

## **Regulating ‘Mobility’ and Masculinity through Institutions in Colonial Victoria, 1870s-1890s**

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David Rollison shows us that ‘mobility’ and ‘settlement’ operated in a dynamic and dialectical relationship in the past. Mobility, he argues, was a force for social change. Social institutions in early modern England, such as families, the Law, and the Church, were not immobile in the face of new populations. Travellers, sojourners, internal migrants and strangers moved through ‘settled’ spaces and featured in everyday life. ‘Thus *movement*,’ Rollison shows, ‘was literally the necessary condition of the abiding, settled, “structure”’ (Rollison 1999: 10). His suggestive definition of mobility underpins this article about the regulation of colonial mobility and masculinity in Victoria, Australia. Mobility characterised the colonial period, was watched, regulated and policed by law makers and institutional authorities, and shaped places and peoples. It was through the management of mobility that colonial settlement defined itself, with power residing in the social institutions and practices of the colonial state which were shaped through class, gender and ethnicity.

Concentrated attention on the concept of ‘mobility’ through recent historical studies of social mobility, movement and intimacy across frontiers and between peoples foregrounds new interpretations of both imperial and colonial worlds which, at the same time, destabilise the ‘nation’ as the primary locus of historical analysis (Ballantyne 2011: 58). The ‘moving subjects’ of these scholarly accounts range from whalers and seafarers, in the early phases of colonial encounters, to Europeans

in close contact with Indigenous peoples during periods of colonisation, with research suggesting that ‘mobility and intimacy operated at the forefront of colonial processes’ (Ballantyne and Burton 2009: 11). Yet, as this article contends, the insights from this research are yet to be applied to the deeper anxieties caused by seemingly unauthorised mobility *within* and *between* colonial worlds. In particular, it suggests that white male immigrants who were transferred from the Immigrants’ Home in Melbourne to the Yarra Bend Hospital for the Insane between the 1870s and 1890s became examples of failed mobility and flawed masculinity.

White male settlers who came to the Australian colonies as hopeful immigrants sometimes disturbed notions of settlement through their eventual lack of success, either in the rush for land or gold, or as male heads of families and providers. These men were, perhaps, ‘unsettlers’ (see Stasiulis and Davis 1995) and exhibited aspects of the ‘settler’ identity as described by Lorenzo Veracini, but also occupied the space of the ‘exogenous other’ through their instability (Veracini 2010: 26-7).

The histories of a range of immigrants — whose stories have been examined and told from a variety of points of view — have not yet attracted specific attention for their vulnerability as mobile peoples inside this rubric of mobility studies. Migrants to colonial Victoria in Australia traversed imperial and colonial spaces, including institutional spaces, when they made their way to the growing city of Melbourne from the 1850s. Their histories, many evoked in institutional records by the 1870s, provide a clear example of the way notions of ‘mobility’ were formed in the colonial context. While insights into the worlds of colonists emphasise patterns of familial networks, or the lack thereof (Fairburn 1989), with some exceptions their very mobility has not often been examined as a feature of their identities inside the imperial and colonial worlds they occupied during this period (Brooking et al 1999).

To further articulate ideas about mobility in colonial spaces, this paper focuses on a specific group of mobile peoples *par excellence*, that is, the immigrants themselves. It does this through an examination of the institutional records of Victorian immigrants who found themselves

in either the Immigrants' Home or the Hospital for the Insane at the Yarra Bend, also known as the Yarra Bend Asylum, between the 1870s and 1890s. Why did such institutions keep mobile peoples including immigrants under the watchful 'eye of the Law'? As spaces defined in part through the laws of the day or because of the *absence* of a poor law in the colonies, such institutions commanded a 'legal' authority. Not only was mobility curtailed within them, but the very act of mobility within the colony could arouse suspicion and distrust among agents of the law. Police were often called on to help control local colonial movement, particularly in regard to poor Europeans, non-white and transient people. The use of the mechanisms of policing and institutional confinement with these groups could be justified on the grounds that they could be seen to contravene the dominant social and cultural norms proscribed by white settler ideology. Such regulation, as this paper shows, included legal practices and extended to the policing of the intimate worlds of colonial subjects on the streets of the city of Melbourne, Victoria.

A range of welfare, medical and legal institutions was quickly established in the Australasian colonies by the mid to late 19th century. Immigrants, the sick, the mentally ill, the impoverished, the Indigenous, and the wayward were segregated and housed in different institutional spaces. A 'web' of welfarist practices and policies existed, as described by a number of historians (Kennedy 1985: 32; Twomey 2002: 34). There was, arguably, a *web within the web* of welfare provision signalled by this relationship between institutions of health and welfare. By looking at the movement of people *between* social institutions, as well as at the exchange of ideas about mobility itself, this paper suggests the possibility of opening up new ways of seeing and interpreting immigration as a form of mobility that was also regulated and circumscribed by health and welfare institutions that formed part of the fabric of the state.

