

# The Australianness of the English Claude: Nation and Empire in the Art of John Glover

Ian McLean

The recent exhibition of John Glover's art, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2003), curated by David Hansen,<sup>1</sup> provides an opportunity for not only the revaluation of Glover's art but also the discourses of nationalism and empire that have largely organised thinking about Australian art until now, and are currently reorganising it under the rubric of postcolonialism. Glover's art is uniquely placed as a window on the aesthetic imperatives of nationalism and the relationship between empire and settler art—particularly between English art and its Australian colonial offspring. Glover is the most accomplished and famous European artist ever to have settled permanently in a colony, having developed a considerable reputation during his first sixty years in England before migrating to Australia in 1830. Further, Glover is the only artist to have earned the reputation for inaugurating two national schools of art. Early nineteenth-century English critics claimed he was the first artist to properly picture the British countryside and in the process create a genuine British school of art. In the late twentieth century, long after the British had forgotten their initial infatuation with Glover and fallen for Constable instead, Australian curators claimed Glover was the first artist to have mastered the look of the Australian bush, and so laid the foundation stone for a genuine Australian school of painting.

Because Glover is an exemplar of both English and Australian art, he can also be considered an artist of empire, especially given the current interest in those eighteenth and nineteenth-century English artists from Hodges to Baines (not to mention a host of European orientalists and earlier Dutch and Spanish artists) who in moving between worlds in their picturing of empire reshaped European art. This raises an

obvious question: what was it about Glover's aesthetic that simultaneously lent it to two very different, even contradictory things—the imperial and global demands of empire and the *genius loci* of nationalism (and two nationalisms at that)? A study of the reception of Glover's work demonstrates that Glover's naturalist aesthetic was easily exploited by the myth of *genius loci* that underpinned both early nineteenth-century English and late twentieth-century Australian nationalism: namely the conceit that national identity grew organically from the local soil as if ordained by Nature itself. At the same time, Glover's commitments to the picturesque and the style of Claude provided his art with an aesthetic template through which empire could profess its European values.

Proceeding from this starting point, my argument is in two main parts. The first, "The Australian Glover", outlines the key historical moments in his reception by Australian art historians as he progressed from an artist of Englishness to one of Australianness. The second part, "The English Glover", uses the key points that feature in the critical reception of Glover's English art as a lens through which to examine the ambivalent affiliations between discourses of empire, Englishness and Australianness, and as a tool to unpack the paradigmatic opposition between naturalism and Claude's neoclassical schema in Australian art historiography. I will argue that Glover's English aesthetic deconstructs, in advance as it were, the myth of Australian nationalism that arose around it in the late twentieth century. As a post-script, I will also suggest that the tension between Glover's Englishness and Australianness make his art ripe for postcolonial deconstruction: that is, for the unpacking of myths of national identity through the postcolonial paradigms of hybridity and globalism. If Glover's Claudeanism initially created problems for his place in Australian art, now it potentially opens an even more brilliant career for him within postcolonialism's hybrid global domain.

### **The Australian Glover**

Glover's star role in the pantheon of Australian art is a recent achievement, attained long after Buvelot, McCubbin, Roberts, Streeton and Heysen were comfortably ensconced on their thrones. While Glover had enormous fame in his day, memory of his art rapidly faded after his emigration and death. He remained known to connoisseurs in England and Australia and enjoyed a local reputation in Tasmania, but for most of the twentieth century he was considered merely a colonial curiosity. This is because his art seemed imbued with English values: for Anstralian Glover was an artist of empire, out of step with the myth of Australianness that dominated the

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understanding of Australian art for most of the twentieth century. Steeped in Claudean mannerisms, his paintings were considered too Old World for an authentic Australian art.

If anything, Glover was the epitome of an unAustralian artist. When I was a school student at the end of the 1960s his paintings formed one of the most memorable clichés of Australian art history: their bizarre curvilinear trees seemed laughable grotesque relics of a colonial vision, especially when set against the fresh, light-filled paintings of the Heidelberg School. Glover's notoriety still lingers in some quarters not acquainted with his recent turn in fortune. As every student of Australian art knows, the Heidelberg School of impressionist painters discovered the real Australia by looking more to the *genius loci* than the regalia of empire. They cut through European neoclassical cant to reveal the sunlit clearing *we* call home.

