Exclusion or engagement? Cultural obstacles to restricting access in national parks

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Land managers wishing to protect 'wild' or endangered places face a particular cultural problem: the widespread belief that restriction on access is an affront to established rights. We examine the idea of right of access, and draw attention to another idea present in both the indigenous and settler cultures of Australia: that some places are best experienced if we refrain from visiting them. We relate the idea of access to that of dominance, and show that this can obscure our vision of nature, and make it harder to appreciate important features of the natural world, such as biodiversity. We consider an important influence, The Man from Snowy River: can such stories be reinterpreted to support an attitude to nature characterised more by restraint than conquest? We suggest ways educators and park managers could support a process of cultural change to highlight the work of scientists and others as role models for a different approach to 'wilderness'.

The Problem

Visitors to national parks and other significant natural places have been steadily increasing in numbers in the last twenty years. It is now a commonplace experience for park managers that people 'kill the place they love' through overuse, but most are resigned to their fate: to struggle on ever-diminishing budgets to contain the impact of rising visitor numbers. Public policymakers do not readily consider aiming explicitly for reduced usage in parks, or encouraging outright withdrawal from designated places. Such a policy would run counter to numerous widespread assumptions: for example, that high usage is a sign of value, that if a place is of any real interest, then it can only be properly appreciated in a visit, and that it is in any case a basic right to be able to freely access public land.

This paper aims to reflect on the problem of imposing restrictions on access to 'wild' or environmentally fragile places. The dilemmas and debates that arise from such restrictions are a significant drain on land managers' time, one that is likely to grow as visitor numbers and means of access to natural settings increase. We propose to explore the idea that protection of such places can be best achieved not by restriction or regulation, but by aiming at cultural change. Such a change can only be brought about via long-term education, in which regulation would play a significant but decreasing role. It is the underlying assumption of this argument that in the process the nature of Australian national parks could undergo a process in which their role should be less to explicitly 'preserve' nature, and more to promote constructive cultural engagement with it: a cultural engagement which would, however, be free of the destructive activities which have characterised many of our approaches to the land since settlement.

In national parks, managers concerned to protect the natural values of areas under pressure from high use have to confront an important difficulty: the fact that in our culture it is commonly held that as long as you are careful (and no one admits to not being careful) you have a right to go just about anywhere on public land which has not been designated for a very precise use involving specific activities (defence installations, for example). Management attempts to zone areas as 'wilderness' or to limit vehicle access, for example, are fraught with potential controversy. The recent debate over whether sections of Victoria's Box-Ironbark country should be declared national park aroused again the question whether any restriction is an affront to our democratic and traditional rights, and National Party candidates in that region campaigned in the 2002 Victorian State elections on this very issue.1

There is a second, even more intractable problem in this matter. We are approaching the time, as Edwin Bernbaum puts it, when 'the last unclimbed mountains are [being] climbed and true wilderness vanishes, to be replaced with parks and designated "wilderness areas"'. Romantic images of sages 'wandering forever through mountains without end', the very concepts of remoteness and solitude, are being called into question by the hard realities of population increase, helicopter use, legal and other pressures to use mobile phones and GPS systems, and adventurous and even not so adventurous tourism. The case for wilderness zones as a management tool is strong, but it goes without saying that, as Bernbaum implies, a wilderness zone is not the same as the kind of wilderness which inspired wild excitement in explorers and mountaineers past. Alison Byerly makes the point with greater severity: 'The feeling of awe that is inspired by a "sublime" scene depends on the spectator's sense of its dominant power and its ability to call forth a visionary grasp of infinity. The American wilderness, however, has been gradually reduced and circumscribed until it no longer seems to stretch into infinity, but is contained and controlled within established boundaries.'2

One common cultural response to the problem of protection of natural areas is the idea of sacredness. Bernbaum cites the Chinese Mount Tai Shan, whose slopes are covered with inscriptions, temples and tea stalls, and which, he maintains, still evokes for the Chinese as powerful a sense of awe as any wild peak might for a westerner. The idea of the sacred, particularly as a form of respect for place, is worth exploring, as we will show later in this essay. Given, however, that some forms of this idea seem more directed at satisfying the human need for a sense of spiritual fulfillment in a place than at protecting that place from overuse, it does not necessarily by itself offer a solution to land management problems. In particular, the idea of pilgrimage as noted by Bernbaum contains ecological implications for the mountain that are probably not appropriate for Australian mountain settings. These places have evolved in the absence of intense use, and it is to the cultural traditions which surround them which we must look for guidance in management.

