

INSURGENTS AND SURVIVORS

The Language of a Colonial Culture

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When I nominated the title 'Insurgents and Survivors', I did so with the idea of relating it to the general theme of the symposium for this Twelfth Annual General Meeting, 'Peasants in History and Literature'. Without necessarily offering myself as spokesman for the local peasantry, I nominated the subtitle, 'The Language of a Colonial Culture', with the idea of looking at the linguistic evidence for the development of social attitudes in Australia up to the close of the nineteenth century. The stereotype which obtrudes itself here is 'new land, new language': the notion that the new conditions encountered and the new way of life that developed on these shores are reflected in the emergence of a distinctive vocabulary and idiom, gradually showing the achievement of a special identity.

The first stage in this process came of the need to assign names to phenomena with no counterpart in the northern hemisphere. Some names were fixed upon systematically, like *platypus* and *banksia*, but the terms most familiar to us are those taken over from the Aborigines—whether for fauna and flora like *koala*, *wombat* and *mulga*, for natural features like *billabong*, or for artefacts like *boomerang* and *waddy*.

The finding of names for unfamiliar features of the environment continued as the colony grew, and to some extent it would be possible to chart the expansion of the settlement in linguistic terms. The word *taipan* for a venomous snake is not found in the early lists of Aboriginal words, because this snake was not known to the Port Jackson tribes, and its appearance in Australian English had to await the exploration of North Queensland and Arnhem Land. The habits of improvisation in the outback gave rise to *dogleg fence*, *logs* (for gaol) and *camp oven*, while the role of the government as a major employer in the colony must account for the recording in the mid-nineteenth century of *the government stroke*. The development of pidgin is also evidence of cultural interchange, as for example with *sugar-bag* for wild honey or *walkabout* for an Aboriginal custom nowadays imitated by royalty.

But the formula 'new land, new language' must be applied cautiously even at this simple level. The new settlers named an animal an *opossum* because it resembled the opossum of North America, whereas the Australian possum is actually a phalanger, a distinct species. The fish which they called cod and salmon, and the trees which they called cedar and box, were not cod or salmon or cedar or box, and it is not surprising that one or two new trees should have been invented. In England, *wattle* was the term for a framework of rods, branches and twigs intertwined to make a hurdle or fence, or to be plastered with clay to form structures of wattle and daub. As in England the tree most suitable for this was the willow, in Australia the most suitable timber was

provided by the callicoma and the acacia, and so callicoma, acacia and mimosa in Australia came to be known as *wattle*, although no tree of that name had ever existed.¹ (*Lignum* later appeared as a distinct Australian species, from the bushman's contraction of *polygonum*.) The new settlers also began quite early to refer to Australian eucalypts as *gumtrees*, because like other trees they already knew, they exuded gum. Although nothing now seems so Australian as a gumtree, this is an imported term, originally applied to trees other than the eucalypt—and it already had some folklore associated with it. The expression *up a gumtree* (in a predicament) was already proverbial in America in the 1820s, incorporated in the negro song 'Possum up a gumtree'²: it can hardly be claimed as evidence of a developing Australian idiom.

From the outset, the processes of insurgence and survival need to be distinguished. No word seems more patently of Australian origin than *piccaninny*. But the first edition of Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785) had the entry '*Pickaniny*, a young child, an infant, negroe term', and *piccaninny* had been applied to natives of the West Indies for over a hundred years before that, just as *emu* had been applied to large birds like the cassowary 150 years before Australia was discovered. Although the *OED* has a separate entry for *new chum* as a 'fresh immigrant' in Australia, this is only an extension of the term for new arrivals in English gaols and hulks, who were apt to have their possessions confiscated or to be victimized in other ways by the old hands. Grose's entries for *chum* (and *old hand*) are here instructive: a *chum* was someone who shared quarters either in gaol or at university, and *chumage* was the levy paid by prisoners with funds to those who were without. Again, a series of English visitors to Australia in the early nineteenth century were to report that the convicts were called *canaries* because of their yellow clothing. Convicts had already been called canaries for some two hundred years, because *canary* was thieves' slang for 'a caged bird', irrespective of the colour of its plumage.

