentary in the \textit{Historical Records of Australia} on a letter from

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{FP}, 3-4.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{FP}, 4, 6, 11, 13.

Governor Darling to Sir George Murray suggests that the ballad was suppressed through the licensing laws:

A song [was] composed called "Bold Jack Donahoe", and, as this song had an evil influence, its singing was prohibited in any public house on pain of loss of licence.  

And at least one of the convict narratives shows the convict authorities regarding singing as resistance. Thomas Cook, describing the life of a fellow convict Michael Burns, on Norfolk Island, includes two instances of punishment for singing a song. According to the narrative, Burns was put in solitary confinement for three months on one occasion, and later was given a hundred lashes.

35 Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, XV (1922): 906. Plays about bushranging were certainly suppressed. Jackey Jackey was refused a licence by Deas Thomson in New South Wales in the early 1840s on the grounds that "dramas of analogous character have been prohibited from representation in the United Kingdom, and there are obvious reasons, why the principle which renders them objectionable there should apply with even greater force here", Margaret Williams, Australia on the Popular Stage 1829-1929: An Historical Entertainment in Six Acts (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1983), 38.

Women, Resistance, and the Popular Verse of the Convict Period

In chapter 5 we saw that the representation of convict women in the verse published in colonial newspapers worked to legitimize the extremely unequal power relationship between men and women by reinforcing the "damned whore" stereotype. Women are almost entirely invisible in the popular verse about work, punishment, bushranging and escape. Only two women are mentioned, and both of these references occur in introductory sequences — "Johnny Troy" has its hero transported for "the robbing of a widow", but this does not prevent him becoming a ballad hero,37 and "The Convict's Arrival" begins with its hero leaving a "girl" in Ireland.38

The lack of ballads from a woman's point of view is partly explained by the gender imbalance among convicts. There were 24,960 women and 122,620 men transported to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. In addition there were 9,688 men sent to West Australia; 1,173 as "exiles" to New South Wales in 1849, and about 4,580 sent directly to Norfolk Island, Port Phillip and Moreton Bay, bringing the overall total to 163,021.39 The total number of women transported is thus about 15% of the total convict population, or 20% of those transported to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land.

Also significant is the fact that the only work available to women was domestic service, an occupation which kept them isolated from one another.40 The lack of an audience may well have hindered the production of popular verse by women, and would, of course, have hindered its dissemination. Even in isolation, female convicts


40 Hirst, Convict Society and Its Enemies, 56-57.
were constantly offering resistance to the conditions of their servitude. Hirst explains that because the women were domestic servants they were under much closer scrutiny than their male counterparts:

It was as servants as much as anything else that they were judged so harshly and considered to be worse than the men. They were more disobedient and refractory. Contemporaries explained this by claiming that only the very worst women were transported and that they had no fear of the punishment of being sent to the Factory. This may have been so, but what contemporaries did not see was that they were expecting much more of women as servants. They were given less freedom than men and had to give more constant and cheerful obedience. A surly servant was much harder to bear at the dinner table than in the field. A refractory spirit was more likely to be goaded into open defiance by the close confinement and control of domestic life.41

Where women were assembled in groups of significant size they were involved in active resistance on a larger scale. Instances of revolt among the women in the Female Factories at Parramatta, Launceston and Hobart were common, the most dramatic being a riot and mass escape from Parramatta in 1827.42 And there is some evidence that song played a part in resistance where large numbers of women were assembled. R.C. Hutchinson notes that the women of the Hobart Female Factory "when not being watched, ... frequently used bad language and sang improper songs".43 The songs they sang were, of course, not recorded.

41 Convict Society and Its Enemies, 57.


Work, Punishment, and Resistance in the Convict Verse

While some of the convict poems and ballads operated merely by realizing their audience’s concern with the labour and discipline of the convict system, and then offering fictional resolutions to those problems, others incorporated a stronger response into this pattern. Two poems by Frank the Poet which address the labour required of convicts are "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard" and "For the Company Underground". Both pieces oppose the Australian Agricultural Company's decision to end MacNamara's employment as a shepherd at Peel River, and to send him to work in their coal mines at Newcastle.44

"A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard" is addressed to those who control Frank the Poet's destiny. The poem purports to be a direct attempt to influence his working conditions and thus assumes that convict grievances can be redressed by appeals to the system. It is ostensibly the sheep who request that he not be sent to work in the coal mines, and they argue such labour is not appropriate for Frank the Poet:

Why should the poet be sent down
To toil in a coal pit
Such service best suits a clown
But not a man of wit.45

The "Fat wethers, rams and ewes" explain that they owe their fleecy coats, flesh, hides and tallow to the Poet. The piece concludes with a fictional resolution where convict wishes are to triumph over those of their masters, and where an unspecified broader vengeance will be achieved but, as in "Labouring with the Hoe", divine intervention offers the only hope for achieving this. The sheep assert that:

44 EP, 11.

We yet shall hear his merry songs  
On fair Killala's plain  
Kind Heaven shall avenge the wrongs  
Of our much injured swain.

Although the poem is addressed to an officer of the Australian Agricultural Company, it is likely to have reached a convict audience which would have been attuned to its undercurrent of resistance to official ideology. A number of MacNamara's pieces use the idea of a petition, but all subvert it in some way. This happens most completely in "A Convict's Tour to Hell", where the power roles involved in petitioning are completely reversed and the Australian Agricultural Company's superintendent is presented humbly begging the devil for better treatment because he has done Satan's will on earth.46 In "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard" the company's officers retain the position of power in the petitioning process but a central concern of the poem is the undercutting of their dignity. The idea of sheep bleating "With reverence most profound" at the officials is developed in a humorous fashion. The sheep point out that they are assembled "By permission of the great Esquire Hall", who was stock superintendent of the company from 1830 and lived at the Peel River Estate from 1834, and they address James Ebsworth, acting Commissioner of the company between March 1838 and April 1839.47

The poem may also partly operate as a subtle encouragement to resist the work demanded by convict employers. Given the understandable predilection of convicts for avoiding labour, and given MacNamara's history of refusal to conform, the exaggerated descriptions of the Poet's love for his work may well have been regarded with amusement by a convict audience, and may even have helped reinforce the aversion to such diligence. "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard" contains two examples of behaviour which is explicitly set

46 "A Convict's Tour to Hell", FP. 45-49.
47 FP 41.
against the usual convict practice at Peel River, but it is not difficult to imagine where convict sympathy would lie:

Each morning when the watchful cock
Announced the approach of day
At the folds he was seen with his flock
Before Sol’s glittering ray.

The lofty wood crowned hills adorned
Were seen on the Plains
The truant like negligence he scorned
Of all the neighbouring swains.

The sheep explain that:

He reared [lambs] with a father’s care
And fed the sickly ewes
Whilst other shepherds gambling were
On cards and dominoes.

"For the Company Underground" is a much more blatant expression of defiance towards convict masters, and is clearly the kind of poem that a convict audience would have enjoyed. It too is addressed to an official of the Australian Agricultural Company, J. Crosdale who is apparently William Croasdill, Superintendent of its Colliery Establishment at Newcastle from early in 1837,48 but instead of politely petitioning, the speaker firmly states his refusal to carry out the work which the company demands. From the outset it very clear that, in this fictional account, Francis MacNamara will not be working in the Newcastle Colliery:

    When Christ from Heaven comes down straightway,
    All his Father’s laws to expound,
    MacNamara shall work that day
    For the Company underground.

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48 FR. 42.
When the man in the moon to Moreton Bay
Is sent in shackles bound,
MacNamara shall work that day
For the Company underground.49

Then follows a long list of impossible prerequisites, including cows yielding tea instead of milk, the finding of all lost treasures, and the Australian Agricultural Company's heaviest dray being drawn 80 miles by a hound. But the poem ends by breaking this pattern defiantly, and broadening its reference so that it becomes a refusal to perform any labour for them, a bold expression of resistance:

When the quick and the dead shall stand in array
Cited at the trumpet's sound,
Even then, damn me if I'd work a day
For the Company underground.

Nor over ground.

The poems which addressed the punishments faced by convicts could also contain an undercurrent of resistance, reinforcing the existence of a convict subculture in opposition to official morality. MacNamara's "Epigram on Solitary Confinement" is a plea for clemency from Captain David Murray who had evidently just sentenced the convict to ten days solitary confinement for being drunk on board the Phoenix Hulk:

Captain Murray, if you please
Make it hours instead of days,
You know, it becomes an Irishman
To drown the shamrock when he can.50

The speaker's attitude is not that of a humble petitioner, and the verse justifies one of the practices for which punishment was often administered. It is a cheeky assertion that the activities of an Irish convict subculture are natural, and that the punishments are too severe.

More significant is the convict resentment towards punishment, and towards those who administer punishment, expressed in MacNamara's "A Petition from the

49 "For the Company Underground", EP. 41-42.
50 "Epigram on Solitary Confinement", EP. 29.
Chain Gang at Newcastle to Captain Furlong". Floggings were performed by professional scourgers, almost always either convicts or ex-convicts who were regarded as traitors and vehemently hated by their fellows.\textsuperscript{51} In "A Petition from the Chain Gang at Newcastle to Captain Furlong" the flogger is carefully drawn as outside the convict subculture. Again the poem is in the form of a petition to the convict authorities, and it begins with ostensible humility:

\begin{verbatim}
With reverence and submission due,
Kind sir those [sic] words are sent to you,
And with them a good wish too,
Long may you reign,
And like Wellington at Waterloo
Fresh laurels gain.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{verbatim}

Its concluding appeal to Captain Furlong is similarly humble:

\begin{verbatim}
Now sir, your petitioners great and small
On bended knees before you fall;
Nor let us in vain for redress call,
Drive Duffy away,
As in duty bound we all
Will ever pray.
\end{verbatim}

And the solitary final line, "'Tis needless to say the prayer was granted", appears to assert that reasonable and polite requests will be regarded favourably by the authorities.

At face value the opening and concluding segments appear to be a somewhat obsequious way for a convict to address a gaoler. On the other hand, as with "A Petition from the A.A. Co. Flocks at Peels River in Behalf of the Irish Bard", a convict audience might be aware of an ironic perspective. The poem mentions only the "reverence and submission" which is "due" to Captain Furlong, something that prisoners might assess at a lower level than Furlong himself would, and they may also see an irony in addressing a Superintendent of chain gangs as "kind sir". More

\textsuperscript{51} Hirst, \textit{Convict Society and Its Enemies}, 144.

\textsuperscript{52} "A Petition from the Chain Gang at Newcastle to Captain Furlong", \textit{EP}, 43-44.
importantly, the poem soon moves away from obsequious petitioning to threats of resistance. It declares bluntly that "Duffy ... has not got our approbation, / Nor never will", and the convicts threaten what is effectively a hunger strike:

Our jaws now daily will grow thinner,  
And stomachs weak, as I'm a sinner.....  
Each day I'd rather have my dinner  
Cooked by Jack Ketch.

It matters no whether salt or fresh,  
Even his touch would spoil each dish.  
His cooking we never can relish —  
We'd rather starve. 53

"A Convict's Tour to Hell" is a long, humorous poem that offers a resolution to the suffering which convicts endured, particularly at the hands of harsh disciplinarians, and provides its audience with a fictional vengeance for that punishment. MacNamara recognizes the possibility of using his verse as a weapon to attack those against whom he is otherwise powerless, prefacing the poem with the couplet:

Nor can the foremost of the sons of men  
Escape my ribald and licentious pen. 54

In a carnivalesque inversion of life in the penal colonies, when Frank the Poet dies he finds that Satan hates and despises the poor and will have none in his kingdom — instead convicts "soar to Heaven in droves and legions".

Most of the poem is devoted to a tour of hell where the Poet is shown many figures renowned as harsh gaolers or masters who are now themselves suffering extreme torments. A convict audience is offered a detailed and satisfying revenge against the State and its repressive arm:

53 "A Petition from the Chain Gang at Newcastle to Captain Furlong", FP, 43-44. Refusing food was a very common form of convict protest, although usually the reasons given were that it was insufficient, of inferior quality or was not supplied according to custom or rule, Hirst, Convict Society and Its Enemies, 48.

54 "A Convict's Tour to Hell", FP, 49-54.
And all those fiery seats and chairs
Are fitted up for Dukes and Mayors
And nobles of Judicial orders
Barristers Lawyers and Recorders
Here I beheld legions of traitors
Hangmen gaolers and flagellators
Commandants, Constables and Spies
In flames of brimstone they were toiling
And lakes of sulphur round them boiling.

Sergeant Flood, stationed at Newcastle in 1836 and 1837, is shown atoning for all the prisoners' blood which he had caused to be shed. Frank asks after Captain Murray whom he says he knew on the Phoenix Hulk, and Satan confirms that he is present. Major Morisset and Captain Cluney, Superintendents of Norfolk Island and Moreton Bay, respectively, are lashed together with a fiery belt. The magistrate from the Police Office is there "to be tied / And burned in this world of fire". Izzy Chapman, who tells Frank that he is suffering because he had captured many bushrangers, is seen in a river of boiling lead with snakes and worms entering his mouth and nose to devour his entrails. While Frank is in Hell great jubilation accompanies the arrival of Governor Darling:

And about six feet of mortal sin
Without leave or licence trudged in ...
And all the inhabitants of Hell
With one consent rang the great bell
Which never was heard to sound or ring
Since Judas sold our Heavenly King.

Although this description takes place at three removes from reality — after death, in a dream, in a poem — at another level "A Convict's Tour to Hell" operates as a legitimation of resistance. It is spoken from the viewpoint of a resister, beginning with the Poet's explanation that he was a bushranger "Whose valour had for years been tried / On the highway before he died", and it is addressed to habitually disobedient

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55 EP. 50.
prisoners, the convicts who are receiving punishment in addition to their original sentences:

You prisoners of New South Wales,  
Who frequent watchhouses and gaols  
A story to you I will tell  
Tis of a convict's tour to hell.

As well as placing harsh taskmasters in hell — including those who have met violent ends such as Captain Logan, Williams, the overseer at Grose Farm "who was killed the other day", and Dr. Wardell — it valorizes bushrangers and others who have taken up arms. Frank's entrée to Heaven is his personal acquaintance with resisters. At the gate of Heaven Saint Peter asks Frank whom he knows and he replies:

Well I know Brave Donohue  
Young Troy and Jenkins too  
And many others whom floggers mangled  
And lastly were by Jack Ketch strangled.

Jenkins, who had been hanged for murdering Dr Wardell, was well-known for his outspoken defiance. The Sydney Herald reported that he made this speech from the scaffold:

Well, good bye my lads, I have not time to say much to you; I acknowledge I shot the Doctor, but it was not for gain, it was for the sake of my fellow prisoners because he was a tyrant, and I have one thing to recommend you as a friend, if any of you take the bush, shoot every tyrant you come across, and there are several now in the yard who ought to be served so.⁵⁶

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⁵⁶ Sydney Herald, 13 November 1834, 2.
Chapter 7
Stronger Responses: Bushranging and Escape

In spite of the state's overwhelming coercive power there were a few attempts by convicts to rebel against the convict system, the most significant uprising occurring at Castle Hill in March 1804 when convicts on the government farm at Castle Hill overpowered constables and overseers and mustered 250 to 300 men, but the disturbance was easily put down. There were two important factors which contributed to the uprising. First, it was rare for so many convicts to be living and working together, and secondly most of the leaders and many of the rebels were Irish. About a third of the Irish convicts in the colony at this time had been transported for their part in the 1798 uprising which was the culmination of a decade of unrest in Ireland,\(^1\) and Governor Hunter had pleaded with the Colonial Office not to send "any more of the Irish Republicans" who "keep us in a constant state of suspicion".\(^2\) The only other serious attempts to overthrow authority were on Norfolk Island, the most severe of the secondary settlements, where there were major outbreaks of violent protest in 1794, 1826, 1834, and 1842.\(^3\)

No popular verse about these outbreaks has survived but there is an important group of ballads which describe bushranging, the other major circumstance in which convicts took up arms and used them against the enforcers of law and order. As with the question of whether the convicts constituted a class, there has been much discussion about the nature of bushranging and the amount of support it engendered in

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\(^3\) Hirst, *Convict Society and Its Enemies*, 134, 142; McQueen, "Convicts and Rebels", 13-14.
the populace. Ward has argued that bushrangers, including those from the convict period "could not have existed for long if it had not been for the almost universal sympathy and support of the bush proletariat.... the bushrangers' accomplices [and] receivers ... constituted a majority of the inhabitants of the colony". 4 It has been shown, however, that such a picture is an exaggerated one. Jennifer McKinnon points out that:

Many of those whom the bushrangers robbed and whose lives they threatened were smaller settlers, free employees, many of whom were ex-convicts, and convict servants, that is, the lower echelons of the community and those groups from whom the bushrangers' sympathisers and supporters were drawn. 5

She suggests that often the poor were the people hardest hit by the actions of the bushrangers, partly because they were robbed more often than other sections of the community, and partly because even when the bushrangers' haul was meagre, this could represent a greater proportion of their possessions. 6

The survival of bushranging gangs depended both on loyalties within those gangs and on some sort of solidarity with convicts, but neither of these things could be taken for granted. Although bushrangers were often greatly indebted to assigned convicts for assistance, they also often robbed them, and, in turn, assigned convicts often helped to capture bushrangers. Bushrangers could also be very disloyal to their supporters, a good example being the associates of Donahoe — Walmsley and Webber — who both offered to give evidence in return for a pardon in 1831. Walmsley's offer was accepted and, as a result, dozens of small settlers were arrested. 7

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5 J.A. McKinnon, "Convict Bushrangers in New South Wales 1824-1834" (M.A. thesis, La Trobe University, 1979), 86-87.
6 McKinnon, "Convict Bushrangers in New South Wales", 88.
McKinnon suggests, on the other hand, that there were examples of solidarity between convicts, and that group feeling was unusually strong in the case of the Irish:

cases of loyalty between convicts did exist and it is obvious that they had a consciousness of themselves as convicts. Many however had a consciousness of being 'Irish convicts' and not just 'convicts' and it appears that loyalty was always much stronger and enduring between the Irish convicts than was the case with others.\(^8\)

Irish sympathy and support for bushrangers is very evident in the events following the deaths of John Troy and Thomas Smith. After their execution for bushranging, the bodies of Troy and Smith were given to their friends "on the understanding that they should be buried before sundown". Instead the two corpses were conveyed to a house in Kent Street, as the Sydney Herald of 23 August 1832 reported:

where to use an Irishism, they were waked. On Sunday afternoon the bodies were carried into Market-street, and laid in front of the house of a man named Donohoe, who gave information that led to the apprehension of Smith, on his premises. The red handkerchief that was held by the culprits at the time the drop fell, was thrown at the door, and from the color [sic] betokened an ominous significance. The Police were obliged to interfere, and the mob, after giving Donohoe three groans, proceeded peaceably to the Church-yard, and the bodies were consigned to the grave.\(^9\)

This disturbance and the fact that a ballad was composed in Troy's honour are evidence for the support given to some bushrangers by a significant section of the Irish community.\(^10\) Martin Cash and Jack Donahoe, the only other convict bushrangers to have ballads devoted to their exploits, were also Irish.

The vast majority of bushrangers were trying to achieve nothing more than survival outside the convict system, but some had loftier aims and at times their actions indicated a concern with what were perceived as the system's injustices. In 1833, convicts who had absconded from Major Mudie's Hunter Valley property, Castle

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\(^8\) "Convict Bushrangers in New South Wales", 252.

\(^9\) Sydney Herald, 23 August 1832, 3.

\(^10\) McKinnon, "Convict Bushrangers in New South Wales", 171-73.
Forbes, fired shots at their master, making it obvious that their anger was incited by his harsh treatment of his charges, in this instance, sending men to be flogged. Before the absconders were caught they administered a flogging to a settler and asked him how he liked it. The most clear cut example of bushranging as rebellious in intention is the activities of the troop led by Ralf Entwhistle who absconded in 1829. The gang, which for a while had almost eighty members, operated for a year in the Bathurst district, climaxing in a plan to attack Bathurst, but the support that Entwhistle hoped for never eventuated. Connell and Irving argue that bushranging operated as violent resistance on a number of occasions:

> Sometimes it meant rural terrorism such as burning the ricks of unpopular masters, on a familiar British model. On a few occasions — in Van Diemen's Land in 1813 and during 1824-26, and in the Bathurst district in 1829 — it took on the character of a guerrilla resistance, with gangs upwards of twenty men able to fight off military search parties and contemplate raids on towns. Matthew Brady's career in Van Diemen's Land in 1824-26 shows dramatically how convicts with skill and resolution could maintain themselves for long periods as outlaws in the back country.

Although bushrangers usually had no thought of such drastic action, their activities would have led to crippling disorder and perhaps have created the circumstances in which a rebellion was more likely, if they had gone unchecked. But in the face of the coercive arsenal available to the state, open resistance was unlikely and, in practice, rare. Connell and Irving note that "All the risings were defeated, all the bushranging gangs were dispersed and their leaders hanged or shot". McKinnon argues that in New South Wales between 1824 and 1834, in spite

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11 McKinnon, "Convict Bushrangers in New South Wales", 124-25, 252-53; Hirst, Convict Society and Its Enemies, 144, 182-83; McQueen, A New Britannia, 136-37; McQueen, "Convicts and Rebels", 27.


13 Hirst, Convict Society and Its Enemies, 148.

14 Class Structure in Australian History, 48.
of the presence of large numbers of bushrangers, they were generally felt not to present a significant threat:

The occasions on which the populace were clearly deeply concerned for the security of their lives and their property were few. This occurred in the Hunter's River-Bathurst districts in the latter months of 1825, around Illawarra in 1829, around Parramatta in 1830, at Bathurst in the later months of 1830 and at Hunter's River at the end of 1833 and early in 1834. It was the Entwhistle outbreak at Bathurst in September 1830 that caused some of the greatest alarm. It occurred so suddenly and on such a scale that many people abandoned their farms in the general panic. But it was quickly dealt with. It appears that with a few exceptions bushranging was regarded as a way of life and the price that had to be paid for cheap convict labour. While some key individuals created alarm and gave the appearance of being unstoppable, the majority of bushrangers were captured within a matter of months, but were always quickly replaced by new ones.\(^\text{15}\)

Although bushrangers were only occasionally offering deliberate resistance to the convict system, in the extant verse from the period they are always shown in this light, and McQueen rightly points out that the ballads "present a romanticized picture of their subject".\(^\text{16}\) This was partly because their subjects were carefully chosen. John Donahoe was an atypical bushranger and particularly appropriate for ballads about resisters. He was sentenced to transportation for life after being found guilty in Dublin in April 1824, on a charge of intent to commit a felony. As with Francis MacNamara, Meredith tries to turn him into an Irish rebel, suggesting that "Records do not disclose the exact nature of the offence contemplated by Donahoe, but it was possibly of a political nature". His evidence for this is the fact that Donahoe had grown up in the turbulent years which followed the uprising of 1798, and also a reference in an Irish broadside to Donahoe's transportation "For being a bold United boy".\(^\text{17}\) The ballad has been composed after his death — in fact Zimmerman dates this version to around

\[^{15}\text{McKinnon, "Convict Bushrangers in New South Wales", 234.}\]
\[^{16}\text{A New Britannia, 137.}\]
\[^{17}\text{WCB, 1.}\]
1870 — and the reference shows Donahoe being appropriated to Irish nationalism rather than a fact about his conviction. Meredith omits to mention that the convict indents for the *Anne and Amelia*, which brought Donahoe to Australia, list his "Trade or Calling" rather un glamorously as "Errand Boy". As with MacNamara, it is likely that his sympathies were with those fighting the English, but there is no evidence that this was related to his transportation.