We would like to argue that there is support in Australian tradition, ancient and modern, for the idea that certain significant
places should be treated differently, for reasons which are not simply pragmatic or administrative, but which are connected also to story and legend. We would like to see if there is a practical consistency between the protective, essentially science-based ideas of zoning practised by park managements, and ideas of respect and awe in the face of nature expressed by some artists and thinkers over the centuries. If there is, then it might be possible to work towards a situation where culture and tradition are allies in the preservation of vulnerable areas, not impediments to be overcome.

**Dominance and Restraint**

We'll begin by looking at the history of the idea of 'right of access,' considering two common cultural attitudes to this, dominance and restraint. In *The Bureaucrat's Domain* Ray Wright discusses the question of access to land as it affected early administrators' attempts to control the exploitation of Victoria's public lands by applying zoning principles. 'Viewed through European eyes the land truly was “blank space”...Yet, even as they looked at bush and mountain and endless vistas, immigrant settlers mentally ordered and partitioned the landscape' for their own private exploitation. Discussing the efforts of Crown Commissioners to control ruthless illegal felling of trees and protect access to water, Wright notes the difficulty faced by the commissioners in dealing with the public's belief that it was not the place of the government to interfere with the individual's right to gather the 'produce of the land', be it the collection of firewood or the removal of stone from unoccupied, unused and therefore by definition 'waste' Crown land. Any restriction in that regard was an infringement of individual rights, of the ancient right to "basic needs".  

Already in these conflicts the basic outlines of the present situation were being established: that a kind of free-for-all attitude to public land had to be carefully controlled by administrators struggling to establish ground rules based on the greater community good: a struggle easier in the defined circumstances of urban locations, where a general assumption prevailed in favour of public parks, for example, than in the much more open conditions of the rural frontier, where the effect of private activity on a community asset like a stream might not be so obvious. On this frontier the legal fiction of *terra nullius* prevailed, a fiction which enabled administrators and settlers alike to act as if the country were completely empty of tradition and meaning, and needed to have new rules imposed upon it: the only question was to do with whose rules would prevail, and the contending parties - squatters, miners, settlers, administrators - fought their battles without any consideration for what might have been the practices of the previous occupants, who existed mainly as an obstacle to the free opening up of the land.

It is now accepted that the land desired by the settlers was not a 'waste', but a cultured and managed landscape: not a 'blank space', but a country already 'mentally ordered and partitioned' by the indigenous inhabitants, albeit in a way quite different from the one being conducted by the white colonists. It already had rules of access in the form of sacred places, for example. These were swept aside like the indigenous people themselves, yet some are now in the process of a kind of reinstatement, in lands returned to the traditional owners or jointly managed by them. The most famous of these is Uluru, an example to which we will return.

The right to 'basic needs' is of course a right to exploit. Even expressed most moderately in the 'wise use' vision of nineteenth-century planners, it can emerge very easily into the idea of dominance. A spectacular example of this idea is the Snowy Mountains scheme, built on the premise that nature is there primarily to be used and thus bent to our will for our needs. Other apparently more reasonable positions also have a lot in common with the dominance position. Take the harmless practice of peak bagging: at its extreme it becomes the notion that any millionaire can buy access to the peak of Mount Everest. What this comes down to is the same set of assumptions and logical slips: we want to, we need to, we have a right to: to climb the mountain, carve it up, punch a hole in it. The idea has adherents in most activities: for example, bushwalkers often resent attempts to limit their right to go anywhere their feet can take them.

