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An orientation to nature: The construction of wilderness in the work of John Watt Beattie (1859-1930)

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I declare that what follows is the product of my own independent work and has not been previously submitted for assessment at a tertiary institution.

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Abstract

At the turn of the twentieth century Australian nature had become increasingly bound up in the symbolism of a young nation. From the appropriation of native flora and fauna to the declaration of National Parks, the hostility that defined much of the early interactions between Europeans and Australian nature had softened. This thesis examines the reorientations to nature that preceded this moment by investigating a new vision of nature in Tasmania at the turn of the twentieth century. This vision was embodied in the sentimental depictions of remote wilderness that the photographer John Watt Beattie popularised between 1879 and 1930. The trends and values embodied in Beattie's photography — those of Tasmanian history, the emergence of a sentimental attachment to local scenery and romanticism — communicated an orientation to nature based on sympathy, wonder and respect. By identifying how Beattie played upon the anxieties of his Tasmanian audiences, performed his role as a photographer-explorer and reproduced discourses of romanticism, this thesis explores the archaeology of an emergent environmental consciousness in turn of the century Tasmania.

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Introduction

The Beattie moment in historical perspective: Tasmanian nature, John Watt Beattie and environmental history

In 1879, at the age of twenty, John Watt Beattie made his first photographic journey into the Tasmanian wilderness. After some time living on his father's farm in the picturesque upper Derwent Valley, he borrowed a horse, hired a cart, and made a start for Lake St. Clair with two colleagues and a set of gelatine Dry-Plates.[1] By 1896, swept up in the burgeoning and influential Tasmanian tourist industry,[2] he was appointed the colony's official photographer and was presenting illustrated lectures to packed halls in Hobart and Launceston.[3] Beattie's miraculous fortunes were tied to a set of historical contingencies, not least of which was the transition from wet to dry plate photography in the early 1880s. While an avid collector, antiquarian, writer and conservationist, it was through his photographs of Tasmanian wilderness that Beattie both reflected and shaped new orientations to the environment in the late nineteenth century. This reorientation fed into the the developing imperative of 'selling' Tasmania as a tourist destination.[4] In this way, we can think of a Beattie moment in late nineteenth century Tasmanian orientations to nature.[5] The Beattie moment acted as a catalyst for the development of new practices in Tasmanian nature and was a pivotal juncture in Tasmanian history.

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[1] Jack Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia (1955),* 2nd edition*,* (Melbourne: Institute of Australian Photography, 1977), p. 81.

[2] Marian Walker, "Memories, dreams and inventions: the evolution of Tasmania's tourism image 1803-1939," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Tasmania, 2008), pp. 3-4.

[3] Michael Roe, "Beattie, John Watt (1859–1930)," in Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/beattie-john-watt-5171/text8687. Article was first published in hardcopy in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 7, (MUP), 1979. Accessed 2 November 2013.

[4] Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia (1955),* pp. 80-84.

[5] I approach 'the Beattie moment' as a collection of interrelated shifts in orientations to Tasmanian nature. These shifts were articulated in a social movement in late nineteenth century Tasmania, but they were also expressed within John Watt Beattie's personal archive. In naming this movement after a prominent participant I am not rejecting the diversity of actors within it beyond Beattie, but attempting to simplify terminology for the purposes of this thesis.

The shifts of the Beattie moment were connected to the growth of a mature urban society and culture in Tasmania. By the late nineteenth century many Tasmanian men had become wealthy from the financial dividends of a mining and settlement boom and aspired to the habits and status of urban gentlemen. In some cases this involved the pursuit of art as a hobby within the photographic clubs of Hobart and Launceston.[6] Clubs like the Tasmanian Photographic and Art Association and the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club encouraged in their members a passion for nature. Understandably, these clubs were incubators of new experiences and depictions of the environment based on a sympathetic orientation to nature. Such an orientation was cultivated as these photographers engaged in the romantic fantasy of solo trips into the Tasmanian wilderness. The most talented and successful of these amateurs were able to make a career in landscape and portrait photography — contemporaries of Beattie like Stephen Spurling II and the Anson Brothers (who Beattie worked for and eventually bought out), established thriving studios in Launceston and Hobart.[7] The three generations of Spurling's were especially successful and along with Beattie, were at the forefront of photographic technology and landscape photography in Tasmania.[8] The images that these photographers captured were then represented and appropriated through postcards, albums, and the popular magic lantern show.[9] Photographers presented nature according to the prevailing, and often competing, understandings of what made landscapes valuable in the late nineteenth century. One of the most popular cultural frames for these urbanites was the

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[6] Nic Haygarth, *The Wild Ride: Revolutions that shaped Tasmanian black and white wilderness photography* (Launceston: The National Trust of Australia, 2008), p. 35.

[7] Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers: A Directory, 1840-1940,* edited by Gillian Winter, (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical research Association, 1995), pp. xii-xiii.

[8] Christine Burgess, "The Spurling Legacy and the Emergence of Wilderness Photography in Tasmania," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2010), pp. 1-2.

[9] Margaret Tassell and David Wood, *Tasmanian Photographer: From the John Watt Beattie Collection,* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981), p. 7.

"pursuit of wonder", which drove the development of nature leisure at the turn of the twentieth century.[10]

This aesthetic shift to the picturesque and the social shift in leisure patterns that it provoked suited Beattie perfectly. His reputation was built in a period where the scarcity of Aborigines in the colony rendered Tasmania 'safe', the convict question had been 'resolved' with the cessation of transportation, the development of mining infrastructure had opened the way and the time for nature leisure in the romantic highlands, and technological development had provided a new medium for the capture of the romantic in nature. The interactions between all these features had important implications in the emergence of the romantic wilderness aesthetic that underpinned a reorientation to nature in late colonial Tasmania. Diverging from the utilitarian conception of European man in nature that supported the colonial possession and appropriation of nature, this reorientation was defined by a conceptualisation of man's place in nature based on a more sympathetic or sentimental model of relations.

Beattie's vision of wilderness provided much of the imaginative foundation for the emergence of this model of relations in Tasmania by way of a framework of romantic imagery and rhetoric. Beattie's vision of man in nature was centred on an "innocent enjoyment of the bush" that helped to consolidate an environmental consciousness in citizens by way of increased exposure to wilderness.[11] This sentimental respect for Australian nature contradicted the dominant, oppositional orientations to nature that developed over the course of Australian settlement in the nineteenth century.[12] Both officially and unofficially Beattie played central

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[10] Julia Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's Landscape was Explored, Nature Discovered and Tourism Unleashed,* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2005), p. 8.

[11] Richard White and Caroline Ford, "Introduction" in *Playing in the bush: Recreation and national parks in New South Wales,* ed. Richard White and Caroline Ford (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2012), p. 15.

[12] Andrea Gaynor, "Environmental transformations" in *The Cambridge History of Australia,* Vol. 1, *Indigenous and Colonial Australia,* ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 276-281.

roles in the promotion of this new vision in Tasmania, which included the dissemination of information and imagery, the exploration of the island and advocation for the conservation of particular spaces. The deployment of his photographs of romantic scenery in his magic lantern shows and other publications resonated strongly amongst a group of urbanites who were familiar with, but physically disconnected from, the Tasmanian wilderness.

Ultimately, Beattie's images were significant because they helped to transform perceptions of Tasmanian nature by attributing intrinsic value to scenery through a romantic lens. The employment of a romantic aesthetic in the imagery that supported new leisure practices in nature is an example of how intrinsic values of Australian landscapes began to disrupt the dominant utilitarian conception of the Australian environment in the late nineteenth century. In Tasmania, Beattie provided a material and rhetorical impetus for this disruption — through his photographs , publications, and advocacy for nature leisure, conservation and preservation. A close engagement with Beattie's considerable photographic oeuvre as well as his own written archive, provides a means of exploring the mechanics behind a reorientation to nature which constituted a remarkable shift in how Europeans engaged with the Tasmanian physical environment.

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Beattie's contribution to the popularisation of a sympathetic orientation to nature in Tasmania has, to some extent, been noted by historians of Tasmania and practitioners of environmental history in Australia. Though there were other notable Tasmanian photographers active in the depiction of wilderness between 1890 and 1920, few enjoyed the official approval and wide

commercial popularity that Beattie did.[13] Beattie is a significant figure in Tasmanian history and an understanding of Beattie as an advocate for the preservation of Tasmanian wilderness is apparent in most of the literature, which, apart from some important exceptions, lacks a sustained historical sensibility. One exception to this is Nic Haygarth's *The Wild Ride.* From Haygarth's scholarship it is clear that the connection between Beattie, technology, and the opening of the Tasmanian highlands is well established,[14] and though it can of course benefit from further attention, the real intellectual dividend of studying Beattie lies elsewhere. A number of other forces behind the Beattie moment in turn of the century Tasmania have had less attention than they should. Indeed, existing interpretations of this movement have either been too superficial or too provincial to communicate either the meaning of Beattie's vision of a sympathetic orientation to the environment, or the archaeology of the Beattie moment in turn of the century Tasmania.

Both the meaning of sympathetic orientations to the environment and the archaeology of depictions of wilderness like Beattie's have been considered in other Australian contexts. There is evidence that throughout the nineteenth century Australian nature became entangled in romantic discourses in contextual art, writing, and leisure practices. Tim Bonyhady has argued in *The Colonial Earth* that during this period art "assumed a new significance as a medium for changing how Australians looked at their environment."[15] And while the artists behind this shift do not measure up to current expectations of 'respect for nature' in their eagerness to change views using the axe,[16] they were nevertheless central to the ways that "The settlers' attachment to the colonial landscape" became "matched by their desire to

[13] Roe, "Beattie, John Watt (1859–1930)," in Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/beattie-john-watt-5171/text8687. Accessed 2 November 2013.

[14] Haygarth, *The Wild Ride,* pp. i-iv.

[15] Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth,* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), p. 8.

[16] Tim Bonyhady, "Artists with Axes," *Environment and History* 1 (1995), p. 223.

preserve it."[17] In *Hunters and Collectors,* Tom Griffiths establishes that the sentimental reorientation of the settler gaze on mainland Australia was underlaid by an 'antiquarian imagination' in nature writing that emerged as a counterpoint to pastoral romantic imagery.[18] Significantly, Griffiths' network of eccentrics thought that the frontiers of knowledge in the natural world could only be "advanced through a direct, watchful, sensuous engagement with nature."[19] These public expressions of a sympathetic orientation to nature apparent in art and writing promoted an idealised experience of nature — what Julia Horne has called, "wonder as a state of being."[20] While all these scholars have established a trajectory of environmental consciousness in colonial Australia, a localised case study of the expression of sentiment in Beattie's oeuvre can contribute new insights as to how orientations became inflected in the Tasmanian context.

While this thesis tests the limits of existing literature with an investigation of the Beattie moment, it also reconsiders a historical debate over the environmental bona fides of colonial artists like Beattie. In 'Artists with Axes', Bonyhady interrogates the idea that colonial artists were antecedent environmentalists by pointing out that the "pursuit of the romantic… did not, however, always involve a corresponding respect for nature".[21] Colonial artists often altered the minor details of scenes to fit European conceptions of beauty. However, as Bill Gammage pointed out in respect to colonial painters, "it was safe to embellish a transient foreground, but not the broad span of the land" because the depiction of the land was the point of reproducing

[17] Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth,* pp. 3-4.

[18] Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 105.

[19] *Ibid.,* pp. 127.

[20] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder*, p. 301.

[21] Bonyhady, "Artists with Axes," p. 223.

Australian landscape in the first place.[22] Unlike Gammage's painters, photographers could not imaginatively reset foregrounds — instead they cleared them.[23]

Bonyhady raises numerous examples of recklessly eager photographers and artists including Beattie, but it is important to note the impact of these individuals on stimulating popular admiration for nature, and the extent to which this affects how we should analyse the behaviour of the artists. The fact that Beattie's behaviour was not that of the latter-day environmentalist does not refute his contribution to the propagation of a type of environmental consciousness in turn of the century Tasmania. Indeed, just as striking photographs of Tasmanian wilderness were critical to the modern environmental movement in Australia, Beattie's sympathetic depictions of wilderness established the value of nature in the popular imaginary in turn of the century Tasmania.

Reading the Beattie moment as an imaginative catalyst for wider changes in leisure practices retains a sensitivity to where new orientations to nature were situated in relation to the behaviours that they enabled. While Horne touched on the links between tourism and conservation ideology in Tasmania at the turn of the twentieth century,[24] her book is necessarily restricted to a larger scale, and sacrifices a close grained analysis of exactly how these discourses were reproduced. Nevertheless, Horne's analysis of how a cultivated interest in the environment transformed practices of tourism and orientations to nature across Australia forms a necessary backdrop to this study.[25] Beattie was intimately connected to the webs of "place, image and sign"[26] that were the foundations of the nineteenth century tourist

[22] Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia,* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2011), p 19.

[23] Bonyhady, "Artists with Axes," p. 229.

[24] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder,* pp. 154-159.

[25] *Ibid.,* p. 288-289.

[26] Karen Dubinsky, "Wild Things: Nature, Culture and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914," *Labour/Le Travail* 40 (1997): p. 281.

industry, and the transformed leisure practices that Horne details certainly attest to Beattie's influence.

Overall, this thesis is more concerned with what these discourses meant — what histories they were aligned with, how they were expressed, and what kind of behaviour they prioritised. To some extent, such a close grained analysis is offered by Haygarth, but in his focus on the development of photographic technology and bourgeois leisure in Tasmania the longer term historical trends behind the realignment of orientations to nature in late colonial Tasmania become obscured. Bonyhady also casts an historical eye on Beattie's work.[27] However, in asking whether or not photographer-explorer's measured up to environmentalist ideals, and making the point that the "celebration of the artist as conservationist went too far",[28] Bonyhady shifts the focus away from the wider social implications of art and instead historicises a particular ethical code — more or less that of the bushman.

In analysing the Beattie moment as a realignment in the way that some colonial Tasmanians orientated themselves to nature, this thesis correlates with the principal goal of environmental history. Like most environmental history, it is engaged with understanding the physical and imaginative interactions between human cultures and the natural world through time.[29] Indeed, the geographer Clarence Glacken has pointed out that the practical and theoretical implications of these transitions have long captivated western thinkers.[30] In particular, Glacken considered how these transitions were placed within the gradual progression of ideas of the natural world from "the idea of a designed earth" to "the idea of environmental

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[27] Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth,* p. 201.

[28] *Ibid.,* p. 215.

[29] Donald Worster, 'Appendix: Doing Environmental History' in *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History,* ed. Donald Worster and William Cronon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 290.

[30] Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the end of the Eighteenth Century,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. i.

influence" to "man as geographic agent."[31] The reorientation to nature embodied in the Beattie moment was a part of the transition to Glacken's final category. Europeans had been aware of their environmental influence since crises in forestry management in the eighteenth century, and these were often addressed with colonial conservation practices.[32] Doubtless, Beattie's arguments for conservation drew some power from the degradation of mining in Tasmania's western highlands and a wider cultural awareness of environmental damage.[33] But the vision of wilderness that Beattie articulated transcended the utilitarian basis of conservation ideology in an expression of a sentimentalised, intrinsically valuable nature.

In this way, Beattie's vision and advocacy of wilderness related to an emergent late nineteenth century version of environmentalist politics. Drew Hutton and Libby Connors have suggested that the contemporary Australian environment movement has been "slow to claim its past," and as a result has severed the continuity between the protest movements of the 1970s and 1980s and the nineteenth century origins of environmentalism.[34] These politics have produced a set of circumstances where scholars are wary to use terms like 'environmentalist' or 'environmentalism' to describe actors and movements in the historical space that Beattie inhabited. But the reality is that individuals like Beattie were as aware of the environmental impacts of industrial modernity, and were as convinced of the intrinsic value of wilderness, as the activists of the 1970s. While nineteenth century actors may have lacked much of the political and even more of the ecological vocabulary to express themselves, they were nevertheless responding to the same human-induced environmental concerns. Even more importantly, nineteenth century actors mobilised ethical codes like the romantic tradition to

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[31] *Ibid*.

