

# THE CLASSROOM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD: THE REDEMPTION NARRATIVE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH POPULAR LITERATURE SET IN AUSTRALIA <sup>1</sup>

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A small number of popular novels, short stories and plays, wholly or partially set in Australia, were published in France during the nineteenth century and up to World War I.<sup>2</sup> Although they represent only a tiny fraction of the enormous output of the French industrialized press of the time, the range of narratives is diverse, from moral tales to sentimental fiction, adventure novels and bush tales. These imaginary adventures draw their inspiration from the actual experiences of explorers and travellers in the Pacific region, and are contemporaneous, or nearly so, with historical events and geographic discovery. Thus the narratives of the first half of the century are all set in the developing colony of New South Wales, while the discovery of gold in 1851 shifts the focus of French imagination to the colony of Victoria—to Melbourne and the goldfields of Ballarat and Bendigo. Underlying French images of Australia throughout the century are the fundamental notions of inversion and displacement: Australia is the “other” place, a “world upside down”, and the geographical idea of the Antipodes becomes a literary metaphor in these fictional works. Botany Bay and Port Jackson in particular provide the perfect classroom for lessons in moral and spiritual enlightenment and the background for the emergence of the redemption narrative. The foundation of French popular literature set in Australia, the redemption narrative can be found throughout the nineteenth century, although other genres dominate from the middle of the century onwards, such as the sentimental novels of Céleste de Chabrilan and the Victorian goldfields adventure novels, pioneered by Henry Perron d’Arc.

As early as 1792 the penal colony of Botany Bay is linked to the idea of redemption and new social orders. It is the setting for a short piece of political theatre, performed in Paris and written by an unknown, Citizen “Gamas”.<sup>3</sup> Deporting a group of nobles to Botany Bay is seen as a means of achieving social justice by ridding France of the aristocratic class, and at the same time offering the nobles the opportunity to make themselves useful by learning new ways of living based on social equality. Redemption from a life of idleness is possible “at the other end of the universe” for this writer of the Revolution. By the early part of the nineteenth century, however,

French writers are more concerned with individual rather than group redemption and this is reflected in the moral or didactic stories for children and juveniles published by the Catholic Press. Often officially sanctioned by the Catholic Church, these stories reflect the Church's preoccupation with missionary activity in the Pacific region during the first half of the century. Descriptions of Australia's natural environment and landscape, and of the English colonial experiment, as found in early geographies and encyclopaedias,<sup>4</sup> are a wonderful source of information for French writers, whose stories chart personal journeys of sin, punishment, suffering and redemption. Although nationalistic in their underlying theme of rivalry with the English, these narratives are not concerned with the French nation as such, or with French people engaged in struggles or enterprises: Australia is a place where the French have abandoned their colonial ambitions. For these writers, there exists a clear metaphysical link between spiritual purification, Antipodean nature and the penal colony of Botany Bay.

The narratives can be loosely divided into two types: the moral adventure novel or short story, and the moral travel account. Both types are more common before 1850, although they continue to be published throughout the century. Moral travel accounts<sup>5</sup> are distinguished from the encyclopaedias and geography books of the period by their (often very slight) narrative framework, usually provided by the voyage to Australia of a male character, who recounts his visit through a series of loosely connected anecdotes and observations. These travellers have no need of moral redemption themselves, but act as the initiators of debate on matters of social interest, such as the value of the English penal experiment in the rehabilitation of criminals, or the "civilizing" effect of Christianity on Indigenous people.<sup>6</sup> Although these writers touch on individual redemption, it is discussed in the context of a potentially wider social benefit. By contrast, the moral adventure novel or short story, which is the focus of this article, is primarily concerned with the spiritual adventure of the hero—one that culminates in a "happy ending" appropriate to the ideological aims of the narrative.

### The First Moral Adventure Story

"Antony ou la conscience",<sup>7</sup> by Sophie de Renneville, published in 1812, is the earliest known piece of fiction set (at least partly) in Australia. It recounts the adventures of a young Chilean boy kidnapped from his home by pirates and abandoned on the island of Bola Bola in the Pacific. Antony is rescued by a wise and kind Catholic missionary, Father Ely, who educates

the child in good Christian principles and sets up Antony's quest: to take a spiritual path in the world by refining his conscience according to God's laws: "every time that you are about to do something, ask yourself: *In the future, could I admit to this action without being ashamed?* The answer to this question will be the principle of your behaviour".<sup>8</sup> God calls Father Ely to evangelize other Pacific Islands, and he sends Antony off on a journey with an agreement to meet again in four years when he will take the boy home to his parents. Antony's spiritual odyssey takes him across the Pacific to Australia, back to England and then to Bola Bola. Each stage of his journey is guided by different father figures, who assist in keeping him on the narrow path: a French sea captain, the Aborigine Omaï, and the English Captain Jackson.

This tale can be read in the context of contemporary philosophical discussions about the relationship between spirituality, conscience and the will, but it must also be read against the background of relations between Church and State at the time of Napoleon. The Catholic Church in France was severely oppressed under the Empire and its ability to compete with English Protestant missionaries in the Pacific was also reduced. The use of the name "Antony" in the story encodes both its spiritual message and underlying religious and political ideology.<sup>9</sup> For Catholics familiar with the saints of the Catholic Church, the title would immediately connect the reader with a whole system of images and beliefs concerning St Anthony, the patriarch of monks. "St Antoine" would also have been well known to children at the time as part of the repertoire of popular puppet theatre usually seen at the local fair.<sup>10</sup> The connection is further enforced by the use of the formula "un jour",<sup>11</sup> which not only places the text in the genre of a children's tale, but also in the tradition of storytelling about the saint. In the Catholic cult of the saints, St Anthony became known for his many virtues, among them humility, charity and prayerfulness,<sup>12</sup> which he achieved through a spiritual combat with the Devil during his life of solitude in the Egyptian desert from 272 AD onwards. The story of Antony, the stolen and then abandoned child, does not rigorously follow the actual story of the saint, but rather adopts the general theme of the narrative of his life; namely, the development of a virtuous nature through the conquering of human weakness. Thus Antony, who was by nature courageous and pious,<sup>13</sup> is thrown into different spiritual deserts represented by the distant locations he travels to in the Pacific.

In the Australian part of the tale, Antony is shipwrecked in the Gulf of Carpentaria, but is miraculously rescued by Aborigines from Botany Bay. This ignorance of Australian geography, or indifference to geographical accuracy in the narrative, yields a rich confusion of images. Antony and the Captain are saved by an Aboriginal man bearing the name of the Tahitian, Omai, who was brought to London in July 1774 by Captain Furneaux, received by Joseph Banks and introduced into London society, where he was perceived as symbolizing the inherent nobility of less "civilized" peoples.<sup>14</sup> Omai's story became well-known in French society, and in the early nineteenth century was popularized in theatre and in print, becoming better known than the story of Aotourou, whom Bougainville had brought to Paris after his voyage of 1768. In Botany Bay the French sea captain dies, and Omai the Aborigine perceptively offers his assistance by asking Antony to call him "father". Omai, like his Tahitian namesake, is portrayed as a noble, albeit primitive savage. His physical agility distinguishes him as a leader, and he is friendly and comforting: "Omai, as was his custom, rubbed his nose against theirs as a sign of friendship."<sup>15</sup> The "savages" of Botany Bay seem to be all of the noble kind, "good, hospitable, good fishermen and divers". Their lack of hostility is suggested in the description of them "all holding a green branch in their hand", invoking images of the welcome given to Christ on Palm Sunday, just as their offer of food, "breadfruit, roast pig and dog", invokes images of Tahitian generosity, and the Tahitian—not the Australian—landscape. To this anthropological confusion are added contrasting images of the primitiveness of the Aborigines living in caves.

Without hope of returning home and with only kind but primitive savages for company, Antony confronts his despair. Although comforted by Omai, he is saved by his own reasoning. He decides the only way to survive is to study their ways and become loved by the natives. This he does by proving himself adept at hunting kangaroos and climbing trees. Nature provides a further terror, which leads to the ultimate spiritual test.

The savages had just arrived when violent tremors announced a dreadful earthquake right where they were staying. Antony, positioned far away as the guest of honour, saw them suddenly flee in terror and confusion. After having withdrawn more than half a league, the sea returned as a foaming mountain and engulfed the entire group into its breast.<sup>16</sup>

Antony's survival encourages the remaining Aborigines to believe that he is a God, an idea which he dismisses, thus proving his moral and spiritual superiority over them. He triumphs over his adversity in the harsh environment of Sydney Cove, this wilderness at the end of the world peopled with convicts from England and primitive Aborigines. Although Sydney Cove is the place where England sends its convicts, and is therefore a place of punishment, the dominant imagery of Australia emanates from the confusion of anthropological and geographical images based on European knowledge of the Pacific region at the time. Thus the Aborigines are depicted as being closer to the Tahitians, about whom much more was known owing to the explorations of Bougainville and Cook, whilst the natural landscape is inhabited by Australian fauna, such as the kangaroo, which, since 1804, had been one of the great attractions of the Ménagerie of the Empress Josephine at her country estate, Malmaison.<sup>17</sup> Australia is portrayed as an alien place perfectly suited for testing Antony's conscience and the strength of his will.

