

‘The happiest time of my life ...’: Emotive visitor books and early mission tourism to Victoria’s Aboriginal reserves¹

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On the afternoon of 16 January 1895, a group of visitors to the Gippsland Lakes, Victoria, gathered to perform songs and hymns with the Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers Aboriginal Mission. Several visitors from the nearby Lake Tyers House assisted with the preparations and an audience of Aboriginal mission residents and visitors spent a pleasant summer evening performing together and enjoying refreshments. The ‘program’ included an opening hymn by ‘the Aborigines’ followed by songs and hymns sung by friends of the mission, the missionary’s daughter and a duet by two Aboriginal women, Mrs E. O’Rourke and Mrs Jennings, who in particular received hearty applause for their performance of ‘Weary Gleaner’. The success of this shared performance is recorded by an anonymous hand in the Lake Tyers visitor book, noting that 9 pounds 6 shillings was collected from the enthusiastic audience.² The missionary’s wife, Caroline Bulmer, was most likely responsible for this note celebrating the success of an event that stands out among the comments of visitors to Lake Tyers. One such visitor was a woman named Miss Florrie Powell who performed the song ‘The Old Countess’ after the duet by Mrs O’Rourke and Mrs Jennings. She wrote effusively in the visitor book that ‘to give you an idea

1 Florrie Powell 18 January 1895, Lake Tyers visitor book, MS 11934 Box 2478/5, State Library of Victoria. My thanks to Tracey Banivanua Mar, Diane Kirkby, Catherine Bishop, Lucy Davies and Kate Laing for their feedback on an earlier draft of this article, and to Richard White for mentoring as part of a 2015 Copyright Agency Limited Bursary. My thanks also to two anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions.

2 Caroline Bulmer 16 January 1895, Lake Tyers visitor book.

of enjoyment down here would be impossible. Everyone must find out for him or herself. The happiest time of my life was spent here. The kindness of Mrs and Mr Bulmer is past description'.³

Visitors to Victoria's Aboriginal mission stations and reserves were a growing phenomenon in the late nineteenth century, and emotive comments like the one above fill the visitor books. Beginning in the late 1870s, a steady stream of sightseers, known locally as 'excursionists', left Melbourne's dusty streets for the natural wonders of the lakes of Gippsland, for example, or the giant tree ferns and waterfalls of the Dandenong Ranges.⁴ A visit 'to see the natives' became a popular stop on these tours wherein Aboriginal mission stations were viewed as a kind of living exhibition, regarded by the crowds as examples of 'civilisation' in progress or a place to witness Aboriginal primitivism apparently nearing extinction.⁵ Two surviving visitor books from the late nineteenth century reveal the diversity of these visitors and the emotions they express about their visits. Not only local colonials and religiously motivated travellers but international figures of science and government came to missions from all over the world and commented on what they saw. Published travel accounts about Victorian missions by international visitors are in fact quite numerous.⁶ The visitor book comments, however, stand out as highly emotive and uniquely capture an aspect of mission tourism. This article looks closely at the emotions inscribed therein and at the tourist's preoccupations they reveal.

Tourist visitation to missions is an area of scholarship with growing interest in the emotive dimension of this visitation.⁷ While Peter Carolane's excellent analysis reveals two main tourist fantasies – 'romantic landscapes' and 'destitute Aborigines' – enjoyed by excursionists at Lake Tyers in the 1870s and 1880s, it does not comment extensively on tourist emotions.⁸ Jane Lydon and Toby Martin have likewise demonstrated the ways in which mission tourism was bound up with a deep interest in nature, influencing how Aboriginal people were seen.⁹ The significance of the natural world for excursionists has a strong bearing on the emotions they express in the visitor books. To the body of literature on the emotional dimension of tourism, this article contributes a discussion of colonial-era mission tourist emotion as expressed within the visitor books of Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck Aboriginal missions dated 1878–1909.¹⁰

3 Florrie Powell 18 January 1895, Lake Tyers visitor book.

4 Dow 1999; Clark and McRae-Williams 2013; Clark 2015. On the phenomenon of nature tourism see Horne 2005.

5 Dow 1999: 112.

6 For example, Baessler 1895; Trollope 1967; Comettant 1980; Clark 2015.

7 Martin 2014.

8 Carolane 2008.

9 Lydon 2005a; Martin 2014.

10 On imperial emotions, see Rosaldo 1989; on travel and emotion, see Chard 1999; Picard 2012; Robinson 2012.

Bringing a consideration of tourism to the discussion of imperial emotions allows for an exploration of what Ann Laura Stoler calls 'a charged space of colonial tensions'.¹¹ The archival material utilised here, namely visitor books, usefully combines the nexus of emotion, intimacy or friendship and tourism in the mission space. Each part of this nexus assists in the analysis and understanding of its component parts. Emotions under empire have received growing attention in a framework that broadly focuses on the intimacies of empire.¹² The emotive dimension of the encounter between missionaries and Aboriginal people, for example, has recently received attention. Claire McLisky, for example, notes that in the emotional economy of one Protestant mission, Aboriginal love was in demand and missionary love was in excess.¹³ With a focus on written texts, McLisky and likewise Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen note much more is learned about the writer or intended reader than the Aboriginal subjects of the narrative.¹⁴ Recognition, by scholars of mission history, of the mission as a complex space where friendships developed emphasises the possibilities and restrictions for such intimacy.¹⁵ My focus here is the written expressions of emotion by visitors to two such missions, which suggest both the distancing effect of the tourist gaze and aspirations for friendship (as the opening concert description intimates). Influential in histories of emotion have been William Reddy's formulation of 'emotives' (the words we use to talk about our emotions) and Rosenwein's frequently adopted 'emotional communities', encouraging a focus on a group's systems of feeling (including those expressions that are encouraged, deplored, valued etc.).¹⁶ Sara Ahmed has analysed 'feelings in common' through the impressions left by Others, and demonstrated the way 'feelings rehearse associations that are already in place'.¹⁷ Following Ahmed, Haggis and Allen, and McLisky, I am specifically analysing emotions as they are expressed in written form. What can the highly effusive visitor comments tell us about relations between tourists and Aboriginal mission residents?

