'Das Hundsköpfige Beutelthiere', in *Bilderbuch für Kinder*, by FJ Bertuch, 1821
courtesy Gerard Willems

'In every respect new'

European impressions of the thylacine, 1808–1855

by Carol Freeman

Abstract

When Tasmania was settled by the British 200 years ago, the thylacine, a shy marsupial carnivore with a striped back and a coughing bark, existed in small numbers on the island. By 1936 the species was extinct. This article focuses on the first published image of the thylacine in the *Transactions of the Linnean Society 1808*, and traces its history over the following decades. It argues that the engraving is a sad embodiment of initial contact between Europeans and colonial fauna and that copies of this illustration develop the idea of an animal in need of extermination. Visual representations such as these in scientific and natural history works anticipated the failure of colonial societies to preserve the animals encountered in new environments.

Introduction

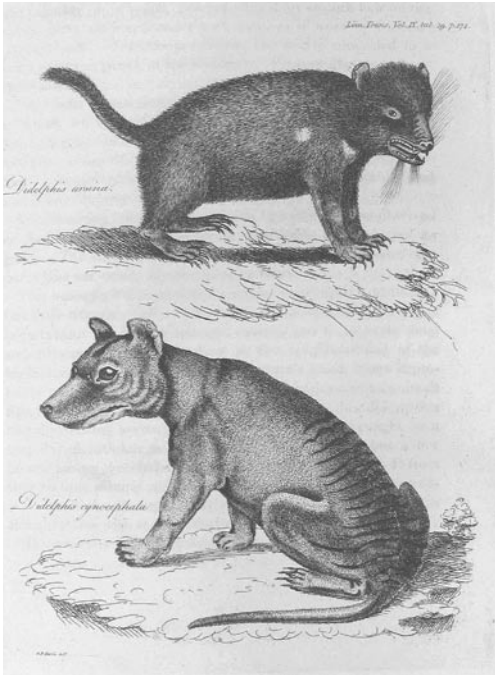
Long before Europeans sighted Tasmania, writers and explorers had suggested ideas about the landscape, human inhabitants and animals of unknown lands. Cultural historian Paul Arthur has described the imagining of the Antipodes as a 'hell on earth' inhabited by 'mythical monsters and terrifying semi-human creatures': a conceptual as well as geographical space that helped consolidate the idea of countries in the Southern Hemisphere as the antithesis of Europe, its 'other' side.[1] The first image of the thylacine presented to the European scientific community was an animal perceived through a veil of expectation and awe. That is, rather than being a clinically objective representation of a 'new' animal, the first published illustration and description of the species also presents a collection of ancient narratives and discourses about colonial outposts.

George Prideaux Harris,[2] Deputy Surveyor-General of New South Wales,[3] was one of a number of British government employees in the colonies who were expected and encouraged, or simply grasped the opportunity, to record or send back evidence of 'nondescript' animals and birds in the hope of forging a new career. Rather than sending his specimen to Europe, Harris sketched and classified the strange animal he observed. His drawing was later transformed into the engraving that became the 'type specimen' of the species, or what French zoologist Georges Cuvier referred to in 1820 as a 'substitute for its subject'.[4] Harris's description of the thylacine tested the classificatory notions that were in place as descriptions of the echidna and platypus had previously done,[5] while his naming of this animal — *Didelphis cynocephala* — exemplifies the increasing number of lay collectors for whom discovering 'new' species was the ultimate goal. The continued citation of Harris as the first to describe the species and the prolonged use of the species' name *cynocephalus*, testifies to his success.[6]

Harris's original drawing of the thylacine, which now appears lost, along with the engraving and other copies that were published in zoological and natural history works in following years, is an example of material culture that gives insights into aspects of colonial settlement and the history of zoological representation. More importantly, a study of these images reveals the role of visual representations in encouraging the extermination of the thylacine. In the decades following Harris's description, zoological illustrations of the species were made and the specimens in museums were constructed without access to a living animal. Other artists and artisans amplified aspects of the published engraving and some invented new positions and features for the animal. On the whole, however, the illustrations directly influenced by Harris's description tend to project the idea of a passive or restrained creature, an image that was later superseded by more imaginative responses to the animal and its habitat. Ultimately, the circumstances under which the first illustration of a thylacine in a scientific journal was made anticipated the fateful association of the species with European culture.[7]

The first European illustration of the thylacine

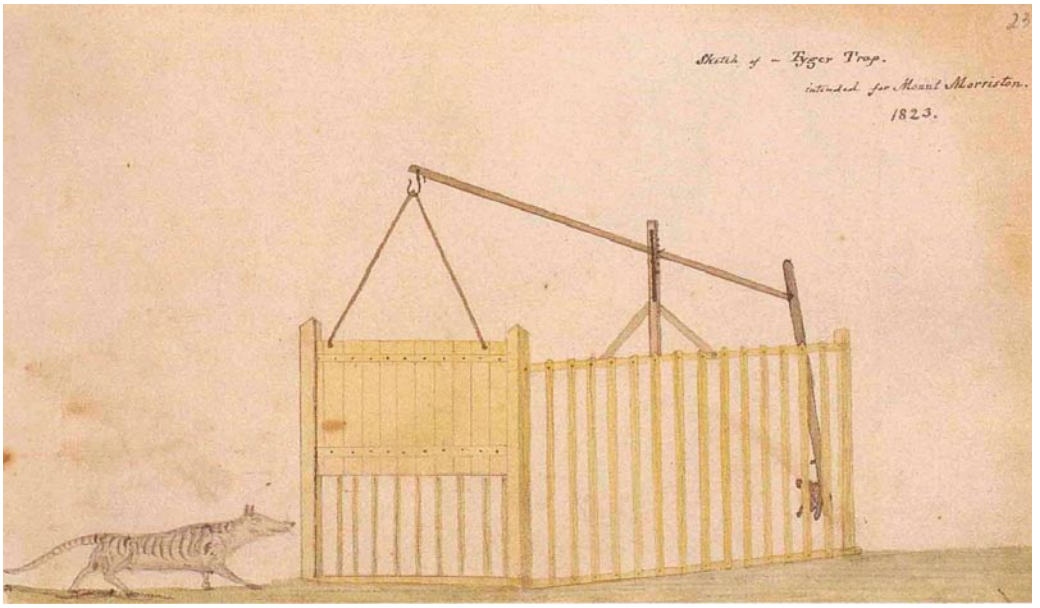
The first published image of a thylacine, an engraving made from George Harris's drawing, appeared with his descriptive notes in the ninth volume of the prestigious *Transactions of the Linnean Society* in 1808.[8] Harris had sent his drawing of the thylacine and a Tasmanian devil to London two years earlier with a letter to Sir Joseph Banks



Engraving of *Didelphis cynocephala* and *Didelphis ursina* in *Transactions of the Linnean Society*, vol. 9, 1808
photograph by Tony Freeman
courtesy The Linnean Society of London

speaking of 'descriptions from the life' of the two species, which Harris considered were 'in every respect new'.[9] He classified the two animals in the same genus as opossums, naming the thylacine *Didelphis cynocephala* (dog-headed opossum) and the Tasmanian devil *Didelphis ursina* (bear opossum). Art historian Tim Bonyhady has contended that the designation of scientific names for 'new' animals was consistently left to scientists in Europe during this period,[10] but this assertion implies that Harris's offering of the classification, and the initial acceptance of it by scientists, was unusual. Science historian Janet Browne, however, outlines the way in which colonial officials sometimes classified and described material themselves and petitioned the government for grants to produce illustrated publications. She comments that many such officials were recognised as 'experts' in a particular field on their return to England and from Harris's letters it seems as if he aspired to such an outcome.[11] He was considered by his contemporaries to be the most 'intellectual' member of Governor Collins's staff,[12] and although he had no training as an artist, it is evident from his letters that Harris had an intense interest in natural history and sketching the animals and birds he saw in Van Diemen's Land.[13] His drawing and description of a thylacine has the flavour of ambition and opportunism, also evident in the letter to Banks where Harris mentions a work he is preparing on the zoology of Van Diemen's Land and offers his assistance in identifying any 'particular curiosities'.[14]