The feeling for the 'ancient right to basic needs' claimed by white settlers is still a major player in debates about land management, although the meaning of 'basic needs' has expanded in the last 150 years. It now encompasses recreation: the right to mine, to collect wood, or graze cattle, has been joined by the right to build resorts, and to walk, fly, ski and mountain-bike freely over the mountains. The conflict between practitioners of these various activities has tended to obscure the fact that the latter ones can be every bit as exploitative as the former, and that environmentalists struggling against, say, destructive forestry practices may be effectively allies of an exploitative tourism which is in the long run just as destructive.

The national park, with its range of zones controlling the impact of users on the landscapes it is protecting, is a major conservation tool to protect natural values against destructive uses. It is arguable, however, that one of the drawbacks of this tool is that it has little continuity with the exploitative and other values to which it is responding: and that it consequently poses artificial physical and mental barriers in the path of possible citizen responsibility for these landscapes. Les Murray has described National Parks as 'useful...as holding operations in the modern age', suggesting that the idea of the national park as it is presently conceived is not complete and final. We will later follow one possible lead from this suggestion.

**The Man from Snowy River**

Populist ideas are a powerful influence on the way a community engages with the land. None has been more influential than *The Man from Snowy River*, not only on Australians' attitudes to mountains, but also to nature generally. In the *Bulletin* debate of the 1890s Henry Lawson criticised Banjo Paterson for his romantic portrayal of bush life, arguing that he was 'blinded to the Real'. Lawson may have won this argument, but Paterson won the audience - partly because Lawson tended to combine a deeply compassionate understanding of bush people with a tendency to ruthlessly tear them down, as exemplified in his statement that 'the real native bushman is narrow minded, densely ignorant, invulnerably thickheaded'. Apart from the relentless bleakness of his vision, a weakness of Lawson's attitude lay in his failure to recognise, or at least to admit, that 'literary nationalism, with its idealisation of the outback life...had made a significant contribution to the development of a national pride, a fact made evident by the staggering sales of Paterson's *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses*'. This volume sold out in two weeks. It sold 100,000 copies then and has continued to sell strongly since: the vision presented by Paterson arguably still shapes the way we want to see ourselves in relation to nature.
What is that vision? The story of the riders 'who would go wherever horse and man could go' can still raise the hairs on the back of the neck in its evocation of the Man, who conquered not only the mob but the mountain too: and it has been used as a stirring battle cry for mountain cattlemen struggling to maintain their grazing rights in the Victorian Alps. So Lazy Harry, a Wangaratta singer, supports their 'right' to graze cattle in the Alpine National Park when he sings

...the legend of the Man from Snowy River
Is riding close beside us as we fight. 12

Lazy Harry is right to see Paterson's vision as consistent with that of the cattlemen. The Man could also be used to support any use of the mountains which involved action and romance: anything which involved seeing the land as a backdrop, a context within which human affairs could unfold, without too much attention to fine details. If Australian literature in the nineteenth century revealed a struggle in writers 'between perception and memory, between what the poets saw and what they thought they saw, or wanted to see', 13 Paterson's work, for all its brilliance, fails into the wishful-thinking side of the conflict.

Paterson's bush is an 'idealised land that never was... He did not, in effect, write about the Australian bush; he re-created Arcadia "down under". 14 Paterson's verse, Harry Heseltine argues, 'becomes eternally and universally available as the dreamland of the Australian fancy: a land where violence loses its terror and immorality its guilt, a land where all that is potentially disturbing is tamed by the settled air of Arcadian inconsequentiality. 15 In other words, Paterson replaced the fake Europe which some earlier writers and artists had tried to see in Australia, and created instead a sort of fake Australia, a land which, though tough, was to the measure of the heroic, resourceful people who came to colonise it, and was ready for their sheep and cattle. 16 There is an exhilarating quality to much of Paterson's verse which makes its popularity easy to understand; yet the sense of adventure in it cannot be separated from other important ideas. Heseltine, in discussing Paterson's work, quotes an interesting remark made by P. R. Stephenson: "The basic element in the Australian mystique is adventure." 17 Paterson's verse, Heseltine argues, is 'founded on adventure,' and it is this quality which is the one which land managers have to deal with when arguing that human activity should be restricted in some places.