A particular set of qualities comprises the category of Australianness in Australian art historiography. Differences with European art and its aesthetic tropes, truthfulness to local ecologies, and the domestication of an alien and even bizarre environment, are the main ingredients for defining a specifically Australian art. They constitute the structural elements of the art myth of Australianness. This "Australianist" understanding of Australian art is more than popular prejudice; it is chiseled into the headstone of official Australian art history. According to Bernard Smith, "it is most confusing to talk about a distinctively Australian form of painting of any kind before 1885. Our colonial painting is essentially a branch of English painting."<sup>2</sup> In 1962 he dubbed the Heidelberg School the "genesis" of Australian art—though as he admitted, this Biblical metaphor was not his. William Moore had coined it as early as 1905.<sup>3</sup>

Terry Smith traced the origins of this art myth of Australian identity to the Heidelberg School's own self-promotion, and particularly to the Australian impressionist Frederick McCubbin's attempt to show that an Australian art exists. By being true to nature—that is, by paying attention to Australia's unique local ecology, its colours, light and forms—McCubbin argued that his fellow impressionists pictured for the first time an Australian sensibility, as if all it took to be Australian was to dispel the picturesque fog of empire, and see the place as it really was. The only "forerunner" he would admit was the Swiss immigrant artist Louis Buvelot. His paintings, said McCubbin, were "thoroughly Australian."<sup>4</sup> Since then, says Terry Smith (writing in 2002), Australian art history has been preoccupied with one question: "when and how did this art become Australian?"; "The astonishing thing is how little change there has been to the framework within which our art counts as historical, as significant and as Australian."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the naturalism of his art, until recently Glover had no place within this framework. He was considered part of a ramshackle crew who, for no good reason, ended up in the colonies. In 1934, in the first substantial study of Australian art, William Moore said that Glover's coming to Australia in 1831 "was one of the strangest things in the annals of our art",<sup>6</sup> though he had nothing much to say about his painting. By contrast, he had much to say about Buvelot, who arrived in Australia in 1865, naming him the "father" of landscape painting in Australia.<sup>7</sup> Margaret Preston repeated this assessment in 1941 when she said that Glover, who happened upon this continent quite unexpectedly, was one of "a strange interesting motley of artists."<sup>8</sup> She continued: "a French [sic] artist named Louis Buvelot may be said to have been the inspiration of the Australian School of Painting."<sup>9</sup> An example of Glover's Australian landscapes did not enter an Australian state gallery outside of Tasmania until 1951 (over one hundred years after his death),<sup>10</sup> and he barely rates a mention in Bernard Smith's first history of Australian art, *Place, Taste and Tradition* (1945).<sup>11</sup>

Glover's rehabilitation, when it did come, was not at the expense of the art myth of Australianness; rather this myth was the key to his new place in the sun. Smith first drew attention to Glover's remarkable naturalism in his book *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1960). However Smith was also quick to qualify Glover's achievement, judging him a painter who never fully escaped the European picturesque conventions he was formed within: "we possess in his Australian work a belated example of the Italianate landscape being accommodated to the scenery of Tasmania."<sup>12</sup> He might render the Tasmanian flora "faithfully enough", but invariably "the subject has been invested with the dreamy pastoral poetry of Claude."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, in 1966 Robert Hughes concluded: "Claude's tranquil prospects and serene skies gave him a schema for his own image of Tasmania."<sup>14</sup> In short, Glover may have possessed an eye for botanical accuracy, but the Claudean atmosphere of his paintings lacked the look and feel of the place.

Glover's full rehabilitation did not come until 1977, when John McPhee curated the first considered exhibition of his work. This can be seen as the moment when Glover's place was firmly secured in the general Australian consciousness. As one reviewer at the time remarked, McPhee gives Glover "belated recognition as a painter of more importance [in Australia] than almost anyone else."<sup>15</sup> McPhee's exhibition was memorable for two reasons. First, there is his estimation of Glover's achievement in Australia. McPhee made of Glover not a colonial oddity but an antipodean patriot whose radical realism broke with colonial myopia to create a distinctively Australian art. After he migrated to Tasmania, said McPhee, Glover's "conventional Claudean

approach (i.e. his Europeanness) was forgotten"; "The result is remarkably true to the nature of the Australian landscape...and his place amongst the Australian landscape painters is assured."<sup>16</sup> Second, the exhibition was a public relations coup. The numerous reviewers were enthusiastic about McPhee's thesis that Glover was the first real master of the Australian bush. It played into the national psyche, which had begun to show more interest in the romance of colonial times. Paul Heinrichs, writing for Melbourne's *Age*, said it most eloquently:

