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Thomas Vranken

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'A Medium More Important than Bodily Sense'
Wilde, the Antipodes, and the Techno-Imagination

Thomas Vranken

University of British Columbia

> Here am I, and you at the Antipodes […]. The messages of the gods to each other travel not by pen and ink and indeed your bodily presence here would not make you more real: for I feel your fingers in my hair, and your cheek brushing mine. The air is full of the music of your voice, my soul and body seem no longer mine, but mingled in some exquisite ecstasy with yours.
>
> (Oscar Wilde, letter to Constance Wilde from Edinburgh, 16 December 1884.)

A decade ago, in his chapter for *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, Ken Stewart voiced what has long been the conventional understanding of Wilde and his relationship with Britain's Australian colonies. 'The image of aristocratic dandyism [Wilde] affected', Stewart asserted,

> was the reverse of typically Australian. In witty conversation and in his plays and other writings, he employed with pitiless *brio* the convention of Australia as a joke place, a vast and distant outpost overrun by convicts, sheep and wealthy philistines who were to be spurned, unless one was in debt.[1]

Indeed, some thirty years before Stewart, in his now still-standard biography of Wilde, the most significant statement Richard Ellmann makes about Australia is that Wilde turned the country into 'the butt of his regional jokes'.[2] Even twenty years before Ellmann, in 1970, Coral Lansbury declared that Wilde 'could never regard Australia as a subject for anyone's serious attention'.[3] In this article, I seek to go beyond this somewhat unproductive understanding of Wilde's relationship with Australia. Instead, I argue, over the course of the 1880s and '90s, Wilde and Australia came (albeit, at times, begrudgingly) to identify with one another. In making this argument, I work to view the relationship through the prisms of both fin-de-siècle technology and celebrity culture, on the one hand, and 'Antipodean' discourses on the other.

In his study of decadent cartography, Alex Murray reminds us that the late nineteenth century was a period of

> rapid increase in the speed and affordability of long-distance travel. No longer was European touring restricted to the aristocratic and upper-middle class; instead it had

> become democratized, available to an upwardly mobile bourgeoisie who were desperate to accumulate the cultural capital provided by travel.[4]

Little wonder, then, that the decidedly anti-democratic, anti-bourgeois, decadent movement became so famously averse to the exhausting vulgarities of travelling in person. 'If you desire to see a Japanese effect, you will not behave like a tourist and go to Tokio [*sic*]', Vivian tells Cyril in 'The Decay of Lying'.[5] 'What is the use of moving', Des Esseintes asks himself in *À rebours*, 'when one can travel so magnificently on a chair?'[6]

While advances in nineteenth-century transportation technologies such as steamships and the railway may have contributed to the vulgarization of physical tourism, the spread of media and communications technologies at the fin de siècle opened up more arcane modes of relocation that seemed rather better-suited to the decadent mentality. In 1872, the Earl of Kimberley, Gladstone's Secretary of State for the Colonies, chaired a meeting of the Royal Colonial Institute to celebrate the linking of Australia to Britain by telegraph. After enumerating 'the horrors of the movements aboard ship', Kimberley triumphantly declared there to now be 'no such difficulties in communicating with the different parts of the Empire by telegraph'.[7] For, while 'they could not be close in an actual bodily sense with their fellow-subjects on the other side of [the world]', Kimberley explained, 'when they could communicate with them in a few minutes by telegraph they could not but feel they were allied to them through a medium more important than that of bodily sense'.[8]

Despite a number of somewhat half-hearted efforts, Wilde never made it to Australia 'in an actual bodily sense' either: 'I am waiting to go', he claimed during an interview in America, eagerly reprinted by a newspaper based in Sydney, '[but] I cannot find any one to go with'.[9] Yet, though Wilde never actually travelled to Australia – that thoroughly virtualized collection of colonies which, in the final decades of the nineteenth century, 'sent more telegraphs per capita than any other nation'[10] – the author and his fictional creations repeatedly pondered 'that absurdly shaped country' as it appeared on the map, as if preparing to do so. 'What a curious shape it is!',

declares the Duchess of Berwick in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, 'Just like a large packing case'.[11] For Wilde, then, Australia became an ambivalent symbol of travel itself – ugly but fascinating, invigorating yet exhausting.[12]