In this period of intense colonisation which overlaps with what Ballantyne and Burton (2009) term 'an age of mobility' (335), further investigation is warranted into the ways the new settlers (also

immigrants) created institutional solutions for the social problems posed by increasingly mobile peoples. Departing from earlier social history studies of 'persistence' and 'transience' (Brooking et al 1999: 60), and also from existing arguments about migration (Broome 1984), this paper aims to bring colonial Victoria into the existing framework of the mobile imperial world, taking care to show how local expressions of mobility shaped reactions to it, and therefore also formed colonial practices.

While the paper focuses on one colony, Victoria, it is productively explored alongside other colonies in settler jurisdictions which found their populations swollen after the goldrushes. Existing studies of mobile peoples — immigrants, miners, sojourners and others — show that in different places, attempts to draw legal distinctions between categories of person were bound up with concerns about population control and management (Coleborne 1995, 2001; Hawk 2011). For instance, historical studies of the Chinese as a diasporic people who not only moved through places, but also settled in them, show that the presence of Chinese triggered social unease, even while Chinese intermarried and created settler families of their own (Bagnall 2011: 63-4). The very 'containment' of mobility, as Angela Hawk argues, was a primary aim of lawmakers and police across the colonial world (Hawk 2011). Although the aim of this paper is to focus on one colonial site, as I argue elsewhere, wider discussions about the transcolonial relationships across and between colonial sites are also relevant and vital.<sup>2</sup> Although Hawk is interested in 'mad migrants', especially miners caught in institutional settings across gold-mining regions of the Pacific, she deploys the analytical concept of 'mobility' only in passing. Insanity is also the subject of other studies of immigration, with scholars interested immigrants' susceptibility to institutionalisation, and what occurs when they find themselves subjected to new ideas about the 'desirable' immigrant (Shin 2010; McCarthy and Coleborne, forthcoming).

Importantly, this paper contends that forms and practices of mobility were gendered, and shaped by class and ethnic differences. In particular, fears surrounding the future of white masculinity in the period under

examination highlight the gendered meanings of mobility in the white settler context. Many poor, white male immigrants were perceived as members of both the welfare and health institutional network, and treated as depleted specimens of the male colonial citizenry.<sup>3</sup> Like their non-white counterparts, these men disappointed expectations of settler success and a more confident form of mobility, in the context of the colonial narrative of the quest, for both settler conquest and white masculine prowess. Class also mattered: and poor migrants were part of these stories of migration networks (Richards, 1991: 3).

In her study of deserted wives in colonial Victoria, Christina Twomey asserts that by the middle of the 19th century, deserted wives were at the centre of debates about a raft of colonial social problems including the stability of marriage and the family (Twomey 1995). Undoubtedly, as Twomey shows, these women did feature in representations of the destitute and discussions of the 'houseless' immigrant in the period before 1870 (Twomey 1995: 81). In contrast, though, I suggest that in the later period — and emanating from the goldrush era of the 1850s onwards — mobile, white immigrant men became the real locus of anxiety about settler stability.

The gendering and racing of mobility is relevant because as feminist scholars of the many colonial worlds assert, colonial regimes are, historically, always 'in process', with the production of 'gendered and sexualized orders' therefore, precarious; far from being all-powerful, the state is uneven and has limitations (Burton 1999: 2). These scholars, including Antoinette Burton, emphasise the 'persistent mobility of bodies' across the imagined communities of the empire (Burton 1999: 2). It was this movement of people, and bodies, which occasioned anxiety about identity. In 'making identity' through institutional confinement and official records, colonists working within an imperial framework strained against social fluidity and what they deemed as inappropriate forms of mobility, particularly where these posed a threat to prescriptions for settler dominance, for example, through mixed-race marriage, other forms of so-called aberrant sexual practices, and disappointed expectations around gender. For their part, many

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individuals confined in social institutions had also transgressed the borders of place, and it became impossible to situate them except as outcasts. White men in institutions had arguably failed to meet expectations of strong, white masculinity in a variety of respects; as robust fathers, marriage partners, providers, and economically productive citizens.

Two studies from the comparable colonial context of New Zealand highlight relevant pathways for this study of colonial Victoria. First, Margaret Tennant singles out male welfare recipients by looking at elderly indigent men and old men's homes, asking questions about their reactions to institutionalisation (Tennant 1990). Annabel Cooper also examines the effects of poor economic circumstance and welfare provision on existing, so-called 'strong' notions of masculinity in New Zealand through her study of men and welfare during the 1890s. Cooper finds that while men aspired to be self-reliant, their masculine identities could be threatened by poverty and the failure to provide for their families (Cooper 2008). Like Tennant and Cooper, in order to further illuminate the contemporary meanings of mobility I situate the stories of male immigrants as welfare recipients in the context of discussions about colonial institutionalisation.