However, Donahoe's life in New South Wales made him a useful symbol of resistance. Hirst describes him as "the most elusive and disturbing of the bushrangers". He was regarded as a thorn in the authorities' side, and this is illustrated by the fact that the actions of his gang were important among the reasons for the introduction of the stringent Bushranging Act. Until Donahoe's "career" it was relatively rare for the gentry to be robbed. In addition to robbing them he often humiliated them by taking their clothes, and his victims included such representatives of authority as Major Innes and the Rev. Samuel Marsden, the Senior Colonial Chaplain. The press made much of two occasions when police were humiliated by Donahoe, once when they questioned the gang without realizing their identity and allowed them to depart, and once when constables were locked in the Parramatta Court House by the bushranger and his associates.

Meredith describes one of Donahoe's robberies, showing that, unlike most bushrangers, he was interested in much more than mere survival:

> then Donahoe advised Mr Driver to feed and treat his government servants well. He went on to say that it was nothing but sheer starvation and maltreatment that drove them to following their present pursuits. He said

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20 *Convict Society and Its Enemies*, 135.

that had there been any female in Driver's van, they would not have alarmed her by molesting it; that they would levy contributions certainly upon passengers, where they could; give such masters as starved their Government servant of servants ten minutes for prayer, but treat others civilly, and then on the most civil terms, they said goodbye to Mr Driver and went on their way.\textsuperscript{22}

Similarly, after learning that one of his victims was William Cox, Donahoe is supposed to have replied, "Why did you not tell me that before, I would not rob such a good master".\textsuperscript{23} The \textit{Sydney Gazette} reports Donahoe's final stand and shows that he acted as a resister:

The bushrangers took to the trees for shelter, and showed a most determined resistance. DONAHOE called out to the Police to "come on," using the most insulting and indecent epithets; he fired; another of his party did the same, but both shots missed. DONAHOE then cheered his companions on, waving his hat, swearing he would beat the whole Colony, and shouting with all his might, "Charge, my boys."\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{WCB}, 17.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{WCB}, 20.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 7 September 1830, 2.
"Bold Jack Donahoe" and "The Wild Colonial Boy"

Meredith identifies five groups of Donahoe-Wild Colonial Boy ballads which he suggests derive from ballads that became popular in the late 1820s or early 1830s. He titles the first of these "Brave Donahue", a curiously literary piece which links the bushranger to a tradition of Irish freedom fighters and which is discussed below; and he divides the rest of the Donahoe ballads into four groups, suggesting that each was derived from a different ballad.\(^{25}\) In fact the groups have many shared elements. John Manifold argues that Meredith's groups 3, 4 and 5 could have been derived from a single "ancient" original; that 2B, 2C, and 2E are about a different character, the Wild Colonial Boy, (he ignores 2D which is a fragment too short to make any judgments about); and that 2A is a mixture between the old Donahoe ballad and the later ballad about someone else. Manifold arrives at his conclusions by "measuring each ballad against a set of historical facts" about Donahoe's life, finding that the "Wild Colonial Boy" group (2B, 2C and 2E) score 0 out of 10, while their nearest competitors score 5 out of 10.\(^{26}\)

Manifold's methodology leaves something to be desired as ballads are clearly not interested in "historical facts", but his figures do point to some significant divergences between the groups. An examination of the different narrative components of these ballads can throw light on their relationships. The following elements can occur in Meredith's groups 2, 3, 4, and 5:

- Hero transported from Dublin (2A) 3A 3B 5
- After twelve months in Australia took to the highway 3A 3B 5
- Companions listed 3A 3B 5
- Hero as a "Wild Colonial Boy" whose parents loved him dearly 2A 2B 2C 2E

\(^{25}\) WCB, 39-56.

Scarcely 16 left home to be a bushranger (2A) 2B (2E)
Robbing rich and destroying their stock 2A 2B (2E)
Began his wild career in 18... 2C (2E)
Incident with Judge MacEvoy etc. 2C (2E)
Scorning to live in slavery 2A 2B 2C 3A 4A 4B 5
Escape from a death sentence 2A 3A 3B
People afraid to travel because something new in papers every day 3A 3B
Cruising/riding/walking in the bush 2A 2B 2C 2E 3A 3B 4A 4B 5
Police demand surrender but hero boldly refuses 2A 2B 2C 2E 3A 3B 4A 4B 5
Rather range forest than work for government 3A 3B 4A 5
Cowardice of companions 4A 4B 5
Fight with police (a) fatal ball pierces heart 2A 3A 3B (4A) (4B) 5
(b) shoots at least one 2B 2C 2E
Prayer for hero's soul 2A 3A 3B 4A 4B 5

Some elements are common to all or nearly all nine texts — each has the hero travelling through the bush immediately prior to the confrontation with the police; each has him refusing to surrender to police; each has a subsequent gun battle; and all except 2E and 3B have reference to the hero scorning to live in slavery. On closer examination these shared elements can be broken down into smaller units which support Manifold's division of the ballads into two broad groups — a "Wild Colonial Boy" group comprising 2B, 2C and 2E, and a "Bold Jack Donahoe" group comprising groups 3, 4 and 5. If 2A, which Manifold suggests is a mixture of both, is ignored we can posit two archetypal ballads from Meredith's data. The essential "Wild Colonial Boy" might include:

- Hero as a "Wild Colonial Boy" whose parents loved him dearly 2B 2C 2E
- Chorus about roaming, plundering, and scorning to live in slavery 2B 2C
- Scarcely 16 when left home to be a bushranger 2B (2E)
- Robbing rich and destroying their stock 2B (2E)
- Began his wild career in 18... 2C (2E)
- Incident with Judge MacEvoy etc. 2C (2E)
- Cruising/riding/walking in the bush 2B 2C 2E
- Police demand surrender but hero boldly refuses 2B 2C 2E
- Fights with police and shoots at least two 2B 2C 2E

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27 Meredith's 2D is omitted as it is only a fragment. Elements which occur in only one text have been omitted. Brackets indicate an apparently distorted or minimal presence of the element.
"Bold Jack Donahoe" could contain:

- Hero transported from Dublin 3A 3B 5
- Twelve months in Australia took to the highway 3A 3B 5
- Companions listed 3A 3B 5
- Hero scorns to live in slavery 3A 4A 4B 5
- Escape from a death sentence 3A 3B
- People afraid to travel because something new in papers every day 3A 3B
- Cruising/riding/walking in the bush 3A 3B 4A 4B 5
- Police demand surrender but hero boldly refuses 3A 3B 4A 4B 5
- Rather range forest than work for government 3A 3B 4A 5
- Cowardice of companions 4A 4B 5
- Fight with horse police, fatal ball pierces heart 3A 3B (4A) (4B) 5
- Prayer for hero's soul 3A 3B 4A 4B 5

The second group could be further split — Meredith's group 3 tells of its hero's transportation, bushranging, escape, fame, discovery in the bush by the horse police, refusal to surrender, and death, and it concludes with a prayer for his soul; group 4 focuses on its hero's discovery by the horse police and his companion's desertion; and group 5 combines elements from both of these groups. However, there are good reasons to regard 3, 4 and 5 together. A number of elements not present in the "Wild Colonial Boy" group are shared by members of the "Bold Jack Donahoe" group. Unlike the versions of the "Wild Colonial Boy" where the hero was always alone, in all these texts he has companions and these are either formally listed early in the ballad or mentioned in the description of their cowardice. In all the ballads in groups 3, 4 and 5 there is a prayer for the hero's soul. And in all except 4B the hero says that he would rather roam the forest than work for government. The oldest texts of any Donahoe ballad, those in broadside collections in Britain and Ireland, are variants of a ballad closely related to the sole member of Meredith's group 5. It is likely that Meredith's groups 3 and 4 were derived from a longer ballad something like 5, which contained details both about Donahoe's career and about a final encounter in which his companions proved untrue.

The exact links between the ballads "Bold Jack Donahoe" and the "Wild Colonial Boy" are difficult to sort out. In their earliest printed forms they conform to the pattern outlined above. The former appears in British and Irish broadsides from the mid-
nineteenth century, as we have seen, and in Australia in a poorly remembered fragment from the *Hawkesbury Herald* of June 1904 (Meredith's 4A) and in Paterson's *Old Bush Songs*, first published in 1905. The latter is first recorded in *The Colonial Songster*, from the early 1880s, and is also included in *Old Bush Songs*.

Manifold suggests that the "Wild Colonial Boy" arose separately and was based on the deeds of an historical bushranger; his argument, however, is considerably weakened by the fact that no one can find any record of that bushranger. Meredith believes that Jack Donahoe was the original "Wild Colonial Boy", and supports his argument with 2A. But, like the earliest printed texts, almost all of the numerous versions collected since the 1950s are distinct. A few versions of each ballad have very slight traces of the other, but these, and the single text central to Meredith's argument, are best explained as the products of a later merging. It seems most likely that the "Wild Colonial Boy" is a separate ballad composed to fit new circumstances, but modelled closely on "Bold Jack Donahoe" and perceived by many of those who took it up to be closely related to its model.

Whatever the relationship between the two ballads, it is clear that the "Wild Colonial Boy" was a more appropriate song for audiences from the second half of the nineteenth century. The hero is "colonial", usually born in Castlemaine and, more importantly, his bushranging is no longer presented as a response to the convict system. The ballad apparently had a particular relevance for selectors and perhaps employees of larger land-holders for whom its hero carries out a vicarious revenge.


29 *Who Wrote the Ballads?*, 45-47.

30 *WCB*, 43-44.

31 For a list of these see Ron Edwards, *200 Years of Australian Folk Song: Index 1788-1988* (Kuranda: Rams Skull, 1988), 59-60, 384-86.
robbing squatters, destroying their stock, holding up judges and lecturing them and, of course, defying the police. It may be no accident that in both of the early texts and in the most frequently collected versions, the hero begins his career in the early 1860s, the years of the Land Acts which allowed Free Selection. A number of elements were relevant to both periods and are shared by both groups. For example, the refusal to live bound in "iron chains", which is part of the introductory material in groups 4 and 5, concludes the chorus in the "Wild Colonial Boy" group. Although in the context of the convict period this must be interpreted as a refusal to live as a convict, in a later period it could be merely an expression of the determination not to be captured.

A potential problem for this neat distinction between different social functions for different periods is Meredith's assertion that the "Wild Colonial Boy" "was being sung some six years before the discovery of gold".32 His evidence for this is contained in a book by Charles Cozens, The Adventures of a Guardsman, recording its author's visit to New South Wales in 1845. Cozens notes that "Many amusing anecdotes are still told of him, and, though long since dead, he yet lives in song, owing to his brave and romantic exit".33 Meredith argues that the song referred to is a version of "The Wild Colonial Boy" and not of "Bold Jack Donahoe" because it is only in the former that the bushranger shoots three policemen. He quotes 2C:

He shot the trooper Kelly, and laid him on the ground,
Davis firing in return, received a mortal wound,
He fired another shot, which stretched out poor Fitzroy,
And that was how they captured him, the wild colonial boy.34

The passage in Cozens's text which supports Meredith's argument is:

[He perished] but not before he had brought two of his assailants to the ground, including the corporal, and had seriously wounded a third, when, in levelling his piece at the remaining uninjured foe, his enemy forestalled

32 WCB, 91.

33 Charles Cozens, Adventures of a Guardsman (London: Bentley, 1848), 149.

34 WCB, 91.
him, and shot him in the centre of his forehead. He fell — nobly fell, where he had stood alone and unsupported.35

However, it is impossible to distinguish which song Cozens was referring to in his recollections. His text could equally be used to argue that it was "Bold Jack Donahoe" which he had heard. In the first place it is only in "Bold Jack Donahoe" that the hero is killed and not captured. In the second place the Wild Colonial Boy operates alone whereas the hero of "Bold Jack Donahoe" does not. The above quote from Cozens is preceded by a passage which corresponds closely to Meredith's groups 4 and 5, members of the "Bold Jack Donahoe" group:

Upon the policemen perceiving the smoke of their fire, they immediately dismounted, and, with a view of surprising them, advanced on foot, but it so happened that they were not unperceived, as they had been detected coming over a neighbouring range of hills. The three cowardly comrades of Donoghue instantly proposed to beat a speedy retreat while it was yet in their power, which was indignantly objected to by Donoghue, who replied, with a spirit worthy of a better cause, "No! go who will — I remain. There is but man for man, and we have, of the two parties, the advantage." This however, had not the desired effect on his chicken-hearted associates, who intimidated their intention of retiring, which Donoghue assented to, calling them base cowards, and declaring that he alone would stand his ground while life remained. The three cowards then took to their horses just as the police approached, and, without firing a shot, galloped off, leaving their brave though unfortunate comrade to perish alone.36

Meredith's group 5 has a few verses which are surprisingly similar:

As Jack and his companions roved out one afternoon,
Not thinking that the pains of death would overcome so soon,
To their surprise five horse police appeared all in their view,
And in quick time they did advance to take Jack Donahoe.

"Come, come you cowardly rascals, oh do not run away!
We'll fight them man to man, my boys, their number's only three;
For I'd rather range the bush around, like dingo or kangaroo,
Than work one hour for Government," said bold Jack Donahoe.

The Sergeant of the horse police discharged his carabine,  
And called aloud to Donahoe "Will you fight or resign,"  
"Resign, no, no! I never will, unto your cowardly crew,  
For today I'll fight with all my might," cried Bold Jack Donahoe.  

The Convict Bushranger Ballads

Although, as we have seen, Ward was incorrect in arguing that most bushrangers were regarded as "heroic symbols of resistance to constituted authority," the bushranger ballads from the convict period do paint their heroes in this way, and the resistance they describe is often very carefully directed. Jack Donahoe, Martin Cash and Johnny Troy stand up specifically to convict masters and to the state's coercive apparatuses, expressing opposition to the work required of convicts, the punishment they faced, and the very fact of their confinement.

The "Bold Jack Donahoe" group celebrates a number of aspects of its hero. The texts enjoy his ability to defeat and mock the convict authorities by escaping, they refer to his fame and how he is feared, but their central concern is his expression, in word and deed, of resistance to the convict system. The praise of Donahoe extends into the period prior to his transportation. Although he may have been transported merely for intent to commit a felony while employed as an "Errand Boy" in Dublin, the versions of the ballad give a very different picture. For example, Meredith's 3A has its hero transported for stealing five hundred pounds, and its second verse makes clear that this sum must have come from a highway robbery. As we have seen in chapter 5, Donahoe is being presented as part of a long tradition of Irish tories, raffarees and highwaymen. On his arrival in the colony he is usually shown returning to this practice, and in this version the hero explains that after scarcely twelve months in the

37 WCB, 56.

38 Australian Legend, 147.
colony he “took to the highway as ... oft-times ... before”. In Meredith’s 5 the hero is again a highwayman, and from the outset his resistance to English law is stressed:

'Twas of a valiant highwayman and outlaw of disdain,
Who'd scorn to live in slavery or wear a convict's chain;
His name it was Jack Donahoe of courage and renown —
He'd scorn to live in slavery or humble to the Crown.

This bold undaunted highwayman, as you may understand,
Was banished for his natural life from Erin's happy land.
In Dublin City of renown, where his first breath he drew,
It's there they titled him the brave and bold Jack Donahoe.40

Meredith’s group 4 also refers to Donahoe’s bravery and refusal to live in bondage in the introductory verse but in 3A (and in most of the versions of the ”Wild Colonial Boy” in group 2) this has become a full chorus:

Now come along my hearties, we’ll roam the mountainside,
Together we will plunder and together we will die,
We’ll wander o’er the valleys and we’ll gallop o’er the plains,
For we scorn to live in slavery, bound down in iron chains.41

If this chorus was in existence during the convict period, it is partly a dream of freedom for its audience. The lines work as a fictional resolution to the hardships of convictism, either as part of the ballad’s introduction or as a chorus sung in the first person plural.42 In the later form they assert that the singers too could attain the dream of freedom, but they are concerned with more than this. The chorus is an expression of a desire to reject the convict system.

An important feature in most of the different versions is the ease with which Donahoe could escape. One stresses his prolonged ability to elude the police — "He

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39 WCB, 50.

40 WCB, 56. This bears a striking resemblance to the broadside versions, for example “The Adventures of Brave Jack O’Donough”, CM, 77.

41 WCB, 50.

42 It cannot be proved that they existed as a chorus during the convict period.
was chased about by hundreds, for three long years or more". The members of group 3 have a verse which uses Donahoe's escapes to make a mockery of police. For example, 3A laughs at the authorities who had him in their grasp but failed to keep him:

Now Donahoe was taken all for a notorious crime,
And sentenced to be hung upon the gallows tree so high,
But when they came to Sydney gaol he left them in a stew
And when they came to call the roll they missed Jack Donahoe.

This group also focuses on the bushranger's notoriety. A verse in 3A states that the newspapers were publishing something new about him every day and that consequently people were afraid to travel. Meredith's 3B presents the effects of Donahoe's actions as much more specifically felt by "tyrants", a common term for harsh disciplinarians:

As O'Donahoe made his escape, to the woods he did repair,
Where the tyrants dared not show their face by night or by day.

Groups 4 and 5 have an element where Donahoe's bravery is enhanced and his defeat rationalized by his companions' desertion. The reason for their retreat is the numerical superiority of the police. In 4A Donahoe's personal courage is stressed when he boldly declares:

"Begone, you cowardly rascals, begone from me, I pray;
I'll fight them all myself, and that you plain will see."

In 4B the companion's cowardice enables the ballad to assert that with unity, the authorities could be overcome:

43 WCR, 55.
44 WCR, 51.
45 WCR, 51.
46 WCR, 53.
47 WCR, 53.
"Begone you cowardly scoundrels, begone, I pray from me,
For if we were united, we'd gain the victory.
Today I'll fight with courage bold that all the world may see,
For I'd rather die in battle than be hung on a gallows tree."  

The central element shared by "Bold Jack Donahoe" and the "Wild Colonial Boy" is a fight with the police. What appear to be the earlier versions of the incident express opposition to life as a convict whereas the later versions have a more general defiance to authority. The Wild Colonial Boy tends to tell his pursuers that he will fight but not surrender, while Jack Donahoe's words relate more specifically to the convict system. In 3A when Donahoe is finally confronted by the horse police and called on "to fight or to resign", his answer is full of defiance towards the state's repressive apparatus and to the labour required of the convicts:

"Resign to you, you cowardly dogs, a thing I ne'er will do,
For I'll fight this night with all my might", cried bold Jack Donahoe,
"I'd rather roam these hills and dales like a wolf or kangaroo,
Than work one hour for government", cried bold Jack Donahoe.  

"Brave Donahue" is the title which Meredith gives the Donahoe verse that is not related to either "Bold Jack Donahoe" or the "Wild Colonial Boy". It too operates partly as a dream of freedom for a convict audience, stressing the freedom of a bushranger's life. The poem draws a parallel between Rome under threat from warriors and the penal authorities faced with the bushranger Donahoe:

A life that is free as the bandits of old,
When Rome was a prey of the warriors bold,
Who knew how to buy gallant soldiers with gold,
Is the life full of danger,
Of Jack the bushranger,
Of brave Donahue!  

As we have seen above, "Brave Donahue" presents bushranging as a continuation of the Irish fight for freedom from English domination. For an Irish convict audience, its

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48 *WCB*, 55.
49 *WCB*, 51.
50 *WCB*, 40-41.
urging its listeners to "Be brave and true" in the tradition of their Irish forefathers is an incitement to rebellion or resistance. The last verse is a statement of Donahoe’s determination to continue fighting against "the stranger"—in Ireland the English and in Australia the penal authorities:

Then hurl me to crime and brand me with shame,  
But think not to baulk me, my spirit to tame,  
For I’ll fight to the last in old Ireland’s name,  
Though I be a bushranger,  
You still are the stranger,  
And I’m Donahue.

It is possible that performance of this piece may have been even more of a group expression of opposition to the convict authorities. This version is recorded in Thomas Walker’s Felonry of New South Wales, where a man who claims that he learned the song "from Walmsley, Webber’s mate” performs it for a group of bushrangers. He subsequently tells his companions these words which they all then sing together:

We will still be bushrangers,  
And shoot down the strangers,  
We’re all Donahues.51

"The Ballad of Martin Cash" illustrates the impossibility of completely distinguishing between ballads about work, punishment, escape and bushranging. It tells of its hero’s escape from a place of secondary punishment and of his refusal to labour: "He left Port Arthur’s cursed soil, / Saying ‘No longer will I toil’". This ballad operates by allowing a fictional resolution to the confinement of convict life,

51 [Thomas Walker], Felonry of New South Wales: Realistic Stories of the Early Days of the Convict Settlement of Botany Bay (Sydney: Dymock, 1891), 60-64. Another version is printed by Meredith, WCB, 41-42. In this text the entire ballad is in the first person plural and would consequently operate for a convict audience as a direct statement of its determination to fight the English and the convict system. Its source is Frank Clune, Wild Colonial Boys (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948), 220-21. In this book Clune and his literary collaborator, P.R. Stephensen, stress the links between the convict bushrangers and those of the goldrush period, who are the focus for the book. It may have suited their purpose to have it in the first person plural. We have already seen that Clune or Stephensen has apparently added to "Jim Jones at Botany Bay", Wild Colonial Boys, 75.
noting Cash's ability to move freely around Van Diemen's Land. It also enables the expression of opposition to the convict system. In particular Cash's deeds are used to provide the ballad's audience with a vicarious revenge against the masters of assigned servants:

He made the settlers crouch in dread
Where'er that he showed his head;
This valiant son of Erin,
Where the sprig of shamrock grows.

The ballad gloats at the way Cash reverses the power relationship between convicts and their enemies:

Saying, "Down, you cowardly dogs,
Or I nail you to the floor!"
It's loud for mercy they did cry,
But no one came to their reply,
While Martin, with a smiling eye,
Stood gazing at his foes. 52

There is also a deal of enjoyment of the fact that he is able to defeat a powerful array of the state's coercive arsenal:

It was on the Salt Pan Plain
He faced his enemies again,
There were Sydney blacks and horse police,
And well-trained soldiers too;
But at the time when they drew near,
Cash hailed them loudly with a cheer,
And let them have it left and right,
His colours were true blue.
Bravely did he stand his ground,
The bullets flying thick around,
He faced his firing foes.
"Surrender, Martin!" loud they cry,
"Never till the hour I die!"

