

The Encyclopedia of Australian Utopian Communalism

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The Encyclopedia of Australian Utopian Communalism

Bill Metcalf

Introduction

This project aims to document all Australian 'utopian' texts and all Australian 'intentional communities', or 'communal groups', at least prior to the mid-1970s.¹

Not all Australian intentional communities have been underpinned by utopian ideals — but most were — and most utopian writing did not lead to intentional communities — but some did. A wide range of material about Australian intentional communities and utopian texts is being discovered faster than it can be fully researched (see Appendix).

History of the Project

This project began in 1973 as research for an MPhil in sociology at the University of Queensland but, for various reasons, the thesis and ensuing book focused mainly on what is now called

¹ The cut-off point of mid-1970s has been selected because the Aquarius Festival at Nimbin in 1973 initiated what can best be regarded as the contemporary rather than historical manifestation of this phenomenon.

environmental sociology, omitting most of the historical material.² In 1980, this unpublished material became the starting point for a PhD at Griffith University, but again the final thesis omitted much of that historical material.³

In 1988, this historical data was the starting point for a book that, in 1994, was submitted to Syracuse University Press, but was rejected because the editor felt it would not be economically viable. A small amount of that unpublished material became the opening chapter of *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality*.⁴ With financial support from Arts Queensland, material from the rejected manuscript, about Queensland's 1890s communes, was expanded, then published as *The Gayndah Communes*.⁵ With a small Local History Writing Grant from the Victorian Government, another small part of the rejected text was expanded and published as *Herrnhut: Australia's First Utopian Commune*.⁶

As well, other material from that rejected text has been expanded into eight scholarly articles,⁷ three encyclopedia entries,⁸ four chapters in edited books,⁹ and two research reports.¹⁰

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- 2 W. Metcalf, *The Environmental Crisis: A Model Based on Systems Theory* (MPhil thesis), St Lucia, University of Queensland, 1995; and W. Metcalf, *The Environmental Crisis: A Systems Approach*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1977.
 - 3 W. Metcalf, *Dropping Out and Staying In: Recruitment, Socialisation and Commitment Engenderment in Contemporary Alternative Lifestyles* (PhD thesis), Nathan, Griffith University, 1987.
 - 4 W. Metcalf, *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality: Cooperative Lifestyles in Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 1995.
 - 5 W. Metcalf, *The Gayndah Communes*, Rockhampton, Central Queensland University Press, 1998.
 - 6 W. Metcalf and B. Huf, *Herrnhut: Australia's First Utopian Commune*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2002.
 - 7 W. Metcalf, 'The Fall and Rise of an Antipodean Utopia: Brisbane, Australia', *Utopian Studies* vol. 19, no. 2, 2008, pp. 189–212; 'Utopian Communal Experiments in Tasmania: a litany of failure?', *Communal Societies*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2008, pp. 1–26; 'Dr Thomas Pennington Lucas: Queensland Scientist, Author, Doctor, Dreamer and Inventor', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 19, no. 5, 2006, pp. 788–804; 'Lady Parachutists and the End of Civilisation in Queensland', *Queensland Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2006, pp. 33–49; 'Hachshara: An Australian Kibbutz', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. XVII, part 2, 2006, pp. 191–216; 'Harry Head: Socialist, Communard and Central Burnett Pioneer', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2002, pp. 68–80; 'Utopian Queensland', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. XV, no. 12, 1995, pp. 553–70; W. Metcalf and G. Featherstone, 'A Messiah for the West: J.C.M. Fisher and the Church of the Firstborn in Western Australia', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 8, 2006, pp. 117–36.
 - 8 W. Metcalf, 'Intentional (or Alternative) Communities in Western Australia', in J. Gregory and J. Gothard (eds), *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia*, Crawley, University of Western Australia Press, 2008; W. Metcalf and D. Christian, 'Intentional Communities', in G. Goethals, G. Sorenson and J. Burns (eds), *Encyclopedia of Leadership* vol. 2, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2004, pp. 735–40; and W. Metcalf, 'Intentional Communities in Australia and New Zealand', in K. Christensen and D. Levinson (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2003, pp. 705–12.
 - 9 W. Metcalf and D. Bellingham, 'Henry George's Utopia: Wintergarden Centre, Queen Street Mall', in R. Evans and C. Ferrier (eds), *Radical Brisbane*, Melbourne, Vulgar Press, 2004, pp.