It seems clear to us that Paterson's verse encourages readers to misread and possibly misinterpret the land. Nevertheless, it is equally clear that wholesale rejection of such myths is both unhealthy and counterproductive. Between the 'black armband' and the 'three cheers' views on modern Australian culture it is worth looking for a view which empathetically if critically accepts the realities of the past. We should bear in mind not only the polarisation of views in the contemporary cultural debate, but also the legitimate concern behind Les Murray's contention that:

...each people has its proper Shinto distinctive as verandah beams
hard to join as a stranger's childhood.
What withers us is that Australia
is a land of shamfaced shrines. 18

Murray irascibly attacks some environmental management practices as a form of 'self hatred' and 'necssity' values: natural and human realities intertwined, not in hostile opposition.

The Man needs, not an antidote or a demolition, but perhaps an update - and maybe it has one. In 1996 Mark O'Connor published Tilling at Snowgums, a book of poetry on a variety of themes about the Australian Alps. The collection concluded with a longish poem entitled A New Ballad of the Man from Snowy River. This offers an intriguing reading of the poem and the tradition of which it is a part. It ends after the colt returns voluntarily to the Man because he's sick of the hard life in the mountains and yearns for the mollycoddled life of the thoroughbred racehorse (he would have gone home earlier but was deterred by the racket kicked up by the pursuing stockmen): yet O'Connor's version is not a parody of Paterson. He claims rather to be mixing a tart 1950s realism into the romance of the old ballad. 19 His version seeks to complete Paterson's by inserting material which our different understanding of nature has made more important, and which has made us want to see the Alps as more than just a backdrop to an action story. Here's an example:

Their horses rose through endless groves of box and cypress-pine,
Climbed frozen creeks to frosted heaths
where sallee hold the line,
Where fox scats stud the byways with their
freeze-dried scale and fur,
And the cawing soaring ravens speak of thoughts
most look defer.
The slope was like a house wall, and they walked
up it like flies,
Sneaking round behind the mob in hopes
of a surprise;
Vast flowerbeds that elsewhere would denote
a stately home
Soon lay vibrantly beneath them, untended and unsown,
Day lilies, gentian violets, eye-bright of deep-sea blue,
Though there wasn't too much colour once the troops
had trottied through. 21

The supply of detail offered by O'Connor in this passage marks his intention off from the work of Paterson, and makes his poem less adventurous and more contemplative than the original. There is, in addition, a definite strain of satire in the sardonic humour of the last quoted line O'Connor is the opposite of romantic, and invites the reader to look beyond the adventure: he emphasises the idea that the country suffers when the horses thunder through - not something considered by Paterson, who lacks 'the modern environmentalist's eye for the small species and the subtle interaction.' O'Connor 'hoped to offer not so much an opposing vision as a more complete one, however less memorably expressed... to show not just the flying hooves of the gallant horsemen but some of the delicate species underneath.' 22 His book aims to make a new statement about the nature of our relationship with the high country, a statement which will celebrate the culture implied in The Man from Snowy River, but make us look again at it, perhaps a little uneasily. In thus celebrating the human traditions of the mountains and yet laying a heavy emphasis on the non-human reality of the environment, O'Connor undertakes an unusual task: to situate cultural history constructively in an appreciation of the natural environment.
without fudging the issue of conflict between the two. Without rejecting the heroes of the past, he wants us to see them with a critical sympathy, softened with a slightly ironic humour.