[32] Gaynor, "Environmental transformations," p. 272.

[33] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (1), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[34] Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement,* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 17.

argue for less damaging orientations to nature — specifically that of a relationship based on respect, sympathy and sentiment. This meant that actors like Beattie were aware of the environmental impacts of human activity and were equipped with a rationale for challenging these interactions — they displayed an environmental consciousness.

Beattie's environmental consciousness was informed by a rich provincial historical imagination that encompassed a set of European experiences of nature in Tasmania ranging from contact to colonial maturity. In one sense, this historical imagination was defined by the long-term effects of Alfred Crosby's Columbian Exchange — the biological interactions and transformation of nature that stemmed from the process of European settlement in the "Neo-Europes" established around the globe between 1820 and 1930.[35] These processes encompassed many of the ecological changes that took place as settlement in Tasmania spread throughout the island. For example, Stuart Macintyre has stressed the environmental role of sheep, which could be thought of as "the shock troops of land seizure" in the imposition of an imperial economy on Australian nature.[36] Settler-owned cattle also played a role as "shock-troops" of an imperial economy that gradually changed the ecologies of all settler societies.[37] The introduction of sheep and cattle onto the inland grazing country and the clearing of trees began in the early years of the 1800s and accelerated throughout the nineteenth century.[38] In Tasmania, pastoralism was encouraged by the mild climate and native pasture, and the colony's flock of sheep — about 172,000 in 1819 — was double that of New South Wales within twenty years of settlement.[39] Sharon Morgan has argued that the early years of

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[35] Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 (1986)*, 2nd edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-5.

[36] Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia,* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 59-70.

[37] Tom Griffiths, 'Introduction' in *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* ed. Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), 1997, pp. 1-18, p. 9.

[38] Henry Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 38-40.

[39] James Boyce, "Return to Eden: Van Diemen's Land and the Early British Settlement of Australia," *Environment and History* 14 (2008): p. 295.

settlement in Tasmania coincided with an "inevitable" ecological destruction, and after that a reconstruction based on various versions of a European pastoral ideal.[40] This process had a profound environmental impact in Tasmania, where the ecologies of the north-west of the island were radically transformed for a pastoral economy that generated enormous wealth.[41] Beattie's family were originally farmers in the Derwent Valley and he was familiar with the wide-scale transformations wrought by the Columbian Exchange and the utilitarian pastoral economy. Beattie's sympathetic vision of wilderness was a reaction to this history of hostility.

While the Columbian Exchange explains the backdrop of the emergence of sympathetic orientations to nature, the biological framework of Crosby neglects much of the wider context and trajectory of environmental change in Tasmania. Indeed, Libby Robin and Jane Carruthers have pointed out that Crosby's biological exchanges operated differently in separate geographies.[42] It is clear that in Tasmania, strictly biological challenges were not the only ecological threats to the environment. James Belich has argued that the kind of "explosive colonisation" that "compressed time and supercharged growth" on the American and Australian frontiers in the nineteenth century had widespread environmental causes and implications.[43] The precise lens of Crosby's Columbian Exchange isolates the biological changes caused by European settlement at the expense of placing moments of contact in a more comprehensive historical timeline. Belich demonstrates that these biological changes occurred in repeated cycles as explosive colonisation led to extensive changes in the biological sphere of settler colonies because of the perpetual environmental stresses of population growth.

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[40] Sharon Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an Antipodean England,* (Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 3.

[41] Gaynor, "Environmental transformations," p. 280.

[42] Jane Carruthers and Libby Robin, "Taxonomic Imperialism in the Battles for Acacia: Identity and Science in South Africa and Australia," *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa* 65 (2010): pp. 48-9.

[43] James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 9.

As new agricultural practices and an increase in population necessitated further changes in orientations to and practices in nature, the challenges of growth became the common experience of Australian settlement throughout the nineteenth century. Belich relies in part on the example of colonial Victoria, but between 1832 and 1851 Tasmania was also the site of explosive colonisation with the population growing from 24,000 to just under 70,000.[44] Explosive colonisation understandably placed considerable pressure on nature and often resulted in observable environmental damage.[45] Settlers were forced into "a rolling engagement with the dynamics and ecology of an unfamiliar land, a long physical encounter that also represents an intellectual settling-in."[46] Griffiths has read this entire period as "like a giant experiment in ecological crisis and management, sometimes a horrifying concentration of environmental damage and cultural loss, and sometimes a heartening parable of hope and learning."[47] As elsewhere, colonialism in Tasmania necessitated continual imaginative as well as physical encounters that impelled environmental consciousness in peculiar ways and occasionally attested to a more positive "coming-to-terms" in Australian orientations to nature.[48] Positioned at the turn of the twentieth century, Beattie's vision of wilderness was a positive 'coming-to-terms' all too aware of the full history of environmental impacts of European settlement in Tasmania.

Interestingly, while Beattie's vision of wilderness was a response to the history of interactions between humans and nature in Tasmania, it appeared to neglect the heritage of Indigenous

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[44] Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania*, p. 139.

[45] James Beattie, *Empire and Environmental Anxiety: Health, Science, Art and Conservation in South Asia and Australasia, 1800-1920,* (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 4.

[46] Libby Robin and Mike Smith, "Australian environmental history: Ten years on" *Environment and History* 14 (2008): p. 136.

[47] Tom Griffiths, "The Nature of Culture and and the Culture of Nature," in *Cultural History in Australia*, ed. Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 71.

[48] J.M. Powell, "Environment Identity Convergences in Australia, 1880-1950," in *(Dis)Placing Empire: Renegotiating British Colonial Geographies,* ed. Lindsay J. Proudfoot and Michael M. Roche (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 117-118.

dispossession at the heart of settlement. As an individual engaged in nature writing Beattie displayed a similar ecological awareness to a set of writers and bohemians in turn of the century Victoria. These antiquarians were engaged in producing "original and intimate readings" of Australian nature at around the same time that Beattie was active in Tasmania.[49] However, these antiquarians grappled with the heritage of contact and conflict that defined the colonial frontier in Victoria for much of the nineteenth century. Donald Macdonald, a trailblazer of Victorian nature writing whose grandmother had grown up speaking an Indigenous language, was sometimes moved by his exposure to wilderness to reflect sensitively about the history of violence and dispossession that underwrote his project of nature writing.[50] Beattie never engaged in this style of nostalgia in the context of his nature writing. As an amateur historian and curator of his own museum on Tasmania Beattie collected and presented photographs of Indigenous people, but as a Scot arriving in Tasmania in 1879 — three years after the death of Truganini and at the peak of social Darwinist understandings of racial extinction — the inevitable death of the 'doomed race' in Tasmania was purely of the past. An investigation into this aspect of Beattie's archive can help uncover the particulars of his post-'extinction' understanding of the possession of nature, and explain why an acknowledgement of the injustice of dispossession was incompatible with sympathetic orientations to wilderness in turn of the century Tasmania.

Comparing visions of wilderness in this way can assist in identifying the historical conditions that produced different orientations to nature in the Tasmanian context. In terms of this approach it was not just mainland Australia that experienced movements comparative to the one that Beattie was involved in. Indeed, as an idea, wilderness has been most often associated with the American experience of nature. American environmental historiography is

[49] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors,* p. 122.

[50] *Ibid.,* p. 119.

partially defined by the legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis — which suggested that the unique American national character was derived from the experience of contact with a 'wild' frontier.[51] In Turner's influential essays, the imaginative link between the ideals of individualism, independence and egalitarianism, and the national character of the United States of America was forged through a battle with wilderness. Roderick Nash has pointed out that the memory of this battle with nature resonated amongst American urban communities at the turn of the twentieth century.[52] A similar pioneer imagination was evident in the Beattie moment in the way that magic lantern shows functioned as immersive experiences of nature for audiences alienated from wilderness. In Tasmania, the social shifts of the late nineteenth century drew men away from rural labour and into towns, factories and mines.[53] These men were familiar with the moral values associated with the immersion in wilderness that characterised the lives of earlier settlers and sought to access experiences of nature that would have been familiar to their forefathers.

This indicates that Beattie's magic lantern shows were produced by a cultural yearning for contact with nature that was linked to shifts in labour practices and living conditions. American environmental historian Richard White has pointed out that as an "intellectual history of attitudes toward nature" environmental histories have invariably "emphasized how certain cultural views of nature vary with class and locale."[54] Indeed, as a concept, 'wilderness' exists at the centre of a web of relations consisting of contextual (and sometimes competing) cultural forces.[55] This formulation evokes Richard Grove's notion that ideas about

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[51] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History,* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 3.

[52] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind (1967),* 4th edition, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 141-143.

[53] Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania,* p 198.

[54] Richard White, "From Wilderness to Hybrid Landscapes: The Cultural Turn in Environmental History" *The Historian* 66 (2004): pp. 557-560.

[55] Ibid., pp. 558-560.

the environment during the era of European expansion were a forum for rehearsing discourses of "internal alienation" and "fulfilment."[56] If these notions are accurate, it means that historians can read depictions of environments as texts to draw out the prevailing intellectual preoccupations of the day.

Alfred Runte does this in *National Parks: The American Experience,* in which he argues that the development of the American National Parks movement was a response to New World cultural anxiety about the classical antiquity of the Old World.[57] Runte argued that through the National Parks movement Americans used romantic scenery to claim a comparative natural antiquity.[58] Runte's interpretations hold in Australia, where the influence of competing romantic ideals — classical, pastoral and sentimental — produced different visions of the Australian landscape.[59] However, Runte's is just one reading of the American National Parks movement, and as Donald Worster has argued: "'nature' is not one idea but many ideas, meanings, thoughts, feelings, all piled on top of one another, often in the most unsystematic fashion."[60] The primary purpose of cultural environmental history is sensitively unravelling these ideologies in relation to the cultures that they existed in, and while American antecedents of environmentalism are often found in a national past, there is much of the movement that defies easy geographical categorisation.

While Runte's observations about how nature in the American west was mobilised to support ideas of American citizenship and nationalism in the late nineteenth century have been

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[56] Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 38.

[57] Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience (1976),* 4th edition, (Plymouth: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), pp. 5-9.

[58] Alfred Runte, "The National Park Idea: Origins and Paradox of the American Experience," *Journal of Forest History* 21 (1977): p. 65.

[59] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors,* pp. 103-106.

[60] Worster, "Appendix: Doing Environmental History," p. 299.

inspirational for this project, I focus on just one particular section of Runte's concept of 'scenic nationalism.' While cognisant of the ways that Tasmanian nature was mobilised through various movements to support provincial and national notions of identity, this thesis predominantly leaves this aside in favour of dissecting the ways in which scenery became "a cultural asset" in the first place.[61] This initial connection lies underneath the politics and practices of scenic nationalism and nature leisure as they developed in the American and the Australian contexts in the twentieth century. An analysis of what drove the initial connection between nature and sentiment prioritises a local scale. Instead of analysing the effects of a version of scenic nationalism in the Tasmanian context, this thesis takes a step back and considers what historical forces contained and produced this moment of connection, how it was communicated by actors like Beattie and what contemporary discourses were drawn upon to give this form of environmental consciousness weight.

Understanding the relationships between Beattie's vision of wilderness and those that emerged in the American west and in Victoria are important, but there were some particular differences in how these visions were produced and reproduced in each context. Therefore this study needs to remain sensitive to how the interaction between global, regional and local forces can produce historical contingencies. John Mackenzie has demonstrated that connections between European cultural practices, regional environmental realities and local ecological innovations drove peculiar orientations to nature and game in British Africa.[62] Responses to environmental challenges were constituted through a range of metropolitan, colonial and international networks that worked towards conservation measures.[63] Interpretations like Mackenzie's are sensitive to a diverse range of cultural influences that

[61] Runte, *National Parks,* p. 11.

[62] John M. Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 201-202.

[63] *Ibid.,* p. 202.

acted upon the settler imagination. Subjected to a similar interpretation, the story of wilderness in turn of the century Tasmania would produce a history that acknowledged the importance of how settlers conceived of nature on the Tasmanian frontier alongside an understanding of imperial cultures of information in the Royal Society of Tasmania (The Royal Society).

The Royal Society, founded in 1841, was one way that Tasmanian settlers came to terms with a foreign nature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Royal Society was comprised of a network of naturalists and natural historians that faced the cultural possession of Tasmania with a "framework that tied local and immediate experience to the Anglo and European worlds."[64] Ian Tyrell has demonstrated that this framework was inherently transnational and argued that the experiences of degradation that accompanied the mining booms drove new approaches to the development of productive land in both Australia and California.[65] Such challenges provoked an investigation into the natural environment that eventually led to the development of more sophisticated orientations to nature. Indeed, Peder Anker has argued that the new science of ecology emerged "out of the imperial administrative and political culture"[66] of the late nineteenth century British empire.

Ideas like ecology, conservation ideology and National Parks all emerged in Anglo settler societies at similar times. Understandably, these ideas then developed along different trajectories according to the specific historical contingencies of certain settlements and

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[64] Thomas R. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and history in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 98.

[65] Ian Tyrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: Californian-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860-1930,* (California: University of California Press, 1999), p. 5.

[66] Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945,* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 1-2.

colonies.[67] Nevertheless, Grove has argued that "the circumstances of colonial expansion increasingly exerted the most potent influence on European perceptions of the human relationship with the environment."[68] In this way, Beattie's work within The Royal Society at the turn of the twentieth century is part of what Grove calls the "emergence of a complex European epistemology of the global environment."[69] And while Grove explains the ways that Europeans came to grips with environmental degradation through an analysis of environmentalist attitudes and conservationist policies in the tropical colonies of the European empires,[70] the degradation-conservation dynamic that he identifies resonates throughout the Beattie moment. This dynamic was especially apparent in Beattie's presentations to The Royal Society.

Institutions like The Royal Society were forums for the discussion of a range of issues relating to the anxieties produced during the process of settlement. Springing from one of global histories great ecological revolutions in 1788, Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin point out that modern Australian culture has been fascinated with "the moral and scientific dimensions of the ecology of invasion."[71] This claim reflects the divergent strands of The Royal Society at the turn of the century in the way that the institution harboured both the ecological and sentimental investigation of Tasmanian nature. Beattie's activities within The Royal Society were positioned in this space of ecological crisis and management. Indeed, his advocacy was positioned in what Robin has suggested was a period of flux during which the links between the local ecologies of Australia and the global imperial economies were weakening in favour

[67] Thomas R. Dunlap, "Ecology and environmentalism in the Anglo Settler colonies", and Jane Carruthers, "Nationhood and national parks: comparative examples from the post-imperial experience" in *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* ed. Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), 1997.

[68] Grove, *Green Imperialism*, p. 24.

[69] *Ibid.,* p. 2.

[70] *Ibid.,* p. 17.

[71] Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin, "Environmental History in Australasia" *Environmental History* 10 (2004): p. 6.

of national symbolic bonds.[72] However, there was a contradiction at the heart of an increasing attachment to local nature. The development of tracks and tourist infrastructure to service this interest threatened the wild romantic value that made these spaces valuable. This was an internal contradiction within the Beattie moment and reflected an instability in how different groups of settlers were attempting to come to terms with Tasmanian nature.