Definitions

Utopia/Dystopia

The term 'utopia' and its variations is to be understood herein using Ruth Levitas' simple definition: 'desire for a better way of being and living'. 'Dystopia' also follows Levitas's definition: 'fear of what the future may hold if we do not act to avert catastrophe'.¹¹ These simplistic definitions are sufficiently open to include a sufficiently broad range of texts and communal groups.

Communal Group/Intentional Community

There have been various attempts at definitions, but the most widely accepted has been created out of this research: Five or more people, drawn from more than one family or kinship group, who have voluntarily come together for the purpose of ameliorating perceived social problems and inadequacies. They seek to live beyond the bounds of mainstream society by adopting a consciously devised and usually well thought-out social and cultural alternative. In the pursuit of their goals, they share significant aspects of their lives together. Participants are characterized by a 'we-consciousness', seeing themselves as a continuing group, separate from and in many ways better than the society from which they have emerged.¹²

Terms such as 'commune', 'alternative lifestyle group', 'intentional community', 'communal group' and so forth all have slightly different connotations within the specific research field of communal studies but, for the sake of this paper, these differences can be ignored.

Because this research project, being 'encyclopedic' is trying to be inclusive rather than exclusive; these definitions are loosely used

78–82; W. Metcalf, 'Alternative and Communal Australia? or The Education of Young Bill', in A. Dearling and M. Bahloo (eds), *Alternative Australia: Celebrating Cultural Diversity*, London, Enabler, 2000, pp. 2–6; W. Metcalf, 'Australian Utopias', in W. Hudson and G. Bolton (eds), *Creating Australia: Changing Australian History*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1997, pp. 122–30; and W. Metcalf, 'Utopian Thought and Communal Experience in Australia: A Demographic Analysis', in D. Hardy and L. Davidson (eds), *Utopian Thought and Communal Experience*, London, Middlesex Polytechnic, 1989, pp. 60–7.

10 W. Metcalf and D. Bellingham, *Utopian Brisbane, and all other known Writings of 'Austin South'*, Brisbane, Griffith University (Australian School of Environmental Studies), 2003; and W. Metcalf and T. Darragh, *Krumnow's Manifesto*, Brisbane, Griffith University (Australian School of Environmental Studies), 2001.

11 R. Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1990, pp. 7, 165.

12 Metcalf and Christian, *The Encyclopedia of Community*, p. 670; and B. Metcalf, *The Findhorn Book of Community Living*, Forres, Findhorn Press, 2004, p. 9.

and, when in doubt, literature or a social group is included rather than excluded. To recognize that not all 'utopian' literature is equally utopian, and not all intentional communities/communal groups are equally communal, a five-star rating is being developed.

State-by-State Outline

A few examples will be offered of utopian literature and associated communal experiments on a state-by-state basis.

Victoria

Victoria holds the Australian record for the most utopian texts and communal groups, although on a per capita basis Queensland would win. The best example of a Victorian utopian text with clear connections to communal living would be *The New Arcadia: an Australian Story*, by Horace Tucker.¹³ Tucker's book portrays starving mobs of unemployed workers roaming the streets of Melbourne. A doctor berates them for doing nothing to help themselves overcome this political and social crisis. From an inheritance, this doctor donates land and money to start a utopian commune based on Christian Socialism. In it, members employ the latest technology, including steam-irrigation, to achieve a prosperous, egalitarian society. Gender equality is crucial in this scheme but, for women who prefer not to live with men, a separate commune, what we would now call a 'feminist-separatist' facility, is developed.

In 1892 Horace Tucker led a group which really did establish seven communes in Victoria, at Jindivik, Wonwondah East, Red Hill, Moora Moora,¹⁴ Kilfera, Horsham and Croydon. Over the next three years, 700 families (about 2000 people) lived on these communes. Tucker intended that each commune should consist of five collective homes, or mini-communes, each consisting of a married couple (with children) and nine single men, but this never eventuated. Instead, most families lived in their own tents while single men dossed down wherever they could.

Within Tucker's communes all work was shared, without pay, and any outside income went into communal funds. Everyone had equal access to collective resources regardless of their work, gender or age. Not surprisingly, these communes faced opposition from

13 H. Tucker, *The New Arcadia: an Australian Story*, Melbourne, George Robertson, 1894.

14 A large intentional community, also called Moora Moora, still exists in Victoria but has no connection to Horace Tucker's scheme.

conservative politicians although many local newspapers were initially enthusiastic. Horace Tucker, unfortunately, was more a propagandist than a manager, and he continued to promote his communes even after serious flaws developed. Illness was frequent, with several children dying from bronchitis, at least partially because of poor housing. Tucker maintained that his brand of communal living was 'opposed to the miserable, competitive, throat-cutting methods of society. It depends for success on a brotherly regard for each other ... [and] such efforts would result in a more far-seeing and a wiser race of workers'.¹⁵

While these communes enjoyed some commercial success, members lived in cold, leaky tents, often lacking even boots and warm clothing. Horace Tucker, the optimistic promoter, tried to keep members cheerful with admonitions to 'carry on' but the communards resented being treated as serfs, and rebelled. All seven communes ran into serious trouble in 1894, and slowly collapsed.

