Care would be taken to make it clear to all visitors that the exhibits were a gift from the mother colony to Victoria. (Hear. Hear)...Whatever feelings existed between these colonies politically, there were nothing but the most kindly feelings between them socially...The gift would be cherished by Victoria as an evidence of the generosity and brotherly spirit of New South Wales—(hear)...Mr Burdett Smith, in responding, said that during his association with this great historic Exhibition he had endeavoured to disabuse the minds of the Victorians of the idea that any jealousy existed between the peoples of the two colonies...This idea of jealousy had been steadily removed, and he hoped to see it replaced by the most friendly federation in sentiment and fact. (Hear).

The divergent use of proprietary and familial metaphors throughout the Exhibition tells of deep, mutual colonial ambivalence towards a single national identity. The frequently-employed terminology of proprietorship of history speaks of the entrenched sense of discrete identity held by both NSW’s and Victoria’s boosters. The use of divergent familial metaphors implies both paternalism and fraternalism, continuing to symbolise tensions about the right colonial order.257 That order was not so easily answered, as the speeches above would suggest, by a distinction between the ‘social’ on the one hand and the ‘political’ on the other. Each argument was about establishing symbolic credentials to assert legitimacy in the present.

The anxieties of British statesmen and colonial boosters, many of whom were themselves British expatriates,258 about the solidity of the imperial-colonial relationship also intensified during the 1880s. There had been concerns about the strength of the relationship between the colonies and Britain from the early decades of the nineteenth century, especially because of the ‘newness’ of all imperial colonies and the precedent

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258 The Executive Commission had sixteen members, of whom thirteen have entries in the Australian Dictionary of Biography. Of the thirteen, five were English emigrants, two each were Irish and Scottish emigrants, one was from the Isle of Man, one was from Belgium and two were Australian born. Pike, Douglass (gen. ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1969, pp.185,197,327,422; Pike, Douglass (gen. ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 4, p.391; Pike, Douglass (gen. ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 5, pp.50,127,275,312; Nairn, Bede (gen. ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 6, pp.87,155,324; Ritchie, John (gen. ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 12, p.258.
America had set here of independence. While the basis of the relationship and its dependencies was economic and political, imperial and colonial officials increasingly expressed the anxiety as a question of maintaining the racial purity of colonial Australia. In the 1870s and 1880s this anxiety was amplified by other imperial and colonial ‘racial’ frictions, including New Zealand’s Maori Wars, colonial imposition in the Pacific, and the Sudan conflict. Both British and colonial boosters felt more concerned than ever about the strength of their alliance, which also encouraged colonial leaders to become involved in a wider and more extreme movement for Imperial Federation, in the cause for which the Exhibition was also enlisted.

The perception of Australia’s ‘newness’ also added the implicit question of democracy to the relationship equation. Throughout the nineteenth century, America became the archetypal new society, and imperialists and colonial boosters feared that the Australian colonies might go the USA’s way, seeking ‘tyranny of the majority’. The imperialists’ fear of democracy amplified in the 1880s when local rumblings about the nature of Australian government became explicit. In the 1870s the Australian Natives’ Association was making nationalist arguments, and in the 1880s the Sydney-based ‘Bulletin school’ started to express strident anti-imperialist and republican sentiments. The other element, then, of the anxiety about the imperial relationship was a concern to gain, consolidate and demonstrate the allegiance of the local populace to the imperial world order. The Argus articulated the dilemma thus: Australia had:

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259 See, for example, Alomes, Stephen, A Nation at Last?, esp. chapter one; White, Richard, Inventing Australia, pp.47,49,51,55-6.
260 As above, pp.47,55-6.
266 White, Richard, Inventing Australia, pp.52-6. The fears about America were amplified by the publication of Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America in 1840, which popularised the idea of America’s tyranny of the majority.
a young and intelligent population, at once eager and educated, and yet separated by time and space from the centres of civilisation which it inherits and which it is developing.\textsuperscript{269}

Throughout the Exhibition, boosters emphasised their concern over temporal disconnection, symbolised in their language of Britain as the parent (mostly the mother and sometimes the father) and the Australian colonies as the children.\textsuperscript{270}

