



Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:

Gelder, K;Weaver, R

Title:

The transnational kangaroo hunt

Date:

2021-06-25

Citation:

Gelder, K. & Weaver, R. (2021). The transnational kangaroo hunt. COMYN, S (Ed.). Fermanis, P (Ed.). Worlding the South: Nineteenth-century literary culture and the southern settler colonies, (First), pp.177-195. Manchester University Press.

Persistent Link:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/281324>

License:

[CC BY-NC-ND](#)

The transnational kangaroo hunt

Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver

The kangaroo hunt narrative genre was invented early on by the appropriately named John Hunter. Hunter was second captain of the HMS *Sirius*, arriving at Sydney Cove with the First Fleet in 1788. An astronomer and naturalist, his notebook, *Birds & Flowers of New South Wales Drawn on the Spot in 1788, 89 & 90* (1790), contained 100 illustrations of native flora and fauna, including a watercolour of a kangaroo to which Hunter ascribed an Aboriginal name, *Pa-ta-garang*. His account of the beginnings of settlement, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions of Port Jackson and Norfolk Island*, was published in London in 1793. Here he writes: ‘The animal described in the voyage of the *Endeavour*, called the kangaroo (but by the natives *patagorong*) we found in great numbers; one was lately shot which weighed 140 pounds.’¹ Kangaroo hunting as a practice had already been described by other First Fleet chroniclers, like John White and Watkin Tench. But Hunter was the first writer in the colonies to turn the kangaroo hunt into a narrative that presented the quarry as a fitting adversary, focusing on its strength and physical characteristics, describing the chase itself and the methods used for hunting, and detailing the struggle to the death between the kangaroo and the hunter’s dogs:

The strength this animal has in its hind quarters is very great: in its endeavours to escape from us, when surprised, it springs from its hind legs, which are very long, and leaps at each bound about six or eight yards ... they have vast strength also in their tail; it is, no doubt, a principal part of their defence, when attacked; for with it they can strike with prodigious force, I believe with sufficient power to break the leg of a man ... We for some time considered their tail as their chief defence, but having of late hunted them with greyhounds very successfully, we have had an opportunity of knowing that they use their claws and teeth. The dog is much swifter than the kangaroo: the chase, if in an open wood (which is the place most frequented by the animal), is seldom more than eight or ten minutes, and if there are more dogs than one, seldom so long. As soon as the hound seizes him, he turns, and catching hold with the nails of his fore-paws, he springs upon, and strikes at the dog with the claws of his hind

feet which are wonderfully strong, and tears him to such a degree, that we have frequently been under the necessity of carrying the dog home, from the severity of his wounds; few of these animals have ever effected their escape, after being seized by the dog, for they have generally caught them by the throat, and held them until they were assisted, although many of them have very near lost their lives.²

The hunting and killing of kangaroos is a direct expression of settler domination over species. A naturalist's naming and classification of a species is one part in a chain of colonising events that includes description, visual representation, killing, dissecting, eating – and significantly, exporting and exhibiting. Kangaroos – and kangaroo body parts – were already being transported back to England for scientific study, general curiosity, and popular entertainment. Markman Ellis notes that 'Botany Bay was a media event in London', generating two key exports: 'preserved kangaroos' and 'information'.³ Joseph Banks had brought skins and skulls back to London, commissioning one of the most famous artists of the day, George Stubbs, to paint the kangaroo. Stubbs' oil painting was exhibited at the Society of Artists of Great Britain in 1773 under the title *Portrait of the Kongouro from New Holland, 1770*, and was remarkably influential, with the image reproduced by other artists; it also appeared as an engraving in John Hawkesworth's bestselling 1773 journal of Cook's voyage. Penny van Toorn notes that Banks was also given 'a large stuffed kangaroo' by Arthur Phillip.⁴ Phillip himself had carried four live kangaroos back to England in 1793 on the HMS *Atlantic*, along with Bennelong and Yemmerrawanne of the Eora nation; Banks later gave two of these kangaroos to Queen Charlotte for her Kew Gardens menagerie. Around this time the entrepreneur Gilbert Pidcock included a live kangaroo in his small travelling circus.⁵ Christopher Plumb notes the 'kangaroo mania' in England during this period;⁶ while Richard Neville suggests that by 1800 there were so many kangaroos living there 'they were said to be almost naturalised'.⁷

Transnational kangaroos

This is the beginning of the transnationalisation of the kangaroo – which meant, among other things, that kangaroo hunting became a recognised recreational activity outside of Australia. One article appeared in English newspapers in March 1851 titled 'A Kangaroo Hunt in West Surrey'. It reproduces the familiar tropes of an English fox or stag hunting narrative, absorbing the kangaroo into existing traditions while also highlighting the novelty of the species:

Extraordinary as it may appear, there has been a genuine kangaroo hunt in the vicinity of Dorking. One of these animals, some four months ago, escaped from the pen in which it had been confined at Wotton, the seat of Mr W. J. Evelyn, M.P., and has been running wild in the neighbouring woods ever since, bidding defiance to several attempts to effect his capture. On Monday, however, by Mr Evelyn's direction, a regular hunting party was formed to accomplish this object ... Almost immediately the extraordinary animal broke cover, evidently determined to show sport ... the chase got warm, and, dogs and men in close pursuit, he reached the foot of Leith-hill. Here the animal's peculiar mode of progression was exhibited in a style which astonished the field – a singular succession of leaps carrying it over the ground at a rate perfectly startling ... At last, hard pressed, the animal took refuge in a pond on High Ash Farm, Abinger, where a groom succeeded in capturing him, though not without receiving a fraternal embrace, from which his shoulder suffered for some days.⁸