"Johnny Troy", a bushranging ballad which has only been found in America in an apparently distorted form, has an opening verse which addresses its audience as bushrangers whom it presents as ideologically opposed to the convict system:

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52 PP. 59-60.
Come all ye daring bushrangers
And outlaws of the land,
Who scorn to live in slavery
Or wear the convict's band.

I'll tell to you the story
Of the most heroic boy.53

Troy is depicted defeating the convicts' guards in an attempt to free 140 of his fellow prisoners. Unfortunately there seem to be gaps in the text which probably include a description of the bushrangers' last stand. However, there is a verse which shows its hero as a resister or rebel, telling his men to load their weapons in preparation for a deliberate attack on the horse police. The ballad contains a particularly interesting self-reference which illuminates its social function. A verse refers to singing it as part of gloating about victory over the penal system and its coercive arm:

"When once we reach the shore, brave boys,
We'll shout and sing for joy;
We'll hiss and stone those horse police
And sing "Bold Johnny Troy"."

"Jim Jones at Botany Bay" also links the convicts' work, their punishment, and bushranging. It describes the constant noise of chains and the arduous labour: "For night and day the irons clang, and like poor galley slaves / We toil, and toil, and when we die must fill dishonoured graves". The strength of the state's coercive powers are underlined during the voyage to the colony when the five hundred soldiers on board the convict vessel are able to drive away a potential means of escape — a pirate ship. Very early in the ballad the state's ability to punish offenders is stressed by the sentencing judge:

Don’t be too gay at Botany Bay, or else you’ll surely hang —
Or else you’ll hang,” he says, says he — “and after that, Jim Jones,
High up upon the gallow-tree the crows will pick your bones —
You’ll have no chance for mischief then; remember what I say,
They’ll flog the poaching out of you, out there at Botany Bay”.

"Jim Jones at Botany Bay" concludes by offering its audience a resolution to the hardships of the convict system, depicting its speaker contemplating a revenge directed towards the authorities who are seen as violent oppressors:

But by and by I’ll break my chains: into the bush I’ll go,
And join the brave bushrangers there — Jack Donahoo and Co.,
And some dark night when everything is silent in the town
I’ll kill the tyrants, one and all, and shoot the floggers down:
I’ll give the Law a little shock: remember what I say,
They’ll yet regret they sent Jim Jones in chains to Botany Bay.

Nelson Wattie points out that this ballad embraces singer and audience with the line "We toil, and toil, and when we die must fill dishonoured graves", and he suggests that it is ultimately an appeal to action:

The simple past tense is the typical tense of narration, but 'Jim Jones' moves from this tense through the present, where it gathers sympathy, into the future, where the narrator speaks of his plans, hopes and aspirations and invites the now sympathetic audience to share them. In the strictest sense therefore 'Jim Jones' is not narrative, or only partly so. Its final force is polemical.

On the other hand McQueen argues that "Jim Jones is threatening assassination, not social unrest; his protest is a personal one against men like Price and Logan". But McQueen fails to see the song functioning in a social context and to consider the effect of its dissemination. If a historical figure held the views which Jim Jones expresses in the ballad he may well be wishing for a personal revenge. However, if a ballad like "Jim Jones at Botany Bay" was sung by convicts, its impact would be quite different.

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54 "Jim Jones at Botany Bay", QRS, 17-18.


56 A New Britannia, 135.
The song is a vehicle to express opposition to the convict system, and the speaker's stated intention becomes an example of laudable behaviour, perhaps to be imitated.

Convict Ballads about Escapes

Two ballads probably composed in Australia celebrate escapes by prisoners. "The Seizure of the Cyprus Brig in Recherche Bay, Aug, 1829" describes the powerful events which Marcus Clarke was later to use in For the Term of His Natural Life, in the episode of "The Seizure of the 'Osprey'".57 The ballad's opening encourages convicts to sing together about a victory over the convict system (although in fact no chorus has survived), addressing its audience as potential freedom seekers:

Come all you sons of freedom,
A chorus join with me,
I'll sing a song of heroes.
And glorious liberty.58

Bushranging is legitimized as the logical response to the terrible living conditions and brutal punishments experienced by the prisoners who were "starv'd and flogg'd and punish'd / Deprived of all redress". It depicts the escapees as bushrangers who had been caught and sentenced to a secondary settlement. They are described as "noble lads" and their speech is a stirring condemnation of the convict system, and of refusal to remain in its power:

57 Marcus Clarke, For the Term of His Natural Life (1874; Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1975), 131-136.

We first address'd the soldiers,
"For liberty we crave,
Give up your arms this instant,
Or the sea will be your grave;
By tyranny we've been oppress'd,
By your colonial laws,
But we'll bid adieu to slavery,
Or die in freedom's cause."

"The Catalpa" describes the escape of Fenian prisoners from Western Australia and may be as much concerned with politics in Ireland as with resistance to convict authorities. Its chorus gloats about the outwitting of the prison authorities, ostensibly taunting them with the escape:

So come all you screw warders and gaolers,
Remember Perth regatta day,
Take care of the rest of your Fenians,
Or the Yankees will steal them away.59

The ballad stresses that the prisoners were transported for "defending their country, Old Ireland". And the last verse celebrates their freedom and suggests that they will be able to continue the fight for Ireland:

Now they've landed safe in America
And there will be able to cry,
"Hoist up the green flag and shamrock,
Hurrah for old Ireland we'll die."

Overall the popular ballads of the convict system are part of a subculture in opposition to official ideology. They contain, and their performance is part of reinforcing, a system of beliefs which works in opposition to the convict system, presenting the operation of that system as unjust. The popular verse of the period is

59 "The Catalpa", OBS, 26. "The Fenian's Escape", Ron Edwards, The Big Book of Australian Folk Song (Adelaide: Rigby, 1976), 130-31, is an Irish ballad which tells the same story, stressing that the Irish have defeated the English:

Now boys if you will listen to the story I'll relate,
I'll tell you of the noble men who from the foe escaped,
Though bound with Saxon fetters in the dark Australian jail,
They struck a blow for freedom and for Yankee land set sail.
essentially a response to the twin facts of convict life — hard physical labour and harsh discipline. Some poems seem to operate to secure consent for the existing order, soothing potential convict dissent by a reminder that sentences will expire, and by asserting that through prayer or petition justice will eventually be done. Yet even these contain criticisms of the arduous labour and brutal discipline. The poems which addressed their audience's experiences within the system could also contain an undercurrent of resistance, reinforcing the existence of a convict subculture in opposition to official morality. The strongest responses were ballads about bushrangers and escapes, and these provided a legitimation of opposition and valorized resisters.
Part Three. Goldfield Songs

When we're out upon the spree
We are jovial and free,
And for harmony most ardently we long;
To a concert room we pop,
At the bar we take a drop,
And then go in the room to hear a song.

Charles Thatcher
"When We're Out Upon the Spree"
Chapter 8
The Miners and Their Enemies

Folklorists examining the nineteenth-century popular ballads and related verse have often rejected the goldfield songs because they could not fit them into the rural and organic "folk" culture which they wanted to find.\(^1\) The material from the goldfields was usually not anonymous and, even worse, was tainted by its commercial nature, both when performed by professional entertainers in goldfield concert halls, and when published in the numerous and often reprinted songsters or in newspapers on the fields. Only a handful have been collected from oral sources.\(^2\) The songs belonged not to some romantic notion of a "folk community" but to a thriving entertainment industry.\(^3\)

Contemporary observers noted a considerable variety of music on the Victorian goldfields. W. Craig wrote:

Music, song, and laughter are heard in every direction. The German camps are strong in music, but they lapse into silence when stirring martial strains are commenced on the bagpipes by enthusiastic Scottish

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\(^1\) For example John Manifold's influential *Who Wrote the Ballads? Notes on Australian Folksong* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1964) regards the songs of the goldfield entertainers as outside his definition of folk song or ballad. So too does the entry "Folksong and Ballad", in William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton, Barry Andrews, *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1985), 268, which states "the songs of the goldfields were seldom anonymous and clearly identifiable folk-songs".

\(^2\) Ron Edwards, "The Thatcher Tradition", *Australian Tradition* 29 (1972): 10-11, suggests that only two of Charles Thatcher's songs have been collected in the field.


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Highlanders, who are numerous on Bendigo, every gully, indeed, having its piper and pipes.

In Golden Gully we find a party of four full-blooded negroes entertaining a group of miners....

The scene, song and music have an exhilarating effect upon the bystanders, and in a pleasant mood we pass on to the hill that leads to our tent in Kangaroo Gully. Here something fresh arrests our attention. A party of four Britshers or Americans are seated around a camp fire, and one of them is singing the latest popular ballad, "Ben Bolt of the Salt Sea Wave." The singer has a rich, powerful bass voice, into which he throws much feeling.4

Craig's reminiscences were written and published half a century after the events that he described and probably overstate the degree of music on the fields, but the writings of others who were present also record the miners making their own musical entertainments. William Kelly remembers "a jolly evening, enlivened by anecdote and adventures as well as song" and Ellen Clacy records that wild songs and laughter could be heard around campfires on the fields.5 Although these accounts indicate that self-made entertainment was a feature of goldfield life, the extant songs from the goldfields are the products of professional entertainers.

There are several reasons for the predominance of songs from the pens of professional songwriters. Weston Bate suggests, somewhat simplistically, that the diggers "were usually too tired to create songs in the bush tradition", and he attributes the growth of commercial balladry to this supposed lack of production on the diggers' part.6 In fact the opposite is more likely to be the case — the impetus for amateur song composition declines when there is easy access to professionally produced


6 Weston Bate, Victorian Gold Rushes (Fitzroy/Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988), 39.
entertainment, and the goldfield towns had a large enough population with a readily disposable income to support a variety of commercial cultural activities. Our picture of the popular song on the fields has also probably been influenced by what survived. The professional singers found it profitable to collect their songs and publish them in booklets called "songsters", many of which are still extant, and it is largely from these published collections that the corpus of goldfield songs derives. It is impossible to know what songs composed by working diggers have been lost.

The extant songs from the goldmining towns which flourished in the 1850s and early 1860s come almost entirely from Victoria. Although there were important rushes in New South Wales, Victoria was a much more significant producer of gold and attracted a far larger potential audience for the goldfield entertainers. Nevertheless a few songs which were probably sung to miners in New South Wales have survived. The Sydney Songster, whose title page describes its contents as "A Collection of New Original, Local, and Comic Songs, by George Chanson, as sung at the Sydney Concert Rooms", contains a number of pieces which describe fields in New South Wales and which would have been relevant to an audience of miners. Concert halls in Melbourne were filled with miners and it is likely that the Sydney Concert Hall also received at least some of its patronage from this source. One song in the Sydney Songster is titled "The Rush to Glenmire" and others, including "Going to the Diggings" and "The Cove What Drives", also refer to New South Wales fields such as Lambing Flat and Forbes. An advertisement on the back page of the Sydney Songster indicates that songs from entertainers on the Victorian fields were available in Sydney.

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7 During the 1850s the rushes in New South Wales produced only about 7 per cent of Victoria's gold output, but from 1860-63 it was more like 25 per cent, Geoffrey Blainey, The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining (1963; Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1969), 84.

8 SS.

And local music hall songs were certainly sung at Maitland, Lambing Flat and Forbes.¹⁰

The extant goldfield songs belong to the music hall tradition. Hotel owners in the mining towns attracted thirsty diggers by building concert halls and offering a variety of musical and theatrical entertainments. Admission was free but the drinks were expensive. In his recollections of life on the Victorian goldfields, William Kelly describes Bendigo's most famous concert hall:

I would be wanting in gratitude for the many agreeable evenings I spent in it were I to omit specifying the concert-hall attached to the Shamrock Hotel, on which the enterprising landlord spent no less a sum than 8000l., in producing a hall that might not blush in holding up its head side by side with the most aristocratic place of resort of the same kind in the United Kingdom. And in a like spirit he followed out the speculation, never stopping at a price to secure the first artists in the colony, his musical staff often costing him as much in salaries alone as 150l. per week. Yet even under this formidable outlay he made a large fortune from the mere profits of the drinks consumed, for there was no charge on admission. There are concerts every night, but Mondays and Saturdays (especially the latter) are the grand evenings, when every inch of the enormous hall, and every corner of the different approaches, are thoroughly filled. It was no uncommon thing, I understand, to receive 500l. of a Saturday night, which, of itself, would be ample reimbursement, as the publican's profits in Victoria may be fairly set down at cent. per cent., without at all outraging probability.¹¹

A typical program at the Shamrock would include a number of popular songs and selections from opera sung by various performers, and a few "local songs" sung by Charles Thatcher, the most prolific of the goldfield composers.¹² These goldfield songs were almost always set to existing tunes and were sometimes parodies, in the sense of having their words to some extent modelled on those originally associated

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¹⁰ "The Rush to Glanmire", SS, 6-8; "Going to the Diggings", SS, 5-6; "The Cove What Drives", SS, 8-9; "Stringy Bark and Green Hide" is described as "A Character Song, as sung by Mr. J. S. Brice, at the Theatre Royal, Maitland, Lambing Flat, Forbes, &c.", SS, 13.

¹¹ Kelly, Life in Victoria, 2: 188-89.

with the tune. Thomas Bracken writes: "Thatcher possessed a very fair voice and the crowded audiences that used to assemble nightly at the Shamrock Concert Hall, were enthusiastic in their approval of his efforts". Another contemporary observer, Harlow Wicks, writing of the time of his own arrival in Bendigo in late 1857, remembers Thatcher's capacity to draw "immense houses nightly at the Shamrock". He became known as "the inimitable Thatcher" or simply "the inimitable", and Bracken suggests that he "was pocketing about £20 or £30 a week by his songs".

The local pieces composed by Thatcher and his contemporaries were not the only music hall songs performed in the concert halls on the goldfields. Many items that were part of the repertoire in the London music halls were performed in Australia and a few of these were even reprinted in the goldfield songsters. One of Thatcher's songs addresses this fact and playfully suggests that these Old World pieces are inappropriate for life on the goldfields. "Old Acquaintances; or, Ten Days' Later News" alludes to the fact that many of the English songs familiar to his audience have been heard too often. The song purports to be a letter from England which gives later news about the characters in well-known songs, reporting that Annie Laurie was married last summer and that Kathleen Mavourneen is now very old and ugly. It makes fun of the characters in some of these songs by describing them in terms from the goldfields, for example, explaining that now Mrs Johnson "goes on the spree" every night with Molly Bawn.

13 The songs did not always use pre-existing tunes, for example "London Cries", TCM, 1: 30-32, was annotated: "Air — Original".

14 Thomas Bracken, Dear Old Bendigo: (A Sketch of the Early Digging Days) (Bendigo: Robshaw, [c. 1892]), 19.


16 Bracken, Dear Old Bendigo, 21.

17 "Old Acquaintances; or, Ten Days' Later News", TCM, 1: 5-6.
Although Thatcher was clearly the most popular and influential of those singing and composing the songs which addressed life on the fields, there were a number of others as well. He referred to them, somewhat dismissively as "imitators", in a song called "Competition", but they were much more significant than that. Accounts of life in the mining towns mention such singers as Greville and Pierce, and Bracken notes that "Miss Urie, the best singer of Scottish ballads we have ever had in the colonies, contributed greatly to Thatcher's success on the stage. She used to sing duets with him, and as these were on local subjects they always 'took' with the diggers". The goldfield songsters contain significant contributions from composers such as James Mulholland, Samuel Lemaitre, P.S. Raphael, Joe Small and "George Chanson". Thatcher's importance is perhaps slightly exaggerated by what material has happened to have survived, although he did clearly enjoy greater success than his colleagues. His manuscript collection in the State Library of Victoria contains many songs which were unpublished, and the other goldfield composers must have had similar work which no longer exists. A songster by Mulholland that was published in Ballarat in mid-1855, according to Hugh Anderson, has apparently disappeared, and items by other composers may well have suffered the same fate.

Although there is some overlap, the corpus of Thatcher's songs falls roughly into two groups — unpublished songs in manuscript form and published songs. The fact that very few of the manuscript songs were included in the songsters from the period is probably explained by their limited focus on specific local events and personalities. G. McKay wrote that "Every passing event of interest was made a

18 "Competition", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.


20 Bracken, Dear Old Bendigo, 19.

21 Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

22 Colonial Minstrel, 25. The second volume of TCM seems to have disappeared.
subject by him", and some of his songs were not unlike the British and Irish broadside press in the way they dealt with the latest news, for example, "The Fire in Bridge St.", which describes an event that evidently took place the day before the song was performed. Often Thatcher's work would focus on specific events which local identities found embarrassing, such as "Ballarat Comic Alphabet" which begins:

A stands for John Alloo  
Who for grog was lately nailed  
And B for Captain Brown who by  
His partner was assailed  
C for Carver Auctioneer  
Who gets joed when he rides out.

Sometimes such local allusions had unfortunate consequences. For example when Thatcher sang a song called "The Amorous Bank Manager" about an attack on a publican's wife, the publican assaulted him on the floor of the Lyceum, the concert hall where he was performing. In Ararat Thatcher was taken to court for libel in a handbill advertising a performance, but in court he sang the song in question, "The Ararat Lawyer", and the case was dismissed.

Anderson seems to suggest that it was these sort of songs which were the most popular:

Although we find Thatcher's doggerel dealing with the larger historical events of most importance today, such was not the case with his contemporaries. From the evidence available, it was the topical, the local songs, which gained the loudest applause, the notice in the press.

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23 Annals of Bendigo, 1: 64.

24 "The Fire in Bridge St.", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

25 "Ballarat Comic Alphabet", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

26 Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 81-82; 110.

27 Colonial Minstrel, 85.
Certainly songs like these were extremely well received but they tended to have only a short-lived relevance, while some of the other local songs, whose subject matter was perhaps more general, reached a wider audience over a number of years. Thatcher published a series of songsters called Thatcher's Colonial Songster and another called Thatcher's Colonial Minstrel, and his songs were included with others in the Victoria Songster series and the Melbourne Vocalist series. Sometimes these publications introduce songs with a reference to their popularity, although perhaps the figures are not to be accepted without some reservation. Thatcher's Colonial Songster describes "Petticoat Lane" as having been sung for 275 nights at the Charlie Napier, a hotel in Ballarat, and the Victoria Songster claims that "John Chinaman My Jo" was sung for 300 nights. Some of his songs were published as broadsides and in newspapers, although these may not have had as long a currency as those in the songsters. There is also internal evidence in some of Thatcher's pieces that the published material included those which received the most acclaim from his audiences. For example "What Shall I Sing?" lists what were probably his most requested songs at that time and almost all of those mentioned appear in the songsters.

On the few occasions when songs composed by the goldfield entertainers have been examined by twentieth-century commentators, they, like the transportation broadsides and convict verse, have been seen as unproblematic reflections of the society which produced them. Ward and Anderson have quoted from them,

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28 TCS; TCM; VS; MV.


31 "What Shall I Sing?", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
sometimes extensively, to give a colourful description of the culture on the fields. Unlike the transportation broadsides, the songs of the goldfields were composed by those with first hand experience of their subject matter and they consequently do record a great deal of information which is helpful to those interested in goldfield life. The composers saw themselves partly as social commentators, and contemporary observers were aware of the songs' value as encapsulating the flavour of goldfield towns. The Argus for 7 April 1854 wrote that Thatcher's songs were "all humorous, abounding in local allusions, as a matter of course; and if circulated in England, would give a much better idea of life at the gold-fields than most of the elaborately written works upon them do". It should be noted that, as with the work of the popular goldfield artist, S.T. Gill, the professional entertainers on the fields produced caricature rather than realist versions of the society they sang about.

But for the miners who regularly filled the concert halls, the songs performed a complex range of social functions. One way to explain, at least partially, how the goldfield songs operated for their initial audience is to see them as agents of socialization, both assisting new arrivals to assimilate into a particular colonial culture, a process which the songs themselves refer to as "getting colonized", and more importantly, enacting tensions, conflicts, fears and frustrations experienced by their audience, and attempting to resolve them. Winfried Fluck suggests that socialization refers to the process by which individuals "acquire the skills, attitudes, values and meanings which allow them to function in society". He suggests that popular culture can be seen as operating in this way but he argues that its socializing function has another significant aspect:

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33 Argus, 7 April 1854, 5.

34 "Getting Colonized", TCM. 1: 34-35.
Its socializing influence ... is not restricted to offering models of behavior for imitation and serving as a source of social knowledge. What is much more significant in terms of social function is that it enacts tensions and conflicts with existing values and meanings in such a way that the recipient is able to explain and to accommodate them within the social and cultural context in which he or she is living.\textsuperscript{35}

It is not easy to be sure just who the audience for the goldfield songs were. The community included many who were not miners, although mining was the most significant occupation, involving about two thirds of the 119,682 men working on the fields, according to the 1861 census. Also present were storekeepers, lawyers, publicans, doctors, publishers, journalists, and those involved in a variety of trades. In the census, 136 women gave their occupation as miner, and women were represented in many other areas including government; the professions; trading; the hotel, clothing and domestic industries; manufacturing; and agriculture.\textsuperscript{36} From late 1852 the fields contained a diverse ethnic mix. Frank Cusack suggests that among those who made up the Bendigo population in the early 1850s were representatives from Scotland, Ireland, England, Cornwall, Hungary, Poland, France, Germany, China and America, as well as those from Sydney and Van Diemen's Land. He notes that a "camaraderie" existed in spite of the linguistic, cultural and racial differences, but that "it did not preclude a marked tendency to segregate in national groups".\textsuperscript{37} In spite of the diversity of the goldfield population, it is clear enough that at least the bulk of the audience for the songs were young men from Britain and perhaps, to a lesser extent, from Ireland. This section of goldfield society was dominant among those involved in mining, but was subordinate to other groups with power in the colony. Much of the songs' function was concerned with asserting solidarity within this


\textsuperscript{36} Bate, \textit{Victorian Gold Rushes}, 37-38; 42.

Anglo-Celtic mining fraternity, power over others on the fields, and opposition towards those to whom they were subordinate.

**Outsiders: Squatters, Professionals and Charlatans**

Many of the goldfield songs address the relationship between the miners and those who held power, status and wealth. The representatives of the state on the goldfields are frequently attacked, and the squatters and members of the professional middle class are also targets. Thatcher sees his own role, in "What Shall I Sing?", as amusing the audience with songs that make fun of those who are perceived as outside the mining fraternity. He asks whether he shall "walk into the squatters", "touch up the traps", "show up the Municipality", or "attack magisterial folly".38 In New Zealand Thatcher went so far as to suggest that he had a reformist mission, beginning a performance in Auckland with the lines:

> My name is Thatcher, I'm a comic file,  
> And I'll walk into some of them in style,  
> Come then and hear what Thatcher has to say  
> About the various topics of the day.  
> You but support him and he'll do his best,  
> And all your grievances shall be redressed.39

In fact it is the performance itself which offers a fictional redressing of grievances. Broadly speaking, the songs compensate for their audience's lack of power by asserting their superiority over their opponents, either by lampooning them or by relating incidents where miners outsmart them. But in spite of the scorn which the songs can express, they often contain a covert acceptance of the miners' inferior position. The basis for the unbalanced power relationship is not really questioned.