Exhibition officials attempted to placate this anxiety in part on the Exhibition’s diplomatic stage, pledging paramount loyalty to Britain and its concerns. The ‘organs of grovel’, as the critical Bulletin referred to the boosters at the Exhibition’s opening,\textsuperscript{271} assured the Queen that the ‘vast concourse of spectators’ who had witnessed the Exhibition’s opening ‘evinced that loyal and devoted attachment to Your Majesty’s throne and person which these great colonies are always proud to cherish and maintain’.\textsuperscript{272} Indeed, the opening was so spectacular that it ‘would give a timid person courage though all the enemies of empire were leagued for its destruction’.\textsuperscript{273} While colonial Australia’s presence in 1888 indicated a moment of independent maturation, its coming of age was firmly within a paternal scheme.

But colonial boosters also looked to the Exhibition itself to deal with their anxieties about the colonial-imperial relationship. The Commissioners did much to promote Britain, ensuring that it had the largest Court\textsuperscript{274} and also paying for it. Conceptually, the Exhibition Commissioners saw the cultural program as a major opportunity to demonstrate allegiance to the imperial world order. This occurred primarily in two ways: first, colonial boosters articulated a concept of civilised taste that was defined by its imperial origins, and which often included an underlying notion of antiquity; second,

\textsuperscript{269} The Argus, 30 July 1888, p.7.
\textsuperscript{270} Underlining Lowenthal’s documentation of the use of filial and biological metaphors to illustrate both relations between past and present and relations between nations. Lowenthal, David, Foreign Country, pp.71-2,106-07.
\textsuperscript{271} The Bulletin, 18 August 1888, p.5.
\textsuperscript{272} Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, Official Record, p.208. See also VPRS 1095, Unit 28, Governor’s Office, Governor’s Special Files, Melbourne Exhibition 1888, Letter from Premier to Governor re. inviting the Royal Highnesses to Exhibition Opening.
\textsuperscript{273} Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, Official Record, p.179.
\textsuperscript{274} Executive Commissioners for the Centennial International Exhibition of 1888, Report, VPP, p.8.
they indicated theircivilised credentials through a more explicit outline of imperial-colonial history in art. This resort to imperial culture reflected a common liberal response to fear of tyranny of the majority, and what was seen as a necessary concomitant of such democracy—a decline in civilisation.  

Art as Taste and History

We will turn first to object lessons in taste. Before Melbourne hosted its first International Exhibition in 1880, The Age believed the city’s inhabitants showed ‘primitive taste’ in their domestic settings, and ‘in the higher divisions of art...the crudest taste and executive power was manifested’. The 1888 cultural program offered an even greater opportunity to elevate local taste. Over six months, Frederic Cowen, an English musical conductor and ‘one of the great leaders in the musical world at home’, conducted 263 concerts, some with an entrance fee and some free, of the works of the ‘great masters...in a manner hitherto unknown in these colonies’. The musical concerts helped elevate taste by evoking particular pasts and places. (Illustration 13) The Age reported gratifyingly that the audiences preferred programs ‘of the most advanced kind’ rather than ‘commonplace ditties’:

...Beethoven...Wagner...The plebiscite programme...showed that works of high class hold a prominent place in public esteem; indeed, such a programme would be regarded as unexceptionable by the most cultivated musical community...It should not be forgotten that music is a language expressive of thought, clearly intelligible to the mind, although not capable of translation in to verbal language; and that its thoughts, like those finding expression in speech, may be noble or trivial, refined or vulgar.

Not all the locals showed such good taste. Ada Cambridge’s fictional character Patricia Kinnaird didn’t ‘like Wagner a bit’, nor was she keen on Beethoven. Patty’s friend Margaret Clive advised her to ‘shut your eyes tightly...and while the music goes on try

276 The Age, 1 August 1888, p.4.
277 VPRS 1095, Unit 28, Governor’s Special Files, Melbourne Exhibition 1888, Governor’s Opening Speech, p.3.
280 The Age, 1 February 1889, p.1.
Illustration 13
Henry Cowen conducts the Orchestra at the Opening of Melbourne’s Centennial International Exhibition, 1888
Courtesy Museum of Victoria
to forget where you are, and imagine things. That helps you wonderfully”. 281
Ultimately, Patty did come to like the music, especially as evidence of her refinement helped cultivate her romantic interests.