Great Australian landscape painters! Men who knew how to paint a gum tree, who knew the Australian palette, the way the bush looks in sunshine, the feeling of the scrub. But who the blazes has ever heard of John Glover?... Who, nearing 80, threw off a lifetime of painting style to simply look fresh at what was around him, and had the guts to paint it exactly like it was.<sup>17</sup>

Now even Glover's notorious trees seemed Australian. The *Bulletin* enthusiastically reported: "But there are his masterpieces: great gums writhing like mad snakes against a uniquely pointillist landscape populated by happy, monkey-like natives, a somewhat surreal, somewhat naïve vision, but hauntingly, uniquely Australian."<sup>18</sup>

McPhee succeeded in selling Glover's art because he gave it pride of place in the art myth of Australianness—something journalists and the general public intuitively understood. He drew on Smith's observations about Glover's naturalism and on Hughes's praise for Glover's ability to domesticate the landscape—what Hughes called a "proper place for white men" in which "the blacks [are] an error of taste and intrusion." "For the first time," said Hughes, "antipodean nature is really humanized...it has become a friendly world into which the European settler can move without strain."<sup>19</sup> But McPhee also discovered a Glover far more radical than either Hughes or Smith imagined—one who, within a few years of migrating to Tasmania, had thrown off a lifetime allegiance to Claude and indeed a whole tradition of western art to discover the liberty which Australia and the New World promises. In the words of one reviewer at the time: "for the first time in his life, the artist was painting freely; no longer was he bound by tradition that he had unashamedly followed."<sup>20</sup>

Not everyone has been convinced by McPhee's thesis. In one of the most astute books written on Australian colonial art in recent times, *Images in Opposition* (1984), Tim Bonyhady concluded that Glover "obviously continues [in his Tasmanian paintings] to regard the Roman artist as the paragon of landscape painters", and that "Claude's idealised Italian landscapes probably appeared to Glover as the paradigm

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for the pastoral arcadia he perceived in Tasmania.”<sup>21</sup> More recently, Christopher Allen followed the art historians (Smith, Hughes and Bonyhady), to also conclude that Glover “has not fundamentally adapted to a new land, but largely reproduced the old.”<sup>22</sup>

McPhee might not have convinced the art historians, but he did persuade the curators. Ron Radford and David Hansen, for example, implicitly accept the gist of McPhee’s argument. While Radford admitted that Glover’s *A View of the Artist’s House and Garden...* (1835) pictures “his rapid transformation” of the land to “his European ideals”, he insisted that “it is not an idealised landscape, it is realistic.”<sup>23</sup> But whoever is right, there now is a caveat with which everyone agrees. In his recent history of Australian art Allen might have singled out Buvelot as the first artist to properly domesticate the Australian bush, but he acknowledged a precursor, that painter of colonial properties, John Glover. Repeating Hughes’s observation, Allen claimed that Glover was the first Australian artist to suggest “an uncomplicated sense of being at home.”<sup>24</sup> In 2003 Hansen, who has written the most complete and scholarly account of Glover’s art, summed up the new consensus:

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One of the abiding myths of Australian art history...is that the Swiss Barbizon-style *plein-airiste*, Louis Buvelot (1814–88) was the first artist to capture the forms and colours of the Australian bush. This led to an unreasonable dismissal of earlier artists such as...Glover. This work [*View of Mills' Plains* (c.1833)], and the closely related *Australian landscape with cattle*...provide an effective refutation.<sup>25</sup>

Refuted is not the myth itself (its way of structuring Australianness) but a detail of its narrative. All that changed was that Australianness was insinuated more deeply into colonial history.