One reason why overseas visitors were ready to derive *canary* from a convict's clothing was that they were most often educated people, familiar with the more respectable levels of usage. *Canary*, *new chum* and *piccaninny* were in the English language before the First Fleet sailed, but they are found in dictionaries of what Grose called 'the vulgar tongue', not in polite usage. Yet the population of Australia in its formative years was more proletarian than it was ever to be afterwards, and this allowed for strong linguistic connections below the level of respectability. Even today Australian idiom is more intimately related to 'the vulgar tongue' of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England than we may recognize. The modern editor of Ben Jonson, dealing with the character in *Bartholomew Fair* who calculates how he 'may make myself some saver' (V.ii.70) to retrieve his fortunes, needs to supply a note explaining

¹ The *wattlebird* is no relation. It was named from the wattles on its neck.

² See Thomas Wood, *The Oxford Song Book* (Oxford University Press, 1928), Vol. II, pp. 110-11.

what 'make a saver' means. No Australian with any familiarity with the race track needs to be told what it is to 'have a saver'. The plot of *Bartholomew Fair* involves a black box containing a marriage licence that changes hands as the play goes on. In an early scene the Proctor John Littlewit sends his wife to tell his clerk Solomon to fetch the box, and when she is gone for some time the impatient Wasp comments:

Good Lord! How long your little wife stays! Pray God, Solomon, your clerk, be not looking i' the wrong box, Master Proctor. (I.iv.23-6)

No editor has commented on the wordplay on 'box' here (a variant of *case* in Elizabethan English), although it will readily be perceived by the less respectable amongst us. The character in Jonson's later play, *The New Inn*, who declares himself 'as dry as a chip' and calls for two jugs of beer (IV.i.3-4), might almost be speaking in Australian idiom.

It is instructive that it should have been an Australian scholar who lately reopened the debate about Greene's attack on Shakespeare as the 'upstart Crow', by looking again at the linguistic evidence. In his *Groats-Worth of Witte* (1592), Robert Greene referred to

an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey.³

'Shake-scene' points to 'Shakespeare', and 'Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde' parodies a line in *3 Henry VI*. The description of Shakespeare as 'an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers' was first taken as an accusation that his early writings plagiarised the work of other men; later it was explained as a reference to Shakespeare the actor, one of 'those Puppets [as Greene described them] that spake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours.'

Professor H. J. Oliver was the first to perceive the significance of 'Shake-scene' in this context.⁴ 'Shake' in Australian idiom means 'to steal', as it did in English thieves' slang. The 1811 edition of Grose's dictionary has the example 'He shook the swell of his fogle; he robbed the gentleman of his silk handkerchief', and the *OED* traces back to c.1412 the expression 'to shake (a person) out of (property)', as meaning 'to rob, plunder'. A 'Shake-scene' is a purloiner of scenes. This may not help to validate Greene's charge, or to determine whether it is aimed at Shakespeare the playwright or Shakespeare the actor, but it does allow us for the first time to perceive the full dimension of the pun.

Another Australian scholar has looked afresh at Macbeth's soliloquy contemplating the murder of Duncan, where he reasons that if only

³ *Greene's Groats-Worth of Witte*, ed. G. B. Harrison (Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos), pp. 45-6.

⁴ H. J. Oliver, 'Shakespeare the Shake-scene', *Notes & Queries*, N.S. 26, No. 2 (April 1979), p. 115.

this blow
 Might be the be-all and the end-all, here—
 But here—upon this bank and school of time
 We'd jump the life to come.