Several major art galleries completed the cultural program. The most prestigious was the British Loan Collection, or the English Picture Gallery as it was more popularly known. ‘[T]he absorbing interest of the show to all cultivated and would-be cultivated persons’, 282 it consisted of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paintings by prominent ‘modern’ British artists, including Vicat Cole, Turner, Constable, Watts and Holman Hunt, of landscape scenes, animal life, marine subjects, historical scenes and other genre painting and portraits of men of ‘high intellectual distinction’. 283 The paintings were lent by English upper-class ‘noblemen and gentlemen’ 284 and by Her Majesty Queen Victoria, which, commentators noted with pride and reverence, had left the palace for the first time since their royal procurement. 285 The jury commented on the ‘high educational value of this noble collection of pictures and the important effect its exhibition must have had in elevating and purifying the public taste’. 286 The Australian Portrait Gallery was also a special feature of the British Loan Collection, 287 while Mr James Walker exhibited the ‘London Art Gallery of Australian History’. Victoria exhibited a non-competitive Victorian Loan Collection, while the Victorian Artists’ Gallery was a competitive gallery. (Illustration 14)

The art’s provenance, in terms of the wealth and status of its owners and its place of origin, gave it its ‘quality’. The content of some paintings also immediately connoted civilisation, including one of the most popular paintings in the Gallery, ‘Ripening Sunbeam’, 288 George Vicat Cole’s ‘glorious landscape’ of England. 289

281 Cambridge, Ada, The Three Miss Kings, p.16.
282 As above, p.11.
283 Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, Official Record, p.218.
284 As above, p.27.
285 As above.
286 As above, p.217.
287 As above, p.141.
288 As above, p.19.
Illustration 14
Fine Art Court No.3, Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition, 1888
Courtesy Museum of Victoria
A very true compliment was paid to that picture by an English father doing the
gallery with his Australian boy. 'Look well at that picture, look long at
it...[B]ecause when you understand that you will understand England'.

Indeed, the equation of nobility with imperial art as civilised taste even allowed local
'gentry' to exhibit taste. Frederick Armytage, a Melbourne resident with significant
pastoral interests in the Geelong district and a member of the Melbourne Club, contributed twenty-five European paintings to the Victorian Loan Collection. The
Official Record commented:

It must ever be a cause of satisfaction that so many of our wealthy citizens give
evidence of a desire to surround themselves with objects of art, which not only
indicates the possession of a refined taste but also the judgement to gratify it by
the selection of works of a high degree of merit, (not to mention the money with
which to acquire the works!)

Exhibition Commissioners also argued that age in art-works gave them an added
dimension of 'civilised taste'—the obverse of their belief that the colony's newness was
debased. They apologised for the quality of the works in the Victorian Artists' Gallery:

[I]t was scarcely to be expected in a young country where fine art had only just
begun to struggle into existence, that the pictures in this section could enter into
successful competition with the handiwork of the masters of the great European
school.

Another of Ada Cambridge's characters, Mrs Clive, criticised the colonies' boosters for
their equation of age with quality. Commenting on Vicat-Cole's 'Ripening Sunbeam',
she stated:

And yet see how it is—a dozen such, if...there should be a dozen of anything so
beautiful, have not the market value of one black and faded old master that never

290 The Australasian Sketcher, 6 September 1888, p.135.
291 Hone, J. Ann, entry on Frederick Armytage in Pike, Douglass, (gen. ed.), Australian
292 Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, Official Record, p.221.
293 As above, p.220.
294 White, Richard, Inventing Australia, p.57.
295 Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, Official Record, p.221.
at the best of times had a spark of poetry in it. These men with money—these Governments that are forming national collections—they will give a fortune for an old daub with a name to it.\textsuperscript{296}

Notwithstanding such critiques, Melbourne’s boosters, so conscious of the colony’s newness, adhered to the equation of age with quality far more strongly than their British counterparts. Exhibition officials carefully prescribed the cultural program, placing it within a context of imperial classicism and explicitly disavowing the merit of contemporary and indigenous or popular culture. Unlike the value system associated with machinery in the Exhibition, Exhibition Commissioners saw newness in cultural terms as morally-tainted. While this definition was in keeping with imperial definitions of taste, its urgency was all the greater in colonial Australia, which was keen to show to itself and the world its moral and racial sophistication through its taste for imperial antiquity.