In his written notes about the thylacine, Harris includes a detailed delineation of the animal's body, together with the results of a dissection, and comments on the creature's appearance and habitat in the manner of a formal scientific report. But the notes also explain that the animal from which the drawing and description were taken was a male 'caught in a trap baited with kangaroo flesh' and that it 'remained alive but a few hours, having received some internal hurt in securing it'.[15] Twentieth-century zoologists have largely disregarded the engraving in the *Transactions* because of its perceived inaccuracies. For instance, Eric Guiler (1998) dismisses the engraving with the words, 'nothing in this [image] reflects reality'.[16] Cäsar Claude's (1996) assessment of the engraving draws attention to the head of the animal, which he considers too big, and the rump, which he finds too slender. Claude contends that the pictured animal resembles a hyena and adds that 'the picture Harris designs here gives a correct impression of how the early settlers in Tasmania perceived the thylacine'.[17] Indeed, there are elements in the engraving that suggest the 'reality' that Harris reported when observing the injured thylacine in the trap. Temminck (1827) and Renshaw (1905) both conclude that the specimen described by Harris was



Sketch of a Tyger Trap intended for Mount Morriston. 1823.
by Thomas Scott

immature or small.[18] This could account for its relatively large head and slender rump. It is also possible that the drawing Harris made was adapted slightly in the engraving process, as Harris's notes and the published engraving do not match exactly. Apart from the drawing, and Harris's description in the Linnean Society archives that is quoted verbatim in the journal, there appears to have been little for the engraver to go by. Some drawings made in colonial sites by other artists, for instance one of the echidna by John White, surgeon-general of the New South Wales colony, not only include the circumstances of their 'discovery' but also supply what Gruber has described as information that is so precise in visual details that it seemed intended for the engraver.[19] Indeed, it is because the image is not exactly as Harris described, and because of its status as the only published zoological illustration of a thylacine that was made from a drawing of a living specimen more or less in the wild, that the engraving in the Linnean Society journal deserves sustained attention.

Harris's personal response to the animal and the circumstances in which his drawing was made are clearly discernible in the descriptive text. Judging by his comment that the trap was baited with kangaroo flesh, it was probably similar to the 'tyger trap' pictured by another surveyor of Van Diemen's Land, Thomas Scott, in 1822.[20] Scott's drawing shows a wooden cage with a suspended door that dropped in reaction to pressure on the bait attached to a central pivot inside the cage. 'As the bottom [of the pivot] is pulled forward, the top moves backward disengaging the ridge pole which sat in a notch on the bait stick. Thus dislodged, the gate is released.'[21] The 'internal hurt in securing it' that Harris mentioned may have been caused by the gate falling on the thylacine, or efforts to get the animal out of the cage. This type of trap was generally used when the capture of live animals was desired and is the only type to use bait as an inducement, 'exploit[ing] the natural curiosity of many animals'.[22] The gate in Scott's picture looks heavy: it could

be conjectured that it fell with some force on the thylacine's hindquarters as the animal attempted to back out of the cage with the bait in its mouth.[23] This may account for the seated position of the animal in Harris's drawing as its spine may have been damaged so it could not move. It also invites speculation as to whether or not the animal was in fact still alive when it was sketched. It is possible that the body was delivered to Hobart and then sketched and dissected by Harris, while aspects of the text relating to the animal's behaviour were based on the report of a trapper.[24]

Accepting this scenario would, however, render the position of Harris's figure and many other aspects of his drawing and description puzzling. It seems much more likely that the drawing was actually made in the 'few hours' that the thylacine lived after capture, perhaps still confined in the trap. For instance, Harris described the animal as 'exceedingly inactive and stupid', as it would appear if badly injured, and he particularly remarked on the action of the 'nictitant membrane'.[25] The effect of the injury and/or the confined space of the trap is, indeed, discernible in the awkward, hunched posture of the figure in the engraving. The muscled shoulders and neck hint at the extent to which the animal struggled before it became 'inactive', and the foreshortened body and large head suggest that the angle of Harris's gaze may have been determined by the dimensions and location of the cage. Evidence of a closer examination of the thylacine's body *after* death, as suggested in Harris's claim of a dissection, is displayed in the detail of the body parts and the way the skin moulds over the animal's bones in the engraving.

The engraving in the *Transactions* is the only illustration in a scientific, zoological or natural history work in the nineteenth century that is derived from a drawing made of a thylacine living in Tasmania and, because it represents the animal in a naturalistic style, it is the only image in which the species' situation and original habitat is tangible. In this regard, Harris echoes contemporary artists, such as Charles-Alexander Lesueur and Ferdinand Bauer, who accompanied voyages of exploration and captured animals on paper for scientific classification and study. Lesueur's images often show species in a particular environment, or in the circumstances in which they were found, or actively engaged in foraging or eating,[26] and are aligned with what Martin Kemp, art and science historian, has called 'the cult of the overtly natural' and 'nature in the raw' in botanical and landscape illustration of the late eighteenth century.[27] Like these animals, the seated thylacine in the *Transactions* does not conform with most figures in published illustrations early in the nineteenth century, which were often based on badly stuffed taxidermy specimens. It differs significantly from illustrations of other species in two standard multi-volume contemporary works, Buffon's *Natural History* (published from 1749 to 1778) and Shaw's *General Zoology* (published between 1809 and 1826), that adhere to what Cuvier required of his illustrators in 1820: pictures that 'avoided foreshortening that distorts the actual form' and show a standardisation and detachment from fine art.[28] The conventional pose was usually a standing profile position, to show effectively the entire physiognomy of an animal for identification or classification. The unusual position of Harris's thylacine indicates that the drawing came directly from a colonial site. However, the lack of background and only a faint shadow of the animal's body giving the illusion that it occupies space — seen also in Bauer's drawings — are typical of more conventional illustrations. Bryson maintains that this lack of spatial depth was associated

with the 'laying-out', or tabular character, of scientific practice.[29]

The close observation of the position and attitude of the trapped thylacine in Harris's drawing also reveals his 'laying out' for inspection his skill in illustrating animals. Indeed, when the image is viewed in the context of Harris's written description, it is as if the actual thylacine and the segment of earth it sits on have been removed and transported, as many dead specimens were, for investigation by a European scientific institution.

