The English found the Eora a stubborn and proud people, unwilling to conform to the habits the Europeans wished to force on them, such as the wearing of clothes and the adoption of a settled life. It is clear to me that the Eora did not view themselves as inferior to the Europeans in any way, and thus saw no reason to adopt their ways. It is not hard to imagine why, for early Sydney was a degenerate settlement, full of violent, starving and often immoral people. This must have been obvious to the Eora, many of whom—including Bennelong, a leading Eora whose name means 'great fish'—considered themselves to be distinctly superior to the Europeans in everything that mattered, including hunting, fighting and managing the land. Indeed, the superior intellects and morality of many Eora were evident even to some European observers such as Watkin Tench. Late in 1789 Bennelong, along with another prominent man Colbee, was kidnapped by the Europeans, who wished to open relations with the Eora. A few days later Colbee escaped but Bennelong, although at first enraged, soon took advantage of the opportunity his captivity afforded him and became a favourite of Governor Phillip and the other leading Europeans. He lived with them until May 1790. Watkin Tench says of him:

> His powers of mind were certainly far above mediocrity...Love and war seemed his favourite pursuits...Whenever he recounted his battles, 'poised his lance and shewed how fields were won', the most violent exclamations of rage and vengeance against his competitors in arms, those of the tribe called Cameeregal in particular, would burst upon him.

The Eora held to their traditional way of life for a surprisingly long time. As late as 1820, members of a Russian exploring expedition were surprised to find proudly traditional Eora wandering the streets of Sydney stark naked. One can't help but believe that they were making a statement, saying in effect, 'We're not bowed

yet by you Europeans.' Indeed, traditional Aboriginal life continued well into the 1830s in such rugged regions as the Lower Hawkesbury. Doubtless the Aborigines were aided in their fight for independence by the ruggedness of the sandstone country. To the Europeans it was worthless, terrifying and confusing, while to the Eora it was home.

Sydney Harbour is loved by modern Cadigaleans above all else, for it is the centre—the great magnet—towards which the city is turned. So memorable is its beauty and so distinctive are its landmarks than one needs to travel it just once in order to develop a clear mental map of it. In order to set the city in its context let's take an imaginary tour up the harbour, beginning at the Heads and ending at the bridge, visiting sites of historical and natural significance. Until the 1950s this is how most overseas visitors approached the city for the first time.

On entering the harbour on our right we pass North Head. Rising abruptly from the restless ocean, its heathy summit is still undisturbed by signs of European conquest, for it is one of Sydney's great national parks. It is without doubt the most important remaining refuge for Sydney's wildlife, providing the last redoubt for fauna including the harbour's last penguins, about sixty of which still nest around its sandy beaches and in rock crevices below the apartment buildings at Little Manly Bay. Although severely threatened by irresponsible residents who bring their pets to the park's beaches, at least for the moment you can hear the penguins barking like dogs on a still day as they fish in the harbour.

Just west of North Head lies that fine stretch of sand known as Manly Cove. Today it is highly urbanised and boasts a ferry terminal and aquarium, but in September 1790, fewer than two years after settlement, it presented a very different scene. We can

imagine Governor Phillip approaching the strand in a longboat. On shore are hundreds of Aborigines feasting on the carcass of a beached sperm whale. They are formed into little groups, busy cutting up the blubber and roasting it over fires. Phillip, anxious to begin a conversation, steps ashore unarmed and calls for Bennelong, the only Aborigine he knows well.

Bennelong finally comes forward and, as one contemporary recounted,

> They discoursed for some time, Bennelong expressing pleasure to see his old acquaintance, and inquiring by name for every person whom he could recollect at Sydney; and among others for a French cook, one of the governor's servants, whom he had made the constant butt of his ridicule, by mimicking his voice, gait, and other peculiarities, all of which he again went through with his wonted exactness and drollery. He asked also particularly for a lady from whom he had once ventured to snatch a kiss; and on being told that she was well, by way of proving that the token was fresh in his remembrance, he kissed Lieutenant Waterhouse, and laughed aloud.

Things progressed well until an Aborigine, who had not seen Europeans before, arrived on the scene.