In the process of rejecting in-person international appearances, decadent approaches to travel unwittingly dovetailed with the requirements of celebrity culture. The concepts of intimacy, absence, and distance are now understood as fundamental aspects of modern fame. Indeed, in 2007, Joseph Roach deemed physical absence 'a necessary condition of […] celebrity';[13] while, back in the 1950s, Donald Horton and Richard Wohl suggested that we read celebrity as a form of 'intimacy at a distance', in which 'the most remote and illustrious men are met as if they were in the circle of one's peers'.[14] Yet what if one's celebrity icons really were distant, not just socially or symbolically, but geographically as well? How do people maintain the sense of intimacy on which celebrity relies if the parties involved not only never see one another but never even walk the same streets or breathe the same gaslit and fog-prone air? In this article, I will suggest that the kind of purely imaginative exchange that Wilde and Australia engaged in during the final decades of the nineteenth century produced an increasingly heightened form of celebrity, in which the participants brought about an extreme version of what Horton and Wohl called the 'ambiguous meeting ground on which real people play out the role of fictional characters'.[15] For, just as Wilde toyed with certain stereotypical depictions of Australia during this period, so too did Australian print media regularly manipulate and perpetuate stereotypical impressions of Wilde. These interactions, I argue, enabled the creation of a somewhat unlikely sense of intimacy and identification.

The Grotesque, the Weird, the Strange…

Early on in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (a novel Ward, Lock and Co. published simultaneously in London, New York, and, significantly, Melbourne), Dorian's soon-to-be fiancée Sibyl Vane walks down Euston Road with her sullen brother James on his final afternoon in London before sailing

for Australia. In a long passage of indirect speech, Sibyl 'prattle[s] on about the ship in which Jim was going to sail, about the gold he was certain to find, about the wonderful heiress whose life he was to save from the wicked, red-shirted bushrangers'.[16] The sixteen-year-old James is actually due to take up the relatively mundane occupation of apprentice salesman for a merchant fleet; yet, in Sibyl's mind, James 'was not to remain a sailor, or a super-cargo, or whatever he was going to be. Oh, no! A sailor's existence was dreadful'.[17] Instead, Sibyl fancies, James

> was to leave the vessel at Melbourne, bid a polite good-bye to the captain, and go off at once to the gold-fields. Before a week was over he was to come across a large nugget of pure gold, the largest nugget that had ever been discovered, and bring it down to the coast in a wagon guarded by six mounted policemen. The bushrangers were to attack them three times, and be defeated with immense slaughter. Or, no. He was not to go to the gold-fields at all. They were horrid places, where men got intoxicated, and shot each other in bar-rooms, and used bad language. He was to be a nice sheep-farmer, and one evening, as he was riding home, he was to see the beautiful heiress being carried off by a robber on a black horse, and give chase, and rescue her. Of course, she would fall in love with him, and he with her, and they would get married, and come home, and live in an immense house in London. Yes, there were delightful things in store for him. But he must be very good, and not lose his temper, or spend his money foolishly. […] [I]n a few years he would come back quite rich and happy.[18]

The reader never learns what James actually does in Australia, or even if he makes it to Australia at all.[19] Yet, in many respects, it does not matter for Wilde what Australia is really like. For in this (the only) depiction of Britain's former colony found in the novel, Australia operates purely as a self-consciously textual stereotype, becoming not so much an actual place as a romantic figure conjured up by the feminine overconsumption of melodrama and cheap railway fiction. Indeed, the great specificity of this passage ('before a week was over', 'six mounted policemen', 'attack them three times') serves not to enhance any sense of conventional realism, as one might normally expect, but rather to underline the reverie's clichéd absurdity. Through an ambivalent irony, then, Wilde simultaneously ridicules and perpetuates European discourse about Australia.