### The Convict Hero: Fall and Redemption

The role of the conscience and of the will and the possibility of redemption in Australia explored in "Antony ou la conscience" provide the essential themes in the later foundation narratives set in the penal colony of Botany Bay. *Allan: le jeune déporté à Botany Bay* by Ernest Fouinet, appearing in 1836, is the first novel to exploit fully the redemptive possibilities of deportation to Botany Bay. Allan is a rebellious and troubled youth, jealous of his older brother Meredith. At the age of 15, he leaves his village after stealing the collection for the poor from the local church, and teams up with the criminal Evan. Together they rob a Bristol merchant, are caught and sentenced to deportation. Allan arrives at Botany Bay unrepentant. At the same time, his brother, now an Anglican minister, discovers Allan is in Botany Bay and decides to take up the position of minister in the colony. The individual stories of the two brothers structure the narrative until they finally meet. However, it is Allan's story that dominates and it yields a rich imagery. His fall and subsequent redemption is a journey of both physical and psychological torment. The narrative recounts his repentance and ultimate acceptance by Botany Bay society through his experiences as a convict, an escapee in the bush, and as a captive of the Aborigines.

The system of images associated with each of these scenarios serves the avowed goal of the narrative: "to spread the most pure and strict precepts of piety, honour, love and respect for the family",<sup>18</sup> and also indicates the underlying theological and philosophical questions. The new settlement is referred to as either Botany Bay or Port Jackson/Sydney, and these geographical names are associated with a Manichean imagery that reflects the division of Sydney society into the penal and the colonial. Thus, those on the side of "good" are the instruments of English administration: the Governor, the Protestant minister, the soldiers, the reformed convicts, the free settlers and the "civilizable" Aborigines. Situated on the side of "evil" are the unrepentant convicts who continue their life of crime in the new colony, along with primitive Aborigines who refuse offers of European civilization. The narrator provides the moral voice, the conscience of the story. In this type of narrative, the hero is English, male and a convicted criminal sentenced to deportation to Botany Bay. Although all of these heroes are essentially virtuous men who have been led astray, it takes the terrifying experience of deportation and the harsh life of a convict in Australia, coupled with good honest labour taming the wild land, to bring about repentance and redemption. These convict heroes do not then return home to England: they become the model settlers of the blossoming colony.

The redemptive properties of the penal-colony experience are made explicit in the sermon of the colony's Anglican minister. England has given the convicts a wonderful opportunity, for, "instead of death, instead of a gloomy prison, it gives you air and sunshine, the means to be useful and to rehabilitate you by doing good".<sup>19</sup> He likens the convict character to the unruly Nature they find themselves transported into:

My children, you and this nature have much in common. You all have a soul that is basically good, but you have allowed this goodness to be snuffed out and to disappear under a thousand baser instincts [. . .] this is exactly the same as these thick, tangled forests preventing the fertile rays of sunshine from penetrating to the earth where there is goodness just as in your souls.<sup>20</sup>

The potential beauty of the new landscape eludes the convicts, who see only a withered countryside, dull greenery, a cloudy sky and a pale sun, and Aborigines who inspire terror. Allan's escape attempt is the first stage in his journey towards redemption. Initially he manages to find tropical fruits such as bananas and coconuts growing close to Sydney, but as he descends

to the plains the landscape becomes sterile, there is no shade, and the sun devours him. The nights are filled with forest fires and the sinister “cou-i” of the Aborigines. The narrator taunts him: “Well, Allan, now that you are sprawled on this grass, overcome with fatigue, dying of hunger, don’t you think that it is harder after all to be answerable to implacable need than to the gentle authority of a father?”<sup>21</sup>

Delirious, Allan falls into a thicket of moss and bark where he stays for several days. In his fever he finally understands the great crime he has committed against his family. In this wilderness, where he is continually attacked by mosquitoes and ants, he realizes he must compensate those he has stolen from. His sufferings continue as hunger, thirst and fear of the Aborigines torture him. The mother kangaroo he injures provides a simple allegory for the hurt he has inflicted on his own mother, and the loss of his compass symbolizes his own lost soul. Just as he has rejected his family’s love and care, he kills a bird that has led him to water. Tormented by the lessons of nature, Allan laments: “Where is my cradle of Lanberris? And my father and my mother? Where is the work that I rejected? Where is my brother who always defended me? Where are they?”<sup>22</sup> He faces the ultimate test. Captured by Aborigines and tied to a tree, Allan is undoubtedly about to be eaten. The Aborigines are described in such a way as to appear grotesque and devilish. The flames from the fire accentuate their white teeth, their hollow cheeks, their pierced noses and ears. Their bodies and faces are decorated with white and red lines and circles. “Finally the improvised stove was ready, and the savages danced around the unfortunate Allan; leaps, gestures, chants, laughing, all of this enough to frighten the boldest person. They abandoned themselves to their sinister merrymaking [. . .]”<sup>23</sup> This archetypal scene, written in 1836, adds an important new element to the imagery of Aborigines. Their portrayal as cannibals “proves” their primitive state, and provides a scenario in the narrative that generates suspense, terror and excitement. Allan is saved at the last moment by the appearance of a rival Aboriginal tribe and escapes, vowing to demand the forgiveness of his parents. In an amazing coincidence he comes across a small house in the bush where he recognizes the voice of his brother, and his desire for forgiveness is met with demands for repentance and the promise of salvation.

The process of repentance continues as the savage landscape of the bush is replaced with the chains of the convict gang. Pardoned, the transformation of Allan into a virtuous believer is completed in the act of building a replica of his parent’s house, New Lanberris. “It was the old Wales of the North transported to the New Wales of the South”, represented

by the European fruit trees flourishing in place of the bush, and the flocks of sheep and cattle grazing the land.

The transformation of the land is accompanied by the civilizing of Allan's young servant, "Bali-Bali", the good Aborigine who responds to the benign authority of Allan. A series of comparisons with animals position Bali-Bali as sub-human. He is likened to a faithful dog attentive to his master's needs, to a greyhound given its freedom, to climbing a tree with the agility of a monkey, and to running like a deer. Allan now wants to apply his success in taming Bali-Bali's wildness to all aspects of this alien world: "he wanted to civilize these wild plants and render them useful to society, just as he had done with Bali-Bali and some former thieves, the true savages of the civilized world who had become his faithful servants".<sup>24</sup> As Allan advances towards the final atonement for his past sins, his idea of the bush changes and the landscape assumes a less threatening quality. Through virtuous eyes, the Blue Mountains become a place of beauty and tranquillity:

At sunset these virgin forests presented a beautiful and animated spectacle [. . .] birds of all the colours of the rainbow jostled with their song for places for the night [. . .] Between the trees and the earth, in the shafts of light that the setting sun sent into the clearings and which resembled the trace of angels in sacred paintings, myriads of butterflies with large blue or white eyes painted on their crimson or rose coloured wings shone like diamonds shaken in broad daylight. On the branches of the cedars white possums ran, and they jumped from one branch to another using their bat wings, with which they are equipped.<sup>25</sup>

Allan's personal redemption is symbolized by his changed vision of the natural landscape and by his new role as a cultivator and farmer. A series of coincidences also resolves the moral conflicts of the story and re-instates the Christian moral order of good and evil. Thus the Bristol merchant whom he had robbed becomes his partner in the farm, whilst his colleague in crime, Evans, now an unrepentant, escaped convict, is captured and punished, thanks to the heroic actions of Bali-Bali. His father pardons him before he dies in Wales, whilst in a final scene of reconciliation his mother arrives. The symbolism of the moment is transparent as Bali-Bali, representing both the regeneration of Allan and the fruits of European evangelization, greets Allan's mother: "Bali-Bali gave Mistress Maddock Blue Mountains heather just like that of Snowdon, and, as she took it, she embraced the little black boy and smiled."<sup>26</sup>

## Second Generation Redemption

In two novels, the process of moral redemption involves the sons of convict fathers deported for crimes that result from changes to English society brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Both fathers are virtuous men who have suffered bad luck or injustices in England. The divisions within Sydney society arising from its penal origins and its growing number of free settlers are revealed in a continuing polarization of images of the colony. Despite this ongoing battle between good and evil, the adventures of the sons confirm the salvation of their fathers. The first of these novels, *La Famille du déporté*,<sup>27</sup> published in 1841, is one of six volumes of moral adventures located in different parts of the world. Although having a thin narrative framework and superficial characterization, this short novel is rich in imagery of Australia. The central character, John Livesay, commits a class-motivated crime, killing an English aristocrat who had refused help to his starving family. Deported to Botany Bay with his children, Livesay's essential goodness is acknowledged from the beginning and, prior to his departure, it is through the eyes of an already remorseful believer that the reader views the evil of the penal colony, inhabited by hardened criminals who thrive in this degenerate environment:

Here the biggest thief, the biggest rascal is often the most highly regarded. Those who do not succeed, escape from their assigned lands, disappear into the forests, the mountains of Australia; or, hiding on a neighbouring island called Diemen's land, they bring fire, plundering and death amongst the settlers attracted to Australia by an honourable motive.<sup>28</sup>

The association between the "forêt" or the bush and the criminal element is clear. The untamed wilderness shelters those who reject civilized society. This image of the bush as threatening is further reinforced by the idea of Antipodean nature and landscape. Australia is described as the centre of this opposing space to Europe: "In the Antipodes to Europe, of which the main centre is the island where the family of the convict finds itself, everything happens back-to-front to us. It is truly an upside-down world."<sup>29</sup> The characteristics of this upside-down world, apart from the reversal of the seasons, and the winds and the rivers that flow inland, are most striking in the lack of resemblance of the plants and animals to European ones, where any similarities are so "disfigured" that it would take a naturalist's eye to distinguish

them. Singled out for special mention are the platypus, echidna and kangaroo.