Notwithstanding, commentators occasionally expressed a suspicion that the art works were perhaps not so much for the ‘masses’, but for an elite few who indeed maintained their power and privilege by displaying their knowledge of long-standing private cultural codes.\textsuperscript{297} \textit{The Australasian Sketcher} commented:

Strange to say, it is not those of highest fame which take the public taste. Crowds do not assemble before the Turners or the Constable; but it may be said the Turners and the Constable were not sent out for the delight of the crowds, but for the education of the few.\textsuperscript{298}

Again, Ada Cambridge’s Patty Kinnaird also failed to demonstrate elevated taste. Upon looking at the ‘famous Wattses and Holman Hunts’:

having been given to understand that these were pictures one was expected to kneel down before and worship, [she] drew upon her newly augmented courage to the extent of saying plainly that she thought them horrid.\textsuperscript{299}

\textsuperscript{297} Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen, \textit{Museums and The Shaping of Knowledge}, passim.  
\textsuperscript{298} \textit{The Australasian Sketcher}, 6 September 1888, p.135.  
\textsuperscript{299} Cambridge, Ada, \textit{A Woman’s Friendship}, p.15.
The *Arrow*, an obscure and short-lived suburban journal, parodied the Exhibition’s arrangements, and especially its metropolitan pretensions. The fictitious John Scuffen, farmer from Dungaree,\(^{300}\) has a rather nasty encounter in the English Picture Gallery. He and his family sit down in ‘this ere magazine of high art’ to have lunch, and a guard requests him to move. After some protest, his wife Jane also chips in. “Yes indeed, sir, we have the liberty in this country to look at pictures either sitting or walking. There are some of them as looks they was upside down; leastways you can’t comprehend them properly unless you stand on your head and bring a spyglass on to em.” Nevertheless, a policeman intervenes, dismissing them as ‘country yokels’ and tells them to move to the garden to finish their lunch. Duly, they progress towards the door and are sidetracked by the Governor’s recreation chamber, in which they take the time to admire the furniture, until they are told by an orderly that it is not on exhibition.\(^{301}\) (Illustration 15)

Here then, we see two deeply contradictory strands, ‘that of the elite temple of the arts, and that of a utilitarian instrument for democratic education’,\(^{302}\) and we also see something more: an intelligent, open critique of the Exhibition’s didactic ambition, including Tony Bennett’s ‘scopic regime’.\(^{303}\) The dialectic between the maintenance of power and privilege through private knowledge and ‘viewing’ systems on the one hand, and on the other hand the ‘publication’ of such knowledge under the aegis of enlightened liberalism is not resolved throughout the Exhibition, and Chapter Three will also show that it becomes an issue around Cooks’ Cottage. The public critique of the Exhibition challenges suggestions that members of the public did not understand the boosters’ purposes, and that they accepted strategies for self-governance uncritically. The success of the ‘exhibitionary complex’ is problematic, and while it is troubling when theorists ignore this question,\(^{304}\) its outcomes can only be guessed at rather than assumed.

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\(^{300}\) Near Ballarat, Victoria.

\(^{301}\) *The Arrow*, Number 2, 6 October 1888, p.1.


\(^{303}\) See footnote 61.