The passage from *Dorian Gray* reproduced above glosses a number of the key narratives surrounding Australia at the end of the nineteenth century: from goldmines, sheep-farming, and bushrangers, to the oft-employed movement of wayward literary characters to and from the colonies in their acquisition of new-found wealth and respectability.[20] However, in viewing Wilde's

relationship with Australia, perhaps the most interesting lens one can employ is that of 'the Antipodes'. A *longue-durée*, pre-contact, cultural construction, the Antipodean discourse began circulating long before Wilde, and, indeed, long before European settlement itself. Yet, in envisioning a perversely and subversively uncanny great southern land, this cultural narrative seems particularly suited to what would become the decadent imaginary. Simon Ryan suggests that both before and after 1770 Australia was typically cast as a kind of 'repository of perversity', as 'a stage on which European fantasies of difference, aberration and monstrousness […] played out'.[21] This was a surreal land, in which 'the animals [were] bizarre, the trees peculiar […] the vegetation continually green'.[22] More than simply botanical and zoological difference, however, the Antipodes housed human monstrosity as well. In fact, as Ryan points out, along with other forms of biological perversion and inversion (creatures half-human, half-hog; people with feet where their heads should be),[23] the south was apparently plagued with beings whose sexual status was indeterminate. 'The view that Australia was inhabited by hermaphrodites', Ryan notes,

> is expressed in the 1676 French travel fantasy, *La Terre Australe Connue* by Gabriel Foigny. *Another World and Yet the Same* [c. 1605] also imagined Amazonia […] where 'the women wear the breeches and sport long beards, and it is the men who wear petticoats and are beardless'.[24]

In other words, then, as a cultural construct the Antipodes were pre-populated with socially inverted figures such as the New Woman and the dandy long before their appearance in the fin-de-siècle popular press.

Even after acquiring first-hand experience of Australia, notions of Antipodean strangeness (or what Daniel Hempel calls 'the Australian grotesque'[25] continued to shape how Anglo-Australians represented the country in which they lived. One particularly notable example of this – an example to which Wilde directly responded – was produced by Melbourne's own author-poet-playwright, dandy, and *enfant terrible*, Marcus Clarke. In the preface to an 1876 edition of Adam Lindsay Gordon's collected poems (first published in Melbourne), Clarke presents Australia as not only a Darwinian aberration but as a kind of surreal, hyper-artistic locus of creative production:

> the poetry which lives in the trees and flowers of Australia differs from those of other countries. […] In Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribblings of Nature learning how to write. Some see no beauty in our trees without shade, our flowers without perfume, our birds who cannot fly, and our beasts who have not yet learned to walk on all fours. But the dweller in the wilderness acknowledges the subtle charm of this fantastic land of monstrosities. […] Whispered to by the myriad tongues of the wilderness, he learns the language of the barren and the uncouth, and can read the hieroglyphs of haggard gumtrees, blown into odd shapes, distorted with fierce hot winds […]. The phantasmagoria of that wild dreamland termed the Bush interprets itself, and the Poet of our desolation begins to comprehend why free Esau loved his heritage of desert sand better than all the bountiful richness of Egypt.[26]

Earlier in his preface, Clarke declares 'the dominant note of Australian scenery' to be 'the dominant note of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry – Weird Melancholy';[27] and Clarke's Australia is even more overt in its self-conscious intertextuality than Wilde's Australia in *Dorian Gray*. Indeed, here, the Australian landscape itself becomes a strangely orientalised, even Daliesque, hieroglyphic text that only insiders are able to interpret and decipher.

When, a little over a decade later, this collection of poems was published in England, Wilde wrote an anonymous review of the collection for *The Pall Mall Gazette*. Though largely dismissive of Gordon's artistic accomplishments ('Had he stayed at home he would have done much better work'),[28] Wilde's review becomes increasingly fascinated with Clarke's preliminary preface. After first appropriating from this preface through a great deal of indirect summary and unacknowledged quotation (a number of Clarke's phrases appear in Wilde's review without inverted commas),[29] Wilde does eventually refer to Clarke directly, reproducing at length those lines found above. With an injection of prophetic optimism, Wilde declares