I argue that the visitor books are overlooked and useful sources for glimpsing the preoccupations of colonial visitors. As sources, the visitor books of Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck show us that visitors were not simply enjoying the pleasurable interruption of 'savagery' in the landscape, they were participants in a specifically colonial dynamic characterised by the tourist gaze or the colonial gaze.¹⁸ In addition to this, the profusion of emotive expressions by visitors demonstrates their interest

11 Stoler 2001a: 893.

12 Stoler 2001a and 2001b; Ballantyne and Burton 2009; for an analysis of the vocabulary of Victorian-era sentiment, see Stedman 2002; cf. Rosaldo 1989.

13 McLisky 2014: 94.

14 McLisky 2014: 83; Haggis and Allen 2008: 691.

15 Ellinghaus 2009; Elbourne 2010; Horton 2010; Grimshaw and May 2010; Ballantyne 2014; Cruickshank and Grimshaw 2015: 165.

16 Reddy 2001; Rosenwein 2002; see also Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Dixon 2012.

17 Ahmed 2004: 39.

18 Jay and Ramaswamy 2014; Urry 2002.

in Aboriginal people, albeit through the lens of tourism coloured by the exoticism of difference and the familiarity found in representations of British civilisation as progress. Their behaviour, appropriate or otherwise, demonstrates how visitors used the space and experienced it as waiting to receive their gaze. This article focuses on the emotive expressions in two specific and very rich sources, drawing out select themes that highlight the colonial dimension of this tourism. To unpick these spaces of tension within the empire, I begin with an overview of the Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck missions, before outlining the nature of mission tourism and the emotions expressed in response to the missions and its aspirations for friendship. It also becomes necessary to address the other side of this encounter wherein visitors themselves become the object of scrutiny and mission residents return the gaze.

Excursioning on a mission

The visitor book from Lake Tyers was kept from 1878 to 1909 and passed from Ian Bulmer, the grandson of missionaries John and Caroline Bulmer, to the State Library of Victoria, where it resides today. The second surviving visitor book belonged to the nearby mission of Ramahyuck (or Lake Wellington) and was kept from 1878 until 1906. This book was given to the State Library by Berta Hagenauer, granddaughter of Ramahyuck's missionaries Friedrich and Louise Hagenauer. In his early study of the visitor books, Bain Attwood found the creation of six visitor books by the Board for the Protection of Aborigines (the Board) in 1878 took place in the context of mounting criticism of their segregationist policies.¹⁹ The perceived objectivity of the comments of upper-class visitors, as used to legitimise the Board's control of Aboriginal people, is therefore a factor in the significance of the visitor books then and now, and ties the activity of the tourist gaze and the emotive expressions recorded by these sources to the state administration of mission residents. Each of Victoria's six missions and reserves was presented with a visitor book, a black leather-bound volume, embossed in gold; as only the visitor books from Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers are known to remain, they are the focus of this article.

The locations for Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck missions on the lands of the Gunai people (now Gunaikurnai) were chosen for their isolation from white settlement and the goldfields, and in the case of Lake Tyers its proximity to a ready supply of fish and water fowl.²⁰ Both stations were established in the early 1860s, a time when tourism in the Gippsland region of eastern Victoria must have appeared a distant

19 Attwood 1989: 21.

20 Campbell and Vanderwal 1994.

and unlikely prospect.²¹ John Bulmer, a recent missionary volunteer, was supported in his endeavour by the Church of England. Recognising the commercial benefits of tourism, he was somewhat supportive of the mobile Gunai traditions.²² Friedrich Hagenauer, by contrast, trained as a Moravian missionary from the age of 22, was far less tolerant of Gunai hunting for food or continuing traditional ceremonies.²³ Both men were recently married and they raised their families on the missions, sharing the same ideals in mission management. Hagenauer assisted Bulmer in redesigning the layout of Lake Tyers 'forming it in a square, and my house was to be at the top'.²⁴ It was similar to Ramahyuck, which was structured around a village green with the missionary's house as the most significant building besides the church.²⁵ The only subject of disagreement between the two missionaries appears to be their response to the growing tourism at the Gippsland Lakes. Hagenauer, as a strict authoritarian, objected to the intrusion of excursionists. Bulmer was more welcoming to visitors; his wife Caroline's relatives were among the first to establish a boarding house near the ocean at Lake Tyers sometime in the 1880s.²⁶

For the average visitor, a trip to the regions offered a diversion from Melbourne's bustle and dust, characterised by one newspaper correspondent as 'the endless strife for dollars, the struggle for fame or gain, the treadmill of society occupations'.²⁷ See, for example, the photographs of Nicholas Caire, whose work was featured in prestige publications as well as popular guidebooks.²⁸ Once hanging on the walls of middle-class homes, these photographs responded to a demand for images portraying the somewhat idealised scenic life of the bush dweller.²⁹ With titles like *Fairy Scene at the Landslip, Black Spur* (c. 1878–79), Caire emphasised the fantastical and exotic in nature.³⁰ The landscape was the principal drawcard, featuring picnic spots, sporting activities, fishing and other appealing healthful pursuits. With the expansion of the railway network during the late 1870s, the bush became an accessible place of respite for the city dweller as well as travellers from further afield.³¹

21 Bulmer commenced work on the Lake Tyers mission in 1862 after selecting the location with the help of local men of the Gunai nation who know the area as Bung Yarnda ('Big Waters'). Ramahyuck was established a year later, the name composed of a biblical reference, *Ramah* meaning 'home of Samuel' and *yuck*, a Gunai word meaning 'mother' or 'own'. Campbell and Vanderwal 1994; Goding 1990.

22 Dow 1999: 113; Carolane 2008: 162.

23 Mulvaney 1971: 309; Nanni and James 2013: 57.

24 Campbell and Vanderwal 1994: 64.

25 Campbell and Vanderwal 1994: 64.

26 Goding 1990: 27; Carolane 2008: 164.

27 'Picturesque Victoria. Lake Tyers No. 2', *Argus*, 27 March 1886: 4.