\(^{304}\) Bennett, Tony, *Birth of the Museum*, p.11. He writes, “…the degree to which such planned effects are evaded, side-stepped or simply not noticed raises different questions which, important though they are, I have not addressed here.”
Illustration 15
Executive Commissioners’ Reception Room
Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition, 1888
Courtesy Museum of Victoria
Colonial and indeed imperial boosters also articulated specific histories, as opposed to ‘antiquity’, in the Exhibition, especially through portraiture and sculpture. The Dome iconography, described earlier, set the pattern here. It illustrated some historical genealogies allegorically, placing the Exhibition’s world order in the exemplary civic codes of ancient Greece and Rome. Mostly, however, artistic themes commemorated individuals, events and places of the past.

In the Dome iconography, the only specific historical subject was explorers, indicating their status as the pre-eminent theme of Australian history. However, Englishmen did as much as local exhibitors to offer a self-conscious and sustained material imagining of a national Australian ‘history’. The Australian Portrait Gallery contained thirty-two portraits by five entrants. Most of the portraits were of European explorers and associated scientific crew who were known to have made geographical ‘discoveries’ of and within Australia. As the ‘man amongst men’ in this regard, it was appropriate that Captain James Cook featured twice, while Abel Tasman, Matthew Flinders, George Bass and William Dampier were also represented. James Walker’s London Art Gallery of Australian History contained thirty-one portraits of ‘navigators, discoverers, and other celebrities connected with the earliest history of Australia’. The Dome iconography and the art galleries point to the complete imaginative convergence of English exhibitors and colonial Exhibition officials regarding Australia’s foundation historical narratives.

The Australian Portrait Gallery also featured various men who were heralded as colonial ‘founders’ and ‘statesmen’, such as John Pascoe Fawkner, Thomas Henty and Lord Melbourne. Such was the assumption of the widespread public extent of this knowledge of the Australian past that the portraits needed no description apart from the names of the persons. Even portraits of the Commissioners themselves were exhibited: James McBain, President of the Centennial Exhibition Commission, featured in the Victorian Loan Collection. Gaining membership of the Exhibition Commission itself

305 Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, Official Record, p.219.
306 As above, pp.647-8.
was seen as an affirmation of individual statesmanship.\textsuperscript{308} The Exhibition Commissioners represented the contemporary lineage of the earlier ‘pioneers’ who they honoured in the Exhibition, and by an iterative route, the very ‘exhibition’ of these men—the establishment of their public historical provenance—worked also towards cementing their contemporary status as ‘men of history’.

The Australian Portrait Gallery also played an unusual role in remembering individual women of the ‘Australian’ past. Four portraits of women featured, their historic status achieved exclusively through their matrimonial arrangements. Unlike the men, their relationship to history needed to be spelt out with the following descriptions: ‘Wife of Theodore Hertoge’, ‘Wife of Abel Jansen Tasman’, ‘Lady Parry (wife of Sir Edward)’ and ‘Elizabeth, Wife of Capt. Cook’\textsuperscript{309} Their status ‘inside’ history was contingent and marginal: only two of the four were given their own names. No women of Australian history were deemed important enough for commemoration in their own right; women were another resounding silence in the colonial public historical sphere. Their inclusion in the Portrait Gallery only serves to underline the precedence of the explorer then statesmen themes in public imaginings of Australian history.

The discursive parameters of these galleries as history rather than art is underlined by the fact that many of the works featured were by unknown or unattributed artists. Of the thirty-two exhibits in the Australian Portrait Gallery, fourteen were by unknown artists or by artists distinguished only by their nationality. This contrasts with the notion of ‘taste’ discussed earlier, and its lineage in the ‘art history’ of place, denoted by specific artists and chronological ‘schools’\textsuperscript{310} ‘Taste’ was a non-issue when the art was in the history galleries. Portraiture was an important form for monumental history, with its subjects literally becoming larger than life.\textsuperscript{311} The form of their representation emphasised their public success by being the subject of a portrait and being exhibited.

\textsuperscript{308} See footnote 215.
But the form neutralised the political contexts of their public work by emphasising their apparent enduring and fixed personality characteristics. Those close associates of the Exhibition, the permanent collecting institutions, were also playing a major role in the collection of Australian history through portraiture and other art genres.  