By the 1860s, the acclimatisation society of Paris was making determined efforts to bring kangaroos to France. The Jardin d'Acclimatation was reported to have 'some hundreds of kangaroos, recently arrived from Australia' and introduced 'into several estates' where they were 'hunted in that country like other game. The flesh is sold in the market, and is thought a great dainty.'⁹ The Société Zoologique d'Acclimatation in Paris was established in 1854; in 1858 it set up gardens in part of the Bois de Boulogne, with the intention of importing and naturalising species from around the world. The globalisation of the kangaroo was, of course, part of a much larger project of species circulation through similar acclimatisation organisations around the world, including Australia. In fact, Australian acclimatisation societies were themselves actively contributing to the live export of kangaroos: a report of the Victorian branch in 1861 notes that 'Bennett's kangaroo is the most abundant species in Australia, extremely hardy, and much the best calculated for acclimatisation in an English park'.¹⁰ A newspaper report in Australia in 1874 remarked that a French landowner at Beaujardin, near Tours, had 'let loose kangaroos, which are multiplying very abundantly, and give excellent sport, and a good eating'. 'The kangaroo,' it added, 'is destined to become in a few years, quite a French animal.'¹¹

The exported kangaroo became a familiar enough figure to generate its *own* narrative. An anonymous article in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* from 9 May 1830 is titled 'Adventures of a Kangaroo'. Here, the author visits one of George Wombwell's popular travelling menageries in England and is 'particularly struck by a very fine kangaroo, whose magnificent proportions proved him to be one of the finest specimens of his species'.¹² But as he watches the kangaroo in its cage, he imagines that it feels the indignity of its imprisonment 'as poignantly as the poor blacks who are

daily torn from their homes and their families and put in slavery'.¹³ Here, Wombwell the entertainer is read as a slave trader; and the kangaroo is placed in the imperial framework of a growing anti-slavery movement, displaced, imprisoned, and exploited. The author then dreams that the kangaroo is speaking to him, telling its own story firsthand, 'in as good English as if it had been brought up in this country':

'I am', said he, 'the son of Bounгарie-Bammee, the King of the Kangaroos at Botany Bay. My father was allowed to be the most stately of his race, and had often been marked down as the prey of the "bush-rangers", but luckily escaped their pursuit, and may yet, for aught I know, be enjoying his liberty. My mother was not equally fortunate, for, while pregnant of myself and two little sisters, she fell into the snares of the hunters, was taken alive, and presented to Governor Darling, who, admiring her symmetry, sent her as a present to the King of this country.'¹⁴

This remarkable narrative – where a kangaroo speaks, possibly for the first time – directly connects the kangaroo hunt to the business of acclimatisation: the mother is captured, not killed, and exported to England (the site of her enslavement). It also links back to Arthur Phillips' 1793 voyage to England with those four kangaroos and two Eora men. In fact, the narrative wants to give this kangaroo its own Indigenous identity and kinship system, tying the kangaroo hunt and its consequences to Aboriginal dispossession and demonstrating a parallel between, for example, Bennelong's experience of expatriation and that of an acclimatised native species.

The kangaroo is also an exhibited 'curiosity'. When she arrives in England the mother is sent to a menagerie, where she is greeted by kangaroos who are already there:

Her sufferings, on being thus torn from the scene of all her joys, she has often described to me as dreadful, but, bearing up against them with true philosophy, she arrived safe in this country, and was, at last, conveyed to the Royal Menagerie in Windsor Great Park, where, to her surprise, she found several of her old friends, who had, like herself, been transported from Australia, by way of exchange, perhaps, for animals of a more mischievous description who had been transported to her native wilds.¹⁵

The Windsor Park menagerie was built for George IV in the early 1820s. Jane Roberts notes that by 1828 newspapers were reporting 'there were "no less than a dozen remarkably fine kangaroos in the Royal menagerie at Sandpit Gate"', one of the park's major entrances.¹⁶ Perhaps the best-known imported animal in Windsor Park at this time was a giraffe, a favourite of the king. 'I had the pleasure of being associated with the celebrated Giraffe,' the kangaroo says. George IV died a month after 'Adventures of a Kangaroo' was published, and the animals in the menagerie were moved on to

Regent's Park Zoo. The kangaroo looks back at his time at Windsor Park with some fondness:

I had nothing to regret; in fact, I enjoyed as much liberty as I wished, had plenty to eat and drink, and became as great a favourite with my keepers as if I had been their own flesh and blood. I had, too, the proud satisfaction of being caressed by his Majesty, the Marchioness of Conyngham [the King's mistress], and all the great Ladies of the Court, who were constantly admiring the increasing dimensions of my tail, which, as you are aware, constitutes a prominent feature in my person.