Horace Tucker published *The New Arcadia: an Australian Story* in 1894, two years after these seven communes had been formed, so both the communes and the utopian text were informed by Tucker's ideas. Tucker was an avid fan of the American writers Edward Bellamy¹⁶ and Henry George,¹⁷ and integrated some of their ideas into his own brand of Christian Socialism. Tucker's book impacted on other rural communes forming in Victoria in the 1890s, as well as on communes in Tasmania and Western Australia, as described below.

Another important Victorian commune was Herrnhut, established in 1852 in Geelong, moving to western Victoria in 1853, and closing in 1889.¹⁸ Herrnhut's charismatic and autocratic leader, Johann Friedrich Krumnow, was informed by numerous obscure biblical texts, often with millenarian and utopian overtones such as those propounded by Pastor Johannes Evangeliste Gossner at Gossner Missions Institute, Berlin. Krumnow was immersed in German Pietism and Moravianism, religious and social views which promoted Christian communal living as leading to 'Heaven on Earth'. Krumnow's eclectic theological and political views were

15 L. Blake, 'Village Settlements', *The Educational Magazine*, vol. 21, no. 11, 1964, p. 499.

16 E. Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (1888), Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1890.

17 H. George, *Progress and Poverty: an inquiry into the cause of industrial depressions, and of increase of want with increase of wealth, the remedy* (1880), New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1883.

18 Metcalf and Huf, *Herrnhut*.

'a mixture between Slavic mysticism and primitive religious beliefs, based on a naive and literal understanding of certain parts of the bible'.¹⁹ Mixed with communism, this produced what contemporary critics saw as a heady brew of religious and political fanaticism. Krumnow and his fellow communards sought to live as they believed Christ and his early followers had lived, sharing food and housing while devoting themselves to the realization of an ideal world. Anarchism also came into the equation with Krumnow rejecting state authority, and believing himself to be answerable only to God.²⁰

While Krumnow does not appear to have been influenced by Australian utopian authors, his work influenced at least one other Australian commune. Pastor Hermann Herlitz was a supporter of Krumnow, and drafted new rules for Herrnhut commune in 1882–3. In 1893 Herlitz established Leongatha Labour Colony, which was probably more training centre than utopian commune. Some critics condemned it as a concentration camp for unemployed men.²¹ Nevertheless, during this commune's lifetime, over 3000 men lived there.²²

Australia's first urban commune, 'Co-operative Home', was established in Melbourne in 1888 by David Andrade, John Andrews and other members of the Melbourne Anarchist Club. Their utopian experiment was informed by the imported utopian/anarchist ideas of William Goodwin, Peter Kropotkin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. They published their own newspaper and opened Australia's first vegetarian restaurant but, in spite of their efforts, Co-operative Home commune collapsed after only one year.²³

Queensland

Queensland's best known utopian author would be William Lane, whose works *White or Yellow?: A Story of the Race-war of A.D. 1908*²⁴

19 F. Mueller, 'Arrival in Australia and What I Experienced There', *Der Lutherische Kirchenbote*, trans. L. Kupke, September 1888, p. 134.

20 Metcalf and Huf, *Herrnhut*, pp. 4–14.

21 R. Kennedy, 'The Leongatha Labour Colony: Founding an Anti-utopia', *Labour History*, no. 14, 1968, pp. 54–8.

22 J. Murphy, *Leongatha Labour Colony*, Leongatha, Woorayl Shire Historical Society, 1983.

23 S. Merrifield, 'The Melbourne Anarchist Club', *Bulletin of the Australian Society for Labour History*, vol. 3, 1962, pp. 32–43; and *Recorder*, vol. 1, no. 5, 1965, p. 3; vol. 1, no. 6, 1965, pp. 1–2; and vol. 2, no. 4, 1966, p. 11. Co-operative Home was located at 47 Victoria Avenue, Albert Park. The house has since been replaced by an ugly structure housing Craigrossie Clinic.