A close reading of Harris's notes

The authenticity of Harris's drawing is reinforced in the *Transactions* by the sole inscription 'GP Harris delt' — the artist's (delineator's) name is supplied, but the engraver's name is not given. Nevertheless, early readers may have overlooked details about the animal's physical capture in their eagerness to examine the unfamiliar form and to debate the species' place in a classification system. Drawings of two 'new' animals from Van Diemen's Land would have been particularly interesting to scientists in Europe. Harris's desire to succeed, as well as anxiety about the situation he found himself in, is evident in his descriptive text. It moves between enunciative modes: from the careful recitation of body measurements at the beginning of the entry, to the paragraph near the end where his feelings towards the animal he is discussing intrude.[30] There, in a short, unpunctuated sentence, Harris writes of the 'internal hurt' that resulted from the thylacine's capture. Immediately after this, he tersely comments: 'from time to time [the animal] uttered a short guttural cry, and appeared exceedingly inactive and stupid; having, like the owl, an almost continual motion with the nictitant membrane of the eye.' Harris's use of 'internal hurt' and 'but a few hours' suggest a fleeting tone of distress. Elsewhere, in a letter to his mother, he mentions that large kangaroos resisted the dogs so desperately when hunted that the kangaroos often killed or 'wound[ed] them sadly'. Although he was referring to domestic animals rather than native ones, Harris's concern is unusual for a male in the colony at this time.[31] The age of the thylacine specimen may also have contributed both to Harris's concern and the animal's behaviour. Barbara Hamilton-Arnold, editor of Harris's letters and papers, calls Harris, who was in his early 30s when in Hobart Town, 'a high-principled Quaker' whose objections to the flogging of a convict woman by acting Lieutenant-Governor Edward Lord threatened Harris's position as surveyor, magistrate and commissary and had 'disastrous consequences' for his family in Van Diemen's Land.[32] If Harris was prepared to sacrifice his position in the colony to protest about the treatment of a convict woman, he may very well also have been sensitive to the capture, injury and death of a young thylacine.

A mixture of scientific and popular rhetoric is a consistent feature of nineteenth-century zoological and natural history works, and Harris's notes also oscillate between these discourses. He begins in detached, scientific style with a detailed description of the thylacine's body and continues with the comment that it bears 'a near resemblance to the wolf or hyæna', despite the drawing, which depicts a thickset animal that looks more like a bulldog. At the very end of the entry, Harris also notes that the animal 'is vulgarly called the Zebra Opossum, Zebra Wolf, &c'. By the 1820s Lieutenant Jeffreys and settler George Evans were also referring to the thylacine as 'hyena' in published works, a particularly significant association as the hyena was linked with cowardly behaviour, greed and grave-

robbing.[33] Harris develops the rhetorical image of the wolf/hyena when he mentions the animal's eyes: 'large and full, black, with a nictitant membrane, which gives the animal a savage and malicious appearance'. This value-laden observation, and the dramatic sentence 'it inhabits amongst caverns and rocks in the deep and almost impenetrable glens in the neighbourhood of the highest mountainous parts of Van Diemen's Land', sit uneasily with the dispassionate and measured language of the first paragraph, while the words and their syntax place the thylacine in a romantic or even Gothic landscape.[34] The appeal of these particular sentences is demonstrated by the fact that they were selected and repeated verbatim, or embellished, in many scientific and popular texts into the next century, while other aspects of Harris's notes were ignored.

References to the monstrous and Gothic connections

The representation of the thylacine offered by Harris to nineteenth-century European culture was an amalgam of influences, responses, discourses and messages. But the impression that predominates is one for which Europeans had long been prepared, for it filled the space delineated by the fears and imaginings of European explorers as well as colonists. On the way to the new settlement at Risdon Cove, while at anchor in Frederick Henry Bay waiting for 'a fair wind' to take the vessel up the Derwent, Harris had written to his brother:

> if accounts from Port Jackson and some persons who have been here can be credited, a quadruped not quite so pleasant [as the kangaroo] to live in the neighbourhood of, is also an inhabitant of Van Diemen's Land — Traces of a Carnivorous Beast have been found in many parts, like a leopard or Panther, but I do not hear that any person belonging to the Settlement has seen the animal itself — Labillardiere in his Voyage in search of Perouse in 1792 Speaks of being ashore here & being disturbed by the Howlings of a Beast, that came pretty near them — That at another time a quadruped the size of a large Dog sprung from some Bushes — it was whitish Spotted with black — and in the woods they found a large upper Jaw and Vertebrae of an animal certainly carnivorous. I suspect however that it may be only a variety of the wild Dog, or rather wolf of this Country.[35]

Only two thylacines were known to have been caught when Harris sent his drawings to Joseph Banks,[36] so imaginative impressions were able to accumulate: a rare, possibly nocturnal, carnivorous, wolf-like animal, existing in the confined space of an island was waiting to be closely observed and described.[37] Harris was armed with recent 'pre-texts', and the name he selected for the species, '*cynocephala*', suggests ancient links to undiscovered lands. The Cynocephali, or dog-headed race, was one of the five major Plinian or monstrous races that as long ago as Egyptian times were believed to inhabit the East. There were also heated discussions in the Middle Ages about the existence of the Antipodes and on the thirteenth-century Hereford map appear numerous illustrations of human/animal hybrids such as the Cynocephali.[38] Cortez and Columbus looked for the Plinian races in America, while Gesner's *Historia Animalium* and Topsell's popular seventeenth-century zoological work include references to them. Although Münster's *Cosmographia* — a standard encyclopedia until the eighteenth century — questioned the existence of such beings, they were inserted as illustrations in

the text, thereby 'favour[ing] belief in what is left open to doubt'.[39] In the medieval cathedral in Exeter, where Harris grew up, images of many of these mythical figures adorn the misericords or tip-up seats in the back row of stalls in the quire.[40] Historians Florike Egmond and Peter Mason comment on the 'ability of images of the monstrous races to leap across textual contexts'.[41] As medievalist JB Friedman notes, 'the myths of the monstrous races, though geographically obsolete, were too vital to discard. They provided a ready and familiar way of looking at … the New World'.[42]

So, in regard to his 'scientific' naming, as well as his description of the animal, there is evidence that Harris was influenced by long-held preconceptions that strange or menacing creatures existed in the wilds of Van Diemen's Land. Roderick Nash comments in *Wilderness and the American Mind* that 'legends and folktales from first contact to well into the national period linked the New World wilderness with a host of monsters, witches and similar supernatural beings'. Nash cites a 1707 text that warned of 'the *Evening Wolves*, the rabid and howling *Wolves* of the *Wilderness* [which] would make … Havock among you'.[43]

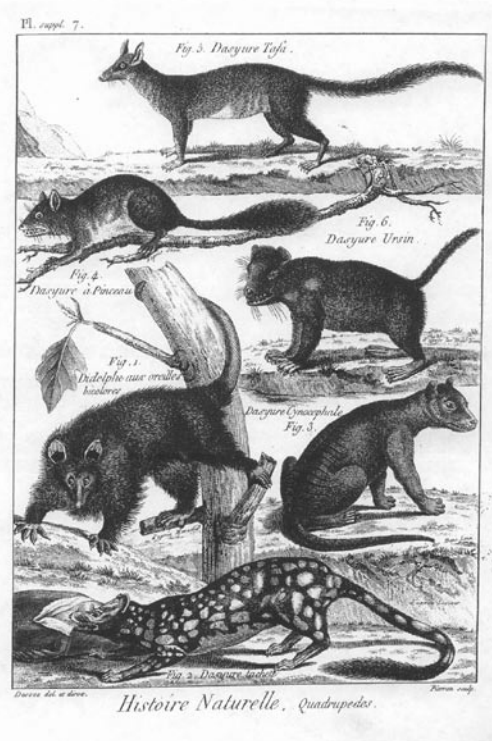
The development of similar ideas about the thylacine has been specifically related to what historian Jim Davidson calls 'Tasmanian gothic', a way of looking at the island that is 'as old as Marcus Clarke', a reference to the author of the epic nineteenth-century convict story, *For the Term of his Natural Life*. Davidson mentions a landscape containing presences or, rather, absences — among them the 'Gothically named Tasmanian Tiger'.[44] Descriptions of the thylacine in both zoological and natural history works often include references to wild landscapes, dark forests, wolves, darkness and violence: elements in a well-known gothic metanarrative that always concludes with doom. Essayist Amanda Lohrey talks of a tendency in individuals who construct this narrative to 'invest nature with their own trauma', but I disagree with her statement that 'the spaces of the colonies were without preordained meaning or ideology'.[45] As I have previously suggested, meanings for the animals found in colonial environments had been developed long before the exploration and settlement of Van Diemen's Land. The thylacine was the repository of justifiable uncertainties and imaginings about this remote and unknown island and as a result was also invested with the qualities of a number of European animals that were considered the epitome of evil, appetite and cruelty. Many of the published images and descriptions of the thylacine discussed in the following section expressed the anxieties of Europeans and helped to construct an easily assimilated identity for the thylacine that then shaped actions toward it and inscribed many pages in the story of the species' demise.