Along with all the other animals, the kangaroo is moved to Regent's Park Zoo, where – locked in a cage – he befriends a 'samboo [or sambar] deer' that is later 'condemned to death', 'given to feed a lion in the opposite den'. The kangaroo worries about his own possible execution. He is, instead, 'conducted to the Tower of London, where, under a new gaoler, my lot became still harder than before'. When Wombwell buys him, the kangaroo feels relatively free again, travelling 'almost every part of the Kingdom'.¹⁷ But he yearns to return to the menagerie at Windsor Park, where he was born. This is a fully expatriated kangaroo, no longer connected to Australia in any way: born in England, acclimatised to English park life, exhibited by an entrepreneurial English showman, and entangled in a global assemblage of exotic species.

Global kangaroo hunts

The kangaroo hunt was itself part of a global narrative to do with travel, adventure, and hunting as a rite of passage for young men in particular. It could also provide the means for educating readers about species biodiversity in remote places. Sarah Bowdich Lee was well known as the first biographer of the renowned French naturalist Georges Cuvier: her *Memoirs of Baron Cuvier* appeared in 1833, a year after his death. Lee and her husband T. Edward Bowdich had worked with Cuvier in Paris; they also spent some time in west Africa. Lee was a prolific natural historian; her book on taxidermy appeared in 1820 and considers, at one point, the best way of bringing species collected overseas back to menageries and museums in Britain and France. It recognises that menageries provide the naturalist with an opportune way of analysing species, and wonders how acclimatised species from around the world might contribute to the domestic economy: 'The Peruvian sheep, the lama [sic], the kangaroo, the casoary [sic], may, perhaps, one day be very useful.'¹⁸

In the 1850s Lee published two adventure novels that mirrored each other in plot and circumstances and shared a naturalist's fascination with

exotic-species description. *The African Wanderers; or, the Adventures of Carlos and Antonio* (1850) is about an orphaned Spanish boy who is adopted and educated by an English soldier. Later on, he goes away to sea, makes a friend, and ends up in west Africa, hunting genet cats, porcupines, leopards, wild boar, and buffalo. Lee's companion novel was published the following year in London, titled *Adventures in Australia; or, the Wanderings of Captain Spencer in the Bush and the Wilds* (1851). Lee had never visited Australia, so she relied on a range of London-published source material for her species information, some of which she lists in her Preface: for example, Robert Brown's *Prodromus of the Flora of New Holland and Van Diemen's Land* (1810) – Brown had sailed with Matthew Flinders on the *HMS Investigator* and went on to become head of the Botanical Department at the British Museum – the physician-naturalist George Bennett's *Wanderings in New South Wales, Batavia, Pedir Coast, Singapore, and China* (1834), and John Gould's *The Birds of Australia* (1841–48).¹⁹

Bernhard Gissibl has talked about a 'mobile, transnational class of globe-trotting hunters' in a post-frontier empire, who participate in 'controlled' forms of recreational hunting, like the safari, 'in the wake of conquest'.²⁰ But in Lee's Australian novel, Captain Spencer precedes this post-frontier moment. He has recently fought in the second Anglo-Sikh War, in 1848–49; to recuperate, he takes a ship to Australia, accompanied by his horse, dog, and a talking parrot. Spencer's journey to Australia is a detour from an ongoing military occupation in the interests of empire that has exhausted him. Shipwrecked on the west Australian coast, he seems to have no sense of purpose other than to kill a kangaroo: 'If I could but shoot a kangaroo,' he tells himself, 'I would go back [to India] directly.'²¹ Against his better judgement, Spencer gets involved in frontier conflict. Under attack, he kills an Aboriginal man, an event that deeply troubles him. Later on, he helps a wounded Aboriginal man called Kinchela and they become companions. Lee's novel makes it clear that Spencer is a 'wanderer', not a settler: he is a 'mobile', 'transnational' figure that remains at a distance from the imperatives of dispossession, development, and nation-building. Species information in this novel – and in Lee's African novel, too – gives it a kind of picaresque structure: characters stumble from one species to the next, almost at random. The kangaroo hunt is one of the few things that gives Spencer a specific trajectory, a destination. And with Kinchela to advise him, it also helps him to learn a little about Aboriginal people. At one point, Spencer joins a group of Aboriginal people on a large-scale kangaroo hunt, 'a regular battue' as the novel puts it.²² The emigrant Tasmanian artist John Skinner Prout illustrated Lee's novel with a series of lithographs, one of which shows Spencer dressed in white and on his white horse charging through the battue and scattering the kangaroos in front of him (Figure 8.1). Interestingly, he is