This paper begins with a general discussion of the policing or regulating of colonial mobility in local spaces before going on to discuss the institutionalisation of white male immigrants. Victoria, known as Port Phillip before 1851, provides a useful site for this examination in that various studies of immigrant populations, Aboriginal peoples, mental health institutions and welfare practices all identify the historical contours of the colony in the period under examination. While they draw on rich archival materials, they have done so without explicitly drawing attention to processes of colonial mobility.

### **Mobility and Mobile Peoples in Colonial Victoria**

Priding themselves on the egalitarian nature of their new society, 19th century colonists in Victoria made much of the possibilities of class mobility. As one contemporary writer wrote, contrasting this

class fluidity with that of Britain put it, in such a place servants could be 'the real masters and mistresses' (Goodman 1991: 105). However, the local expressions and social meanings of 'mobility' were highly layered and both desirable and undesirable forms of mobility could be discerned in the patterns of colonial settlement and regulation. By the 1860s, for example, it is now well-documented that Aboriginal peoples had already been confined to mission stations in eastern and western Victoria at Corranderk and Lake Condah, among other mission sites, with their movement restricted by laws surrounding Aboriginal 'protection' (Broome 1984: 49-51). A sad example of the ways in which Aboriginal people were caught inside institutional and legal networks that challenged their movement is set out in Bain Attwood's search for the story of Brataualung man Tarra Bobby (Attwood 1987). Settler colonial histories provide another angle on the 'unsettling' process of colonial population movement and expansion across frontiers and Aboriginal-European relations are inscribed here in scholarship which relates the conditions of the settler world as confining, restraining and preventing Aboriginal mobility (Russell 2001).

In patterns of movement, we can identify forms of mobility which push against colonialism's imperative to settle (Salesa 2009; Ballantyne and Burton 2009). In Victoria the capital city of Melbourne developed around Port Phillip Bay. Europeans already in New South Wales quickly moved in every direction to settle the land, especially after an influx of free settlers and assisted immigrants arrived from Britain in the 1830s and subsequent decades. The rapidity of European settlement was dramatic. In the goldrush years to 1861 the European population exploded, with more than 500,000 immigrants arriving in that decade (Broome 1984: 72). Goldminers were more mobile than most, and it is in histories and accounts of goldmining that historians have found much of the social anxiety surrounding forms of mobility. It is well known that anxieties about the Chinese, in particular, and about Chinese immigration, in both the Australian colonies and elsewhere between the 1850s and 1870s, were pronounced and shared many of the same characteristics. Public and official commentaries alike conflated Chinese male behaviour with vice and sometimes disease. The fact

that single men were unaccompanied by women meant that they were perceived as ‘unsettlers’ and were also vulnerable to police surveillance and, at times, institutionalisation (Coleborne, forthcoming). Later, by the 1880s, more problems were posed by non-whites on the streets of Melbourne: male Afghan hawkers, Chinese grocers, dark-skinned ‘foreigners’ — the fears of heterogeneity were ever-present in the popular press (Coleborne, forthcoming).

Mobility might be found in literary accounts and travellers’ writing which, as David Goodman asserts, are embedded within an imperial relationship (Goodman 1991: 99). Goodman interprets published gold rush travellers’ narratives as either ‘colonial narratives’ or ‘pastoral narratives’ and it is in the colonial narratives of travellers that colonial Melbourne can be seen as both an inversion of the metropolis, but also as a new site for the development of ideas about manhood and class mobility. It is in this ‘colonial narrative’, Goodman argues, that we see the colonial subject depicted ‘as both more manly and more unruly than the metropolitan’ (Goodman 1991: 102). This ambiguous narrative positions gender as central to settler discourses.

In all of these ways, historians have shown that mobility was an implicit threat to colonial order. However, it is in the work of legal histories, including histories of policing, that we find more explicit accounts of mobility as it was regulated and controlled in colonial Melbourne (Wilson 2006). Police were explicitly involved in the maintenance of meanings around ‘mobility’ and engaged in restricting urban movement and the occupation of public and private spaces in the period under examination. Between the 1850s and 1890s, Melbourne became a thriving urban centre which was known for its sharp contrast between poverty and wealth. As the next section of this article goes on to explain, Melbourne was notable for its different spaces and areas which were marked by social class and differentiated social groupings. But some individuals and groups transgressed the invisible borders between these spaces.

Vagrants, among others, appeared in the many different city spaces, thereby becoming vulnerable to the attention of police (Davies 1994).