The narrative is structured as a series of scenes in which the father and his children travel as convict tourists around Sydney. Acceptance of his punishment allows Livesay now to perceive this alien land more as a curiosity than a threat; however, it is through the eyes of his innocent children that the Sydney environment is experienced. There is a heart-wrenching description of the hunt of a female kangaroo, European-style, with a pack of hounds, an episode that is repeated often in novels throughout the century. The kangaroo is portrayed as a noble creature, a mother figure, who fights valiantly to protect herself and her young. The children are scared equally by the appearance of a black snake and the Aborigine who saves them. Although of threatening appearance,<sup>30</sup> this Aborigine proves capable and informative as he kills the snake and presents it to the children. Elsewhere, for these "exiled innocents", the bird life is a source of amazement, and provides a point of contact, of familiarity between Europe and the alien land:

Then, from the evergreen Australian forests where the bark hanging and floating at the will of the wind gives the appearance of an ancient column to each tree, from the clumps of tender green mimosas, from the thousand types of eucalypts and so many other trees, strangers to our climates, escape superb stonechats, great-beaked cockatoos with brown plumage, stained with yellow on their heads, galahs with red heads, cockatoos with a prominent beak and a beautiful crest with white plumage lightly nuanced with a yellow fan in the tail.<sup>31</sup>

A large part of Livesay's redemptive experience occurs in the form of a journey inland from Botany Bay with his eldest son, Auguste, at the invitation of and in the company of the Governor. His other children are cared for by the Governor's wife. Through the eyes of the "good" convict, the journey is presented as a series of observations on the landscape and meetings with different Aboriginal tribes. Following one of "these bizarre Australian rivers that flow the other way round to those of our country", the dominant images are of a land sparsely inhabited with Aborigines suspicious of contact with the whites and uneasy in their presence. The "primitive" Aborigines, clothed in possum skins and living in "miserable" bark dwellings, have skin the colour of "dark chocolate" and wear bones in their noses that prevent them from breathing properly. The last image is that of

a fire started by the Aborigines which races through the bush and destroys the eucalypts, the mimosas, the cedars, the coconut palms, everything in its path, creating an image of wanton destruction caused by the vindictive action of "uncivilized" people.

Although still a convict, Livesay and his family prosper, selling the produce of their farm. The climate is likened to that of Montpellier in the south of France. The image of green valleys where herds of cattle graze and where fruit trees from all over the world can flourish symbolizes the success of the penal experience and serves to vindicate its moral goals of hard work in an outdoors environment.

The New Wales is also renowned for the quality and variety of its fruits. Peaches, apricots, nectarines, oranges, lemons, loquats, guava, cherries, blackberries from the Cape, China and Europe, hazelnuts, chestnuts from Spain, almonds, medlar, quinces, grapes, pears, figs, pomegranates, strawberries, raspberries and melons of every type, all ripen here perfectly in the open air.<sup>32</sup>

Livesay cannot obtain a complete pardon, however, until he has suffered a final test. The oldest son, Auguste, becomes a merchant in the Pacific. When he is shipwrecked, his father believes him dead; however, the narrative follows the son's adventures as he returns to Sydney via several exotic Asian and Pacific locations. The prodigal son's return is his father's final penance as the Governor announces his freedom, completing the redemptive process.

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The fragility of the redemptive experience is accentuated in a short novel by André de Goy, *Histoire d'un jeune chercheur d'or en Australie*, published in 1852.<sup>33</sup> In this story, the corrupting influence of gold is the trial facing the son of the former English convict Georges Calton. Georges is the "good" convict, deported after a run of bad luck had left him with no work and a sick wife. Prior to his demise, Georges is described as prudent, a hard worker and a loving husband and father. Taking out his frustration caused in part by the Industrial Revolution, Georges is sentenced to deportation to Botany Bay for his part in the destruction of a mill. Once again, his essential virtue, symbolized by his hard work and faithfulness to his settler master in the colony, ensures humane treatment and his good behaviour

earns him his freedom after three years' servitude. Prosperity, and reunion with his wife and son, are the rewards of his moral regeneration.

Whilst Georges had acquired an "honest fortune", however, his eldest son, Philip, tempted by the possibility of enough riches to return to England as a "gentleman", leaves home against his father's advice and heads for the goldfields, where a "dishonest" fortune can be made. Philip's adventures on the goldfields as a member of a gang led by a likeable and honest character called Bras-de-Fer entail a series of fortunes and misfortunes that lead him to question his conscience and arrive at a moral decision, thus confirming the redemptive powers of the Australian environment. In this frontier society the gold seeker can still be a romantic figure, as is Bras-de-Fer, but the life of the miners is decadent and miserable: "All these men, clothed in rags and bent towards the ground, braving the rays of a burning sun, work furtively, regarding one another with an air of defiance."<sup>34</sup> Images of the punishing qualities of the landscape and the less-than-human society that endeavoured to mine its riches, conflict with the lure of gold and its illusion of wealth, symbolized in Philip's dream. In this dream, Philip and the gang are walking on a huge plain of sand, which glitters in the sun like gold; however, as they advance the golden sand turns to mud. Then Philip sees his horse, previously stolen from him, and as he runs towards the creature, its grey coat changes colour:

When I found myself close to him, I recognized that my horse had been turned into solid gold. Then I heard you all cry: "A golden horse! A golden horse!" As the horse was already saddled, I jumped on its back; however I had barely mounted this precious horse when his two front legs transformed into vast wings; then, before I had time to put my feet to the ground, my golden horse took flight, soared into the air, and passing above the woods and prairies he came gently down in my father's garden.<sup>35</sup>

The significance of the dream becomes evident as the narrative progresses. Philip and Bras-de-Fer are attacked and lose their share of the gold takings. Philip recovers his horse from the horse thieves and uses it to transport the injured Bras-de-Fer out of the goldfields. The pilgrimage home marks the beginning of Philip's redemption. Bras-de-Fer is thirsty and Philip stops in the shade to offer him a drink: "'Are you suffering a lot?' he said with a son's concern, offering his water bottle to the injured man."<sup>36</sup> Philip faces his final test on the station of a farmer who cares for Bras-de-Fer in return

for Philip tending his sheep. He discovers an enormous nugget of gold on the farmer's property. A tussle with his conscience ensues. Should he tell the farmer or take the nugget for himself? Only God will see and judge his crime. Choosing a virtuous path by refusing the temptation of the gold confirms his redemption. Despite the farmer selling the gold and giving Philip the substantial sum of £5000, Philip receives no approval or thanks for the new wealth he brings to the family, for this is "dishonest" money. Honest work on the land is contrasted with the "scourge" of gold, "a foul-smelling fever". Only those who recognize the inherent immorality of a livelihood made from gold prospecting prosper in this version of colonial life. The hard lesson learnt by this prodigal son after his adventures on the goldfields is "that riches acquired by chance and used in the service of immoral passions are a deadly poison".

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In a later variation of the "second-generation" redemption narrative, Félicien is another rebellious adolescent son who learns about obedience to his father, this time by "distance education". Nicknamed "The Independent One" by his family, Félicien's character causes him serious trouble as he gets older. Writing in the first person, he describes himself as "vain, wilful, full of self-importance" at home, and as "unruly, quarrelsome, imperious" with his schoolfriends. Rejecting all authority and discipline, he is expelled from school, and his exasperated father confines him to his office at home in Paris, where he must continue his school work. Instead of doing his lessons, Félicien discovers some old exercise books belonging to his father, who was formerly a ship's doctor, and reads the tales of six children's relationships with their fathers from around the world, the last of which is "Tête-crêpue, le petit Australien".<sup>37</sup> Published in 1878, this tale by Elie Berthet uses the sufferings of a young Aboriginal boy at the hands of both white settlers and his black father to instruct young readers in the virtue of obedience. The tragic scenes in this story set in the cruel Australian desert reveal contradictory images of both whites and blacks in the context of the ongoing conflict between them. The narrator is always the child-voice and the young Aboriginal boy tells his tale to Félicien and to other child readers/listeners.