The problems of settler adjustment were frequently worked out through the employment of romantic ideals as they applied to the conservation of aesthetic landscapes.[73] In Beattie's time, romantic ideals were best articulated through the medium of photography, which had dovetailed with romanticism to transform the way that settlers and Europeans imagined the landscapes that they possessed.[74] Curiously, in Beattie's Tasmania these ideals — mediated through the photographic lens — were shared in a colonial scientific society, which provided the "structures and personnel for the examination of environmental processes and problems."[75] Stefan Petrow has pointed out that in Tasmania, this examination included the historical interests of a cultural elite driven by "curiosity and love of place" to use The Royal Society and a conduit through which their antiquarian imagination could be exercised.[76]

In these ways, scientific networks like The Royal Society provided a focus for the expression of sentimental approaches to the environmental and historical puzzle of settlement.

The resonance of Tasmanian nature with established ideals of romantic beauty was a crucial element in how Beattie composed and presented his vision of wilderness at the turn of the

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[72] Libby Robin, *How a Continent Created a Nation,* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2007), p. 187.

[73] Beattie, *Empire and Environmental Anxiety,* p. 73.

[74] Haygarth, *The Wild Ride,* p. 6.

[75] Beattie, *Empire and Environmental Anxiety,* p. 27.

[76] Stefan Petrow, "The Antiquarian Mind: Tasmanian History and the Royal Society of Tasmania, 1899-1927," *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* 137 (2003): p. 68.

century. During the nineteenth century, romanticism was especially concerned with preserving or transforming natures.[77] In Australia, romanticism had become a key plank in the consolidation of settler-colonial culture by the late nineteenth century through the "nature-inscription" of a number of influential bohemian authors, poets, and artists.[78] These cultural developments reflected an emergent regard for the romantic, picturesque quality of the Australian landscape that, while secondary to more established conceptions of Australian nature, underpinned the late nineteenth century National Parks movement and the shift to nature leisure more generally.[79] One important element of an investigation of the emergence of an environmental consciousness in Tasmania is exploring the contextual relationships between cultures of romanticism and how nature was thought of, talked about, and depicted, at the turn of the twentieth century.

The ubiquity of romanticism in Beattie's vision of wilderness indicates that while early attempts at conservation lacked the scientific rationale of those in the late twentieth century, they do offer an example of how romantic sensibilities informed an environmental consciousness. Mary Louise Pratt has identified the foundations of this process in a global shift from European maritime to interior exploration that, was completed in the mid nineteenth century.[80] Pratt has argued that the challenges of translating the experience of landscape, culture, and alienation in colonial "contact zones" into writing led to the development of a "'planetary' consciousness" in Europe.[81] Pratt's 'planetary consciousness' can be read as the metropolitan shadow of what was developing on the peripheries of the

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[77] Alan Bewell, "Romanticism and Colonial Environmental History," *European Romantic Review* 23 (2012): p. 397.

[78] Andrew McCann, "Romanticism, nationalism and the myth of the popular in William Lane's the workingman's paradise," *Journal of Australian Studies* 25 (2001): pp. 2-4.

[79] Richard White, "The recreational rationale in NSW national parks," in *Playing in the bush: Recreation and national parks in New South Wales,* ed. Richard White and Caroline Ford (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2012), pp. 27-28.

[80] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (1992),* 2nd edition, (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 9.

[81] *Ibid.,* pp. 4-9.

settler empire where colonists were "adapting notions of late eighteenth-century european romanticism to the local landscape."[82] Ella Barnet has explored how these adaptations of the picturesque and the sublime were applied to the antipodean vistas of the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.[83] This shift is representative of the way that Australian nature assumed value — by being absorbed into existing aesthetic hierarchies. The application of romantic value to Tasmanian nature in Beattie's work added an ethical weight to new orientations to nature, and while it may have sanctioned some environmental damage, it nevertheless underwrote a sympathetic vision.

Thus, by exploring how Beattie played upon the anxieties of his Tasmanian audiences, performed his role as the photographer-explorer, and reproduced the discourses of romanticism, an intellectual contribution to the history of settler adjustment to Australian nature can be made. However, while these anxieties, roles and discourses were obviously played out in a very localised context, they nevertheless have 'trans-imperial' genealogies.[84] Analyses of Beattie, his work, and his times have implications across a range of fields — as all environmental history does — but they also add new context to a set of debates that are continually replayed in the Australian political sphere. As arguments about Australia's use of the Tasmanian wilderness are regularly rehearsed in the national political domain, the debates that Beattie engaged with around mining, conservation, and the preservation of scenery develop new emphasis. By helping to reinforce developing understandings of a latent environmentalist past in Australia, an analysis of the Beattie moment engages with the stories

[82] Ella Barnet, "Flirting with the picturesque: The effects of Romanticism and romance," in *Playing in the bush: Recreation and national parks in New South Wales,* ed. Richard White and Caroline Ford (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2012), p. 42.

[83] *Ibid.,* p. 47.

[84] David Lambert and Alan Lester, "Introduction: Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects," in *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century,* ed. David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 2.

that we tell ourselves about the history of environmentalism and teases out some of the intricacies in this complex narrative.

Importantly, what we can see through an environmental historical reading of Beattie's work on Tasmanian wilderness are the ways in which this reorientation to nature was tied to the historical and social contexts of turn of the century urban Tasmania. By tracing how these elements interacted within Beattie's oeuvre, we can better understand what drove the interest in nature that emerged in turn of the century Tasmania and what this interest meant. To borrow from William Cronon, this thesis on the Beattie moment in turn of the century Tasmania is less a story about nature and more of a story about a story about nature.[85]

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This thesis focuses on the Beattie moment in orientations to nature in Tasmania — the details of a particular set of attitudes to the environment as they were articulated by an influential individual across a range of mediums in turn of the century Tasmania. Beattie's interests, actions, and images open windows onto the orientation of settler culture to the environment at this time. Existing understandings of Beattie, and of the relationship between settlers and the environment, can be extended through the application of a particular type of cultural environmental history to Beattie's photographic and written archives. In order to do this, each of the following chapters serves a different purpose and asks radically different questions of Beattie's archive.

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[85] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1995), pp. 7-25., and William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History and Narrative," *The Journal of American History* 78 (1992).

Chapter one asks why Beattie's vision of wilderness became popular and charts a set of historical foundations that defined the possibilities of his common sense version of environmental consciousness. It is about the spaces and places that interested Beattie, how the interests of his urban public tied him to these topics, and what these topics tell us about the Tasmanian settler imagination at the turn of the twentieth century. Chapter two considers how Beattie's public performances as a photographer-explorer were constructed and elaborated in the halls of Hobart and Launceston. It investigates the type of environmental messages that underwrote these performances and it nominates the ones that became essential elements of Beattie's realigned vision of European man in Tasmania. Chapter three is concerned with an analysis of Beattie's photography in the context of romanticism. It explores how notions of the romantic picturesque and sublime influenced how Beattie photographed Tasmanian nature and suggests that without the link to the romantic tradition, Beattie's vision of wilderness would have lacked a compelling rationale for challenging existing orientations to nature. Approaching Beattie's archive in this way allows an analysis that acknowledges the constructedness of the ways that he thought of, reproduced, and acted out his orientation to the natural world.

This analysis will be conducted using the written, photographic and biographical material left behind by Beattie — a contained archive that is a rich collection of sources for a study of this kind. Such an archival method is predicated on the approach of 'new biography', which contests the separation "between the individual and the history of society."[86] It is a method that has been traditionally accepted within biographical approaches to history and with Jo Burr Margadant I take it as a premise that "cultural politics are most easily examined as well

[86] Mark Hearn and Harry Knowles, "Struggling for Recognition: Reading the Individual in Labour History," *Labour History* 87 (2004): p. 9.

as emphatically imagined in the individual life."[87] This thesis traces the historical trends embodied in Beattie's photography — those of Tasmanian history, the emergence of environmentalism and romanticism — through Beattie's archive in a way that is sensitive to his position of influence in the construction of values pertaining to Tasmanian nature. While these ideas are apparent within Beattie's work and existed in specific geographies this is not intended to be a biography or a spatial history, the analysis is driven by an historicisation of ideas, not of an individual or of a space. Above all, the Beattie moment was significant because it was an expression of wider cultural trends that constituted an expression of Tasmanian environmental consciousness.

[87] Jo Burr Margadant, "Introduction: Constructing Selves in Historical Perspective," in *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth Century France,* ed. Jo Burr Margadant (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p. 7.

Chapter One

The historical foundations of Beattie's wilderness

"I was the first man who ever used a camera there, and the first to practically introduce the very beautiful scenery to the Tasmanian public, at once creating an interest which has grown in intensity as the years have gone by…"

John Watt Beattie, 1904

John Watt Beattie, photographer, collector and advocate for Tasmanian nature, made the above observation during a magic lantern show to a group of wilderness enthusiasts in Launceston in 1904. At the time he had been the colony's official photographer for the best part of a decade and these presentations were his stock-in-trade. By 1904 there was nothing particularly remarkable about Beattie extolling the beauty of wild nature to the Tasmanian middle-classes — he had made a career out of producing romantic visions of rugged wilderness for the consumption of urban Tasmanians. Yet, by drawing an explicit connection between the camera and 'seeing' Tasmania as scenic for the first time, he is signalling an important shift in orientations to nature that took place in late nineteenth century Tasmania. As a self-styled photographer-explorer, Beattie was uniquely positioned to both shape and reflect this shift. Hence, contrary to his claims, the public acceptance of his vision was not based on his outstanding photography and it mattered little that he was the "first man."[1] Rather it stemmed from the existence of a set of contemporary forces and anxieties — foundations that had their roots firmly in Tasmanian colonial history. In this sense Beattie's vision of wilderness was predominantly a reflection of a reorientation to nature in late colonial Tasmania.

Analysing Beattie's vision of wilderness provides the opportunity to investigate a range of relations and forces beyond the set that Beattie himself prioritised in October 1904.[2] To be

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[1] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/7 (2), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[2] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 28.

fair, Beattie's adoption of the camera and the role of photographer-explorer was remarkably novel and influential at the time.[3] However, Beattie did not see himself as someone who was reflecting a new orientation to nature. Instead of reading Beattie as an exemplary character of photographic exploration, this chapter reads Beattie's work as a culmination of social trends that produced a sympathetic vision of wilderness in late Victorian Tasmania. Indeed, to analyse "the space in which discursive events are deployed" in this way is not to foreclose the issue of Beattie's genius, but rather to cast an historical gaze on "the interplay of relations within it and outside it."[4] Social movements differ according to the discursive fields that they emerge in and they display different characteristics according to time and place. These differences matter and are often not fully articulated at the time of expression. Most importantly, this chapter recognises that these differences have their origins in identifiable historical forces.

Indeed, the acceptance of Beattie's vision of wilderness required the existence of what Ann Laura Stoler calls "epistemic habits". Stoler's 'epistemic habits' lean on the understanding that the development of ideas are limited by the "conditions on the possibilities of knowledge within a "discursive formation""[5] — the settled intellectual dispositions of a particular space and time.[6] In this sense the production, reception and consumption of Beattie's work was constrained by the basis of European civilisation in Tasmania and the prevailing social anxieties of his audience. To begin with, the vision of wilderness expressed in Beattie's oeuvre was only possible due to the dispossession of Indigenous land in Tasmania and the historical silence that followed this process. On top of this were laid the social anxieties of

[3] Nic Haygarth, *The Wild Ride: Revolutions that shaped Tasmanian black and white wilderness photography* (Launceston: The National Trust of Australia, 2008), p. 44.

[4] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 29.

[5] Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 5.

[6] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 39.

late nineteenth century Tasmanian society and the environmental implications of these anxieties. These included the persistent shadow of convict heritage, the dilemma of resource exploitation, and the question of practical use related to the preservation of nature. Beattie's vision of wilderness formed a necessary counterbalance to these anxieties in a post-frontier society still coming to grips with itself and its past. The operation of these anxieties and concerns in Beattie's work constitutes the archeology of turn of the century Tasmanian environmental consciousness.

When Beattie stepped onto Tasmanian soil for the first time in 1879 at Launceston he was stepping into a context where Tasmanian Aborigines had been consigned to historical memory. Truganini, widely considered the last 'full blood' Tasmanian Aborigine had died in Hobart in 1876, giving increasing credence to the hypothesis of racial extinction in Australia.[7] In terms of Beattie's relationship with Indigenous dispossession in Tasmania, this context distanced much of his advocacy for wilderness from the violence and intimacy of the early frontier and connected it instead to what Lesley Head has described as the "imprisonment of Aborigines deep in the geological column and at the bottom of the evolutionary staircase" of the late colonial European imagination.[8] Earlier in Tasmanian history, race relations on the colonial frontier were comparatively intimate. For example, in 1852 the Tasmanian historian John West had written mournfully that "A change so rapid in the relations of a people to the soil, will scarcely find a parallel in this world's history."[9] However, by the time of Beattie's arrival in Tasmania in 1879 social Darwinist understandings of racial extinction had obscured the emotions felt by John West and produced an "unobserved accretion of silence" in the

[7] Henry Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 87.

[8] Lesley Head, *Second Nature: This History and Implications of Australia as Aboriginal Landscape* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p. 54.

[9] John West, *History of Tasmania (1852),* 2nd edition, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1971), pp. 309-310.

colony's estimation of dispossession.[10] Beattie's vision of wilderness in Tasmania's unpopulated highlands simultaneously originated from and reproduced the power of this silence.

Beattie's experiences as a photographer-explorer show the extent that Tasmanians had moved beyond the context of dispossession in their orientation to nature. Beattie's use of the bush and his unimpeded mobility in it, reflected an understanding of and orientation to nature based on an oblivious cultural acceptance of *terra nullius*.[11] An enthusiasm for the appropriation of Tasmanian nature is apparent in Beattie's 'Playground of Australia' talk given to the Premiers of Australia in February 1905. In it he encourages tourism in the wild lake country: "the most picturesque part of our island".[12] What underlies Beattie's pitch to the Premiers is an idea of possession and power clearly related to *terra nullius*. To borrow from James Bonwick's 1870 account of the Tasmanian Aborigines, the Tasmanian settlers "came not to share the soil with the dark man, but to appropriate it."[13] Beattie's unproblematic orientation to nature shows the extent to which this appropriation had been achieved. The ease of Beattie's mobility in Tasmania's highlands suggests that from his very first expedition in 1879, the island was really a white man's 'playground.'

Even though Beattie was an amateur historian, representations of Tasmania's Indigenous (and immediately post-contact) past were remarkably absent in his vision of wilderness. While representations of the Aboriginal presence in Tasmania were completely excluded from Beattie's magic lantern shows, other material related to Beattie does display an engagement

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[10] Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 108.

[11] Head*, Second Nature*, p. 6.

[12] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/11, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[13] James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians* (London: 1870), p. 28.

Figure 1.1: John Watt Beattie, 'Aboriginal Tasmanians from Cape Barren Island, March 1893', *Aborigines of Tasmania.* Source: National Library of Australia.

with the Aboriginal legacy of colonial Tasmania. For example, at the end of Beattie's publication *Album of Tasmanian Views,* a set of "unique" photographs of "The Lost Tasmanian Race" are advertised for sale.[14] This commercialisation was a common theme throughout the 1890s during which Beattie published an album of photographs of Tasmanian Aborigines at the Cape Barren Island Reserve (Figure 1.1). These images evoke Charles Walter's 1865 photographs of Aborigines at the Victorian reserve of Coranderrk in the way that they display the "central humanitarian civilising objective" of respectable domesticity.[15] Such images were being produced in a context where, by contemporary standards, racial extinction had occurred. The existence of these commercialised conceptions of the 'Lost Tasmanian Race' in the rhetoric and imagery of Beattie's oeuvre should be considered as a testament to the imaginative power that racialised concepts of evolution and progress wielded at the turn of the twentieth century in Australia.[16] To the European consumers of these images,

[14] John Watt Beattie, *Album of Tasmanian Views*, Call No. 986/B, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

[15] Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 58.