The rest of O'Connor's collection extends the ambition of his task by offering us a range of heroes, from plants to volunteers of the Kosciusko Huts Association (KHA). This offers another intriguing lead in the matter of redefining our approach to the mountains. O'Connor succinctly states the problem he is confronting in taking up the challenge of supplying something 'lacking in the poetic tradition of the high country': 'It is not so easy to tell a comparably gripping story about the Alpine animals and plants, even if their endurance is fascinating and almost heroic. This statement goes to the heart of the cultural problem of human interaction in the Australian Alps, and recalls Heseltine's remarks about the appeal of adventure in Australian culture. This appeal is, of course, by no means specific to Australia. Ursula Le Guin has made the point very entertainingly for a somewhat different purpose:

It is hard to tell a really gripping tale of how I wrested a wild-oat seed from its husk, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then I scratched my gnat bites, and then I found another patch of oats...no, it does not compare, it cannot compete with how I thrust my spear deep into the titanic hairy flank while Oob, impaled on one huge sweeping tusk, withered, screaming. Le Guin's wry reflection finds an echo in soil scientist Alec Costin's observation that the spectacles of a scientist doggedly working away at transects in the Alps while being eaten by mosquitoes is distinctly lacking in romance and adventure. Nevertheless, there is genuine engagement in precisely such a contemplative attitude to nature - as Le Guin's little narrative quixotically shows. The challenge, perhaps, is to put this engagement on an equal footing with that of high adventure. As Murray has put it: 'Finding some new vision, or new style, some new tune for the world to enjoy and maybe whittle, is a necessary work of atonement for stealing a continent and living well from the theft. If we don't make something worthwhile for mankind out of our conquest here, we are little more than thieves living on our spoils.' As part of this vision Murray offers a 'Shinto tempered by humour.' It is a vision exemplified in much of his work, an effort to achieve a vernacular synthesis of folk traditions, love of country and the people who are part of it, and laconic humour - with attentive engagement with indigenous culture. It is an attempt to express what he calls 'convergence, the slow mutual assimilation of Aborigines and other Australians.'

For Murray the bush possesses 'a blessedly interminable quality which was and is almost my mind's model of contemplation.' Murray is no stranger to political controversy, yet as Jonathon Bate has pointed out, he 'heartily dislikes critics who hitch poets to the bandwagon of politics and causes,' His vision is rather expressed in lines like:

Country the forceful can wreck but not reach
shall welcome the calm man
with nothing to teach.

This vision is a contemplative, inclusive one owing much to the many resonances of Aboriginal culture, but not rejecting the traditions of non-Aboriginal Australia. Interestingly, he has argued that in the matter of 'moulding and changing opinion,' of establishing views which gradually become accepted realities and 'overturning... orthodoxies,' non-fiction is 'arguably more powerful than imaginative literature.' His view is interestingly complex, but in the end he may be said to be looking for a 'music of equality,' an 'attempt to mime the balanced complexity of reality according to something like a common view held by a broad range of society.'

**Restraint**

If the spirit of adventure and exploitation may be said to have prevailed in recent Australian history, is there nevertheless another strain in our culture which might be strengthened to provide a more balanced 'complexity of reality' without engaging in wholesale recriminations or attempts to rewrite history? We would like to consider the question of access again. Two examples may serve to illustrate the position obtaining in our culture, as opposed to that which it succeeded.

First: in an exchange of views in the Kosciusko Huts Association Newsletter the question was raised whether, in view of increasing pressures on certain sites in the Park, the Association should refrain from publicising the location of some hut sites on its website. An opponent of this view attacked it for being pointless, on the grounds that someone else would inevitably provide the information if the KHA did not; more interestingly, he branded the idea 'elitist, un-Australian' and 'class selecting.' Such a view reflects that of the National Parks Service, delivering an address to the International Year of the Mountains conference at Jindabyne on indigenous values of mountains was able to say without controversy, in reference to certain mountains of the south coast, 'These are sacred mountains, there are matters here about which we should keep quiet.' At the same conference Cliff Coulthard, indigenous manager of the Iga Warta cultural tourism centre made reference to a mountain in his country in the following words: 'That's a sacred mountain, we don't allow visitors to go there.' We raise these examples to pose a question: does the default position on public land have to be free access for all unless there are specific dangers in that access; or could we not move to a more flexible position in which we naturally assume that some land will be treated differently? The Aboriginal idea that some areas of land will be naturally viewed with more discretion and restraint is not completely foreign to mainstream culture in Australia: certain nineteenth-century writers wanting to emphasise the mystical power of great mountains suggested that to want to scale them was vulgar and insensitive. Here's James Cuthbertson in the 1890s, evoking a European alpine scene and proclaiming:

And holy reverence their passage bars
To meaner souls who seek to enter there.