28 Dow 1999: 114.

29 Pitkethly and Pitkethly 1988: 12.

30 For an analysis of Caire's Lake Tyers photographs, see Peck 2010.

31 Lydon 2005a: 182–83.

Tourists were most likely to pay their visits during the high summer season from December through to March. This timing allowed for the best appreciation of the environment, though some days were exceedingly hot.³² Studying visitor numbers and using the number of names recorded as an indication of visitor frequency, reveals visitors' comments were most numerous during the 1880s.³³ Lake Tyers averaged 79 visitors per year (and recorded its highest of 155 visitors commenting in 1886), while Ramahyuck averaged 28 visitors commenting (and recorded its highest of 69 in 1881). During the 1890s, when the depression hit Melbourne, visitor comments decreased sharply to an average of nine per year at Lake Tyers and four at Ramahyuck. Visitor comments ceased for Lake Tyers in 1909, after the death of John Bulmer, by which time an average of three visitors per year left comments in the visitor book; at Ramahyuck the average number commenting was two. Comments ceased in the Ramahyuck visitor book in 1906, three years before Hagenauer's death. Notably, but outside the scope of this article, visitor numbers increased in the interwar period, as Sianan Healy illustrates, when mission tourism took off once more.³⁴

Among the names, dates and reasons for visiting, and alongside the comments, it is possible to learn from where many of the visitors came as well as their religious, personal or professional relationship to the mission. Visitors to Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers came from all over Australia, as well as internationally. The majority of visitors travelled out from Melbourne and its surrounds, as well as the other colonies (most frequently New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland). International visitors originated predominantly in England, including Bristol, Birmingham, Cambridge and London. During Melbourne's International Exhibition in 1881, members of the organising committees from Belgium, France, Austria, England and Japan all visited Ramahyuck.³⁵ International visitors were far more numerous to Ramahyuck than to Lake Tyers if the number of comments is taken as an indication, they were also more likely to have a religious or governmental affiliation with the mission.³⁶ Visitors to Lake Tyers who choose to indicate their home countries form a short list consisting of America, England, France and New Zealand. Ramahyuck, by contrast, attracted visitors from England, Scotland, Austria, Belgium, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Germany, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), Japan, Bohemia (Czech Republic) and New Zealand. The diverse origins of visitors supports an understanding of the British Empire as highly networked and mobile, as Tony Ballantyne has detailed,

32 A. Kingley 10 January 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book.

33 My numbers are based on legible comments in the visitor books and are estimates only.

34 Healy 2006.

35 Victory Chonberger (Austria) 24 January 1881; N. Akajame (Japan) 14 March 1881; T.A.C. Van Der Kelen (Brussels) 14 March 1881; O. Boulay (France) 14 March 1881; E. Lichture (Wien) 14 March 1881; Lieutenant Hart Prischof (Austria) 14 March 1881, Ramahyuck visitor book, F.A. Hagenauer Papers, MS 9556 Box 1, State Library of Victoria.

36 Ramahyuck visitor book; Dow 1999: 113.

with missions as important nodal points.³⁷ The visitor books bear out his argument. Not only local colonials and religiously motivated travellers but international colonial figures of science and industry came to missions from all over the world, as detailed below. In addition, these visits were tied to the significant events of Melbourne’s International Exhibitions in 1881 and 1888, as well as international religious networks. Victoria’s six Aboriginal missions and reserves were nodal points in a network of transnational information, artefact and emotional exchange. The two missions that this article focuses on diverged in their reception of visitors. While Lake Tyers came to be associated with pleasure-seeking tourists (receiving less ‘official’ visitors) and Ramahyuck was the destination for religiously minded visitors, both visitor books record comments with similar expressions of emotion.³⁸

In addition to the local excursionists, or day trippers (sometimes just called ‘trippers’), mission tourism included a distinguished audience of visitors, some local and some international. Among well-known secular visitors were journalists, photographers (including Nicholas Caire), sculptor Charles Summers, author James Dawson, as well as members of recently established universities and local members of parliament.³⁹ Well-known writer The Vagabond (aka John Stanley James) visited Lake Tyers, Ramahyuck and Coranderk Aboriginal Reserve.⁴⁰ A visit by Lady Diamantina Bowen, wife of Governor Sir George Bowen, and her four daughters to Ramahyuck on 14 December 1878 would have been a notable event in the mission’s calendar. Similarly, Ian Clark notes a list of international visiting dignitaries to Coranderk near Healesville, which received hundreds of visitors annually.⁴¹ At another Victorian mission, Lake Condah to the west of the colony, the manager J.H. Stähle often emphasised illustrious visitors in his reports to the Board. This included the Bishop of Ballarat and the ‘official correspondents of the leading papers in the colony’.⁴² Other visitors were part of a community united by religious and humanitarian work; for example, Reverend John G. Paton, Missionary New Hebrides, South Sea Islands, wrote less than a month after a reverend from Scotland. In this way, the Ramahyuck visitor book illustrates important connections between far corners of empire, connections that were strengthened by return visits. Their comments engaged also with broader racial debates, using the opportunity to give their assessment of the condition of Victoria’s Aboriginal population or refute the claims of a contemporary, as John G. Paton did:⁴³

37 Ballantyne 2014.

38 The influence of Christianity on emotions in the mission space should be acknowledged; it is, however, outside the scope of this article.

39 Nicholas J. Caire 2 February 1886; C.S.E. Summers 2 April 1885; James Dawson 21 March 1886; A. & V. Robertson (Sydney University) 9 February 1881, Lake Tyers visitor book.

40 ‘A Peep at the Blacks’, *Argus*, 7 July 1877: 9; ‘Picturesque Victoria. Ramahyuck’, *Argus*, 2 January 1886: 4; ‘Picturesque Victoria. Lake Tyers No. 1’, *Argus*, 20 March 1886: 4; ‘Picturesque Victoria. Lake Tyers No. 2’, *Argus*, 27 March 1886: 4; ‘The Vagabond’ 26 November 1885, Ramahyuck visitor book.

41 Clark 2015: 108–15.

42 Board for the Protection of Aboriginies, Annual Report 1886: 10; Annual Report 1887: 8; in particular Annual Report 1888: 8.

43 Rev. J. Linklater 21 January 1888; Rev. John G. Paton 3 February 1888, Ramahyuck visitor book.

The spiritual instruction and the deep interest taken in [the residents'] present and actual welfare is also most gratifying and attended with good results, in having many of them so to fear and serve God as to prove how premature and false [Charles] Kingsley's statements were, that 'the Aborigines of Australia are too stupid to understand the gospel. Poor brutes in human shape they must perish like brute beasts' – I have not addressed a more attentive and sympathetic congregation expectantly on each visit, they have voluntarily contributed handsomely to my mission.⁴⁴

Taking the opportunity to compare Australian Aboriginal people with subjects of missionary instruction elsewhere in the empire was not uncommon among visitors to the missions or, as Frances Steel notes, among early steamship tourists in the Pacific.⁴⁵ Such activity became an important part of 'doing a "Tour"', as one visitor to Ramahyuck described their visit.⁴⁶

When mission managers used comments from the visitor books to emphasise the progress of the reserve system through the feedback of important people, they were fulfilling the books' intended function.⁴⁷ In this way, the emotions of visitors were employed to legitimise the Board's actions. The format of the books themselves present structure and order: they are ruled horizontally with vertical columns for Name, Date, Object of visit and Comments. Though Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck like all the missions and reserves received a visitor book from the Board, these government documents ended up as the property of the missions. Attwood observes that Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck were managed by two men whose force of personality and connection to the mission were unique, resulting in the books becoming important objects to their families.⁴⁸ The particular emotional dynamics displayed in the visitor books must be, in part, due to these factors.