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### The English Glover

Glover's rehabilitation in the late 1970s was part of a resurgence in Australian nationalism and a rethinking of its mythic narratives. Indeed, McPhee's thesis revised important aspects of the myth's narrative of origin. If he did not upset the structure of the myth, his claim that the former artist of Englishness was in fact an Australian patriot cleared some ground for the more radical revisionism that occurred during

the postcolonial turn that followed in the 1980s and 90s, which emphasised global perspectives of mixed, unhomely identities and the hybridity of migrant experiences.

This postcolonial turn makes the relationship between Glover's English and Tasmanian paintings the most compelling issue of his art today. Hansen clearly responded to this new postcolonial climate in *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*. Whereas McPhee's exhibition had focused on Glover's Australian art, Hansen brought together substantial numbers of Glover's English and Australian work, and devoted much of his research to the largely ignored English work. His exhibition made it possible to properly assess the relationship between the pictorial conventions of Englishness and Australianness, empire and colony. However, Hansen stuck closely to McPhee's proposition. In a radio interview on the exhibition, Hansen claimed that while in England Glover did not match Constable's ability to distil an identity from the local scenery, in Australia he did.<sup>26</sup> To Hansen (then a Tasmanian resident), Glover's Tasmanian views felt like home; they were hymns to *genius loci*. The uniqueness of Tasmania's landscape so impressed itself upon Glover that he discovered a sense of place that still impresses us. As Hansen wrote in the catalogue: "some elements of the Australian environment remained resistant, intractable, unable to be accommodated within the Picturesque frame, and it is because he embraced these new realities that Glover earns his high reputation."<sup>27</sup>

I don't disagree with Hansen's sense of Glover's importance in the Australian landscape tradition, but I would argue it differently. Glover's Australian art is not the ace in the pack that first secures the myth of Australia's *genius loci*, but the joker who upsets the myth's foundational structures by revealing its genealogy in Englishness. Glover's English art is, I will argue, the key to understanding not just why the myth of Australia's *genius loci* is an exotic flowering of the English picturesque, but also how the art myth of Australianness was able to construct its difference from Englishness. Seen against his Australian achievement, Glover's English art is thus a means to deconstruct his supposed picturing of Australianness. If the picturing of Englishness is a utopian discourse that happily combines naturalism and Claudeanism, Australianness is also a utopian discourse, but one caught up in the "science fiction" of settler identity—the fiction being that the excising of Claudeanism to reveal the kernel of empirical truth called naturalism would produce a more scientific or believable account.

The picturesque took root in England because its nostalgia eased the alienation of modern industrial life. Picturing an original paradisiacal England before the Fall and, at the same time, a Utopia to strive towards, the picturesque was a balm for



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revolutionary times and a boon for a Tory point of view.<sup>28</sup> Upon migrating to Tasmania, Glover, this master of the English picturesque, found himself in what seemed an Antipodean replica of the original paradisiacal England. Indeed, as Glover was no doubt aware, Tasmania could “boast...the most salubrious and congenial climate of any in the known world, for an European constitution”, and “a rich variety of scenery... chiefly composed of...gently undulating valleys...extensive tracts of level pasture land...and the plains plentiful with streams and ponds; the whole forming a picture not less captivating to the eye of the farmer than to that of the painter.”<sup>29</sup> Likewise, a chorus of commentators has noted Glover's good fortune in migrating to Tasmania rather than New South Wales. In 1962 Clive Turnbull observed: “Life in the Tasmanian countryside was very little different in the English countryside, for this lush green island when planted with English trees becomes in almost every way a replica of ‘home’, and ‘home’ was to be, for many decades, a recurrent word in Australian conversation.”<sup>30</sup>

However there was an essential difference between England and Tasmania: in England the picturesque Arcadia was already lost; in Tasmania it was new, even prelapsarian. Thus Bernard Smith remarked in 1960: “It is not altogether inappropriate that Glover should seek to apply Claude's vision to the Tasmanian scene for he himself saw it as a kind of exotic pastoral Arcadia.”<sup>31</sup> Or as the north Tasmanian art curator Daniel Thomas put it in 1973: “The former painter of artificial pastorals now lived in a real Arcadia, near Dennington in northern Tasmania.”<sup>32</sup> Hansen quotes the Australian-loving English art historian Michael Rosenthal saying exactly the same thing: “in England Arcadia has to be made; in Australia it is found.”<sup>33</sup>