The themes of explorers and statesmen was a two-tiered history of British imperial expansion, consisting of exploration as the moment of first importance in Australian history, with colonial implementation of imperial existence through bureaucratic means as the second tier. Conversely, the thematic renderings worked to give the colonies a morally-acceptable antiquity, while the emphasis on exploration history avoided the awkward politics of convict origins, raised by the Exhibition's commemorative raison d'être. The two-tiered reading respected generational order as the natural sequence of development in imperial-colonial histories, reinforcing the concept and rhetoric of familial ties through which the imperial-colonial relationship was defined.

**Picturesque History: Time as Progress**

As we have seen, the Exhibition was predominantly about progress through time. In the cultural program, the Commissioners equated only the past with civilisation, due to its geo-political origins. However, they had a different assessment of the present when it came to the question of local developments or 'on-shore' history. Time passing was equated with progress: modern was good, while the past was primitive. This notion was expressed particularly in picturesque representations of the local past. The Commissioners' identification of civilisation as imperial antiquity formed one element of the colonial racial equation, implying the illegitimacy of Aboriginal antiquity. However it was in 'on-shore', picturesque representations, that boosters more directly

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313 See also Healy, Chris, 'Histories and Collecting', pp.40-42, for similar themes represented in library/museum collections.
contrasted the ‘prehistoric’ status of Aboriginal people with the ‘progressive’ status of the ‘Anglo-Saxon race’.

Exhibition Commissioners expressed an on-shore Australian history through written, theatrical and picturesque modes. ‘The Centennial Cantata’ formed the centrepiece of the Exhibition opening ceremony. Its six parts depicted ‘Australia’s National history’ chronologically. After Part I greeted visitors, ‘Australia’s Solitary Past’ formed Part II of the Cantata. We see a:

reign of solitude...seldom stirred...[but by] speech barbaric; from whose face austere
The shudd’ring savage turns in speechless fear;
...O’er the primeval forest depths profound,
...O’er all perpetual solitude doth brood,
Save where the savage stalks in search of food:
A land by civilisation’s step untrod-
Alone with Nature, and with Nature’s God.\(^{314}\)

The Cantata’s composer, Henry King, claimed that for Part II he had the challenge of applying a musical accompaniment to ‘the expression...of nothing’. He resolved this by having ‘the Chorus sing with closed lips, the intention being that scenes of Natural life may receive an interpretation approximate to Reality’.\(^{315}\) Thus serene Nature is valued as the primordial origin of Man—a characteristic construction of an indigenous Australian antiquity.\(^{316}\) Australian Aborigines became a human irrelevancy because of their lack of civility, especially as evidenced by their lack of a dialect familiar to the viewer of the scene.

‘A Century’s Progress’, the Exhibition’s written history, paid Aboriginal people even less heed. They were succinctly dismissed, ‘ethnologically-speaking’, as a ‘tribe of savages...of a low type’.\(^{317}\) The civilised progress which the history then documented was due to the ‘indomitable courage and endurance characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon


\(^{316}\) Lowenthal, David, *Foreign Country*, pp.54,91.

\(^{317}\) Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, *Official Record*, p.61.
race’,\textsuperscript{318} and so too the Cantata continued to celebrate the pioneering spirit of the British colonists, culminating in a metropolitan materialism:

Honour the Pioneers.
Stout of heart and strong of frame,
Sturdy sons of Britain came;
...the great magician—
GOLD, before whose spells arising,
Lo, the myriad-peopled cities...
Dispossessing solitude.
...Where the feet of the dark hunter strayed,
See the wealth of the world is arrayed.\textsuperscript{319}

Here we witness the symbiosis between the ‘writing out’ of Aborigines from Australian history, both conceptually and textually,\textsuperscript{320} and the ‘writing in’ of a masculinist conception of pioneers as the first generation of mass historical actors in on-shore Australian history. The ‘dispossession of solitude’ by the pioneers was an epic legitimation of \textit{terra nullius}.