> He appeared to be a man of middle age, short of stature, sturdy and well set, seemingly a stranger, and but little acquainted with Bennelong and Colbee. The nearer the governor approached, the greater became the terror and agitation of the Indian. To remove his fear, Governor Phillip threw down a dirk which he wore at his side. The other, alarmed at the rattle of the dirk, and probably misconstruing the action, instantly fixed his lance in his throwing stick. To retreat, his Excellency now thought would be more dangerous than to advance. He therefore cried to the man, *Wee-ree*, *Wee-ree* (bad, you are doing wrong) displaying at the same time every token of amity and confidence. The words had, however, hardly gone forth when the Indian, stepping back with one foot, aimed his lance with such force and dexterity that, striking the governor's right shoulder just above the collar-bone, the point, glancing downward, came out at his back, having made a wound many inches long. The man was observed to keep his eye steadily fixed on the lance until it struck its object, when he directly dashed into the woods and was seen no more.
>
> A more distressing situation than that of the governor... cannot readily be conceived: the pole of the spear, not less than ten feet in length, sticking out before him and impeding his flight, the butt frequently striking the ground and lacerating the wound.

Phillip eventually recovered, and today the spear tip that inflicted the damage is a treasured item in the National Museum of Australia. To his great credit, Phillip did not take revenge for the spearing. In fact, the incident served to open greater dialogue with the Eora, who thereafter visited town frequently. Perhaps they realised that the Europeans—even *Beeàna*—were mortal after all.

On the south side of the harbour entrance lies South Head, and behind it a great sweep of sand backed by grass and stately Port Jackson figs. This is Watson's Bay, which has long offered the most sublime views of the city. The trip out along Old South Head Road, the first road built in the colony, was a favourite weekend jaunt in the early days and a compulsory sightseeing expedition for distinguished visitors who could then admire the city's lighthouse.

Proceeding along the southern shore we come to Rose Bay where Bungaree, the first Aboriginal circumnavigator of Australia and 'King of Sydney', was buried in 1830. Further on is Point Piper, where Captain Piper, the celebrated 'Prince of Australia', built his magnificent residence which was so favourably commented upon by many new arrivals. Next is Double Bay, now known colloquially as Double Pay because of its exclusive shopping precinct. It was here, in the 1870s, that the great Italian explorer of New Guinea, Luigi Maria D'Albertis, rented a cottage among the trees. In his journal, D'Albertis recorded the enormous

pleasure he found in the pleasant, solitary weeks he spent on his verandah, peeping out through the foliage to the pristine sands and blue waters.

Just beyond is Rushcutters Bay, scene of a gruesome murder of two convicts by Aborigines in 1789, while west again is Woolloomooloo Bay, the key ritual site for the Eora. In the harbour nearby, a small castle appears as if floating on the water. Pinchgut is where convicts were exiled to starve, and where the bodies of particularly notorious malefactors were hung in chains until they rotted. Pinchgut was once a beautiful natural rock stack, and not everyone was pleased with its transformation into a fort. In 1841, Reverend John Dunmore Lang wrote, 'This natural ornament of the harbour, which no art could have equalled, this remarkable work of God, which has stood like a sentinel keeping watch for thousands of years, has been destroyed by the folly of man.'

We now approach the core of European settlement and three points that define it, named after a remarkable trio whose distinctive histories tell the story of the early city in miniature. The southern pylons of the Sydney Harbour Bridge rise from Dawes Point, named for one of the most interesting yet largely forgotten of the city's early residents. William Dawes spent a lifetime trying to build links between black and white. He arrived with the First Fleet as a lieutenant in the marines and was given charge of fortifications and astronomical observations. He built his observatory some distance west of the main camp so that fires would not obscure his view of the night sky. The relative solitude of the location seems to have given him a unique opportunity to interact with the Eora, who at first refused to enter Phillip's tent city.

Dawes strove hard to learn the Eora language, and the principal written record he left is two notebooks which document his attempt to do this. They make curious reading, for along the way he seems to have fallen in love with a girl called Patyegarang,

whose name means great grey kangaroo. Dawes' notebooks hint at their growing love, recording events and phrases that haltingly chart its progress:

> I shall not become white: this was said by Patyegarang—after I had told her if she would wash herself often she would become white—at the same time throwing down the towel in despair...
>
> *miahug* = lover, sweetheart...
>
> you don't want my company?
>
> we two only...