24 W. Lane, 'White or Yellow?: A Story of the Race-war of A.D.', *The Boomerang*, 18 February to 5 May, 1888. This has occasionally been erroneously described as a dystopian work, but it was certainly utopian to Lane and to his intended audience.

and *The Workingman's Paradise: An Australian Labour Novel*,²⁵ helped inform those who travelled to Paraguay in 1893 to establish New Australia.²⁶ Lane's writing was equally influential with those 2000 people who stayed in Queensland to establish 12 utopian communes in 1893–4: 'Byrnestown', 'Resolute' and 'Bon Accord', near Gayndah; 'Nil Desperandum', 'Excel Pioneers' and 'Obertown Model', near Roma; 'Mizpah', 'Industrial' and 'Monmouth', near Chinchilla; 'Protestant Unity' and 'Woolloongabba Exemplars', near Noosa; and 'Reliance', near Springsure.²⁷

While Lane's writing was paramount, these communards were also informed by the utopian writing of two other Queenslanders, 'Austin South' and Dr Thomas Pennington Lucas.

In 1893 'Austin South' published *In Those Days?— or, Life in the Twentieth Century*,²⁸ which appears to have been part of a larger work, *The Land and the People*, which had been published in Brisbane in 1891.²⁹ In 'South's' work, Brisbane became a utopia through following the 'Single Tax' policies of Henry George,³⁰ as well as harnessing electricity to alleviate toil. People learned to share, to live together in harmony and prosperity, so cultural pursuits rather than demeaning toil filled everyone's days.

In 1894 Thomas Pennington Lucas published *The Curse and its Cure*, his story about Brisbane being destroyed through capitalist greed and immorality then, through a peculiarly Methodist version of Christian Socialism, becoming a perfect society, a utopia. Those living in the city enjoyed cultured, comfortable lives. Those involved in agriculture lived in rural communes, known as Workmen's Colonies, which were

under an experienced overseer. Once a week the men all meet to report each man's work, and to take counsel with and advise the overseer. No idler is retained ... The men work collectively for ten hours a day, each holding being worked, as adjudged by the whole committee of men ... It is

25 W. Lane, *The Workingman's Paradise*, Brisbane, Edwards, Dunlop & Co., 1892.

26 G. Souter, *A Peculiar People*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1968.

27 Metcalf, *The Gayndah Communes*; and 'Utopian Queensland'.

28 The only full text of *In Those Days, or, Life in the Twentieth Century* that appears to have survived was published in *The Voice*, 28 April 1893, pp. 5–6; 5 May 1893, pp. 5–6; 19 May 1893, p. 6; 26 May 1893, pp. 5–6; 2 June 1893, p. 6; 9 June 1893, p. 6; 16 June 1893, pp. 5–6; 30 June 1893, pp. 5–6; 14 July 1893, pp. 5–6; 28 July 1893, p. 6; and 4 August 1893, pp. 5–6.

29 A. South, *The Land and the People*, Brisbane, Co-operative Printing Company Limited, 1891. ('Austin South' was a nom de plume of a Brisbane solicitor, Austin Douglas Graham.)

30 George, *Progress and Poverty*.

astonishing how such villages develop, until they sometimes grow into fair sized towns.³¹

One of Australia's fully imported utopian ventures was 'Kalevan Kansa', established in 1899 near Chillagoe, north Queensland, by Matti Kurikka, from Finland. Kurikka adhered to both the ancient Finnish utopian folk mythology, called 'Kaleva', as well as the more modern ideas of Marxism. Seventy people joined this communal venture but it quickly collapsed through mismanagement and sexual jealousies. Kurikka was neither informed by Australian utopian writers nor did he have any impact on other Australian writers or communal ventures, but his utopian communal experiment in Queensland informed his next communal venture, 'Sointula', in Canada.³²

New South Wales

Sydney, like Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane, spawned numerous literary and Bohemian groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and a number of New South Welshmen wrote utopian texts. For example, in 1890 Alexander Johnston wrote *The New Utopia*, arguing that through following Henry George's 'Single Tax' principles,³³ and state socialism, a utopia would automatically come into being.³⁴ In 1894 Samuel Rosa wrote *The Coming Terror*, in which society collapsed into anarchy before a benign dictator stepped in and prescribed communal living for the masses.³⁵

Three large communes, Pitt Town, Wilberforce, and Bega,³⁶ developed in New South Wales during the 1890s, but there is no evidence that they were significantly informed by local writers, it appearing that their inspiration flowed from Queensland's William Lane and Victoria's Horace Tucker. Pitt Town, with 500 people (100 households) on 850 hectares, was by far the biggest and most important of these communal settlements. All three prospered for a couple of years, then collapsed.³⁷

31 T. Lucas, *The Curse and its Cure*, Brisbane, J. H. Reynolds, vol. 2, 1894, pp. 110-1.

32 C. Cormick, *Kurikka's Dreaming: the true story of Matti Kurikka socialist, utopian and dreamer*, East Roseville, Simon & Schuster, 2000.