Indeed, as Dean Wilson suggests, police in Melbourne were particularly visible and noted for their role in managing the different people who could be said to be examples of the 'undesirably mobile': street urchins, lunatics, paupers, those who indulged in the 'popular vices', soldiers, spies and prostitutes (Wilson 2006: 110; see also Coleborne 2003). Homosexuality, which crossed the boundaries of 'proper masculinity', was subjected to surveillance; the 'immoral conduct' of men in the city was policed more discreetly, perhaps, but was, nonetheless, another aspect of police work (Wilson 2006: 209-10).

Police performed a wide range of roles in the period. These included removal and escort functions; lunatics were taken to institutions, and troublemakers on the goldfields were removed (Coleborne 2003). Aboriginal people were sometimes removed from specific communities for their own 'protection', as in the case of the request from the Central Board for Aborigines, in Melbourne, made on 22 August 1860 to Captain Standish, the Chief Commissioner for Police, for the removal of an Aboriginal girl from the care of Mr Banfield, a hotelkeeper at Benalla in northern Victoria, in the escort cart (VPRS 937/P4). Police were asked to look for 'missing friends', many of whom were immigrants. In 1868, for example, Melbourne police were contacted by an Immigration Agent who was seeking a John King who had left wife and child after arrival in the colony on the ship *White Star* (VPRS937/P4, Bundle 2).

Police were often asked to carry out operations to 'clean up' city spaces. An example of this was on 28 November 1868 when they responded to a newspaper article and investigated complaints about the 'infestation' of the Botanical gardens walk, particularly the 'wattle-grove and a portion of the bank', by 'dirty frowsy vagabonds of both sexes, who, at all hours of the day and night, are to be found there indulging in a sort of unsavoury pic-nic, and engaging in conversation unfit for decent ears to listen to' (VPRS937/P4, Bundle 2).<sup>4</sup> The police responded to such requests about the 'incurable class' even when the area was outside their beat; and directives note that police began including the area in their beat walk after being asked to do so by the

Council of the City of Melbourne. Wilson suggests that distinctions were drawn between the ‘deserving poor’ and the ‘incorrigible’, with frequent arrests made in the Domain gardens area in the late 1870s when, in other poor communities, they offered assistance rather than punitive measures (Wilson 2006: 129). These policing practices suggest a close, and even intimate, level of urban policing of mobility.

### **Immigrants and Colonial Institutions**

‘Strangers’ and newcomers, too, were watched in colonial Melbourne. ‘Foreigners’ who wandered out of place attracted the attention of commentators in the press, perhaps more so because they were potential settlers, as Georg Simmel suggests of ‘foreigners’ more generally in his essay ‘The Stranger’ (Simmel, in Wolff 1950: 402). Marked by accent and sometimes language itself — as well as clothing, customs, and names — these strangers were visibly mobile. As Twomey perceptively recognises about the response to new immigrants to Victoria:

In Editorials and correspondence, published daily in newspapers, reference to the newly-arrived as ‘The Strangers’ underscored the discomfort old colonists felt about the congregation of large numbers of people unknown to them on the wharves and in the backlanes. ‘The Strangers’ and ‘The Houseless’ soon became interchangeable designations (Twomey 1995: 73).

Contemporaries, including the medical superintendents of institutions, drew attention to immigration as a source of social breakdown, commenting frequently on the problems of dispersed populations in colonial society. They also pointed to immigration and geographical isolation as causes of mental breakdown (Coleborne 2006). Many inmates of colonial institutions were ‘socially isolated people’ (Finanne 2003: 98). They were men like Benjamin T, who was sent from the Immigrants’ Home to the Yarra Bend Hospital for the Insane in August 1873 — all that was noted in his patient record was that he was aged 63 and a Protestant born in Germany (VPRS7399/P1 Unit 2: 162). While many of the patient notes are similarly brief, they can reveal something of the patterns of life of mobile men in the

colonies and, as with Benjamin's story, gesture to the web within a web of social institutions. As explained earlier, this web or system of colonial institutions has been only partially described and explored by social and legal historians who draw links between charity and health institutions, while also referring to the impact of poverty and sickness on immigrants (Garton 1990; Tennant 1990).

Although hospitals for the insane had a relationship to other colonial welfare provisions and, like other authorities, provided a form of outdoor relief, meaning forms of institutional relief for the needy, as institutions they have not often or readily been understood or historicised in this manner. In his history, *Europeans in Australia*, Alan Atkinson writes that there 'was a link ... between the high hopes of immigrants and the crowded asylums' (Atkinson 2004: 281). Citing evidence of committals of insane men during the goldrushes in 1850s Victoria, Atkinson touches on a story which has remained relatively under-explored by historians of the asylum (Coleborne 2007) and historians of welfare (Goodman 1994).