In December 1790 an Eora man named Pemulwy speared the colony's 'game keeper', a man named McEntire. He had been transported for poaching, and in his new role in the colony he continued to practise his profession, only now he was doing it legally, and it was the Aborigines' game he was stealing. McEntire's reputation among the Eora was such that he was suspected of carrying out atrocities as well as killing the animals they hunted. Phillip, in an uncharacteristically bloody move, ordered a group of marines to bring him ten Aborigines to be made an example of. Lieutenant Dawes was ordered to participate, but at first refused. Such insubordination could have cost Dawes his life but the governor seems to have respected the man, and gave him a chance to reconsider. After consulting his pastor, Dawes agreed to participate, yet despite the fact that the raid was unsuccessful he was disgusted with himself for relenting, and made it known that he would never participate in such an action again. This left him in malodour with Phillip and, despite his desire to stay an additional three years, in 1792 Dawes was shipped out under a cloud. He eventually moved to the West Indies where he became a tireless campaigner against slavery.

Sydney grew up between Dawes Point and Bennelong Point, which today supports Danish architect Jørn Utzon's

incomparable Sydney Opera House. In November 1790, at a time when almost all of the Europeans in the settlement were living under canvas or wattle and daub, Governor Phillip ordered a brick house to be built for Bennelong on this prized site. Bennelong himself chose the spot, and for many years it was the focus of Eora activity in the colony. In 1795, however, Bennelong's house was pulled down, and subsequently a series of other structures occupied the spot.

The fact that the Opera House stands on the point today is largely due to the vision and determination of one man—Eugene Goossens, conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and director of the state conservatorium in the 1950s. Joe Cahill, the New South Wales premier from 1952 to 1959, wanted to build the new opera house above Wynyard Station but Goossens convinced him to force the Maritime Services Board (which was keen to build a new shipping terminal on the site) to relinquish its plans. His gambit nearly went astray when Goossens was returning to Sydney on one occasion and customs officers discovered pornographic material in his luggage. Despite the fracas, Goossens' plan went ahead.

Utzon won the competition to design the house in 1957. During construction, costs spiralled from the original $7 million projected by Utzon to $102 million and in response the state instituted the Sydney Opera House Lottery. But by 1965 Utzon had fallen out with both the state government and the construction engineers, so the building, finally opened in 1973, does not strictly conform to his original design.

So remarkable is the structure, nonetheless, that an image of it adorns the promo of a third-rate American television program 'Unsolved Mysteries of the World'. The program's usual staples are lost treasures, hauntings, telepathy and extraterrestrial visitations. Perhaps the greatest unsolved mystery about the Opera House is just how the people of Sydney, who were busy

destroying the old Georgian heart of the city at the time, could have carried through, even imperfectly, such a brilliant and extraordinary plan.

A couple of decades later the opportunity existed to create an Opera House precinct every bit as majestic as the Opera House itself. That opportunity was lost with the construction, against enormous public opposition, of three blocks of flats commonly referred to disparagingly as 'the Toaster'. I must forbear from mentioning the official name of these structures, for by linking their construction with the Eora it conveys a gross insult to one of Sydney's most important Eora leaders. These flats occupy what could have been a magnificent open space linking Circular Quay, the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Opera House. The Toaster is perhaps the greatest act of environmental vandalism visited on Sydney in recent times.

Long before Utzon's astonishing structure was to adorn the site that commemorates his name Bennelong travelled to England where he met George III. Like almost all expatriate Sydneysiders he was miserable during his sojourn away, and he recorded with evident relief upon his return, 'I'm home now.' Bennelong died in 1813 at Kissing Point, just a year before Governor Phillip went to meet his maker. With their passing ended Sydney's first and most extraordinary age.