(I.vii.4-7)

Here *jump* is acknowledged as a gambling term (to risk, hazard), *bank* is a gambling term, and as A. P. Riemer has pointed out, *school* is a gambling term.⁵ It is familiar in Australian English in expressions like 'two-up school' and 'poker school', and the 'Vocabulary of the Flash Language' compiled in 1812 by James Hardy Vaux has the entry '*School*: a party of persons met together for the purpose of gambling.' Macbeth is ruminating that if 'th' assassination / Could trammel up the consequence', that if only 'this blow / Might be the be-all and the end-all, here', then here, 'upon this bank and school of time', we'd risk or wager the life to come. An editor in the eighteenth century emended the text to read 'this bank and shoal of time', and that is what Macbeth is found saying in almost any edition of Shakespeare you pick up.

The intervention of respectability, or the predominance gained by more formal and official usage, has had the effect of concealing certain evidence from us. Dr W. S. Ramson has documented another aspect of the process in showing the hidden contribution of English dialect words to Australian English, finding a provincial origin for *barney* (an argument), *cobber*, *dinkum*, *ringer* (one who excels), for outback terms like *dampier* and *bowyangs*, and even for *larrikin* and *wowser*.⁶ To these might be added *stoush* for a fight, *poon* for a nincompoop, *ripper* for 'a first-rate man or article', and *stipe* for a stipendiary magistrate.

The pursuit of a national identity through a distinctive vocabulary and idiom can be a hazardous undertaking. Few words gathered such associations in the Australian outback as the word *mate*. Yet we seem to owe it to the London costermongers. John Camden Hotten's *Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant and Vulgar Words* (1859) has the entry

Mates, the term a coster or low person applies to a friend, partner, or companion. 'Me and my mate' did so and so, is a common phrase with a low Londoner.

Henry Lawson, the apostle of mateship, wrote to the *Bulletin* in 1893 on 'Some Popular Australian Mistakes'.⁷ He insisted that 'Men tramping in search of a "shed" are not called "sundowners" or "swaggies"; they are "trav'lers."' The distinction may be important, as characterizing a 'traveller' as an itinerant in search of work, but does the authority of Lawson make 'traveller' an Australianism? Hotten in 1859 recorded '*traveller*, name given by one tramp to

⁵ See A. P. Riemer, *Macbeth* (The Challis Shakespeare, Sydney University Press, 1980), and *Sydney Studies in English*, 5 (1979-80), pp. 96-101.

⁶ W. S. Ramson, *Australian English: An Historical Study of the Vocabulary 1788-1898* (Australian National University Press, 1966).

⁷ See the *Collected Prose*, ed. Colin Roderick (Angus and Robertson, 1972), Vol. II, pp. 24-5.

another.' Again, although *drunk as Chloe* has been explained by reference to the famous painting in Young and Jackson's pub, it is recorded in Jon Bee's *Dictionary of the Turf, the Ring, the Chase &c*, in 1823, fifty years before the portrait existed. Even the Australian *Hay, Hell and Booligal* must surely be patterned on the English *Hull, Hell and Halifax*.

Much of what we seize upon as authentically Australian idiom, as the sign of a growing independence from a parent culture, is in fact a perpetuation of certain aspects of that culture. It is again evidence of survival, not insurgence. While it may be significant that the developing colony should have found these irreverent and unrespectable linguistic modes congenial, we must still wonder how much of what we cherish in the Australian legend has come from cultivating special strains of 'Pommyism'.