By approaching the mission as a charged space of colonial tensions, it is possible to observe that the positive experiences by reputable persons overruled the distress frequently communicated to the Board by Aboriginal mission residents, especially women.⁴⁹ Visitors were not interested in observing the restricted mobility of Aboriginal residents, or the Board's removal of their children, which residents so often wrote about in letters pained of emotion. Further, the Board used that which would perpetuate their control. At the same time, the well-being of Victorian Aboriginal people – as a remnant of a so-called dying race – was at the forefront of several visitors' minds. One visitor wrote: 'The station [is] well kept, well pleased with attendance and service in the mission Church and am glad to see that after appropriating the lands of the aboriginals some thought and care is taken of the few

44 Rev. John G. Paton 3 February 1888, Ramahyuck visitor book. See also Paton 1890: 54–55.

45 Steel 2013.

46 M. Borgett 15 September 1895, Ramahyuck visitor book.

47 Attwood 1989: 22.

48 Attwood 1989: 22.

49 See Nelson et al. 2002.

survivors of the Lords of the Soil.⁵⁰ This visitor's reason for visiting was 'Pleasure', which demonstrates the tension of the mission space in which both humanitarian sentiment or concern is expressed alongside gushing appreciation of the landscape. This asymmetrical dynamic in the expression of emotion by mission tourists is a key component of their preoccupations.

The mission space reminded visitors of familiar places, whether it was England, another colony or familiar landscapes. These other spaces enabled them to make sense of Australia as a new world. For many tourists, the 'Picturesque', by definition calling to mind the pictorial in nature, was a recurring framework through which to make sense of the Australian landscape.⁵¹ This discourse highlighted what was familiar; for example, a report in one visitor guide from 1886 noted that Lake Tyers 'reminds one of an English village'.⁵² In one unique instance, a visitor noted: 'The arrangement of the settlement reminds me of the small Dutch towns in Cape Colony'.⁵³ The idea that tourists (and surveyors as well) saw the land as a *landscape* (with all the familiarity and domestication this implies) has been noted by Giselle Byrnes, who argues, 'landscapes and colonial space were constructed primarily through visual strategies, most notably the panoptic and the Picturesque'.⁵⁴ Four visitors to Lake Tyers make reference to the Picturesque, demonstrating this shared convention – this included photographer Nicholas Caire who was on a 'professional tour in search of the Picturesque'.⁵⁵ Robert C. McKnight on 9 April 1882, as an example, wrote that he was '[d]elighted with the grand and picturesque situation of the station; and much pleased with things in general'.⁵⁶ His reason for visiting was '[t]o gain information and for general enjoyment'. Delight, just like pleasure, was an endorsement of all that had been surveyed. Aboriginal people were rarely visible to tourists in these pleasurable landscapes surrounding the missions; as Julia Barst has noted of the work of settler colonial artists, Aboriginal bodies were rendered absent, thus sustaining the idea of an empty land, or *terra nullius*.⁵⁷

These viewing conventions were shared by visitors and could be described as pictorial colonisation, following Clark. In his discussion of Chief Protector of the Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson, as a nascent tourist in Victoria during the first half of the nineteenth century, Clark proposes this term to describe Robinson's adoption of "old world" ordering systems in documenting and understanding "new world" landscapes, native settlements and indigenous flora and fauna'.⁵⁸ As with the

50 (Name illegible) 26 March 1886, Lake Tyers visitor book.

51 Cf. Lynch 2015.

52 Tanjil 1886: 66.

53 Fred Elsworth 10 April 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book.

54 Byrnes 2000: 54.

55 P.C. Plaisled 27 September 1880; McKnight 9 April 1882; John Watson 26 December 1884; Nicholas J. Caire 2 February 1886, Lake Tyers visitor book.

56 Robert C. McKnight 9 April 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book.

57 Barst 2008: 168.

58 Clark 2010: 565.

Picturesque, he was encouraged to see Victoria through the lens of somewhere else. Tourists and artists have famously done this in Australia.⁵⁹ This was nowhere more apparent than in the fashion from earlier in the century of carrying a 'Claude Glass' on one's excursions, a tinted piece of glass that rendered the landscape in warm tones similar to the paintings of Claude Lorraine.⁶⁰ As these examples demonstrate, a visitor to the missions brought with them ways of seeing derived from discourses on travel and art. As we will see in the next section, such optics have a bearing on the emotions visitors chose to include in their visitor book comments. And further, how they responded to the presence of Aboriginal people in the mission space.

Pleasure in a perfect paradise

Visitors repeatedly expressed their wishes for the Aboriginal residents in terms that overtly link wellbeing with the beauty of the surroundings and, in so doing, project their ways of seeing onto the mission residents. For example, Mrs Harding, a visitor in January 1883, writes: 'A few weeks spent here is to forget the troubles of the world, living in peace and happiness [under] the kind care of Mr and Mrs Bulmer, which the Blacks seem to enjoy.'⁶¹ Mr and Mrs H.J. Robertson, who visited on 7 March 1885, wrote: 'Enjoyed our visit exceedingly thanks to Mr Bulmer's kindness. [The] blacks ought to be very comfortable and happy in such a beautiful place with so much kindness shown them.'⁶² Comments similar in tone verge on envy for the Aboriginal residents, one visitor exclaiming: 'Would I were a Black!'⁶³ Another comment to this end states: 'Very much delighted a perfect paradise of lovely scenery and good management.'⁶⁴ Here we see that the benefits of nature gave rise to many exclamations of pleasure and return visits by tourists; however, visitors also projected these positive feelings about the Gippsland environment onto the Gunai people they encountered, seeing them as fortunate.