Established in the late 1840s, the Yarra Bend Asylum drew its substantive patient population from the suburban areas of Melbourne, with some patients from rural areas. After institutions were established in the rural towns of Ararat and Beechworth in the 1860s, and the Kew Asylum was built in the 1870s, inmates at the Yarra Bend were most likely to be poor and living in inner city areas, thus many were admitted from Fitzroy, Collingwood, Carlton, North Melbourne, St Kilda, and the city itself.<sup>5</sup> By the 1870s, Atkinson writes, Melbourne was a 'chaos of humanity', a city which had grown nine times its size in the 20 years after the goldrushes of the 1850s to 207,000 (Atkinson 2004: 269). Collingwood was 'poverty stricken and tightly packed', teeming with animals and coloured by 'brackish water'; the inner city was 'suffocating', full of rubbish and sewerage problems, and with higher child mortality rates in the densely populated suburbs of North Melbourne, Fitzroy, and Collingwood than in other areas of the city (Atkinson 2004: 271, 269). Urban environments, then, were places where the 'classing gaze' operated to good effect (Finch 1993).

Historians have created a ‘map of social inequality’ in Melbourne, showing the proximity of boarding houses, lodging houses, and charitable agencies such as the Immigrants’ Home (Davison et al 1985: 19). Located at Princes Bridge, St Kilda Road, the Immigrants’ Home was established in 1852 by the Immigrants’ Aid Society and, by the middle of 1853, this and other shelters were already providing temporary lodging for more than 10,000 immigrants (Broome 1984: 76).<sup>6</sup> They were relatively expensive to run and were supported through voluntary contributions and a government grant and, in the tradition of welfare institutions, had rules: no alcohol or fraternization was allowed and fires and lights had to be out by nine at night. Inmates needed to practise obedience and had duties to clean the place (Broome 1984: 77).

By the 1860s and 1870s, the immigrants waiting to be ‘housed’ included aged and infirm men awaiting for admission to benevolent asylums, men suffering from chronic diseases, convalescents, single and pregnant women, and deserted wives and children. Immigrant men, many of whom came to the colonies from Britain in pursuit of social improvement, were among the ‘outcasts of Melbourne’. Often bachelors, they mixed with the poor and criminal who formed part of the ‘itinerant street economy’ (Davison et al 1985: 7-8, 15; Brown-May 1998: 121-2). Poor, infirm and older men were vulnerable to institutionalisation (Swain 1985: 99, 101). Many of the men arrested under vagrancy laws were also immigrants, with the policing of vagrancy in Victoria peaking in the 1880s (Davies 1994: 156, 162). As shown in Figure 1, the *Illustrated Australian News* ran a story on the Home in 1868 which included two images of male inmates: an image of the night refuge where the men sit picking oakum, and another featuring men waiting in the ‘casual’s room’ (IAN 18 July 1868: 4-5). The text pronounced that all classes of men and women sought help here — from the ‘street-arab’ who was a familiar sight in the main streets of the city to the labouring man. Others included women and children who had become the ‘unhappy objects’ of institutional life because of their poor luck in life. As the author commented, poverty could also strike the educated and the highly trained among professional men, ‘it would be difficult to enumerate the various classes of persons’ seeking shelter here (IAN

18 July 1868: 4).



Figure 1 Night refuge at the Immigrants' Home, W H Harrison, Melbourne 1873, wood engraving. Reproduced with permission of the National Library of Australia

The Immigrants' Home, then, was a place where need was ever-present. It catered to newly arrived immigrants who were yet to venture far beyond the city, and served as a shelter for men and women whose ambitions to settle in Victoria had not been realised. The roving journalist John Stanley James spent a night in the Home in the 1860s and wrote of the 'sickening smell' of 'unwashed humanity', with everything 'foul': 'rugs, mattress, floor, and walls' (Cannon 1969: 146). The inmates were mostly old men and many of them had been in the Home for many years, as the Annual Reports of the Immigrants' Aid Society and its Home show. For 1874 the society reported that:

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The male adult inmates were of the most helpless class, - the majority suffering from disease, and requiring medical treatment and hospital care. The really able-bodied who sought as 'casuals' temporary relief were comparatively few, and these only applied in any number during the severe period of our winter season (Annual Report 21,1874: 3).

In fact, the annual reports of the society throughout the 1870s, including the reports of the medical officer and the special committees, began to complain about the problem of men in particular. Sick, disabled, living unstable lives, they were often regarded as 'utterly helpless' and a burden on the community.<sup>7</sup>

From the 1850s, despite circulating knowledge about the instability of the colonial life, new arrivals to the colony of Victoria continued to be attracted by the promise of wealth and prosperity, especially following news of the discoveries of gold, but also because migration from parts of Britain and Europe had become one response to poverty and overcrowding. Contemporaries had already engaged in discussions about the effects of immigration on mental health and in 1853, Dr Earley, medical officer to the Immigrants' Aid Society, published 'Hints upon Health' for the new arrivals, which stressed the importance of 'judicious conduct' among immigrants. Earley's pamphlet specifically noted the mental risks of immigration:

Mental influences ... of no ordinary character, present difficulties in the case of immigrants: from the period they decide upon quitting the mother country until arrival, their minds are subjected to the extremes of hope and doubt, and who shall define the extent of these upon the health? They are advised most strenuously to exert themselves to resist the depression of spirits, which is the natural consequence of so much previous excitement, and to strive for that calmness, self-possession, and reliance, so essential to success ... in a new country (Earley 1853: 1).