Just west of the Harbour Bridge is Blue's Point. You cannot miss it, for like the nose of Chaucer's miller it is marred by an outrageous wart. In this case the wart is an apartment block, Blues Point Tower, dominating an otherwise beautiful precinct. Tragically, similar developments are not hard to find throughout Sydney. They are the inheritance of an earlier age when the populace cared less for the beauty of their city, and when thefts of our common wealth by property developers were often called progress. Blues Point was named for Billy Blue, a Jamaican Negro who, for many years in the early nineteenth century, was

the town's favourite son. Known as 'the Old Commodore', Billy and his European wife ran a sort of primitive ferry service, rowing people across the harbour at one of its narrowest points. He was also the town wag, cracking public jokes to the delight of all. Many visitors recalled seeing the locals in hysterics as Billy discomfited some high and mighty with a few well-chosen words. Some citizens, however, were not so amused, including one who called himself 'An Observer' in a letter to the *Sydney Gazette* in 1833.

> I intend putting up with the braggardism of Billy Blue no longer. It is a disgrace to our town police that this crying nuisance is not put down. Two very respectable ladies were bellowed about by this sweep and because they hurried on to get out of the reach of his tongue he made use of such language as must have shocked every modest person.

The editor of the *Gazette*, however, must have had a fondness for Billy, for he added, 'We think "An Observer" is hard upon the Old Commodore who has grown into a privileged position. Poor Billy is now nearly a hundred years old...he intends no harm.'

When Billy Blue died the following year, the editor eulogised his passing:

> The remembrance of the whimsicality of character which grew with him as he advanced to the end of his earthly pilgrimage will be treasured when the minions of ambition are forgotten in the dust...requiescat—we may never look upon his like again.

Blue, Bennelong and Dawes were all extraordinary people, notable for building links between races and cultures. They are testimony to the tolerance of diversity that has marked Sydney from its earliest times. Today, with rapid growth, cultural diversity and the development of ghettoes straining the social fabric of this city of about four million, we need to be reminded of this history more than ever.

Sydney's Aboriginal people were not beaten by superior European weapons, or indeed by superior European anything—except germs. As with Aboriginal people throughout Australia, their death rates from various epidemics such as smallpox, measles and pulmonary infections were appallingly high, while their birth rates were dismally low. The resulting demographic alone can probably account for their decline. This is hardly surprising, for the First Fleeters were probably the best source of contagion in the world, being drawn from London, one of Europe's great pestilential and insanitary port cities. The convicts had been living in filth for years and between them doubtless harboured enough diseases to eliminate every isolated human population on the planet. Certainly within three years, syphilis had made such progress in the infant town that Phillip despaired (quite correctly, it turns out) of ever ridding the place of it.

Despite all of their tribulations, some Eora have survived and today they play an increasingly important role in the life of the city. Some are leading environmental activists, while others contribute significantly to the arts and other spheres of endeavour.

The changes wrought on the wildlife of Sydney by the First Fleet were profound. The *gnar-ruck*, as the Eora knew the white-footed rabbit-rat (*Conilurus albipes*), was illustrated by a First Fleet artist, who noted that this delightful rodent was a considerable pest to the colony's storehouses. Sadly, the illustration is the first and last evidence that this now extinct creature ever inhabited the Sydney region.

Despite the demise of the *gnar-ruck*, new pillagers of the government store were not long in coming. By 1790 the First Fleeters were writing of the plagues of rats that swarmed about the settlement. I have examined the bones of many eighteenth and early nineteenth-century rats from archaeological excavations in Sydney and all are from the brown or Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). In the 1780s this species was a newcomer to England,

having arrived from Siberia only a few decades before, at about the time of the ascent of the Hanovers to the throne. To many loyal Britons the creatures were about as welcome as the German-speaking monarchs, and were soon known as Hanoverian rats.

Today Hanoverian rats are relatively uncommon in Sydney. They survive mostly around dockyards and drains, but elsewhere they have been replaced by a more recent invader, the black or plague rat (*Rattus rattus*). It's a species that belies its name, for it is often such an attractive creature, with its white belly and large eyes, that many people refuse to believe that it is not a native but a pest.

Given the contemporary reputation of Australia as a home of snakes it is curious that the First Fleeters encountered very few of the reptiles, and indeed many believed that there were no poisonous species in the area. By 1805, however, all of this had changed, and the public became alarmed at the number of fatalities occurring at the fangs of these creatures. So common had the reptiles become that in December 1808 an attack even occurred in the Sydney General Hospital. As the *Sydney Gazette* reported:

> A patient in the General Hospital on Tuesday was attacked by a snake, which twirled around one of his legs, and endeavoured repeatedly to inflict a wound that doubtless would have proved mortal; but was fortunately prevented from taking place by the woollen clothing that the poor man wore. As soon as disengaged the reptile endeavoured to make off, but was detained and killed.