In qualifying the 'new land, new language' formula in this way, I may seem to be upholding it in another – that is, accepting that unrespectable levels of usage must be a manifestation of democratic sentiment. This is an assumption that runs through Australian literary history: that in crude literary forms like the ballad we should expect to find the stirrings of a democratic spirit, which will be lacking in the more cultivated verse of the colonial period. Yet literary nationalism often exhibits itself in forms which we are unwilling to recognize. Poems like Wentworth's *Australasia* (1823), or volumes like Charles Tompson's *Wild Notes, from the Lyre of a Native Minstrel* (1826), although they are the work of currency lads, have rarely recommended themselves to enquirers after the dawning of a genuinely Australian vision. When in his long poem 'Retrospect' Tompson recalled his schooldays on the Castlereagh, and the way the landscape had since been despoiled by the clearing gangs, he wrote like this:

Fair CASTLEREAGH! I trace thy landscape round,
Each well known spot to me is sacred ground;
In ev'ry mead—in every bow'r or tree,
Some dear companion—some old friend I see;
The myrtle grove that skirts thy sloping sides,
And the tall summit from the plain divides,
The rich acacias waving o'er the rill
That pours its scanty stream beneath the hill;
Thy spreading vale—but here let mem'ry tax
The rude invasions of the spoiling axe,
That chased the dryads from th' affrighted glade,
And lopped each shrub that once composed their shade.
Thus Art extends her civilizing reign,
Bows the tall wood and casts it on the plain,
Drives Nature's beauties from their seat away,
And plants a train less lovely far than they;
The landscape shines beneath a borrowed hue,
But graceless more, and different from the true.

Are lines like these an appalling deference to English poetic convention? I think that on the contrary they reflect Tompson's belief that the Australian

landscape deserves the most cultivated style available, and uphold the contention that Australia has its groves and prospects and dryads no less than Europe. What strikes us as most derivative or artificial in the work of Tompson and Wentworth is often its most patriotic aspect.

I have been suggesting so far that if we seek to trace a growing national awareness in colonial Australia according to the formula 'new land, new language', we need to be careful how the argument is framed and which evidence we select. What looks like the survival of an alien culture in Tompson and Wentworth can be interpreted as the insurgence of a new one; what looks like the emergence of an indigenous vocabulary may be the irreverent language of 'low persons' in London a century or so before.

To take up the implications of my sub-title: what can the language of colonial Australia tell us of the mode of existence there? I suggested at the beginning that the expansion of settlement could be traced from linguistic evidence, taking account of the influx that followed the gold discoveries, the development of specialized vocabularies of shearing or of station life, the slower appearance of urban slang, and the contribution of linguistic minorities to Australian English.

Irish influences are traceable quite early, reflecting the relatively large Irish element in the Australian population. The Sydney *Monitor* for 22 March 1828, describing a fracas involving the Irish in Hyde Park, reported that 'many a piteous Shela stood wiping the gory locks of her Paddy' until the police intervened. Here *sheila* is being used as a generic term for an Irish girl, the counterpart to *Paddy* for an Irish man. P. W. Joyce in *English as We Speak it in Ireland* (1910), while listing 'Sheila' as a Christian name, also gave a generic sense: 'Used in the South as a reproachful name for a boy or man inclined to do work or interest himself in affairs properly belonging to women' (p. 320). *Sheila* in Australian English—where it may be applied to any female—still has this pejorative sense. Joyce also includes as characteristic Irish expressions 'I'll go bail' (commoner in Australia in the nineteenth century than it is now) and 'live off the smell of an oilrag'. The *EDD* lists as a North Ireland word *barrack*, 'to brag, be boastful of one's fighting powers'.

Influences from North America were also felt early, perhaps because of parallel developments in the two British colonies. Thus 'currency' was used for local money (as distinct from sterling) in America before it was used in New South Wales, and Australia adopted the American *squatter* to denote an unauthorized occupant of land. Many of the staple features of the Australian outback—the *corduroy road*, the *shinplaster*, the *swamper* working beside the bullock team—are of North American origin. The term *scab* for a workman refusing to join an organized movement of his fellows is recorded in America as early as 1806, but it did not become common in Australia until the development of unionism in the later nineteenth century.