> [t]hat Australia […] will some day […] produc[e] a poet of her own we cannot doubt, and for him there will be new notes to sound and new wonders to tell of. The description, given by Mr. Marcus Clarke in the preface to this volume, of the aspect and spirit of nature in Australia is most curious and suggestive. […] 'In Australia alone', he tells us, 'is to be found the grotesque, the weird, the strange scribblings of nature learning how to write […]'. Here, certainly, is new material for the poet, here is a land that is waiting for its singer.[30]

Fully exploiting *The Pall Mall Gazette*'s commitment to anonymous publication, Wilde begins this review with a moment of concealed self-contradiction, arguing against a claim he had himself made about Gordon – in another anonymous review published in the same journal – only three months

earlier ('A critic recently remarked of Adam Lindsay Gordon that through him Australia found its first fine utterance in song. This, however, is an amiable error. There is very little of Australia in Gordon's poetry').[31] Yet despite the covert playfulness of Wilde's opening, his review as a whole approaches Australia more specifically as anything but a 'joke country'. Instead, Australia here becomes a thoroughly consequential site of and for the Gothic imagination – a tantalising source of future artistic inspiration.

Indeed, a few years after publishing this review, Wilde wrote *Lady Windermere's Fan*, in which Australia becomes artistically consequential not just in theory but in practice. A surreal decadent locale ('that dreadful vulgar place' 'crawling' with kangaroos),[32] Australia is never directly depicted as a setting in Wilde's play. The country does, however, send its emissary in the form of Mr. Hopper – 'that rich young Australian people are taking such notice of just at present'.[33] Hopper's name itself evokes an uncanny and very Antipodean mixing of human being and exotic wildlife. More than this, though, the Australian discourse that Hopper implicitly incorporates into Wilde's play allows Hopper to become both a kind of genderbending pre-emptive doppelgänger for the returning mother Mrs. Erlynne and an authorial tool with which to reinforce the play's broader preoccupation with notions of money, exile, and redemptive homecomings.

The Abode of Lost Souls

The idea of Australia began informing Wilde's literary output several years before he wrote *Lady Windermere's Fan*. In 1889 (the same year that his review of Gordon's poetry appeared in *The Pall Mall Gazette*), Wilde published a poem in Sydney's *Centennial Magazine*. On first reading, 'A Symphony in Yellow' – an impressionistic description of various sites in London – would appear to have very little to do with Britain's Australian colonies:

> An omnibus across the bridge
> Crawls like a yellow butterfly,
> And, here and there, a passer-by
> Shows like a little restless midge.

Big barges full of yellow hay
Are moored against the shadowy wharf,
And, like a yellow silken scarf,
The thick fog hangs along the quay.

The yellow leaves begin to fade
And flutter from the Temple elms,
And at my feet the pale green Thames
Lies like a rod of rippled jade.[34]

Why, one might wonder, would Wilde – a writer with numerous English outlets – choose to print such a poem in an Australian magazine? Several decades after 'A Symphony in Yellow' first appeared, Wilde's publisher Thomas Werner Laurie (writing in another Australian periodical, *The Bookfellow*) recalled talking with Wilde at the time. Wilde, it seems, had just received one of many invitations to travel to Australia:

> 'so they are desirous of my beauty at Botany Bay', said Oscar, inviting my attention to a letter. 'I have inquired concerning this Botany Bay. It is the place of anthropopagi, the abode of lost souls, whither criminals are transported to wear a horrible yellow livery. […] So I have written for them a Symphony in Yellow – they will feel the homely touch. I rhyme "elms" with "Thames". It is a venial offence in comparison with theirs, yet it will show my sympathy. A symphony with sympathy – how sweet! Suppose I were to add a stanza!
>
> And far in the Antipodes
> When sobbing suns have sunk to rest
> A convict to his yellow breast
> Shall hug my yellow melodies.
> "Oscariana".'[35]

In these lines, and the possibly apocryphal backstory that surrounds them, a number of connections have quietly been formed. The poem printed in the *Centennial* is most overtly concerned with revealing what unites the seemingly unconnected phenomena of daily London life: with making visible the underlying symphonic harmony that hums throughout the city, in a typically decadent synaesthetic intermingling of the senses (in this case, sight and sound: this is a 'symphonic' poem focused on colour). What Werner Laurie terms his piece of 'Oscariana' – as Roach notes, celebrities, like the kings and saints who came before them, 'are typically known to the public […] by their first names'[36] – adds another layer of connective complexity to Wilde's poem. Now, decadent yellow becomes globally significant, forming a link between not only the

different manifestations of London's soul but also between Britain and its colonies. Indeed, while the yellow uniforms that they were forced to wear were presumably intended to signify the estrangement of these convicts from their homeland, these uniforms here become precisely what maintains the 'homely' connection between the heart of Britain and White Australia.