In his exposé of nineteenth-century natural history illustrations, Alec Potts also discusses the 'evocation of a strange, supposedly savage world' that accompanies European colonisation of remote areas. He believes these pictures were a means by which repressed and irrational 'social and psychological forces' could find expression.[46] An indication of how the colony continued to be perceived as a savage world is apparent in the *Melbourne Monthly Magazine* in 1855 where the writer 'Cambrian' refers to mythical constructions of the thylacine: 'the Native Wolf is an animal which, at one time, was supposed to be found only in the explorer's or rather settler's imagination, but it is now acknowledged that such an animal does really exist'.[47] Perhaps it was a resurgence of the older, popular associations of *cynocephala* with strange, misshapen monsters of the New World that explains

why, by the mid-nineteenth century, any suggestion that the thylacine resembled a dog — an animal that was more commonly aligned with the 'civilised' world and displayed devotion to humans — was rarely mentioned in natural history works, and the comparison disappeared almost completely over the following 30 years.[48] The stereotype of the dangerous, wolf-like creature had by then become firmly entrenched, and too convenient, to be easily displaced.[49]

Copies of Harris's image

The first copy of Harris's *Transactions* illustration was drawn by 'Deseve' and engraved by 'Pierron' and published in a supplement to Desmarest's *Encyclopédie méthodique*, *mammologie* in about 1820.[50] This new engraving shows an animal with elongated claws only on the rear feet, a lengthened neck, bristles on its neck, a back hunched further and a head lowered slightly. The image is labelled *Dasyure cynocephale*, in the genus for carnivorous marsupials under which Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire placed the species in 1810. The images of the thylacine and the Tasmanian devil are placed on a page with others in their class in layered environments, rather than being portrayed as isolated, unconnected figures. Sarah Thomas points out that the naturalistic background often included in French natural history illustrations at the turn of the nineteenth century reflected the interests of French scientists in the modification of species by climate and environment.[51] Only the thylacine, however, sits on its haunches and faces away from the others on the page; and while the other animals have vital, alert attitudes, teeth showing and wide eyes, the thylacine has a brooding appearance. The very brief text states that the thylacine lives on the seashore and that it preys on echidnas.[52] The misleading reference to marine predation seems to have arisen from confusion between Harris's descriptions of the thylacine and the Tasmanian devil that appeared in the *Transactions*: while Harris reported the remains of an echidna in the stomach of the dissected thylacine, it is only in his description of the Tasmanian devil that the animal 'prey[s] on dead fish, blubber, &c. as their tracks are frequently found on the sands of the sea shore'.[53] Robert Paddle has shown how the error was continued in Murray's *Encyclopedia of Geography* through successive reprintings from 1834 to 1846 at least, and then, how a trickle of publications up to 1967 persisted in mentioning some form of marine activity for the thylacine, despite its denial by Robert Gunn in *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* in 1838 and in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* in 1850.[54]



Dasyure Cynocephale, wood engraving in *Mammalogie: ou Descriptions des espèces de mammifères*, by MAG Desmarest, 1820
Museum Victoria Library

Das Hundsköpfige Beutelthiere in *Bilderbuch für Kinder*, by FJ Bertuch, 1821
courtesy Gerard Willems

An intriguing variation on the engraving in the *Transactions* appeared in *Bilderbuch für Kinder* by FJ Bertuch.[55] The *Bilderbuch* is a lavish children's encyclopedia of animals, plants, flowers, fruit and other aspects of the sciences and arts with a French and German text and 1186 hand-coloured engravings, published in Germany in 237 parts between 1798 and 1830.[56] The illustration of the thylacine appears in volume 10, 1821. It is on a page with other Australian marsupials — several are copies of images by Bauer — and it is interesting for the way in which it differs from the *Transactions* engraving. In some respects, the figure corresponds more accurately to the details in Harris's notes. The hind foot, for instance, does not have the long dark claws that appear in the engraving. Indeed, the image in the *Bilderbuch* agrees precisely with the description in the *Transactions*: 'hind feet 4-toed,claws short, covered by tufts of hair extending 1 inch beyond them'.[57] But the most obvious disparity between the *Bilderbuch* illustration and the original engraving is in the delineation of the animal's eye. In the *Bilderbuch*, a nictitating membrane is clearly visible, but in the *Transactions* the animal's eye is outlined with a clean black line, and the membrane dissolves in the inky black interior of the organ. The image in the *Transactions*, therefore, emphasises one element of the text — 'eyes large and full, black … which gives the animal a savage and malicious appearance' — over others.[58] The image in the children's book, on the other hand, projects a quite different impression, with the eye barely outlined and pale shading in the area of the mouth.

The very brief text opposite the image in the *Bilderbuch* notes only that the 'dog-headed Dasyure' is a carnivore that 'lives in the most mountainous parts of Van Diemen's Land'; it is a lot like a dog, especially around the head; it is close to a marsupial in its internal structure; and it 'looks very wild and vicious'. The text adds that it is very little known 'because only two individuals have been taken up until now, which were both males'.[59] This succinct description, then,

reflects the ambivalence in Harris's text: the thylacine is 'dog-like' as well as looking 'wild and vicious' and the mystery associated with animals in foreign locations is sustained in the admission that little is known about the species.

Other similarities between the image and text in the *Transactions* and this one — the fact that both figures are facing the same direction (indicating that they were both copied from a figure facing the opposite way) and all other engraved copies are facing to the right (indicating that they were copied from the illustration in the *Transactions*) — raises the possibility that the German image may be derived from Harris's original drawing. The preface to Bertuch's work stresses the importance of figures that are 'accurately defined', a 'true representation of objects', not 'composed according to the whim of a draughtsman' and modelled on the 'most perfect of its type'.[60] Harris's drawing was the only known image of the species available in Europe that was made from a live animal and it is not unlikely that his drawing may have made its way to Germany. Research into the classification and illustration of the platypus in Bertuch's work reveals that eminent German naturalist Johan Blumenbach, who also contributed to the *Bilderbuch*, received a specimen of the platypus from Joseph Banks in 1796 that was probably used as a reference. Wanda Horky, archivist at the National Library of Australia, has observed that: 'with Blumenbach working in Germany it wouldn't have been difficult for him to give Bertuch in Weimar information about this strange creature'.[61] As Harris's drawing, originally sent to Banks, is missing from the Linnean Society Archives it is possible that Banks also sent Harris's drawing of the thylacine to Blumenbach and that it was eventually used as a model for the illustration in Bertuch's work. If the German image were indeed a more precise copy of

Dog-head Thylacinus, wood engraving in *The Pictorial Museum of Animated Nature*, about 1850

Harris's drawing it would be consistent with a more general trend that I have observed: images and texts in British works generally construct the thylacine as a dangerous creature, while French and German works tend to represent the species in a way that encourages a more sympathetic response.