33 George, *Progress and Poverty*.

34 A. Johnston, *The New Utopia; or Progress and Prosperity*, Sydney, Turner and Henderson, 1890.

35 S. Rosa, *The Coming Terror, or, The Australian Revolution. A Romance of the Twentieth Century*, Sydney, S. Rosa, 1894.

36 Strictly speaking, these communes were on land that had been set aside as Town Commons near Pitt Town and Wilberforce, northwest of Sydney, and at Bega, south of Sydney, and were normally known by their location rather than any other name.

37 R. Walker, 'The Ambiguous Experiment: Agricultural Co-operatives in New South Wales, 1893-96', *Labour History*, no. 18, 1970, pp. 19-31.

In 1914 William Chidley wrote *The Answer*, in which he argued that vegetarianism, nudism, no hot drinks and 'rational sex' would lead to a perfect society.³⁸ Chidley was persecuted for his utopian beliefs and incarcerated several times in a lunatic asylum. When Chidley died in 1916, his followers established a commune along the lines he had recommended, this being called, at various times, 'Chidlean Home' and 'The Chidley Nature Culturists'. They lived on Berry's Bay on the north shore of Sydney Harbour, scandalizing their neighbours with their nude antics until the commune collapsed in 1925.³⁹

South Australia

The best-known nineteenth-century South Australian utopian writer was Catherine Spence, who wrote *Handfasted* (1879),⁴⁰ *An Agnostic's Progress from the Known to the Unknown* (1884)⁴¹ and *A Week in The Future* (1888–9).⁴² While *Handfasted* was censored because it was 'dangerously radical', *A Week in The Future* became important Australia wide, particularly with female readers interested in utopian endeavours. Another important South Australian utopian writer was Harry Taylor, who wrote *The Single Tax* in 1892.⁴³ Taylor was an avid follower of William Lane, but more of a Christian Communist than a Socialist.⁴⁴

Both Spence and Taylor were well known to the prosperous, extended Birks family of Adelaide, and to other members of the Primitive Methodist Church and the Single Tax League who, in 1894, established Murtho commune. Murtho members were well known by William Lane and his 'New Australians' in Paraguay, and there were member interchanges, most notably Harry Taylor. Murtho, on the banks of the Murray River, near Renmark, was expected to produce citrus and other crops using irrigation water pumped from the river using newly developed, steam-powered 'Tangye Cameron' pumps, a high technology for the time. Murtho's

38 W. Chidley, *The Answer: An Essay in Philosophy*, Sydney, W. Chidley, 1914.

39 A. Curtis, *The Philosophy and Public Life of William James Chidley*, Cambridge, Trinity College, 1926, pp. 491–9; and B. Hornage, *Chidley's Answer to the Sex Problem*, Dubbo, Review Publications, 1983.

40 C. Spence, *Handfasted* (1879), Ringwood, Penguin, 1984.

41 C. Spence, *An Agnostic's Progress from the Known to the Unknown*, London, Williams and Norgate, 1884.

42 C. Spence, 'A Week in The Future', *Centennial Magazine*, December 1888–July 1889.

43 H. Taylor, *The Single Tax*, Adelaide, Hutchison, Creaker & Smith, 1892.

44 D. Gobbett and M. Saunders, *With Lane in Paraguay*, Rockhampton, Central Queensland University Press, 1995, pp. 2–11.

fifty members were relatively well educated, and they sought to create a cultured, sophisticated rural utopia. They thrived for several years but collapsed around 1900.⁴⁵ Another twelve communes (Gillen, Holder, Kingston, Lyrup, Moorook, Mount Remarkable, Nangkita, New Era, New Residence, Pyap, Ramco and Waikerie), established at about the same time as Murtho, collapsed even sooner.