Excursionists had such a good time they assumed the residents must also be delighting in the surrounds. By implying that mission residents also conceived of the landscape as beneficial, visitors unconsciously justify colonisation as a moral act; their dispossession was now invisible. The picturesque was equally providential to visitors and residents. The emotive comments therefore demonstrate the normalisation of the settler colonial project, which is also reflected in the experiences of tourists more broadly in their unfettered access to many parts of the mission. David Picard urges the noting of social contexts, aesthetic cultures and histories bound to the emotive

59 Hansen et al. 2003; Horne 2005; Hoorn 2007; Hughes-d'Aeth 1997.

60 Barst 2008.

61 Mrs Harding 6 January 1883, Lake Tyers visitors book.

62 Mr and Mrs H.J. Robertson 7 March 1885, Lake Tyers visitor book.

63 Sam S. Yule 12 January 1882, Lake Tyers visitors book.

64 Mrs L.P. Huslou (approximate spelling) 27 January 1885, Lake Tyers visitors book.

reception of the landscape (as desirable or sublime, for example). Following Picard, pleasure in the mission visitor book can be seen as part of the 'socially contextualised moral order' of these particular destinations.⁶⁵

That so many visitors found their experience positive and the conditions of the mission just, or at least said so in the visitor books, must be in part due to Mr Bulmer's skill in displaying the station in its best light. As Carolane argues, the missionary guide made the space safe for visitors.⁶⁶ The pleasure derived from viewing the missions would not have been possible without Bulmer and Hagenauer as guides. Visitors enjoyed seeing over Lake Tyers mission in particular (judging from the volume of comments), and they attributed their happiness and gratitude to Mr Bulmer and his wife Caroline, as well as the schoolteachers David and Louisa Morris. When Bulmer was not present to show them around, they expressed their regret in the visitor book.⁶⁷ Like settler colonists, visitors experienced the mission as open and waiting for their gaze. They were able, as many visitors wrote, to inspect all the cottages, the church and the school.⁶⁸ They were able to interview the children and comment on their educational and, by implication, 'civilising' progress.⁶⁹

In contrast to the visitors, the mobility of Aboriginal people was diminished and curtailed by the Board and often the missionaries. The Victorian *Aborigines Protection Act 1886* separated families and removed those of mixed descent under the age of 35 into the service of white families.⁷⁰ Eliza O'Rourke (who sang at the gathering mentioned at the beginning of this article) was one such Aboriginal women who experienced the removal of her children at various times. She wrote letters to the Board asking for her children to be allowed to return to Lake Tyers.⁷¹ Such details in the lives of Aboriginal women seem all but invisible to tourists, with the exceptions of some repeat visitors who formed friendships with a few of the Gunai residents (detailed below). A visitor book, however, is not the forum to express this type of intimacy. The visitor book comments instead capture the pleasure taken by visitors in the landscape.

Another source of pleasure expressed in the visitor books, and a clear preoccupation of mission tourists, is the familiarity found in evidence of British civilisation. For example, Mrs Davies, who visited with her family in December 1882, demonstrates the belief that being settled was a civilised attribute in her comment:

65 Picard 2012: 11 fn 17.

66 Carolane 2008.

67 John W. Faul 6 February 1886, Lake Tyers visitor book.

68 Mr and Mrs Croft 16 November 1879; Edward Latham and party 14 December 1879; G. Bardrelli, Member of the Melbourne Committee of the Aboriginal Society 9 April 1880; Lake Tyers visitor book.

69 R.A. Budd 21 January 1881; Sam L. Chapman 10 February 1881; S. McDoughall and group 18 November 1881; W.E. Bower of the firm of L. & A. Merchants Melbourne 30 December 1881; Mr R. Walker 21 March 1882; Herbert Veal 23 April 1882 (among others), Lake Tyers visitor book.

70 Van Toorn 1999: 341.

71 Nelson et al. 2002: 45.

‘Very pleased to see that such a good home is provided for the Blacks and glad to see that they have no cause to go roaming away!’⁷² It is significant that settling in one place is attributed by this female visitor to the comforting and familiar activity of making a home. The settlement of the continent was, after all, a process of homemaking on a massive scale.⁷³ Both men and women, though, comment on how well ‘cared for’ the residents appear while Aboriginal mobility is conversely associated with traditional, ‘savage’ life and therefore only its absence is praiseworthy.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the missions themselves are often referred to in visitor comments as settlements. For example, ‘A most interesting and admirably situated settlement’, wrote visitor A.F. French in 1881.⁷⁵ Visitors repeatedly expressed pleasure in the mission as a microcosm of empire, where native space has been demarcated for civilising.

This finds particular expression in the way the tourist gaze takes inventory of the scene, deriving pleasure in the domestically familiar. The pervasiveness of the tourist gaze cannot be escaped; it pierces the privacy of the mission, putting residents on display while seeking to reconcile them with its way of seeing. A typical visitor, travelling in a group, phrases their comment as a report in the visitor book:

Visit to mission station with party of 15, visited the school, the parsonage, the Church, the garden and all of the houses, – very pleased with all I saw and heard, and I believe that much good work is being done at this interesting mission station with which Mr and Mrs Bulmer have been connected so long.⁷⁶

Not only does this group gain access to ‘all of the houses’, they are eager to approve of what they find, and show support for the missionary undertaking. When visitors derive pleasure from the progress of children in school and church, or hear their singing, they also assess Aboriginal educational achievements, placing themselves in the position of objective witness, expressing what Frances Steel calls ‘unfettered White settler mobility’.⁷⁷ The inventory structure of many comments lends legitimacy to their feelings of pleasure in progress.

The opportunity to compare Australian Aboriginal people with subjects of missionary instruction elsewhere in the British Empire was not uncommon among visitors to the missions or among early steamship tourists in the Pacific.⁷⁸ To this end, a visitor in 1899 comments:

72 H. Meredith Davis 27 December 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book.

73 In the context of the French Empire see Ha 2014.

74 Stephen P. Thompson 9 April 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book; A.L. Nelson 24 January 1881 (Hon. Commissioner N.S.W. at the Melbourne International Exhibition), Ramahyuck visitor book.

75 A.F. French 12 December 1881; see also Fred Elsworth 10 April 1881; Jas C. Hawker 22 March 1886; W.M. Segrave (of London) 11 April 1887, Lake Tyers visitor book; John Singleton 17 January 1879; Arthur F. French 2 December 1880; Caroline Marks 22 December 1882, Ramahyuck visitor book.