[16] Russell Mcgregor, "The doomed race: A scientific axiom of the late nineteenth century," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 39 (1993): pp. 17-20.

the civilised display of the Aboriginals at Cape Barren Island marked their progress from the 'primitive' race that had perished with Truganini in 1876.

These ideas of extinction, primitivity and the progress of civilisation haunted Tasmanian visions of wilderness. In 1937, just after Beattie's death, the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureaux — which Beattie had provided photographs for — was keen to market Aboriginal carvings in the states far north-west.[17] This fitted within a tradition inherited from colonial Australia of non-Aboriginal reiterations of the primitive "antiquity of Aboriginal culture" in the context of tourism publications.[18] Placed alongside each other, these expressions indicate that in Tasmania the observational practices of photography and tourism construed racial extinction in terms of inevitable and guiltless progress. Interestingly, these visions were articulated through the mediums of the photographic album and the tourist brochure, but not in Beattie's presentations about wilderness. Indeed, the absence of an Aboriginal past in Beattie's vision of wilderness confirms the centrality of possession in how turn of the century Tasmanians thought about the environment.

If Beattie's vision of wilderness was reflective of the emergence of a new sympathetic orientation to nature, this orientation was based on an imaginative and physical mastery of Tasmanian landscape that precluded the recognition of Indigenous ownership of land. Beattie's position in overturning what Tom Griffiths called the "melancholic strain of the local environmental and historical imagination" meant that he was implicated in a "narrative of avoidance."[19] In Tasmania this narrative of avoidance was especially powerful because nowhere else in Australia had Europeans been so effective in creating "a literal wilderness

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[17] Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureaux, *Tasmania's Fertile and Lovely North-West,* (Hobart: Tasmanian Government and Tourism Bureaux, 1937), N919.465 T199, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

[18] Gordon Waitt, "Naturalizing the 'primitive': A critique of marketing Australia's indigenous peoples as 'hunter-gatherers,'' *Tourism Geographies: An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment* 1 (1999): pp. 147-148.

[19] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 5.

with guns and smallpox."[20] For Beattie, any interest in the history of the doomed race in Tasmania was purely of the past, while his vision of wilderness was based upon a post-extinction understanding of a dispossessed and depopulated nature. Any recognition of the connectedness of this history of dispossession would have critically undermined the vision of wilderness that Beattie was articulating. As an epistemic habit the 'narrative of avoidance' enabled the reception of Beattie's vision in turn of the century Tasmania.

Beattie's vision of wilderness and Tasmanian natural antiquity had to square with the other central element of Tasmania's colonial history — the convict legacy. This is no surprise given the unmatched position of the convict inheritance in the Tasmanian historical imaginary.[21] David Young has pointed out that a fascination with the convict past of Tasmania was redolent in the anxieties and interests of locals and visitors alike.[22] Spaces like the abandoned penal settlement at Port Arthur were often the subject of Beattie's historical and photographic gaze because they offered images of the "gentle subsidence of one state into another."[23] With its decaying buildings and creeping vines, Port Arthur was a particular fascination for Beattie, who amassed a large collection of relics from the early days of the prison.[24] Beattie wrote on the history of Port Arthur and his pictures and writing became part of a tourist brochure that was widely distributed throughout the middle of the twentieth century.[25] Beattie understood Port Arthur and the Tasman Peninsula to be a symbol of the entire penal apparatus in Tasmania because it "contained the principal machinery of the whole convict coercive

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[20] *Ibid*., p. 264.

[21] Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania,* p. 197-199.

[22] David Young, *Making Crime Pay: The Evolution of Convict Tourism in Tasmania,* (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1996), pp. 12-15.

[23] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 103.

[24] "Obituary: Mr. J.W. Beattie," *Huon Times (Franklin, Tasmania: 1910-1933),* June 27, 1930, p. 5.

[25] John Watt Beattie, "Foreword" in *Port Arthur, The Penal Settlement in Tasmania: Glimpses of its Stirring History,* ed. John Watt Beattie (Hobart: Oldham, Beddome & Meredith Pty. Ltd., 193?), p. 2.

system."[26] The idea of Port Arthur at the turn of the twentieth century was culturally resonant because it was a nostalgic reminder of Tasmania's past.

At the turn of the twentieth century the state of the settlement at Port Arthur stood as testament to the progress of Tasmania's transition from penal outpost to colony. Tasmanians were consistently anxious about the colony's past as a convict prison. This anxiety was confirmed in both the obsession with and wilful neglect of Port Arthur. Despite a fire that destroyed a great deal of the material reminder of convicts at Port Arthur in 1897, no attempts were made at the restoration of the site.[27] That Tasmanians avoided restoration of the site is curious because the victories of the Anti-Transportation League in the 1850s were achieved in defiance of the economic benefits of convict labour to Tasmania.[28] Indeed, Tasmanian society was established on convict labour, which was used for public and private purposes in the early stages of colonisation.[29] Further, the progressively growing numbers of convicts necessitated the erection of a sophisticated colonial bureaucracy that also drove the development of colonial "social, intellectual and cultural life".[30] The central position of the convict heritage within Tasmanian society is understandable as convicts or their descendants have consistently formed about three quarters of the white Tasmanian population.[31] The movement to abandon transportation, which led to the Port Arthur settlement closing in 1877, was about settler pride and the realisation of self-government. The persistence of an abandoned and derelict Port Arthur as a site of interest indicates that this transition symbolised social progress for turn of

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 116.

[28] A.G.L. Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies: A Study of Penal Transportation from Great Britain and Ireland to Australia and other parts of the British Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977), p. 353.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[31] Alison Alexander, *Tasmania's Convicts: how Felons Built a Free Society* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2010), p. 264.

century Tasmanians — as a symbol, Port Arthur existed as a reminder of how far Tasmanians had come.

The site of Port Arthur also symbolised the changes that had occurred in the orientation of Europeans to nature in Tasmania. In this respect, the interest of Tasmanians in Port Arthur was a symptom of the transition to a post-frontier society. Throughout the nineteenth century the dominant orientation of Tasmanians to nature was one of hostility. And despite the latent appreciation of Tasmania's picturesque scenery, the success of the fledgling society was measured according to the productive improvement of appropriated land.[32] Importantly, convicts had a special relationship with this process — it was overwhelmingly convict labour that cleared the forests and built the roads. But while convict labour was indispensable to the early development of the colony, the mineral booms of the late nineteenth century changed the nature of Tasmanian society and decreased reliance on cleared agricultural land.[33] The abandonment of the convict system, of which Port Arthur was a reminder, marked a transition in orientations to nature based on hostility to one which provided greater potential for appreciation. By the turn of the century Tasmanians were partly able to conceive of the deterioration of the settlement at Port Arthur as the "gentle subsistence of one state into another,"[34] because of their altered orientation to nature.

The kind of images of Port Arthur that were distributed by Beattie demonstrate that his audiences were comfortable with renditions of the nature-human relationship that fetishised the deterioration of the built environment. These images became implicated in a process during which the convict past of Tasmania was transformed into a commodity to be exploited

[32] Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania*, pp. 38-41.

[33] Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies,* p. 353.

[34] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors,* p. 103.

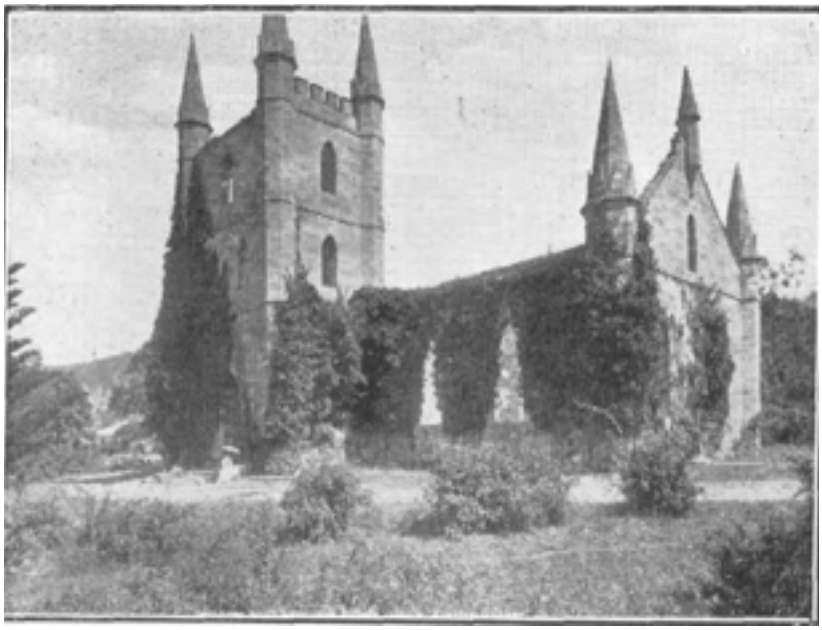

Figure 1.2: John Watt Beattie,'The Church', Source: *Port Arthur, The Penal Settlement in Tasmania: Glimpses of its Stirring History,* Hobart: Oldham, Beddome & Meredith Pty. Ltd., 193?.

through tourism.[35] One image within a brochure written by Beattie displayed the hallmarks of the kind of picturesque romanticism that attracted tourists and defined the antiquarian vision in Australia (Figure 1.2). Beattie's reproduction of 'The Church' is a celebration of the deterioration of the machinery of convictism in Tasmania. It celebrated the progression beyond a reliance on convict labour, and by implication beyond the type of hostile orientation to nature that was most associated with the early years of the colony. As a relic, the image also provided an effective reminder of Tasmanian antiquity. Beattie wrote in the foreword to the brochure: "The wrecks of its great prisons are to-day, just like the ruinous tombstones of a neglected old graveyard, giving evidence of the magnitude of its past."[36] As an epistemic habit, the discourses that swirled around the deterioration of the spaces of Tasmania's convict past, formed a foundation for Beattie's vision of wilderness. However, these orientations to the physical and constructed environment in Tasmania were only one part of Beattie's realigned vision.

[35] Kay Daniels, "Cults of nature, cults of history," *Island Magazine* 16 (Spring 1983): pp. 3-8.

[36] John Watt Beattie, 'Foreword' in *Port Arthur, The Penal Settlement in Tasmania*, p. 2.

If the historical conditions of Indigenous dispossession and the convict legacy were implicit epistemic habits that underwrote Beattie's vision of wilderness, concerns about the degradation of nature were altogether more explicit. While the silences and absences that Tasmania's history of dispossession and convict heritage reveal only become apparent amongst Beattie's wider work, the degradation-conservation dynamic is a central and recurrent theme within his magic lantern shows on wilderness. In the early nineteenth century European colonists all over the world were confronting the environmental problems that followed the local application of western industrialised practices.[37] These practices were rapidly imposed in Tasmania in the late nineteenth century when significant deposits of tin, gold, silver and copper were discovered in the western wilderness.[38] The degradation of the environment that followed the development of these sites provided the specific impetus for arguments about conservation in turn of the century Tasmania.

Beattie gave a presentation to the Royal Society of Tasmania (The Royal Society) about one of these sites in the form of a magic lantern show in November 1896. He described the area around Queenstown and the Mount Lyell mine as "a miserable place", where "already trees all around are dead or dying."[39] Beattie took a set of pictures on this trip that adequately represent the extent of environmental damage being done on the West Coast. From the image 'Queenstown and Mount Owen' (Figure 1.3) it is apparent that the rapid growth of the West Coast settlements far exceeded the capacity for environmental controls. Other images show the Mount Lyell mine which by the time of Beattie's visit was one of Australia's largest

[37] Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.

[38] Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania*, p. 196.

[39] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (1), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

Figure 1.3: John Watt Beattie, 'Queenstown and Mount Owen.' Source: Private Album.

Figure 1.4: John Watt Beattie, 'Panorama Mount Lyell and Gormanston.' Source: Private Album.

copper mines.[40] In one image (Figure 1.4) Beattie juxtaposed the summit of Mount Lyell above Gormanston and the excavated side of the mountain to communicate the scale of mineral extraction on the West Coast. For Beattie, what was happening on the West Coast, and in the Mount Lyell area in particular, was symbolic of the kind of environmental challenges posed to Tasmanian society at the turn of the century.

Beattie was especially mindful of the material conditions that environmental degradation imposed upon the people living and working in the Mount Lyell district. His concern about

the "disagreeable" effects of the "sulphurous fumes" of the furnaces at Mount Lyell and the smelters at Queenstown reinforced fears about the environmental degradations of industry.[41] Beattie's gaze is best understood in 'North Mount Lyell mine from north' (Figure 1.5) from Beattie's West Coast Album, which presents a haunting waste of charred timber, eroded mountainside and discarded metal.[42] Concerned with deforestation, Beattie mused that within

[40] Margaret Tassell and David Wood, *Tasmanian Photographer: From the John Watt Beattie Collection,* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981), p. 116.

[41] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (1), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[42] John Watt Beattie, 'North Mount Lyell Mine from North' *West Coast Album,* from Margaret Tassell and David Wood, *Tasmanian Photographer: From the John Watt Beattie Collection,* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981), p. 117.

Figure 1.5: John Watt Beattie, 'North Mount Lyell Mine from North', *West Coast Album.* Source: Margaret Tassell and David Wood, *Tasmanian Photographer: From the John Watt Beattie Collection,* Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981.

a "few years the highlands of Lyell will be bare desolate wastes."[43] This was mostly due to the circumstances of the workers and their families and the centrality of timber for shelter, heat, light and fuel in a typical Australian mining settlement.[44] In his presentation on the Mount Lyell mine Beattie assumed the place of the enlightened urban observer as he noted the reckless destructiveness of the Western speculators, provincial settlers and itinerant workers.

Despite Beattie's awareness of the environmental damage posed by the workers in Queenstown, the complicity of his environmental tourism in the degradation on the West Coast was altogether less acknowledged. The fact that Beattie travelled at the expense of the Mount Lyell Railway Company is a fitting symbol of the emergence of environmental consciousness in late nineteenth century Tasmania. The Mount Lyell Railway physically

[43] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (1), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[44] Clare Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka,* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2013), p. 21.

opened up the western wilderness to Beattie and the wealthy urban populations in the east and north-east of Tasmania. Without the Company's patronage Beattie could not have taken his photos, presented his magic lantern show to The Royal Society in 1896 or made the arguments for conservation to his elite urban audiences. His experiences of Mount Lyell, and perhaps the response to his talk in 1896, led Beattie to ask in 1899 "what lover of nature can stand unmoved and contemplate her glories swept away by the tide of utilitarianism — the axe and horrid sulphur fumes?"[45] Beattie shared his hope that Tasmanians could "retain many solitary places in this beautiful island of ours where nature in all her grandeur will reign supreme, and where sulphur fumes, and axes, will be forever unknown."[46] More than just relying on the support of the mining company to enable him to document the West Coast, Beattie also relied on the shock that his images of mining produced to make arguments prioritising the natural world. This emphasises that an urban concern about environmental damage was one foundation for arguments for conservation in turn of the century Tasmania.

Importantly, Beattie realised that mineral wealth alone could not sustain Tasmania. In a letter to his father upon first setting foot on the island in 1879 Beattie remarked that "there is a great cry about the mines but they will not last long and then Tasmania will fall asleep again for another half century or so."[47] In this he was reasonably accurate in diagnosis but not so in terms of time. In his history of mining around Mount Lyell Geoffrey Blainey characterises the time of Beattie's arrival as one of tremendous instability in the western mineral fields with bad practice, eager investors and desperate selectors contributing to a climate of boom and bust.[48] By the turn of the century Beattie was in the process of campaigning for what he saw

[45] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/7 (3), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[46] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/7 (3), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[47] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/2, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[48] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell (1954),* 5th edition, (Hobart: St. David's Park Publishing, 1993), pp. 1-50.

as the solution to Tasmania's volatile mineral based economy — tourism. While Beattie based his arguments for conservation on a popular urban concern about the environmental damage of industrial modernity, the tracts of land preserved through these campaigns also needed to be used. The best way to use these spaces in turn of the century Tasmania appeared to be through the declaration of National Parks, which had their origin in the American understanding of scenery as a cultural asset.[49] Beattie played off the contemporary popularity of this concept in a series of magic lantern shows about the Schouten Peninsula given between 1903 and 1906.

