Natural History, Ludwig Leichhardt and Queer White Desire

Katrina Maree Schlunke
The University of Sydney and The University of Tasmania

In 1843, Ludwig Leichhardt writes from the Moreton Bay District near Brisbane, Australia to his friend Lieutenant Robert Lynd in Sydney:

> They are a fine race of men, tall and well made and their bodies, individually, as well as the groups which they formed, would have delighted the eye of an artist. Is it fancy? But I am far more pleased in seeing the naked body of the black fellow than that of the whiteman. It is the white colour, or I do not know what, which is less agreeable to the eye. When I was in Paris I was often in the public baths in the Seine, and how few well made men did I see! There is little fat in the black-fellow, but his muscles are equally developed and their play appears on every part of the body, particularly on the back, when you are walking behind him and he is carrying something on his head. (qtd Aurousseau, 675)

What to make of this rush of feeling and aesthetic judgement contained in this intimate description? As Monaghan writes:

> The "nativisation" or "indigenisation" of the settler state is predicted on not just Indigenous dispossession but Indigenous disappearance — and it remains an essential element of settler colonial desires. The terms denote not just a displacing or replacing desire, but, somewhat ironically, a desire for an originary authority that dissipates Indigenous claims to sovereignty and territory. (198)

While Monaghan is gesturing more generally to the ways in which settler peoples make "originary" claims as discoverers and knowers of the land they steal, the idea of an "originary authority" also comes into being via the detailed descriptions of life in the colony that becomes known as its "natural history." The most well-known form of this is the detailing of particular plants and animal life, but depictions of Indigenous peoples were also part of that work. Such descriptions transformed Indigenous occupied land and Country[1] with its interconnections, rules and specific responsibilities to swathes of unknown bush to be "explored" and "discovered" by folks such as Ludwig Leichhardt. That those descriptions were also bound up with European ideas of beauty and homosocial comparison suggests the ways in which colonization also included white aesthetics and imagination. In the absence of any recorded conversation with any of the reported Indigenous men, Leichhardt's view is a one-way perspective written in a confiding style to another white man.

Some have seen Leichhardt's careful evaluation of Indigenous

Australian men as a sign of his homosexuality and others have emphasized his romanticism.[2] Yet what makes this small extract of particular interest is the way it brings together a raced gaze with a memory of the homosocial world of the public bathhouse to render a small scene on the Australian frontier as a colonizing but also queered event. In this sense, the assumed opposition between the colonial self of Leichhardt and the Indigenous other becomes a moment of connectivity with the larger white homosocial world of public bathing and bodies. I use queer theory's emphasis on "vector[s] of desire" to show the ways in which Leichhardt may have stepped beyond the colony's assumed racial oppositions to follow voyeuristic flights of cosmopolitan connection (Edelman, 344). Leichardt's descriptions suggest an appreciation of, and connection to, Indigenous Australians through a positive aestheticism. Desire in this queer sense is understood as *productive* (per Deleuze), rather than organized around lack, while drawing our attention to the mismatches "between sex, gender and desire" (Jagose, 3). In this case, Leichhardt's description does not dwell upon his role as employer or exploiter of Indigenous labor, but leaps to his one-sided aesthetic pronouncement, bringing together the purveyed bodies of those seen in the Paris public baths with the laboring body of an Indigenous Australian.

Looking

To write, as a man, of the quality of another man's body in connection with what one has seen in a public bathhouse is an instant touchstone, in this historical and cultural moment, to male gay culture. Public baths and bathhouses have been associated with different orders of homosociality across time and have been important sites of male gay culture in the modern era. The evocation of the all-male bathhouse connects the contemporary reader to hazy ideas of the hedonism of the communal Roman baths and the threats of closures that haunted the gay American bathhouses during the HIV panics of the 1980s and 90s. The sexually charged "looks" exchanged within gay bath houses have been well explored within gay literature but perhaps most tellingly by Armistead Maupin in his *Tale of the Cities* series (1978-2014), concerned with gay life in San Francisco, and earlier by Michael Rumaker in his homage to the liberatory effects of the baths of New York in *A Day and a Night at the Baths* (1979). The Parisian public baths to which Leichhardt is likely referring would have been the Piscine Deligny. Leichhardt lived at 25 Place Dauphine, about a twenty-minute walk to the Piscine Deligny, although there were other swimming baths further afield that floated on the Seine throughout the nineteenth century. The Piscine Deligny was a floating swimming school (*école de natation*) that later blossomed into a coveted destination for the rich but in Leichhardt's time (1838) was probably needing the massive renovation it would undergo in 1840. The water for the actual swimming section of the baths was provided by the unclean Seine but the Piscines also offered steam or Turkish baths, cafés to take refreshment in and decks to sunbathe upon.