76 John Kennedy Macmillan 20 January 1887, Lake Tyers visitor book.

77 Steel 2013.

78 Steel 2013.

A beautiful day, everything looked at its best. Mr Bulmer kindly showed us the church and school and houses in which the aboriginals live but I was disappointed at not seeing more of the natives – it appears that the day of my visit was a general holiday and consequently nearly all the aboriginals were out boating. Was greatly struck by the fact that there was only one pure black girl attending the school – this foreshadows an early extinction of the race.⁷⁹

Under the civilising machine of the mission, the Gunai occupied a complex position: their expected disappearance in contrast to their adaptation to the Christian lifestyle coalesced into something unique and exotic for the tourist gaze. Though comments focus on the positive – in many ways this is *the* convention of the visitor book – there was also an underlying belief in the doomed race theory.⁸⁰ The perceived impending extinction of the Gunai made groups of tourists unapologetic about their wish to see mission residents.⁸¹ Many visitors who made the trip to Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck missions were motivated by such curiosity; when they found the mission residents absent ('camping out', hunting or playing cricket in nearby Cunninghame), they expressed their disappointment in the visitor books.⁸² The above comment encapsulates the disappointment that the object of their visit is not readily in view, this excursionist also expressed surprise on learning the Aboriginal residents had their own leisure time and spent it boating.⁸³

Added to the complex array of emotions expressed by excursionists so far detailed was, unsurprisingly, curiosity. Alongside pleasure, curiosity is frequently listed as the reason for visiting. Curiosity appears 30 times in the Lake Tyers visitor book, but not at all in the Ramahyuck visitor book. As noted already, a pervasive desire to see over the mission, in the panoptic manner described by Brynes,⁸⁴ manifested itself as emotional expressions in the visitor books. Pleasure, in particular, was both sought after and expressed effusively by both male and female visitors of different origins, predominately of the middle class. There were some rare cases, however, when this curiosity had the opportunity of being transformed into friendship. As the shared concert described at the opening of this article suggests, such intimacy was forged during heightened emotional events, such as religious holidays and concerts.

Friendships formed between Aboriginal mission residents and visitors through the wives and daughters of missionaries, this much is clear from the list of performers at the concert, who included John and Caroline Bulmer's daughter May. Though she no longer lived on the mission with her parents, May visited each Christmas.⁸⁵ May visited her parents with friends such as Florrie Powell, whose effusive comment

79 P. Holyoake Rast (approximate spelling) 6 February 1899, Lake Tyers visitor book.

80 See McGregor 1997.

81 Lydon 2005a: 187–88.

82 H.R. Reamsey (approximate spelling) 1 January 1886; E. Angus Young 6 February 1899, Lake Tyers visitor book.

83 See Dow 1999 for a discussion of ongoing connection to country expressed in Gunai activities off the missions.

84 Brynes 2000: 54.

85 May Bulmer 15 January 1892, 19 January 1894, 30 March 1894, Lake Tyers visitor book.

that she had spent ‘the happiest time of my life’ at the mission contrasts with the known realities of mission life. In this way, the highly emotive expression in the visitor books complicate understandings of mission tourism as one-directional. The shared interests between Aboriginal women and the daughters and friends of the missionaries further testify to this.

If nature was one of the defining sources of pleasure for tourists, Aboriginal women shared this passion in one respect: fern collecting. Tourists, and women in particular, were captivated by the Victorian era’s craze for ferns, known as Pteridomania, and they saw the outer regions as ideal places to gather specimens for their ferneries (also known as glass houses).⁸⁶ Letters from Gunai women to Hagenauer’s daughter Ellen Grace Hagenauer (1873–1947) suggest a shared passion.⁸⁷ These women – some of whom had known each other their whole lives – corresponded after Ellen Grace’s marriage and subsequent move to Western Australia.⁸⁸ Emily Stephen, for example, wrote to ask how Ellen’s fernery was progressing in spite of the very dry weather.⁸⁹

At Lake Tyers, May Bulmer went fern collecting with a friend and repeat mission tourist Mabelle F. Smith. Smith visited Lake Tyers twice during 1890s, in one comment she writes:

Thanks to the kindness of Mr and Mrs Bulmer besides all others on the station. In remembrance of this trip are carrying away sundry small boxes, baskets, pots, misses and bundles. ‘Many were the days we say’[.] Found the Natives very willing to help us by showing us to different places, also collecting ferns and mosses. Only wish my visit were longer.⁹⁰

This comment suggests that not only did Smith form a friendship with ‘all the others’ on the station, she went fern collecting with some of the residents, most likely Gunai women, and had them act as her guides ‘showing us to different places’. Smith is unusual for mentioning the whole mission community in her comment, most visitors only thank their hosts, Mr and Mrs Bulmer, in keeping with the convention of visitor books. Her relationship with the women of the mission was formed through their shared passion for ferns, constructed as a particularly feminine and civilised or refined pursuit.⁹¹ Smith’s enthusiasm for the people of the mission can also be seen in her purchase of Aboriginal-made baskets, which were a common souvenir item (also encouraged as refined and ladylike).⁹²

86 Allen 1969; Lydon 2005a: 183; Whittingham 2009; Mabey 2016.

87 Mabelle F. Smith 30 March 1894, Lake Tyers visitor book; Lydia Gilbert to Ellen Le Souef n.d., Le Souef Papers (1888–1903) MN 1391, 4370A/713/8/5, State Library of Western Australia.

88 Emily Milton Stephen to Ellen Le Souef 14 November 1903, MN 1391, 4370A/713/7/13/2.

89 Emily Milton Stephen to Ellen Le Souef 14 November 1903, MN 1391.

90 Mabelle F. Smith 30 March 1894, Lake Tyers visitor book.

91 Mabey 2016.

92 E. Angus Young also visited specifically to buy a basket, 6 February 1899, Lake Tyers visitor book.

Women's friendships counter simultaneous narratives around presumed racial demise. In the context of mission tourism, events such as fern collecting were an opportunity to know mission residents through a shared passion. Christmas and Easter were also important markers in the year and accorded special activities, which often resulted in renewed visits by friends and local community members. The visitor books show this familiarity increasing during the festive season and at Easter.⁹³

As a considerable number of comments in the visitor books demonstrate, Aboriginal mission residents were not always distant objects of spectacle for visitors. They were sometimes friends, acquaintances and guides. Aboriginal residents performed alongside European visitors and shared a religious space and feeling on occasions like Christmas and Easter. These relationships, though undoubtedly few in the scale of mission tourism, and formed through the missionary families, defy the distancing tendencies of the tourist gaze. Caroline Bulmer, John Bulmer's wife, deemed these connections important enough to write into the Lake Tyers visitor book. Women shared many things in the mission space, including pleasure from the landscape (presumably with each other for company) and religious devotion.