An earlier South Australian commune, the 'Spinster Land Association', was formed near Binnun in 1872, supposedly as a lesbian collective. To date, little can be found about what informed their utopian endeavours, or even how long they lasted.⁴⁶

Tasmania

Tasmania has had several writers who believed that utopia could be realized through communal living. For example, in 1865, Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Crawford published a scheme to create a utopia for retired officers and their families from the British Military stationed in India.⁴⁷ This community, called Castra, would recreate the idyllic life of the Indian Hill Stations, with imported workers doing all the hard labour, and numerous servants to attend to other needs of the fortunate members, who would enjoy a life of genteel culture and gentlemanly recreation. Incredibly, Castra got underway near Ulverstone in 1874, but soon collapsed.⁴⁸

In October 1894 Emily Dobson, the wife of Tasmanian premier Henry Dobson, formed Southport Commune, with twenty-eight members. Three utopian authors important to Dobson's ideological development were Horace Tucker, who had just published *The New Arcadia: an Australian Story*, William Lane, whose writings were promoted in Tasmania by Robert Harvey, and Catherine Spence, whose 1888 work *A Week in The Future*⁴⁹ offered a genteel, Victorian utopia to which Emily Dobson was attracted. Both Tucker and Harvey went to Tasmania and acted as consultants to Emily Dobson as she created Southport Commune.

By Christmas 1894 Southport Commune had grown to sixty

45 L. Kerr, *Communal Settlements in South Australia in the 1890s* (M.A. thesis), Melbourne, University of Melbourne, 1951; and D. Mack, *The Village Settlements on the River Murray in South Australia 1894–1909: A Chronicle of Communal Life and Hardship*, Adelaide, David Mack, 1994.

46 *The Age*, 16 September 1872, p. 2; and *Border Watch*, 11 September 1872, p. 289.

47 A. Crawford, *Letter to the Officers of H.M. Indian Service, Civil and Military*, Hobart, James Barnard Government Printer, 1865.

48 Metcalf, 'Utopian Communal Experiments in Tasmania'.

49 C. Spence, 'A Week in The Future', *Centennial Magazine*, December 1888–July 1889.

members and appeared to be prospering. Three main problems, however, soon became evident: the paternalistic and prudish rules enforced by Emily Dobson were unacceptable to many members; their land was of dubious productivity; and their emphasis on clearing land, and their consequent slowness in building houses, meant that people were still living in tents when the harsh Tasmanian winter arrived. By mid-1895, many communards, including Emily Dobson, had returned to Hobart and those left at Southport began operating as individuals rather than as a collective.⁵⁰

A radically different utopia was envisaged by Critchley Parker in the early 1940s, as he planned to import several thousand Jewish refugees to establish Poynduk community, in the Port Davey area of Tasmania's remote southwest. Poynduk would become 'the Paris of Australasia', hold regular 'Olympic Games' involving poetry reading, public speaking and musical contests, and would have a university staffed by 'distinguished professors'. Poynduk would uphold principles of racial tolerance and international brotherhood, within a socialist economy. Poynduk's governance would 'be moulded on that of the USSR collective ownership'. The Tasmanian government offered limited support but when Critchley Parker died in 1942, Poynduk died with him.⁵¹

Western Australia

A number of utopian works have been written in Western Australia but none so far discovered have featured communal living. Two of the best known Western Australian utopian works are George Scott's *The Lost Lemurian: A Westralian Romance* (1898)⁵² and Veni Cooper-Mathieson's *A Marriage of Souls: A Metaphysical Novel* (1914).⁵³

The best-known communal group in Western Australia was 'New Jerusalem' (1902–13), however, the group's utopian inspiration and direction developed in Victoria prior to 1902. There, during the 1890s, they were informed by the writings of George Brown⁵⁴ and Horace Tucker⁵⁵ and were able to observe the developing range of Victorian communes. They saw these

50 Metcalf, 'Utopian Communal Experiments in Tasmania'.

51 Metcalf, 'Utopian Communal Experiments in Tasmania'.

52 G. Scott, *The Lost Lemurian: A Westralian Romance*, London, John Bowden, 1898.

53 V. Cooper-Mathieson, *A Marriage of Souls: A Metaphysical Novel*, Perth, The Truth Seekers Publishing Co., 1914.

54 G. Featherstone, 'Co-Workers with Christ: George A. Brown and Christian Socialism in Victoria 1885–1894', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 77, no. 1, 2006, pp. 16–33.

55 H. Tucker, *The New Arcadia: an Australian Story*, Melbourne, George Robertson, 1894.

communes prosper, then fall apart, and believed they could do better. New Jerusalem's leader, James Cowley Morgan Fisher, was a follower of the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, particularly as filtered through John Wroe and Christian Israelism.⁵⁶ These teachings led Fisher, who called himself a 'Christian Jew', to develop a polygamous, patriarchal lifestyle, with himself as the theocratic leader, when they moved to Western Australia in 1902.