In the 1800s when Leichhardt was writing, bathing was generally associated with cleanliness and an order of purification, including the therapeutic uses of both hot and cold water. As bathing involved some encounter with the naked self, it was at different times also associated in the Christian world with temptation brought on by the sight of one's own flesh. But by the 1800s, the bath had shifted in understanding from a site of temptation to a sign of virtue and frequent bathing became associated with the idea of frequent confession (Ariès and Duby, 1988). Bathing was also associated with the emerging public hygiene movement that saw the development of public baths for the washing of clothes as well as public bathing throughout the 1800s.[3] That Leichhardt refers to his experiences in a public is as much a signal of his clean living and reformist, liberal sensibilities as it is evocative of homoerotic engagement. The baths were certainly all-male affairs and the opportunities to see and reflect upon the physiques of other men was freely available. Whichever way Leichhardt looked at his fellow male bathers in Paris, by 1843 in Australia, Leichhardt expresses moral concern only about the sight of women. He gives full weight to what the sight might do in relation to one's scientific ambitions and fleshy (heterosexual) temptations. In a letter from this same period to his close friend and patron William Nicholson he writes:

> As for myself, I used to be keenly aware of what simple-minded advocates of the Bible call "the iniquity of the flesh." Through my sense of what is moral, through being continually in love and but little exposed to temptation, I have remained in a state of "masculine maidenhood", but, my affections have constantly had an object of attachment, I have just as constantly felt the yearning to win her. My interest in science, however, has been just strong enough to prevail over the promptings of the flesh, and ambition may have given some help to science … I sensed what I was losing by remaining a bachelor; and it seems to me that an unmarried man can hardly be virtuous through and through, since his eyes are constantly adding fuel to his desires (qtd Aurousseau, 733).

Leichhardt is articulating here his own clinical virginity while establishing science and sex as competing passions with only "love" and "attachment" triggering "promptings of the flesh." Ways of looking produce a constant attack upon virtue when directed at the focus of one's desire (or perhaps women in general); and yet it is those same eyes that provide the necessary detailed descriptions for the greater advancement of science.

Leichhardt spent much of the previous years exploring the diversity of natural history, which was organized according to the then still emerging style of scientific description. His time in Paris coincided with the post-revolutionary rise of that city as an epicenter for medical knowledge, one of the disciplines Leichhardt was studying. According to Weiner and Sauter, there existed a "revolutionary belief that citizens had a right to health care but owed society the use of their living bodies and their cadavers for study. This

new concept entailed their ready availability in multiple stages of disease and in death, making Paris a magnet for medical men, native and foreign" (Weiner and Sauter, 25). In this way, close observation of human form and disease was added by Leichhardt to the existing tradition of observing the natural world.

The style of these descriptions of unknown peoples and places were also tied to the existing genre of travelers' accounts that commanded good prices in the 1840s, and were well circulated. In private letters like these, the picturesque accounts of the exotic helped portray the men who wrote them as gentlemen explorers and travelers. But Leichhardt is not a distanced observer as we might expect of "scientific" description today. His evocation of what would please the artist leads him to consider his own response to the color of skin, while his questioning and his proposition of a possible fancy leads him to his pronouncement of a personal aesthetic that white is "less agreeable to the eye." He also makes a comment on the lack that he observed among (the presumably white only?) men in the baths of Paris. We can simply read this as one man's "view," but what was the cultural environment that may have enabled this perspective?