The emergence of arguments for the preservation and public use of nature in Tasmania at the turn of the century was hardly surprising. The same conditions that were dominant in Tasmania — an urban wealthy society, anxiety about the negative effects of modernity, a settler history of contact with wilderness, and a relationship to Europe based on an Old World-New World dichotomy — gave rise to debates about the use of nature in the form of National Parks across the Anglo world.[50] In Tasmania, Beattie campaigned for the "alienation by government for a suitable area of land" on the east coast encompassing the Schouten Peninsula, Freycinet and Wineglass Bay.[51] Beattie argued that this would become "our National Park" and should be "reserved absolutely and for all time… for the people of Tasmania."[52] He was aware of the transnational resonance of his arguments, noting in particular that "the preservation of the native fauna of the Empire, is attracting great attention in England, and quite recently a society has been formed in London" whose "work includes

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[49] Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience (1976),* 4th edition, (Plymouth: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), p. 11.

[50] Richard White, "The recreational rationale in NSW national parks," in *Playing in the bush: Recreation and national parks in New South Wales,* ed. Richard White and Caroline Ford (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2012), pp. 17-18.

[51] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS 29/6 (1) Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[52] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/6 (2) Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

the whole Empire."[53] Beattie found satisfaction in the fact that "however small our effort, it is in harmony with the newly formed society."[54] While Beattie explicitly mentioned the protection of fauna, and his livelihood was linked to the preservation of scenery, Debbie Quarmby has noted these were only two amongst the constellation of interests that drove the Tasmanian National Parks movement in the late nineteenth century.[55] However, Beattie's lectures on the Schouten Peninsula demonstrate that just as they were across the British Empire, transnational discourses were a crucial anchoring point for local arguments for preservation in turn of the century Tasmania.

Freycinet National Park was eventually founded in 1916, at least ten years after the series of lectures that Beattie gave to The Royal Society. While he may not have been immediately effective in his advocacy for a National Park, Beattie's vision of preserved wilderness was nevertheless reflective of an influential orientation to nature within turn of the century Tasmanian society. This orientation, eventually ascendent in the declaration of the Freycinet National Park, was only possible due to the discursive conditions of late Victorian Tasmanian society. Tasmanians like Beattie only had the freedom to explore, depict and possess Tasmanian wilderness due to the dispossession of the Tasmanian Aborigines. The physical sites and social legacy of Tasmania's convict past provided a basis for Beattie's antiquarian imagination, and the sympathetic orientation to nature latent within it. This orientation, as articulated in the magic lantern shows at The Royal Society, drew upon local epistemic foundations. Indeed, Beattie's environmental ethic would have lost coherency if it was not impelled by Tasmanian anxieties about environmental and material degradation in western Tasmania, along with the imperatives of use that accompanied the preservation of wilderness.

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[53] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/6 (5) Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] Debbie Quarmby, "The Politics of Parks: A History of Tasmania's National Parks," (Ph.D. thesis, Murdoch University, 2006), p. 31.

These historical conditions made a sympathetic orientation to nature possible and defined the limits and characteristics of environmental consciousness in turn of the century Tasmania.

Chapter Two

Beattie's magic lantern show: Ritual, performance, and the consumption of nature in fin de siècle Tasmania

"It always seemed as though I had to wrest the views from the possession of a hostile force. I gave in at last, and actually fled away from it."

John Watt Beattie, 1901

In Roderick Nash's classic 1967 book *Wilderness and the American Mind,* Chapter Nine begins by relaying the story of Joseph Knowles — "the modern primitive man."[1] Nash explained how in 1913 Knowles set off naked into the Maine wilderness to live "as Adam lived" for some two months. By way of a series of cleverly delivered dispatches, the citizens of Boston became fascinated with this man's life in the wilderness and upon his triumphal return to civilisation Knowles was a bona fide celebrity.[2] However, somewhat predictably, Knowles' solo adventure in the Maine wilderness turned out to be an elaborate ruse. Instead of hunting bears for their pelt and making fire with his hands he spent his two months in a secret cabin drinking beer and entertaining guests. Nash zeroes in on the popularity of Knowles' story and uses it to illustrate the value of 'wilderness' as an idea in early twentieth century America — spreading "from a relatively small group of Romantic and patriotic literati to become a national cult."[3] From Nash's analysis it seems that the audiences in Boston were interested in the Knowles affair because it fulfilled a set of fantasies that they had about man's place in nature.

While reading Nash, I was struck by how John Watt Beattie's performance of the role of the photographer-explorer in his magic lantern shows operated in a similar way in fin de siècle Tasmania. Beattie's audiences were receptive to his vision of nature for similar reasons that

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[1] Roderick Nash quoting the Boston *Evening Transcript,* October 9, 1913. in *Wilderness and the American Mind (1967),* 4th edition, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 141-143.

[2] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind (1967),* pp. 141-143.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 143.

Nash's Bostonians were interested in Knowles. While Beattie did not engage in the deception that Knowles did, his presentations and publications were engineered to satisfy a similar impulse — repackaging a combination of the danger, the wonder, the hardship and the toughness of the Tasmanian wilderness for an urban population alienated from the realities of the physical world. Like other purveyors of a bush myth in fin de siècle Australia, Beattie was part of an urban intelligentsia that literally and metaphorically projected their values onto Australian nature. At the heart of this reading of Beattie's presentations as indicators of broader public sentiment is an understanding of his public actions as performance — as "cultural behaviour for which a person assumes responsibility to an audience"[4] — and a sensitivity to how nature was consumed in fin de siècle Tasmania. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the values behind Beattie's realigned vision of nature-human relations as they were articulated in his magic lantern shows. It argues that in these reconstructions of his own expeditions Beattie offered an immersive and inclusive mode of imagining Tasmanian wilderness that tapped into the historical contingencies of fin de siècle Tasmania and consolidated an emergent sympathetic orientation to nature.

The shifts in Tasmanian orientations to nature that Beattie's presentations embodied originated in a particular institutional space. Therefore, this chapter begins with an investigation into the Royal Society of Tasmania (The Royal Society). It considers Beattie's photographic expeditions as a ritualised exploration of Tasmania's wild regions where an imperial gaze was applied through the lens of the camera. These expeditions were where Beattie acted out his own fantasies of exploration while capturing Tasmanian landscapes. The experiences of the photographer-explorer were then bent through the implicit social contract of Beattie's performances where he took to the stage to narrate his expeditions and share his

[4] Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough into performance," in *Folklore: Performance and Communication,* ed. D. Ben-Amos and K.S. Goldstein (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 18.

images of Tasmanian nature. Like Nash's early twentieth century Bostonians, Beattie's audiences were beginning to consume nature from the sympathetic "viewpoint of the vacationer rather than the conqueror",[5] due to the modernisation of Tasmanian society. This realigned model of man's place in nature was the basis for the new perceptions and experiences of nature amongst fin de siècle Tasmanians.

The Royal Society was a central forum for sharing knowledge about science, nature and natural history throughout the mid to late nineteenth century. Founded only as The Royal Society in 1841 by the Governor of Van Diemen's Land Sir John Franklin, the group initially published a journal — the "Tasmanian Journal" — which publicised the proceedings of their meetings.[6] As a group of literate men interested in nature, Franklin and the fellows of The Royal Society were implicated in what Mary Louise Pratt has called the assembly of "a new kind of Eurocentered planetary consciousness" which "asserted an urban, lettered, male authority over the whole of the planet."[7] In this way the networks of naturalists and natural historians that were fostered in The Royal Society faced the cultural possession of Tasmania with a "framework that tied local and immediate experience to the Anglo and European worlds."[8] Indeed, the proliferation of such networks in Europe and around the world from the middle of the eighteenth century was a thoroughly imperial impulse.[9] However, as elsewhere, in Tasmania the methods that sustained this impulse were radically altered by the adoption of photography as a form of collection.

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[5] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind (1967),* p. 143.

[6] Royal Society of Tasmania, (1841) 'Minutes of "The Royal Society" Van Diemen's Land, 1841,' RS 147/1, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[7] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (1992),* 2nd edition, (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 37.

[8] Thomas R. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and history in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 98.

[9] Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia,* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 16-17.

The early years of The Royal Society coincided with the final period of natural history as a discipline conducted primarily through the physical collection of specimens and communicated through the written word. Ideally suited to the very "passion for collecting, classifying and controlling facts"[10] that drove natural historical investigation, photographic technologies were readily assimilated into the field naturalist's method. As Tom Griffiths points out in *Hunters and Collectors,* the invention of the camera and the mobilisation of photography across the knowledge systems of empire represented the culmination of the European pursuit of lasting possession of the natural subject.[11] The Royal Society was an important site for the development of this Tasmanian "geographical imagination", within which photography became an essential practice for the gathering, ordering and representing of fact.[12] Beattie's presentations to The Royal Society in the late nineteenth century were realisations of a late imperial type of natural history and considered together his magic lantern shows were a multimedia catalogue of Tasmania's wild spaces.

That the predominant site for the performance of Beattie's magic lantern shows was a scientific forum demonstrates the remarkable adaptability of The Royal Society as an institution in fin de siècle Tasmania. The type of presentation that Beattie produced was rich in the antiquarian gaze and romantic tone of an amateur historian. Beattie's artistic sensibilities nevertheless correlated with the objective "to investigate the Physical Character of the Island, and to illustrate it's Natural History and Productions."[13] Beattie was elected a fellow in 1890 and he also had an important role in broadening the scope of The Royal

[10] Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan , "Introduction: Photography and the Geographical Imagination," in, *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination,* ed. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (London: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd, 2003), pp 2-3.

[11] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, pp. 24-25.

[12] Schwartz and Ryan, 'Introduction: Photography and the Geographical Imagination,' p. 6.

[13] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS30/1, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

Society by establishing the historical and geographical section in 1899.[14] Throughout its different iterations The Royal Society continued to be supported by powerful colonial agents and by the end of the nineteenth century controlled the Tasmanian Museum and the Art Gallery and through these, much of the scientific and cultural discourse within the colony.[15] The breadth of the interests and influence of The Royal Society ensured it was a dominant feature of intellectual life in fin de siècle Hobart.

However, The Royal Society was not simply a powerful mouthpiece for Beattie. Of all the institutions available for the expression of a sympathetic orientation to nature in fin de siècle Tasmania, The Royal Society was also the most suitable. By the time that Beattie was active, the focus of this network had widened considerably from the intimate groups of scientists and botanists who originally gathered in Governor Franklin's parlour in 1841.[16] By Beattie's time, the discussion within The Royal Society captured both the divergent paths of natural history as it splintered into the professionalised scientific study of the natural world and the popular naturalism of amateurs.[17] An example of this was how Beattie's arguments for conservation on the highlands of Lyell relied on both scientific understandings of human health and hygiene, along with scenic considerations of landscape preservation.[18] Beattie drew on the logically compelling rhetoric of science alongside the emotionally compelling imagery of landscape photography. This communicated a holistic understanding of the natural world that resisted categorisation within either of the divergent strands of natural history. Due to the

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[14] Michael Roe, "Beattie, John Watt (1859–1930)," in Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/beattie-john-watt-5171/text8687. Article was first published in hardcopy in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 7, (MUP), 1979. Accessed 2 November 2013.

[15] P. Bolger, *Hobart Town,* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), p. 186.

[16] *Ibid.,* p. 27.

[17] Nicholas Drayson, "Early Developments in the Literature of Australian Natural History: together with a select bibliography of Australian natural history writing, printed in English, from 1697 to the present." (Ph.D., thesis, University College, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 1997), p. 68.

[18] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (1), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

breadth of interest within The Royal Society it was a natural forum for Beattie's advocacy — this was where environmental consciousness happened in fin de siècle Tasmania.

Beattie's articulations of a sympathetic orientation to nature mirrored the divergence of the natural historical gaze within The Royal Society, while reproducing the dominant modes of exploration of the late nineteenth century. In this way, Beattie's use of the camera placed him in a lineage of exploration. Beattie's ritualised expeditions had a cartographic purpose that mimicked the European tradition to map not just the navigational features of the globe but the "contents" of unknown landmasses.[19] As has been explained above, the mobilisation of the imperial gaze in collecting, documenting and capturing nature (which had previously been conducted at the tip of the pen) was given fresh impetus by the development of photography. The late nineteenth century photographic gaze, while contributing to the documentation of the natural world, firmly correlated with what Paul Carter has called "the explorer's backward view."[20] In this light, Beattie's expeditions in the late nineteenth century, well after the colony had been mapped, can be interpreted as the acting out of fantasies of exploration and discovery. The introduction of a new documentary tool provided an opportunity to rehearse many of the established tropes of scientific exploration through a slightly different medium — the lens of the camera.

Beattie's legacy is as often spoken about in terms of his exploration as it is in terms of his contribution to landscape photography. Jack Cato, in his chapter on Beattie in *The Story of the Camera in Australia,* communicates an image of him in just these terms. Cato compares Beattie to Flinders and Bass, but credits him with the totalising gaze of the natural historian.[21]

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[19] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 30.

[20] Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country: History, travelling and language (1988),* 2nd edition, (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 48.

[21] Jack Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia (1955),* 2nd edition, (Melbourne: Institute of Australian Photography, 1977), p. 83.

Beattie's attention to the more minute aspects of exploration is also remarked upon — the "caves and blowholes", the "water and timber resources", and the specifics of weather apparently never escaped his photographic attention.[22] In his presentations Beattie himself seldom missed a chance to remind audiences of his credentials as a frontiersman. For example, in 1901 Beattie described some of the Barn Bluff country as "fresh, unbroken ground."[23] However, most of Beattie's presentations to The Royal Society were given from when he became a fellow in 1890 by which stage Tasmania's useful mineral resources in the west had been known of and exploited for some twenty years. Likewise, the timber reserves of the colony and the productive river flats were known assets well before Beattie's arrival in 1878. Yet before Beattie and others like him, these features were overwhelmingly communicated through the verbal and written traditions of early natural history.[24] Conversely, in his presentations Beattie wove visual representations of Tasmania throughout the traditional narrative of discovery and documentation.

Beattie's expeditions were rituals where he rehearsed the traditional narratives of explorers and scientists, but he was also fulfilling the more romantic, sentimental purpose of exposing himself to nature. This part of Beattie's ritual resonated strongly with an orientation to nature that emerged in the late nineteenth century across Australia and accentuated a "direct, watchful, sensuous engagement" with the world.[25] This sentimental orientation to nature captured one part of what the amateur strand of natural history had evolved into — an antipodean version of the transcendental tradition pioneered by John Muir and John Burroughs in the United States of America.[26] The purpose of this element of Beattie's

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[22] *Ibid.*

[23] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RSA/A17B, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[24] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 30.

[25] *Ibid.,* pp 127.

[26] Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora,* pp. 106-107.

expeditionary ritual differed from the reproductive purpose of the objective knowledge he gained through rational observation. As experiences, Beattie conceived of these parts of his expeditions as the acquisition of individual, subjective knowledge that could only be gained through experience.

While it is clear that Beattie valued the exposure to nature that allowed him his romantic experiences, this was precisely what his audiences were also craving — albeit in the illusory form of the magic lantern show. Most of Beattie's expeditions were initially conducted for reports to The Royal Society, but these expeditions were frequently appropriated for other purposes including individual profit. Attractive to both visitors to the island and local urban populations, most of Beattie's magic lantern shows were exclusively held in the major Tasmanian centres of Hobart and Launceston between 1896 and 1906, although it is likely that they were conducted for a longer period than this.[27] Many were held in Beattie's own Port Arthur Museum in Hobart — admission for a shilling — where a room for "seventy or eighty people" was set aside.[28] The magic lantern shows were just a part of Beattie's overall body of work, but they gave him "no end of pleasure" and in his own estimation, "did a lot of good" in terms of the popularisation of a new vision of Tasmanian nature.[29] Beattie played a key role in this popularisation of Tasmanian nature through the lens of the camera, but he was far from alone in presenting a new vision of wilderness.