Tête-crêpue's tribe of the "Black-Snake" is a poor but traditional tribe, proud of not making any deals with the white invaders of their territory: "We have kept our possum-skin coats, our ironwood spears, our

flint hatchets. We travel on water in our bark canoes, and we also build our shelters from bark where we sleep. We do not want to accept any present, take on any of the ways of the whites. We are living as our dead ancestors used to live.”<sup>38</sup>

Close to nature, and close to his culture, Tête-crépue is endowed with a humanity that befits a noble but primitive race, although this nobility is somewhat undermined by the imagery associated with his name, “Fuzzy-Haired”, perhaps linked in most children’s minds to their toys or to Polynesian children found in the missionary literature. The effects of white occupation of his people’s land are sympathetically explained, so that their decision to attack a sheep station is seen to be perfectly justified. Failing to recognize the consequences of their action, the tribe enjoys a feast of roasted sheep with a childlike innocence. The scene of communal gluttony indicates their primitive state: “The feast lasted night and day; we gorged ourselves on more or less cooked meat, we fought over the skins from which we could make excellent coats. Men and women, children and old people were all eating with joy.”<sup>39</sup>

The squatter arrives with his guns and stockwhips, “huge and fearsome whips which they use with amazing skill”.<sup>40</sup> Surviving this scene of carnage, Tête-crépue reunites with his parents in the most desolate and sterile country. After three days, his father sends him to look for food. He seems to be the only living thing and death haunts the landscape: “A deathly silence everywhere, interrupted only by a burning breeze which, from time to time, fluttered the hardy leaves of the trees or bent the yellowed grass of the plain with a metallic sound.”<sup>41</sup>

Then he discovers an ant hill and returns with food for the night, of which he receives only a small portion. The next day he tries again. Tormented by hunger and thirst “under a sun of fire”, he battles with a black snake and returns with food, but once again he is given only a very small portion. On the third day his father sends him out once more, but this time he returns empty-handed and dying from hunger. The innocent, suffering child is attacked by his father wielding an axe: “Father, don’t kill me...”, he cries, and writes despairingly, “my body seemed destined to serve as food for my parents”. The image of the axe-wielding father about to cannibalize his innocent son is disrupted by the sound of a stockwhip, “the immense lash of a stockwhip wrapped around my father”. The stockman triumphs over the father, as the violence of white “civilization” must triumph over the “barbarity” of cannibalism. Transported into the white world where “they dressed my injury and treated me with much humanity”, Tête-crépue,

the victim of his father's inhumanity caused by the European occupation of their land, gratefully adopts his new life: "I got well quickly; today I am a shepherd on a 'station' in the area of Victoria. I am very happy, and I no longer eat ant cakes or black snakes, rather [I eat] all sorts of good things given to me by the whites."<sup>42</sup>

Félicien is induced to change his ways after reading this and the other stories. The scenes of cruelty in distant Australia, inflicted by the white settlers and the potentially cannibalistic Aboriginal father, assist him to understand the benefits of a civilized life under the guidance of benevolent fathers such as his own. Reformed, Félicien apologizes for his errors and changes his ways, convinced of the superiority of his own way of life. The sufferings of Tête-crêpue, resolved by his assimilation into white frontier society, illustrate the underlying ideology of the superiority of European civilization and the redemption it offers to primitive peoples and wayward sons.

### The Missionary Hero and True Redemption

The hopes of the Catholic Church to reconvert the Protestants of the Pacific to its own beliefs are articulated in explicitly ideological narratives with a "happy ending" of compliant natives embracing Catholicism and thus attaining true salvation. The missionary hero who succeeds in the conversion of the pagan natives is the theme of a curious tale from a collection sanctioned by the Archbishop of Paris and published in 1848. "La pieuse négresse de l'Australie" by J. B. J. Champagnac<sup>43</sup> is one of 56 tales from the five parts of the world, all with a moral or religious purpose, written to provide "interesting reading without danger" for juveniles. The narrative revolves around two key figures, a nameless missionary whose mission is to evangelize the "idolatrous people of New Ireland in the Australian regions", and a native of the island, the "pious black woman", "a poor Australian called 'Aïssa'". The idealized missionary character is devout and zealous, and has already been rewarded by a number of conversions amongst the "naturels" who frequent the modest church he has constructed. The heroine is an archetypal inhabitant of an exotic distant land, located in the Pacific but not specifically Australia. She is variously described as the "pious" or "faithful" negress, the "naïve Indian" or "the good mother". This confusion of racial identity is compounded by the use of an exotic name, "Aïssa".<sup>44</sup> The essential image is that of a fervent believer converted from her pagan beliefs.

The anonymity of the central protagonists is complemented by the anonymity of the landscape in which the story is set. The location is deliberately vague. The image of a Pacific Island somewhere in the Australian region is conveyed through references to the dreadful heat and luxuriant flowers, but is most strongly suggested through the different scenarios that a reader would identify as occurring on a Pacific Island, perhaps from reading missionary publications. The heroine of this story has a very sick child who she believes has been cured by the intervention of the missionary and the Virgin Mary. In gratitude, she offers to bring other natives of the island to the missionary so that he can convert them from their idol worship. True to her word, she arrives with many people all wanting to be Christians. The climax of the story is a long scene of instruction in the Catholic faith culminating in the planting of the cross, an event which causes great enthusiasm in these newly converted "savages".

A scene of intense devotion is described as the cross is elevated into the air covered in flowers: "all the good Indians prostrate themselves at the foot of the cross, and offer their hearts to Jesus Christ with the utmost confidence".<sup>45</sup> This scene, which would have warmed any missionary's heart, ends with Aïssa asking the priest to bless her child again, symbolizing the continuity of the Christian mission. The "happy ending" of this tale validates the Catholic mission in the Pacific and legitimates the work of the priests in the region. The images of devout "savages" prostrate before the cross reinforces the notion that "good" savages are those who accept Christianity, especially Catholicism. As agents of redemption, French Catholic priests must also suffer in the sense that they are surrounded by primitive godless people, their reward being the conversion of souls to the Catholic faith.

The colony of New South Wales, although seen by devout Catholic writers as a place for moral redemption, was under the control of their arch religious rivals, the Protestants. The short novel of Eugène de Walincourt, *Voyage à Botany-Bay*,<sup>46</sup> published with the approval of the Archbishop of Bordeaux in 1859 and partly set in Australia, illustrates both the underlying national and religious rivalry that shaped the Catholic view of the region, as well as a belief in Catholicism's potential to offer redemption. Marcel, the French hero, discovers his true vocation through a voyage to Botany Bay and the resolution of a family quest, and at the same time demonstrates the failures of Protestantism in the colony. Redemption and nationalism cross paths.

Unlike other heroes of the redemption narratives, Marcel shows no signs of being an essentially virtuous person. The son of an irreligious doc-

tor, Dr Goubin, who pays no attention to his son's moral character, Marcel is described as "the most undisciplined and the most impetuous" of children. Sent to Paris to study medicine, Marcel does little work and leads a life of pleasure, spending his father's money and incurring debts. His life of selfishness culminates in his killing a friend in a duel. The revelation of his dying father finally changes the course of Marcel's aimless life. Dr Goubin reveals that he had abandoned Marcel's mother, whom Marcel believes to be dead, in Sydney. In a loveless marriage, Dr Goubin was repelled and irritated by his wife's piousness and her efforts to convert him. Begging his son to undo this injustice and travel to Sydney to find his mother, he assumes that the mother believes them to be dead, as when they left "the colony was at war with the savages". He also advises Marcel that his indifference to religion has been the cause of all his unhappiness. The process of Marcel's redemption commences upon his father's death and will reach completion at the other end of the world.

The voyage to this "far away land" comprises the first stage of Marcel's spiritual journey, which is clearly shaped by its destination, a penal colony for "criminals condemned to lengthy sentences". Images of colonial life are polarized between its law-abiding citizens and its criminal elements, with Port Jackson and the town of Sydney representing in general the positive aspects of English colonization, and Botany Bay its darker side. Thus the first images of Botany Bay upon arrival are of a dismal landscape: "The approach to Botany Bay was signalled by the sight of a type of scraggy trees covered with white bark and entirely devoid of leaves. The sea was very rough [. . .]"<sup>47</sup> Port Jackson, on the other hand, is presented as an impressive harbour with a port capable of handling ships from all over the world. The Sydney of 1826, according to Marcel's observations, offers all the indications of an English town and a capital. This is evident in the large paved streets, gas-lighting and the solidly constructed houses, churches and banks. Sydneysiders are heavy drinkers and the taverns are always full, whilst the aristocracy listens to music in the Botanical Gardens. At the bottom end of Sydney society are the convicts, who are either interred in well-constructed prisons or sent to labour on public works. The lowest of the convicts are those who continue to commit crimes until they appear before the colonial courts. This class of individuals is "the most hideous spectacle that one could imagine", and arouse in Marcel the sad reflections of a true Christian.