The strength of these friendships can be seen in the ongoing contact between Ellen Grace Hagenauer and a number of Aboriginal women with whom she grew up on Ramahyuck.⁹⁴ The Gippsland tourist industry not only affected Gunai people who lived on missions, but similarly those forced to reside in local towns under the *Aborigines Protection Act 1886*. Jessie Ellis, born on Ramahyuck, was working and boarding in Bairnsdale in October 1888 after being placed in service. Her letters to Ellen Grace record the impact of later nineteenth-century tourism from an Aboriginal perspective. In a letter from Ellis to Ellen Grace, by then married to Albert Le Souef and living in Western Australia, Jessie Ellis describes a typical day. It is worth quoting her letter at length:

I am kept busy the whole day and then I have to walk home every night as there isn't any spare room, it's all filled up with boarders, there are about seventeen or more, and when some of them leave there is always some one to take their place. I do the washing myself and it is a great difference to the home washing, far more besides ... The white shirts are terrible. Seventeen and first I didn't like Bairnsdale. I was fretting for home, one feels very sorry to part from our own dear home. Don't you think so. I can tell you I was delighted to see Papa and Mama up, and they were awfully kind to bring us some things and I was also glad to taste the home apples.⁹⁵

93 For example, Mabelle F. Smith 30 March 1894, Lake Tyers visitor book; Eliza Francis 7 April 1885, Ramahyuck visitor book.

94 See Cruickshank and Grimshaw 2015.

95 Jessie Ellis to Ellen Le Souef 30 October 1888, MN 1391, 4370A/713/8. The Mama and Papa referred to here were Louise and Friedrich Hagenauer.

Jessie Ellis and Ellen Le Souef grew up on Ramahyuck mission and regarded it as their home. This was likely the first time in her life Jessie Ellis had been away from her family and the mission. In this context, tourism must have provided both an opportunity for work, as well as a painful reminder that she had been separated from her family and the place where she grew up.

Jessie Ellis's experiences raise the question: how did Aboriginal people respond to the tourist gaze? Some evidence can be seen in the archives. In the early phase of mission tourism, particularly in the period after the instigation of the visitor books, the Gunai practised a strategy of withdrawal from tourist attention. Hagenauer noted in a letter that excursionists were at first a source of entertainment for the residents. He wrote in April 1878:

We have had lately a great many visitors from Melbourne, who seem all to take some interest in the natives, but have sometimes very strange ideas, so that the blacks have often a good laugh about them when they are away again.⁹⁶

Two years later, however, residents at Ramahyuck were less inclined to remain in view while day trippers were visiting. In February 1880, Hagenauer wrote, 'my Blacks lock all their houses and go in the bush' when excursionists arrive by steamer.⁹⁷ In this letter to Reverend M. MacDonald, a long-time correspondent, he is determined that the public be aware that 'this reserve is set aside for the sole use of the Aborigines and not as a pleasure ground to white people'.⁹⁸

At the other end of the tourist era, in the early twentieth century when tourism had recommenced to Aboriginal missions, Kitty Johnson continued similar strategies of withdrawal, this time exploiting the situation for her and her family's economic benefit.

[When the tourists arrived at] her house there she was sittin' out the front with her head covered with a possum-skin rug, and she wouldn't pull her head out from it. She sat there listening to the tourists askin' her to let 'em see her so they could get a photo, but she just sat there. After a good bit of coaxing all of a sudden she shoved 'er hand out and stuck a mug on the ground in front of her and she waited till she reckoned there was enough coins dropped in, then she pulled the rug off and sat there grinnin' away, smoking her pipe for the tourists to photograph her.⁹⁹

96 Hagenauer to MacDonald 27 April 1878, F.A. Hagenauer Letter Book (1875–85) MS 3343, National Library Australia.

97 Hagenauer to MacDonald 23 February 1880, NLA MS 3343.

98 Hagenauer to MacDonald 23 February 1880, NLA MS 3343.

99 Pepper and De Araugo 1980: 80.

This example demonstrates that some residents were, to some degree, able to manage the tourist gaze by playing on their status as tourist attractions, using humour and withdrawing from view to unsettle viewer expectations of an easily accessible exhibit.¹⁰⁰ The sale of artefacts and souvenirs was another way to opportunise on tourist interest.¹⁰¹

Visitors on display

Visitors themselves became part of the narrative of progress as they viewed the spectacle of ‘progress’ on the mission. Tourists simultaneously witnessed and performed the ideal of civilised progress; however, they did not always meet this ideal. Station managers and missionaries objected to the disruptions that visitors caused to the routine and order of the station. Meanwhile, the Board was inconsistent in its response, demonstrating potential internal division between members and their objectives.¹⁰² The objections to visitors began prior to the instigation of the visitor books in 1878 and ended up including journalists, the Board and missionaries. The debate surrounding how Europeans were to interact with the Aboriginal population was an important topic and one that ripples through multiple archival sources.

One month prior to the introduction of the visitor books at each of Victoria’s six missions and reserves, the Superintendent at Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve, closest of the six to Melbourne, complained about the conduct of visitors. The letter is recorded in the Board’s register of correspondence as follows:

that two individuals in the garb of gentlemen and a lady visited the station, one gentleman said he came on visit of inspection ... Mr [Halliday the Superintendent] considers his conduct outrageous – in patting the girls’ heads and staring at the women and sticking out his tongue and teeth. Mr [name illegible] will send his card. [Halliday] writes to know if Capt. Page knows anything of the individual and if he was sent by the Board etc.¹⁰³

Superintendent Halliday was not the only person to note the ways in which visitors made a spectacle of themselves. Hagenauer protested two years later that ‘loads of people’ visited Ramahyuck on Sundays, overrunning the place ‘entering cottages &c. and making themselves generally objectionable’. Hagenauer ‘begged that something might be done to put a stop to it’.¹⁰⁴ The Board replied that the matter should be brought to the attention of the police; however, this proved to be a useless exercise as the police could not see that there was anything they could do.¹⁰⁵ In the end, it