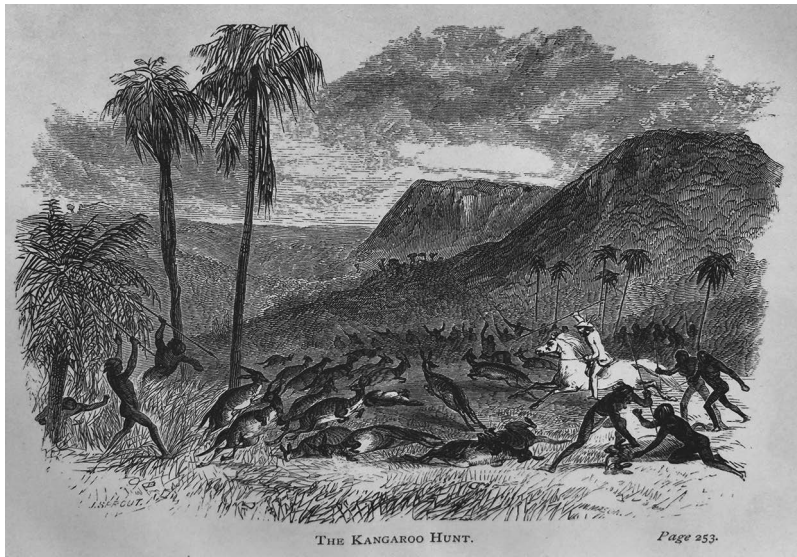


Figure 8.1 John Skinner Prout, 'The Kangaroo Hunt', in Sarah Bowdich Lee, *Adventures in Australia; or, the Wanderings of Captain Spencer in the Bush and the Wilds* (London: Grant and Griffith, 1851), n.p.

carrying a spear, not a rifle; an enthusiastic participant, he is both integrated into the action here and a kind of counterpoint to it, a stark contrast to the Aboriginal hunters around him.

The global hunting novel often turned to Australia as a site of adventure, even though its authors – like Lee – may never actually have been there. Emilia Marryat Norris was the daughter of the bestselling sea-adventure novelist, Captain Frederick Marryat. She wrote sea-adventure novels herself, some of which were set in the Pacific. Norris never visited Australia; it is not even clear if she visited the Pacific. Her novel *Amongst the Maoris* was published in 1874; it was reprinted in 1882 with the title *Jack Stanley; or, the Young Adventurers*. Jack is a young protagonist who travels to New Zealand to find the man who may have swindled his father. The novel touches on the Māori land wars but they seem remote from the main action. The Māori characters are, however, generally shown to be subjugated, working in the service of European settlers. Stanley meets a seasoned military officer, Colonel Bradshaw, who is now living peacefully in the bush, not far from Wellington. Bradshaw becomes his mentor, telling him stories about Māori customs and practices. Almost out of the blue, he tells Stanley about a kangaroo hunt in Australia. Colonel Bradshaw turns out to be the opposite of Captain Spencer: a military officer in the service of

empire who is against hunting as a recreational practice. He tells Jack Stanley about a kangaroo hunt in order to demonstrate ‘why I dislike the idea of it’. A hunting party singles out ‘one large male kangaroo’ and their dogs run it down until it is exhausted. ‘I was nearest to him at the time he gave in,’ the Colonel says,

and I saw him rushed upon by the savage brutes, who gnawed and worried him, covering his soft grey fur with blood. He stood impotently beating the air with his forefeet, and the great tears ran from his beautiful eyes and down his cheeks. I was thankful that I was armed with a gun, that I might as soon as possible shoot the poor beast dead; and by the time the others came up, I was standing over him, feeling in my own mind that I had joined in a cowardly, unmanly sport, and vainly regretting that I had been an accessory in any degree to what I now looked upon as unworthy of me.²³

W. Gunston’s illustration in the novel – with the ironic title ‘Sport!’ – also conveys an impression of melancholy in the wake of the killing (Figure 8.2).

Such moments of regret over the kill are generally rare. Global recreational hunters mostly relished the hunt as an uplifting experience, often underpinned by a fascination with the natural sciences, especially in relation to species classification. French explorer Count Ludovic de Beauvoir’s *A Voyage around the World* (1870) chronicles his travels through the Dutch East Indies, Java, China, Japan, Australia, and California in the mid-1860s. De Beauvoir was twenty-one when the trip began; he travelled with the young Prince Pierre d’Orléans and the naturalist Albert-Auguste Fauve, who was only a teenager at the time. In Java they hunted deer, crocodiles, and rhinoceros. They arrived in Australia in July 1866 and soon went kangaroo hunting along the Murray River in Victoria. ‘In this short time,’ he writes, ‘how our feelings as sportsmen have been excited! What lucky shots we have had! What delightful sport! Shall we ever have such again?’²⁴ De Beauvoir thinks about taxidermy and how best to preserve specimens to take back to Europe: ‘in future we may each bring home a perfect museum of natural history’.²⁵

At one point de Beauvoir separates from the rest of the kangaroo hunters, overcome with enthusiasm:

I found myself alone in pursuit, driving in my spurs till I could no longer pull them out of my horse’s sides; but the kangaroo still kept more than a hundred yards a-head. At last I gained upon him by degrees, and came up with him. But I had been fool enough not to bring any arms with me, and I dared not approach, for our hosts had warned us that the brute is exceedingly dangerous when he is brought to bay, and can strangle a man in his arms in no time ... Luckily the Prince had come up with me, and he was armed; he put an end to our duel by a ball through the heart of the brute; you may imagine our delight²⁶



Figure 8.2 W. Gunston, 'Sport!', in Emilia Marryat Norris, *Jack Stanley; or, the Young Adventurers* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1882), n.p.