Yet Laurie's anecdote adds a final, even more complicated, layer of connectivity to Wilde's poem. Somehow, in making apparent this connection between Britain and Australia, Wilde and his poem forge their own connection to Anglo-Australia as well. In fact, by the end of the extended version, Britain has quietly disappeared, and it is Wilde and his poem that Australia is found embracing. Earlier on in this article, I asked how a celebrity could possibly maintain a sense of intimacy with an international public from which they were even more physically removed than was the norm. How, I asked, might a connection be formed between people who not only never met one another but never even walked the same streets or breathed the same fog-prone air. Here, Wilde seems to position his verse as a sympathetic stand-in for physical connection while also suggesting that literature more generally is able to negate the need for travelling in person.

In All Probability the Disgraced Author Will Come to Australia

Yet a longing for physical connection begrudgingly remained. As discussed above, Wilde's publisher, Laurie, recalled Wilde identifying with the legal subversion that he associated with Australia and its convict past, and – both before and after his incarceration for 'acts of gross indecency' – Australian print media itself seemed to feel their Antipodean country to be Wilde's natural home. In the years before 1895, this feeling simply manifested in an indefatigable expectation that Wilde would make an imminent visit to Australia. Thus, halfway through Wilde's 1882 American tour, the Freemantle *Herald* suggested 'Oscar Wilde […] may possibly visit Australia before his return to Europe';[37] in 1893, *Table Talk* of Melbourne declared 'Mr. Oscar Wilde intends visiting Australia during the present year';[38] while, two years later still, Sydney's *Sunday Times* announced that 'Oscar Wilde contemplates lecturing in Australia shortly'.[39] After the

scandal of Wilde's imprisonment, however, a number of notices appeared in the Australian press that suggested even more strongly that Australia was where Wilde belonged. 'In all probability the disgraced author, playwright, *doyen* of London drawing-rooms, and advocate of Babylonian bestiality, will come to Australia', wrote Sydney's aptly-named *Bird O'Freedom*, towards the end of Wilde's incarceration, 'where we regret to say gentlemen of his over-cultivated tastes are not entirely unknown';[40] 'His wife […] waits his release', reported Queensland's *Warwick Examiner* the following year, 'to seek with him the obscurity of some small continental town, or perhaps Australia will be the chosen haven. In appearance the brain-distorted Wilde was the image of a fellow-disciple in Melbourne, who died 12 or more years ago'.[41] This 'fellow-disciple' was surely Marcus Clarke, who died in Melbourne sixteen years prior to this report; for Tony Moore, Clarke was 'the closest thing to an Oscar Wilde' Australia ever produced.[42] In a way this reference is fitting. For, while these rumours about Wilde moving to Australia were factually unfounded, where better for a figure such as Wilde to spend his final years (even if only in a purely imaginative capacity) than in 'the repository of perversity', the land of 'the Grotesque, the Weird, the Strange'?

I would like to end by suggesting that this sense of absent presence and present absence was partially constructed by the ontology of the telegraph. In this essay's epigraph, the newlywed Wilde expresses a remarkably modern understanding of communications technologies and the intimate, post-Newtonian temporalities and virtual geographies they help to bring about. As the Freemantle *Herald* partially suggested at the time, Wilde had initially planned to supplement his 1882 American tour with a follow-up tour of Australia and Japan.[43] Ultimately, however, after leaving America, he returned home, married Constance, and completed a British lecture tour instead. By the time he wrote what would become the epigraph to this essay, then, Wilde was actually in Edinburgh and Constance in London; yet his language ('here am I, and you at the Antipodes')[44] maintains a curious echo of the half-planned Australian tour that he might otherwise have been on at the time. In this way, Wilde's Antipodean language itself curiously complements the epigraph's broader message of corporeality-defying geographic indeterminacy ('your bodily

presence here', Wilde assures Constance, 'would not make you more real').[45] Richard Menke has written of how the telegraph 'uncouples communication from geography',[46] and Wilde's broader understanding of geographic flexibility is surely indebted to telegraphic reconceptualizations of time and space: 'I have been obliged to be away […] since our engagement', Wilde told an American friend a few months earlier, 'but we telegraph to each other twice a day'.[47]