The gold discoveries brought in more Americanisms concerned with mining, like *cradle*, *paydirt* and *pan out*, besides English mining terms like

tailings and *tribute*, and dialect words like *mullock*. Words of German origin like *shicer* and *spieler*, and Yiddish terms like *shickered* also date from this time. Even here the 'vulgar tongue' of the 'low Londoners' may still have been influential. Hotten's dictionary of 1859 includes *shicer* for a 'mean man, a humbug—a person who is either worthless, or will not work', *shickery* for 'shabby, badly', and *shaler* for a girl. It is possible that these terms, like the Spanish *donah* for a woman (also found in Hotten) gained extra currency in Australia from English slang.

When we eventually have a dictionary of Australian English on historical principles, with full citations, it may be possible to undertake a systematic linguistic survey on these lines. Proceeding less systematically, I shall instance some key words or word classes which identify social attitudes or point to social stratification in colonial Australia. The use of even a single word in the vocabulary of the outback can be illuminating. The term *disperse*, used in relation to the blacks, seems an odd word to occur in the speech of a character of Joseph Furphy's. Bob Bruce is found referring to a new station-owner who has 'come from a part where the blackfellers was quiet as sheep, on account of all the rumbumptious fellers gittin' dispersed.'⁸ *Disperse* is here being used in the technical sense defined in the *OED* as 'To cause to separate in different directions . . . to scatter; to rout', and illustrated in the citation of 1887: 'Reform meetings were dispersed by charges of Dragoons.' In the Australian strikes of the 1890s, the order *to disperse* would be preceded by the reading of the Riot Act. In the outback, a single person could be 'dispersed', as E. M. Curr explained in *The Australian Race*:

To an observer of languages, it is interesting to note the new signification of the verb *to disperse*: that when a Black girl of fifteen is shot down she is said to be *dispersed*.
(iii.20)

In his reminiscences *After Many Days* (1918), Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh recalled one of his native police officers telling him that

on one occasion when they were 'dispersing' (that was what it was called) some blacks, he saw Jerry, one of his boys, with a little picaninny boy in his hand. He was swinging the little chap round preparatory to knocking out his brains against a tree.
(p. 232)

Another insight into colonial culture may be provided by the set of related words *house*, *barracks* and *hut*. I have tried to describe elsewhere⁹ the hierarchy in Australian station life which these three terms define, using the *locus classicus* of Chapter VI of Furphy's *Such is Life*. The *house* (or *government house*) on a large station was the residence of the owner or manager, and it was the apex of the pyramid. The *barracks*, at the next level, accommodated the overseer, the

⁸ Joseph Furphy, *The Buln-Buln and the Brolga*, ed. R. G. Howarth (Angus and Robertson, 1948), p. 93.

⁹ *The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn: Literary Evidence for Australian Cultural Development* (Edward Arnold, 1981).

jackaroos, the storekeeper and any visitors who fell below the level of the house, but were not to be relegated to the hut. The *hut* was the accommodation for the station-hands, with bunks along the walls and a rough table and benches with supports driven into the earthen floor. Here the more lowly itinerant might be allowed to stretch his blankets for the night.

It is clear in *Such is Life* that the employees of the station might get as far as the verandah of the house, to receive their orders for the day, and might even hear 'the faint pling-plong of a piano' from there, but they would be unlikely to get inside. Visitors arriving at a station of any size could present agonizing problems of etiquette for those who had to decide whether they rated the house, the barracks or the hut. Rolf Boldrewood in his essay on 'Bush Hospitality' describes how the system evolved and how sensitive the lines of demarcation became. One distinguished visitor who turned up expecting to be welcomed at the house, and was assigned to the equivalent of the barracks instead, responded by leaving a cheque for a guinea in payment when he departed next morning. The proprietor, not to be wrong-footed, wrote him a note acknowledging 'a most extraordinary communication, containing a cheque, for which he was totally unable to conceive any reasonable explanation, and had forwarded to the Secretary of the Lunatic Asylum.'¹⁰