Although influenced by the plight of the convicts, it is Marcel's experiences with the Aboriginal tribes outside of Sydney that provide him

with inspiration and allow him to find his calling. Having learnt upon his arrival in Sydney that his mother is dead, he undertakes a voyage to the interior to escape from the place of his sadness. On this journey he has several encounters with different Aboriginal tribes. His first violent meeting on a convict-run farm is almost fatal, but it sets him thinking about only one thing: "evangelizing the savages". The Aborigines, described as "savages" or "Indians", attack Marcel, wounding him in the chest and head. A description of their weapons follows, which confirms their aggressive nature. The spear is "terrible" and "dangerous", with very sharp tips made from fish teeth or a type of cane. The Aborigines can throw these spears a great distance with considerable accuracy. "The other weapons used by these savage people are a type of scimitar, the pike, a club about twenty inches long, bulbous at one end and pointed at the other, and finally an axe made from a cutting stone."<sup>48</sup> Marcel then joins the expedition of Captain Sturt, which just happens to pass by the convict farm. This fortuitous event permits him to make a number of further observations about the Aborigines. Fearful of the whites, the first group flees, setting fire to the bush. Sturt's lieutenant, Hume, displaying a gentle determination to meet with them, entices one of the "savages" over. Followed by his companions, it is revealed that "most of them were affected by skin diseases, and the one that appeared to be their leader begged the Europeans to cure them".<sup>49</sup> The Aborigines from the Darling River region "are well proportioned and build huts". The features of these Aborigines are noted according to the standard criteria of body markings, clothing and ritual marks such as the absence of front teeth. Their physical features, which assign them to a slightly superior group of Aboriginal people, are also noted.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, the Aborigines of the Murrumbidgee River are described as inferior to those of the Darling: "Their characteristics were so hideous that they could hardly be considered to be human beings. The women and children especially had a repulsive appearance. They seemed to be in the last stage of starvation and depression."<sup>51</sup> Initially hostile, most of the Aborigines they meet on the journey respond to the friendly advances of the strangers who venture onto their territory. Only one group, which attack their boat, appear to be truly malevolent, and this is indicated by their behaviour and bizarre body paint: "Some had painted white lines on their ribs, thighs and face, which gave them the illusion of being walking skeletons. Others were entirely painted with yellow and red ochre, and rubbed with grease which made them all glisten."<sup>52</sup>

The sight of these Aborigines posturing and gesticulating from the river bank "chilled Marcel's heart", and provokes more than anything else "the desire to save the savages". Reflecting that he has nothing to fear from these beings as he is protected by God, Marcel instead thanks God for having pointed out to him "the glorious path" that he should take. His decision to become a missionary is confirmed when, upon his return to Sydney, he learns that there is no Catholic priest in the colony. Sturt's hazardous expedition is commemorated by a monument erected in Sydney suggesting that there is a common sanctity to the pioneering work of the explorers and the missionaries, both of whom are endeavouring to open up the country to European civilization: "Why must it be that each important geographical discovery is almost always gained through the loss of life or health of the courageous men to whom we owe them?"<sup>53</sup>

Marcel's experiences with Sturt and the Aborigines thus shape his decision to become a missionary. At the end of the novel it is revealed that the narrator is the captain of the ship that is bringing Marcel to Sydney six years later to fulfil this dream. As the faithful storyteller, the captain holds the responsibility for informing the reader of the resolution of the mystery of Marcel's mother. This results from a chance meeting with a Protestant passenger, Field, on the ship returning Marcel to England to be trained as a missionary. He recounts how he was converted to Catholicism by a Madame Goubin, who was living with the tribe on the Castlereagh River that had also taken him captive. Marcel learns of the saintliness of his mother, made Queen of the tribe:

They all loved her like their mother, and by the end she had such influence over them that a large number of them already knew the good Catholic prayers. Three years passed in this way, and this good Madame Goubin lived in peace, having but one goal in this lowly world: convert the savages.<sup>54</sup>

The conversion of Aboriginal souls under the eyes of British administrators is a double triumph for the French, in both a nationalistic and a religious sense. The failure of the English to reform their convicts and to civilize the Aborigines is seen as evidence of the superior moral vision of Catholicism and the French nation. Marcel's personal decision to become a Catholic priest is the final stage on his path to true redemption, and is the unquestioned result of his visit to the young penal colony of Botany Bay.

## Conclusion

French Catholic writers used their Antipodean classroom to teach the lessons considered to be important for the maintenance of the faith in French society. These redemption narratives reveal the concerns of Catholic theology and the emerging theme of religious nationalism, and were written partly with the aim of combating the increasing secularism of publishing in France from the 1830s onwards. Despite their ideological stance against the dubious morals and pernicious influence of the industrialized and democratic press, however, the stories are imbued with the dominant aesthetic of popular literature, that of "divertissement". The idea of knowledge contributes a large part to this primary goal of entertainment, and accordingly the stories incorporate contemporary anthropological ideas and geographical discoveries to provide key scenarios and images. These narratives, though didactic, must maintain the interest of the reader, and the exotic location of the penal colony accentuates the drama of the spiritual quest. Jean-Claude Varella explains the role of the numerous descriptions of the colony's inhabitants and nature in the narratives: "In short, the text engages in tourism [. . .] Geographical recreation holds the reader and fills in the textual space: these are the two related obsessions of the popular novelist."<sup>55</sup> The "spiritual tourism" engaged in by these texts is a key narrative tool that allows the reader to understand the message, but at the same time enjoy the story.

The dominant lesson of these narratives is that of redemption and regeneration through individual choice and action, with the goal of possessing a conscience shaped and guided by the Christian faith. These ideas could be demonstrated in the penal colony of New South Wales because it provided a location far removed from the complexities of French society and politics. It offered a simpler, pre-industrial society with clearly defined elements that corresponded to the needs of the narrative. The division of the colony's society into convict and settler, assimilated (whites) and non-assimilated (blacks), untamed and tamed wilderness, provided the essential Manichean imagery for this small group of didactic tales. Each of the principal characters of these narratives fulfils his spiritual quest, becoming a more moral person according to Christian ideals. The choices they make, such as Antony refusing to believe he is God, Allan realizing his sinful behaviour towards his family, Philip declaring the discovery of the gold nugget, or Marcel realizing his true vocation as a Catholic priest, are all the result of their experiences in the colony and indicate their progress towards the attainment of a good Christian conscience.

The religious and moral lessons of these narratives would have no potency without a belief in the purifying and redemptive powers of the Australian landscape. This belief, which is evident in all the narratives, is based on descriptions of the harsh environment and primitive Aborigines, with whom communication proved either impossible or difficult, in the explorers' accounts, and in the encyclopaedias that synthesized their reports for the public. It is formed in part against the enduring parallel imagery of the Pacific as "the South Seas". The "new Cythera" of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, his botanist Philibert Commerçon and Joseph Banks, who reported the intimate encounters of the sailors of these expeditions with the women of Tahiti, created a powerful imagery of a paradise of free love, gentle nature and a society in harmony with itself. Some explorers such as Jacques Arago and François Péron and the author G. L. Domeny de Rienzi articulated the idea of the redemptive powers of both the English penal system in New South Wales and the Australian bush. It is also a strong theme in the discussion in France in the 1830s about the need for a penal colony in the Pacific. The strength of this belief relies on the notion of the great "otherness" of the Australian natural world, based on its location on the other side of the globe and its bizarre forms of flora and fauna unlike anything found in Europe. This difference seems to have endowed the Australian environment with the power to change human beings. Péron, who spent nearly six months in Sydney in 1802 with the Baudin expedition, is full of admiration for the flourishing European city established in a perverse environment, and for its success in the rehabilitation of its criminal population:

[. . .] repelled from European society, and sent off to the extremity of the globe; placed from the very hour of exile in a state between the certainty of chastisement and the hope of a better fate; [. . .] they have been compelled to abandon their anti-social manners; and the majority of them, having expiated their crimes, by a hard period of slavery, have been restored to the rank which they held amongst their fellow men.<sup>56</sup>

Jacques Arago, the draughtsman on the expedition of Louis Freycinet (1817-1820), visited Sydney in November 1819. He recounts his impression of the colony's regenerative qualities and adopts the position that the colony offers redemption to those transported for their crimes, citing examples of thieves who have become magistrates. This success he attributes

to the work ethic and to Nature itself: "You would fancy, that the air of this country, though breathed by ferocious tribes, purifies the heart, and gives birth in it to every generous sentiment."<sup>57</sup> Domeny de Rienzi's encyclopaedia, published in 1836 and 1837, incorporates the accounts of all known exploration of the region to this time.<sup>58</sup> In his detailed description of the colony he notes the natural beauty of Port Jackson and the "miniature London" that the English have created. Domeny gives credit for this amazing transformation from wilderness to prosperous colony to the emancipists, who are often discriminated against by the free settlers: "what marvellous changes have been wrought by the work of those English banished from the mother country; so as to atone for their crimes in these distant wastelands".<sup>59</sup> The transformation of criminal to honest man, and the landscape from wilderness to civilized town, are symbols of the regenerative effects of the Australian experience used in the redemption narratives. In France, the debate over the need for a penal colony in the Pacific is nourished by the publication of French explorers' accounts and by translations of English accounts of the new colony, and inspires scholarly works by T. Ginouvier (1826), L. F. Benoiston de Châteauneuf (1827), Ernest de Blosseville (1831) and J. de la Pilorgerie (1836). The question of whether the English penal colony has achieved its goal of rehabilitation is seriously debated. This poem by Delille, quoted by Blosseville, expresses the commonly held view that deportation to Botany Bay resulted in the transformation of the criminal to useful citizen:

This Botany Bay, cesspit of Albion,  
Where theft, plunder and insurrection  
Have come in crowds, and, purging England,  
Will they make the ground fruitful in their distant exile?  
There, the indulgent law turns dangerous subjects  
Into skilful settlers, happy citizens;  
Delight in repentance, encourage work,  
Gives them freedom, morals, a country.  
Everywhere I see the dried-out swamps,  
Wilderness improved and the cleared woods.  
Copy this example: make their punishment useful;  
And, that on dragging virtuous remorse from the irons,  
Forgiveness changes fruitless evils to good.<sup>60</sup>

The Christian view of the inhabitants of the Pacific altered in the later part of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth. According to Bernard Smith, "the missionary enterprise helped to bring together and co-ordinate much of the dissatisfaction with the sentimental primitivism that accounts of Tahiti had stimulated".<sup>61</sup> The philosophical approach underlying the French "regard" of primitive people began to be questioned by the explorers of the Pacific. Jean-Baptiste Leschenault de la Tour, the botanist on the Baudin expedition, is quoted by Péron saying:

I am astonished, after so many examples of cruelty and treachery, which are related in all voyages of discovery, to hear sensible people aver, that men in a state of nature are not wicked; that they may be confided in without fear; that they are never aggressors except provoked to revenge, etc. Unhappily, many voyagers have been victims to vain sophisms. For my part, I am of the opinion, from all that we have seen and experienced, that we cannot be too much on our guard against men whose nature has not been softened by civilization.<sup>62</sup>

His reflections from the other side of the world were written at the same time as Chateaubriand was arguing in chapter 5 of *Le Génie du christianisme* (1802) that Tahiti is not Eden, but Eden *after* the Fall. He attacks the paradisiacal and hedonistic image of Tahiti as but an illusion:

However, on approaching these wastelands, they distinguish some artistic monuments which relate to those of nature: they were the execution posts of Morai. The vanity of men's pleasures! The first building that we discover on these enchanted shores is that of death, which floats above all human happiness.<sup>63</sup>

This view had already been espoused in the late 1790s in England by Thomas Howeis, founder of the London Missionary Society, inspiring him to commence evangelization of the Pacific. The emerging science of ethnography provided a rational explanation for the inferior nature and culture of the Pacific peoples, with a system of classification based on physical characteristics that was also seen to explain their innate character. Domeny de Rienzi documents the anthropological theories underlying the difference in the European idea of the Polynesians, the Melanesians and the Endamenes, with the first group retaining some of their noble characteristics whilst the Endamenes, which includes the Aborigines, is placed last on the human

scale. His physical description of the Aborigines lists all those features considered by the Europeans to represent ugliness,<sup>64</sup> and he concludes: "In the human race, these miserable beings are those who are closest to the primitive. They live in couples or in tribes, without laws, arts, work, without any religion other than a crude fetishism."<sup>65</sup>

Omaï, the Aboriginal father to Antony in the earliest narrative, *Antony ou la conscience* (1812), is in name and behaviour closer to popular images of the Polynesians. However, the 1836 novel of Ernest Fouinet introduces the Aborigine as a cannibal in a short scene designed to shock and scare the reader. The image of the Aborigines in this narrative is derived from the beliefs commonly held by that time about their truly primitive state. In the narratives that follow, they are often nameless and faceless characters who are described according to the physical characteristics prescribed by anthropological studies. The Aborigine who saves John Livesay's children from a black snake also scares them with his threatening appearance. Marcel, the hero of Walincourt's *Voyage à Botany-Bay*, has violent encounters with hostile tribes of Aborigines in central New South Wales who are considered "hideous" human beings. Timid, undernourished and ill, they are shadowy beings who light fires in the bush as they flee the Europeans, providing the missionary with dreams of their salvation. Elie Berthet writes with some sympathy of the war between blacks and whites over land in the story of the young Aboriginal boy, Tête-crépue, yet the dominant imagery is that of the primitiveness of the Aborigines symbolized by the boy's father. The harrowing scene of the Aboriginal father about to murder his son to save himself from starvation, and the violence of the stockwhip that saves the boy's life, is justified by the end of the story. The assimilation of Tête-crépue into white society, and his gratefulness, signify that he too has found redemption.

A more strident version of the redemption narrative emerges in *Voyage à Botany-Bay*, where true redemption is only to be found in the Catholic faith. This religious nationalism mirrors the fierce rivalry that existed between Protestant and Catholic missionaries in the Pacific. French Catholics regarded the failure of the English to civilize the Aborigines as a failure of Protestantism. It thus seems appropriate that Marcel, who finds his true spiritual path as a priest in the colony, should follow in the footsteps of his mother, the good Madame Goubin, and devote his life, as she did, to converting the Aborigines to the Catholic faith.

## Notes

1. This study is based on research towards a Ph.D. thesis to be presented at the University of Sydney. It owes a great deal to the work of Dr Colin Thornton-Smith and Dr Patricia Clancy (P. A. Clancy and C. B. Thornton-Smith, *Analytical Checklist of French Fiction and Pseudo-Memoirs set in Colonial Australia*, University of Melbourne, ISFAR and Australian Centre, 1991).
2. I have identified 57 texts as works of fiction, although, as I point out, the distinction between fiction and reference works or travel books is often blurred.
3. Citoyen Gamas, *Les Emigrés aux terres australes ou Le dernier chapitre d'une grande révolution*, comédie en un acte et en prose, Paris, Chez la citoyenne Toubon, 1794.
4. Examples of these references are G. L. Domeny de Rienzi, *Océanie, ou, Cinquième partie du monde*, Paris, Firmin Didot Frères, 1836-1837; Albert Montément, *Voyage dans les cinq parties du monde [ . . . ]*, Paris, Selligues, 1828; Charles Delattre, *Voyages et naufrages curieux en Océanie*, Liège, Librairie Classique de Riga, 1838.
5. Examples of this type of narrative are *Un jeune Suisse en Australie* by Herminie Chavanne, published in 1852; *Les Convicts en Australie* by Paul Merruau, 1853; *Autour du monde: voyage d'un petit Algérien* by E. Dupois, 1890; and *Voyage du matelot Jean-Paul en Australie* by Charles-Victor Crosnier de Varigny, 1890.
6. Special note: The stories discussed in this article refer to Aboriginal people as "uncivilized", "primitive" and "savage". In reproducing this material, the author regrets any offence caused to persons of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.
7. Me de Renneville, "Antony ou la conscience", in *Les Enfants de 15 ans: histoires à mes jeunes amis*, Limoges, Barbou, 1812, pp. 153-173.
8. "chaque fois que vous serez sur le point de faire une chose, vous vous demandiez à vous-même: *pourrai-je un jour l'avouer sans rougir?* La réponse à cette question sera la règle de votre conduite". *Ibid.*, p. 158.
9. Religious literature published in France during the time of Napoleon was constrained not only by the general laws of censorship in operation, but also by the conflictual relations between the Church and the *Consulat*. Napoleon's rehabilitation of the Church after the Revolution had restored the Church—but as an instrument of his State. According to some historians, Pope Pius VII had ceded the temporal in order to save the spiritual supremacy of the Church (see Jean-Paul Bertaud, *La France de Napoléon, 1799-1815*, Paris, Messidor/ Editions Sociales, 1987, p. 40) and had taken on the role of the Church's conscience. The Imperial Catechism, proclaimed for use in all the churches in August 1806, specified that the duties of a Christian entailed complete fidelity and obedience to the Emperor to ensure the preservation of the Empire. This included the obligation to do military service and pay the taxes necessary for the defence of the Empire. There is no doubt as to the relationship between

- God the Father and Napoleon in this catechism: "Honorer et servir notre empereur est donc honorer et servir Dieu lui-même." (Vicomte Hervé de Broc, *La Vie en France sous le premier empire*, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1895, p. 216) The same year, 1806, saw the institution of the 15th of August as Saint Napoleon's Day. Although some Catholic clergy enthusiastically supported their new master, many remained silent and those who spoke out against him were suppressed. "Plus la puissance de Napoléon grandissait, plus elle s'appesantissait sur l'Eglise. Tout ecclésiastique soupçonné d'opposition était impitoyablement frappé." (Ibid., p. 220) In September 1809 Napoleon ordered his *ministre des cultes*, Bigot de Préameneu, to halt all missionary work except in France, as these missionaries were in the employ of those who paid them—the English (ibid., p. 225).
10. See Jeanne Bem's analysis of the myth of Saint Antoine, "Tentation de Saint Antoine", in Pierre Brunel, *Dictionnaire des mythes littéraires*, Paris, Editions du Rocher, 1988, pp. 1347–1352 (1348).
  11. Bem describes how traditionally the formula "un jour" was used in retelling the story of Saint Antoine. Ibid., p. 1347.
  12. See Michael Walsh, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Melbourne, Burns & Oates, 1985, p. 15.
  13. "La nature avait doué Antony d'une âme forte et courageuse; élevé dans ses principes religieux, il savait que la Providence n'abandonne point ceux qui marchent dans le chemin de la vertu: il se mit à genoux, joignit ses petites mains, les éleva vers le ciel en implorant l'assistance divine" (p. 154).  
"Nature had endowed Antony with a strong and courageous soul; brought up with his religious principles, he knew that God never abandons those who take a virtuous path: he kneeled down, joined his small hands, raised them towards the sky whilst asking for divine help".
  14. Bernard Smith describes how Reynolds's portrait of Omaï symbolized both his acceptance by society and his perceived affinities with classical antiquity. In satiric verse, Omaï "as noble savage, became a stock figure of great use in the attack upon the morals and manners of contemporary society". (*European Vision and the South Pacific 1768–1850*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960, p. 59.)
  15. "Omaï, d'après ses usages, frotta son nez contre le leur en signe d'amitié." (p. 165)
  16. "Les sauvages venaient d'arriver, lorsqu'un affreux tremblement de terre s'annonça par des secousses violentes dans la partie même où ils se reposaient. Antony, placé en vedette à une grande distance, les vit fuir tout-à-coup dans la terreur et la confusion. La mer, après s'être retirée à plus d'une demi-lieue, revint en montagne écumante, et engloutit dans son sein le détachement tout entier." (p. 168)
  17. Joséphine Bonaparte was an avid and passionate collector of exotic flora and fauna, a hobby she pursued in gentle rivalry with the Muséum d'histoire naturelle. At Malmaison she established a botanical collection for which she