The development of negative constructions in British works can be traced in the text accompanying two of three almost identical copies of the engraving from Harris's drawing that appear in *History of the Mammalia* in 1849, the more popular *The Pictorial Museum of Animated Nature* in about 1850, and Charles Knight's *The English Cyclopædia* published in 1855.[62] The accompanying descriptions in both *History of the Mammalia* and *The Pictorial Museum* are identical. They repeat Harris's description 'dog-headed' and stress the species' resemblance to a dog, but then comment that the species is 'much rarer than the ursine opossum [Tasmanian devil]' and paraphrase Harris's words, stating 'in stature it nearly equals a wolf'. It is also noted that the thylacine's habits are nocturnal and the habitat of the species is then exaggerated

The Zebra or Dog-faced Dasyurus, wood engraving, in *The Animal Kingdom*, by Georges Cuvier, 1829

thus: 'remaining concealed during the day in the caverns and fissures of the rocks, in the deep and almost impenetrable glens among the highest mountains of Van Diemen's Land'. With the addition of the word 'fissure' and the removal of 'in the neighbourhood' from Harris's sentence, the thylacine's habitat is now more precise and secluded. The illustration emphasises the point: a miniature background of mountains, a palm tree and exotic foliage have been added to the copy of the engraving, the figure has been reversed by the copying process, and the claws on all feet have been extended and sharpened. The idea of a savage animal is conveyed by the observation that the thylacine 'prowls, hyæna-like, in quest of prey'. The story of Harris's thylacine caught in the trap is repeated, but the word 'ferocious' is added to 'inactive and stupid',[63] and later in the paragraph a crucial and much-repeated statement is made: the thylacine 'usually' attacks sheep.[64]

The problem with this description is not that the thylacine was said to resemble a dog, wolf or hyena for, as art historian Bernard Smith remarks, the unknown was interpreted in terms of the known.[65] Rather, it is that the animals to which the thylacine was compared for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have particularly negative associations in European mythology, that particular elements were *selected*, and that a distinct tone is produced as these elements interact with each other and with the image. Constructions of the thylacine in natural history works in the following years tilted Harris's visual and verbal description this way and that with the addition of a word, a line or two, or a physical attitude, usually to stress associations with feared or despised animals. In some cases an entry distorts the original image, or places contradictory suggestions side by side and so creates a confusing impression.

The 1855 work *The English Cyclopædia*, which also uses the copy of the *Transactions* engraving discussed above (Figure 5), includes a text based on Harris's description with the addition of the sentence 'two of these animals are now alive in the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London' and quotes the relatively long entry in the zoo's guidebook.[66] The image is now labelled 'Tasmanian Wolf', extending the comparison Harris makes at the beginning of his text. The entry states that the animal plays the role of the 'larger quadrupeds of Africa and Asia', that is, of dominant predator, and it includes the comment 'their favourite prey is mutton'.[67] In the three works that reproduce this image, a smaller figure of the Tasmanian devil, surrounded by lush, almost tropical vegetation, also appears.

A wood engraving by Basire in an 1829 English translation of the standard zoological work by Georges Cuvier, *Le Règne Animal (The Animal Kingdom)*, shows a taller version of Harris's seated image, with round bear-like ears and a smooth dense

coat.[68] This figure looks like a large dog and is compared with one in the accompanying description and on its label, 'dog-faced dasyurus'. It is also called 'zebra dasyurus', a reference to the African horse-like animal (or more precisely, its stripes) that was once considered 'dangerous and imperfect', but in Buffon's late eighteenth-century zoological work is described as 'elegant'.[69] The stripes on the thylacine are faint and it looks warily over its right shoulder. Despite the teeth visible in its barely-open mouth, the image reinforces the comparison with inoffensive species that is made in the text. Paddle considers that this illustration of the thylacine and others of the period depicted an 'upright, noble animal';[70] in my opinion, only this image warrants such a description.[71]

The remainder of the descriptive text in Cuvier's work dispels any notion of nobility. Cuvier calls the thylacine 'a singular looking animal, by no means pretty', and also states that the species inhabits coastal areas, that it eats the 'half-corrupted bodies of Seals' and 'remains concealed in cavities in rocks, or in hollow trees' on the coast, rather than in fissures in the mountains.[72] This English translation and elaboration of the lines from Harris's description of the Tasmanian devil encourages reactions of disgust and repulsion. However, the image and text considered together convey a more complex message and tend to create the impression of an undesirable, rather than a dangerous, animal because the visual image is relatively appealing. So, in two works emanating from France, *Encyclopédie méthodique* and *The Animal Kingdom*, notions of nobility in the image are undercut in the text by associating the animal with the sea rather than the mountains, and with scavenging rather than hunting. Later British texts that mention marine predation do so in combination with less engaging images, so that more unequivocally negative impressions are suggested. The image of a relatively innocuous, dog-like animal did not appear again in natural history works in English until the early twentieth century when the extinction of the thylacine was imminent.

European settlement and the demise of the thylacine

The thylacine was one of many native animals that experienced the effects of European settlement. The consequences of introducing species from other parts of the world, unsustainable agricultural practices, habitat alteration and introduced diseases decimated wild populations. In the case of the thylacine, the growth of the sheep industry in Tasmania was a major factor that encouraged destructive actions toward the species. Sheep were introduced to Van Diemen's Land at the time of the first settlement in 1803. By 1819, their numbers had grown to 172,000,[73] a quantity that, together with oxen, Lieutenant Jeffreys felt was 'amply sufficient for the supply of the inhabitants'. The thylacine was soon accused of killing sheep, although Jeffreys maintained that only four thylacines had been sighted in 17 years of settlement,[74] and Paddle has identified only two records of verified thylacine attacks on sheep, both in 1817.[75] However, dogs had been reported as a problem in the colony in 1819 and 1826 and recognised as a threat to stock when they were no longer needed for kangaroo-hunting. Guiler's analysis of the Van Diemen's Land Company diaries and records between 1832 and 1849 shows there were significant sheep losses on its holdings from predation by dogs.[76] Paddle also provides evidence of the company's mismanagement and other factors that resulted in excessive stock losses at various times during the nineteenth century. He maintains that the thylacine provided a convenient scapegoat for these

losses and so during the course of the century the species was visually, discursively and rhetorically constructed as a danger to livestock.[77] Despite few verified reports of sheep-killing and 25 different warnings of the increasing scarcity or possible extinction of the thylacine by contemporary 'scientists and naturalists' between 1820 and 1888 in Tasmania alone,[78] successive private and government bounties, and trapping for zoos and export, along with changes to habitat, competition for prey and introduced disease depleted thylacine numbers to unsustainable levels.[79]

As documented by Bonyhady, there is evidence that concerns were voiced about the treatment of certain species, that there was awareness of possible extinctions, and sometimes action was taken to preserve animals.[80] However, Grove has noted that thinking on the matter of conservation in the nineteenth century was often 'contradictory and confused' and action to pass or effectively implement legislation was rarely taken.[81] Despite knowledge of its limited numbers, estimated by Guiler at between 2000 and 4000 when European settlers inhabited the island, and early fears for its survival, no action to preserve this 'native predator' was even suggested until early in the twentieth century and then nothing was implemented until it was far too late.