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38 "What Shall I Sing?", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

It was common for Thatcher, when he was travelling around the goldfields, to conclude a performance with a song about important local figures from whatever town he was in, and these are a good example of mocking songs. A number survive in manuscript form, including "Avoca Celebrities", "Castlemaine", "Daylesford", "Dunolly Celebrities", "Geelong Celebrities", and "Maryborough Celebrities".\(^{40}\) They laugh at the mayors, councillors, lawyers, surveyors, bailiffs, and other public figures in these towns. To an audience in Avoca, Thatcher sang:

You've got a fine Shire Council  
And Dixon is the President  
In size and weight it's plain that he  
Surpasses every resident  
He's broken nearly every chair  
Which on the floor has rolled him  
And the Council now are going to get  
A cast iron one to hold him.\(^{41}\)

Although it makes fun of those in the community with some sort of power, this is clearly not threatening. In fact this group of songs were usually introduced with a rider which undermined the seriousness of any attack. "Avoca Celebrities" begins apologetically:

Your celebrities I'm going to quiz  
They mustn't [sic] be offended  
But though I poke fun at them now  
Mind no harm is intended.

And in many other songs, local identities with power or prestige are mocked. "Carpenter the Smelter" makes fun of one of the members of the Mining Board; and in "Lansell's Case" the fact that some of the well-known residents of View Point are forced to suffer the smell of a tallow-melting works causes great amusement.\(^{42}\)

\(^{40}\) Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

\(^{41}\) "Avoca Celebrities", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

Bracken writes that "One of Thatcher's greatest 'hits' was his song of 'Bullock Creek' in which the adventures of certain lady and gentlemen bathers in that stream were chronicled with graphic fidelity". A letter to the historian of Bendigo, G. McKay, written by a Mr Harlow Wicks, dated Traralgon, 12/4/13 states: "When I first arrived in Bendigo, in the latter part of 1857, Thatcher's greatest draw was the 'Bullock Creek Picnic,' which had occurred shortly before I arrived, and it drew immense houses nightly at the Shamrock". The song describes a party of gentlemen and ladies who go for a picnic with "Fowls and prime ham sandwiches, champagne and Stilton cheese". It compares ladies bathing at Brighton or Margate with bathing in Bullock Creek. Instead of having bathing machines to let them into the water, towels at the ready, and bathing gowns, these women had "not a blessed thing on when they bathed in Bullock Creek". A further affront to their dignity is the fact that the gentlemen, who were a discreet distance away, heard screams of anguish and rushed to the pool to find one of the ladies trying to pull several leeches off herself.

Songs of a more general nature also compensate for the miners' own lack of power by mocking those who do hold power. "The Public Man" offers tongue-in-cheek advice to would-be politicians and, in the process, outlines a critique of the behaviour of many involved in politics. It suggests that even if a man cannot read, write, recite a speech, spell, and is "as stupid as a mule", his road to high office is by no means blocked. All that is necessary is that one "seem to know". The song's speaker urges the would-be "public man" not to let a lack of knowledge on any issue prevent him from discussing it. If a meeting is held on the land question, the would-be politician should rise up and "Cry down vile monopoly, / Talk of squatter tyranny, /

43 Bracken, Dear Old Bendigo, 20.
And howl against the ministry". He is to "get very warm" on "the poor injured diggers' rights". The song advises anger and ranting "like an actor", in the face of opposition. It suggests that if the politician owns property he should look well to his interest, "And vote for that which pays [himself] best". And it advises him to donate to charity.

Nor were lawyers and doctors immune from this sort of attack. James Mulholland's "Australian Humbugs" describes those in the professions as "The greatest imposters we have here". Lawyers were shown smugly deceiving all with whom they had dealings. One punning song described them as cricketers in the sense that they often "bowl their clients out / In an underhanded way". Another describes a lawyer "Humbugging the jury, soft-soaping the judge" and then laughing later about how he "nailed 'em with blatherskyte". Thatcher's song, "Colonial Curiosities", provides a list of "rarities" in the colony, suggesting that one is unlikely to find a lawyer who is "more a fool than a rogue". Several pieces comment on the doctor's need for patients. The speaker in "By-and-By" suggests that when a doctor greets him, he says that he hopes "I'm quite well" but that this is a lie. And in Thatcher's "A Cheerful Glass", a doctor sits dreaming of "prime consultations":

Compound fractures are pleasant to him;  
With joy [he] thinks of bad dislocations,  
Or taking off some fellow's limb.47

The songs also attack various charlatans who may not have had more prestige than the diggers, but against whom the diggers wanted some sort of revenge. "Life of a Colonial Quack Doctor" mocks the unqualified doctors who frequented the fields by relating some of the tricks they employed, for example, pulling a serious face and saying "'Twas fortunate you came to me". Mulholland's "Australian Humbugs" criticizes "Land jobbers, who freely speculate / On sections of land sold by the state",

describing their practice of subdividing and then demanding exorbitant prices regardless of the quality of the land. The speaker in "Buying Land" tells of being sold land that was described as well-watered and which turned out to be a swamp. Another song sarcastically comments "What a blessing to Victoria are her brilliant Auctioneers!". And two songs, "Life of an Auctioneer" and "By-and-By", express satisfaction that an auctioneer who had been selling stolen horses, is in trouble with the police.48

In mid-1859 a share boom began, and many miners invested and lost large amounts of money. Serle notes:

By the end of 1859 one hundred public companies had been formed and another hundred followed in 1860. All told, probably well over £1 million was invested in about eighteen months by tens of thousands of the public....

By January 1861, fourteen of about one hundred surviving public companies were paying dividends, and most of the rest were moribund. £1 million of capital was almost 'annihilated'. About 270 leases were being worked of about 850 which had been applied for a year earlier.49

The song "Share-Jobbing" criticizes the unscrupulous promoters' methods by ostensibly urging people to become involved in this new swindle. It suggests that those interested in making large profits should get hold of an unprofitable claim, draw up a prospectus, pay some great man to put his name to the venture, buy some specimens and display them prominently. Thatcher's "My Broker" describes the broker dressed as "a swell", informing that another call is due, offering "mining snares", convincing him to buy "bubble shares", and telling him that the "Provincial Banking Company" (one of the companies which went bankrupt) would be a good speculation. But its final verse shows that the speaker is now too wise to be taken in


49 The Golden Age, 225.
and that the broker will soon have to "gull some other flat". On the other hand, songs about failed companies could also give the diggers an opportunity to laugh at the misfortunes of some of the public figures who had lost vast sums of money. Thatcher's "The Loss of the Shareholders" tells of the demise of The Provincial Banking Company, apparently enjoying the fact that "M—n" has lost his legal battle and that the Chairman has lost an unknown quantity of money.\(^{50}\)

Many songs directly attack the squatters or offer the diggers a compensation for their relative lack of power by making fun of squatters. Thatcher's "Billy Nutts in Australia" is a medley with a section, "Lines Upon a Squatter" which rather bluntly expresses the diggers' resentment towards large land-holders:

> Oh, you stupid, grumbling chap,  
> At you I means to have a rap;  
> For you always are complaining  
> Of your bad luck here, and feigning  
> That by the discovery of gold,  
> You fellows are completely sold;  
> But had not gold been found out here,  
> You all might then have, p'raps, looked queer,  
> And found no customers, I fear,  
> For that bad scabby mutton.  
> But now you sell your crops like fun;  
> Hay at an awful price per ton;  
> And that's the way we coves are done,  
> You avaricious glutton.\(^{51}\)

Other songs are sarcastic about the squatters' opposition to the diggers. "A New Chum's Letter", partly making fun of the new arrival's inability to understand the colony, describes the squatters as "a fine race ... the true pioneers of this nation" and notes, with heavy irony, that of course they refuse to accept compensation even if they are "all ruined through the gold fields". "Colonial Curiosities" mentions, among its list of types of people unlikely to be found in the colony, a squatter who doesn't complain.


\(^{51}\) "Billy Nutts in Australia", *TCS*, 1: 10-13.
and who doesn't want compensation. "Australia As It Is" sarcastically describes the squatters of Victoria as "a splendid race" who claim that "Gold Diggings ruined the country!".\footnote{52}

Thatcher finished his exhibition titled "Life on the Goldfields" with a song called "The Shearing Season".\footnote{53} It combines several important elements — the incompetent new-chum motif which is discussed in chapter 9, a spectacular success for the miners, and a satisfying fictional vengeance against the squatters. When a new rush breaks out, all a squatter's shearers leave the station in spite of the fact that the squatter humbles himself and begs them to remain. He is forced to employ new chums who are very inept and when they shear, take not only the wool but also "a deal of the mutton". The station is soon advertised for sale. A couple of months later the shearers return but the squatter is still angry and tells them that he would see them "reduced to the verge of starvation" rather than re-employ them. But the shearers are there to buy the property, having made "a big pile at the rush at McIvor". To rub salt into his wounds they offer the squatter a job as an overseer. The song finishes with its speaker saying that it isn't known whether the squatter hanged himself or threw himself into the river, the change in his fortunes was so "galling ... to his pride".

The goldfield songs were particularly vicious about those who had newly acquired land, and in their attacks on the \textit{nouveau riche} there is, to some extent, an implicit recognition of the legitimacy of the established squatters' position. Anderson suggests that one song was composed in response to the fact that a new squatter threatened to impound cattle belonging to the miners and tradespeople associated with extensive diggings on his property. The song, facetiously titled "The Lord of Barrandown", details how Harney made his money as a publican, catering for the


wants of farmers, enduring their jibes and smiling while he pocketed their money.\textsuperscript{54} He was thus able to buy the Barrandown Run and become a squatter. In this song Harney's pretensions are mocked by the exaggeration of his position in the song's title, but elsewhere Thatcher deflates his status, describing him as "a respectable publican and cockatoo settler".\textsuperscript{55} The song suggests that the new squatter has printed warnings about his intention to impound cattle so that everyone will know that he is "lord of the Barrandown Run". Its last verse mocks Harney by linking him with outdated activities of landowners in England and Ireland:

So hunt up all stray cattle, Harney Darling,
As for trespassers be sure to do them brown,
Revive man-traps and spring-guns, Harney Darling,
Remember you're the lord of Barrandown.\textsuperscript{56}

In other songs too, there is a covert recognition of the legitimacy of the position held by established squatters. For example, "Changes on Bendigo" shows the social origins of some of the new rich such as a publican who is now a squatter "thanks to brandy and sherry", or the owner of Muskerry who, although he made his fortune selling tools, now has a station, sits on the bench and wants to go into Parliament. It also laughs at a shanty-keeper who used to "open the grog tent with large holes in her stockings and get gloriously lushy" but who owns a "nice villa and lives now in plenty". These songs are partly an egalitarian mocking of the pretensions of those who have recently made money, but implicit is the "naturalness" of the established squatters' wealth and power.\textsuperscript{57}

Songs and poems with broader political objectives draw on what David Goodman has described as "the language of agrarianism" to query the squatters'

\textsuperscript{54} "The Lord of Barrandown", Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 58-60.

\textsuperscript{55} In the prose connecting sequences in "Mclachlan in Court", Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 86-88.

\textsuperscript{56} "The Lord of Barrandown", Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 58-60.

\textsuperscript{57} "Changes on Bendigo", Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 53-55.
control of access to land.\textsuperscript{58} "Hurrah for Australia" addresses "the Land Question", urging that the "domination" of the squatters be broken. "Unlock the Lands" wonders why there is unemployment when so many are ready to cultivate the earth but are not given the land to do so. It suggests that Australia will not flourish because of wealthy squatters or gold mines, but through "horny hands" that hold the plough. Samuel Lemaître's "Stand Back" hints that if those who have power over decisions concerning the allocation of land do not allow wider access, trouble may follow:

Lords of the soil—the tyrant's hand  
But ill becomes "the Digger's friend;"  
Act as you preach—unlock the land—  
Don't brave the coming storm, but bend,  
Thousands of miles are round you spread,  
With grass as green and sky as blue;  
Don't bar the road to honest bread,  
Better step back a mile or two.\textsuperscript{59}

Other pieces, however, underline the insincerity of some of those who preach land reform. Both "The Public Man" and "Hints to Candidates" suggest that unscrupulous politicians are cynically using the Land Question to gain votes, mouthing popular rhetoric without any real commitment to the issue.\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{60} "The Public Man", TCM, 1: 32-33; "Hints to Candidates", TCS, 1: 35-36.
Those involved in the administration of the law on the fields are represented as harsh, self-seeking and anti-digger, and miners are given ample opportunity to laugh at their adversaries. But, in spite of the virulence of these attacks, it is the individuals involved in the administration of the system who are presented as aggressive, incompetent drunkards, while the institutional power itself is not questioned. One aspect of the legal apparatus is sharply satirized in "Justice on the Mines", a song which portrays those who are supposed to be administering justice behaving in the same ways as those who are in their charge.\textsuperscript{61} The judge is presented as an alcoholic, needing a drink of whisky before a trial begins. He is shown as irritable, accusing the law officer who brings the whisky of having watered it and of having brought the wrong brand. And his severity is made obvious and ridiculous when he sentences the prisoner to death by hanging on a charge of assault. When the constable questions the harshness of this decision, the judge punches him in the nose and a fight ensues, during which the effects of the alcohol wear off. The prisoner is set free on paying two guineas for fighting.

In songs about the administration of the law in Bendigo, Thatcher underlines its severity and its bias against the diggers. "McLachlan in Court" shows the Clerk of the Court, J.T. Sanders, laughing with delight when a digger is brought in from a licence-hunt without the cash to pay his fine.\textsuperscript{62} The song suggests that the official has "feathered his nest" and will continue to take large amounts of money from the public purse. The Police Magistrate, Mr Lachlan McLachlan, better known as "Bendigo Mac", sentences a woman to a month's jail for being "drunk and disorderly". A woman called "the Countess of Beresford" is charged with breaking windows and is

\textsuperscript{61} "Justice on the Mines", The "Native Companion" Songster (Brisbane: Crawford, 1889), 12.

\textsuperscript{62} "McLachlan in Court", Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 86-88.
fined five pounds or a month in jail. F. McKenzie Clarke, a contemporary observer, notes that this magistrate was "a terror to the criminal class on account of his supposed severity to them".63 Another song, gloating about the fact that much of McLachlan's role was to be taken over by the Municipal justices who were appointed in 1857, mentions the judge's enjoyment of his work, and his reputation for harsh sentencing. It notes, with some satisfaction, that Bendigo Mac will soon be retrenched, losing the thousand pounds per annum which he currently receives.64

"Life of a Warden" gives a digger's view of those in charge of administration on the goldfields.65 Its speaker supposedly wishes to be a warden, "merry and free ... and so fond of a spree". He remembers the days when the goldfield commissioners enjoyed the "fine sport" of hunting unlicensed diggers and when the foot police "made handsome perquisites". The warden believes himself to be of great consequence, dresses well, and hates "anything in shape of work". He plays billiards, has a substantial income and expensive clothes, and wakes every morning with a hangover. Having provided its audience with a form of revenge against those in authority by mercilessly lampooning them, the song turns to offer a more practical possibility — people are taxed too much and are looking towards "this class" as a target for "government retrenchment". Its speaker hopes that one day "The fine young useless warden, of this degenerate time" will be exhibited in a glass case in a museum.

Thatcher's version of the Eureka stockade events was "The Private Despatch of Captain Bumble of the 40th stationed at Ballarat to His Excellency Sir Charles Hotham", a song which ridicules the assault on the stockade.66 The military are


65 "Life of a Warden", *TCM*, 1: 19-21.

66 "The Private Despatch of Captain Bumble of the 40th stationed at Ballarat to His Excellency Sir Charles Hotham", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
mocked by the song's sarcastic suggestion that the skirmish was of greater significance than Sebastopol. Captain Bumble reports that the first successful attack was on two drays which were captured after only slight resistance. Unfortunately for the police, the contents were not gunpowder, as they had expected, but potatoes. The ridiculing continues when the troops have to halt their march because one of their number has bunions. With heavy sarcasm the song notes that, yearning for glory, the police opened fire on a tent in which a candle was lit, killing a woman and child. Captain Bumble refers to this as "a slight mistake". The attack on the stockade is described as "a bold and desperate charge" against men who were asleep.

The most significant conflict between diggers and troopers was over the payment of licence-fees, and some of the songs on this subject may have had a stronger role, acting to encourage resistance to the tax. William Burrows, a trooper on the fields, writes in his reminiscences:

One favourite dodge to evade taking out licences used to be, for the man on the top of the hole, only, to be provided with a licence, while his mates who were working below had none; these fellows would then jeeringly invite the constable to do his duty in the following words of a then popular song:—

"Young man of the Crown, Why don't you come down?"

But the police knew better than go [sic] down a hole, among such a lawless set of ruffians, and had to give up the pursuit, in many instances, as hopeless.67

The song was Thatcher's "Where's Your License?" which allows the goldminers a fictional victory over their adversaries.68 The popularity of this piece is attested by the fact that it was one of the very few to have been collected from an oral tradition.69


68 "Where's Your License?", *VS*, 1: 5-6.

It describes with obvious pleasure the use of the cry "Joe", the ritual insult that both infuriated the police and warned the diggers of their presence. The song goes into some detail about the humiliation of "A tall, ugly trap" who chases a digger, only to have him rush down a hole and taunt his pursuer in the way which Burrows describes. Carefully defining the diggers as very different from the troopers, it shows the trap refusing to "burrow[...] the earth like a mole", while the digger, at ease in his natural habitat, escapes.

Troopers were characterized as violent, corrupt and hard-drinking. Thatcher's "Colonial Curiosities" includes a trooper who does not get drunk in its list of rarities. "The Song of the Trap", a medley about the troopers, shows one of their number singing happily, "We've cracked heads before, and can crack 'em again". The song celebrates the use of the term "Joe" to insult the police with its trooper-speaker remembering that the cry "was certain to render us savage", while the audience must have enjoyed the repetition of this word:

We twigg'd who they were calling Joe,  
We nailed 'em for shouting out Joe,  
We lugged 'em right off to the lock-up  
For daring to hail us with Joe.  

In the second segment the speaker mentions the need to patrol at night, thereby allowing the police to "nobblerize" and "sometimes [to get] rolling drunk". The third segment remembers by-gone days including hunting for licences and sometimes taking bribes from those they caught — "a trifle soon made it all right, / And no one ever was the wiser". With quite a different tone the song "Billy Nutts in Australia" describes the departure of Inspector Lobbs from Ballarat, suggesting that the police have an extremely comfortable lifestyle. Lobbs takes a last fond look at the fields where the

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71 "A New Chum's Letter", TCS, 3: 73-75, claims sarcastically that the police are well-known for sobriety.
diggers were working and wipes away a tear. The song's final verse explains the reason for his sentiment:

He turned and left the spot —
Oh, do not deem him weak,
For new were the inspector's togs,
And quite plump was his cheek.
Go watch the jolly style,
These coves live in up here;
Be sure that those who have to leave,
Will wipe away a tear.\(^{72}\)

Other songs lampoon the police by focusing on some of the more demeaning aspects of their work. "The Dog Nuisance" is a medley which laughs at police who chase dogs for the handsome reward of half a crown per animal. The first prose connecting section describes the "rare jollification" in the police camp a few nights previously when the officers "weren't short of grog". Sergeant Bullfrog sings of the last time he went out courting and was attacked by a dog which bit a hole in his trousers. He was in an ill humour and his female companion thought that it was directed at her, but he could not explain because he would be "chaffed". In the final segment an Irish trooper taking four dogs home is confronted by a woman who owns one of them. He refuses to give it up because he can get half-a-crown for it. The policeman thought of his duty "but love chained him to the spot" and he asked for a kiss in exchange for her dog. She offers him "any quantity. / To redeem a pup like this".\(^{73}\)

A number of songs address the issue of sly-grog selling and the police attempts to stop this activity. "Laying Information" deals with the methods which the police employed to trap the law-breakers. It shows a policeman chuckling smugly to himself as he plans to fool shopkeepers and sly-grog sellers into selling him alcohol so that he

\(^{72}\) "Billy Nutts in Australia", TCS, 1: 10-13.

\(^{73}\) "The Dog Nuisance", TCM, 1: 28-30; "The Goat Nuisance", TCM, 3: 103-4, laughs at another demeaning activity which the police are required to perform.
may then report them. The song is only implicitly critical of the trap who earns "five notes" for every conviction. "Poll the Grogseller" enjoys Poll outwitting two "sly-grog detectives" who disguise themselves and try to trap her. They order brandies but she says that "we don't sell it here" and offers them ginger beer. She gloats that she is aware of their dodge and that they would have to "get up early in the morning" to catch her out. "The Grog Seller's Lament; or Derwenter's Song" concerns a sly-grog tent about ten miles from Bendigo which has recently been raided. During the song there is a scornful reference to that "little informing dog" who was responsible for having the proprietor in court, a few mornings earlier. And the song finishes with the owner of the shanty making it clear that if any informer comes near his establishment again, they will "never want any brandy no more". But the most satisfying revenge against informers is contained in the song "Grogelsior", subtitled "Not by Prof. Longfellow". An informer who enters a sly-grog tent in Ararat is warned not to inform by his mate but insists that he will anyway. The song describes the result:

A little low informing hound,  
Guilty of perjury is found;  
For twelve months he is nailed, so nice,  
Bowed out at last in his device,  
Grogelsior.

There, down in Pentridge Gaol, you may  
See him pick oakum every day,  
Whilst voices echo from afar,  
Serve him quite right; revenged we are,  
Grogelsior.74

Chapter 9

Emigration and Assimilation

The society which consumed the goldfield songs was an extremely transitional one. Demographic upheaval of such magnitude had never been seen before in Australia and was never to be repeated. During the decade 1851 to 1861 Australia's population nearly trebled, growing from 405,356 to 1,145,585, but it was Victoria which felt most of the impact, with its population increasing six times, from 77,345 to 540,320.¹ Ward argues forcefully that, in spite of this massive level of immigration, the "old colonists" influenced the newcomers far more than they were influenced by them:

Though the total number of new immigrants was, in Victoria, so overwhelming, their arrival was spread over ten years and each gold-seeker, on landing, found himself a single individual, or one of a small party, in a strange land inhabited by people many of whose ways of acting and thinking were new to him. In such circumstances there are two normal human reactions, not mutually exclusive. One is to seek shelter in a community grouping of one's compatriots: the other is to merge oneself in the general body of citizens by learning their strange ways as quickly as possible. In Australia during the Gold Rush the Chinese were the only foreigners whose numbers made the first course really feasible, just as the great differences between their culture and that of the colonists made it almost inevitable. For British immigrants, the second course was natural and easy. There was no language barrier, and the differences in outlook between the newcomers and the old colonists were, after all, relatively slight. Yet just because of these facts, the distinction between a new chum and an old hand was usually painfully clear.²

Ward suggests that old hands from the pastoral era passed on to the new arrivals a male tradition of mateship, independence, improvisation and hard-drinking.