Beattie was part of a group of Tasmanians who made a life out of photographing wilderness. The earliest of these individuals, earlier than Beattie, was the avid natural historian Morton

[27] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[28] Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia (1955),* p. 82.

[29] John Watt Beattie quoted in, "Death of Mr. J.W. Beattie: Widely-known Photographer," *The Mercury,* June 25, 1930, p. 7.

Allport.[30] Beginning his photography in 1855, Allport was one of the earliest adopters of the camera in Tasmania, but his art was more of a hobby than a business and as a distributor for the works of the great British zoologist John Gould in Tasmania, he was clearly more of the scientific persuasion than the sentimental.[31] Stephen Spurling, a photographer based in the northern city of Launceston, took advantage of a popular interest in images of nature that did not exist in Allport's day to establish a thriving business.[32] The most successful years of *Spurling and Son* were slightly after Beattie's peak as a photographer of Tasmanian nature in the early twentieth century. However, it is clear that they both participated in the same movement. The existence of this occupation in fin de siècle Tasmania attests to an appetite for wilderness photography. Indeed, for a significant stretch of time a group of Tasmanian urbanites were fascinated by sympathetic images of wilderness that were presented, valued and consumed in a range of mediums from the portable postcard to the immersive magic lantern show.

These presentations attempted the reproduction of wonder but the transcendental imagination could not be fully realised in a dimmed hall — and it appears that Beattie knew this all too well. In a lecture given on an expedition to Port Davey in 1898 Beattie broadcast the "undoubted" picturesque scenery of "The Sounds of Tasmania", but lamented his inability to completely capture it's beauty.[33] The need to personally experience nature was impressed most on the audience in a presentation on the Barn Bluff country given to The Royal Society in 1901. Beattie claims that in remembering the gorge of the Forth River his "photograph does

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[30] G. T. Stilwell, "Allport, Morton (1830–1878)," in Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/allport-morton-2881/text4119. Article was first published in hardcopy in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 3, (MUP), 1969. Accessed online 31 August 2014.

[31] *Ibid*.

[32] Christine Burgess, "Spurling, Stephen (1847–1924)," in Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/spurling-stephen-1580/text1653. Article was first published in hardcopy in 2014. Accessed online 31 August 2014.

[33] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (1), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

but scant justice to its characteristics, failing sadly in impressing the vast depths of the gorges and the cliff, which can only be realised and appreciated by a direct inspection of the actual scene."[34] For Beattie, the transcendental experiences of nature that were valuable in the context of fin de siècle Tasmania could only be partly measured, captured and reproduced. However, it would be misleading to suggest that these visions — the scientific and the sentimental — were incompatible. Indeed, they existed in the oeuvre of Beattie's presentations as "paired, bourgeois forms of authority"[35] that satiated the Victorian appetite for knowledge while leaving the romantic illusion of inexpressible wonder intact.

Beattie was a well-known figure in turn of the century Tasmania who reached out to audiences across a number of different mediums. Of these, his presentations to The Royal Society were the most important because of the position of The Royal Society as a preeminent cultural institution in fin de siècle Hobart. This was where Beattie's magic lantern shows debuted — including one at the Tasmanian centenary celebrations in 1904 where he gave the keynote historical address.[36] The way that his photography business and museum of antiquities in Hobart grew into an enormous business on the strength of his technical skills as a photographer, his tenacity as a bushman and his force of personality, confirms the cultural influence that Beattie had cultivated.[37] An obituary in the *Huon Times* declared him "a photographer of exceptional skill and artistic temperament", mentioned his "worldwide reputation" and claimed that no person "has done more to make known the natural beauties of the State".[38] In all of his public interactions Beattie was engaged in a compact with his

[34] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RSA/A17B, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[35] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 4.

[36] Roe, "Beattie, John Watt (1859–1930)" Australian Dictionary of Biography: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/beattie-john-watt-5171/text8687.

[37] Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia (1955)*, p. 82.

[38] "Obituary: Mr. J.W. Beattie," *Huon Times (Franklin, Tasmania: 1910-1933),* June 27, 1930, p. 5.

audiences and this dynamic was most apparent within Beattie's magic lantern shows where he articulated an environmental consciousness amongst the imagery of Tasmanian wilderness.

What these audiences got from Beattie was a performance. The magic lantern show was a site of negotiation in which certain cultural scripts were played out.[39] The most striking performative aspect within the archive of Beattie's presentations were the ways that he established connections with his audiences. Beattie began his lecture on the Hartz Mountains by confessing that this "great storm-swept plain" had claimed the life of his companion Arthur Geeves.[40] Having established the danger of the Hartz wilderness, Beattie immediately underscored the proximity of this site to more comfortable climes — "One can hardly realise how, within twelve miles of a temperate climate there can exist contemporaneously, such wild and dangerously intemperate conditions."[41] Beattie regularly switched between scientific observation and sentimental anecdote. By describing the experience of his expedition from his own eyes — "it always seemed as though I had to wrest the views from the possession of some hostile force. I gave in at last, and actually fled away from it"[42] — Beattie was effectively transporting the viewer of the presentation into his position in the cold and rain at Barn Bluff. In switching perspectives, staking out the dangerous conditions and relaying his personal loss, Beattie established a connection with an audience expectantly awaiting the thrill of discovery, the fantasy of danger and the illusory satisfaction of shared experience. This connection was made all the more meaningful by the sentimentality communicated in Beattie's description of personal loss.

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[39] Peter Burke, "Performing History: The Importance of Occasions," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 9 (2005): p. 40.

[40] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/7 (2), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[41] *Ibid*.

[42] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RSA/A17B, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

The audiences of the magic lantern shows were clearly expecting new images and stories but Beattie also needed to deploy settled knowledge. By regularly invoking recognisable cultural touchstones, Beattie flattered his audiences and familiarised the content in his presentations. Most often these were references to the art of the colony. In a lecture given on Port Davey in 1898 Beattie claimed that the area on the west coast of Tasmania would "without doubt delight the heart of the artist."[43] Beattie was disappointed with the photographs that he managed to develop of Port Davey so he referenced the early nineteenth century paintings of Joseph Lycett.[44] In this presentation the audience was ostensibly receiving information from Beattie through the culturally appropriate references to Lycett. On the other hand, Beattie sometimes expressed doubt that the artist could truly capture the transcendent qualities of the Tasmanian wilderness. In a lecture about the Arthur Ranges, Beattie referenced William Piguenit's romantic images of Tasmania and remarked that the view of the last five miles of the range "would occupy an artist a good hard weeks work in just sketching them."[45] Making these kind of cultural references positioned Beattie within — and in some cases above — some of the great painters of the Tasmanian landscape canon.

The tone and structure of Beattie's situational performances are captured in one exceptional magic lantern show on the Arthur Ranges in 1896. Beattie claimed in some of his presentations that he was a believer in the proverb that "pictures speak louder than words"[46] which is interesting because his presentations were evocative mixes of imagery and rhetoric that relied on both for their power. In the presentation on the Arthur Ranges Beattie nominated

[43] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (2), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[44] *Ibid*.

[45] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS5/14, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[46] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/11, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

"specimens of scenery presented in Mr. Piguenit's graphic paintings"[47] as the impetus for his expedition. However, by mentioning them they also served as an imaginative grid for Beattie to assemble his descriptions and photographs of the ranges around. In describing the natural formations Beattie also leant on metaphors of the built environment — describing the "huge, precipitous walls; sometimes in sharp pinnacles capping cathedral shaped masses".[48] As nature writing this employed elements of scenic nationalism, which helped settler populations make sense of the value of natural wonders alongside the built heritage of a culturally ubiquitous European antiquity.[49] Through switches in perspective Beattie invited the audience members to place themselves standing atop the Arthur Range, looking out into "the country beyond" through "tremendous passes or canyons."[50] Beattie's presentations were inseparable from the rhetorical games that he used imaginatively to transport the audience into the Tasmanian wilderness. Beattie's magic lantern shows were popular because they provided the illusion of exposure to nature to the urbanites of Hobart and Launceston.

It is clear from the high regard that Beattie and his presentations were held in that presenting nature in this immersive, illusionary, ephemeral form resonated amongst fin de siècle Tasmanians. In a context where professional and amateur nature study had split along institutional lines, amateurs like Beattie assumed a position as educators while the professionals pursued research within the walls of educational institutions.[51] Indeed, many of Beattie's lectures were reproduced in Tasmanian newspapers once they had been performed on the stage of The Royal Society and in the Port Arthur Museum. Like Donald Macdonald

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[47] *Ibid*.

[48] *Ibid*.

[49] Runte, *National Parks,* pp. 18-22.

[50] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS5/14, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[51] Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, *Ecological Pioneers: A Social History of Ecological Thought and Action,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 114.

and Charles Barrett in Victoria, Beattie played a crucial role in introducing a sentimentalised vision of Australian nature to the broader public.[52] While their methods differed slightly (Barrett and Macdonald communicated almost exclusively through newspapers) these figures were satisfying a common impulse. In a post-frontier society, urban audiences alienated from the physical world were seeking exposure to natural environments and the construction of wilderness in Beattie's magic lantern shows responded to this demand.

Beattie's magic lantern shows communicated a vision of nature in an immersive and evocative way that both responded to and impelled shifts in orientations to nature. The vision of wilderness in Beattie's presentations resonated with a stream of romanticism that opposed the pastoral rendering of Australian nature imposed by the "Wooly flocks and patrician pastures that gave historical depth to the landscape and provided an escape from the melancholy glen and stony desert."[53] The operation of this melancholic and threatening side to the Australian landscape in the Tasmanian imagination is captured in Beattie's wresting the views from "the possession of some hostile force" at Barn Bluff.[54] The orientation to nature that this resonance implied was one of respect and sympathy. As a form of environmental consciousness, the underlying sympathetic ethic in Beattie's presentations rebutted the dominant 'victory over nature' story of pastoral romanticism and demanded an orientation to nature based on wonder and respect.

Through the verisimilitude of his magic lantern shows Beattie performed a version of this orientation to nature that squared with the cultural expectations of fin de siècle Tasmanian society. Like the story of Knowles in early twentieth century Boston, the history of Beattie's

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[52] *Ibid*.

[53] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 105.

[54] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RSA/A17B, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

presentations at The Royal Society demonstrates that in a post-frontier society the hostility, "solitude and hardship" that had characterised the frontier and "intimidated many pioneers" were "likely to be magnetically attractive to their city-dwelling grandchildren."[55] Beattie's vision of wilderness was enabled by the institution of The Royal Society amongst the tensions between academic science and amateur natural history. Performing the role of the photographer-explorer, he employed both the sentimental and the scientific gaze in his magic lantern shows. Most importantly, these shows were public interactions where Beattie's performance was engineered to satisfy the prevailing demands of his audiences and the types of immersive experiences of nature that they sought. Based on an analysis of Beattie's magic lantern shows, fin de siècle Tasmanian audiences sought to consume Beattie's wilderness in a way that celebrated the melancholic characteristics of the Australian bush.

[55] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind (1967),* p. 143.

Chapter Three

"A pleasure in the pathless woods": Romanticism and environmental consciousness in Beattie's photography

"I love the bush, and nothing gives me greater delight than to stand on top of some high land and look out on a wild array of our giant mountains. I am struck dumb, but oh! my soul sings."

John Watt Beattie, quoted by Jack Cato, 1955

Around the turn of the century John Watt Beattie was part of a group of Tasmanian settlers who looked at wilderness with a sentimental orientation. This orientation became possible as Tasmania began shifting to a post-frontier society in which the dominant conceptions of nature were moving away from the hostile rationale of the rugged pioneer and towards the more sentimental approach of the vacationer. Beattie's photographs of wilderness, most often expressed in his magic lantern shows and photographic albums, are artefacts of this moment and this shift. They are evidence of what Tom Griffiths has called an "antiquarian imagination"[1] in early twentieth century Tasmania. Partially as a product of this imagination, the orientation to nature that Beattie articulated across a range of contemporary media was avidly consumed by audiences seeking exposure to wilderness as a retreat from civilisation. This wilderness, projected onto screens in Hobart and Launceston and inscribed on the pages of numerous albums, was a romantic one. Beattie's audiences were not interested in the taming of nature. On the contrary, they were filling auditoriums, purchasing albums and mimicking his expeditions in — to borrow from Julia Horne — "the pursuit of wonder."[2] The operation of this romantic dynamic in turn of the century Tasmania constituted an environmental consciousness because it prioritised a sympathetic and respectful orientation to nature.

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[1] Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 105.

[2] Julia Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's Landscape was Explored, Nature Discovered and Tourism Unleashed,* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2005), p. 8.

Beattie was a romantic. At The Royal Society of Tasmania (The Royal Society) and in his magic lantern shows he regularly used words like 'picturesque' and 'sublime' to convey the wonder and grandeur of Tasmanian nature. He admired the great romantic painters Joseph Lycett and William Piguenit and took pilgrimages to the sites where they had transferred the romance of Tasmanian scenery onto canvas. Popular conceptions of Tasmanian nature were heavily influenced by the imagery of these romantic painters at a time when many people in Tasmania were living existences removed from the historical environmental struggles that shaped the mythology of the settler on the frontier. In a way, the cultivation of a romantic sensibility in Beattie's oeuvre opened a path for these alienated individuals to experience wild nature — to familiarise themselves with Tasmanian wilderness, to remember their forays into the highlands and to feel as though they were escaping civilisation. This romantic sensibility was apparent in the ways that Beattie framed his photographs, how he positioned mountains and lakes and how he chose to depict the interplay between civilisation and nature. Romanticism was the cultural tradition most suited to Beattie's particular aesthetic, the objectives of his advocacy and the sentimentality of the orientation to nature that his vision of wilderness upheld. This meant that within Beattie's work, romanticism lent turn of the century Tasmanian environmental consciousness — what appears to be a radical ideology — a cultural resonance and ethical weight.

The romantic sensibility had a long and intimate history with the imperial expansion of European peoples. As long as Europeans had encountered difference, forms of romanticism were employed as ways of placing the Other in a system of existing imperial relationships.[3] In the ways that romanticism represented nature, it was engaged in a translation of difference

[3] Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 7.

that reflected one of the great historical struggles of the imperial age — between the preservation and the transformation of the natural world.[4] Romanticism is often thought of as a discourse that enabled Europeans to take imaginative possession of exotic lands that were then appropriated and more often than not exploited.[5] However, such a formulation fails to heed Saree Makdisi's persuasively argued appeal to consider romanticism as an "historical designation of a number of enormously varied engagements with the multitudinous discourses of modernisation."[6] What happened in Tasmania in the late nineteenth century, on the very edge of the antipodean periphery, was representative of a mutation of romanticism that was based on European possession, but nevertheless displayed a more sympathetic orientation to nature.

This mutation had antecedents across Australia where European settlers applied aesthetic notions of romanticism to the environment as a form of sympathetic possession. Ella Barnet has pointed out that in the context of New South Wales European romantic ideologies, in particular those of the picturesque and the sublime, were altered in order to apply to the distinctively Australian landforms of the Blue Mountains.[7] In a way, the romantic orientations to the Blue Mountains that Barnet explores through the art and literature of the late nineteenth century were produced from similar historical processes to those that produced the poetry of Wordsworth and Keats — specifically the transformation of the countryside and the degradation of the natural environment.[8] Like other wilderness movements across the Anglo

[4] Alan Bewell, "Romanticism and Colonial Environmental History," *European Romantic Review* 23 (2012): p. 397.