Conclusion

My study of images of the thylacine and the way they interact with texts, along with the history of the species' extinction, suggests that scientific and popular works were among the many sources that, intentionally or otherwise, exerted subtle and consistent pressure to exterminate the species. The fate of the thylacine is foreshadowed in the first European illustration of the species in the *Transactions of the Linnean Society*. The engraving of the trapped animal is a sad visualisation of initial contact between a settler and native wildlife that is recounted in many narratives of life in the colonies. This image, together with its copies and their accompanying textual descriptions, encapsulates the fears and uncertainties of colonists, the drama of an experience in a country far away from Europe, long-held preconceptions about the New World and the imagination of artists. The illustrations also demonstrate that engravers and editors were indeed selective in their use of empirical material, often showed little regard for accuracy or detail, and that British artists, in particular, tended to distort the form of the species.

Factors such as these continued to influence visualisations of the thylacine emanating from Britain and other countries throughout the nineteenth century. While some illustrations exhibited a degree of accuracy, towards the end of the century many bore little resemblance to the living thylacines that were regularly arriving at European zoos. Economic concerns also encouraged belief in, and the exploitation of, centuries of superstition and mythology that were then projected into images of the species.

This paper has been independently peer-reviewed.

Notes

I am grateful to Mike Smith for suggesting I submit this paper to *reCollections* and the journal's editorial team for their proficient assistance. I would also like to thank Dr Jules Freeman and the anonymous referees for comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of the paper.

1 PL Arthur, 'Fantasies of the Antipodes', in I Buchanan and R Barcan (eds), *Imagining Australian Space: Cultural Studies and Spatial Inquiry*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 1999, pp. 37–46, pp. 37–40.

2 The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* cites his full name as George Prideaux Robert Harris. Recent research by Barbara Hamilton-Arnold into Harris's letters (held in the British Library), in Devon researching his family, together with a detailed search of official and unofficial references to him, suggests that the third name, 'Robert', is an error.

3 The island of Van Diemen's Land, called Tasmania from the middle of the nineteenth century, was initially an island outpost of the colony of New South Wales and administered from there until 1825.

4 Georges Cuvier made this comment in the introduction to *Nouveau recueil de planches coloriées d'oiseaux* (1820). It is quoted in K Schulze-Hagen and A Geus (eds), *Joseph Wolf (1820–1899): Animal Painter*, Basilisken Press, Marburg an der Lahn, 2000, p. 83. G Renshaw, *Journal of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire,* vol. 35, 1938, pp. 47–49, suggests that a taxidermy specimen acquired by the Linnean Society from Bullock's Museum in 1819 (and later sold again) was the same animal described by Harris, but Harris makes no mention of sending a skin to England in his letter to Joseph Banks, although he notes attempting to send a live Tasmanian devil to him. Returning ships were unreliable, the colony was in the grip of a serious shortage of supplies at the time the thylacine was caught, and there is no mention of a thylacine in shipping or collection records as early as 1806–08. It therefore seems unlikely that the Linnean Society specimen was also the one Harris described. It is curious that the specimen in Bullock's Museum from 1812 (*A Companion to Mr Bullock's Museum and Pantherion; Containing a Brief Description of Upwards of Fifteen Thousand Curiosities, Antiquities and Productions of the Fine Arts*, William Bullock, London, 1812, p. 30), later acquired by the Linnean Society, was not used as a model for illustrations in British zoological works published up to 1833, when the British Museum acquired a specimen.

5 JW Gruber, 'What is it? The echidna comes to England', *Archives of Natural History,* vol. 11**,** 1982, 1–15, p. 2.

6 Harris classified the thylacine in the genus *Didelphis*, originally created for American opossums, and added the species' name *cynocephala* or dog-head. French naturalist Geoffroy St Hilaire replaced the thylacine in the genus *Dasyurus* with marsupi-carnivores in 1810. Temminck finally gave the thylacine its own genus, *Thylacinus*, in 1824 and it became known as *Thylacinus cynocephalus*, as it still is today. Common names for the thylacine, however, varied at different times and in different spaces, several names often used in the same place, at the same time. For instance, in the early nineteenth century 'hyena', 'zebra opossum', 'zebra wolf' and occasionally 'tyger' are quoted as used in the colony (George Barrington, *The History of New South Wales*, Sherwood, Neely and Jones, London, 1810; George Evans, *Description of Van Diemen's Land, with Important Hints to Emigrants*, John Souter, London, 1822; G Harris, 'Description of two new species of Didelphis from Van Diemen's Land', *Transactions of the Linnean Society of London*, vol. 9, 1808, 174–8, p. 175; and on Thomas Scott's drawing of a 'tyger trap' (Fig. 2)). British and German zoological works referred to the species as 'dog-head Thylacinus', 'dog-faced opossum' or 'Beutelhund' (pouch-dog) (*History of the Mammalia*, Sketches in Natural History*,* Cox, London, 1849; Hugh Murray, *Encyclopaedia of Geography,* Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, London, 1840; Traugott Bromme, *Zonengemälde. Naturgeschichte und Völkerkunde vollständig in Wort und Bild*, Schmidt and Spring, Stuttgart, 1846). By the mid-nineteenth century 'tiger' is common in Tasmania and on the mainland of Australia, but in European zoological and natural history works 'thylacine' is sometimes used (RP Lesson, *Centurie zoologique, ou choix d'animaux rares,* FG Levrault, Paris, 1830; Dr Chenu, *Encyclopédie d'histoire naturelle; ou Traité complet de cette science*, Gustav Havard, Paris, 1850–1861). More often, 'Tasmanian wolf', 'marsupial wolf' and 'zebra wolf' are the labels given to illustrations (*Excelsior: Helps to Progress in Religion, Science and Literature*, James Nisbet, London,

1855; *Illustrated Australian News*, 19 December, 1885; Alfred Edmund Brehm, *Brehm's Zoological Atlas Classified in 55 Sheets*, Ruddiman Johnston, London, about 1891). This trend continues well into the twentieth century, with Tasmanian wolf overwhelmingly common until later in the twentieth century when 'Tasmanian tiger' became the most common colloquial name. Thylacine has been used since 1830, especially in zoological works and, because it is unique and does not have the connotations many other common names carry, I use this name to refer to the species throughout this paper.

7 C Freeman, 'Figuring extinction: Visualising the thylacine in zoological and natural history works 1808–1936', PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005. This thesis analyses over 80 illustrations of the thylacine and finds that most nineteenth-century images bear little resemblance to the species and consistently project the idea of a vicious, threatening animal. One set of illustrations that proliferated between 1880 and 1900 — before and during the time that the government bounty on thylacines was in force — constantly compares the species with a wolf, to which the thylacine bears no relation.

8 GP Harris, 'Description', pp. 174–8.

9 B Hamilton-Arnold (ed.), *Letters and Papers of G.P. Harris 1803–1812 Deputy Surveyor-General of New South Wales at Sullivan Bay, Port Phillip, and Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land*, Arden Press, Sorrento, 1994, p. 89.