² Australian Legend, 115.
However, serious doubts have been raised about the extent to which the characteristics of goldfield society were derived from "old hands". Bate points to a number of factors that call into question the pattern suggested by Ward. He notes that the first Victorian rushes were quickly swamped by urban dwellers from Melbourne and Geelong. He suggests that the mateship noted by observers on the fields could have sources other than the old hands, pointing out that new chums had often formed parties of "shipmates" on the way to the colony. He notes that features described by Ward such as toughness and an ability to improvise were required by the camping life which the new immigrants were young and adaptable enough to survive. He also points out that the skills involved in mining came from California, not the "old hands".3

Nevertheless it is clear that many of the migrants arriving in Australia were confronting what was to them a very strange environment. The goldfield songs are often responses to the sense of alienation which the immigrants felt, and sometimes they record this alienation. For example, "All There" tells of passengers disembarking in Melbourne and feeling that onlookers were staring at them because of their new-chum status, and the speaker in "When First I Landed Here" describes the tears he shed because of the strangeness of his new surroundings, while standing on Sandridge pier.4 There is no doubt that the new arrivals did tend to assimilate into this environment, wherever its characteristics came from. Again Ward uses the goldfield songs as evidence of the assimilation which he delineates, seeing them as reflections of the process. He writes that Thatcher's work "demonstrates ... the chameleon-like rapidity with which new chums tended to take on the colour of their surroundings".5

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5 *Australian Legend*, 124.
But rather than just reflecting the process, the songs of the professional entertainers were one of the pressures assisting the newcomers to assimilate into goldfield society.

Sometimes the songs explicitly urge the new arrivals to join the distinctive culture on the fields. For example, Thatcher's "Getting Colonized" gives an exaggerated description of the ways that a new chum is different from those who have been "colonized".\(^6\) It addresses the new arrivals themselves, recognizing that many of the experiences which they confront will seem strange, but offering encouragement and, ultimately, membership of the mining fraternity. The song's last verse recommends perseverance, and promises that soon the strange habits of the colony will become familiar:

Cheer up, new chums, and don't be sad,  
Keep up your peckers, cease to fret,  
Although affairs seem very bad,  
The gold-fields ain't quite worked out yet;  
A nugget soon may make you smile,  
Let all your powers be exercised —  
When you've been here a little while,  
You'll jolly soon get colonized.

Although "Getting Colonized" addresses new chums, its audience was probably made up primarily, if not exclusively, of those who had been "colonized". Its role in assisting the process of assimilation lies perhaps less in its overt advice to new chums than in the more general way in which, like many of the goldfield songs, it is concerned with group definition. The song draws a sharp distinction between the mining fraternity and new chums, from the former's point of view. It claims that the new arrivals can be very easily recognized and it lists some of the ways that they reveal their inexperience of colonial ways. It also makes it very clear that the assimilated diggers have their own origins in the group against which they are defined, with the

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\(^6\) "Getting Colonized", *TCM*, 1: 34-35.
speaker referring to his own transition from new chum to "colonized" miner. The song is part of a general pressure on new arrivals to assimilate into goldfield society.  

 Particularly popular in the early years of the goldrushes was a large body of songs which laugh at the antics of the goldfield version of that well-known comic figure, the new chum, but although this group addresses the process of non-assimilation, it was part of this wider pressure on new arrivals to "get colonized". These songs, composed by Thatcher and other professional entertainers, included "The Disappointed New Chum", "The New Chum's Lament", "The Green New Chum", "The Bond Street Swell", "The Cockney Emigrant", "The First Hole", "The Unlucky New Chums", "The Hard-Up Swell" and "The Unsuccessful Swell". The songs about failed new chums strung together a series of stock motifs, with minor variations. In addition, a number of other pieces did not tell the whole story but gave an extended treatment of one of the common motifs. Anderson rather simplistically explains Thatcher's emphasis on songs about the experiences of new chums by his lack of "an intimate knowledge of the colony". However, it was of course this material which had the most relevance to those who made up his audience in the early stage of his career, and Thatcher was well attuned to their likes and dislikes.

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7 The songs could also offer the digging fraternity a version of their own assimilation which explained the transition from initial alienation to easy familiarity with the colony, not in terms of their own foolishness, but in terms of the changes which had occurred in the colony. "When First I Landed Here", TCS, 1: 3-5, begins with its speaker remembering how everything seemed "awful queer" when he first arrived in the colony. Instead of describing himself as different then, it focuses on changes in the colony. Shopkeepers are now much more polite, cartage rates were very expensive but now there are buses available for threepence a ride, and there are now many more women in the colony, thanks to Mrs Chisholm.


9 Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 10.
New-chum narratives sometimes begin with a description of the voyage to the colonies. The ships which they travel in are unseaworthy, the weather is appallingly rough and the voyage seems as if it will never end. "'Tween Decks" is a medley by J. Capper devoted to the hardships of the voyage, particularly the seasickness, and its speaker wonders: "Who'd quit their old homes, leave off ploughing old fields, / To plough the rude ocean, it's been very rude to me".10 "Tom Jones", focusing on one element from the new-chum songs, tells the story of an English lawyer's clerk who decides to go to Australia and try his fortune as a miner. Very soon after the ship departs he is distressed by a fierce storm. He tries to work his passage to Australia but hates going aloft, and by the time they reach the colony he has not succeeded in paying off his passage. The crew jump ship, taking the captain's gig, but it sinks in the stormy sea and all are drowned.11

When the new chums arrive in the colony they are confronted by an alien environment. They are overcharged in shops, the people they meet take advantage of them by borrowing money from them, and they are forced to pay expensive freight charges. If the inexperienced new arrivals look for work, they find that employers prefer "old hands" "as they're more wide-awake". "Going to Shout" shows a number of people who have been "colonized", taking advantage of "a green new chum just lately come out". Because of his inexperience he doesn't know the meaning of the term "to shout" and they are able to get him to buy them large rounds of drinks.12

Thatcher, in particular, had a good ear for local idiom and his work has provided a rich source for lexicographical research.13 Another of his songs which underlines

10 "'Tween Decks", VS, 1: 7-9.
11 "Tom Jones", TCS, 2: 45-47.
12 "Going to Shout", VS, 5: 149-50.
the distinctions between the language of the diggers and those back home in England is "English Notions of a Digging Life". In this piece, the speaker claims to have written a letter to England using miner's language and to have received one in reply showing that he had not been understood. He explains: "it seems I licked them off their perch / With my rum colonial lingo". His sweetheart took "on the gutter" to mean "living in the gutters" rather than "having found a seam", and a German friend of hers "Blushed like a girl of sixteen" when she mentioned the word "shicer". As well as defining group membership by the lexis employed, the songs used the crudity of language as a marker of membership. A common motif was the language of bullock-drivers. New chums are frequently presented as being shocked by the swearing of bullock-drivers, and thus prove themselves outside the "colonized" mining fraternity. The diggers are not generally shown swearing themselves, but they are portrayed as familiar with and unabashed by such language.

There were other very clear markers of group membership. The speaker in "The Green New Chum" finds that his outsider status is obvious even from his clothes and equipment. "The Cockney Emigrant", a song attributed to J. Capper, describes William Strong's inappropriate wardrobe:

He took a waggon-load of clothes of every kind and form,
That, when at the Gold Diggings he might double work perform,
With lots of India-rubber things, to guard 'gainst rain and storm,
And long boots lined with rabbit skins, to keep him nice and warm.

The heroes (or perhaps anti-heroes) of the new-chum songs find that when they reach the fields they face a new range of problems. Unscrupulous miners often take advantage of them, using tricks that would not fool a more experienced digger. Newcomers do not recognize the "old hands" from Van Diemen's Land as ex-convicts,
and become "mates" with them, only to see them disappear with the proceeds from mining. The speaker in "The New Chum's Lament" has particularly bad experiences in this regard: thieves steal his boxes scarcely an hour after he is off the boat; he joins a party of diggers who turn out to be ex-convicts, unable to forget "old habits"; and provisions are expensive and the group is having no success mining so the "old hands" steal his tools and tent. In "The Green New Chum" two diggers salt their worthless mine with nuggets and sell it to a new chum for an ounce and a half of gold.

Nor are the new chums generally prepared for the arduous labour required on the fields. They have sometimes been given exaggerated accounts of the ease with which gold can be found in the colony. For example, the speaker in "The Green New Chum" has been told that if he greases his boots the gold will stick to them. One of the most exaggerated accounts of a new chum's unfitness for the hard work of mining is in "The Bond Street Swell", where the speaker is distressed when he sees what his new occupation involves:

"What! must I venture down a hole,  
And throw up filthy clay?  
If my mother could but see me now,  
Whatever would she say."

He went and bought a shovel,  
And a pick and dish as well;  
But to every ten minutes' work  
He took an hour's spell.  
The skin from off his fair white hands  
In blisters peeled away —  
And thus he work'd, and sunk about  
Twelve inches every day.

20 "The Bond Street Swell", VS, 1: 9-11.
New chums show their incompetence on the fields in many ways. It took the speaker in "The Green New Chum" a week to dig a hole ten feet deep at Fiery Creek, only to reach someone else's mine shaft. In "The Unsuccessful Swell" an incompetent new arrival twice begins sinking a hole which has plenty of gold but fails to find it. The first time he gives up in despair after sinking only a couple of feet, and in the second case, "like new chums have done before, / Pitched away his washing-stuff". The new chum in "The Bond Street Swell" gives up in a rage when only a foot off the bottom, and a "cove named Sydney Bob", a man who is either Australian-born or at least "colonized", steps into the hole and soon pulls out a "pretty handsome 'lob". In "The Unlucky New Chums", three new chums swear a loud oath and give up in despair, not realizing that they are only a foot off the bottom of their claim. They sell their tents and tools, rush to town and send sad letters home. The song finishes slightly unusually:

At last some old hands, who were coveys deep,
In passing that way just to take a peep,
By chance, this said hole, quite forsaken see'd,
And to give a trial, was all agreed;
They went down, and sunk it a foot, when lo!
A twenty pound nugget lay snug below:
The new chums soon hear of the luck they'd had,
And to lushing they took, till they all went mad.
Poor unlucky new chums.21

Other songs tell of the way in which experienced diggers made fun of the inexperienced new chums. In "The Cockney Emigrant" a spring poured into the hole that a new chum had begun and the water soon rose towards his chin. The song continues: "He called for help, some diggers came, who looked down with a grin, / And, passing on, said coolly, "Does your mother know you're in?".22 "The First Hole" by Samuel Lemaire tells of a new chum who is deliberately misled. Someone

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shows him a spot and tells him that if he sinks there he will "make a pile". He works until his money has run out, and then sells his swag and swears that he will keep digging until the shirt on his back is gone:

At last a glittering speck foretold
That, in a few minutes more, he'd be slap on the gold:
"Hurrah," he cried, "I know where it's hid,"
When smack went his pick on a coffin lid.23

Even new chums who persevere and find gold can discover that they have new problems to contend with. The new chum in "All There", having had his money taken by his "mate", works on regardless and eventually finds another nice "lob". He swears that he will not be swindled again. However, the owner of the lodging house urges him to marry his daughter, and she deserts him less than a month after the wedding.24

One of the possibilities open to new chums who fail to assimilate is, of course, to return to England or, occasionally, to Ireland. In "The Disappointed New Chum", a "swellish" new arrival's dreams turn to failure, and he indicates his unfitness for the life of a digger by wishing that he was still working as a clerk in a mercantile office in England. The song describes this occupation contemptuously as "quill driving", in implicit contrast with the "driving" which miners do. The speaker in "The Cockney Emigrant" writes to his mother telling her that he is coming home. However, very commonly the new chums confirm their non-membership of the digging fraternity by joining groups which are perceived as antagonistic towards the diggers. The hero of "The Bond Street Swell" ends up working on the roads, doing "the Gov'ment stroke / At eight bob every day". Although the speaker in "The Disappointed New Chum" wished that he was back in England, he remains in Australia. The song finishes with a

23 "The First Hole", MV, 1: 6-7. The author of this ballad sometimes has his surname spelt "Le Maitre" but this thesis uses "Lemaître" throughout.

neat merging of the new-chum figure and another of its audience's adversaries, in a process which increases the negative portrayal of both:

So this well bred, respectable, nobby young chap
Takes a government billet at eight bob a day,
And he's sent to the diggings to serve as a trap.

Similarly James Mulholland's "Forty Shillings, and Take Him Away" describes "New Chum Policemen / [Who] looked so important, and strutted about".25

New-chum songs encourage assimilation in a number of ways. By defining the digger fraternity against those who fail to assimilate and by poking fun at those outside this group, they encourage emulation of the diggers themselves. Their extreme exaggeration of the characteristics of the new chum, the outsider, defines group membership in terms that are relatively easy to comply with. By describing a range of experiences which those in the audience have successfully dealt with, the songs confirm their audience as members of the mining fraternity, and suggest that membership is a significant achievement. They contain a good deal of implicit flattery for the miners who make up their audience, but sometimes this praise is made explicit. For example, in "Murphy's Letter Home", an Irish version of the failed new chum describes Australia as "shockin'" and explains that getting gold is "mighty hard work". Similarly "The Cockney's Lament" admits that mining may be a suitable occupation for "sturdy great fellows".26

The process of transition from new chum to the digger fraternity is a rite of passage which has strong parallels with the transition from boyhood to manhood. The trials which the would-be miners face are in some ways a list of tests. New chums indicate that they have failed to achieve adulthood, and membership of the mining


fraternity, in various ways. For example, one of the subjects of "The Unlucky New Chums" writes to England saying "O! my mother dear, / I'm a fool for coming without you here". On the other hand, the assimilated miners are portrayed as fully-fledged men. "Taking 'Em by Surprise" tells the tale of "a youth that the world might term 'green'". When he left for the colonies "No sign of a beard on his chin could be seen". He "snivelled" to leave his mother and went to Australia for five years, during which time he picked up Australian habits of dress. He returned home in a blue shirt and with full beard and was not recognized.  

In these songs, the mining fraternity is defined not only against those who are currently outside it, but also against the past lives of many of its members. For the miners who had left the northern hemisphere, the new chum was, in one way, an exaggerated version of what they had themselves been not so long ago. As we have seen, a number of songs refer to this fact, promising new chums that if they persevere, they will soon become "colonized".

By defining the mining fraternity against its members' northern hemisphere pasts, the songs help to elide many potentially divisive internal differences. They assert a cohesion in spite of the fact that the audience came from widely different class backgrounds, had widely different educational levels, and came from diverse ethnic backgrounds (English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish). One of Thatcher's songs, "When We're Out Upon the Spree", refers to a concert hall audience where a group of "Britons", which includes the speaker, gives "cordial welcome" to Irish, Scottish and American miners. Implicit in its reference, however, is the possibility of disharmony, and there were instances of conflict between European miners of different


28 For example, "The New Chum's Lament", The Colonial Songster, 10-11.

29 "When We're Out Upon the Spree", TCS, 3: 76-77.
ethnic origin. Serle notes that there was disharmony, though less than might have been expected:

To a remarkable extent, the diggers lived and worked together in national groups. [They] marched in procession to meetings in national groups which had their spokesmen, and many disputes about claims developed into national brawls. Yet what is most striking is the general amity in which such a cosmopolitan population lived together.30

Alongside the new-chum songs' assertion of the superiority of the "colonized" mining fraternity, went many doubts about leaving the old culture. In the goldfield songs two opposing perceptions of the audience's new land can be seen. One of Thatcher's most popular songs was "Petticoat Lane", said to have been performed for 275 nights during his residency at the Charlie Napier concert hall in Ballarat, and regarded by Bracken as "Thatcher's best effort". It is given pride of place in "What Shall I Sing?", a song that is essentially a list of Thatcher's most requested pieces, and which has survived in a manuscript dated 13 March 1857. "Petticoat Lane" derives its narrative structure from the large group of new-chum songs relating the formulaic story of failure to assimilate into goldfield life. It begins in accordance with this narrative:

When first I arrived, to the diggings I started,  
Where they said I could pick up great nuggets of gold;  
But the sight of the holes made me feel quite down-hearted—  
I found that I was most decidedly sold.  
My delicate hands soon were covered with blisters,  
And in heaving the earth out it gave my back pain;  
And I wished I was once more at home with my sisters,  
In charming old England and Petticoat Lane.31

Tales of failed new chums were particularly common among the early work of the goldfield entertainers, but by the end of 1857 in well-established towns like Bendigo

30 Golden Age, 75.

31 "Petticoat Lane", TCS, 2: 52-54; Thomas Bracken, Dear Old Bendigo: (A Sketch of the Early Digging Days) (Bendigo: Robshaw, [c. 1892]), 22; "What Shall I Sing?", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
and Ballarat, assimilation was not such an urgent need. Instead of following the formula and continuing to tell of the diggers' hardships, "Petticoat Lane" deviates to remember, fondly and without sarcasm, the pleasures of life in London, reverting to the original narrative pattern only for its conclusion, when the digger explains that he will return to England as soon as possible. There remains a tension between wishing for what has been left behind in the Old World and laughing at those who desire such things, a tension which must have struck a chord with many of the song's audience.

As we will see below, a common way for the songs to resolve the tensions between the desire for the Old World and the reality of the New World is to stress Australia as a land of opportunity in contrast to England's poverty. Two of Thatcher's songs contradict this pattern. "Encore Verses to Petticoat Lane" partly portrays poverty in England as a fiction, describing various ways in which those who appear to be poor are in fact involved in dishonest schemes to obtain money. Its speaker describes "mudlarking", or picking up things that were left by the tide, as "lucrative". He describes a ruse where he would chalk out a mackerel or salmon on the pavement and then write that he was starving, and would thus get money from old ladies. He describes how the beggars of Petticoat Lane would be miraculously cured on their arrival in the pub at night — the blind would regain their sight, the sailor who lost his leg in the Crimea would have his leg restored to him and the dumb man would shout for his beer and swear profusely. "To the West End" remembers the "riches untold" which belonged to one very limited experience of London life, and its speaker dreams of life in the West End, making it clear that his trip to Australia is an attempt to gain access to that lifestyle.32

The criticisms of Australia in "Petticoat Lane" are undercut by the audience's attitude to its speaker, but this is not the case in some of the songs and verse published in the goldfield songsters. "Reminiscences of Brighton" briefly mentions Australian as

32 "Encore Verses to Petticoat Lane", VS, 5: 174-75; "To the West End", TCS, 3: 85-86.
"the land of kangaroos and fleas". A more detailed criticism of the Australian landscape is given in Thatcher's "The Cockney's Lament" which devotes a verse to the subject:

The bush is all over the same,
No matter what part you go through—
In vain you explore it for game,
You'll find only wild kangaroo;
There's plenty of crooked gum trees—
Its fine scenery's all my eye;
There's musquitoes [sic] and whopping big fleas,
And thousands of rats, by the by.33

This song, like a number of others, devotes a lot of attention to remembering the life in London which the new arrivals have left behind. In a similar fashion, "I Remember" compares London with the colony of Victoria, finding the latter "dismal, stale and slow". It contains a long list of happy memories of the Old World, including favourite public houses, eating places, balls, races, fairs and the theatre. "To the West End" also remembers Hyde Park and the Opera with deep affection. Other songs appreciate that Australia has some advantages, but then express a patriotism centred on England. In "Take Me Back", the speaker admits that he has spent happy times in Sydney and Parramatta and that if he had been born there he would "adore" those places, but Houndsditch is his home. In "England" the speaker is aware of the attractions of Australia's "flocks and rich corn-fields" but nothing could ever make his love for England grow cold.34

Two of Thatcher's pieces offer their own suggestions as to how these songs which focus on the delights of the Old World might have operated for their audience. "The Dream of Home" suggests that to dream of England was one way to cope with the "cares and troubles" which face those who have travelled in search of gold. In

sleep, the speaker leaves Australia far behind and is soon at home again. He remembers the thatched cottage in which he was born, kind friends, green fields, the purling brook, the watermill and the church. But this sort of song cannot resolve the problem it realizes, and the last verse finishes with the pain of awakening. Much more positive is the interesting reference to the role of the concert hall in goldfield society which Thatcher presents in "When We're out upon the Spree". It tells of the goldfield songs' ability to help their audience remember the Old World that had been left behind while enjoying the New World in which they lived. "When We're out upon the Spree" describes the relaxation of successful miners:

When we're out upon the spree  
We are jovial and free,  
And for harmony most ardently we long;  
To a concert room we pop,  
At the bar we take a drop,  
And then go in the room to hear a song:  
We order in our glass,  
And a cheerful hour we pass—  
Enlivening music drives away dull care;  
And that well-remembered strain  
Brings back scenes of home again—  
Oh, jolly is the digger when the gold's all there.  

Many songs offer some resolution to the clash between Old and New World by comparing conditions in Australia with those in England and concluding that life in the colony has its advantages. Several of the verses in "Petticoat Lane" had alluded to the bustle of street life which had been sadly left behind, including the cries of those selling oysters, pies, sprats and trotters, but another of Thatcher's songs deals with the subject in a humorous way, suggesting that it is a relief to be away from the familiar sounds of London. "London Cries" reminds the diggers that the old world had its plagues as well as its joys:

35 "The Dream of Home", TCS, 2: 42-43; "When We're out upon the Spree", TCS, 3: 76-77.
On the diggings here I wander,
Far from London's smoke and noise,
And I very often ponder
On its plagues as well as joys;
Late I slumber every morning,
Undisturbed by London cries,
Which at home are quite a warning,
And out of you take a rise.36

The speaker remembers being disturbed from sleep by the cries of sweeps, milkmen, dustmen, costermongers, jews, dog meat sellers, Italians, muffin men, watercress sellers, organ grinders, fishmongers, Punch and Judy shows, "dreadful ballad singing", and bells. It concludes:

But in peace a fellow sleeps;
Though we live here quite sequestered,
Still this country let us prize,
For thank heaven we're not pestered
With those horrid London cries.

A common strategy, evident in songs such as "The Best Way to Spend Your Pile", was to offer the new arrival a resolution to the doubts about his or her decision to come to Australia by a comparison of the economic prospects in the new land with those in England. Few went into such detail as an atypically sentimental piece by Thatcher called "Mary's Dream". Its speaker realizes the homesickness and despair that the new arrival could feel, by describing the time when she mourned the fact that she was in "this wretched country" and wished to be in England again. However, a dream reminded her of the hardships of the Old World:

36 "London Cries", TCM, 1: 30-32.
I slept, and had my wish fulfilled—
Again I was at home,
And with my dearest children
Through London's streets did roam—
I wandered on midst rain and cold,
With no shelter to my head,
And my little ones cried bitterly,
And pined for want of bread.
My husband could get no employ,
And with features full of woe,
To keep us from starvation,
To a workhouse we did go!
They tried to separate us—
I woke up with a scream,
And heard the windlasses at work—
Thank God! 'twas but a dream.37

The windlasses signify the hope that exists in Australia. The song's final verse is a statement in favour of emigration. In spite of the fact that Mary's husband has been away mining without success for weeks, and the family has had bad luck for "a tremendous while", at least they have shelter overhead, bread to eat, and most importantly the possibility of future wealth:

And who can tell what happy days
For us may be in store;
My husband, p'raps, will soon return
With nuggets in galore;
And if kind Fortune smile again,
And crown his willing hand,
I'll bless the day that we came out
Unto this happy land.