Materially, exhibitors reinforced this rhetoric with various picturesque forms, including photographs, models and tableau vivants. We have seen previously that Cook’s rooms in the NSW Court included a major tableau depicting Captain Cook’s landing at Botany Bay in 1770. It showed Cook and \textit{The Endeavour} crew, supported by an artillery, while ‘the original owners of the soil watch in wonder as the corner stone of an empire is...modestly laid’.\textsuperscript{321} While the journalist makes the relatively unusual concession of original Aboriginal ownership of the land, they were rendered over-awed and ‘out-gunned’, as it were, by European possession. The tableau was described ‘as realistic as [it is] picturesque’,\textsuperscript{322} but David Lowenthal suggests the very comfort of the picturesque lies in the impossibility of its reality.\textsuperscript{323}

\textsuperscript{318} As above, p.59.
\textsuperscript{319} As above, p.195.
\textsuperscript{320} In the latter regard, the textual emphasis automatically excluded orally-based cultures, and those who did not speak English even more so. Macintyre, Stuart, ‘Writing Australian History’, p.5; Griffiths, Tom, ‘Past Silences’, pp.18-20; Garton, Stephen, ‘Aboriginal History’, pp.190-92; Healy, Chris, ‘Histories and Collecting’, esp. p.43.
\textsuperscript{322} As above, p.61.
\textsuperscript{323} Lowenthal, David, \textit{Foreign Country}, pp.54,91.
Other tableaux featured exclusively European ‘acts’ of Australian history, and had as their compelling rhetoric, time passing: the viewer was to read them ‘as a measure of how far the colonists had come’.\textsuperscript{324} In the Victorian Court, the Corporation of Melbourne exhibited a model of the ‘Old City of Melbourne’.\textsuperscript{325} The *Centennial Magazine* reported the model as ‘interesting, because the visitor, after seeing it, may go to the parapet of the dome and obtain a very good bird’s-eye view of the Melbourne of today’.\textsuperscript{326} The impact of this picturesque portrayal relied upon the public’s temporal comparison of a space.\textsuperscript{327} In this sense ‘the greatest exhibit is undoubtedly that of the city and its population, and its edifices, and its position in respect to the neighbouring colonies’,\textsuperscript{328} a proposition bolstered by the synoptic world featured wall-to-wall in the Exhibition. (*Illustration 16*) The picturesque and vague representation of history was, argue Kimberley Webber and Lowenthal, a prerequisite for the spiritual power of the artefacts in relation to the progress narrative.\textsuperscript{329}

The juxtaposition between the European progress narrative and the stilled ethnography of Aborigines was also reinforced in the representation of Aboriginal people in other forms in the Victorian Court, such as a ‘medallion head of an aboriginal (life size)’ and an ‘Aboriginal hunting scene, sculptured in relief’ in the Sculpture and Die-Sinking Section.\textsuperscript{330} The Aborigines were neither named, dated, nor geographically located; there was no need for historical specificity in European constructions of Aboriginality. Further, their metallic form appropriated the ancientness of Aborigines in the European language of classicism.\textsuperscript{331}

\textsuperscript{324} Webber, Kimberley, ‘Constructing Australia’s Past’, p.159.
\textsuperscript{325} Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, *Official Record*, p.599.
\textsuperscript{326} *A Melbourne Journalist*, ‘The Centennial Exhibition’, p.62.
\textsuperscript{327} Dunstan, David, *Victorian Icon*, p.198.
\textsuperscript{328} *The Australasian*, 4 August 1888, p.265.
\textsuperscript{330} Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, *Official Record*, see, for example, p.595.
Illustration 16
Melbourne in 1888, from Fitzroy Gardens, Thomas Edmund Photographer
Courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria
Conclusion

The Exhibition closed on 9 March 1889, after a month’s extension by popular demand. It had received 2 003 593 visitors, ‘equal nearly double the population of the Colony’, repaying the efforts of the Exhibition Commissioners to encourage varied and widespread visitation. Thousands of visitors had daily flocked to the Exhibition, to the point where crowded conditions made viewing the exhibits impossible, although it also had its quiet times. The Exhibition’s budget was exceeded ten-fold, much to the press’s concern. But the investment had probably still been worth it. A large portion of the Colony’s population had witnessed this astounding public spectacle. Its logistical complexity, collective materialism, and numerous technological and theatrical conceits provided an object lesson in the power and seductiveness of the world order which it articulated, and its specific components offered thousands of object lessons in the past and present, with profound implications for the future.