Earley also advocated immigrants leave the 'unhealthy tendencies of our already overcrowded city' for the country where they could find work on stations and in townships. Much of what he had to say was directed at male immigrants. The advice offered in a separate pamphlet by the Reverend William Jarritt, 'Hints to Immigrants Upon Colonial

Life and its Requirements', was also largely levelled at male immigrants. In it Jarritt emphasised the value of good 'character' and counselled patience and hope (Jarritt 1853: 3).

The myth of the Australian colonies as a 'working man's paradise' was being questioned at the very time of its construction, and has continued to be pulled apart by historians (Buckley and Wheelwright 1989). Among them, Milton Lewis and Roy Macleod argue that 'Colonial statisticians and image-makers neglected the extent of poor living and working conditions and their relation to illness and mortality' (Lewis and Macleod 1987: 402). Shurlee Swain and Alan Mayne also elaborate on the poor health conditions of the inner city in Melbourne and Sydney for the working-classes and those out of work (Swain 1980; Mayne 1983), and Cooper has noted the severe alienation experienced by men whose disappointments and failures in work led them to commit suicide (Cooper 2008: 258). As the Immigrants' Aid Society noted in the 1870s, the 'loose kind of life' being led by men added to the burdens of the colonial welfare network with local charities in smaller, rural communities sending these men back to Melbourne; single women who found themselves pregnant in these communities shared a similar fate. Immigrant men were possibly more vulnerable to isolation in the colonies, as Frederic Norton Manning, Inspector General of Asylums in New South Wales, noted in 1880: they operated a 'peculiar mode of life' as bushmen and miners, they were often unmarried, they were peripatetic and lured by seasonal work, and they were inherently restless (Manning 1880: 3). In addition, according to Manning, there was a marked tendency towards introspection, suspicion, distrust and selfishness among colonists who could not fall back on support from associates and family (Manning 1880)

Social class, then, played a significant role in the construction of the male colonial identity inside social institutions. Sectors of the settler immigrant population were seen to be more susceptible to problems of health including mental breakdown. The evidence for this growing need can be found in the reports of social institutions. By the 1870s, the Annual Reports of the Immigrants' Aid Society noted that the

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Immigrants' Home was becoming unliveable, with 'utterly inadequate' accommodation on the male side and, on women's side, conditions were even worse, with the threat of outbreaks of epidemic disease. These reports convey a sense that all the unwanted cases from hospitals were being turned over to the immigrants' home, an important point, since the asylum then became the final and last resort, making it, too, part of this 'web' of welfare provision. The reports noted not only the aged and infirm men whose lives were damaged by age and disease, but also a group of younger men, disabled and diseased and utterly dependent upon welfare.

By 1890, it appeared that colonists were reflecting on the social problems that had emerged with the growth in population growth during the 1850s and 1860s, and Victoria's Inspector of Asylums, Thomas Dick reported that a 'large proportion of ... admissions were of a chronic and incurable type, received principally from gaols, hospitals, benevolent asylums, and the Immigrants' Home' (Annual Asylum Report Victoria 1891: 35). The men who had recourse to these institutions, simply by virtue of their need for forms of charity in hard times, were working-men and poor men who lived hard and drank heavily. Men were more affected by 'drink, drugs and violent accidents' (Goodman 1994: 200). Like the older men eking out their existence in boarding houses and homes, young men, too, were likely to fall on hard times, especially in the 'excitement' of the 1850s, when as Dr John Singleton suggested, he saw a number who, because of the 'heat' and drink, ended up in the Yarra Bend Asylum (Goodman 1994: 197).

The evidence suggests that increasingly in the Australian colonies, as in other white settler colonies, institutions were seen as appropriate places for the treatment of the mentally ill, although families also played important roles (Coleborne 2010). Medical superintendents and inspectors guessed that the relative 'popularity' — or, perhaps, acceptability — of institutions was due to several factors including the lack of a poor-house system, as existed in Britain, and the large number of itinerant persons pursuing work in the colonies (Annual Asylum Report 1891). A continual refrain expressed concern, however, over the



ability of the Home to provide for cases of 'chronic disease, debility, and old age — cases turned out of the Melbourne and provincial hospitals, and sent from the country generally' (Immigrants' Aid Society Annual Report 19 1872: 6). This may account for some transfers of men from the Home to the Yarra Bend who were, perhaps, not cases of mental breakdown, but rather cases of men who were malnourished and feeling the physical effects of poverty.