One of the ways that the goldfield songs address the sense of dislocation felt by the diggers in a strange culture is by juxtaposing exaggerated versions of English and colonial types. Several songs do this by reversing the process of migration and relating what happens when those who are Australian-born or thoroughly Australianized are placed in London. In "Cooey!", an ex-convict couple make a good deal of money in Bendigo — he from mining, she from illegal grog-selling — and they

decide to visit England. The digger's clothes and flowing beard are out of place in the fashionable streets of the West End, he disgraces himself by smoking a pipe in an exclusive Regent Street shop, and the couple betray the fact that they are in an alien social environment by tipping over-generously. She purchases a velvet dress from a snooty young sales assistant who invites her to take a seat in the shop until her husband returns. But instead of demurely waiting she uses the bush practice of raising her hand to her lips and yelling "Cooey" to alert him of her whereabouts, and he returns immediately. The song derives its humour from several sources. It is an embodiment of a colonial cringe, representing embarrassment at the couple's hopeless failure to conform to polite society's practices. But there is also another side. This juxtaposition of Old World and New World lays bare the pretentiousness of the English rich, and the song's title and conclusion draw attention to an Australian practice which is shown to be very effective. A similar idea is expressed in "The Queer Ways of Australia". Dick Briggs, who has spent ten years in Australia returns to England wearing "jumper'n boots up to the knee, / With dirty Sydney 'cabbage-tree'— / The costume of Australia". Dick's mother is appalled at the language he uses towards the cattle but it works "like a charm".38

One of the best examples of the conflicting desires for the Old World and the New World and the resolution of that conflict is a duet sung by Thatcher and Urie, titled "Pleasures of London". Again it tells of those who have experienced life in the colony returning to London. The form of the song represents the competing attractions of the Old and New Worlds for many of its audience by giving each a voice. Although she admits that London is "very fine", Urie's persona hates the bustle and the "empty show", grieves that they have left Australia and begs that they return soon. Thatcher's persona loses his temper, tells her she is becoming "quite a bore" and informs her that

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if she wants to go back to "dreary Australia's shore", she should go on her own. Their differences continue, with him describing the delights of hearing Cowell sing and of dancing at the Argyle, while she worries that their money will run out. Eventually he shifts position, realizing that their funds are low. The resolution is represented in the form of the song as they sing with one voice:

    Then come love, come, no more delay
    And may auspicious breezes blow
    And next week we'll get underweigh
    And start for dear old Bendigo. 39

The audience's own decisions to leave the Old World have been re-confirmed.

The portrayal of Australian ways as rougher, cruder, and less educated than English customs but as practical and effective nevertheless, also appears in songs set in Australia. Often the distinction between those who have been "colonized" and those conforming to English patterns of behaviour is class-based. In "The Lady and the Bullock Driver", a beautiful young woman with a fair complexion marries a squatter at St. James', King Street, in Sydney. When it is time for the young couple to go to the "magnificent station" he owns at Bathurst, he solemnly warns the bullock-driver that he must watch his language or be sacked. The bullocks are stunned by the driver's "wond'rous civility" but eventually they get stuck in a creek and will not pull because they miss "his colonial curses". He knows that bullocks "won't move without swearing", and so asks the lady if she would allow him "to damn that 'ere Poley", unaware that he is disobeying the squatter's orders in his question. 40

Thomas Bracken's reminiscences of the goldfields describe another of Thatcher's most requested songs, listed in "What Shall I Sing?:

One of Thatcher's greatest "hits" was his song of "Bullock Creek" in which the adventures of certain lady and gentlemen bathers in that stream

39 "Pleasures of London", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

were chronicled with graphic fidelity. In those times Bullock Creek was celebrated for its leeches, and on the occasion in question, they displayed their vitality to very great advantage.41

The songwriter's treatment of these events in "The Bullock Creek Picnic" touches on the differences between colonial and English behaviour, and ultimately mocks the pretensions of those who try to behave in ways appropriate for English high society while in the Australian bush. As we have seen in Chapter 8, it compares the sophisticated bathing habits at Brighton or Margate with those in Bullock Creek, relishing the loss of dignity when leeches attack the naked women swimming in the creek.42

A number of the most popular goldfield songs contain a mixture of scorn for colonial lack of sophistication and admiration for the practical skills of those who are Australianized. In "What Shall I Sing?", Thatcher wonders whether to "dilate upon State Education" as he does in the song "Colonial Education", where the young of the young colony are presented as precocious, as uneducated in traditional ways, but as possessing qualities appropriate for their environment. The children in Australia are depicted as having no knowledge of European history, geography or arithmetic, but the song notes that they can "reckon you up", and have a detailed understanding of the local geography and of mining procedures. "The Rising Generation" uses some of the same sort of material, partly making fun of the children's ignorance of grammar and arithmetic but also proving their competence in more practical matters appropriate to the goldfields. It also jokingly exaggerates the worldliness of colonial youth, telling of them outwitting the speaker on several occasions. For example, he tells of leaving a hole he had shepherded and returning to find it occupied by "a child in petticoats" who

41 Dear Old Bendigo, 20.

had a miner's right. "Changes Since 1852" tells of boys panning for gold at four years of age, and having the cheek of full-grown men at ten years.\(^{43}\)

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Chapter 10

Mining

Geoffrey Serle pointed to a significant contradiction on the goldfields when he wrote that "It is the interplay of the mercenary and the fraternal ... which makes the digger and his contribution to Australian society so difficult to assess".¹ This gap between the personal acquisitiveness, which was at the heart of mining, and the ideology of mateship and collectivist attitudes has made it possible for historians to give vastly different accounts of goldfield life. Radical nationalist historians have argued that an ideology combining mateship, collectivist attitudes, independence and egalitarianism, pervaded the fields. Ward's Australian Legend has the most extended discussion of the presence of these attitudes in the mining communities, but other accounts, such as Robin Gollan's, have restated his views.² Ward himself notes that, to some extent, the collectivist values which he foregrounds derived from the pursuit of wealth. He explains that alluvial mining could not effectively be carried out except in teams, and he notes that "group solidarity was strongly reinforced" by the practice of licence-hunting which united the diggers against the police.³ But goldmining was essentially carried out by small groups of miners — "expectant capitalists" as Connell and Irving describe them — hungry for gold.⁴ Humphrey McQueen, whose position

³ Australian Legend, 117-18.
is furthest from Ward's, points out that claim-jumping was a daily occurrence and he stresses that the pursuit of wealth was the digger's raison d'être. One of the functions of the collectivist ideologies which undoubtedly existed on the fields may have been to hide, or perhaps to compensate for, the fierce acquisitiveness which was at the core of mining.

Although the desire to acquire riches was the central fact of goldmining, the songs produced by the professional entertainers tended to work to obscure this fact. In stark contrast to the Australian material, songs about the goldfields published in London could be less than subtle concerning the reasons for emigration. One such piece had the nasty title *Let's Be Off to the Diggings, and Get as Rich as a Jew!* The words "Get Rich as a Jew!" were formed by representations of small nuggets, and a line-drawing of a large nugget bore the inscription:

First shovel-full  
Behold!  
A Nugget of Pure Gold!  
Fifty Pounds Troy! my boy!  
O joy! Without Alloy!

But the songs produced for audiences on the fields showed an understandable tendency to define mining in less blatant terms.

Goldfield songs could mention both the egalitarian and collectivist ideologies and the fierce competition. "The Rowdy Mob" refers to a group of miners having a claim jumped by their more violent rivals, and we have already seen that new chums had their money, their gold and their equipment stolen by "old hands" in songs such as "The New Chum's Lament", "All There", and "Bryant's Ranges"; but more positive accounts of the group feeling between miners were the norm. "Look Out Below", one of the few goldfield songs to be taken into an oral tradition, praises the "diggers'
independent life" which it contrasts with the class oppression in England. In a similar fashion, "London and the Diggings" focuses on the egalitarian nature of goldfield society:

> At home aristocracy seems all the go,
> On the diggings we're all on a level you know;
> The poor man out here ain't oppressed by the rich,
> But dressed in blue shirts you can't tell which is which.
> And this is the country, with rich golden soil,
> To reward any poor man's industrious toil;
> There's no masters here to oppress a poor devil,
> But out in Australia we're all on a level.7

As we have seen, some of the songs which praised such egalitarian attitudes implicitly justified the position of the old rich. "Australia Versus England" approves of the fact that on the goldfields "all are independent" and notes with pride that Australia has no workhouse, no poor law, no bullying overseers, and no masters oppressing the poor. Yet it mocks a woman who has married a rich digger and who now lies on a sofa perusing "Shickspur's plays, / And strum[ming] the grand pianer". Although this is an attack on those who move outside an egalitarian ideology, the terms it uses are typical of the scorn which the old rich display towards the new rich.8

The songs which describe the values revered by radical nationalist historians focus on the life at the goldfields as the reason for goldmining. Thatcher's well-known "Look Out Below" raises the possibility of its hero's lust for gold and then tends to shift away from it:

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Wherever he turned his wondering eyes,
Great wealth he did behold —
And peace and plenty hand in hand,
By the magic power of gold;
Quoth he, As I am young and strong,
To the diggings I will go,
For I like the sound of the windlasses,
And the cry "look out below."9

And the rest of the song suggests that what was really attractive about the fields was
the diggers' independent life" or "A jolly digger's life", each verse ending with a
restatement of its speaker's love for "the sound of the windlasses, / And the cry 'look
out below". Similarly Joe Small's "First Impressions of the Goldfields" asserts that it
is the life which is so attractive, not the precious metal itself, although it mentions that
almost every mound of wash-dirt reveals specks of gold. The song describes the
fields as a "fairyland", a "magical scene", focusing on the frantic energy of driving,
sinking, swearing, drinking, dancing, singing, skylarking and joking. A friendliness
to new arrivals is one of the characteristics that is stressed when the speaker sees
"Diggers smoking, new chums joking" and he is invited "Come, my hearty, join our
party". The blurring of motives for mining is evident in the concluding lines: "There's
a sight to charm the eye; / The riches of this magical scene, Ol!", where the referent for
the word "riches" is not gold but the overall vitality of life on the fields.10

Thatcher's "Making a Pile" demonstrates the tension between personal
acquisitiveness and the need for the miners to see themselves in a different light. This
song perhaps slips and gives a glimpse of the individual greed beneath the ideology of
mateship on the fields with the revealing shift from first person plural to first person
singular in the line: "in the next hole that we sink I p'raps may make a pile".
Generally, in spite of its blatant title, it will only talk about the material wealth which
the miner seeks in exceedingly vague terms such as "Visions of future happiness with

pleasure make me smile". And, evidently uneasy about having focused on the question of the motive for mining, the song's last line has the speaker displacing his desire for gold onto the lover he has left back in England: "For her alone I mean to work and try and make a pile". Another song that only partially hides the motives for mining is "To the West End". It focuses mainly on the delights of London and finishes with a verse which suggests that its speaker is interested in London life rather than in Australian gold:

To the West, to the West End, to me, oh, how dear!
Its life, too, how different to what's termed life here;
Though Australia is teeming with riches untold,
And its gullies and hills yield the glittering gold,
Oh London, dear London, how does my heart yearn
To thy calm solid pleasures once more to return;
If fortune smile on me, I'll hasten to spend
The rest of my days in the lovely West End.11

However, the song has been a list of delights including "fine spacious shops [that] gleam with jewels and gold" which would be accessible only to the digger who had won gold, expressed so euphemistically in the smiling of fortune.

Other songs obscure the acquisitiveness at the centre of goldmining by suggesting that diggers have come to the goldfields for much more socially acceptable reasons than to grab riches. "Ballarat in 1855" suggests that mining is providing work for those who could not find jobs in the Old World. It praises the prospects in Australia and offers the fact that parents in England are sent money by their sons at the fields as a consolation for the guilt which many must have felt about emigrating:

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11 "Making a Pile", TCS. 3: 89-91; "To the West End", TCS. 3: 85-86.
Thousands kindred all resigning,
Emigrating to this land,
Who for food at home were pining,
Find work for their willing hand.
Many a parent who has saddened,
And for absent sons has grieved,
By thy treasures has been gladdened,
And in time of need relieved.\(^{12}\)

A number of songs presented goldmining not as means for individuals to gain wealth but as part of a greater enterprise. *Mount Alexander Gold-Diggers' Song* stresses the role of mining in building a new and glorious nation which is a tribute to the British Empire. A more common device was the celebration of the search for gold as part of progress, both inevitable and worthy. Serle has noted that many of the miners brought with them a view of history which believed that a long period of economic struggle and civic discord was now ended, and a new and glorious age of progress was just beginning. "Changes on Bendigo" describes Sandhurst's part in "the great march of progress". When mining was valorized in this way, it was often felt necessary to add a proviso referring to the social responsibility of those who won wealth. *Mount Alexander Gold-Diggers' Song* concludes arguing that the wealth from goldmining should be distributed among the needy. It proposes that "health and wealth not gained by stealth, / Proclaim high reputation", and claims that successful diggers express their thanks and joy by giving generously to those who are needy. A footnote to the song advocates subscribing to "a fund for the relief of such Diggers, or other persons in connection with the mines, as may by sickness, accident or other cause, stand in need of friendly assistance".\(^{13}\)

In some cases the rationalization of mining was blatant. "The Song of the Goldminer" begins with shouts of "Hurrah!" for the sunny land which teems with

\(^{12}\) "Ballarat in 1855", *TCS*, 2: 50-51.

treasures waiting to be plucked from the soil. Mining is legitimized both as a
celebration of human power and as an inevitable part of progress.

Hurrah! hurrah! for the countless heaps,
For the nuggets and the dust,
The rich red gold in the mountain sleeps,
But yield to our strength it must.
What though it hath lain in stream and plain,
For ages that none can scan,
The earth but yields up her wealth again,
Subdued by her master, Man.
Then merrily ply the pick and spade,
And rock the cradle fast,
Here we pursue no idle trade,
For we shall be rich at last.\textsuperscript{14}

After such an undisguised admission of a basic lust for wealth, the song offers a thin
concession to fears that greed is not socially acceptable:

Hurrah! hurrah! for the bright red gold,
Yet not for itself we sing,
For are not the blessings still untold,
And the comforts it may bring.
The rich alone they have gold to spare,
But he is poor indeed,
Who'd not with his fellow-creature share
In the hour of his care and need.

Resolutions are also offered to occasional doubts about the impact of mining on
the land and on its original inhabitants. The song "Ballarat in 1855" half recognizes
the obvious impact of mining, noting that Aboriginals once gained their food in this
place, and that the once green earth now "shews the ravage / Of the busy pick and
spade". But it rationalizes this into labelling the pre-mining days as "lonely" and the
Aboriginals as "untutored" and as "savages". It concludes that Ballarat is a
"Wonderful and great gold-field" where "Hills and valleys teem with life".\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} "The Song of the Goldminer", \textit{VS}, 1: 22.

\textsuperscript{15} "Ballarat in 1855", \textit{TCS}, 2: 50-51.
The songs of the professional goldfield entertainers addressed other aspects of colonial working life. Migration to Australia meant a world turned upside down in many ways and the new occupations which the immigrants took up brought their own tensions. One song, "The New Aristocracy; Or, Life in Australia", notes that Australia is a very queer place where the Regent Street Swell discovers that the class most favoured is "the hard-working man and mechanic". It gives a list of people who have lost the prestige they once had, including a lawyer from Chancery Lane who now sells gingerbread, nuts and lemonade from a barrow; a Bishop selling chocolate, coffee and tea in a tent; Sir Noodlecum Fipps cleaning boots; and Lord Fuzzleby's nephew who used to spend every summer holidaying in Nice but who is now a member of the police force. Ward suggests that this song "combines a jibe at the new type of imported policeman with one at the clergy", and there is clearly a considerable degree of class revenge in the way it delights at how the power relations have been inverted. As Serle shows, many of those who migrated to Australia were forced to take up activities with which they were unfamiliar, and this extended far beyond mining. But the song does not stop with a mere jibe. It finishes:

I might mention several more
Men of standing and former renown,
Who are turning in money like dirt,
By different means in the town.
Young men take a leaf from their books,
Throw away pride, and though it seem funny —
Never mind what you work at out here,
So long as it brings in the money.\(^{16}\)

This is more than a neat way to conclude. Its earlier attitude is partially reversed, and those from all class positions are urged to leave behind their Old World backgrounds and to assimilate into the New World society. Just as the new-chum songs had encouraged a cohesiveness in a society with plenty of potential for friction, this song

encourages cohesion and assimilation. In a similar vein, Mount Alexander Gold-Diggers' Song notes that:

This Golden trade, doth not degrade  
The man of information,  
Who shovels nuggets with the spade,  
Of beauteous conformation.\(^{17}\)

A large part of the social function of the goldfield songs was to urge miners to persevere with their new occupation in spite of the many discouragements which they faced. The songs both fanned the desire for gold and offered encouragement to the disheartened diggers, urging them to work diligently. Serle explains just how few miners won the rewards they hoped for:

It has never yet been strongly enough asserted that the results of digging were a cruel disappointment for the great majority.... Despite the immense production and its value to the economy, the producers were too numerous for many to gain a worthwhile share, and prizes were little more frequent than in Tattersall's sweeps or football-pools. No precise estimates are possible. But it is probable that from mid-1852, of all those who tried the diggings, eight out of ten made no more than the equivalent of reasonable wages, paid their way, or lost money. Another one in ten earned high wages over a long period of time and the remaining 10 per cent at the end of their digging may have been able to clear £100 or more — sometimes much more.\(^{18}\)

Several songs present as fun the hard work that was required to make a claim financially viable. "The Crushing Machine" tells of the music and mirth which a quartz crushing machine emits and its chorus describes the machine as "the greatest invention on earth, / On whose labours all industry lean [sic]". The song admits that the machine has "a deafening roar" but the wealth that it produces makes listening to it a delight. The speaker is married with a large happy family and each of the children is stamped with the crushing machine. "The Jolly Puddlers" has a chorus which asks "who can lead the life that we jolly puddlers do[?]". And, as we have seen, in "Look Out

\(^{17}\) Mount Alexander Gold-Diggers' Song.

\(^{18}\) Golden Age, 85.
Below", the "sound of the windlasses" and the "cry 'look out below'" echo through the song. Its speaker concludes that nothing is equal to a "jolly digger's life". 19

Some pieces operated as coping songs by allowing the diggers to exaggerate the difficulties involved in life in the colonies and therefore to laugh at them. Thatcher's "Colonial Travelling; Or, The Horrors of the Corduroy Road" describes and exaggerates the bumpy roads between Melbourne and the fields. During the journey, the speaker's "splendid new white hat" is dented on the coach's ceiling and a "lady's frontispiece" catches him "slap on the jaw". P.S. Raphael's "A Digger's Dream" makes a joke out of some of the hardships, telling the story of a dream in which the digger thinks that he is at work in a wet shaft. Eventually he is successful but wakes to find that he has not grabbed the rope to pull up his pail but instead is holding the cat's tail. "Rush Away" mentions the heavy cartage rates to a new rush at Bryant's Run and the distance to water at the new field. It claims that there are two "peelers" to prevent people taking water, that the grog seller has been arrested, and that others have returned to try elsewhere. Thatcher's "Going Kangarooing", which is presumably based on a trip by local identities, laughs at the hardships experienced by a party which gets lost in the bush and has to spend a night out unprepared. Their discomforts are many — the cart they travel in is far from luxurious, the horse jibs once or twice, they hunt unsuccessfully, it rains heavily, they are unable to light a fire, they have no blankets, and strange noises in the night make them start. However, the song ends positively:

Things mend when at the worst folks say,
The sun shone gloriously next day,
And again they all got underweigh
To return from Kangarooing. 20


Songs which specifically urge perseverance in the search for gold are legion. The story-line of "Trials and Success of the Persevering Gold Digger" is obvious from its title. In "Look Out Below", the digger resolves to continue mining in spite of his initial "vile" luck, and eventually makes "his pile". "In Luck" tells of someone who has persevered and is at last successful. He was without any money, the publican had refused him credit, the storekeeper had stopped giving him supplies, he had sold everything he owned except the tools and the tent, and his wife and children "down south" had experienced hard times since he had become a miner. But now he has struck it rich he can buy drinks all round and will take the first post to the coast. "By-and-By" offers its audience a general encouragement that things will improve in the future. One verse is particularly aimed at miners:

What, though you've just bottomed a shicer,  
And your every wish may be crost [sic];  
It should urge you more strongly to try, sir,  
To find out the lead that is lost.

What, though we scarce earn bread and butter,  
The pick and spade cheerly [sic] we'll ply;  
We shall certainly hit on the gutter,  
And go home with a pile by-and-by.21

A number of songs addressed the fact that gold returns were diminishing, but they too urged perseverance. "Who Wouldn't Be a Digger" notes that fewer people are arriving in Australia from England because they have discovered that mining is no longer as easy as it was, but its last verse recommends continued diligence, "For many a one will make his pile / That's now a hard-up digger". "Two Years Ago" laments that there is less gold in Bendigo now than there was in the past, but it notes that "some stunning golden piece / Of ground will turn up yet". Samuel Lemaitre's "The Gold of Other Days" encourages today's miners to "press on, / Guided by hope's bright rays"; and "Changes Since 1852" has as its last chorus:

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Then let's still turn up the soil, boys,
For gold rewards our toil, boys, —
There's many a nugget to be found,
That's lying snug in golden ground.22

The speaker in "Making a Pile" vacillates between sadness and cheerfulness — in fact "sad" and "cheerful" are the stage directions given for different sections of the song. It begins with the speaker feeling "quite down-hearted" because he has spent so much time on the diggings without making his pile, but then "Visions of future happiness with pleasure make [him] smile". He is convinced that "desponding" is not the way to make a pile, but when he "bottom[s] on the reef", the gloom returns. The song concludes on a note of cheerfulness when he remembers a proverb which states that "Fortune cannot always frown, but some day she will smile". Two songs by P.S. Raphael offer encouragement to unsuccessful miners. The first of these, "Cheer Up, My Lads", tells of a digger who arrived in Australia full of confidence but soon found out his "blunder". A thief stole two ounces of gold from his tent but he realizes that if he continues to fret he will not be able to pay for his next licence and so he sings to himself "Cheer up". The speaker in Raphael's "Damper and Tea" has a torn tent and a sack for a bed, and yet he pities some of the other diggers. He prefers to sit drinking tea and eating damper while others foolishly hurry away to new rushes. He feels superior to the "red-belted coon [who] found a nugget close by" but who cannot read and write.23

Some of the songs urging perseverance had a hidden agenda — keeping miners in the goldmining towns and therefore as potential members of concert hall audiences. "Stay Where You Are", subtitled "Advice to Ballarat Diggers" discusses some of the hardships faced by a digger and offers a solution.24 The speaker, Joe Brown,


describes himself as "an unlucky digger" who has travelled to every new rush, been held up and robbed, and been lost in the bush. He has experienced diggings that are too wet and diggings that are too dry, creeks too low and hills too high. His chief problem is that he has not remained in one place and persevered. He advises other diggers that hundreds who are poor could have been rich if they had not rushed about but had remained in Ballarat. He urges: "Then dig up each gully, each flat, every hill — / Don't shepherd too much, but work with a will".