In her poem Before Kosciusko (1946) the Jindyworobak writer Minnie Agnes Filson ('Rickety Kate') argues that the best way to experience the splendour of the mountain is to resist the urge to conquer it. After evoking the approach to the 'dazzling slopes' of the 'immaculate mountain' she tries to impress the reader with what should be the deepest response to it:
I would have then turned back,  
Remembering the dark  
In the secret chasms of the mind,  
And I would not have defied  
That high white country  
With the sign of my ascending.  
I would have been content  
That my eyes had seen it.36

The best known example of what we are talking about is the request by the Anangu people for visitors to respect Uluru by not climbing it. This is not a restriction: it’s left to the visitor to decide what to do, and some visitors to Uluru disregard the request. They feel that without the ascent they will not have had the full experience of the monolith.37 When the Anangu did close the Rock for eleven days in 2003 as a mark of respect for a member of the community who had died, there were threats of litigation from some visitors and pressure from politicians, suggesting that the ‘right of access’ idea in some respects seems to transcend even respect for the dead.

The Anangu vision is not, of course, the same as the idea practised world-wide in national parks of reference areas and exclusion zones. Nevertheless, the two positions, based as they are on ideas of deep appreciation for the value of the land in question, are remarkably compatible. Moreover, traditional Aboriginal approaches to land management have shown consistent understanding of the necessity for species protection. Deborah Bird Rose has argued that: ‘Sacred sites are rarely random, and many of them, (but not all) are places where rituals can be conducted which have the effect of replenishing the members of the species which has its source of origin at that site.’38 She points out the fact that many Dreaming sites act as animal sanctuaries. She quotes botanist Peter Latz, for example: ‘there’s a lot of dreaming trails which cross over, these are really important places. They are so sacred you can’t kill animals or even plants, And of course you don’t burn them. You might burn around them in order to look after them.’

The difference between Aboriginal dreaming sites and protected areas like national parks is that the first are deeply internal to the culture; the second are still to some extent contentious, a compendium of rules imposed by managers on visitors who may or may not fully understand or support them. Such understanding and support can only come from the kind of identification which makes the park a part of the citizen’s life, not a location outside the stream of life, to be visited as a kind of exotic experience. For this to happen, significant changes would have to happen, not just in the way national parks are conceived, but in the way we see nature and conservation in ordinary life.

Culturally speaking, detailed observation, aesthetic appreciation, a sense of belonging and desire to respect or protect are closely linked but recognition of this link is not commonly used in support of nature conservation. Kathryn Williams has drawn attention to the way that ‘cultural expectations of beauty’ can affect our very ability to see. Her research shows how we can seriously undervalue certain valuable landscapes – like grasslands, or casuarina woodlands – because they don’t seem beautiful.39 These findings confirm and extend the intuitions of common sense, that we may miss things if we approach them too fixated on one dimension of what they might offer. Our argument is that this is what may have happened with our obsession with wanting to go everywhere, to follow the adventure trail: and that by endowing certain landscapes with the mystique of inaccessibility we might even enhance our appreciation of them.

Our imaginative engagement with cultural heritage has also been selective. Griffiths and Robin have lamented the fact that the deeds of scientists in the High Country have not entered the imagination as those of the cattlemen have,40 and it does seem strange that the adventures of the forester Baldur Byles, who in the 1930s spent months in the Alps on a lone mission exploring its slopes and gorges to investigate the state of mountain catchments, are not part of the legends of the mountains. Similarly, Maisie Fawcett (Carr), dubbed by the cattlemen of the Bogong High Plains ‘the washaway woman’, laid the basis for our understanding of the effects of grazing with her exclusion plots. Both these people are virtually legends to those interested in the ecology of the Alps, but are distant from the imagination of the general public. ‘The scientists won the conservation battle, but lost the cultural debate’.41 Maybe it’s much easier for a rampaging horseman to capture the public imagination than it is for a scientist struggling with transsects while being bitten by swarms of flies, but this is partly a challenge of presentation: or, as Williams puts it in a different context: it ‘provides opportunity for new approaches to extension’.42 She calls for educators and managers to put up the models they think should be admired and support them.