By 1905 'New Jerusalem' had about seventy members, and the state government promoted them as a successful example of modern farming. This was owed to the communards' use of the latest equipment, often imported from the USA. 'New Jerusalem' had its own school, church and community hall, and members worked together and prospered, even managing to have a branch railway line built to the edge of their property in 1909. When Fisher died in 1913, however, New Jerusalem's members rapidly blended in with their more conventional neighbours.⁵⁷

A radically different form of utopian commune was 'Shalom', later known as 'Universal Brotherhood', which Mary Broun and Fred Robinson established near Perth in 1963. 'Shalom' was expected to become utopia after the intervention of the 'Space Brothers', supernatural beings from more technically and morally evolved planets. The group thrived for many years but slowly came undone after the death of their prophet, Fred Robinson, although a small group, 'Brooklands community' (aka 'The homestead'), continues. One academic researcher observed:

The Prophet's vision is a utopian vision of a new social order ... a world based on sharing, creativity, harmony, co-operation, Universal Brotherhood and positivity. It is also a Prophetic vision. It invokes the idea of cosmic realms, for it invokes the Space Brothers, and the Divine World. The vision is seen by Members as the blueprint for the new social order that will replace the old social order eliminating all injustices and inequality. ... Members ... are committed to the utopian endeavour of realising these aspirations, both in the structures of the model society they are building, and in the state of consciousness of residents.⁵⁸

56 G. Featherstone, 'The Nunawading Messiah: James Fisher and Popular Millenarianism in Nineteenth-Century Melbourne', *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2002, pp. 42-64.

57 Metcalf and Featherstone, 'A Messiah for the West'.

58 P. Black, *The Fashioning of the Earth Anew: An Ethnography of the Universal Brotherhood* (PhD thesis), Perth, University of Western Australia, 1984, p. 18.

Summary and Conclusion

This project is proving to be a rich source of material for publishing academic books and articles. It is doubtful, however, if any project with a title such as the 'Encyclopedia of Australian Utopian Communalism' could ever be said to be truly completed, since historical intentional communities and utopian texts are being discovered faster than they can be researched.

It would be wonderful to be liberally funded, employ several postdoctoral research assistants and an editorial director, and have ample funds to subsidize finishing the research and publishing a high quality, multi-volume encyclopedia but, in spite of a dozen or more applications to funding bodies over the past fifteen years, not a penny has been forthcoming for the overall project — although specific books have received small amounts of funding.

Australia has a rich legacy of utopian literature and of communal experiments which sought to put those ideas and ideals into practice. Imagining utopias, and consciously attempting to realize these dreams, thrives in Australia.

Appendix: Sources of Data

Research data about Australian utopian literature comes through two main channels: other people's research and opportunistic research. Those writers whose work has helped document Australian utopian works include Nan Albinski,⁵⁹ Melissa Bellanta,⁶⁰ Vincent Buckley,⁶¹ Verity Burgmann,⁶² Jack Dann and Janeen Webb,⁶³ Robert Dixon,⁶⁴ John Dunmore,⁶⁵ Raymond

59 N. Albinski, 'A Survey of Australian Utopian and Dystopian Fiction', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1987, pp. 15–28; and 'Visions of the Nineties', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 20, 1987, pp. 12–22.

60 M. Bellanta, 'Mobilising Fictions, or, Romancing the Australian Desert, 1890-1908', *History Australia*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2003, pp. 15–29.

61 V. Buckley, 'Utopianism and Vitalism in Australian Literature', *Quadrant*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1959, pp. 38–51.

62 V. Burgmann, *In our Time: socialism and the rise of Labor, 1885–1905*, Sydney, George Allen and Unwin, 1985.

63 J. Dann and J. Webb, *Dreaming Down Under*, Sydney, Harper Collins, 1998.

64 R. Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

65 J. Dunmore, 'Utopias and Imaginary Voyages to Australasia', *Occasional Lecture Series*, no. 2, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1988.

Evans,⁶⁶ Robin Gollan,⁶⁷ Van Ikin,⁶⁸ Andrew Milner et al.,⁶⁹ Lyman Tower Sargent,⁷⁰ Bruce Scates,⁷¹ Richard Trahair⁷² and Robyn Walton.⁷³

Opportunistic research occurs because of the length of time over which this research project has been going on. Many Australian librarians and other researchers know of this project; should they stumble upon another example of Australian utopian literature, they bring it to my attention. Similarly, while chasing up one utopian text, others will often be encountered. There appears to be a considerable amount of undocumented utopian writing held in Australian libraries, particularly those outside Melbourne and Sydney.