100 For further examples of challenging the gaze see Lydon 2005a.

101 Nugent 2011; Kleinert 2012.

102 Barwick has written on the Board’s internal divisions and conflict in Barwick 1998.

103 Register of Correspondence H. Halliday to Board 32 August 1878, NAA CRS B 2861 /X2 p.44 [microfilm].

104 Hagenauer to Board memo 28 February 1880, NAA CRS B 2861 /X2 p. 134 [microfilm].

105 Memo 1 March 1880 and Memo 4 March 1880, NAA CRS B 2861 /X2 p. 134 [microfilm].

was suggested that a notice prohibiting visitors be posted on the reserve, and visitors be treated as trespassers unless they obtained permission. Hagenauer's letter book reveals the weight of this issue on his mind. Using his religious network, he spoke to Bishop Moorehouse who then wrote to Sir William Stawell (a prominent colonial figure who had been a member of the 1877 Royal Commission into Aborigines). Of these letters and strong representations that he made to the Board, none seem to have been effective. In 1881, the Ramahyuck visitor book records a high of 69 comments, suggesting that Melbourne's International Exhibition drew yet more people out to the missions and Hagenauer was fighting a losing battle.

It should be noted that missionaries did not object to certain types of visitors, if Hagenauer's responses to the situation are a guide. A visit from a bishop and his family was very much enjoyed, but excursionists on the Bairnsdale Steamer were an 'annoyance' with an 'injurious influence' on the order of the mission.¹⁰⁶ Such markers of class as gentlemanly garb, however, did not guarantee appropriate behaviour, as the above letter from Coranderk's Superintendent demonstrates. Hagenauer had no objection to what he described as 'respectable ladies and gentlemen visiting the place', which suggests that civilised behaviour was just as important for the viewer as it was for the viewed.¹⁰⁷

The Board and missionaries were not alone in their disdain for visitors. John Stanley James, a visitor himself and the journalist noted above who wrote under the pseudonym 'The Vagabond', gives an account of visiting Lake Tyers, criticising other excursionists for disrupting the discipline of the mission and disturbing the children at school. Interestingly, he also gives his opinion of the visitors' book:

Here the Tom, Dick and Harry of society have inscribed their names and recorded their impressions, mostly of a supremely idiotic class. What can an ordinary Melbourne cockney know of the question of the treatment of our aborigines which has been a puzzle to philanthropists and practical politicians? Yet with a sublime impertinence Tom, Dick and Harry, and the females of their kind, scrawl their remarks over the visitors' book, patronising Mr and Mrs Bulmer in, as it seems to me, a most offensive manner.¹⁰⁸

The offensiveness for James appears to be derived from the numerous expressions of gratitude and pleasure for being shown over the mission. James did not, however, leave a comment in the Lake Tyers visitor book; instead, after visiting Ramahyuck in November 1885, he stated simply 'See Argus'. His article, which expresses the sentiments above, also repeats many of the overstepping tendencies of mission tourists. As a journalist, he perhaps felt he should be treated as an insider, entitled to see the mission in all its detail, while positing that outsiders should practise more

106 Hagenauer to MacDonald 23 February 1880, NLA MS 3343; Victoria 1882: 47.

107 Hagenauer to MacDonald 23 February 1880, NLA MS 3343.

108 'Picturesque Victoria. Lake Tyers No. 2', *The Australasian*, 3 April 1886: 1.

courtesy.¹⁰⁹ For James, overt expressions of pleasure and gratitude are patronising spectacles; however, for missionaries and Board members it is the intrusive behaviour of visitors that must be regulated.

Conclusion

Visitor books are a rich source for examining the nexus of mission tourism, imperial intimacies and emotion. The Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck visitor books are revealing of the preoccupations of visitors, demonstrating a pervasive interest in Aboriginal people, which manifested as a complex entwining of tropes (exotic, primitive, disappearing and/or civilised). The visitor books are telling of a voyeuristic intimacy between the viewer and the viewed, between the coloniser and the colonised. Visitors drawn to Gippsland by the beauty of the waterways and landscape were equally curious to see the mission residents. Before the tourism of the 1920s, with its formalised structure of boomerang throwing and a gum leaf band, visitors encountered (what was called) the civilising experiment in progress. Neat cottages, school rooms and church services provided a pleasurable mix of the familiar and the exotic, which stimulated many visitors to repeat their visits. Witnessing mission work in progress confirmed the positive qualities of the visitors' culture, while rendering invisible its unpalatable aspects (such as child removal, alcohol and prostitution)¹¹⁰ and the impact on the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people by the administrative surveillance and edicts of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines.

Often visitors' pleasure in the landscape was transferred to the Aboriginal residents, whom they expected to share in their joy at the healthful surroundings. Visitor curiosity in the goings on of the mission manifested in a pervasive voyeurism, in part enabled by the missionary tour guides, wherein cottages were inspected, children's progress at school and in church commented on and summaries of the experience written into the visitor books. Surprise was expressed by visitors who, after taking inventory of the mission, found that it far exceeded their expectations. Their surprise often led to favourable comparisons between Europeans and Aboriginal people, as a reflection of the good work of the missionaries, their families and ultimately the administration of the Board.

Some visitors made friends with mission residents, and here I have focused on Gunai women. The concert held at Lake Tyers mission in 1895 was but one instance in which the Gunai and visitors shared songs and hymns, expressing their shared understanding of religion through friendship and emotion. Another instance, more specifically between women connected with the missionary's family and resident

109 Richard White has examined John Stanley James's writing on China with reference to how James situated his first-hand account against a straw man of popular opinion: a similar process is executed here. See White 2008.

110 Rowley 1970; Merlan 1988: 43; Lydon 2005b: 215; Horton 2010: 8.

women, can be seen in their joint expedition to collect ferns and mosses from around the Gippsland Lakes. While these relationships do not feature often in the visitor books, their description in letters provides a necessary counter to the distance created between Aboriginal people and Europeans in visitor comments as established by an objectifying tourist gaze. Not insignificantly, the visitor books illuminate a node in the transnational phenomenon of international information exchange and show that the exchange of emotion is critical to these flows. Tourists and travellers traversed the empire, seeking information and deriving pleasure from the civilising machine in action and on display. Sometimes they inadvertently made spectacles of themselves to the bemusement of Aboriginal mission residents.

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