Leichhardt is writing in the early 1840s in a period that in Germany and across other parts of Europe he visited (including Italy, England and France) saw a well-developed sense of the neo-classical. This particularly stemmed in the instance of Prussian Germany from the work of Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768), an early Hellenist who repopularized what he understood to be the Greek ideals of male beauty in art and life. For example, in "On the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks" Winckelmann writes generally about the superiority of the corporeal form of Greek bodies that were produced by physical exercises, the Spartan traditions of sleeping on the ground and following particular diets to avoid fat. Those ideal forms were also found in others: "Behold the swift Indian outstripping in pursuit the hart: how briskly his juices circulate! how flexible, how elastic his nerves and muscles! how easy his whole frame! Thus Homer draws his heroes…" (Irwin, 62). Winckelmann has himself been critiqued for his appreciation of white marble but as Hodne argues: "The few times that he actually speaks about skin colour in his History of Art are usually in positive terms, like the passage where, describing the soft skin of a 'dark complexioned beauty', Winckelmann concludes that 'a brown skin is to be regarded as the clearer, because this colour, when natural, is occasioned by the blood showing through it, and from this very cause it is tanned more quickly than a white skin" (2020, 193). Leichhardt's description also emphasizes the musculature of the Indigenous Australian men: "his muscles are equally developed and their play appears on every part of the body." Beauty lay in the sight of the bodies of beautiful young men and the Indigenous men Leichhardt sees are beautiful in their fulfilment of the Hellenistic aesthetic of fitness and a capability of appearing noble in their nakedness. That Leichhardt appears to have had the ordinary aesthetic judgement of the educated traveler of the 1830s neither proves nor disproves his desires. However, the historical context of those judgements allows us to

contemplate the possibility of the bathhouse as a colonial frontier that was itself filled with the echoes of this Greek ideal. This shift of gaze from the strange and irreconcilable difference of colonial Australia recorded by others to Leichhardt's personal *cum* scientific remarks renders this scene not so much a scene of "difference" as of worldly intimacies to be shared, in particular with white men. This is a scene where the unfolding, agential, effects of the Indigenous body with their material beingness produces further effects and connections such as those with Hellenist thinking and a desire to advance science. In this way, Leichhardt creates an appreciation of Indigenous bodies that is not just scientific as we would understand it now *or* simply romantic but personal and intimate as well as deeply voyeuristic and controling.

How *Leichhardt's* body figured to those he is describing is difficult to establish. His own accounts of being struck by one of his Indigenous guides (Charley Fisher, a Wiradjuri man from Bathurst) on his first expedition may suggest that his body was not seen as all powerful nor inviolable, or it could mean Fisher was particularly courageous or something else entirely. Leichhardt's willingness to record his being beaten by his Indigenous guide contributed, Kociumbas suggests, to the overall understanding of Leichhardt's first expedition. She understands it to have been seen as "too tied to pastoralist interest, [as] he was too obviously a foreigner and so 'not quite a gentleman' and his record of losing a physical fight with one of his Indigenous guides meant he could never become a national hero" (262).

In the instance of this particular letter to Lynd, Leichhardt records looking from behind, a position unconducive to the recording of another's response. His description of the Indigenous men's muscles is deeply evocative of a visceral eroticism; but at the same time we recognize that this is a queerly naïve description. Perhaps like the naked statues of the Greeks, Leichhardt could admire (and perhaps desire) an athletic young Indigenous man as he could admire (and perhaps desire) the practices and purpose of them as "scientific" phenomena. In the final sentence of his letter to Robert Lynd he writes as if passing on a love token: "I cannot omit mentioning, that I found the Moreton Bay passion-flower in full blossom, near a water-hole, in a rather swampy place, with tea-trees (melaleuca) and course [sic] grasses." That his naturalist interests had this dimension of desire and taste is further suggested in a letter to William Nicholson when he writes of the people he meets in Sydney:

> I did my best all round to encourage an interest in science in the families I met, since, on the one hand, I looked upon myself as an itinerant preacher, and saw, on the other hand, the advantage to science itself of wide-spread observations made by numerous persons. … And yet although I have been able to show people the same easy confidence with which many of them have been so kindly treating me, there's always been something lacking, something that holds me back from them. It seems impossible for me to risk declaring myself openly and fully to them. And what you ask have I to declare? I have often felt as if I were pretending to be the guardian

> of … secrets, like the masonic brethren, but that they would prove to be nothing but matter of common knowledge were I to divulge them (qtd Aurousseau, 509).

He then goes on to describe having to endure "small talk" about friends, enemies and children and his endless efforts to lift the quality of conversation: "I've always tried to get them to raise their level of interest, and, as trivialities of this kind disgust me, and there was no escape from them, I tried my utmost to find refuge in generalities." (qtd Aurousseau, 509). Disgust and fear and anxiety are all here and all in the name of science. Ordinary body functions are simply that, as a later section in this same letter suggests: "My settled habits have made me extraordinarily soft. You know how easily I get diarrhoea. It's been like it was in Paris. etc." (qtd Aurousseau, 510). But when looking and scientific description come together perhaps we experience his most erotic and poetic moments. When these accounts have a botanical focus, the romantic, intimate desires produced by his detailed description can be seen:

> … creek, river, and water-holes were adorned with the scarlet blossoms of Calothamnus, which hangs with drooping branches like the weeping willow over the waters, looking at its own beauty, like Narcissus, and dropping blossom after blossom into the murmuring stream, as man drops his blighted hopes into the stream of life. (qtd Aurousseau, 682)

When these descriptions move from botany to Indigenous people they become deeply disturbing, reminding us that colonialism was also a battle of feeling and looking and about the making of lasting records of life that quickly and effectively displaced the flourishing lives of Indigenous peoples with judgements and taxonomies. These descriptions would circulate and become the basis of an order of blind citing whereby Indigenous life would be valorized via the citation of knowledges quite irrelevant to them.[4] The differences in race and situation between Leichhardt and these Indigenous men charge those descriptions with the already noted possibility of the homoerotic but only to an audience schooled in those aesthetics. There may have been more science than erotic voyeurism in Leichhardt's gaze but both were controling and organizing activities. Scientific descriptions sustain the borders between entities but also classify similarities. The difference between Leichhardt's careful distinction between orders of life can be usefully contrasted with Gauguin's primitivist collapse of nature and human in his description of his Tahitian guide almost fifty years later: "With the suppleness of an animal and the graceful litheness of an androgyne he walked a few paces in advance of me. And it seemed to me that I saw incarnated in him, palpitating and living all the magnificent plant-life which surrounded us" (Gauguin, 19). For Gauguin, the guide for a moment *is* nature whereas for Leichhardt the guide (and other Indigenous peoples) are cultural participants and producers who also suggest a beauty that only an artist might truly bring to life. Perhaps this suggests something of the variety of training

and culture that created diverse colonial gazes, albeit with little change in the systemic effects of colonial systems upon Indigenous peoples.

Four months after writing the description being examined here, Leichhardt revisits the theme of Indigenous beauty in his diary. He cannot countenance the flat nose of some Indigenous peoples in terms of "ideal European beauty" but goes on to write: "However, the artist would not get weary of observing and studying their bodies, be it that he admired the play of their back muscles, when he walked behind them, be it that he saw them throwing and swinging spear, wommara and waddi, be it that he viewed their groups sitting, lying and squatting" (Darragh and Fensham, 379). Leichhardt's evocation of these athletic forms and communal activity echo the subjects of Hellenist sculpture and vase painting. In this way, he sustains his own imagining as that of the ideal artist who (schooled in Winkelmann aesthetics one might guess) is able to see the superiority of form. Occupying the imagined position of a particular kind of artist, Leichhardt makes a wider link than that of particular bath scenes to a larger world of beautifully formed bodies which in turn gives him access to a particular subject position both superior to the whites around him while vulnerable to the judgements of white colonial society.

Homosexuality?

This looking and describing of Leichhardt has been seen (in both positive and negative ways) as evidence of his possible homosexuality. Aldrich in *Colonialism and Homosexuality* writes: "There has been speculation on the real-life Leichhardt partly because of his homoerotic descriptions of Aboriginal men and because of his friendship with Nicholson and Lynd" (232). William Nicholson was the English university friend and financial backer of Leichhardt with whom the latter had originally planned to explore the world and extend their mutual interest in natural science, while Robert Lynd was the barrack-master and natural science enthusiast who housed Leichhardt when he lived in Sydney. It is to Lynd that the description I am discussing here concerning the Indigenous men is addressed, and it is Lynd who penned the lyrics for the elegiac ode "Leichhardt's Grave" written when Leichhardt was supposed dead on his first journey to Port Essington. The ode refers to his "virtuous friend" and to happier times when "science like the smile of God, comes brightening o'er that weary land" (Lynd, 5).

Aldrich goes on to quote the Chisholm biography of Leichhardt that, written in the 1940s, is most notable for its efforts to raise the figure of Englishman John Gilbert at the expense of Leichhardt's reputation. Within this biography, Leichhardt is, at best, described as a "romantic and irresponsible blunderer" (xxi). Chisholm suggests Leichhardt formed a "queer alliance" with Nicholson and that kindred interests "caused the acquaintance to ripen" (xxi). The biography refers to the time when Leichhardt and Nicholson went to study in Paris as such:

> It was a queer alliance. At the outset, no doubt, Nicholson had waxed "motherly" from compassion – his lonely and generous nature had responded to Leichardt's mingling of helplessness and assertiveness – but by this time the association had become a habit. Here, in a French setting, the Englishman was playing Sindbad the Sailor with a German Old Man of the Sea.[5] Both men were detrimentally affected by the alliance. In Nicholson's case it caused much waste of time and money (it left him indeed practically a poor man), and in Leichhardt's case it promoted the weakness that was to cause him to become known in Australia as a confirmed sponger. (Chisholm, 63)