By 1880, the Medical Officer's report for the Immigrants' Aid Society noted 'revolting' cases among the male immigrants, perhaps hinting at cases of paresis or General Paralysis of the Insane (GPI), the tertiary stage of syphilis. Mental defects among women were also causing great anxiety. The Society's own medical work was being privileged and a system of diagnosis and classification had generally improved over the decades, but this was still not the aim of the Society, nor was it ever intended to be. The transition of migrants from the Immigrants' Home, Salvation Army homes or the street to the hospital for the insane were triggered by this sense of hopelessness, including where they involved cases of advanced age or incurable illness. Table 1 provides a summary of the recorded details of 15 men transferred from the Immigrants' Home to the Yarra Bend.

Although very little is known about the 15 men based on their patient records, some facts about them can be discerned from the case notes. Many of the men who made up the institutional population were labourers, including William B (VPRS7399/P1 1873 Unit 2: 164). That labourers formed such a large population of the male insane suggests, as Garton also argues, that working men were especially vulnerable to institutional committal (Garton 1988: 106-10). This theme of masculinity and work is potentially productive. Often for male inmates, the loss of work during periods of economic crisis was a trigger for institutional committal. Masculine identities in the colonies were formed in and outside of marriage and family relationships (Phillips 1987), but how could men perform their masculinity in the colonial institutional setting of the hospitals for the insane?

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Year	Age	Name	Birthplace	Religion	Marital status
1873	60	James M	Scotland	C of E	Widowed
1873	63	Benjamin T	Germany	Protestant	Unknown
1873	44	William B	England	C of E	Married
1873	54	Robert K	England	C of E	Widowed
1873	47	John G	Ireland	RC	Single
1873	60	Thomas C	Ireland	RC	Single
1873	48	John R	England	C of E	Single
1873	66	Joshua W	England	C of E	Single
1891	61	George S	England	Unknown	Single
1891	27	Charles J	Ireland	RC	Single
1891	30	Brian M	Ireland	RC	Single
1891	57	David C	Unknown	RC	Unknown
1894	72	William R	Scotland	Presbyterian	Widowed
1894	74	Joseph R	Unknown	C of E	Unknown
1894	36	Thomas P	Wales	Wesleyan	Unknown

Table 1 Fifteen male patients at the Yarra Bend Hospital for the Insane who were transferred from the Immigrants' Home.<sup>8</sup> **Source:** PROV, VPRS7399, Male Patient Casebooks, 1872-1912

Debility among men obviously signified a loss of virility and masculinity and many of the men institutionalised at the Yarra Bend were described as feeble and weak, and characterised in their patient case notes as elderly, depleted of body and mind, and without family contacts in Australia. As explained above, the notes included very little information about their previous histories and, to the medical and colonial authorities, they were most likely to be seen as a sad reminder of the strains of migration to the new colony. But they might also be symbolic of other stresses present in colonial society, and especially ideas about the importance of white masculinity.

Various patients had multiple and sometimes related conditions: for instance, Thomas C was said to have suffered sunstroke and then his melancholia set in, but he was also ill with tubercular disease (VPRS7399/P1 187, Unit 2: 198). Other men, like William R, 72 years old and originally from Glasgow, had been involved in accidents

in which he suffered a head injury (VPRS7399/P1 1894 Unit 10: 26). Organic brain disease also affected many men: Joseph R, a 'feeble old man', 74 years old, suffered from dementia (VPRS7399/P1 1894 Unit 10: 91).

The diagnosis of GPI was also linked to male weakness and became a hallmark of the immigrant male profile in the institution. This condition, which affected around 25 per cent of those who contracted syphilis, officially struck men aged between 20 and 40 years old. Nineteenth-century asylum doctors often viewed sufferers of the disease as possessing an inherent weakness of character and it was considered a psychiatric disorder with an organic cause. It typically presented as psychotic episodes and the early onset of dementia in affected men (Manning 1880: 10-12). The GPI cases present some interesting issues when read alongside other cases of male patients in the institution because of the questions they raise about male sexuality, physical decline and weakness.

Charles C, 27 years old, was also diagnosed with GPI, as was Brian M (VPRS7399/P1 1891 Unit 9: 29; and Unit 9: 32). Vagrancy also loomed as a social category which highlighted fears about the failures of settler masculinity (Fairburn 1985). Other men had perhaps lived between institutions and the outdoors, as rough, houseless strangers in the developing urban world of colonial Melbourne. One example was John R who was covered in 'bruises and abrasions' when he arrived from the Immigrants' Home (VPRS7399/P1 1873 Unit 2: 199).