This is a kangaroo hunt narrative that exaggerates the violent potential of the quarry: the kangaroo is a threatening 'brute' that must be shot through the heart. Soon afterwards, de Beauvoir chronicles 'a duel with an old kangaroo':

I was at twenty paces when the kangaroo turned and charged me; still at full gallop, and rather excitedly, I fired my revolver at him; the ball struck him in his fore-paws, he turned, then charged again. My first ball missed him, but

I sent him a second ‘warning’ which staggered him, and a third which ‘suppressed him’ altogether. A last ball finished him, and put an end to the frightful convulsions in which he died at my feet. I cannot tell you how exciting this wild chase, pistol in hand, was, and the fantasia round the brute as he charged furiously, after the prolonged anxiety as to which would give in first – horse or kangaroo.²⁷

In John Hunter’s much earlier kangaroo hunt narrative, the kangaroo kills hunting dogs. But here the kangaroo charges at the mounted hunter. The word ‘fantasia’ references the work of French artists such as Eugène Delacroix and Eugène Fromentin, both of whom had painted traditional Arab hunting and military scenes (e.g. Delacroix’s *Fantasia arabe* [1833]). ‘As a simulacrum of Arab military force,’ Philip Dine writes, ‘the fantasia would become an almost compulsory theme for visiting French artists.’²⁸ After he kills the kangaroo, de Beauvoir comes ‘to fetch my beautiful prize, whose skin we took’. ‘I am preserving it carefully,’ he writes to his family in France, ‘you will see his claws and the marks of my bullets.’²⁹

The kangaroo hunt was itself an ‘almost compulsory theme’ for visiting artists in Australia. One of the earliest was Augustus Earle, ‘the first professionally trained freelance travel artist to tour the world’.³⁰ Earle had sailed with Charles Darwin on the HMS *Beagle*. Before that, he had travelled to the United States and South America; for eight months he was a castaway on the island of Tristan da Cunha, occupying his time by painting and ‘organising dangerous hunting expeditions in search of food’.³¹ Richard Keynes writes that he gave ‘full rein to an ambition to record the scenery in remote places previously unvisited by any artist’.³² Earle arrived in Sydney in January 1825 and went on to produce the colony’s earliest lithographs. His most celebrated Australian oil painting, *A Bivouac of Travellers in Australia in a Cabbage Tree Forest, Day Break* (1827), was set somewhere in the Illawarra subtropical rainforest, south of Wollongong. It presents a detailed scene, with a group of nine settlers and two Aboriginal men around a campfire. Some are half-asleep, others are preparing breakfast and attending the horses. There are two kangaroo dogs, curled up and still sleeping. And in the foreground of the painting, in the shadows, is a dead kangaroo: this is the aftermath of a kangaroo hunt.

Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones notes the significance of the term ‘bivouac’ in this painting’s title, suggesting that it came out of his investment in the Romantic concept of the ‘noble frontiersman’.³³ It is also often associated with military camps. The term was routinely adopted in early Australian settler chronicles of exploration, drawing these two things together. Thomas Braidwood Wilson first visited Australia in 1826, around the same time as Augustus Earle. In the late 1820s Wilson went on an expedition along the Swan River and down to King George’s Sound, described in his memoir,

Narrative of a Voyage round the World, published in London in 1835. The expedition party is accompanied by an Aboriginal guide named Mokare, who carried 'a fowling-piece, which he would not go without' and who at one point 'succeeded in shooting a large kangaroo'.³⁴ Soon afterwards, Wilson writes, 'we bivouacked in the vicinity of a lagoon'; the party settles down to camp 'by the golden rays of the departing sun'; a fire is kindled, and 'the kangaroo was speedily cooked in various ways'.³⁵

Wilson's *Narrative of a Voyage* is one of many early explorer chronicles that also maps out terrain for future settlement. It works by generating excitement and interest in the colonial project, not least through its investment in the romance of bivouacking and the thrill of the kangaroo hunt. On the other side of the country at around the same time, the agricultural agent Robert Dawson was making a much more overt attempt to promote the colonies and attract entrepreneurial newcomers. His book *The Present State of Australia* (published in London in 1830) is an account of three years spent in New South Wales exploring country on behalf of the Australian Agricultural Company. Like Earle, Dawson arrived in Sydney in 1825; soon afterwards, he took a group of settlers to Port Stephens, north of Newcastle, heading up the Karuah River. His expedition inland brought him into contact with different communities of Aboriginal people. Eager to kill kangaroos, Dawson, like Wilson, shared his guns with the Aboriginal guides: 'They are excellent shots, and I have often lent them a musket to shoot kangaroos, when it has always been taken care of and safely returned.'³⁶ This is a self-confident colonial racism, certain that Aboriginal people will always dutifully return guns to settlers (rather than, say, use them to shoot them).