Not only humans fell victim, for bullocks, horses, sheep, dogs and even caged birds succumbed to the scaly plague. The snakes, I suspect, were attracted by the outbreak of Hanoverian rats, which are an excellent food for the creatures. Already the ecology of the land was changing at the hands of the new invaders.

A surprising diversity of marsupials survived in the area that is now Sydney until quite late. Rock wallabies adorned Middle

Head until hunters eliminated them sometime after the 1860s. Bandicoots were so common in harbourside suburbs that they figure in the childhood memories of many Sydneysiders who grew up before the 1980s. Eastern quolls (cat-like spotted marsupial carnivores) also survived until recently. Once common on the mainland, they are now to be found only in Tasmania. Sydney was their last mainland stronghold, and they were common enough between Manly and Coogee for visiting American museum collectors to obtain specimens there in the 1930s. They made their last stand in the eastern harbourside suburb of Vaucluse, where as late as 1972 they were breeding in the sheds and outhouses of a few lucky local residents. It seems almost unbelievable that the people of Sydney would allow this last precious remnant to become extinct, but the quolls vanished without comment, probably as a result of the council 'cleaning up' Neilsen Park, as well as ever denser development.

Bandicoots are strange and ancient creatures. About the size of a rabbit, they eat insects and are valuable in keeping down garden pests, especially on lawns. They were once abundant, and in the early days provided Governor Phillip and the Eora alike with many a dainty repast. They are also remarkable in that they have the shortest gestation period of any mammal—a mere eleven days. So quickly do they breed that young females still suckling from their dams can be pregnant themselves. Unfortunately their rapid reproduction has not protected them from destruction, for of the three species that once occurred in the Sydney area only one is now left. The tiny remnant surviving around North Head are national treasures—the last land-dwelling marsupials in the Sydney area. They are particularly common on an area known as St Patrick's Estate, which is owned by the Catholic Church. Perhaps it's their predilection for early sex that has made them so unpopular with the Church. Whatever the case, their forty-million-year tenure on the estate seems to be drawing to a close,

for the spirit of St Francis has given way to that of the medieval popes. The Church is determined to develop its land for housing.

Sydney's birds tell a different story. Their nadir came in the nineteenth century when virtually every man carried a gun and felt free to blast at any feathered thing that came within range. Emu, brolga and magpie-goose were lost to the city at this time, but since then it's the smaller birds that have suffered. Chats have vanished, while blue wrens have become increasingly rare. Black swans have also largely disappeared from the harbour. In their place, however, have come new arrivals. Sacred ibis colonised the city in the 1980s and today they are common in Sydney parks, where they scavenge from rubbish bins and take tidbits from the hands of toddlers.

In the late 1990s the wondrous channel-billed cuckoos returned in force. These great, pterodactyl-like birds were recorded by the First Fleeters, but have been scarce ever since. They fly to Australia from New Guinea each summer to lay their eggs in the nests of currawongs and crows, and it may be that Sydney's vast currawong population has been the lure for their return.

The large-scale ebbs and flows of species, however, do not tell the entire tale of Sydney's birds, for local events are also having profound impacts. Of prime importance is the intensifying density of development that is depriving many suburbs of their native vegetation. There are now areas where the only birds you're likely to see are introduced sparrows, rock pigeons and Indian mynahs. It's a phenomenon that will grow as concrete replaces trees.

In the early hours of one winter morning in 1999, Sydney Harbour received a blast from the past. For a few hours, before the ferries started running, and before the flotillas of boats started up, a solitary southern right whale passed between the Heads—the first of her kind to do so for about two centuries. She was probably looking for a safe place to calve or rest, just as countless

thousands of her relatives did in the millennia before the arrival of the Europeans. Two months later, a second whale entered the harbour and this one frolicked in its waters for a week. She arrived a decade after the bicentenary of the visit of a less fortunate whale, which in July 1790 capsized a boat, drowning a midshipman and a marine. In revenge the whale was pursued and harpooned several times. A month later its carcass washed up dead on Manly beach. The Eora came to feast on it, and it was during this feast that Governor Phillip was speared.