10 T Bonyhady (ed.), *The Skottowe Manuscript: Thomas Skottowe's Select Specimens from Nature of Birds, Animals, &c. &c. of New South Wales*, David Ell Press, Sydney, 1988, p. 29. Bonyhady's statement, however, references just one example, that of New South Wales colonial artist, John Lewin. Sybil Jack mentions material collected by surgeon-general of New South Wales, John White, and lieutenant-governors of Van Diemen's Land William Paterson and David Collins: 'Cultural transmission: Science and society to 1850', in RW Home (ed.), *Australian Science in the Making*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 53. Kathleen Duggan, 'The zoological exploration of the Australian region and its impact on biological theory', in *Scientific Colonisation: A Cross-Cultural Comparison*, Papers from a conference at Melbourne, Australia, 25-30 May 1981, pp. 79–81, p. 96, makes similar, but more general, assertions.

11 J Browne, 'Biogeography and empire', in JA Secord, N Jardine and EC Spary (eds), *Cultures of Natural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 305–21, pp. 310–11, mentions that the occupations of naval and military officer, colonial official, government surveyor, merchant and administrator sometimes 'encouraged and expected, an interest in science and natural history' (p. 309). She points out that Joseph Hooker, Robert Brown and Hugh Falconer were originally surgeons on ships of exploration when they began their respective careers as collectors and classifiers of botanical specimens and palaeontologist; while Robert Swinhoe, who named a number of birds, mammals and fish, was a British consular representative in Formosa.

12 J Kerr (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists,* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, p. 348; R and T Rienitis, *Early Artists of Australia,* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1963, pp. 204–9; Hamilton-Arnold, *Letters and Papers*, p. 11.

13 Hamilton-Arnold, *Letters and Papers*, pp. 7–16. Harris left a law practice in Exeter to take up the post of surveyor in New South Wales, but Hamilton-Arnold also comments that a copy of a 1586 plan executed by Harris and published in *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1799, 'demonstrates a neat and methodical turn of mind and possibly some training in draughtsmanship'.

14 Hamilton-Arnold, *Letters and Papers*, p. 89. It is noted that 'as a young man with ambitions for himself and his family, [Harris] was trying to advance his career and financial circumstances in the colony, and to promote patronage back home through his natural history interests'.

15 Harris, 'Description', p. 175. In his description of the Tasmanian devil on p. 178, Harris notes that a live specimen was to be sent to Joseph Banks but the animal died before the vessel it was loaded on left New South Wales.

16 E Guiler and P Godard, *Tasmanian Tiger: A Lesson to be Learnt,* Abrolhos, Perth, 1998, p. 13.

17 C Claude, *Der Beutelwolf: Thylacinus cynocephalus Harris, 1808,* Zoologisches Museum de

Universitat Zurich, Zurich, 1996, p. 49. Passage translated by Dagmar Nordberg, 2004.

18 CJ Temminck, *Monographies de mammologie, ou description de quelques genres de mammifères, dont les espèces ont été observées dans les différens musées de l'Europe*, 2nd ed., Dunfour & D'Ocogne, Paris, 1827, pp. 63–5, pl. vii, p. 65; G Renshaw, 'The Tasmanian thylacine', in Sherratt and Hughes (eds), *More Natural History Essays*, London, 1905, pp. 216–32, p. 219.

19 Gruber, 'What is it?', p. 3, pp. 6–10.

20 Thomas Scott was appointed Assistant Surveyor of the colony in 1821 and made the trap for use on his property 'Mount Morriston' near Ross, a town in the Midlands district of Tasmania. In the course of his duties, Scott explored many parts of the island, including north-west areas near the extensive pastoral holdings of the Van Diemen's Land Company: GH Crawford, 'The Scotts: Thomas, George and James', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings,* vol. 14, 1966, 4–20.

21 S Cubit, pers. comm., 2004.

22 JA Bateman, *Trapping: A Practical Guide*, David and Charles, London, 1979, p. 12.

23 On the other hand, the trap in Scott's crude drawing looks quite large, which may make an injury to the animal's back unlikely.

24 In *Tasmanian Tiger*, p. 13, Guiler and Godard go further, suggesting that the drawing was made from the skin of an animal 'after it was killed by a hunter', but this does not take into account Harris's detailed description of its behaviour.

25 A nictitating membrane is present in many animals, including birds, fish and mammals, and is often called a third eyelid. It can be drawn across the eye to provide extra protection.

26 S Thomas, *The Encounter, 1802: Art of the Flinders and Baudin Voyages*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2002, p. 29.

27 M Kemp, '"Implanted in our natures": Humans, plants, and the stories of art', in DP Miller and PH Reill (eds), *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1996, pp. 197–229, p. 216.

28 Schulze-Hagen and Geus, *Joseph Wolf*, pp. 82–3.

29 N Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1990, p. 106. John Lewin, a natural history artist painting and drawing in Australia between 1800 and 1819 and not constrained by zoological conventions, provided a background of mountains, trees and clouds for his painting of the thylacine. A reproduction of this watercolour appears in Guiler and Godard, *Tasmanian Tiger*, pp. 90–1.

30 The movement between styles is similar to that remarked on by Ross Gibson in his essay on Thomas Watling's *Letters from an Exile at Botany Bay*. Gibson perceives in Watling's text an 'alternating current' between expressionist subjectivity on the one hand and scientific objectivity on the other. He also sees the results of this ambivalence in the work of artists around the turn of the nineteenth century — a manifestation of what he terms an 'epistemological crisis' in Europe. See R Gibson, 'This prison this language: Thomas Watling's *Letters from an Exile at Botany Bay* (1794)', in P Foss (ed.), *Islands in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture*, Sirius-Angus and Robertson, Leichardt, 1988, pp. 4–29, p. 27.

31 B Hamilton-Arnold, *Letters and Papers*, p. 73.

32 ibid., p. 106.

33 Evans, *Description of Van Diemen's Land*, p. 56; and Lieut. Jeffreys, *Van Diemen's Land. Geographical and Descriptive Delineations of the Island*, JM Richardson, London, 1820, p. 108. Hyenas were said to have a 'glandular pouch' that led to the belief that they were alternately male and female — O Goldsmith, *The History of the Earth and Animated Nature*, Fullarton, London, 1855, p. 396 — a potent reason for mistrust.

34 The thylacine's habitat was believed by RC Gunn and other early settlers to be remoter areas of the colony including mountainous regions: RC Gunn, *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, vol. 31, 1863, p. 103; R Mudie, *The Picture of Australia*, Whittaker, London, 1829, pp. 175–6; H Widowson, *Present State of Van Diemen's* Land, Robinson, Joy, Cross and Birdsall, London, 1829, pp. 170–80. Recent research, however, suggests the species mainly frequented lightly forested or 'open' country where their food sources (small to medium-sized native animals) were abundant; Guiler and Godard, *Tasmanian Tiger*, pp. 84–5; M Jones and DM Stoddart,

'Reconstruction of the predatory behaviour of the extinct marsupial Thylacine (Thylacinus Cynocephalus)', *Journal of Zoology,* vol. 246, 1998, 239–46; pp. 243–4. It is pertinent that, in an extremely popular natural history work of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the hyena is said to 'reside in the caverns of mountains, in the clefts of rocks', words very similar to those used by Harris and others following him to describe the thylacine's habitat: Goldsmith, *History of the Earth*, p. 397.

35 Hamilton-Arnold, *Letters and Papers*, p. 59. Wild dog and New Holland dog were early names for dingos, also referred to by explorer William Dampier as 'like hungry wolves' and 'as great as a Mastiff-Dog': Zoological Society of London, *The Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society Delineated*, Thomas Tegg, London, 1830, p. 53.