Although the goldfield entertainers would sometimes move on tour through other centres, they often relied on residencies in the large mining towns. Thatcher himself spent long stretches working in the "Shamrock" concert hall in Bendigo and at the "Charlie Napier" in Ballarat. He was very aware that he relied on drawing large crowds and some of his songs were directed partly to urging miners to remain in these towns. Such songs confirmed that those in his audience were correct to have remained where they were. "Bryant's Ranges" describes some of those leaving Bendigo on the latest rush but it finishes with its speaker asserting that he is wiser than he once was when he lost money through such impetuosity, and that this time he will wait for good information before he leaves for Bryant's Ranges. Thatcher's "The New Rush" describes one of the new fields. The speaker is a goldfield entertainer who recalls seeing an advertisement for "a monster concert" in which he was to sing, but which was in fact held in a "small crib". The song finishes with the speaker pleased to leave:

But now I leave the thickly-peopled rush,  
Leave penury, discomfort, crime behind,  
How welcome to me is the silent bush!  
As back to Ballarat my way I wind.25

A complex and somewhat contradictory group of songs addressed the reflex of the diligence and perseverance — the refusal to work which was personified in the

character of the "loafer". Thatcher's song "The Loafers' Customs" lists some of the
stock attributes of this comic figure: loafers managed to survive without working by
borrowing money, getting others to buy them drinks, and obtaining meals on credit.
Some of the songs on this subject stressed the ideology of hard work, such as "The
Natural History of the Loafer" which finishes:

   But labour of all kinds they shirk,
   And that is the cause of their failure;
   For a cove that's not willing to work,
   Ought never to come to Australia.26

Songs about loafers partly express some class antipathy towards gentlemen of leisure.
"The Natural History of the Loafer" describes loafers as men who talk about their rich
relations and their expectations of an inheritance, and sometimes dress as "swells"
although they have no money. Other songs too make a connection between the Old
World rich and the New World loafers. "London and the Diggings" explains that "the
fellows that frequently hang round hotels, / Out here are called loafers, at home are
called swells". The speaker in "Billy Nutts in Australia" suggests:

   Those coves that toil get golden soil,
   With the swells it's wise worse.
   All kinds of work they seem to shirk,
   For at home they lolled on sofas;
   And so you see they prove to be
   Most miserable loafers.27

On the other hand there is at times an undercurrent of admiration for the
cunningness of the loafers who managed to survive off their wits. A number of
loafing practices are described in "Life of a Loafer" and some of these bear strong
resemblances to activities which the diggers regarded as admirable.28 The speaker
claims that he had been in court for having no visible means of support, asserting in

accordance with the values of the mining fraternity, that he is not at all worried by "the traps". The song describes loafing as "a jolly life". Another song which suggests that loafing could have strong links with digging practices was Thatcher's "Shepherdling". It reminisces about the "precious lazy days" when a party of diggers would pitch out a few desultory shovel loads of soil at nine o'clock in the morning and then go drinking, trying to avoid paying for a round of drinks. They would "Joe" the traps, play cards, pelt the Chinese with clods of earth, and enjoy watching fights. The tone of some of the songs about loafing also reveals a certain affection for their subject matter. Thatcher presented himself as "the perpetual President of the Loafing Society" in a letter to the press which expressed tongue-in-cheek sadness at the decline in the number of those who qualified for membership of the society. One of his songs called "Loafing Society" mentions a recent meeting of loafers where two were expelled from the society for shouting drinks and one was suspended for a week for subscribing to the hospital. It is clearly far from antipathetic:

New members we're getting each day  
Two diggers who've lately been puddling  
Have got tired of work and they say  
They both mean to give over puddling  
And their horse is beginning to shirk  
To move round he don't see the propriety  
He eats up his oats but won't work  
So he's one of the loafing society.

However, there also seems to have been a darker side to these descriptions of loafers. Thatcher's "What Shall I Sing?", dated 13 March 1857, is a list of his most popular songs which mentions his audience requesting the "Loafing Society" and also

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29 "Shepherdling", TCS, 3: 103-5.

30 Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 92-93.

31 "Loafing Society", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
has Thatcher wondering whether he will "go at the loafers again".\textsuperscript{32} The middle of 1857 was a time of high unemployment in the colony and there were large demonstrations of the unemployed in the streets of Melbourne. Serle explains that the press "showed extraordinary venom towards the demonstrators, and for long castigated them as loafers". One letter in response to these attacks asked "What is my duty? Employment I cannot get; money, I have none. What shall I do? It seems to me I must do one of three things—beg, steal, or starve. Which is my duty?". It was signed "NOT A LOAFER".\textsuperscript{33} Of course there must have been those who were happy to remain idle and live off their wits in the way which the songs suggest, but the concept was to be used to discredit the large numbers of genuinely unemployed in times of economic downturn. They were labelled "loafers" and, in effect, blamed for their own unemployment. One of Thatcher's songs specifically equates loafers with the unemployed, wondering whether the authorities will construct a colonial workhouse to house them.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} "What Shall I Sing?", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

\textsuperscript{33} Serle, \textit{Golden Age}, 242; \textit{Argus}, 22 January 1859, 7.

\textsuperscript{34} "English Imitations", \textit{VS}, 5: 166-68.
Chapter 11
Gender and Race

For the young men who made up most of the audience of the goldfield songs, women were, of course, an object of desire; but they were also a source of fear, and the songs frequently realize such fears and offer resolutions to them. Women were often presented as untrustworthy and predatory. One song discusses the means used to catch poachers in England — man traps and spring guns — and concludes that no one need worry about these because the only man traps in Australia "are the ladies".1 "Who Wouldn’t Be a Digger" suggests that women try "to nail a lucky digger". The song "Poll the Grogseller" notes that Poll "possessed ... a smooth oily tongue" and implies that she uses her good looks to attract male customers and to keep them drinking. "Going to Shout" describes a new chum who is betrayed by a woman called Sydney Sal whom he met on the street. She takes him to a bar where he has to buy drinks for "a score ... or more" of her friends, and then he is led to a house where he is beaten and robbed.2

One response to the fear of women revealed in these songs was merely to assert male power. Some operated as a mild form of titillation for the miners, suggesting that women were readily available for them: for example, "Scrumptious Young Gals", which is a leering description of the young women on the goldfields as objects. It describes them as "tugged out so finely, / Adorning the diggings so charming and gay", and it thanks Mrs. Chisholm for providing "such a constant supply". "When First I Landed Here" similarly suggests to its male audience that because there are more

1  "English Imitations" VS. 5: 166-68.
2  "Who Wouldn’t Be a Digger", TCM. 6-7; "Poll the Grogseller", TCS. 3: 75; "Going to Shout", Anderson, Colonial Minstrel, 77-79.
women in the colony today than when its speaker arrived: "We now can take our pick". "No Shepherding" describes a woman in the terms which diggers used to describe their mines. She warns him that he must stop "shepherding" her because someone else might jump "the claim", and the song concludes that they must go to the church immediately to "register the claim". "The Snowy River" is in the voice of a single girl who cannot find a husband and is resolved to go as far as the Snowy River. It concludes: "You'll find out that a wife / Is the warmest outfit for the Snowy River".3

Marriage was a particular concern for the audience, both for those who were single and for those who were separated from their wives, and the subject was addressed from a number of angles. "The Faithless Nursemaid" offers two resolutions to the possibility of a woman's unfaithfulness. The speaker tells of the nursemaid whom he knew and loved in England and of the fun they had together, but he presents himself as too independent to be overly concerned by such ties:

But to come to Australia for gold,  
I always had made up my mind;  
To my heart the sweet girl I did fold,  
Then reluctantly left her behind.4

The nursemaid promises to remain faithful but when the miner goes to Melbourne after having bad luck at the diggings, he sees her walking in the street. She is dressed in fine silk, her fingers are adorned with rings, and she explains that she is a rich digger's bride, before strutting away. The song offers a fictional vengeance (including physical violence) to what it suggests is faithlessness:

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But her husband and she were too flash,
And into extravagance went,
And, of course, then the whole of their cash
Soon melted away, and was spent.
Poor Jane, alas! brown she is down [sic],
But it serves her right, you must agree;
She drinks, and he beats her like fun —
So she'd better by half have had me.

Other songs such as "All There", which tells of an attractive woman who runs away from her husband in less than a month, could warn against marriage altogether. Thatcher's "Stephen Cain" also deals with a woman's desertion of her husband, suggesting that this was a moment of good fortune for the man concerned. Bracken introduces the song with this preamble: "Like the majority of versifiers Thatcher paid a lot of attention to the fair sex. His verses teem with love incidents, and love in those days was quite a different thing to that sensation your genteel poets gloat over". The song tells of a miner who made a large fortune and then married a woman who spent it all. They returned to the diggings but he was not successful and she was not slow to upbraid him. She would drink all day while he worked and, when she was drunk, would get cross and throw the crockery around:

One day whilst at work, as hard as a Turk,
From the tent away she ran;
And he found the young slut right off had cut
With another more fortunate man.
But he sang, "Hurrah! it's as well as it is,
It's jolly good riddance for me,
For if I'd made a thousand pounds,
She'd have spent it, I plainly see;
And if kind Fortune smile again,
And I get another lob,
I'll always steer clear, by Jingo, no fear,
Of this emigration mob".5

5 "All There", V.S. 4: 122-23 (another text of this song, J. Small, The New Zealand and Australian Songster (Christchurch: Tribe, Mosley and Caygill, 1866), 20-21, does not have this ending); "Stephen Cain", TCS. 1: 22-24; Thomas Bracken, Dear Old Bendigo: A Sketch of the Early Diggings Days) (Bendigo: Robshaw, [c. 1892]), 21.
"The Disappointed Girl" enacts a fictional vengeance on a woman who refuses to marry anyone but a rich digger. This song describes a woman who, it suggests, is so ugly that in spite of the money she has saved up no one will marry her. She decides instead to go to Australia and marry a rich digger. She declines a couple of proposals and is angry when she sees other women with "flash" diggers. She travels to Bendigo where she "leered at and ogled the whole of the men". The song offers its audience a revenge against someone who was not available to them:

But now to bring to a conclusion this song —
Things didn't turn out to her wishes;
And if you go to a well-known restaurant,
You may there see her washing up dishes.
So, young girls, just ponder this song in your mind —
Don't treat every suitor with rigour;
A willing though poor man's as good, you will find,
Praps as any flash lucky gold digger.6

Although occasionally the songs describe the traditional and virtuous wife who waits patiently and full of hope, looking after the children while her husband works at the fields,7 the more common female figure is a tough and unpretentious woman. Particularly revealing are two pieces which focus on the wedding itself. "Colonial Courtship, or Love on the Diggings" contrasts Australian and English stereotypes and, like a number of songs, the straightforward and practical colonial methods lay bare the foolish affectation of English customs.8 For example, the Australian women do not burst into tears and sob "ask my papa", when their suitors propose, "They follow their own inclinations". This independence may, in itself, be threatening to the young male audience, but the women are also presented as having strong sexual drives: "One day they pick up a chap, / The next day he's walked off to church, sirs". And nine times

7 For example, "Mary's Dream", TCS, 2: 49-50.
out of ten, when her suitor sets a date, the "colonized" woman asks, "Lor, Sammy, can't it be done quicker".

In one way the women's eagerness is flattering and perhaps consoling for those in the audience whose immediate chances of marriage are relatively slight, and the song manages to retain this aspect while offering a resolution to the male fears of female independence and sexuality which have been raised. English brides might have bottles of smelling salts to prevent themselves fainting in church, but Australian women drink brandy. And alcohol ultimately turns them into figures of fun. The audience is told that some brides get "tight" on their wedding nights and demonstrate a strong inclination to fight. "Colonial Courtship, or Love on the Diggings" concludes in a patronizing way which asserts male power:

But bless their dear hearts, we all know
[This is] a proof of colonial affection.

The word play on "tight" (italicized in the printed text to make sure no one misses its double meaning) may well indicate that the sexual fears still lurk beneath the surface. "Moggy's Wedding" tells a similar story of a bride whose wilfulness and sexual drive is removed by drink. She begins the day by uncorking a case of brandy and taking "a most tremendous pull", falls out of the bridal cart, and is "half groggy" at the ceremony. But at the party afterwards she and her guests resolve to get properly drunk:

Mog to do her share was able,
And she soon got precious tight;
And stretch'd blind drunk beneath the table
Was how she spent her wedding night.9

The songs also address the tension between marriage and membership of the mining fraternity. "Parody on the Grenadier" first raises the possibility of uxoriousness and then demonstrates that the bond between the miners takes precedence

9 "Moggy's Wedding", TCS, 3: 77-79. "London and the Diggings", TCS, 1: 7-8, refers to the differences between English and Australian weddings in similar terms to these two songs.
over the marriage bond. The potential for a digger to be too fond of his wife is raised when the hero requests that she joins him on the fields and again when he "flies" to embrace her. The song's punchline, however, shows the men bonded by their knowledge of goldfield language while the miner's wife is excluded through not having access to this lexicon. She is jealous because she has been told that he has a new "fan", a term which she understands in its colloquial sense meaning "woman". He laughs and explains that a "fan" is a machine for pumping air down into shaft. The proper relationship has been re-established: she now fears that he will leave her, and his primary bond is again with the mining fraternity.\textsuperscript{10}

Thatcher's song, "Cooking \textit{v.} Digging" addresses the issue of gender roles in some detail. It tells the story of a man who abuses "his patient wife" and accuses her of being lazy when he arrives home to find that his dinner is not ready. With a list of terrible puns, she suggests that they swap tasks:

\begin{quote}
You wash up the dishes, whilst
I go and \textit{wash} up too,
Then you'll dress the children, dear,
And dress the dinner too;
Drive the goats away, my love,
Whilst I \textit{drive} in the claim,
Mind you rock the cradle too,
And I will do the same.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

Of course he finds that he cannot make a pudding, the baby cries while he is up to his elbows in dough, the cat drinks all the milk, a goat takes the cabbage, he lets the fire go out, and when his wife arrives home dinner is far from ready. He expects to be chastised, but instead she bursts into tears:

\begin{quote}
Says she, you've spoilt the dinner,
But together we'll condole,
For because I had no miner's right
They've been and jumped my hole.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} "Parody on the Grenadier", \textit{TCM}, 1: 15.

\textsuperscript{11} "Cooking \textit{v.} Digging", \textit{TCM}, 3: 93-95.
This, of course, confirms that a woman's place is in the kitchen and a man's is outside labouring. There are humorous consequences when he attempts her tasks but the couple's livelihood has been jeopardized by her attempting his. And at the level of pun, the song threatens a much more brutal penalty for women who transgress established gender roles.

Race Relations

Although songs such as "Ballarat in 1855" could proudly describe Ballarat as a "great hive of nations", access to full membership of the mining community was by no means equal. Ward suggests that Mulholland's "The White-Washed Yankee" "reflects nicely the mingled admiration and irritation which the Yankees inspired in Colonial breasts". It tells of an Irish miner who imitates an American in accent, dress and habits, but the song itself is clearly critical of the stereotypical American ostentation. The would-be Yankee has his hat "jauntily on one side of his head", wears "knee boots with gilt red tops" and a "long silk yankee sash", and sports a goatee. He spends his time lounging "at billiard tables, tenpin alleys, and hotels", smoking six inch cigars or chewing cake tobacco, and "expectorating on the furniture, but seldom on the floor". The Irish were presented in stereotypical fashion even by the Irish comic singer Joe Small. Songs such as "Murphy's Letter Home" present a stage-Irish version of Irish stupidity with its speaker describing the "strange sort of bird here they call kangaroo" which is found at the top of the highest gum trees. Songs such as "Out on the Spree" and "Paddy's Fight with the Chinamen" portray the Irish as violent and drunken.12

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The material produced by the goldfield entertainers was often viciously racist. As we have seen, "Ballarat in 1855" celebrates the presence of a thriving goldmining town where once "Natives ... with weapons rude / Roamed th[e] wildernesses", and describes the original inhabitants as "untutored" and as "savages". But it was not only the Aboriginals who were excluded from the mining fraternity on the grounds of race. Anti-semitism is an occasional component of the songs — for example "Changes Since 1852" refers to the "swarm of Jews" selling in the rag fair and "Cases of Insanity" suggests that one would be "a lunatic" to buy from "a Ballarat Jew hawker". Thatcher's "The Black Doctor or The Row on Board the ELLEN LEWIS" refers to "a mutinous darkey [...] who was] so black / That charcoal would leave a white mark on him". It concludes:

I hope in such cases as these
Such coves will be treated with vigour
Especially darkeys: you know
There is'nt [sic] much good in a nigger.13

It was the Chinese, however, who were the butt for most of the racial hatred expressed in the goldfield material. The songs raised complex racial fears and used various strategies to try and alleviate them. Part of their function was to paste over internal differences within the mining fraternity by defining it against another easily identifiable group. Bate suggests that the influx of other nationalities "did not threaten British dominance of political and cultural life, but it provided an unusual experience for Britons, who had probably never had to mix so freely with foreigners, especially Chinese". He points out that the Chinese immigrants totalled more than 25,000 and on some fields numbered about a quarter of the digging population.14 Serle argues that

13 "Ballarat in 1855", TCS, 2: 50-51; "Changes Since 1852", TCS, 2: 60-61; "Cases of Insanity", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria; "The Black Doctor or The Row on Board the ELLEN LEWIS", Charles Robert Thatcher Papers, MS 5004, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

the Chinese made deliberate efforts not to annoy the European diggers, trying not to
damage the water holes — one of the often-stated grievances against them — and not
wearing the Chinese trousers which offended the Europeans. More importantly, the
Chinese usually worked ground which the European miners had abandoned.15

Those involved in the revival of interest in Australian "folk music" since the
1950s have tended to obscure the extreme racism of the goldfield songs. Ward's The
Penguin Book of Australian Ballads prints no goldfield songs about the Chinese.16
Another tactic has been to focus on the very few songs which are at least partially
favourable to the Chinese. "The Fine Fat Saucy Chinaman", which contains the lines
"Now John, with all his many faults, / Leads an industrious life", has been reprinted in
Hugh Anderson's Goldrush Songster and his Colonial Ballads.17 Also reprinted in
those two places and in The Gold-diggers Songbook is "The Chinaman" which
grudgingly expresses positive attitudes to the Chinese.18 Having characterized China
as a peculiar country and its inhabitants as a "curious" race, having noted with some
enjoyment the way that diggers persecute the Chinese miners, and having laughed at
Chinese difficulties with the English language, its final stanza concludes with a couple
of lines that present the speaker as more understanding:

15 Geoffreys Serle, The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851-1861 (Melbourne:


(Ferntree Gully: Rams Skull, 1958), 90; Hugh Anderson, Colonial Ballads (1955; Melbourne:

18 "The Chinaman", TCS, 2: 56-57; Anderson, ed., Goldrush Songster, 88; Anderson, Colonial
Ballads, 70; Hugh Anderson, ed., Gold-digger's Songbook: When First I Landed Here (Melbourne:
Red Rooster, 1980), 77.
Should a stranger be inquisitive,  
And to ask him questions try,  
A vacant stare then John will give,  
And "no sabby" he'll reply.  
He's a peaceable fellow, deny it who can,  
And there's many worse than a Chinaman.

The lack of audience agreement with these lines is suggested by the fact that when the song appears in *The Native Companion Songster*, published in 1889, it does not have this last stanza and so finishes with a description of the European miners poking fun at the Chinaman.19

Extremely racist ditties about the Chinese were among the most popular of all the goldfield songs and they went hand in hand with the constant harassment and minor violence which, on several occasions, erupted into bloody anti-Chinese riots. Serle points out that petty persecution such as pulling pigtails and throwing stones at the Chinese was widespread by early 1855. Many songs refer approvingly to this harassment and violence. "Shepherdding" reminisces about the pleasures of throwing clods of earth at the Chinese who would "swear and jabber, while the injured parts they'd rub". "Poor Ching Chong" describes with obvious enjoyment the European diggers insulting Ching Chong, pulling his pigtaila and pushing him into a hole. Thatcher's "John Chinaman My Jo" blames the Chinese for dirtying the water holes and points out that this "of course" angers the white diggers and that is why they drive the Chinese away. Similarly "The Fine Fat Saucy Chinaman" alludes to the justified rage of the European diggers when they catch the Chinese muddying the "splendid water holes". "The Chinaman" enjoys the persecution of the Chinese and the fact that this causes them to fly into a rage.20

Sometimes the songs' logic reveals their racism. "Paddy's Fight with the Chinese" shows how the Chinese were automatically blamed for the white diggers'  


problems. Paddy Noolan has a pile of washing dirt stolen while he is asleep. He sets off to find the "dirty blackguards", comes upon a group of Chinese miners with some washing dirt, assumes that it is his and attacks them with a pick handle. Its implicit belief in white racial superiority is evident in the ease with which Paddy knocks twelve of them down. When he is, at last, overpowered by their numerical superiority, he is still able to jump up and drive them off. "A Chinese Barney on the Diggings" notes at the outset that "The Chinese are proverbial / For being pretty quiet", but then follows a delighted account of "an awful riot". The song suggests that when the Chinese fight they do not do so in a "manly" way, like an "Englishman", in a ring. It describes with delight the brawl with pick handles, spades and even a frying pan. One of the Chinese goes to get a revolver, but this proves ineffectual because he forgets to put powder in it. In spite of this careful presentation of Chinese methods of fighting as unmanly and slapstick, there is a delight (and an expression of racial superiority) in the description of the extreme violence used by the police inspector, who regains order by using a riding whip to subdue them "Like bullocks".21

Perhaps the most appalling of the songs celebrating anti-Chinese violence was "Dick the Digger", probably composed by Joe Small, which offers its audience a blatant legitimation of the brutal riots on the Buckland River field in July 1857. It describes an idyllic scene, where there was "plenty of gold, / For all who'd take the trouble to seek", which is disrupted by the Chinese who spoiled the water and "prigged all the fruits of [Dick the Digger's] labour". The song presents Dick as perfectly justified in going out with "his mates" and attacking the Chinese with picks; their day's activities are described as "a jolly good spree":

Then up rose Dick, and, seizing his pick,
Went sallying out with his mates;
Leaving the gold, these diggers, so bold,
Had a pick at the Chinamen's pates:
Poor John Chow Chow
Found himself in a row,
And away down the creek he ran,
'Till in his place
Was left no trace
Nor the ghost of a Chinaman.