If the returning whales offer some hope that wildlife and the city can coexist, there are precious few other indications that such a happy outcome can be achieved. Ever since first settlement, one species after another has been lost, and even today, despite the enacting of endangered species laws and various stops on developers, we continue to lose our precious biodiversity.

Sydney's sandstone keeps its European occupants oriented towards the sea, for its infertility and mountain barriers long prevented its people from developing a vast and wealthy hinterland. Instead, Sydney developed as a port city with its orientation towards the Pacific. From the very beginning, exotic peoples walked its streets: Tongan royals, tattooed Maoris, turbaned Malay Lascars, Chinese traders and Aborigines. In this it differs from all the other cities of Australia's south, for they were always turned towards a Europe made readily accessible across the Southern Ocean by the roaring forties.

The city began life as an armed camp ruled by a governor whose powers were so wide that everyone who arrived in the colony found themselves sold down from their liberty. The Home Office undoubtedly granted such wide powers to allow Phillip to deal with unrest and disquiet in a thief colony that was at best many months' sail from London.

The son of a Jew from Frankfurt who had migrated to England, Phillip was fifty when he sailed with the First Fleet and was often ill. Despite being a compassionate and just man, the difficulties he laboured under meant that he sometimes failed to live up to his ideals. He was assisted in his duties by the judge-advocate, David Collins, a strikingly handsome officer of the marines with no legal training but with a 'most cheerful disposition'. That disposition was to be sorely tested by his time in New South Wales. Spiritual guidance to the colony was provided by the Reverend Richard Johnson, one of a handful of First Fleeters to be accompanied by his wife. They seem to have been a lacklustre pair. Medical matters were supervised by the surgeon John White, an Irishman of uneven temper, who despite the burden of his office managed to document the flora and fauna of the new land.

The First Fleet sailed under the protection of the marines, at whose head stood the cantankerous and treacherous Captain Robert Ross. In March 1788 he placed most of his subordinates (including Lieutenant Watkin Tench) under arrest over a trivial matter, and technically they remained so until they returned to England. It is in these second ranks of command within the service that we find the truly luminous minds in the colony. To me, Tench stands out above them all, for he was able to take an overarching view of the settlement that encompassed both black and white. His friend William Dawes was perhaps the most morally upright man in the colony. Poor Ralph Clark took months to adjust to life in Sydney Cove, but even he left us intriguing insights into the new colony.

On the other side of the invasion stood the Eora. The names of many remain unknown to us, for the smallpox epidemic of 1789 carried them off before much could be learned of them. Bennelong stands out, however, as a great warrior and as a bridge between the colonists and his own people. Arabanoo, who preceded him in living among the colonists, was a gentler soul,

while Colbee seems to have been an important traditional leader. Those who stood aloof from the settlers, such as the resistance fighter Pemulwy, are also less well known, but deserve recognition for the role they played in battling the invasion of their land.

Nowhere, perhaps, are the colony's peculiar characteristics as plainly evident as in the city's first newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette*. First published in 1803, the broadsheet was the megaphone of government. Don't look in its pages for dissenters' voices or incisive political analysis, for the *Gazette* was fiercely censored, and with each new administration it subtly changed its style. Some governors, however, seem to have tolerated gossip, tidbits and humour, and the paper is leavened with both intentional and accidental comedy. A careful reading of the *Gazette* reveals much about Sydney. Through it we learn details of its streetscape, changing architecture, its crimes and its social preoccupations.

Even the convict camp of this early period possessed a few articles of refinement. The printing press that produced the *Sydney Gazette* arrived with the First Fleet, as did a pianoforte. It belonged to surgeon's second mate and later naval surgeon George Worgan, who upon departing the colony in 1792 passed it on to Elizabeth Macarthur. In Mrs Macarthur we find a remarkable woman, for in this wilderness she educated her children, managed a farm, and formed a magnet for the educated souls who clung to civilisation in this most testing of places.

During these years the inhabitants of Sydney often lived in fear of a revolt by such hardened types as the Irish Defenders. But when it came the revolt sprang not from the felons but from within the group ostensibly dedicated to preserve order: the New South Wales Corps. The Rum Corps, as everybody called this junta, thrived by monopolising trade, especially in ardent spirits, which then acted as the colony's currency. In January 1808 the Corps overthrew Governor Bligh, whose ill-fated trip on the *Bounty* must have acted as a rehearsal for his undoing in Sydney.