On another expedition in November 1826, Dawson's party carries muskets, rifles, 'a brace of pistols', 'two double-barrelled fowling pieces', and 'two brace of kangaroo dogs'.³⁷ He writes: 'we bivouacked for the night on the banks of the Karuah, in the pleasant country before described'.³⁸ The description of the camp almost precisely recalls the socially integrated scene in Earle's *A Bivouac of Travellers in Australia*:

my black friends had squatted themselves around the fire, smoking their pipes, and patiently awaiting their turn to partake of the favourite beverage. Our utensils were not many upon this occasion: they consisted of a tea-kettle, a large saucepan, a frying-pan, a few pewter plates, several tin pannicans, which served us for tea and drinking-cups, a spoon or two, some knives and forks, and a few napkins.³⁹

It is worth noting that there is almost always a dead kangaroo beside these campfires: 'And now back to our bivouac,' Dawson writes, '[where] native dogs ... [are] carrying off the remains of kangaroo which the blacks had left about the fire.'⁴⁰

These bivouac scenes are repeated often enough to become generic, working as quintessential expressions of settler colonial experience. Edward Wilson Landor emigrated to Western Australia in 1842, where he worked as a barrister and a journalist, writing on colonial affairs. Landor arrived in Perth with his two brothers, an assortment of dogs – a bloodhound, a mastiff, and a cocker spaniel – and some guns, shot, and gunpowder. He regards the colony as post-frontier, where Aboriginal people are in his view now both ‘docile’ and ‘useful’ to the colonial project. Landor was a kind of republican, speaking up for the farming development of the colonies and the ‘ardent spirit of adventure’ of new immigrants. He did not much like ‘young men who are the wastrels of the World’ because they ‘betake themselves, on their arrival, to the zealous cultivation of field-sports instead of field produce’.⁴¹ Even so, Landor himself enjoys a kangaroo hunt, riding with a party along the Canning River, ‘attended by a native on foot, and five kangaroo dogs’.⁴² His interest in kangaroos is heightened by the work of what he calls ‘the French naturalists’; soon they chase after kangaroos, the dogs outpace the hunters, and one of the dogs later leads them to a spot ‘where [a] kangaroo lay dead’.⁴³ A book illustration by A. H. Irby (a soldier and artist who came to Western Australia in 1840) shows a different kind of scene, with the hunter and his dogs poised to kill a kangaroo at close quarters (Figure 8.3).

That evening, Landor writes, ‘we bivouacked near a small pool of water ... The horses were tethered out and fed; a good fire was kindled, and with kangaroo steaks, cold fowls and ham, and brandy and water, we managed to make a tolerable supper.’⁴⁴ Earlier on, Landor camps again near the Canning River, where a settler and some Aboriginal people in the party have built a small hut ‘for our night quarters’.⁴⁵ Unable to sleep, Landor thinks about the forests around him, wondering ‘what spirits roamed abroad, melancholy and malignant’.⁴⁶ The camp provides what he calls ‘a little circle of light’ that seems ‘like a magician’s ring, sacred and safe from evil spirits that filled the air around’.⁴⁷ The bivouac here works as a kind of protective force field that keeps the frontier – imagined here as Gothic – at a safe distance:

The appearance of the bivouac, to one viewing it from the surrounding darkness, was very picturesque. Every object was lighted up by the cheerful blaze – the cart with its packages in or about it, the sleepers in their blue or red woollen shirts, under the sloping roof, their guns leaning against the uprights, their shot-belts and pouches hanging in front – the kangaroo-dogs lying round the fire, and as near to it as possible – the surrounding trees and shrubs glittering with a silvery light, their evergreen foliage rustling at the breath of the soft land-breeze – altogether formed a striking and peculiar scene.⁴⁸

In Irby’s sketch of this scene, we can see the bivouac; it looks as if there is a kangaroo near the fire, attended by a Chinese cook, and another kangaroo



Figure 8.3 A. H. Irby, 'Death of the Kangaroo', in Edward Wilson Landor, *The Bushman; or, Life in a New Country* (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), n.p.

is being skinned in the background, with a kangaroo dog looking on (Figure 8.4). The settler – Landor himself, perhaps – is at the centre of the scene, standing with arms folded, smoking a pipe: a dominating figure.

The erotics of the kangaroo hunt

The accounts above confirm that the global hunting (and exchange) of species unfolded in the context of imperialism and empire, military occupation, exploration and settlement, and developments in the natural sciences. Hunting often operated in an aristocratic register of privilege and global mobility, as a recreational activity that would take young men around the world. Horace Wheelwright had practised as a lawyer in England in the mid-1840s; in 1847 he went to Sweden and Norway both to hunt and to pursue his interest in natural history. He emigrated to Australia, probably in 1852, trying to make his fortune on the Victorian goldfields, but without success. He then turned to *professional* hunting: the hunter, he wrote, 'has the satisfaction of knowing that, should all other trades fail, he can at least get his living by his gun if he knows how to use it'.⁴⁹ Wheelwright's *Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist: Or, Notes on the Field Sports and Fauna of Australia Felix* was published in London in 1861 and reprinted several times over. We have



Figure 8.4 A. H. Irby, 'The Bivouac', in Edward Wilson Landor, *The Bushman; or, Life in a New Country* (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), n.p.

already seen the figure of the wanderer in Lee's novel, *Adventures in Australia*, published ten years earlier. The wanderer is distinguished from the settler in these narratives, as someone less tied to the business of nation-building and property accumulation. 'There is very little fore-thought with the shooter,' Wheelwright remarks at one point. The hunter here is a bit like Landor's 'wastrels', emigrants with no plans for the future, including the future of the colonies.⁵⁰ 'Six years' rambling over the forests and fells of Northern Europe had totally unfitted me for any settled life,' Wheelwright writes; falling in with another new arrival, he adds: 'The gun had often brought both of us "to grief" in the Old World, so we agreed that for once it should help us out in the New.'⁵¹ Even so, Wheelwright thinks that, compared to other global hunting memoirs – like Mayne Reid's popular *Hunter's Feast* (1860) – his book about hunting in Australia will 'appear dull and devoid of interest'.⁵²