House, barracks and hut do not simply identify specific features of the outback: they are also loaded terms, which point to social gradations. The most interesting of such words is *squatter*, for the changes of meaning it has undergone. *Squatter* was introduced from America (where it is recorded as early as 1788) to describe a semi-criminal class in the colony, 'generally emancipated convicts, or ticket-of-leave-men,' Lieutenant T. Betts wrote in 1830, 'who, having obtained a small grant, under the old system, or without any grant at all, sat themselves down in remote situations, and maintained large flocks, obtained, generally, in very nefarious ways.'¹¹ While the unauthorized occupation of land could identify the squatters, they were known at first more for their criminal proclivities. As W. H. Breton reported in 1833:

There are likewise in the colony certain persons called 'squatters' (the term is American) who are commonly, it may be said always, of the lowest grade. These men establish themselves on some unlocated spot, where they cultivate enough land to supply them with grain, and not unfrequently pilfer whatever else they require, from the neighbouring farms.¹²

As the practice of squatting was legalized by government regulation, and licences were issued and men of capital came to occupy land for the crown, *squatter* became a more respectable word. By 1840 Governor Gipps was moved to write to Lord Russell to counter the associations the word had acquired in the past, and still held in America:

¹⁰ Rolf Boldrewood, *In Bad Company* (1901), p. 285.

¹¹ T. Betts, *An Account of the Colony of Van Diemen's Land* (1830), p. 39.

¹² W. H. Breton, *Excursions in New South Wales* (1833), p. 442.

A very large proportion of the land, which is to form the new district of Port Phillip, is already in the licensed occupation of the Squatters of New South Wales, a class of persons whom it would be wrong to confound with those who bear the same name in America, and who are generally persons of mean repute and small means, who have taken unauthorized possession of patches of land. Among the Squatters of New South Wales are the wealthiest of the Land, occupying with the permission of Government thousands and tens of thousands of acres; Young men of good Family and connexions in England, Officers of the Army and Navy, Graduates of Oxford and Cambridge are also in no small number amongst them.¹³

The future of Port Phillip was obviously safe in such hands. By the end of the century Lady Tennyson, wife of the Governor of South Australia, was writing to her mother that 'squatters in the colony are our aristocracy — as being the people who came out from home in early days. "Oh he is an old squatter, or, she is the daughter of a squatter" means that nothing more need be asked.'¹⁴

To others it was almost a swear word. In Australian fiction and non-fiction of the nineteenth century a surprising number of squatters turn up with nicknames like Hungry Scott or Scabby Moffat, and in *Such is Life* (which offers Hungry M'Intyre) there is a long excursus on the squatter and the Kingdom of Heaven and the camel and the eye of the needle. In one of Henry Lawson's short stories, where Mitchell is reproached for being soft, for finding excuses for blacklegs and scabs, the ultimate rebuke is 'Why, you'd find a white spot on a squatter.'¹⁵ *Squattocracy* also had an unfavourable sense, and it may be that the terms *pastoralist* and *grazier* have come into vogue to avoid the connotations of *squatter*.

My last example is the *cockatoo farmer* or *cocky*. Many observers have noticed the absence in Australia of a true counterpart to the peasant or yeoman class of Europe. This could be due partly to the size of land grants in the beginning, and partly to the unwillingness of the native-born to work on farms, 'for', as Cunningham remarked in 1827, 'owing to convicts being hitherto almost the sole agricultural labourers, they naturally look upon that vocation as degrading.'¹⁶ Although the hapless Hawkesbury settlers might seem to qualify, the nearest approach to an Australian peasantry came later with the selectors or cockatoo farmers who took up small holdings, and helped maintain themselves by part-time work such as shearing, fencing or road-contracting. They were called *cockatoos* because they seemed to descend on the land like a flight of cockatoos when the changes in regulation occurred, and sometimes decamped in the same way. Henry Lawson and Joseph Furphy were brought up on selections, and the poet John Shaw Neilson, who was working with his father

¹³ Gipps to Russell, *HRA* XXI, p. 130.