became famous, and, to a lesser extent, a menagerie of exotic animals, including kangaroos, emus and black swans. Her Australian fauna came initially from the collection of the scientific expedition of Nicolas Baudin to the Southern Lands (1800–1804). According to Christian Jouanin (who, together with Jérémie Benoit wrote the Catalogue which accompanied the exhibition “L’Impératrice Joséphine et les sciences naturelles”, held at the Musée national des châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau from 29 May to 6 October 1997, and which was published in Paris by Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux in 1997), the first kangaroo in residence at Malmaison arrived in 1804, the only one of three kangaroos brought back by Milius aboard the *Géographe* to survive. A pair was brought from England by Dufresne in 1802 and donated to Joséphine by the Muséum, and in 1806 the King of Württemberg donated another pair. The kangaroos did not adapt well to the French climate, and only one remained alive at the time of Josephine’s death in 1814. The black swans flourished, however, and it must be assumed that the collection helped to increase knowledge of Australian fauna amongst the general public.

18. “répandre sur son chemin les préceptes les plus purs et les plus conservateurs de piété, d’honneur, d’amour et de respect pour la famille”. Ernest Fouinet, *Allan: le jeune déporté à Botany-Bay*, Paris, Désirée Eymery, A la Bibliothèque d’Education, 1836, pp. I–II.
19. “au lieu de la mort, au lieu de la prison ténébreuse, il vous donne ici l’air, le soleil, le moyen d’être utile, et de vous corriger en faisant le bien”. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
20. “Il en est de cette nature comme de vous mes enfants. Vous avez tous une âme qui renferme du bien au fond, mais ce bien, vous avez laissé étouffer et disparaître sous mille penchants mauvais [...] c’est tout-à-fait de même que ces forêts épaisses, entrelacées, empêchent les rayons fécondants du soleil de pénétrer jusqu’à la terre où il y a du bien comme dans vos âmes.” *Ibid.*, p. 64.
21. “Hé bien, Allan, quand tu étais sur cette herbe brûlée, étendu, accablé de fatigue, mourant de faim, ne pensais-tu pas qu’il était plus dur encore de dépendre du besoin, implacable, que de la douce autorité d’un père?”. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
22. “Où est mon berceau de Lanberris? Et mon père et ma mère? Où est le travail que je repoussais? Où est mon frère qui prenait toujours ma défense? Où sont-ils?”. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
23. “Enfin la cuisinière impromptu était prête, et les sauvages se mirent à danser en rond autour du malheureux Allan; c’étaient des gambades, des gestes, des chants, des rires, tout cela capable d’effrayer le plus intrépide. Ils s’abandonnaient à leur sinistre réjouissance [...]” *Ibid.*, p. 169.
24. “il voulait civiliser ces plantes sauvages et les rendre utiles à la société, comme il avait fait de Bali-Bali et des anciens voleurs, vrais sauvages du monde civilisés, devenus ses domestiques fidèles”. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

25. "C'était un spectacle beau et animé que ces forêts vierges à l'heure du coucher du soleil [...] les oiseaux de toutes les plus splendides nuances de l'arc-en-ciel se disputaient, par mille ramages, leurs places pour la nuit [...] Entre les arbres et la terre, dans les sillons lumineux que le soleil couchant projetait au travers des clairières et qui ressemblaient à la trace des anges dans les tableaux pieux, des myriades de papillons, avec de grands yeux bleus ou blancs peints sur leurs ailes pourpres ou aurores, brillaient comme des diamants agités au grand jour. Sur les branches inférieures des cèdres couraient les opossums blancs, et ils sautaient de l'une à l'autre au moyen des ailes des chauves-souris dont ils sont pourvus." *Ibid.*, p. 281.
26. "Bali-Bali apportait à mistress Maddock la bruyère des montagnes bleues pareille à celle du Snowdon, et, en la prenant, elle embrassa le petit noir et sourit." *Ibid.*, p. 321.
27. Léon Guérin, *La Famille du déporté: voyages en Australie, au Japon, dans l'Archipel Indien et diverses autres îles*, in vol. 1 of *Le Tour du Monde, ou les Mille et une merveilles des voyages*, Paris, Langlois et Leclerq, 1841, 2 vols.
28. "Ici le plus grand voleur, le plus grand coquin est souvent plus considéré. Ceux qui ne réussissent pas s'échappent du territoire qui leur est assigné, s'enfoncent dans les forêts, dans les montagnes de l'Australie; ou, réfugiés dans une île voisine qu'on appelle la terre de Diemen, ils portent l'incendie, le pillage et la mort chez les colons qu'un motif honorable a amenés dans ces contrées." *Ibid.*, p. 9.
29. "Aux Antipodes de l'Europe, dont le centre principal est la grande île, où se trouvait la famille du déporté, tout se passe à rebours de chez nous. C'est un véritable monde renversé." *Ibid.*, p. 11.
30. "This black, sooty-skinned man, with a flattened face, almost transversal nostrils, thick lips, the mouth disproportionately smiling, tawny coloured eyes semi-covered by the upper eyelid, had his cheeks and chest painted red, the forehead and the temples criss-crossed with white lines, an engraved bone six inches long through the partition of the nose; the only clothing was a kangaroo skin covering his shoulders."
- "Cet homme au teint noir, fuligineux, à la face aplatie, aux narines presque transversales, aux lèvres épaisses, à la bouche démesurément fendue, aux yeux fauves et demi-voilés par la paupière supérieure, avait les joues et la poitrine peintes de rouge, le front et les tempes sillonnées de raies blanches, un os travaillé long de six pouces lui traversait la cloison du nez; enfin pour tout costume, les épaules étaient couvertes d'une peau de kangourou." *Ibid.*, p. 16.
31. "Puis, des grandes forêts toujours vertes de l'Australie, et dont les écorces pendantes et flottantes au gré du vent donnaient à chaque arbre l'aspect d'une colonne en ruine, des forêts de mimosas au vert tendre, d'eucalyptus de mille espèces et de tant d'autres arbres étrangers aux autres climats, s'échappaient des traquets superbes, de grands kakatoës-buses, au plumage brun, tacheté de jaune sur la tête, des kakatoës-rosalbins à la tête rouge, des kakatoës-nasiques

- à belle huppe, au plumage blanc légèrement nuancé d'un éventail jaune à la queue." *Ibid.*, p. 20.
32. "La Nouvelle-Galles est aussi renommée par la bonté et la variété de ses fruits. Les pêches, les abricots, les brugnons, les oranges, les citrons, les loquets, les goyaves, les cerises, les mûres du Cap, de la Chine et d'Europe, les noix, les marrons de l'Espagne, les amandes, les nèfles, les coings, le raisin, les poires, les figues, les grenades, les fraises, les framboises, et des melons de toute espèce, y viennent à parfaite maturité en plein air." *Ibid.*, p. 34.
33. Vol. 2 of André de Goy, *Aventures sur mer et sur terre*, Paris, Alphonse Desesserts, 1852.
34. "Tous ces hommes, misérablement vêtus et courbés vers la terre, bravant les rayons d'un soleil brûlant, travaillent en se regardant les uns les autres, furtivement et d'un air de défiance." *Ibid.*, p. 320.
35. "Lorsque je me trouvai tout près de lui, je reconnus que mon cheval avait été changé en or massif. Alors, je vous entendis tous crier: 'Un cheval d'or! Un cheval d'or!' Comme il avait encore sa selle et sa bride, je sautai sur son dos; mais, à peine avais-je enfourché cette précieuse monture, que ses deux jambes de devant se changèrent en vastes ailes; puis, avant que j'eusse le temps de mettre pied à terre, mon cheval d'or prit son vol, s'élança dans les airs, et, passant au-dessus des bois et des prairies, il vint s'abattre mollement dans le jardin de mon père." *Ibid.*, p. 317.
36. "Souffrez-vous beaucoup? — dit-il avec une sollicitude filiale, en tendant sa gourde au blessé." *Ibid.*, p. 332.
37. Elie Berthet, "Tête-crêpe, le petit Australien", in *Les Petits Ecoliers dans les cinq parties du monde*, Paris, Jouvet et Cie, 1883 (first edition 1878), pp. 186-216.
38. "Nous avons conservé nos manteaux de peau d'opossum, nos lances en bois de fer, nos hachettes en silex. Nous allons sur l'eau dans les canots d'écorce, et c'est aussi avec des écorces que nous nous formons les abris où nous dormons. Nous n'avons voulu accepter aucun cadeau, prendre aucune habitude des blancs. Nous vivons comme vivaient nos ancêtres qui sont morts." *Ibid.*, p. 187.
39. "Le festin durait nuit et jour; on se gorgeait de viande plus ou moins cuite, on se disputait les peaux dont on devait fabriquer des manteaux excellents. Hommes et femmes, enfants et vieillards, mangeaient dans la joie." *Ibid.*, p. 197.
40. "immenses et formidables fouets dont ils se servent avec une étonnante adresse". *Ibid.*, p. 197.
41. "Partout un silence de mort, interrompu seulement par une brise brûlante qui, de temps en temps, agitait le feuillage coriace des arbres ou courbait, avec un bruit métallique, les herbes jaunies de la plaine." *Ibid.*, p. 204.
42. "Je ne tardai pas à guérir; aujourd'hui je garde les moutons dans une *station* des environs de Victoria. Je suis bien heureux, et je ne mange plus ni gâteaux