[5] Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East,* p. 2.

[6] Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 7.

[7] Ella Barnet, "Flirting with the picturesque: The effects of Romanticism and romance," in *Playing in the bush: Recreation and national parks in New South Wales,* ed. Richard White and Caroline Ford (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2012), pp. 44-45.

[8] Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism,* p. 6.

world, such eruptions of environmental sentiment constituted a flight from modernity.[9] In this sense, the colonial contact zone was a site where romantic anxieties about modernisation could be rehearsed and replicated anew.[10] However, it is important to note the ways that other responses to Australian nature deployed existing tropes from the romantic tradition.

For European settlers in Australia, the romantic tradition was a powerful cultural force that influenced the appreciation of nature. Griffiths has pointed out that despite the absence of "classical soil" in Australia, antiquity was nevertheless imposed on the environment through the articulation of a pastoral romantic vision.[11] In some cases this pastoral vision took a (comparatively late) lead from Gilbert White's 1789 romantic natural history, *The Natural History of Selborne.*[12] That White's 1789 vision of a sentimental nature influenced late nineteenth century Australian romantics indicates just how powerful the resonance of the romantic tradition was in Australia. The application of the pastoral vision in Australia represented an application of an English landscape aesthetic to Australian nature without the sentimental attention to a sense of place. The apotheosis of this pastoral vision in the progressive imagery of the Heidelberg school toward the end of the nineteenth century resulted in the suppression of a sentimental engagement with Australian nature.[13] By the turn of the twentieth century it was clear that the pastoral vision that emerged from the type of romantic natural history that White established in *Selborne* had developed into a relatively unsympathetic orientation to Australian nature.

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[9] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1995), p. 13.

[10] Andrew McCann, "Romanticism, nationalism and the myth of the popular in William Lane's the workingman's paradise," *Journal of Australian Studies* 25 (2001): p. 182.

[11] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors,* pp. 102-105.

[12] Tom Griffiths, "'The natural history of Melbourne': The culture of nature writing in Victoria, 1880-1945," *Australian Historical Studies* 23 (1989): p 340.

[13] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors,* p. 106.

While the melancholic strand of romantic engagement with Australian nature was secondary to the pastoral at the turn of the twentieth century, it did nevertheless motivate antiquarians like Beattie. The quest for the sublime in Australian wilderness was based on an aesthetic tradition that incorporated the imagery and style of romantic painters like Eugene von Guerard and Piguenit. The paintings of von Guerard in particular excited the colonial taste for the sublime in nature and contributed to an alternative understanding of Australian landscape to that of the pastoral romantic.[14] This engagement with the sublime in Australian nature produced a set of aesthetics that retained the melancholic sentimentality and sense of place of the provincial English romanticism seen in White's *Selborne* and Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes.*[15] In an urbanised and modernised Tasmania alienated from the environmental battles that characterised the struggle against nature in the early nineteenth century, the romantic lure of wilderness, and the distinct sense of place that wilderness evoked, resonated strongly.[16] Beattie's vision of wilderness was positioned in relation to these trends — by embracing the melancholic it was orientated against the primary impulse of pastoral romanticism, it drew upon the sublime aesthetics of von Guerard and Piguenit and can be understood as a faithful evocation of place in the tradition of White and Wordsworth.

In the work of Beattie, romanticism can be seen to enable a set of sentimental bonds between European colonisers and nature. These bonds were one of a multiplicity of coexisting and contradictory expressions of romanticism over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that varied from an endorsement to a subversion of the imperialist project.[17] Unlike other purveyors of the bush myth at the turn of the twentieth century, and possibly because of the contained nature of Tasmanian settlement, Beattie managed to stay in contact with

[14] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder,* pp. 74-77

[15] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors,* p. 123.

[16] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," p. 13.

[17] Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East,* p. 3.

wilderness throughout his urban existence. Like the bushwalkers whose ideology he partly anticipated, Beattie was able to "romanticise the bush" without having to separate himself from it completely.[18] In this way, Beattie's romanticism can be understood alongside romantic movements that functioned as a critique of, or flight from, modernity.[19] Through the articulation of a sentimental nostalgia that correlated firmly with the preservation of the natural world, romantics like Beattie popularised a sympathetic engagement with nature. This meant that at the heart of Beattie's romantic sensibility there was an idealised mode of relations between humans and nature. While the particulars of this connection varied according to the inflections of time and place, by the end of the nineteenth century in Tasmania the articulation of this coexistence between people and nature was an emergent romantic trope.[20] The historical development of romanticism in Australia enveloped Beattie's vision of wilderness in Tasmania and his understanding of man's orientation to nature.

The cultivation of a romantic sensibility in Beattie's work emerged in the rhetoric of his public performances. The magic lantern shows, with their purpose of popularising wilderness tourism in Tasmania's highlands, frequently described Tasmanian nature as "picturesque."[21] Beattie was not alone in this, indeed, Tasmania was well-known for the ways in which the harmony of river, settlement and mountain satisfied European expectations of the scenic.[22] The expectations of the picturesque often came to the fore when colonists were contemplating the interplay between scenery and water. Considering this, the associations between Tasmania's inland mountain lake country and the Lake District of England become apparent

[18] Melissa Harper, "Sensuality in Sandshoes Representations of the Bush in the Walking and Writing of John Le Gay Brereton and Percy Grainger." *Australian Historical Studies* 31 (2000): p. 295.

[19] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," p. 13.

[20] Stuart Mulligan and Martin Hill, *Ecological Pioneers: A Social History of Ecological Thought and Action,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 53.

[21] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (2) — RS29/11, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[22] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder,* pp. 40-42.

in Beattie's 'Playground of Australia' talk — for good reason he considered the inland mountain lakes as the "most picturesque part of our island."[23] In another presentation, Beattie explained how all seven of the lakes were positioned "under the rugged shelter of the crest of the range."[24] In this way the Tasmanian physical environment was more suited to the sentimental appreciation of nature than much of the Australian mainland. It is easy to imagine how settlers like Beattie understood the inland lakes in reference to the romantic painter John Glover's early atmospheric paintings of the Lake District in England — as picturesque images that conveyed variety in nature.

Beattie's affirmation of his love of the bush indicates that he was interested in more than just the picturesque elements of Tasmanian nature. He was drawn to sites that exhibited the elemental sentiment of the sublime. In a paper given to The Royal Society in 1901, Beattie felt he could not adequately communicate the "depths of the gorges and cliffs" of the Forth River Gorge to his audiences either visually or orally.[25] The only noun that Beattie could summon for the sight was "sublimity" — establishing the romantic qualities of the site.[26] This sentiment is mirrored in Beattie's confession that when standing atop a mountain: "I am struck dumb, but oh! my soul sings."[27] William Cronon has pointed out that this evocation of the sublime was a crucial element of the growth in popularity of wilderness tourism in America throughout the nineteenth century.[28] Beattie's encounter with his very own "mountaintop God" in Tasmania placed him in a lineage of wilderness romantics that included

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[23] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/11, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[24] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/7 (2), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[25] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RSA/A17B, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] John Watt Beattie, quoted by Jack Cato in *The Story of the Camera in Australia (1955),* 2nd edition, (Melbourne: Institute of Australian Photography, 1977), p. 82.

[28] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," pp. 9-12.

Figure 2.1: William Piguenit, *Hell's Gates, Davey River, Tasmania,* 1871. Source: National Gallery of Australia.

Figure 2.2: John Watt Beattie, 'Hells Gates, Davey River, Port Davey.' Source: Private Album.

John Muir and Henry David Thoreau in communicating a vision of the "mountain as cathedral."[29] The cultivation of the romantic sensibility in Beattie's rhetoric marks him out as a romantic interested in a sentimental, respectful engagement with nature.

Beattie's position in a lineage of romantics is even clearer in the ways that he chose to frame his photographs of Tasmanian nature. The most striking example of this is the way that he captured Hell's Gates on the Davey River. Piguenit composed his watercolour *Hell's Gates, Davey River, Tasmania* (Figure 2.1), during an overland painting trip in the 1870s.[30] Beattie referenced this trip in his talk on the Arthur Ranges, inspired as he was to recapture the "specimens of scenery presented in Mr. Piguenit's graphic paintings."[31] In light of this and of the cultural impact that Piguenit's romantic painting had on conceptions of Tasmanian wilderness from the 1870s on,[32] it is hard to miss the striking similarities between Piguenit's *Hell's Gates* and Beattie's photograph of the Davey River (Figure 2.2). Importantly, the scenic

[29] *Ibid.,* p. 12.

[30] "Piguenit, William Charles (1836-1914)," in Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/piguenit-william-charles-4400/text7173. Article was first published in hardcopy in *Australian Dictionary of Biography,* Volume 5, (MUP), 1974. Accessed online 22 September 2014.

[31] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS5/14, Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[32] Roslynn D. Haynes, "Romanticism and environmentalism: the Tasmanian novels of Mary Bjelke-Petersen," *Australian Literary Studies* 20 (2001): p. 69.

Figure 2.3: John Watt Beattie, 'Hobart from the Bay, 1894 or 1895.' *Album of the Boileau family's voyage from England to Australia in 1894-1895.* Source: National Library of Australia.

interplay of water and mountain that underwrote the picturesque vision at this time are apparent in both. Indeed, a comparison of these images demonstrates the extent to which Beattie's photographs relied upon a vision of wild nature established by the existing imagery of romantic painting.

Tasmania was the kind of place to encourage the romantic imagination in the way that it developed through Piguenit and Beattie's depictions of nature. Indeed, Horne has pointed out that Hobart in particular was positioned in such a way — on the banks of a fine river and under the imposing edifice of Mount Wellington — as to bring together the set of scenic elements most appreciated in European lake scenery.[33] Beattie took a photograph of Hobart in the mid-1890s that excellently communicated these scenic elements (Figure 2.3). The photograph seems to have been taken from the northern suburb of Bellerive and looks south across the Derwent River to Sullivan's Cove, the Tasmanian Museum, and the central

[33] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder,* p. 42.

Figure 2.4: John Watt Beattie, 'Russell Falls (Top Fall) Southern Tasmania,' *Beautiful Tasmania the Garden Island.* Source: Launceston Local Studies Collection, LPIC 139 (1900-1909).

Figure 2.5: John Watt Beattie, 'Tasman's Arch from Below, Sunrise, Eaglehawk Neck.' Source: Private Album.

business district, all nestled under a snowcapped Mount Wellington. The interplay of these elements in the photograph alludes to a coexistence between wild nature and civilisation that, according to Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, was the hallmark of late nineteenth century melancholic romanticism.[34] However, under the surface of Beattie's picturesque *Hobart from the Bay* is a threatening tension that is masked by the civilising imagery of buildings and tall ships. In Beattie's photographs of wilderness the determining aesthetic principle slides away from the picturesque towards the sublime.

Beattie's depiction of the sublime in nature was implicit in photos like *Hobart from the Bay,* but in photos like *Russell Falls (Top Fall)* (Figure 2.4) the imposition of the sublime vision is altogether more apparent. Again displaying the interplay between water and landscape,

[34] Mulligan and Hill, *Ecological Pioneers,* p 53.

Beattie has positioned the humans in the frame in a way that accentuates the scale of the fall and the volume of water running over the escarpment. This is consistent with nineteenth century male expectations of the sublime in waterfalls. Horne has pointed out that in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, gentlemen travellers tended to appreciate waterfalls predominantly for the qualities that contributed to an overall sublime scene.[35] Due to the small amount of water at destinations like Govett's Leap and Wentworth Falls, accounts tended to marvel at the height of the fall and the surrounding cliffs.[36] *Russell Falls* presents a considerably different perspective in the way that the falls are the singular focus of the photograph. It seems that Beattie had no trouble in identifying the power of the sublime in the imagery of the falls.

Tasman's Arch from Below, Sunrise, Eaglehawk Neck (Figure 2.5) is similar to *Russell Falls* in that it is ostensibly about the interaction between water and landscape. However, *Tasman's Arch* incorporates a gothic element that pronounces the sublime characteristics of the photograph. The "romanticisation of the grotto" had taken place in England in the eighteenth century and in Australia caves were frequently an interest for early nineteenth century travellers.[37] Due to this heritage and the practice of cave touring, the gothic imagery of the grotto was well established in colonial culture. Beattie evidently drew upon this imagery for his depiction of Tasman's Arch, foregoing the conventional photographic positioning on the cliffs above in favour of a more atmospheric composition (Figure 2.5). Interestingly, both these photographs feature humans placed in the foreground or middle-ground as a way of indicating scale — a familiar romantic technique. However, Beattie's most influential

[35] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder,* pp. 293-294.

[36] *Ibid.,* p. 294.

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233.

Figure 2.6: John Watt Beattie, 'Lake Marion and the Du Cane Range.' Source: National Library of Australia.

Figure 2.7: John Watt Beattie, 'Mountains Byron, Cuvier, Manfred and Marion, and Lake St. Clair, ' Source: National Library of Australia.

photographs, and the ones that most powerfully communicate the sublimity of Tasmanian wilderness, refrain from this technique.

These images are the most important of Beattie's romantic photographs of wilderness because they subtly depart from the convention of placing humans in the foreground for scale, yet still communicate the sublimity of nature. These images, *Lake Marion and the Du Cane Range* (Figure 2.6) and *Mountains Byron, Cuvier, Manfred and Marion, and Lake St. Clair* (Figure 2.7), continue to feature the interplay of water and landscape but impress the sublimity of Tasmanian wild scenery with other compositional techniques. In *Lake Marion and the Du Cane Range* Beattie achieved such interplay by framing Lake Marion "under the rugged shelter"[38] of the Du Cane Range, which rises precipitously out of a misty middle distance (Figure 2.6). On the other hand, *Mountains Byron* depicted the sublime with recourse to an impressive display of numerous peaks fading into the distance as a backdrop to Lake St. Clair (Figure 2.7). Both these photographs articulate a romantic sentiment more often associated with the monumentality of the American west than the Australian wilderness.[39] Indeed, the

[38] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/7 (2), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

[39] Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience (1976),* 4th edition, (Plymouth: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), p. 7.

absence of human figures in *Lake Marion* and *Mountains Byron* accentuated the sense of wonder that defined the sublime in Beattie's oeuvre as a way of experiencing nature.

These photographs demonstrate the extent to which Beattie's wilderness photography was engineered to create a sense of wonder. Horne has argued compellingly that the pursuit of wonder in worthy natural scenery was a powerful motivating factor in travel and tourism in the late nineteenth century colonial imagination.[40] Beattie's photographs of Tasmanian nature tapped into this motivation to communicate an orientation to nature defined by the romantic tradition. Beattie's representations of Tasmania — from the scenic coexistence of Hobart under Mount Wellington, through the gothic atmosphere of *Tasman's Arch* and the picturesque *Russell Falls,* to the imposing sublimity of *Lake Marion* and *Mountains Byron* — represent an orientation to nature with respect and wonder as their defining sentiments. And while these images, collected from numerous sources, represent the extent of the sympathetic ethic in Beattie's vision of wilderness, Beattie's images also existed in relation to other types of romantic discourse — most often within the contained text of the photographic album.

As objects, these photographic albums placed a series of images alongside one another in the context of other textual and symbolic information. Because of the notions of universalism and transparency that had developed alongside photography in the nineteenth century these albums were understood as significant collections of reliable visual information.[41] Published between 1900 and 1909, *Beautiful Tasmania: The Garden Island,* was a collection of forty-eight plates bound and printed in an Art Nouveau style that included scenic, picturesque and sublime images of Tasmanian wilderness and landscapes along with a short essay on

[40] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder,* p. 300.