Ten years later, in the immediate wake of Wilde's trials and imprisonment, the Sydney *Bulletin* (arguably the most influential Australian periodical of the late nineteenth century) returned to ideas around telegraphic communication while lambasting Australian productions of *The Importance of Being Earnest* for not including Wilde's name in their advertisements. Intriguingly, the *Bulletin* went on to compare this partial self-censorship to stories of an 'old South Melbourne woman who, during a Sydney small-pox scare, declined to accept a telegram from the latter city for fear of contagion'.[48] Here, in this curious conceptual slippage linking ideas of contagion, text, and corporeality, the *Bulletin* echoes decadent discourses associating textual production with corruption and disease. At the same time, though, as Richard Fotheringham makes clear, Australian readers in this period would have been all too familiar with the logistics of telegraphic technologies, and 'would have understood this joke precisely: such a telegram would have been written out by a Melbourne Post Office clerk on Melbourne paper from a wired Morse-code message; there was nothing materially Sydney about it, and so nothing contagious'.[49] In 1893, Arthur Symons claimed that decadence meant constantly striving to become 'a disembodied voice'.[50] While a few simple line drawings of Wilde did make it into the Australian press (itself a poignant statement on the telegraphese-like suggestive incompleteness of Australia's impression of Wilde),[51] for most Australians Wilde remained a disembodied textual conglomeration – a product of telegraphic dispatches and intercontinental reporting. Yet, as this article has sought to illustrate, far from being hampered by physical distance, Wilde's relationship with Australia was ultimately facilitated by the imaginative flexibility and hygienic ethereality that long-distance communication enabled. As Wilde himself wrote in an 1889 article on the notorious Anglo-

Australian forger-poisoner Thomas Griffith Wainwright, 'To be suggestive for fiction is to be of more importance than a fact'.[52]