The first chapter in *Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist* is devoted to kangaroos. It chronicles the species' various physical attributes and behaviour, their habitats, and so on; finally, it describes the kangaroo as quarry that could indeed rival sought-after game species in other countries:

Although harmless and inoffensive when unmolested, nature has furnished the kangaroo with a dreadful weapon of defence in the powerful hind claw, with which it can rip up a dog, like the tusk of a boar; and I have seen a large kangaroo take up a powerful dog in its fore claws, bear-fashion, and try to bite it.⁵³

Wheelwright was also an amateur naturalist, and pays special tribute to the work of John Gould. What distinguishes the wanderer-naturalist from the traveller or the visitor here is his ability to provide the reader with an immersive sense of place and species-knowledge; he goes wherever experience leads him as opposed to following fixed routes, itineraries, or preconceived ideas, thereby affording a unique insight into the realities of his destination. In his 1865 book *Ten Years in Sweden*, he writes that ‘English travellers are exploring every corner of the globe, men now “scamper through” lands, which twenty years ago they knew only on the map’. In response to this, he asks an interestingly modern question: how best can a ‘stranger’ write about a foreign country?⁵⁴ The answer, for Wheelwright, involves careful first-hand observation and prolonged exposure to local conditions.

Wheelwright’s chapter on ‘The Australian Bush’ in a posthumous collection of essays published in 1866, *Sporting Sketches: Home and Abroad*, describes returning to London and coming across a novel about the kangaroo hunt: Anne Bowman’s *The Kangaroo Hunters* (1858). Like Sarah Bowdich Lee and Emilia Marryat Norris, Bowman had never visited Australia. Wheelwright initially thinks the book must be a memoir, an accurate account of kangaroo hunting by an old colonial. ‘I turned in early that night in order to thoroughly enjoy an anticipated treat,’ he writes.⁵⁵ But the illustrations alone are enough to disillusion him. One of them, ‘Fight with the Kangaroo’, shows two boys violently struggling with a kangaroo; one of them is in its grip (Figure 8.5).

‘Why, the strongest bushman that ever lived,’ Wheelwright complains, ‘would have stood no chance whatever if the kangaroo once could *put the bug on him* in the manner he is doing to the lad in the picture.’⁵⁶ He is dismayed to discover that the book is a novel written by ‘a lady’; in fact, Bowman was the author of a number of global adventure novels, many of which involved big-game hunting. Wheelwright is so appalled by the novel’s inaccuracies that he cuts it into pieces: ‘It might come in handy,’ he notes, ‘for wrapping specimens in.’⁵⁷ This is a male professional hunter’s disdain for a woman’s novel about kangaroo hunting which seems utterly remote from its realities. By this time, Wheelwright is himself in London with his career as a kangaroo hunter behind him, except that it continues to inhabit his unconscious: ‘I got through my book and fell asleep,, he writes. ‘I recollect I dreamt all night of kangaroo, and fancied I was engaged in a deadly struggle with an “old man”, which all at once, like the stag of Saint Hubert, assumed a beautiful female form.’⁵⁸

Hubertus was a French courtier from the eighth century who went hunting one day in the Ardennes forest in the north-east of France. A stag suddenly turned to admonish him, and when a crucifix appeared between its horns Hubertus renounced hunting and joined the Catholic Church. Boria



Figure 8.5 Artist unknown, 'Fight with the Kangaroo', in Anne Bowman, *The Kangaroo Hunters* (London: Porter and Coates, 1858), n.p.

Sax notes that this event enabled Hubertus to 'reconsider his way of life in a very intimate way' and comments: 'All animals ... can lead us into other realms.'⁵⁹ Wheelwright has no such conversion, but his unwavering commitment to the masculine authenticity of the hunt finds itself overturned in this London dream about kangaroos, inspired by a woman's global adventure novel of empire he had dismissed as inauthentic. We have seen someone dream about a kangaroo in England before. In this case, Wheelwright's imaginary struggle with an 'old man' turns into an embrace by a 'beautiful female form'. This certainly suggests a reconsideration of the business of kangaroo hunting 'in a very intimate way'. Transported back to London, the kangaroo hunt is also now transmuted into a kind of erotic feminine fantasy, as if all the things this hunter had rejected while working in the Australian bush return belatedly to haunt him.