Manning Clark published his take on Leichhardt in 1973 as part of his many-volumed *History of Australia* and writes of Leichhardt's "brotherly kissing":

> In the eyes of his critics he was a sponger, a poseur, and a human fraud with disgusting personal habits – he tore into his food with the savagery of the beasts of the field; he spoke much of that love between man and man which surpassed that of woman, as though it were a love between two souls, but was much given to "brotherly kissing". Those who were uneasy in his presence or rejected the spirituality he spoke of as humbug and twaddle, noted that he spent his life fawning on the men of substance such as James and William Macarthur, or talking to the aborigines. (338)

Clark's claim about Leichhardt being "much given to brotherly kissing" appears to be an extension of a single reference in Mann's account of the second expedition. Mann writes: "On the previous night, as the clouds looked threatening, I crawled into the tent then occupied solely by the Doctor. In doing so I accidentally placed my hand on one of his (he was laying on his back his arms stretched out). He immediately grasped it and drawing me to him, kissed me, and made me kiss him. He was in great distress and low spirits" (32). Chisholm then re-inscribes Mann's experience as: "During this period Mann entered Leichhardt's tent on one occasion and was immediately drawn forward and kissed" (Chisholm, 239). So, while Clark would appear to have exaggerated Leichhardt's physical relations with men his descriptions of Leichhardt in general are marvelous. They are often very romantic and at times appear to almost mimic Leichhardt's own prose:

> He was one of those giants in the land in the days before the levelling flood of industrial civilization, one of those mighty spirits with a vision of the grandeur of the human spirit to match the vision of grandeur entertained by Wentworth, Dutton brothers etc. etc. and … The Gods had planted in him both the mind of a scientist and the creative imagination of an artist. … He wanted also to study all the lechery and beastliness in man, because like Schiller, he was puzzled why God should plant in the heart of the same creature both a vision of His throne, and the insect of sensual lust. (Clark, 338)

Clark's description of meeting Patrick White has a curious echo with

this description: "Once again I was in the presence of a man who wanted something which no man could give him. We were all inadequate: we would all let him down … He knew that the tormented are often the ones who understand. He was an inspiration to keep going." John Rickard notes in his reproduction of this encounter that Clark suggests it occurred "in the years after Voss."[6] In a lovely claim to the affectivity of literature we therefore may have *Voss* (White's novel partly based on Leichhardt) shaping how White was understood by Clark. Then Clark writes of Leichhardt as a kind of White-*cum*-Voss figure in a circle of literary and political effects.

McKenna suggests that "Clark's was a singular vision – emotive and mischievous, tortured and divine – like that of no other historian or writer of his generation" (479). It is Leichhardt's critics (in Clark's description of him) that sound a little like Clark's abhorred "straiteners" displaying their "Englishmanism." They notice not a visionary but the bourgeois banalities of Leichhardt's manners, his connections with others and his suggested advocacy of an ideal homosociality let down by his baser need for physical contact with real men. Clark appears to be saying that Leichhardt's desires exceeded the possibilities of his own time and were part of his misunderstood greatness.

All these portrayals of Leichhardt's desires risk being "anachronistic." This is Sedgwick's term to describe "gay" accounts of Henry James' work: "Anachronistically gay readings, based on late twentieth-century vision of men's desire for men that is more stabilised and culturally compact than James' own" (197). There is no possibility imagined in them, that the power of Leichhardt's "gayness" may be his "queerness" – his refusal to let colonial Australia glide back into simple oppositions of black and white, straight and otherwise. His words insist instead upon the diverse beauties of the colony that refused the foreclosure of black and white and push us to appreciate the diversity of relations that existed between men and men, natural history and the men who described it at this time. As Halperin suggests: "Friendship/love demands an equality of rank between the partners, whereas pederasty/sodomy depends on a socially significant difference between the partners in age, status, and sexual role" (114). This identified difference from classical times can be seen to have influenced male relationships throughout time, even into the contemporary moment.[7] What is queer about Leichhardt might not therefore be his kissing of a fellow expeditioner but his occasional inclusion of Indigenous men within an order of comparative experience and as fellow naturalists.