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[1] Ken Stewart, 'Britain's Australia', in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. by Peter Pierce (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 7-33 (p. 31).
[2] Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), p. 207.
[3] Coral Lansbury, *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth-century English Literature* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1970), p. 30.
[4] Alex Murray, 'Forgetting London: Paris, Cultural Cartography, and Late Victorian Decadence', in *The Long Journey: Exploring Travel and Travel Writing*, ed. by Maria Pia Di Bella and Brian Yothers (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2021), pp. 133-49 (p. 135).
[5] Oscar Wilde, *Intentions* (Leipzig: Heinemann and Balester, 1891), p. 47.
[6] 'À quoi bon bouger, quand on peut voyager si magnifiquement sur une chaise?' (J.-K. Huysmans, *À rebours* (Paris: G. Charpentier et Cie, 1884), p. 183). Translation mine.
[7] *Account of the Dinner held at the Cannon Street Hotel, on Friday, 15th November, 1872, to Celebrate the Completion of Telegraphic Communication with the Australian Colonies* (London: Royal Colonial Institute, 1872), p. 12.
[8] Ibid. Strictly speaking, Kimberley's claim about the speed with which telegrams could be sent from Britain to Australia in 1872 is an exaggeration. While the series of cables linking Britain to Australia made communication considerably faster than it had been previously (before the connection, Kate Inglis notes, 'the monthly news from England was about twenty days old when it reached eastern Australia'), in the first few months of the intercontinental telegraph's operation an average telegram would still take between fifteen and twenty hours to travel from London to Melbourne. Speeds continued to increase, however, and, by 1890, 'the average time taken for a message between London and Melbourne was […] less than six hours'. K. S. Inglis, 'The Imperial Connection: Telegraphic Communication Between England and Australia, 1872-1902', in *Australia and Britain: Studies in a Changing Relationship*, ed. by A. F. Madden and W. H. Morris-Jones (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1980; Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2005), pp. 20-36 (pp. 22, 25).
[9] 'Oscar Wilde Coming to Australia (From the New York Tribune)', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser* (27 January 1883), p. 186. Wilde considered travelling to Australia during his 1882 American tour and twelve years later, in 1894, when he told the English actress Mrs Bernard Beere, 'Of course, *we* must fly to Australia: I could not let you go alone. I have written to Cartwright – a bald genius who is dear Dot's agent – to ask him if it can be arranged'. Oscar Wilde, 'To Mrs. Bernard Beere (? April 1894)', in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), pp. 590-91. Dionysius 'Dot' Boucicault was the son of the Irish playwright Dionysius Lardner Boucicault. In 1886, the Boucicault family established a successful theatre company in Australia, where they staged productions of a number of Wilde's plays.
[10] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Yearbook Australia* (Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001), p. 830.
[11] Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan: A Play About a Good Woman, in Four Acts* (New York and London: Samuel French, 1893), p. 17.
[12] Indeed, Wilde particularly emphasized these lines during the play's first season. 'Last night', he castigated his actor and theatre manager George Alexander, 'whether by inadvertence or direction I don't know, the Duchess left out some essential words in her first speech […] to omit them is to leave out the point of the climax'. Oscar Wilde, 'To George Alexander (Mid-February 1892)', in *The Complete Letters*, pp. 514-15 (p. 514).
[13] Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p. 17.
[14] Donald Horton and Richard Wohl, 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance', *Psychiatry*, 19 (1956), 215-29 (p. 215).
[15] Ibid.
[16] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London, New York, and Melbourne: Ward, Lock & Co, 1891), p. 96.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., pp. 96-97.
[19] When James finally reappears at the end of *Dorian Gray*, some eighteen years later, all we are told is that he 'looks as if he had been a sort of sailor; tattooed on both arms, and that kind of thing'. Ibid., p. 309.
[20] While Magwitch in *Great Expectations* is perhaps the best-known example of such a character, as Stephen Knight has noted, 'the trip to Australia was a popular theme in mid-nineteenth century fiction. Early stories tell how a young man not doing well at home makes the long journey […] grows rich from cattle, sheep or, from 1851 on, gold, and returns home in charitable glory'. Stephen Knight, 'From Vidoq to the Locked Room: International Connections in Nineteenth-Century Crime Fiction', in *Criminal Moves: Modes of Mobility in Crime Fiction*, ed. by Jesper Gulddal, Stewart King, and Alistair Rolls (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), pp. 163-78 (p. 169). On this

point in relation to this passage from *Dorian Gray* more specifically, see also Neil Hultgren, 'Oscar Wilde's Poetic Injustice in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*', in *Wilde Discoveries: Traditions, Histories, Archives*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 212-32 (p. 221).

[21] Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 108, 110.

[22] Ibid., p. 110.

[23] Ryan's discussion of Antipodean hog-men (ibid.) relates both specifically to Joseph Hall's 1605 satire *Another World and Yet the Same* and John Mandeville's fourteenth-century travelogue *The Travels of John Mandeville*. The trope of southerners walking upside down is, of course, central to the 'Antipodes' as both a concept and a word; as such, it dates back to at least the Classical world.

[24] Ibid., p. 109.

[25] Daniel Hempel, '"This Fantastic Land of Monstrosities": The Aesthetic of the Australian Grotesque in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Antipodes*, 30 (2016), 305-16 (p. 305).

[26] Marcus Clarke, 'Preface', in Adam Lindsay Gordon, *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift* (Melbourne: Clarson, Massina & Co., 1876), pp. iii-vi (p. vi).

[27] Ibid., p. v.

[28] [Oscar Wilde], 'Adam Lindsay Gordon', *Pall Mall Gazette* (25 March 1889), p. 3.