¹⁴ Letter of 21 September 1900 in *Audrey Tennyson's Vice-Regal Days*, ed. Alexandra Hasluck (National Library of Australia, 1978), p. 118.

¹⁵ 'Lord Douglas' in *Collected Prose*, ed. Colin Roderick (Angus and Robertson, 1972), Vol. I, p. 494.

¹⁶ P. Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales* (1827), Vol. II, p. 55.

on one holding after another from the 1880s onward, had a different experience of Port Phillip from that of the young men of good family and connections whom Governor Gipps had described. As the editor of Shaw Neilson's *Autobiography* has commented:

Neilson worked arduously, and essentially as a peasant, for the greater part of his life. The fact that Australia does not officially admit to a peasantry is beside the point. Little is altered by our preference for euphemisms like 'cocky farmer', replacing earlier terms like 'stringybark settler'. Neilson uncompromisingly called himself a navvy when a more pretentious man might have said 'fruit picker', 'scoop operator' or 'quarry hand'. Neilson and his father and brothers, straining their muscles, racking their joints and breaking their hearts at pioneering a series of doomed small farms, were unequivocally peasants.¹⁷

As a sympathetic account of the cockatoo farmer, this is atypical. He was scorned by the larger landholders because of the ineradicable distinction between them: the cockatoo scratched the earth for a living, while the grazier or pastoralist never did. He was scorned by the nomad workforce of the outback, on the other hand, for the frugality which circumstances imposed upon him, and for his pennypinching employment of seasonal labour. A whole set of terms have this implication: golden syrup came to be known as *cocky's joy* because it was four times as cheap as jam, at 7d for a 2lb tin; a *cocky's clip* consisted not so much in shearing a sheep as in shaving the wool off it; *cocky's weather* was 'fine by day and rain all night', or 'fine all week and wet on Sundays', so that the hired help gave full value for money; a *cocky's gate* was improvised from two pieces of stick and some barbed wire.

The key words or word classes which I have singled out all refer to the bush, and it is interesting that they all point to some kind of inequality. When the legend of the outback relies so much on concepts of egalitarianism, mateship, and freedom from social distinction, why does the vocabulary of the outback refer so consistently to lines of demarcation? It extends from the racist division indicated in a word like *disperse* to the hierarchy in station life indicated by *house*, *barracks* and *hut*, and to status terms like *grazier* and *squatter* at one end of the spectrum and *cockatoo* at the other. The language applied to bush occupations is also surprisingly discriminatory, rising from nondescripts like the *rouseabout* or *wood-and-water joey* to the *gun shearer* or the *ringer of the shed*. The term *crawler*, nowadays applied to someone who ingratiates himself with those in authority, was in the nineteenth century an occupational term, either for a slow and incompetent worker or for a shepherd (who from the vantage point of someone on horseback seemed to be idling behind his flock). There are indications of one class exploiting another, and being applauded for doing so, in the distinction between *new chums* and *old hands*.

¹⁷ *The Autobiography of John Shaw Neilson*, introduced by Nancy Keesing (National Library of Australia, 1978), p. 12. See also Alan J. Holt, *Wheat Farms of Victoria: A Sociological Survey* (1946).

If the stereotype of nationalism emerging suggested in 'new land, new language' is somewhat qualified by linguistic evidence, so is the stereotype of nationalism achieved, as contained in 'the Australian legend'. The indications of caste and gradation in the vocabulary of the bush point to a disparity between the myth of the outback and the actual way of life there, leaving an implication that 'the Australian legend' may be too self-congratulatory and narcissistic. I am aware that linguistic evidence is only one kind of evidence, and that no conclusions are possible from it in isolation. But there may be a value now and then in taking one kind of evidence—especially if it has been neglected—and in following it wherever it may lead.