Leichhardt's "queerness" but not his "homosexuality" is much more apparent in a colonial context when he temporarily includes Indigenous peoples as fellow natural scientists and exacting craftsmen of life. Writing two paragraphs after his account of the black backs and baths he states: "As much as I was able to observe, there is nothing in the nature in which they live which they have not discovered." Further on he writes: "They are quite as particular about the material of their wommerangs [boomerangs], their spears, nullah-nullahs [clubs] and

helimans [shields], as a European artist" (qtd Aurousseau, 676). He then provides sets of examples of Indigenous usage and management of their environment that detail the Indigenous people's depth of knowledge that he saw must have been built upon histories and continuous practices of experimentation. Leichhardt is far from consistent across his many writings from Australia in these positive and inclusionary descriptions of Indigenous life. Yet it is nonetheless useful to consider the moments in which they erupt and their relative rareness on the colonial frontier.

Whiteness

The "whiteness" that is less agreeable to the eye is more difficult to trace among European thought of that time. Well established in connection with mourning and ghosts in different Indigenous groups, whiteness also carried ideas of deathly shrouds, pallor and an order of nothingness in the western imagination. In the 1840s, white as a color of skin was caught up in the normalizing of images of Christ and the Virgin as white and in a dynamic where one should strive to be like but not transcend these figures. Dyer suggests in *White* that this striving "registered in suffering, self-denial and self-control and also material achievement if it can be construed as the temporary and partial triumph of the mind over matter" (17). Certainly, Leichhardt experiences these torments and treats his own body and own white skin at various moments as something to be cured, experimented with and a source of weakness. Its agreeableness rarely appears.

In his diaries and letters Leichhardt quotes both Goethe and Schiller. While Leichhardt may have known Goethe's ideas about color,[8] Schiller seems a more obvious aid in understanding Leichhardt's sense of "agreeable beauty." He begins his essay "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" thus:

> There are moments in our lives when we dedicate a kind of love and tender respect to nature in plants, minerals, animals and landscapes as well as to human nature in children, in the customs of country folk and to the primitive world not because it gratifies our senses, nor yet because it satisfies our understanding or taste (the very opposite can occur in both instances) rather simply *because it is nature* (Schiller, 180)

And elsewhere he goes on to speak of the great calm, naïve beauty and enchanting idyll of nature. But Leichhardt extends Schiller, claiming not simply the beauty of the "natural" in the Indigenous men but their fulfilment of an aesthetic when compared to white men he has known. Whiteness appears to be understood by Leichhardt as a lack that has emerged from the "softness" of non-Indigenous life. This also echoes Winkelmann who compared the Spartan youth with "a young Sybarite of our time, and then decide which of them an artist would choose as the model for a young Theseus, an Achilles, or even a Bacchus" (Nisbet, 33). Indigenous experimentation within the natural world, their beauty, their care in the production of their tools of life sees

Leichhardt using the vocabulary and learned ways of looking of both the romantic and natural science worlds to make contingent observations that appear to exceed both. But while Leichhardt shows the problem with (particular) white skinned men it is important to appreciate how that specific usage of white did not necessarily undermine the deployment of "whiteness." As Boucher writes:

> On the one hand, studies of empirical whiteness would interrogate its emergence as a specific designation with attendant specifying functions, whereby the attribution of whiteness explicitly legitimates specific privileges. On the other, studies of analytic whiteness would seek to bring to the surface the operation of power that operates via racialized exclusions from the political, emotional or social category "(hu)man" (2006, 20).

Leichhardt's insistence on the artistic beauty of Indigenous men creates another frame within which Indigenous peoples are to be understood. Even as "white" is understood as worse than Indigenous, Leichhardt, as the man who is able to look, describe and so organize the understanding of the Indigenous men, continues the power of what would be called "whiteness" now. That power robs the men of their own responses and silences the power of connection with Country that Leichhardt is actively complicit in colonizing and that this isolating description of the men produces.

Conclusion

In examining the history of the ideas that organize Leichhardt's descriptions and encounters with Indigenous peoples and the way they have been explained by others, we arrive at a complex appreciation of the work that those descriptions do. The productive queerness of Leichhardt may finally lie in his romantic sensuality and his utter commitment to natural history descriptions as a fulfilling desire in and of themselves.