- de fourmis, ni serpents noirs, mais toutes sortes de bonnes choses que me donnent les blancs." Ibid., p. 216.
43. J. B. J. Champagnac, "La pieuse négresse de l'Australie", in *Le Tour du monde ou une fleur dans chaque pays*, Paris, P.-C. Lehubey, 1848, pp. 373-379.
44. The possible origin of this name is African and its meaning is "grateful", which corresponds to her role in the story as the "grateful savage".
45. "tous les bons Indiens se prosternèrent au pied de la croix, et offrirent leurs cœurs à Jésus-Christ dans les sentiments de la plus vive confiance". Ibid., p. 379.
46. Eugène de Walincourt, *Voyage à Botany-Bay*, Limoges, Eugène Ardant et C. Thibault, 1859.
47. "l'approche de Botany-Bay fut signalée par la vue d'une espèce d'arbres rabougris recouverts d'une écorce blanche et entièrement dépouillés de feuilles. La mer était fort agitée [. . .]". Ibid., p. 57.
48. "Les autres armes dont se servent ces peuples sauvages sont une espèce de cimenterre, la pique, sorte de massue longue d'environ vingt pouces, large à son extrémité et terminée en pointe, enfin une hache faite d'une pierre tranchante." Ibid., p. 59.
49. "la plupart d'entre eux étaient affectés de maladies cutanées, et celui qui paraissait leur chef supplia les Européens de le guérir". Ibid., p. 60.
50. "In general, the chest is proportionately more robust than the lower parts. They have a flattened nose, deep-set eyes, prominent eyelashes, and thick lips. The men have a more pleasant appearance than the women."  
 "En général, leur buste est proportionnellement plus vigoureux que les extrémités inférieures. Ils ont le nez épaté, les yeux enfoncés, les sourcils proéminents, et les lèvres épaisses. Les hommes ont un aspect beaucoup plus agréable que les femmes." Ibid., p. 61.
51. "Leurs traits étaient tellement hideux, qu'à peine conservaient-ils la figure des êtres humains. Les femmes et les enfants surtout avaient un aspect repoussant. Ces derniers paraissaient être dans le dernier degré de la maigreur et du marasme." Ibid., p. 61.
52. "Quelques-uns avaient tracé des lignes blanches sur leurs côtes, leurs cuisses et leur figure, ce qui donnait l'air de squelettes ambulants; d'autres s'étaient entièrement peints avec de l'ocre jaune et rouge, et s'étaient frottés de graisse, ce qui les rendait tout luisants." Ibid., p. 62.
53. "Pourquoi faut-il que chacune des découvertes importantes de la géographie soit presque toujours achetée par la perte de la vie ou de la santé des hommes courageux auxquels nous les devons?" Ibid., p. 63.
54. "Ils l'aimaient tous comme leur mère, et elle avait à la fin pris un tel empire sur eux, qu'une bonne partie savait déjà les belles prières catholiques. Trois années se passèrent ainsi, et cette bonne madame Goubin vivait tranquille, et n'ayant plus qu'un but en ce bas monde: convertir les sauvages." Ibid., p. 71.

55. "Bref, le texte fait du tourisme [. . .] La géographie récréative retient le lecteur et occupe l'espace textuel: ce sont les deux obsessions conjointes du romancier populaire." Jean-Claude Vareille, *Le Roman populaire français (1789-1914)*, Limoges, PULIM, 1994, p. 249.
56. François Péron, *A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere performed by order of Napoleon during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804*, translated by Richard Phillips, Melbourne, Marsh Walsh, 1975, p. 277.
57. Jacques Arago, *Narrative of a Voyage Around the World in the Uranie and Physicienne, corvettes commanded by Captain Freycinet, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820*, London, Treuttel and Wurtz, 1823, p. 178.
58. See note 4 above.
59. "quels merveilleux changements y ont été effectués par le travail des Anglais bannis de la mère patrie; afin d'expier leurs crimes sur ces rivages lointains!". Domeny de Rienzi, III, p. 495.
60. Delille, "La Pitié", quoted in E. P. Blossville, *Histoire des colonies pénales de l'Angleterre dans l'Australie*, Paris, Adrien le Clerc, 1831, p. 70.  
 Cette Botany-Bay, sentine d'Albion,  
 Où le vol, la rapine et la sédition  
 En foule sont venus, et, purgeant l'Angleterre,  
 Dans leur exil lointain vont féconder la terre?  
 Là, l'indulgente loi, de sujets dangereux  
 Fait d'habiles colons, des citoyens heureux;  
 Sourit au repentir, excite l'industrie,  
 Leur rend la liberté, des mœurs, une patrie.  
 Je vois de toute part les marais desséchés,  
 Les déserts embellis et les bois défrichés.  
 Imitiez cet exemple: rendez leur peine utile;  
 Et, qu'arrachant aux fers le remords vertueux,  
 Le pardon change en biens des maux infructueux!
61. Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 2nd edn, Sydney, Harper & Row, 1985, p. 145.
62. Translation by Phillips, op. cit. Leschenault wrote this after an aggressive encounter with some Tasmanian Aborigines on the mainland close to Bruny Island. Péron quotes him on p. 238 of Chapter XII of the first volume of his *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes, exécuté par ordre de sa majesté l'Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes Le Géographe et Le Naturaliste et la goëlette Le Casuarina pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804*, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1807. This chapter is entitled "Partie Sud de la terre de Diemen" (Du 13 Janvier au 17 Février 1802).  
 "J'avoue que je suis surpris, après tant d'exemples de trahisons et de cruautés rapportés dans tous Voyages de découvertes, d'entendre répéter à des personnes sensées, que les hommes de la nature ne sont point méchants, que l'on peut se fier à eux; qu'ils ne seront agresseurs qu'autant qu'ils seront excités par la vengeance, &c. Malheureusement beaucoup de voyageurs ont été

- les victimes de ce vains sophismes. Pour moi je pense, d'après tout ce que nous avons pu voir, qu'on ne sauroit trop se méfier des hommes dont la civilisation n'a pas encore adouci le caractère".
63. Quoted in Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 1960, p. 154: "Mais, en approchant de ces rivages, ils distinguèrent quelques monuments des arts, qui se mariaient à ceux de la nature: c'étaient les poteaux de Morai. Vanité des plaisirs des hommes! Le premier pavillon qu'on découvre sur ces rives enchantées est celui de la mort, qui flotte au-dessus de toutes les félicités humaines."
64. "they have a disproportionately large mouth, a very large and flattened nose, with equally large nostrils, teeth protruding a little but with beautiful enamel. In some of them, the jutting lower jaw gives them a strong resemblance to the Hottentots; and their face, seen in profile, is hideous in its animality."  
 "ils ont la bouche d'une grandeur démesurée, le nez fort large et épaté, les narines également larges, les dents un peu proclives, mais d'un bel émail. Chez quelques-uns la mâchoire inférieure, très avancée, leur donne beaucoup de ressemblance avec les Hottentots; et leur visage, vu de profil, est hideux d'animalité." Domeny de Rienzi, I, p. 22.
65. "Ces êtres misérables sont, dans le genre humain, ceux qui se rapprochent le plus de la brute. Ils vivent par couples ou en tribus, sans lois, sans arts, sans industrie, sans autre religion qu'un grossier fétichisme." *Ibid.*, I, p. 22.

**Front cover:** Le Vicomte Eug. de Walincourt, *Voyage à Botany-Bay*, Limoges, Ardant & Thibaut, 1814. Title-page and facing illustration, courtesy National Library of Australia.

**Back cover:** Me de Renneville, "Antony ou la conscience", in *Les Enfants de 15 ans: histoires à mes jeunes amis*, Limoges, Barbou, 1812. Illustration courtesy National Library of Australia.