[41] François Brunet, "Nationalities and Universalism in the Early Historiography of Photography (1843–1857)," *History of Photography* 35 (2011): pp. 98-99.

Figure 2.8: John Watt Beattie, 'Fern Tree Bower, Near Hobart, Southern Tasmania,' *Beautiful Tasmania the Garden Island.* Source: Launceston Local Studies Collection, LPIC 139 (1900-1909).

Tasmania's natural virtues.[42] Among other picturesque images, *Beautiful Tasmania* seemingly tapped into the late nineteenth century obsession with the delicacy of ferns and the quiet beauty of fern tree bowers (Figure 2.8).[43] Like the rest of Beattie's work, these images of a domesticated picturesque are balanced by images of wilderness that resonate with a more elemental romanticism. However, the positioning and messages of the text in the album are altogether more significant.

Beautiful Tasmania began with a two page introduction and short poem, and, though we cannot be sure who the author of this text was, that it introduced Beattie's photographs is nevertheless an important feature. The introduction explained the climatic and scenic attractions of Tasmania as they would appear to mainland tourists.[44] Fitting alongside much of

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[42] *Beautiful Tasmania the Garden Island,* LPIC139 (1900-1909), Launceston Local Studies Collection, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, Launceston.

[43] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder,* pp. 274-283.

[44] *Beautiful Tasmania the Garden Island,* LPIC139 (1900-1909), Launceston Local Studies Collection, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, Launceston.

Beattie's early twentieth century advocacy of tourism, the text focused on the leisure activities available in Tasmania and the growing popularity of the tourist trade in an effort to prove "that there are attractions in Tasmania that appeal to a very wide range of tastes."[45] Though attempting to present a broad experience to the potential tourist, the introduction nevertheless slipped into comparatively extensive discussion of romantic scenery. Like Beattie's photographic work the introduction accentuated the range of romantic scenery available — from the sublime sentiment of the "boldest of mountain scenery" to the nostalgic picturesque of the "peaceful country lane."[46] The romantic link is confirmed when the author quotes Byron's *Childe Harold:*

> There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
> There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
> There is society where none intrudes
> By the deep sea, and music in its roar.[47]

That Byron was quoted in the introduction of *Beautiful Tasmania* is a sure indicator that ideas of wilderness and Beattie's landscapes were influenced by romantic discourse in the turn of the century Tasmanian imagination.

The romantic imagination in *Beautiful Tasmania* sprang from a flight from civilisation. Raymond Williams has suggested that, as an impulse, the flight from civilisation was driven by a new consciousness that was a kind of "active sympathy" with nature and the natural.[48] In *Beautiful Tasmania,* this ethic is apparent in two ways. Firstly, the pitch to the tourist in the introduction exalts the "quietude" of the island state as "a haven of refuge and rest from the

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[45] *Ibid.*

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] Raymond Williams, "The Green Language," in *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism,* ed. Laurence Coupe (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 50.

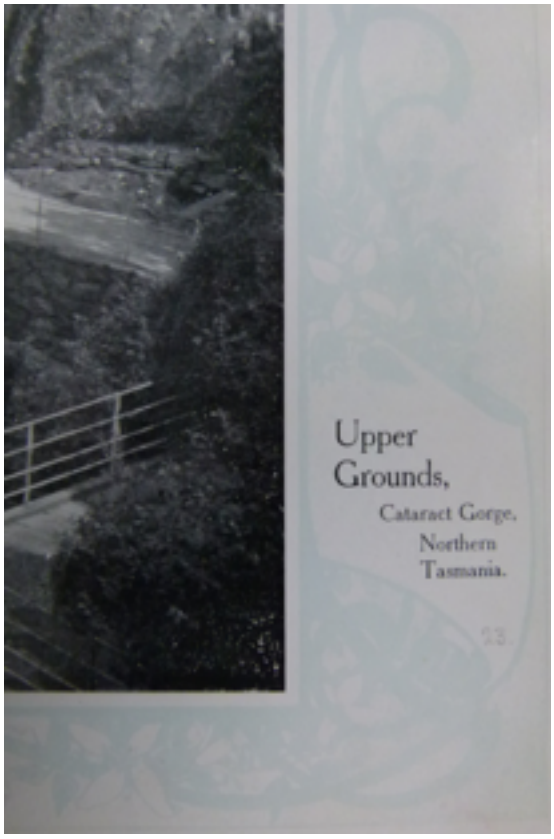

Figure 2.9: Detail of the Art Nouveau decorations in, *Beautiful Tasmania the Garden Island.* Source: Launceston Local Studies Collection, LPIC 139 (1900-1909).

storm and stress of a busy Australian world."[49] This explicit reference to the stresses of modern civilisation links into the implicit symbolism of the second feature — Art Nouveau decoration (Figure 2.9). An aesthetic defined by its employment of organic shapes, feminine curves and natural motifs, Art Nouveau was a fitting style to complement Beattie's romantic images of Tasmanian nature in a publication aimed at alienated urbanites.[50] As Penelope Edmonds has demonstrated, the symbolic meanings of relics can be better understood by considering the forms of expression in the object.[51] In this light, the consolidation of romanticism, Beattie's photographs and the fashions of Art Nouveau decoration in the one object demonstrates how interconnected these pervasive attitudes were in turn of the century Tasmanian society.

[49] *Beautiful Tasmania the Garden Island,* LPIC139 (1900-1909), Launceston Local Studies Collection, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, Launceston.

[50] Stephen Escritt, *Art Nouveau*, (London: Phaidon Press, 2000), pp. 4-8

[51] Penelope Edmonds, "The Le Souëf Box: Reflections on imperial nostalgia, material culture and exhibitionary practice in colonial Victoria," *Australian Historical Studies* 37 (2008): p. 117.

In an album like *Beautiful Tasmania,* the romantic tradition that weaved its way through Beattie's vision of wilderness is most apparent. The album distils the connections between turn of the century orientations to nature in Tasmania, the different values attributed to different types of wilderness, and the escapist imperative of nature tourism. The way that these features interacted in Beattie's photographs lent his vision of wilderness —particularly that of sublime scenery — an ethical weight opposed to those associated with urban space or the pastoral vision of nature. The sympathetic or romantic vision of wilderness constituted an environmentalist ethic because it lent nature an intrinsic value. As it developed on the Tasmanian periphery, romanticism ended up being the keystone in a set of relations between humans and nature that diverged from the ways that pastoral romanticism had celebrated the European exploitation and transformation of nature. Importantly, the sentiment that Beattie's images of Tasmanian landscape expressed was one of sympathy, wonder and respect. This was evidently attractive to the urbanites of Launceston and Hobart, alienated as they were from the historical battles that constituted the possession and appropriation of nature in Tasmania. Romanticism added the symbolic pathos and ethical weight that underwrote the environmental consciousness communicated in Beattie's vision of Tasmanian nature.

Conclusion

The Beattie moment in Tasmanian orientations to nature

John Watt Beattie's trip to Lake St. Clair in 1879 marked the beginning of a period of nearly thirty years during which he became one of the most influential advocates for nature in Tasmania, if not Australia. In Beattie's archive, this period is marked by an intensity in publications and photographs that dissipates from about 1906 — the year that he spent photographing the Western Pacific. In the latter years of his life Beattie's activities began to reflect a wider set of historical and geographical interests that ranged from the Presbyterian missions of the Solomon Islands to the first expeditions to the South Pole.[1] While the orientation to nature that his photographs and presentations encapsulated continued to inform the development of tourism, nature leisure and the National Parks movement in Tasmania, Beattie himself had seemingly moved on. Seen in this light, the sympathetic orientation to nature encapsulated in Beattie's photography and advocacy is a moment of reorientation that functioned as a catalyst for new interactions with nature in Tasmania. This thesis has offered an opportunity to disentangle the constituent elements of the Beattie moment in Tasmanian orientations to nature — the historical foundations of this vision of nature, the methods and practices of its reproduction and the meaning of its symbolism.

First of all, this thesis has demonstrated that the sympathetic orientation to nature that Beattie articulated displayed an extensive historical imagination. Beattie's vision of nature was based on a series of historical contingencies that were rooted in the earliest days of settlement in Tasmania. Indeed, Beattie's vision of the European man in Tasmanian nature was an artefact of Indigenous dispossession in the way that it reflected a post-extinction understanding of wilderness. The imaginative and physical mastery of the Tasmanian landscape embodied in

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[1] Jack Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia (1955),* 2nd edition, (Melbourne: Institute of Australian Photography, 1977), p. 83.

Beattie as the photographer-explorer was disconnected from the moral problem of prior Indigenous occupation. The type of nature leisure that Beattie advocated reproduced a "narrative of avoidance"[2] that enabled the unproblematic reception of a sympathetic orientation to nature.

This orientation to nature also reflected a shift in the interactions that most Tasmanians had with nature. As the mineral booms of the late nineteenth century fuelled the growth of urban centres like Hobart and Launceston, the decaying infrastructure of convict Tasmania came to symbolise the extent to which Tasmanians were no longer personally involved in a battle with nature. Places like Port Arthur provided sites where Beattie could exercise his antiquarian imagination. His photographs of Port Arthur were composed in a way that foregrounded the imagery of the gradual deterioration of the convict order in the face of Tasmanian nature.[3] Despite this, the physical alienation of Tasmanian urbanites from the remote spaces of the island belied the dependence of Tasmanian standards of living on the mining industry, which was transforming the material conditions of life in both the mining settlements and financial centres of the island. Beattie's advocacy exploited the urban anxieties that this environmental degradation generated in his drive to preserve Tasmanian nature from "the axe and horrid sulphur fumes".[4] These epistemic habits — the acceptance of Indigenous dispossession, the symbolism of decaying convict infrastructure and the urban anxieties about environmental degradation — formed the basis of Beattie's articulation of a sympathetic orientation to nature. As historical conditions, the interaction of these contingent forces in Beattie's oeuvre was what made his vision of wilderness possible in late nineteenth century Tasmania.

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[2] Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia,* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 5.

[3] John Watt Beattie, 'The Church' in *Port Arthur, The Penal Settlement in Tasmania: Glimpses of its Stirring History,* Hobart: Oldham, Beddome & Meredith Pty. Ltd., 193?., p. 10.

[4] John Watt Beattie, Papers, 1859-1930, RS29/5 (3), Royal Society Collection, University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Hobart.

Beattie shared these visions through the magic lantern shows that he performed at the Royal Society of Tasmania (The Royal Society), his very own Port Arthur Museum and other venues in Hobart and Launceston. These performances mobilised combinations of the scientific gaze of the natural historian and the sentimental gaze of the artist in a reflection of the broad range of curiosities that The Royal Society encouraged in fin de siècle Tasmania. Importantly, all these interactions were carried out on the basis of an implicit contract between Beattie and his audiences. Indeed the magic lantern show was a site of negotiation where certain cultural repertoires were tested and scripts were played out.[5] In Beattie's case, this meant balancing the sentimental and the scientific gaze in his presentations to the urbanites of Hobart and Launceston. It also meant that his presentations were engineered to satisfy the expectations of these urban audiences and the types of immersive experiences of nature that they sought. As Roderick Nash has pointed out in the American context, these urban audiences consumed romantic images of wilderness with a fervour comparable to the way their forefathers approached the clearing of wilderness a generation earlier.[6]

Beattie's audiences were not simply consuming attractive pictures of Tasmanian nature — they were also absorbing the romantic sensibility that underwrote sympathetic orientations to nature at the turn of the century. Throughout the nineteenth century European orientations to nature were often viewed through a romantic framework. Indeed, romanticism was an ideology that reflected one of the dominant historical puzzles of the age of European imperial expansion — how to understand the transformation and the preservation of the natural world.[7] In the Australian context, Beattie's work represented a divergence from the ways that pastoral

[5] Peter Burke, "Performing History: The Importance of Occasions" *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 9 (2005), p. 40.

[6] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind (1967),* 4th edition, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 143.

[7] Alan Bewell, "Romanticism and Colonial Environmental History" *European Romantic Review* 23 (2012): p. 397.

romanticism had celebrated the exploitation and transformation of Australian nature. Beattie's vision of wilderness was based on an orientation to nature that prioritised sympathy, wonder and respect. The romantic tradition in Beattie's work, which sits in a genealogy that includes Gilbert White and William Wordsworth, and was sometimes articulated alongside the poetry of Lord Byron, lent his vision of wilderness a symbolic pathos and moral weight. This meant that Beattie was communicating a version of environmental consciousness that recognised the intrinsic value of nature, albeit within a sentimental rather than a scientific rationale.

Beattie's influence on how Tasmanians orientated themselves to nature meant a great deal because of the shift that it signalled. Indeed, from the late nineteenth century a collection of social movements appeared to capitalise on the catalyst provided by people like Beattie. These movements — gaining strength in the early years of the twentieth century — depended upon the romanticised imagery of wilderness to bolster new interactions with nature.[8] This model of interactions was eventually ascendent in the declaration of National Parks across Australia's east coast during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The depictions and descriptions of nature that Beattie shared with his audiences in Hobart and Launceston were part of the historic relationship between romanticism and Australian landscape.[9] In particular, performances like Beattie's were a constitutive part of the cultural shift that imbued Australian landscape with intrinsic, sentimental value — a cultural shift that provided the imaginative foundation for changed practices. However, this thesis is less about how orientations to nature like Beattie's eventually supported a collection of environmentalist social movements, and more about the values and positions inherent within a particular vision of wilderness.

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[8] Julia Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's Landscape was Explored, Nature Discovered and Tourism Unleashed,* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2005), p. 300.

[9] Ella Barnett, "Flirting with the picturesque: The effects of Romanticism and romance," in *Playing in the bush: Recreation and national parks in New South Wales,* ed. Richard White and Caroline Ford, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2012), p. 41.

Nevertheless, there are implications here for how we understand these movements and how we think about the history of environmentalism in Australia. The way that Beattie's vision of wilderness was partly a response to a period of dramatic environmental damage fits into a pattern of degradation followed by conservation — Tom Griffiths' "giant experiment in ecological crisis and management" — that runs throughout the history of European settlement in Australia.[10] Likewise, that Beattie found his most ardent followers in the urban areas of Hobart and Launceston mirrors the location of the power-base of environmentalist politics in contemporary Australia. Finally, in Beattie's eyes the intrinsic value of wilderness was related to the emotional power that romantic thought attributed to the grandeur of nature — Beattie's environmental ethic was linked to a dominant cultural feature of late Victorian Australia in a very similar way to how the ecological sciences support contemporary environmentalism. The Beattie moment in Tasmanian orientations to nature is clearly a part of what Libby Hutton and Drew Connors have argued is the unclaimed past of the Australian environmental movement.[11] These implications, reflections and parallels point to the necessity for further study.

This study of Beattie's archive has sought to chart what could be thought of as an early expression of a sentimental environmental consciousness. Beattie's orientation to nature lacked much of the scientific rationale of the environmental perspectives that developed throughout the twentieth century, but it nevertheless is an example of the sympathetic bonds that emerged between some settlers and their environment at the turn of the twentieth century in Tasmania. By analysing the Beattie moment from a number of different perspectives, thereby disentangling the cultural forces that shaped his vision, this thesis has demonstrated

[10] Tom Griffiths, "The Nature of Culture and and the Culture of Nature," in *Cultural History in Australia*, ed. Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 71.

[11] Griffiths. *Hunters and Collectors,* p. 17.

that Beattie's construction of wilderness was linked to a clearly defined set of historical contingencies that demanded certain environmental responses from Tasmanian settlers. It has shown how Beattie responded to a popular audience looking to consume wilderness and established a link between Beattie's seemingly esoteric orientation to nature and a social group in fin de siècle Tasmania. Most importantly, it has demonstrated that Beattie's vision of wilderness — what could only be considered an expression of Tasmanian environmental consciousness — was based on an orientation to nature defined by sympathy, respect and wonder.

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