When those two aspects – romantic sensuality and natural history description — come together to describe Indigenous peoples in Australia, Leichhardt puts his own experience of color and nakedness within his field of explanation to create a continuum of homosocial aesthetics between the European center and colonial periphery. In this connectiveness, in the excess of his poetics descriptions and in the sharing of such descriptions with individual male friends, a particular strand of white queerness comes into the colony that also colonizes. As Andrew Farrell, a Wodi Wodi descendant from Jerrinja Aboriginal community evokes in his poem, "Fat Queer Colony":

> Like cartography, I am
> Interpreted and assigned.
> Settler colonies remain strict on size
> …
> Surpassing the gayze
> I shed the colonial weight.

I will occupy too much space (38)

Farrell claims back his body, his right to claim space and demands the reader consider the colonizing work that continues in the "gayze" of whiteness, whether queered or straight. Leichhardt's desirous natural history descriptions and their colonizing work will continue to be challenged by a multitude of Indigenous acts including by Indigenous queer peoples, "surpassing the gayze."

Endnotes

[1] Capitalization of "Country" follows Sara Kianga Judge, Australian Museum in museum post; *Who is Country? Why I capitalise Animals, Rivers, Coolamons and Storms* as a means of showing respect for 'who' Country is and to differentiate Indigenous Country from national country.
https://australian.museum/learn/first-nations/burra/who-is-country/

[2] See Aldrich (2002). "Sex in Settler Societies: The case of Australia", in *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, pp. 215-245. Also see C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, Vol. III (Melbourne, 2nd ed, 1987), pp. 338-40.

[3] Leichhardt's relationship to baths and bathing may have been influenced by some of the thinking circulating at the time. For example in German, Dr J. S. Hahn's book *On the Healing Virtues of Cold Water, Inwardly and Outwardly Applied, as Proved by Experience*, published in 1738 and in English James Currie's 1805 "Medical Reports, on the Effects of Water, Cold and Warm, as a remedy in Fever and Other Diseases, Whether applied to the Surface of the Body, or used Internally," which was less certain about the benefits of cold bathing. Throughout his life Leichhardt would comment upon the effects of cleanliness and its lack of effects on health. For a fuller exploration of uses of water in public and private see the whole of Anderson *et al*., 2002. For comparison with America public bathing see Williams, 1991.

[4] Queer Black artist Troy-Anthony Bayliss introduced me to the political dimensions of "blind citing" through his work "The Blindcited" (2020). See
https://www.artmuseum.qut.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1241491/A2-poster_Troy-Baylis_PRINT.pdf

[5]Although these sailor and seamen analogies may hold some further 1940s twist not available to this reader it is useful to recall the Sinbad context. Sinbad the Sailor encountered the monstrous Old Man of the Sea on his fifth voyage. The Old Man of the Sea in the Sinbad tales was said to trick a traveler into letting him ride on his shoulders while the traveler transported him across a stream. However, the Old Man would then not release his grip, forcing his victim to transport him

wherever he pleased and allowing his victim little rest. The Old Man's victims all eventually died of this miserable treatment, but Sinbad, after having got the Old Man drunk with wine, was able to shake him off and kill him; a fate we might guess that Chisholm could easily hope for Leichhardt in this scenario.

[6] See Rickard, 1992. Rickard takes this quote from Marr's *Patrick White* and which Clark suggests happened in 1958 or "the years after Voss."

[7] See Merrick 2004; and Halperin 2000: "Those men who refused to rise to the challenge, who abandoned the competitive society of men for the amorous society of women, who pursued a life of pleasure, who made love instead of war—they incarnated the classical stereotype of effeminacy. This stereotype seems to live on in the American South, where 'a redneck queer' is defined as 'a boy from Alabama who laks girls better'n football." It is also alive and well in Anglo-Celtic Australia, where a real bloke is a guy who avoids the company of women and prefers to spend all his time with his mates (that's how you can tell he's straight)." See also Wotherspoon 2007.

[8] Goethe was less interested in separating the spectrum into its divisible parts, investigating instead the vague space *between* the pure colors, where the clear delineation between one color and the next was more mysterious. He looked not to the individual wavelengths but to the merging of short-wave light and long-wave light. He looked to where light interacted with itself. His research seems to have begun with the notion that color, or light, was in fact a perceptual act that necessarily included a more introspective interpretation. Goethe was also understood to have said that whites are the most beautiful but his 1840s translator qualified this by saying that what Goethe intended was "that white skin is more beautiful than the black, because it is more capable of indications of life, and indications of emotion" (Dyer, 50). Leichhardt does not confirm this.

Work Cited

Aldrich, Robert. *Colonialism and Homosexuality*. Routledge, 2003.

Anderson, Susan C., and Bruce H. Tabb. *Water, leisure and culture: European historical perspectives*. Berg Publishers, 2002.