Despite the brevity of the notes, some clues exist about the ways in which masculinity was being inscribed on the bodies of these immigrant men. Sunstroke, a cause of mental breakdown cited for some of those admitted to institutions in the period, affected men more than women. Leigh Boucher has explored the way men were viewed as being more vulnerable to the phenomenon of sunstroke, highlighting the way that white male bodies occupied the very physical spaces of the colonies. During the 1870s, for instance, the white male patients at the Yarra Bend who admitted suffering from sunstroke reached as high as 16 per cent of the total male asylum population (Boucher 2004: 56-7). Given

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colonial debates about white men and their unsuitability for physical labour in the tropics, at least until the late 19th century, the medical beliefs about sunstroke underline the general belief that climate and the physical environment affected the functioning of colonial masculinity. Interrogating medical arguments about the effects of the harsh climate in Australia, Boucher goes so far as to suggest that some colonists feared that Australia represented a real risk to the white male body, already out of place in the 'logic' of settler colonialism (Wolfe 1999: 2-3). This point supports Veracini's argument about the 'exogenous' immigrant category in the 'settled' colony of Victoria (Veracini 2010: 26-7).

## **Conclusions**

Immigrants of all kinds — assisted, poor, ordinary and otherwise — became recipients of a newly formed web of institutional measures inscribed in the institutional record (see also Coleborne 2010b; Rollison 1999: 15). This paper has used institutional records from the archives created through and by the processes of settlement in colonial Victoria to examine, in a small way, this web within a web of the colonial state's institutional responses to mobility among the unsuccessful migrants. Although institutional confinement curtailed the mobility of some immigrants and settlers, in the process of containing mobile peoples within the walls, spaces and textual apparatus of their confines, the institutional records can still reveal something about who these people were. They offer momentary glimpses of people who might ordinarily be less visible in the colonial record and this assists us to usefully locate them in the 'age of mobility' described by Ballantyne and Burton.

At the same time, arguably, the colonial records provide a better understanding of the implications of mobility for colonial society. If we accept that the archival colonial record is also a record of imperial modes of governance, we see that it is through this record that we can begin to locate the contemporary imagining of the problem of mobility (Coleborne 2005; Coleborne 2010b). Moreover, migration to the Australasian colonies was but one aspect of the colonial world that operated inside an imperial and global world of movement. Research

suggests that mobile peoples across many geographical sites met similar fates and were made subject to a range of legal and state controls, with specific patterns of jurisdiction, in white settler colonies that reflected shared anxieties about mobility.

The use of 'mobility' as an interpretive framework might usefully be extended to the study of migrants, in and out of place and across sites and locations, to investigate how migration processes themselves produced complex and contradictory meanings around mobility and movement. Future work could productively examine the multi-layered nature of the concept of colonial mobility in ways that would enhance and highlight our understanding of the 'multiplicity of relationships to place' in the past (Ballantyne 2011: 59). It was against the concept of mobility that settlers came to define settling and settlement, and it was in the space offered across this duality that they made their own meanings about settler culture.

### Notes

- 1 This paper was first presented at the 'Under the Eye of the Law: Mobile Peoples in the Pacific' Symposium, University of Waikato, 3 December 2010. Thanks to all participants, and to the two anonymous referees for very helpful commentary and critique which I have endeavoured to take on board for the refinement of this article. I'd like to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of Tracey Banivanua-Mar, Diane Kirkby, and Nan Seuffert.
- 2 On my own interpretation and use of the term transcolonial, including more extended discussion on its definition, see Coleborne 2010a: 8-10.
- 3 My examination of mobility is drawn from two intersecting projects: one focused on migration and mental illness, and the other on mobility in colonial Australia and New Zealand and the Pacific. The first project mentioned will result in a book titled *Insanity, Identity and Empire: Colonial Institutional Confinement in Australia and New Zealand, 1870-1910*. Elsewhere my work on this subject explores the intersections between ethnicity, gender and class but, for the purposes of this article, I have confined my discussion to white masculinity.

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- 4 A cutting of the newspaper can be found in the records, but no date or newspaper title is included. Archival sources referred to in this article are cited using a simple system, with more details provided in the References. The major archival sources used here relate to collections held at the Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV). Some pamphlet materials relating to the Immigrants' Home are held at the State Library of Victoria (SLV).
- 5 Stephen Garton presents a similar finding about the patterns of admission for the inmates of the hospitals for the insane in Sydney. See Garton 1988: 121
- 6 Broome describes how in November 1852, the Immigrants' Home at Princes Bridge could accommodate 240 people. An unused abattoir at Batman's Hill was also converted for this use, while the Immigrants' Home at South Yarra housed 600, and a Wesleyan House in Drummond Street, Carlton also housed several hundred, meaning that, overall, temporary shelter was available for around 1420 immigrants. See Broome 1994: 76.
- 7 Increasingly, the reports also remark upon a class of 'imbecile' women, a point I explore elsewhere in this project as I extend my arguments about gender, class and ethnicity.
- 8 This is a selection of cases and does not represent a statistical sample.

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