36 Harris, 'Description', p. 175.

37 A thylacine was killed by dogs at Port Dalrymple in the north of the colony and described by Lieutenant Governor Paterson; see the *Sydney Gazette*, 21 April 1805, p. 3. The second may have been the specimen listed in *A Companion to Mr Bullock's Museum*, p. 30.

38 The medieval Hereford map is a circular representation of the earth, called a T and O map (*orbis terrae*, orb or circle of the earth), with Jerusalem at the centre of the circle and the East at the top. The East includes drawings of strange human hybrids such as the Sciopod, who shields himself from the sun with his foot, men who feed only on the smell of apples, the Blemmyae who have eyes and mouths in their chests, and various animal hybrids, like the Cynocephali. The margins of the known world, the 'Antipodes', were believed to be inhabitable by humans.

39 R Wittkower, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1977, pp. 46–74.

40 *Misericords: The Cathedral Church of Saint Peter*, http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/Gallery/Misericord/List.html, accessed 28 January 2005.

41 F Egmond and P Mason, *The Mammoth and the Mouse: Microhistory and Morphology*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1997, p. 115.

42 JB Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1981, p. 207.

43 R Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1982, p. 29.

44 J Davidson,'Tasmanian gothic', *Meanjin*, vol. 48, no. 2, 1984, 307–25, p. 310.

45 A Lohrey, 'The Greens: A new narrative', in C Pybus and R Flanagan (eds), *The Rest of the World Is Watching*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 1990, pp. 89–100; p. 9.

46 A Potts, 'Natural order and the call of the wild: The politics of animal picturing', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1990, 12–33, p. 20.

47 Cambrian, 'Natural history of Australasia', *Melbourne Monthly Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1855, p. 362.

48 Sometimes in scientific texts comparison of the thylacine with a dog or a wolf is strictly on biological grounds, but references to similarities cross into cultural discourse when they appear in popular natural history works. Then, 'dog' is read as 'man's best friend' and 'wolf' as something to be exterminated. A similar interpretation may occur when any text is exposed to a general reader who is unaware of certain scientific assumptions.

49 Although reference to a dog is embedded in the species' designation as '*cynocephalus*', the translation and common name 'dog-headed thylacinus' occurs only fleetingly in natural history texts in the late 1840s, the 1860s and 1880s and the images they contain bear little resemblance to domestic dogs.

50 MAG Desmarest, *Mammalogie*: *ou description des espèces de mammifères,* Supplement to *Encyclopédie méthodique*, vol. 1, Veuve Agasse, Paris, 1820, pp. 362–3, pl. 7.

51 S Thomas, 'Beauty and accuracy so fully combined: The artistry of Ferdinand Bauer', *Art and Australia*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2002, pp. 111–17.

52 Desmarest, *Mammalogie*, pp. 362–3.

53 Harris, 'Description', p. 177. This mistake is particularly repeated in French publications. Sarah Thomas notes that marine zoology was a preoccupation of French scientists Péron and Baudin and that over half of the specimens collected by the ship *Le Naturaliste* were marine species: Thomas, *The Encounter*, p. 32.

54 R Paddle, *The Last Tasmanian Tiger: The History and Extinction of the Thylacine*, Cambridge

University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 26.

55 FJ Bertuch, *Bilderbuch für Kinder: Enthaltend eine Angenehme Sammlung von Thieren, Pflanzen, Blumen, Früchten* ..., vol. 10, Verlage de Landes-Industrie-Comptoires, Weimar, 1821, [n.p.].

56 *Three Centuries of Children's Books in Europe* describes the engravings in this 24-volume work as 'large and exceptionally beautifully coloured', with great decorative beauty. Hurlimann notes that the illustrations are all meticulously hand-coloured: B Hurlimann, *Three Centuries of Children's Books in Europe*, World Publishing Company, Cleveland, 1968, p. 134.

57 Harris, 'Description', p. 174.

58 ibid.

59 Translation by Liz Koolhof, 2005.

60 Bertuch, *Bilderbuch*, vol. 1, 1798, [n.p.]. Translation by Liz Koolhof, 2005.

61 W Horky, 'Platypus paradoxes', *Gateways*, no. 52, 2001, www.nla.gov.au/ntwkpubs/gw/52/p16a01.html, accessed 31 January 2005.

62 *History of the Mammalia*, pp. 160–2; *The Pictorial Museum of Animated Nature*, Charles Knight, London, about 1850, pp. 16-20; C Knight (ed.), *The English Cyclopædia: A New Dictionary of Universal Knowledge*, Bradbury and Evans, London, 1855, pp. 697–8.

63 In *The Last Tasmanian Tiger*, Paddle also focuses on the construction of the thylacine as 'inactive and stupid' in texts following Harris's initial description which, he agrees, provided a particular context for such an observation — the last few hours of the injured animal's life: pp. 209–12.

64 *History of the Mammalia*, pp. 160–2.

65 B Smith, *Imagining the South Pacific*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1992, p. 10.

66 A pair of thylacines was sent to London Zoo by Ronald Gunn in 1850.

67 *The English Cyclopædia*, p. 698.

68 Baron GLC Cuvier, *The Animal Kingdom*, Geo B. Whittaker, London, 1829, vol. 3, pp. 36–7.

69 M Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes and Striped Fabric*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2001, pp. 45–6.

70 Paddle, *Last Tasmanian Tiger*, p. 210.

71 If this illustration is compared with others in Cuvier's work it could be said that the prominence of the 'dog-faced' or 'dog-headed' tag had led to an image such as those made by George Stubbs of domestic animals. Animals in these paintings took on dignified portrait poses and were associated with their owner's position, sometimes with collars inscribed with their owner's name: A Potts, *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 13, 1990, 12–33, p. 15.

72 Cuvier, *The Animal Kingdom*, pp. 36–7.

73 Paddle, *Last Tasmanian Tiger*, p. 210.

74 Jeffreys, *Van Diemen's Land*, p. 101–9.

75 Paddle, *Last Tasmanian Tiger*, p. 102.

76 Guiler and Godard, *Tasmanian Tiger*, pp. 96, 109.

77 Paddle, *Last Tasmanian Tiger*, pp. 110–13, 148–167.

78 ibid., pp. 222–3.

79 For a more detailed discussion of these and other matters related to the extinction of the thylacine see S Smith, *The Tasmanian Tiger – 1980: A Report on an Investigation of the Current Status of Thylacine* Thylacinus cynocephalus, *funded by The World Wildlife Fund*, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Hobart, 1981; E Guiler, *Thylacine: The Tragedy of the Tasmanian Tiger*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985; and Paddle, *Last Tasmanian Tiger*.

80 T Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2000.

81 R Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 12. See also Bonyhady, *Colonial Earth*, p. 11, where it is suggested 'the environmental aesthetic is as deeply embedded in the culture as is resistance to putting environmental ideals into practice'.

Citation guide

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Carol Freeman is a research associate at the University of Tasmania who works in the new interdisciplinary field of human–animal studies. Her research focuses on the cultural histories of extinct species, the politics of picturing animals, animals and perceptions of place, and their representation in films and wildlife documentaries. She is an active member of the Animals and Society Study Group (Aust.) and an international associate of the recently established New Zealand Centre for Human–Animal Studies. This paper is based on material from her PhD project that analysed illustrations of the thylacine from 1808 to 1936, and was an entry in the National Museum of Australia Student Prize for the History of Australian Science in 2006.