Notes

- 1 John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions of Port Jackson and Norfolk Island* (London: John Stockdale, 1793), p. 54.
- 2 Hunter, *An Historical Journal*, pp. 54–5.
- 3 Markman Ellis, “‘That Singular and Wonderful Quadruped’: The Kangaroo as Historical Intangible Natural Heritage in the Eighteenth Century”, in Eric Dorfman (ed.), *Intangible Natural Heritage: New Perspectives on Natural Objects* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 64.
- 4 Penny van Toorn, *Writing Never Arrives Naked* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006), p. 69.
- 5 John Simons, *Kangaroo* (London: Reaktion, 2013), p. 144.
- 6 Christopher Plumb, *The Georgian Menagerie: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2015), p. 111.
- 7 Richard Neville, *Mr J. W. Lewin, Painter and Naturalist* (Sydney: NewSouth and National Library of Australia, 2012), p. 17.
- 8 Anon, ‘A Kangaroo Hunt in West Surrey’, *The People’s Advocate and New South Wales Vindicator* (15 March 1851), p. 11.
- 9 James Mason, *The Year-Book of Facts in Science and the Arts for 1876* (London: Ward, Lock, and Tayler, 1877), p. 18.
- 10 Anon, ‘Acclimatisation of Animals’, *Argus* (25 February 1861), p. 5.
- 11 Anon, ‘Kangaroos in France’, *Hamilton Spectator* (23 May 1874), p. 2.
- 12 Anon, ‘Adventures of a Kangaroo’, *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (9 May 1830), p. 1.
- 13 Anon, ‘Adventures of a Kangaroo’, p. 1.
- 14 Anon, ‘Adventures of a Kangaroo’, p. 1.
- 15 Anon, ‘Adventures of a Kangaroo’, p. 1.
- 16 Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 366.
- 17 Anon, ‘Adventures of a Kangaroo’, p. 1.
- 18 Sarah Bowdich Lee (Mrs R.), *Taxidermy: or, the Art of Collecting, Preparing, and Mounting Objects of Natural History* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), p. 121.
- 19 Sarah Bowdich Lee (Mrs R.), *Adventures in Australia; or, the Wanderings of Captain Spencer in the Bush and the Wilds* (London: Grant and Griffith, 1851), p. 3.
- 20 Bernhard Gissibl, ‘The Conservation of Luxury: Safari Hunting and the Consumption of Wildlife in Twentieth-Century East Africa’, in Bernd-Stefan Grewe and Karin Hofmeester (eds), *Luxury in Global Perspective: Objects and Practices, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 269.
- 21 Lee, *Adventures in Australia*, p. 30.
- 22 Lee, *Adventures in Australia*, pp. 259–60.
- 23 Emilia Marryat Norris, *Jack Stanley; or, the Young Adventurers* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1882), p. 252.
- 24 Ludovic de Beauvoir, *A Voyage around the World* (London: John Murray, 1970), p. 138.

- 25 De Beauvoir, *A Voyage around the World*, p. 138.
- 26 De Beauvoir, *A Voyage around the World*, p. 143.
- 27 De Beauvoir, *A Voyage around the World*, pp. 144–5.
- 28 Philip Dine, 'Horse Racing in Early Colonial Algeria: From Anglophilia to Arabomania', in Daniel O'Quinn and Alexis Tadié (eds), *Sporting Cultures, 1650–1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), p. 145.
- 29 De Beauvoir, *A Voyage around the World*, p. 145.
- 30 Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones, *Augustus Earle: Travel Artist* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1980), p. 1.
- 31 Hackforth-Jones, *Augustus Earle*, p. 11.
- 32 Richard Keynes, *The Beagle Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 1.
- 33 Hackforth-Jones, *Augustus Earle*, p. 18.
- 34 Thomas Braidwood Wilson, *Narrative of a Voyage round the World* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert & Piper, 1835), p. 242.
- 35 Wilson, *Narrative of a Voyage*, p. 245.
- 36 Robert Dawson, *The Present State of Australia; a Description of the Country, Its Advantages and Prospects, with Reference to Emigration: And a Particular Account of the Manners, Customs and Conditions of Its Aboriginal Inhabitants* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1830), p. 63.
- 37 Dawson, *The Present State of Australia*, p. 101.
- 38 Dawson, *The Present State of Australia*, p. 104.
- 39 Dawson, *The Present State of Australia*, p. 101.
- 40 Dawson, *The Present State of Australia*, p. 178.
- 41 Edward Wilson Landor, *The Bushman; or, Life in a New Country* (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), p. 5.
- 42 Landor, *The Bushman*, p. 331.
- 43 Landor, *The Bushman*, p. 333.
- 44 Landor, *The Bushman*, p. 334.
- 45 Landor, *The Bushman*, p. 160.
- 46 Landor, *The Bushman*, p. 162.
- 47 Landor, *The Bushman*, p. 162.
- 48 Landor, *The Bushman*, p. 163.
- 49 Horace Wheelwright, *Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist: Or, Notes on the Field Sports and Fauna of Australia Felix* (London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1861), p. xii.
- 50 Wheelwright, *Bush Wanderings*, p. 215.
- 51 Wheelwright, *Bush Wanderings*, p. x.
- 52 Wheelwright, *Bush Wanderings*, p. xi.
- 53 Wheelwright, *Bush Wanderings*, p. 17.
- 54 Horace Wheelwright, *Ten Years in Sweden: Being a Description of the Landscape, Climate, Domestic Life, Forests, Mines, Agriculture, Field Sports, and Fauna of Scandinavia* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1865), p. x.
- 55 Horace Wheelwright, *Sporting Sketches at Home and Abroad* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1866), p. 417.

- 56 Wheelwright, *Sporting Sketches*, p. 418.
- 57 Wheelwright, *Sporting Sketches*, p. 418.
- 58 Wheelwright, *Sporting Sketches*, p. 419.
- 59 Boria Sax, *Imaginary Animals: The Monstrous, the Wondrous and the Human* (London: Reaktion, 2013), p. 31.