Chorus:-
Then pick, pick, to his labor went Dick,
And he calls their day's-work, gaily, a
Jolly good spree, and he chuckles with glee,
"Ooh! they'll soon get enough of Australia."22

Many of the songs about the Chinese miners focused on their difference from their European counterparts, and the constant implication was that European practices were superior. In "Chinamen in Court" the Chinese are portrayed as "a curious race", China is described as one of the "barbarous nations" and the song suggests that the Chinese are "seldom influenced / By moral obligations". It describes Chinese forms for taking an oath in court such as blowing out a candle, breaking a piece of crockery or cutting off a cock's head, laughing at them by making puns about such things as leaving the court "in the dark", "sorcery", and "fowl play". The practice of swearing on a bible is seen as quite natural. "The Chinaman and the Ice" notices "How civilized these Chinamen / Are getting every day!". European superiority is clear in the fact that the Chinese are relinquishing their "old Mongolian customs", and also in their ignorance of European practices. The song tells of a Chinese miner who had never seen a lump of ice. When he was served ice in a drink of ginger beer he roared, danced up and down and spat it out. When its use was made clear he bought a shilling's worth and took it home but because it was wet he put it outside the tent to dry. When he went to retrieve the ice it had, of course, melted but "John" rushed

22 "Dick the Digger", The Colonial Songster, 6-7.
around the camp "Accusing each Chinese he met / Of robbing from his tent". The song is delighted by the violence which erupts:

Now this led to a jolly row,
And they began to use
Pick handles, pots and frying pans,
And those horrid big bamboos;
Blood soon flowed like water,
For nought else would suffice,
And twenty cocoa nuts were cracked,
All through a lump of ice. 23

Many of the anti-Chinese songs are fearful of an invasion by the Chinese. "Changes Since 1852" mentions the thousands of Chinese who "Swarm here as thick as bees", and "When First I Landed Here" states that "the Chinese swarm around" — both unwittingly illustrating the selectiveness inherent in the proud description of Ballarat as "a great hive of nations" in the song "Ballarat in 1855". Thatcher's "John Chinaman My Jo", described as having been sung by Thatcher "on Ballarat and Bendigo, for 300 nights", expresses the European diggers' fears of being swamped. It describes the influx as "invading us" and worries that the Chinese will soon outnumber "us poor Englishmen". The song apologizes a little for white anti-Chinese feeling with its singer wishing blessings on John Chinaman's head (and "more power to [his] tail") but it also advises him not to abuse the freedom he enjoys. 24

One of the most extended discussions of the fear of the Chinese taking control is in Thatcher's "The Chinese Revolution on Bendigo". Its speaker lies awake thinking of Chinese immigration, of the ships which land every day with thousands of Chinese "swarming like bees". He then dreams of a peaceful Saturday in Bendigo where miners are shopping, girls are looking at new drapes and mothers are buying sweets for the children who toddle by their sides. This harmonious scene is interrupted by a

loud yell as thousands of Chinese rush up and kill the soldiers defending the police camp. Some of the police try to escape but are soon captured and the magistrate, McLachlan, is pursued down a mine shaft where he is pelted with lumps of quartz. The speaker wakes up to acknowledge that the dream may seem "very foolish" but also has a significant amount of truth in it:

To let 'em land here in such numbers ain't right  
With their vast immigration they'll form a great nation.25

"Chinese Immigration" both laughs at ways that the Chinese differ from the English diggers, and raises the Europeans' fears about being overrun by another race. It poke fun at their pigtails, their diet, and their different religious habits. The speaker then signals his intention to move on to a more serious matter:

Now some of you, perhaps, may laugh,  
But 'tis my firm opinion,  
This colony some day will be  
Under Chinese dominion.26

However, the song continues, in a joking and exaggerated way, to raise visions of a colony ruled by an Emperor, suggesting that the Chinese will erect a great wall to separate Victoria from New South Wales, that the squatters will be used as slaves, and that pigtails, rice and chopsticks will be compulsory for all. By realizing the fears in such a way the audience can, of course, partially resolve them by laughing at them. The last verse shows just how deviously the song negotiates its subject matter, first admitting that the fears are exaggerated, but then suggesting that they have some basis. More insidiously it uses this as a justification for keeping the Chinese in their place, before returning to lighter comic exaggeration:


26 "Chinese Immigration", TCS, 1: 5-6.
This picture, perhaps, is overdrawn;
But, however, who can say,
That all these things will not take place,
If we let them have their way.
If it comes to pass, these English songs
Away I'll quick be flinging,
And learn their language, and come out
In Chinese comic singing.

Fundamentally the Chinese were a scapegoat for European frustration at failing to win the rewards they hoped for. Serle's often-cited estimates suggest that, after mid-1852, only very few miners made significant fortunes. As we saw in chapter 10, he states that eighty percent "of all those who tried the diggings ... made no more than the equivalent of reasonable wages, paid their way, or lost money". In 1857 a sharp fall in average annual returns from mining coincided with a sharp increase in violence towards Chinese miners. Serle points out that "however much the Chinese diverged from custom in their use of water, these disputes were symptomatic of underlying causes of conflict rather than of fundamental importance. The basic complaint was that the Chinese were reducing the European digger's opportunities and earnings." The songs presented the Chinese as brutally and self-destructively greedy, and often specifically blamed them for a decline in yields. At another level, this may represent a displacement of the European's own lust for wealth, which, as we have already seen, was frequently rationalized and obscured in the songs about European miners.

The songs often described the effect of the advent of the Chinese on the returns for European miners. The speaker in "Stephen Cain" describes the changes at Bendigo since the Chinese had arrived. When he was first there he worked hard and "took out twelve pounds weight", but now he can barely earn enough to feed himself, largely

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27 Golden Age, 85.


29 Golden Age, 327.
because of the "Chinese, like swarms of bees, / Puddling surface in a tub".30

Similarly, "When First I Landed Here" connects the Chinese presence with the diminished returns for European diggers:

When first I landed here,
Folks rushed to Bendigo;
And went and pitched in Eagle Hawk,
Where lobs were made you know.

Where lobs, &c.

But those days are now gone by;
Getting rich is all my eye;
The Chinese swarm around, my boys,
Puddling every bit of ground, my boys,
And the nuggets are not found, my boys,
Like when I landed here.31

Several songs describe the changes in Chinese eating habits, partly as a marker of their increased prosperity and partly implying that European practices are inherently superior. "Changes Since 1852" notes that the Chinese are becoming colonized, disregarding rice and buying "fowls at any price" and mutton. Thatcher's "John Chinaman My Jo" states that their diet has changed from solely rice to include flour and plums, and that there is a butcher's shop in the Chinese camp. "The Chinaman" shows very clearly the link between the songs' enjoyment of the persecution of the Chinese and their increasing prosperity:

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31 "When First I Landed Here", TCS, 1: 3-5.
When John first came to the colony,
He subsisted alone on rice,
But being well off, he buys you see,
Fowls and pigs, no matter what price;
And sometimes, mounted on a horse,
Through the diggings he will ride,
And John at the blackguard boys looks cross
When they tell him to "get inside."
He's in a rage, deny it who can,
When insult's offered to a Chinaman.32

The songs rationalized the European antipathy towards Chinese miners by presenting them as greedy, cunning thieves. "Colonial Curiosities" lists "a Chinaman not fond of thieving" as a rarity in the colony. In "McLachlan in Court", the magistrate threatens to have a Chinese miner's tail cut off, describes him as "a rascally Mongolian", and sentences him to six months jail for stealing a pair of boots. The Chinese are presented as cunning in "A Morning at the Police Court on the Diggings": during the trial an interpreter explains that the four men in the dock have no money, but when they are subsequently charged they are able to pay the fine.33

The most extended discussion of greed is in Thatcher's song, "The Chinaman's Fate", which clearly delights in the vicious way the Chinese are supposed to treat each other. It begins with a statement of individual competitiveness when Sing-Hi tells his "mates" that he will get more gold than they will, and goes off to fossick on his own. He does not return for dinner "So a greedy old Chinaman eat[s] up his share". The following weeks they search for him and eventually decide that he must have "made his blessed pile, and gone home on the sly". But at last some "mouldy old bones, and a rotten blue shirt" are found and it becomes apparent that Sing-Hi had fallen down a mine shaft. The song explains:


And when his mates heard that he'd turned up his toes, 
They said "poor old chap," then divided his clothes.\(^{34}\)

The chorus throughout is the sarcastic "Oh, what a sad tale — crikey, oh, what a sad tale".\(^{35}\)

There is a strong undercurrent of sexual jealousy towards the Chinese in a number of songs. The speaker in "Chinese Immigration" expects the mandarins to seize the "fair Australian girls" for wives. Sexual possessiveness is perhaps hinted at in "The Bullock Creek Picnic" which shows the European women making a particular point of saying that they wish to be protected from Chinese eyes while they bathe. "The Affecting Narrative of Chink-a-li" offers a revenge to the European audience. In spite of his engagement to a woman in China, when Chink-a-li arrives in Melbourne he falls in love with "a nymph well known in town". Part of the song is devoted to a racist account of Chinese eating habits:

He gazed at her, then at the dog  
She carried in her arms,  
For to his heart or appetite  
They mutually had charms:  
"Oh, would," poor Chink-a-li then cried,  
"That lovely pair was mine,  
That I might make the one my bride,  
And — on the other dine."\(^{36}\)

It relieves its audience's jealousy by allowing no hint of interest on the woman's part, while Chink-a-li pines after her and gives up opium and "puppy-eating". A fever seizes his brain and he dies of love.

\(^{34}\) "The Chinaman's Fate", \textit{TCS}, 2: 72.

\(^{35}\) It is perhaps fitting that Thatcher himself died of cholera in China because of his own greed. He had given up singing for a living and gone on to make a fortune by importing cheap Chinese goods to England. Before he left on his final buying trip, Thatcher told one of his friends "I have plenty of money to live on for the whole of my life, but ... I cannot resist the opportunity of making a few more thousands", Anderson, \textit{Colonial Minstrel}, 149-50.

Several of the goldfield songs deal specifically with marriage between Chinese men and European women. In these pieces the marriage coincides with Chinese mining success and the songs appear to be a response to this as well as to sexual jealousy. In "Poor Ching Chong" the Chinese miner eventually finds a large nugget, buys expensive European clothes and gives up the idea of returning to "the rice and stewed puppies of China". Ching Chong forgets the wife he has left behind, and tries to win a "young gal" called "Carroty Sal". He plies her with gin and they are married, but the following day his assessment of married life is: "No good". The song finishes with a consolation for its audience:

By some it is said
She kicked him out of bed,
And bolted with every shiner;
And, though wedded at church,
She left in the lurch
This unfortunate native of China.

Bracken writes that "Thatcher took a big interest in our Chinese brethren and in numerous lyrics immortalised 'John'. One of the best of these gives an account of a love adventure in which a certain Mr. Ching Chong loses his heart to an interesting lady rejoicing in the sobriquet of 'Cock Eyed Fan'". The song was "John Chinaman's Marriage", supposedly sung by Thatcher for 400 nights. It tells of Ching Chong who had saved a lot of gold and then decided to get married to a European because there were no Chinese women in the colony. The song offers the concert hall audience a detailed and wide-ranging revenge for the miscegenation — something the European miners clearly found particularly threatening.

"John Chinaman's Marriage" delights in revenge against Ching Chong, enjoying the failure of his first attempts at courting and describing the ways that the women

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38 Bracken, Dear Old Bendigo, 20.

humiliated him. We are told that at length one woman "took pity" on him but it becomes evident that this was, in fact, not her motive. She is described as fat, "cock-eyed", with a dirty brown complexion bearing strong traces of small pox, a snub-nose, and deep red hair. It is strongly implied that she was either an ex-convict or of convict stock. The song sums up: "She was just the girl for the Chinaman". The revenge for the diggers who were the audience for the song was directed both to Ching Chong's wealth and to his sexual success. Cock-eyed Fan spent her husband's money very fast, demanding cashmere shawls, and fancy balls. She would often stay out all night and at length ran off leaving "her faithful Chinaman". The song's final chorus warns the Chinese against the practice that the white diggers found so threatening:

If matrimony inclined,
You Chinese chaps had better mind;
Don't marry such girls if you can,
They know too much for a Chinaman.40

Conclusion: Versions of Australian "Folk Song"

In an important discussion of the Australian "folk revival", Graeme Smith has pointed out that the notion of "folk" had its origins in nineteenth-century German Romantic nationalism which elevated traditional cultural forms and regarded them as the soul of national culture. He draws attention to the artificiality of "folk" as a construct, arguing that it is a term "applied by one group of people to another, usually distant from them in time or social status ... a term which attributes value to lower class cultural practices, but in so doing ... shapes them in particular ways".1 The genre of Australian "folk song" was ultimately to be defined by left wing cultural activists in the 1950s as a radical and egalitarian tradition, but such a definition was never a foregone conclusion. While the term "folk" was apparently not used to refer to Australian material until the mid-1940s, earlier discussions of "bush songs" were constructing the nineteenth-century popular ballads and verse in their own ways.

A Romantic and masculinist view of Australian popular ballads is clear in the accounts given by both A.G. Stephens and A.B. Paterson, forming part of what Richard White has described as "the city-dweller's image of the bush, a sunlit landscape of faded blue hills, cloudless skies and noble gum trees, peopled by idealised shearers and drovers".2 Stephens wrote in The Bulletin for 29 June 1901 that bush verse and songs were composed by:

the typical bushman ... the Bush-grown, Bush-rooted product, the nomad tethered in the limits of the cattle-track, the shepherd stagnant among out-

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station sheep, or the man hidden all his days among the gullies and the ranges, in a world bounded on the one side by the remote township, on the other by the great Australian silence.  

In his preface to *Old Bush Songs*, the first collection of the material which came to be known as "Australian folk song", Paterson notes sadly that "The diggings are all deep sinking now, the shearing is done by contract, and the cattle are sent by rail to market, while newspapers travel all over Australia; so there will be no more bush ballads composed and sung, as these were composed and sung, as records of the early days of the nation". He makes the exclusion of women a central part of the definition of the material which he regards as "worth remembering", suggesting that the bush songs, "In their very roughness, in their absolute lack of any mention of home ties or of the domestic affections, ... proclaim their genuineness".

Hartley Grattan wrote an article on "The Australian Bush Songs" in 1929, heavily based on Paterson, in which he constructed a tradition which was far from radical. He suggests that, essentially, the ballads "give a highly laughable caricature of the early life and social history of the country". His survey focuses heavily on songs which address the Australian environment, and on songs about bush occupations — droving, shearing and squatting. At the end of his discussion he quotes from one bushranger ballad, "The Death of Ben Hall", which he introduces in a slightly regretful tone: "As one would suppose, the unruly side of Australian life found expression in ballads". Grattan's ideological position is clear in his praise of the squatters:

the old-time squatter was the finest of the types early Australia developed. It is doubtful whether a swaggy ever admitted as much, for he rather believed that the social system was arranged to his disadvantage by the squatters and the banks. The squatter, however, was the great pioneer who pushed the line of settlement back from the coast until it even found itself, during good seasons, in the deserts of the interior. It was the

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enterprise of the early squatters that built up the great stations, whose strange names decorate the songs of the shearers.5

Another pre-revival statement of the existence of such a genre was Percy Jones’s "Australia’s Folk-Songs", published in the journal Twentieth Century in 1946. Jones was a conservative Roman Catholic priest and his version of the Australian song tradition allowed no possibility of dissent. He mentioned no bushranging ballads and found that the "easy-going nature of the people and the timelessness of the country can be heard in these droll lilting tunes of the early Australian ballads".6

With the 1950s came the strong revival of interest in traditional Australian songs which was to definitively shape the genre. Smith suggests that a number of individuals inspired by cultural nationalism and radicalism, most of whom were either members of the Communist Party or closely linked with it, were instrumental in defining the genre of Australian folk song. In the cold war atmosphere of the early 1950s the left was under siege. The Communist Party’s numbers had dropped dramatically in the years after the war, and Menzies and the right painted them as an alien force, a treasonous fifth column which threatened "the Australian way of life". Right-wing Catholic power in the ALP and the union movement was steadily increasing and the wave of post-war immigration from Europe both segmented the working class and brought to Australia many with deep anti-communist sentiments. Smith suggests that the genre of Australian folk song defined by the revivalists enabled them to present themselves as the true inheritors of the Australian tradition. It also allowed many on the left to turn their backs on an increasing suburban conservatism and to focus nostalgically on a rural, pre-industrial past.7


6 Percy Jones, "Australia’s Folk-Songs", Twentieth Century 1 (1946): 37-43. Jones was able to find Irish-Catholic values in "The Old Bullock Dray".

7 Smith, "Making Folk Music", 481-82. Two other useful accounts of the Communist Party of Australia’s literary activities of this period are Susan McKernan, "Literature in a Straightjacket" and John Docker, "Culture, Society and the Communist Party", both of which are in Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, eds., Australia’s First Cold War, vol. 1 (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1984), 137-52, 183-212.
Vance Palmer and Margaret Sutherland published *Old Australian Bush Ballads* in 1950 and the following year Ron Edwards and John Manifold began a series of booklets called *Bandicoot Ballads*. The Council for the Defence of Australian Culture held "Australian nights" at which "bush songs" were sung, and Edgar Waters, Alan Scott, Russel Ward and John Meredith applied themselves to collection and publication, while the New Theatre's extremely successful production of *Reedy River* brought some of the songs to a wide audience. Bush music clubs sprang up in the midst of large cities and actively promoted their notion of "bush music" to other city dwellers.8

These activists constructed a male and Anglo-Celtic version of Australian identity, a version that reductively masked differences in gender, ethnicity and class. Songs about sheep-shearers, overlanders, bullock-drivers and bushrangers were often assertions of an aggressive and competitive masculinity which offered no place for women. The male revivalists grew beards, donned waistcoats and sometimes belted lagerphones, percussion instruments constructed by nailing large numbers of beer bottle tops onto a piece of wood. It was more difficult for women to find an appropriate costume and role in a movement noted for its theatrical nature.

The revival of interest in traditional song took place at a time of profound changes in immigration patterns and it was sometimes linked to those changes. Percy Jones's early article on Australian folk songs was published in the first edition of *Twentieth Century*, along with an attack on the new immigration policy by B.A. Santamaria titled "Will There Be Any Australians To-Morrow?".9 Opposition to immigration came also from left-wing unions who feared that the influx of labour

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would lead to attacks on pay and working conditions. In the context of a large-scale immigration program from diverse sources, the revivalists celebrated stock images from a past which they presented as monocultural. More recently, John Meredith has acknowledged that the songs revered by the revival assert an Australian identity which excludes people on the basis of ethnicity. In a letter to Meanjin responding to Smith's article, he laments the current lack of interest in "Australian songs", and concludes: "My prognosis is that there will be a swing back to the singing of traditional Australian songs, largely as a reaction to the Asian-orientated multi-national immigration we are now experiencing".

Of crucial importance to the radical version of Australian identity stressed by the revival were bushranging ballads, in particular, "Bold Jack Donahoe" and "The Wild Colonial Boy". Collectors obtained many versions from bush informants and from printed sources, and since 1950 there have been more than fifty reprints of the former, and more than seventy of the latter. Russel Ward's Australian Legend placed both ballads at the centre of the tradition he traced. In Ward's hierarchy of Australianness "no man, except a Currency Lad, could be more truly Australian ... than a working-class Irish convict" and he wrote that Donahoe expressed "contempt for the police as, the ballad-singers felt, true Australians should". He argues that bushrangers were regarded by pastoral workers, free selectors and working people in general, "as 'wild colonial boys', Australians par excellence".

"Bold Jack Donahoe" was central to John Manifold's argument in Who Wrote the Ballads? and his own poetry also drew on both it and "The Wild Colonial Boy".

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11 Meredith, "Letter", 437.


He describes "Bold Jack Donahoe" as "the most widely persistent of all the convict treason-songs ... and the richest in progeny". His work illustrates Smith's suggestion that the concept of "folk" came into prominence at a time when the left was giving increasing emphasis to themes of national identity, and turning its attention from class categories. In Manifold's answer to the threat of "Yankee imperialism", the version of national identity proposed by the revivalists submerges class conflict beneath a consensual notion of culture:

The struggle against juke-box culture and the struggle for national independence and world peace are one. We fight not purely as workers (or housewives, or poets, or farmers as the case may be) but as Australians. What we oppose to "their" culture must be "our" culture: not the product of local beatniks or Toorak salons, but the genuine thing. And in the case of music, the genuine thing is the tradition of the treason-songs. It may be a slim tradition, but it is all we have of our own.14

The revivalists' approach to nineteenth-century popular verse and ballads is clearly inadequate on many counts. An important problem is the impossibility of any real connection between such a backward looking notion of Australian identity and contemporary, urban society.15 This sort of approach has been described by Tony Bennett (following Marshall McLuhan) as "rear-view-mirrorism", walking backwards into the future by rediscovering 'the people' in their historically superseded forms and offering these as a guide for action in the present". As Bennett points out, implicit is a view of the contemporary "people" as somehow having failed to live up to the standards that have been expected of them.16 John Docker has argued that the Left of

14 Manifold, Who Wrote the Ballads?, 35, 175.

15 Ward's Australian Legend ends rather lamely: "Today's task might well be to develop those features of the Australian legend which still seem valid in modern conditions", 259.

the 1950s were unable to come to terms with the popular culture of the cold-war period.17

The recent redefinition of the term "folklore", referred to in the introduction to this thesis, offers a valuable way forward. By defining it as the "cultural activity of small groups" it is possible to leave behind "folk's" nationalist connotations, and to leave behind the memorialization and mystification of cultural survivals from bygone eras. Graham Seal's *The Hidden Culture* is an important step in shifting Australian folklorists' attention towards contemporary small-group culture. Perhaps even more fruitful are analyses of much broader conceptions of contemporary popular culture, such as John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner's study of "lived texts" in *Myths of Oz*.18

But the past must also be analysed to help explain how the present was constructed, and to demonstrate that it was constructed, that change is possible. This thesis has tried to examine the ideologies inscribed in British and Irish transportation broadsides, popular convict verse and goldfield songs, and to suggest how this material might have operated for its original audiences. It has tried not to mythologize the ballads and verse into a consistently oppositional "voice of the people" nor to denigrate them as mere vehicles for disseminating dominant ideology. And it has found contradictory and ambiguous mixtures of dominant and oppositional forms in varying proportions within the different ballad groups. It has also tried to be aware of the gender and race relations which the material encodes, finding, perhaps not surprisingly, that a strongly patriarchal strand runs consistently through all the ballad groups, and that the goldfield songs reveal a vicious racism.

17 John Docker, "Culture, Society and the Communist Party", 183-212.

Much work remains to be done. To date the emphasis has been on collecting rather than discussing the material and, although there remains a need for active collection of popular verse and song, particularly that produced by women, it is time for a careful analysis of what has been amassed. The songs of the itinerant bush workers are in urgent need of examination in their social context. So too is the work of the urban poets of the 1880s and later, who romanticized the bush.
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