Bligh was left a bitter man by his experiences in Sydney, quipping that half of the residents had been transported—and that the other half should have been.

With the arrival of Governor Macquarie in 1810 some semblance of order was restored and the city began to move away from its military roots. Despite his reputation as a reformer Macquarie was not above using grog monopolies for his own ends, and Sydney's new hospital was built on the profits from a monopoly on rum imports granted by the governor. Under Macquarie the *Gazette* began publishing exhortations to its readers to enter the state of matrimony, whereas earlier the paper had carried advertisements by elderly love-seekers that seemed to lampoon wedded bliss. Regularity and morality were the order of the day under Macquarie as lists of official street names and diverse proclamations filled the paper.

It is important to remember just how tiny Sydney was during this time. As late as 1800 there were fewer than 5000 Europeans in all of New South Wales, while by 1810 the population of Sydney was only 10,000, rising to just 30,000 by 1820. It was during Macquarie's reign that prosperous ex-convicts (known as emancipists to the chagrin of Wilberforce and other anti-slavery campaigners) began to be looked upon as respectable members of society. By the 1830s, horrifying traditionalists like James Mudie, they started to play important roles in the life of the colony.

After the first decades of multicultural mixing, Sydney became ever more British. From the 1830s onwards visitors increasingly commented on the quintessentially English character of the settlement. For some, it was only when they sat down to a meal including tropical fruits or kangaroo that they realised they were not in England. The more astute, however, realised that something was amiss when they heard street calls and music that were popular in London a quarter of a century earlier.

The truth is that the colony had become an awful parody of

England, a parody that was predicated upon convictism—the issue of whether you had left your country for your country's good, or had come to New South Wales for your own reasons. It was the yardstick against which all social standing was measured, thus all social status in the colony was defined in terms of the convict present. The problem was that as the city grew it became impossible to know who was an ex-convict and who was not. In this crazy society the most extreme social niceties were of the utmost importance in keeping one from 'convict pollution'. It was simply not possible, for example, to approach someone in the street and address them, even if you had been introduced in polite society the night before. 'Upon my life, I don't know you, sir!' was the bellowed response to such a threatened breakdown of the precarious social order.

The height of this absurd society came with the publication in 1837 of James Mudie's *Felonry of New South Wales*. In the preface to his privately published and scandalous work Mudie coined his term 'felonry'. Like gentry and yeomanry, felonry was meant to denote a class of persons, but Mudie made it clear that this class distinction was immutable. Once a member of Mudie's felonry, you could never become anything else.

The transportation of convicts to Sydney ceased in 1840, but the threat of renewal continued until 1850, when this sick society was finally smashed apart by the discovery of gold. The old animosities were buried under an avalanche of immigration, and not even the slightest pretence at punishment could be kept up in sending convicts to a land of Ophir. The rush of the 1850s totally changed Sydney. Eyewitness accounts of the city reveal what appears to have been an almost instantaneous change, from a city of prisoners with an oppressive administration to a metropolis somewhat similar to the one we know today. Gold was not an unalloyed blessing, however, for it also brought competitors. Melbourne rose almost overnight on the banks of the Yarra, and

for decades it was a larger, richer and more important place than its northern neighbour.

This stage of colonial development coincided with increasing degradation of the Sydney environment and the arrival of inconveniences unknown to earlier settlers. Among the most distressing of these new irritants were the winds known as 'brickfielders'. These dust-filled gales resulted from the denudation of the Sydney region. (There was, at this time, not a single tree in Hyde Park.) The bare ground seemed to increase the intensity of the windstorm and allowed it to carry grit and dust in enormous volume. As if the brickfielders were not enough, Sydney summers were now heralded by squadrons of flies and mosquitoes. The Australian bush fly is a hairy and irritating creature that breeds in offal and faeces, and both food sources then abounded in the city. The mosquito, previously uncommon, doubtless benefited from poor drainage; and these factors, along with a disrupted ecosystem, allowed the pests to proliferate and disrupt every outdoor activity in a way unimaginable to Sydney's inhabitants in both 1788 and 1988. Like the pestilential snakes of an earlier age, their rise bespoke a sick ecosystem. Sydney's society was also beginning to show signs of strain. Young men were gathering in public places and irritating passers-by. Soon they would transform themselves into larrikin gangs known as 'pushes' and begin threatening lives.