Information about the history of communal social experiments in Australia comes from four sources: general social, religious and/or labour histories; works about specific communal groups; local/regional histories; and opportunistic research.

General social, religious and/or labour history works which have been helpful include those by Thomas Coghlan,⁷⁴ Tess Van Sommers⁷⁵ and William Pember Reeves.⁷⁶

Examples of published material about specific communal groups include works by Gavin Souter,⁷⁷ Craig Cormick,⁷⁸ Guy

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- 66 R. Evans, 'Pigmentia: Racial Fears and White Australia', in A. Moses (ed.) *Genocide and Settler Society*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2004, pp. 103–24.
- 67 R. Gollan, 'American Populism and Australian Utopianism', *Journal of Labour History*, no. 9, 1965, pp. 15–21; and R. Gollan, 'The Australian Impact', in S. Bowman (ed.), *Edward Bellamy Abroad: An American Prophet's Impact*, New York, Twayne, 1962, pp. 119–36.
- 68 V. Ikin, 'Dreams, Visions, Utopias', in L. Hergenham (ed.), *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, Ringwood, Penguin, 1988; and *History of Australian Science Fiction*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1982.
- 69 A. Milner, M. Ryan and R. Savage (eds), *Imagining the Future: Utopia and Dystopia*, Melbourne, Arena Publications, 2006.
- 70 L. Tower Sargent, 'Australian Utopian Literature: An Annotated, Chronological Bibliography 1667–1999', *Utopian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1999, pp. 138–73.
- 71 B. Scates, 'The Utopians — and Early Socialists Who Lost their Way', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria*, vol. 54, no. 4, 1983, pp. 19–26; and *A New Australia: citizenship, radicalism and the First Republic*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- 72 R. Trahair, *Utopias and Utopians: An Historical Dictionary*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1999.
- 73 R. Walton, *Heaven and Hell: A Survey of Utopian and Anti-Utopian Prose Fiction by Australians Since 1870* (Masters thesis), Sydney, University of Sydney, 1977; and R. Walton, 'Utopian and Dystopian Impulses in Australia', *Overland*, no. 173, 2003, pp. 5–20.
- 74 T. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1918.
- 75 T. Van Sommers, *Religions in Australia*, Adelaide, Rigby, 1966.
- 76 W. Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia & New Zealand*, London, Alexander Moring, 1902.
- 77 Souter, *A Peculiar People*.
- 78 C. Cormick, *Kurikka's Dreaming*, Sydney, Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Featherstone,⁷⁹ Anne-Gabrielle Thompson⁸⁰ and John Murphy.⁸¹

Examples of local/regional histories that have provided information about communal groups include those by George Redding,⁸² Jane Calder,⁸³ Doreen O'Sullivan⁸⁴ and Margo Galloway.⁸⁵

Opportunistic research occurs, as with utopian texts, when other researchers draw attention to materials they have stumbled upon, or when material is discovered as an unintended consequence of other research. It often happens that when researching one communal group, information about another group will come to light. For example, recent research into the 'New Italy' community (1882–1930) brought to light information about the Women's Silk-growing Association. In 1893 its members were trying to establish women-only communes in New South Wales wherein all meals, domestic duties and social life would be shared, as would all income and expenses. Another example would be the research into Herrnhut Commune that led to discovering information about Maria Heller and the Hill Plain Commune of 1874–5.

79 G. Featherstone, 'Co-Workers with Christ'; and 'The Seventh Messenger and Australia 1904–1980: Benjamin Purnell and the House of David', *The Journal of Religious History*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2005, pp. 290–309.

80 A. Thompson, *Turmoil Tragedy to Triumph: The Story of New Italy*, Stanthorpe, International Colour Productions, 1980.

81 J. Murphy, *Leongatha Labour Colony*, Leongatha, Woorayl Shire Historical Society, 1983.

82 G. Redding, *A History of North Ryde*, Sydney, North Ryde Public School, 1986.

83 J. Calder, *Grampians, a Noble Range*, Melbourne, National Parks Association, 1987.

84 D. O'Sullivan, *Gayndah on the Burnett*, Toowoomba, Doreen O'Sullivan, 1995.

85 M. Galloway, *The Village Settlement School*, Monbulk, Monbulk Primary School, 1997.