Aurousseau, Marcel. *The Letters of F.W. Ludwig Leichhardt* (Vol 2). Cambridge University Press, 1968.

Bérubé, Allan. "The History of Gay Bathhouses." *Journal of Homosexuality*, 44.3/4 (2003): 33-53.

Boucher, Leigh. "Whiteness before 'White Australia?" *Historicising Whiteness: Translational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity*, Eds. Boucher, L., Carey, J & Ellinghaus, K. RMIT Publishing (in association with the School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne,) 2007, vi–xxiii.

Chisholm, Alec. *Strange Journey: The Adventures of Ludwig Leichhardt and John Gilbert.* Rigby, 1973.

Clark, Manning. *A History of Australian Vol 3; The Beginning of an Australian Civilization.* Melbourne University Press, 1973.

Darragh, Thomas and Fensham, Roderick. *The Leichhardt Diaries: Early travels in Australia during 1842-1844.* Queensland Museum, 2013.

Davis, Whitney. *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond.* Columbia University Press, 2010.

Edelman, Lee. "Queer Theory: Unstating Desire." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2.4 (1995): 343-346.

Farrell, Andrew. "Fat Queer Colony", in *NANGAMAY Dream MANA Gather DJURALI Grow: First Nations Australia LGBTQIA+ Poetry*, edited by Alison Whittaker and Steven Lindsay Ross, BLACKBOOKS® (Tranby Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd.), 2023. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/usyd/detail.action?docID=30391765.

Gauguin, Paul. *Noa Noa: The Tahitian Journal.* Dover, 1985.

Halperin, David. "How to do the History of Male Homosexuality." *GLQ: A Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* 6 (2000): 87-124.

Hodge, Dino. *Colouring the Rainbow: Blak Queer and Trans Perspectives: Life Stories and Essays by First Nations People of Australia*. Edited by Dino Hodge, Wakefield Press, 2015.

Hodne, Lasse. (2020) "Winckelmann's Depreciation of Colour in Light of the *Querelle du coloris* and Recent Critique", *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History* (2020) 89:3, 191-210. DOI: 10.1080/00233609.2020.1788636

Irwin, David (Ed). *Winckelmann; Writings on Art*. Phaidon Press, 1972.

Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory*. Melbourne University Press, 1996.

Kociumbas, Jan. *Oxford History of Australia Vol 2, 1770-1860: Possessions*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Lynd, Robert. "Leichhardt's Grave: an elegiac ode" 1845. https://archive.org/details/Leichhardt51202/page/n3/mode/2up

Mann, John F. *Eight Months with Dr. Leichhardt in the Years 1846-47.* British Library, Historical Print Editions, 1888/2014.

McKenna, Mark. "Being There; The Strange History of Manning Clark." *The Monthly* March 2007, http://www.themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-mark-mckenna-being-there-strange-history-manning-clark-479

Merrick, Jeffrey. "Male Friendship in Prerevolutionary France", *GLQ*,1 0:3, 407-432, 2004.

Monaghan, Oscar. "Dual Imperatives: Decolonising the Queer and Queering the Decolonial" in *Colouring the Rainbow: Blak Queer and Trans Perspectives: Life Stories and Essays by First Nations People of Australia*. Edited by Dino Hodge, Wakefield Press, 2015, 195-206.

Potvin, John. "Vapour and Steam: The Victorian Turkish Bath, Homosocial Health, and Male Bodies on Display." *Journal of Design History*, 18.4 (2005): 319-333.

Rickard, John. "Manning Clark and Patrick White: A reflection," *Australian Historical Studies* 25.98 (1992):116-122.

Rumaker, Michael. *A Day and a Night at the Baths*, Grey Fox Press, 1979.

"The Swimming Pool that Sank and other Watery Tales." per Invisible Paris Website**.** http://parisisinvisible.blogspot.com.au/2013/01/the-swimming-pool-that-sank-and-other.html. April 2023 Accessed.

Schiller, Friedrich. "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry," in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism,* ed., Barry Nesbit, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet.* University of California Press, 1990.

Weiner, Dora and Michael Sauter. "The City of Paris and the Rise of Clinical Medicine," *Osiris*, 18 (2003): 23-42.

Williams, Marilyn Thornton. "Washing 'The Great Unwashed': Public Baths in Urban America, 1840-1920, Ohio State University Press, 1991.

Wotherspoon, Gary. "Exploring Love" *Meanjin*, 66:1 (2007): 47-52.