The first visitor of consequence to come to Sydney and speak of it with nothing but admiration was perhaps Anthony Trollope. In his widely read book the prominent author represented Sydney as a distinctive, beautiful and cultured city capable of rivalling any in Europe. Trollope went into raptures over the harbour, and his words changed the nature of Sydney's visitors from predominantly scientists and administrators, to tourists.

Sydney's first century encompassed its infancy. Its dependence upon London, the unselfconsciousness of many of its early chroniclers and its embryonic physical state are all concordant with this notion. Puberty came in the 1880s, for by then the city had left childhood behind and had taken on, in general outline, its adult form. Sydney had grown into a city of 400,000 people. It was no longer an isolated European outpost at the ends of the earth. The city's second century may be thought of as its teenaged phase, for mixed together are sparks of genius, jejune gestures and downright destructiveness. From the Sydney Push with its bohemian ambitions to the push of the developer's bulldozers, the century has a loutish feel about it.

At the dawn of Sydney's third century what trends can we detect? I think I see an overweight adult, drowning in its excrement and suffocating in its own lard, for the city has now grown so large that the quality of life of its inhabitants is suffering. Anyone who must take to the roads or trains in peak hour will know what I am talking about. Anyone who has watched the last bandicoots and penguins dwindle, who has seen green space after green space disappear under housing, and who has seen the summer air thicken ever more with smog, knows of the theft of life that comes with each new phase of growth. The tragedy is, you see, that the best things Sydney has to offer—its weather, beaches and parks—are free. They're not making them any more, yet each year there are more and more people who want a piece of them.

This book is an exploration of what makes Sydney special. It's a search for the origin of that unique mix that gave birth to the city, for an understanding of the natural world upon which it was grafted. In assembling this anthology I have tried to let those who were on the spot during the moments of Sydney's infancy tell us how it was, and I've included reports from the city's distinguished

visitors, everyone from François Peron to Charles Darwin, from the Spaniard Francisco Xavier de Viana to the Frenchman Hyacinthe de Bougainville. I've also tried to tell the story of what happened to early Sydney's favourite sons and daughters such as Watkin Tench, Bennelong, Phillip, Collins, Bungaree and others.

Above all, my eye has been drawn to accounts which record the irrepressible life of the city. Near the end of *The Birth of Sydney* is a yarn by Mark Twain. In it he relates a tall story concerning a shark, a sharp businessman and a wool stockpile that he reputedly heard while visiting Sydney in 1895. Yet at the core of Twain's fable lies a kernel of truth—that curious fabrication of myth from fragile history that lives at the heart of all great cities. The history of Sydney, to borrow Twain's marvellous words, 'does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies. And all of a fresh new sort, no mouldy old stale ones. It is full of surprises, and adventures, and incongruities, and contradictions, and incredibilities; but they are all true, they all happened.'

*

Where necessary, I have modernised punctuation and spelling, silently corrected a handful of obvious errors, inserted the occasional explanatory date, and sometimes added a word or two of clarification in a footnote, marked by a dagger (†). The original authors' own footnotes are indicated by an asterisk (*). Otherwise, their writings are presented as they were first printed, with any omissions of text indicated by an ellipsis (...).

JAMES COOK

A Port Passed By

In May 1770 Captain James Cook anchored the *Endeavour* for a week in a 'capacious, safe and commodious' harbour he first called Stingray Bay. Then, in honour of the treasure trove of plant specimens collected there by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, he changed the name to Botany Bay. It was to become the most famous placename in Australia.

Anxious to continue mapping the east coast, Cook weighed anchor, and a few hours later he spied an entrance to another harbour. Cook sailed by, but gave the place its first European name.

6 May 1770—During our stay in this harbour I caused the English colours to be displayed ashore every day and an inscription to be cut in one of the trees near the watering place setting forth the ship's name, date, &c. Having seen everything this place afforded we at daylight in the morning weighed with a light breeze at NW and put to sea, the wind soon after coming to the