But the Commissioners did not necessarily approve of the public’s behaviour at the Exhibition, complaining that ‘people spend most of their time in promenading, and do very little work in the shape of examining the many wonderful things on view’. (Illustration 17) For Bennett, mannered self-display was as much a part of the ‘scopic regime’ as the more material ‘object lessons’. We have seen, however, some evidence of subversion of the Exhibition’s regime, and Ada Cambridge’s novels also spoke of the many quiet spots amongst the ferneries, fisheries, and many other amusements where there was ‘a darkness in which you could hold your companion’s hand...without fear of being discovered by the people passing through...[L]overs, as a rule, monopolised these retreats.’ This suggests further visitor subversion or avoidance of the Exhibition’s

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332 Dugan, Dennis, ‘Victoria’s Largest Exhibition’, p.4.
334 Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, Official Record, p.300.
335 Thompson, J.R., ‘Melbourne Centennial Exhibition’, p.60.
337 The Australasian Sketcher, 29 November 1888, p.182.
338 This would appear to have been a particularly popular practice, as Ada Cambridge says, ‘as must be well known to a great many of my readers’. A Woman’s Friendship, p.9.
Illustration 17
Promenading at Melbourne's Centennial International Exhibition, 1888
Courtesy Museum of Victoria
‘scopic regime’, and as we have seen, the assessment of whether the Commissioners achieved their didactic intentions remains at least partially problematical.

Nevertheless, the Commissioners’ aims were clear and momentous. They aimed to address the local and international implications of their major economic and political relationships through geo-political definitions of culture, history and time in the 1888 Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition. Victorian and NSW officials deployed the Exhibition’s commemorative moment—described only in brief, vague terms—to assert, respectively, contemporary equality or precedence, while NSW deployed ‘colossal’ renderings of Captain Cook in order to own Australia’s primal historical moments and yet suppress the illegitimacy implied by the actual commemorative event. Victoria was also busy eliminating the undesirable history of Ned Kelly to reinforce to the local population the rightness of systems of government, including the rule of law. At the Exhibition’s close colonial officials continued to play out the question of their respective status through the literal ownership and sharing of history. Despite the Exhibition’s cohering rhetoric and the claim that the event itself furthered the possibility of Federation, resolutions about owning and sharing history remained ambiguous at best, ultimately failing to resolve inter-colonial conflicts.

Victoria’s boosters used the Exhibition’s cultural program in particular to assure and encourage local allegiance to the British empire. Colonial and indeed imperial economic imperatives were dressed-up in a grand costume of civilisation, the prerequisite of which was that it was British. Colonial and imperial boosters defined taste as exclusive to the British, while Exhibition Commissioners and other boosters also added the dimension of age to that equation, reflecting their contemporary, generational deference to England and the fact that they desired to both counter Aboriginal antiquity with their own, and to appropriate the Aborigines’ ancientness.

Major exhibitors also elaborated a far more specific history in art; in large part, art was history not necessarily by name, but by nature. The subject matter rather than its contribution to ‘taste’ warranted its exhibition and collection. In reading the art as history, we see the establishment of the monumental tiers of Australian history—first
British explorers and second immigrant colonial statesmen—that sought to confirm contemporary imperial-colonial orderings of generation, race, gender and class. It was only explorers and statesmen—men in the image of the Exhibition’s Commissioners—who could be literally singled out as historical actors, to be memorialised for their monumental contribution to the empire’s cause.

Picturesque representations at the Exhibition introduced the more amorphous historical category of pioneers, standing for the greater constituency’s historical contribution. Pioneers, also a masculinist imagining, stood opposite to Aboriginal people. For the pioneers, time was progress; Aborigines, on the other hand, lived in stunted time, before progress. Motivated by the forces of economics and empire, the cultural program and the picturesque representations operated as object lessons in the moral hierarchy of generation, race, gender and class, reinforcing and consolidating important, complex and manifold international and local ‘reality effects’.

339 Dening, Greg, Performances, p.125.
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