Conclusion

The task is to promote new heroes without disparaging the old ones, and to be prepared to look at different and at first sight paradoxical ideas, like the idea of withdrawal from selected areas. This is a long-term project, yet the Uluru example shows that if an idea is put up credibly, it can challenge some strongly entrenched assumptions. If the idea is not offered to the public more positively than it has been possible in the past, attempts to limit overuse will continue to be dogged by controversy and administrative problems.

In 1994 Alec Costin suggested a ‘reserve within a reserve’ around Mount Twynam, a place of science only, protecting the vulnerable loose rocks and maintaining more natural ecosystems for future study. ‘The idea is to create some “scientific reference areas protected altogether from tourist traffic,” so as to avoid the eventuality that “the huge increase in tourist traffic would make it impossible to undertake scientific research in normally functioning ecosystems.”43 Commenting on this idea in their report Science in High Places Griffiths and Robin observe: ‘One day, humans may have to follow the sheep and cattle off parts of the mountains, victims of their own exclusions’.44

The word ‘victim’ is an unfortunate one, though certainly accurate given the prevailing assumption that refraining from going somewhere is necessarily a deprivation. As we have argued, that depends on how you look at things. Costin’s idea is based around the strategy of drawing visitors away from the mountain, via the use of strategically placed viewing platforms and tracks, as much as it is about exclusion, a process which is in any case as much a matter of persuasion and education as compulsion. In any case, when the volume of crowds begins to destroy the whole point of the excursion even to themselves, so that it is no longer possible to see and feel what people came for, then withdrawal becomes a much easier matter to contemplate. Think of the road to the Kosciusko summit from Charlotte Pass. When Park authorities proposed its removal, it was believed that ‘the public would not wear’ removal of an
access right which had been there for sixty years. In fact the closure went ahead with little opposition. Surveys revealed that few claimed the right to scale Kosciuszko in a bus.48

Time can be on the managers' side. Research by Deirdre Stattery on Wilson's Promontory National Park shows that a park established for a hundred years fosters traditions in the public mind that make it resistant to unscrupulous manipulation.49 A heavy weight rests on park administrations in the fostering of healthy traditions which encourage citizens to treat the land not just as a protected area, but also as a reflection of who they are. These are not the result of sudden dramatic acts, but of years of decisions about tracks, consultation, participation, interpretative material and the presentation of heroes and perspectives; of cultural realities which need to be nurtured too by teachers and scientists.

There are important and complex issues here. The controversy in the pages of the KHA Newsletter, putting on the table as it did accusations of elitism, freedom and national identity, makes that clear. There are other issues, too, relating to the idea and the point of tourism generally, not just tourism to natural places. These issues need more space than we have here. Nevertheless we strongly believe that the idea of voluntary, culture-based restraint in access to wild places has to be brought into the mainstream of our culture: not as a restriction but as an opportunity for increased understanding, better appreciation, for a clearer view of where we are and what we value.

References


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Minnie Agnes Fison ('Rickety Kate') 'Before Kosciusko' in Bragtag, a Legend, Sydney: The Jindyworobak Press 1946.

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Deirdre Stattery, 'Resistance to development at Wilson's Promontory National Park (Victoria, Australia)' Society and Natural Resources 15: 63-80.


Kathryn Williams 'The biodiversity we want to maintain and the reasons we want to maintain it', paper presented at the conference 'Rural land use change—yes! But will biodiversity be OK?', Melbourne: Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002.


Endnotes

1 Castlemaine Mail 15 November 2002.


5 Wright 1989: 48. Tom Griffiths draws attention to the class dimension associated with efforts to repurpose land use, particularly when it was associated with the regulation of hunting: "Park" was also the language of dispossession, associated with English and Scottish enclosure of the eighteenth century", Griffiths 1996: 16.