[29] Compare, for instance, Wilde's

> The aborigines aver that, when night comes, from the bottomless depth of some lagoon a misshapen monster rises, dragging his loathsome length along the ooze. From a corner of the silent forest rises a dismal chant, and around a fire dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear-inspiring and gloomy. No bright fancies are linked with the memories of the mountains. Hopeless explorers have named them out of their sufferings – Mount Misery, Mount Dreadful, Mount Despair' (ibid.)

to Clarke's

> The natives aver that when night comes, from out the bottomless depths of some lagoon the Bunyip rises, and in form like monstrous sea-calf drags his loathsome length from out the ooze. From a corner of the silent forest rises a dismal chant, and around a fire, dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear-inspiring and gloomy. No bright fancies are linked with the memories of the mountains. Hopeless explorers have named them out of their sufferings – Mount Misery, Mount Dreadful, Mount Despair. (Clarke, 'Preface', p. v.)

[30] [Wilde], 'Adam Lindsay Gordon', p. 3.

[31] Ibid. The earlier piece, which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* three months before Wilde's review of Gordon's collection, is [Oscar Wilde], 'Australian Poets', *Pall Mall Gazette* (14 December 1888), pp. 2-3. For the identification of Wilde as the author of these anonymous reviews, see John Stokes and Mark Turner, *Volume VII: Journalism, Part II*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Ian Small (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 130, 187.

[32] Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, p. 25.

[33] Ibid., p. 11.

[34] Oscar Wilde, 'Symphony in Yellow', *The Centennial Magazine: An Australian Monthly*, 1 (February 1889), 437.

[35] Thomas Werner Laurie, 'Bibliography of Oscar Wilde', *The Bookfellow: The Australasian Review and Journal of the Australasian Book Trade*, 3 (February 1914), 245-46 (p. 246).

[36] Roach, *It*, p. 17.

[37] 'Gleanings: English, Foreign, and Intercolonial', *The Herald* (10 June 1882), p. 2.

[38] 'Personal', *Table Talk* (10 June 1893), p. 2.

[39] 'Personal', *Sunday Times* (20 January 1895), p. 4.

[40] 'Oscar Wilde. Litterateurs Petition for his Release. He Will Come to Australia', *The Bird O'Freedom* (29 February 1896), p. 4.

[41] 'Oscar Wilde', *Warwick Examiner and Times* (17 March 1897), p. 3.

[42] Tony Moore, 'Urban Iconoclast', *Meanjin*, 64 (2005), 204-13 (p. 204).

[43] See Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 186.

[44] Oscar Wilde, 'To Constance Wilde (16 December 1884)', in *The Complete Letters*, p. 165.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Richard Menke, *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 73.

[47] Oscar Wilde, 'To Waldo Story (22 January 1884)', in *The Complete Letters,* p. 155.

[48] 'At Poverty Point', *The Bulletin*, 16 (17 August 1895), 17.

[49] Richard Fotheringham, 'Exiled to the Colonies: "Oscar Wilde" in Australia, 1895-1897', *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, 30 (November 2003), 55-68 (p. 66). As Fotheringham outlines, even after Wilde's plays were withdrawn from the London stage, following the playwright's incarceration for acts of gross indecency, major productions continued in Australia. Indeed, between 1895 and 1897, Wilde's plays were 'enthusiastically received by colonial high society' (ibid., p. 55). Fotheringham views this enthusiasm as part of a broader anti-English Australian nationalism exciting the Australian colonies in the 1890s – a nationalism that led journals such as the *Bulletin*, Fotheringam

suggests, to view Wilde's homosexuality as simply an unfortunate consequence of his 'over-refined English upbringing' (ibid., p. 64).

[50] Arthur Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 87 (November 1893), 858-67 (p. 862).

[51] See, for instance, the simple line drawings of Wilde reproduced in 'Oscar Wilde Makes a Mark', *National Advocate* (4 June 1892), p. 2; 'Oscar Wilde as a Literary Artist', *Weekly Times* (13 April 1895), p. 36; and 'Oscar Wilde. Arrested on Warrant', *The Daily Telegraph* (8 April 1895), p. 5.

[52] Oscar Wilde, 'Pen, Pencil and Poison', *The Fortnightly Review*, 45 (January 1889), 41-54 (p. 54).