6 There are many ironies and cultural complexities associated with the notion of the land as a 'blank space', which we do not have the space to discuss here. See, for example, Griffiths 1996: 103-120, and Watson 1984: 72-81.

7 On the picturesque as a form of control which distorts nature see Blythe 1996: 52 ff. On environmentalism as an ideology of control and exploitation see Mazel 1996: 173ff. Les Murray makes a similar point in his attack on the implied hypocrisy of environmentalists in describing conflicts over woodchipping in South Eastern Australia as a 'class war' in which the "Clean money" side has expected the forest workers to forego income and perhaps even continued residence in their native districts, while making no great sacrifice itself. He recommends a 'rapprochement' between groups with differing views of the countryside, one seeing it in terms of wilderness and ecology, the other as a field of necessity, horizon and home values; "Our Man in Bunyip" in Murray 1997: 87-8. These remarks have to be read in the context of Murray's continuing polemic against 'political correctness': nevertheless he is by no means alone in this view. See, for example Watson 1997: 451-4 and John Voltz's review of From Principles to Practice (Forest Peoples Programme) in Guardian Weekly October 2:9 2003, p. 25.

8 Murray's comment occurs in a discussion of conservation, the sense of the sacred, aboriginal poetry, and its influence on him: "I want my poems to be more than just National Parks of sentimental nostalgia", Harney 1995. The suggestion that 'preservation' is a fundamentally flawed idea in parts of the conservation theme is repeated elsewhere in Murray's work: see, for example, "Wild-deership" in Peasant Mandarin 40.


10 'Some popular Australian mistakes' in Kiernan 1976: 129.

11 Wilde et al., p. 125.


16 Tim Flannery has expressed the idea more severely still: The Man from Snowy River, he argues, is part of the 'great founding lie' of terra nullius: "The Man from Snowy River is anarchetypal Australian hero—one of the brave Ausustralias who
tamed the rugged land. He sits side by side with the archetypal stockman in our constellation of national icons...Yet our worship of the self reliant stockman nearly sidesteps the fact that the men of the cattle frontier were the shock troops in our Aboriginal wars.' Flannery sees the rejection of such 'lies' as a precondition for the implementation of 'socially just population and environmental policies' in Australia. See Quarterly Essay 9: Beautiful Lies 2003: 6-7.

17 Haslehune 1964: 392.
20 O'Connor 1996: 76.
22 O'Connor 1996: 76.
23 O'Connor 1996: 76. The history of Australian poetry is peppered with intriguing explorations of the natural world, including the Jindyworobak project, Judith Wright's 'Notes at the Edge' (in Phantom Dwelling 1985) and perhaps most spectacularly Les Murray's Translations From the Natural World (1993).
24 Le Guin 1996: 149.
28 Quarterly Essay 12: Correspondence 2003: 67. Others have drawn attention to significant ways in which Aboriginal Australian culture has influenced the 'formation of the Australian character and way of life' (Greer 2003: 57). See also Tasey 1996, esp. pp. 126 ff.
30 Bate 1996: 66.
33 Murray, 1997: 161. Murray is here commenting on the narrative method of Eric Rolls's book A Million Wild Acers, but it seems his words are a very good account of one of the themes of his own work.
34 Olaf Moon, 'Should some hut sites remain secret?' Kosciusko Huts Association Newsletter No. 118, 2002-3. See also Nos. 117 and 119.
37 James Cuthbertson, 'Solitude' in Hansen & Mclachlan 1924: 50.
38 Filson 1948: 10.
39 Uluru is a World Heritage Area and in 1994 was the second site to be listed as a cultural landscape. It therefore has unusually strong claims to be treated in a special way. For a brief 'cultural history' of the Rock see Michael Cathcart, 'Uluru' in Bonyhady and Griffiths 2002.
40 Rose 1996: 53. Bird Rose devotes the whole of chapter 5, Dreaming Ecology, to the connection between sacred sites and ecology.
41 Rose 1996: 51.
42 Williams 2002.