Not surprisingly then, the Tasmanian landscape impressed upon Glover its “rich and picturesque” qualities: “it is possible”, he wrote, “almost everywhere, to drive a carriage as easily as in a Gentleman's Park in England.”<sup>34</sup> Admittedly the Australian impressionists left such sentiment well behind. Within fifty years of Glover's death, they had developed new narratives in keeping with the very different conditions and experiences of mainland Australia; and these narratives quickly gained popular appeal in the nationalism that dominated Australia after World War One, when critics praised Streeton's paintings for striking “the national chord”: “they point to the way life should be lived in Australia, with the maximum of flocks and the minimum of factories.”<sup>35</sup>

However these distinctive impressionist narratives were fitted to a similar moral vision and pastoral ideology that structured Englishness. “It is doubtful”, wrote Carol Lansbury, “that the bush would have dominated the culture of (Australian) city dwellers if it had not been the theme of English literature for so many years.” No

matter how much they “were surrounded by the drought-stricken, burnt present of the real bush”, “Australians of the nineties unconsciously lived in the imagined Arcadian past of England furnished for them in books.”<sup>36</sup> From this perspective, Australianness is the culmination of a moral vision that has its origins in late eighteenth-century British nostalgia for an imagined pre-industrial idyll. Thus we might do better to understand the Heidelberg School (despite its distinctive narratives) as a late (Victorian) flowering of the English picturesque, rather than Glover as a precursor of the impressionists. After all, the Heidelberg School was dealing with the same problem that had earlier faced Britain: how to picture a national identity when there was no national tradition of art to draw on; and it followed the same solution by turning directly to the native landscape for inspiration.<sup>37</sup>

McCubbin famously claimed that prior to his generation, Australian colonial artists “were all imbued with the spirit of Europe.” “All these pioneer pictures leave us cold...They might belong to any country, so little are they Australian.”<sup>38</sup> Nearly one hundred years earlier the *Somerset House Gazette* declared of British art:

almost all our landscape painters, previous to Wilson and Gainsborough, looked at their native mountains, woods and plain, only through the spectacles of foreign masters, from which their works have no high pretensions to our approbation, as they will not bear a comparison with the works of our living artists, who regard nature only through the medium of their own optics.<sup>39</sup>

And this is why the *Somerset House Gazette*, that determined advocate of British art, considered Glover their man, praising him “for representing landscape scenery, under a greater purity of atmosphere, with a more fresh and vigorous display of foliage, a more brilliant effect of sun-shine, and a greater extent of aerial perspective, than had been combined in the works of any painter of ancient or modern times.”<sup>40</sup> Such hubris was formative in the development of Englishness because it played to the nostalgia for a pristine pre-industrial Britain; making Glover’s English paintings potent emblems of the new “Englishness” that emerged in early nineteenth-century Britain. A similar hubris also shaped the colonists’ sense of self. Australianness was founded not on history (it is too shameful), but the “look” of a landscape, blissfully unaware that this look is a mirror returning the narcissistic gaze of the settler longing for their own picturesque Arcadia.

This “colonial picturesque” flowered in Australia because the settlers wanted to secure the place for themselves and at the same time make it in the image of their

origin. This necessarily included the assertion of a more independent identity. In this new climate a principal anxiety was how to be of English stock without being English—what the *Bulletin* called “Independent Australian Britons.”<sup>41</sup> If the roots of Australian landscape art were in the English picturesque, and especially its more Italianate Claudean manifestations, they were prudently trimmed, and this young Australian branch of English art was grafted onto some mythical indigenous stock. In their Oedipal-like anxiety to displace Englishness and make their own identity, Australians struck at what they considered to be the distinguishing pictorial feature of Englishness: namely its picturesque Claudeanism. Australians considered it to be like a great English fog in the eye that prevented colonial artists from depicting the place accurately.

This (colonial) anxiety of influence is particularly evident in discussions of Glover’s Australian art—and understandably so, for no English painter admired Claude more than Glover, or brought such a developed picturesque vision to his painting of Australia.<sup>42</sup> Writing about *View of Mills’ Plains* (1833), Radford says:

There is nothing Claudean in the landscape structure or composition although Claude often chose soft afternoon light. Nor does this resemble an English landscape painting. The detailed realism, flattened foreground and central motif of the tree echo the conventions and devices of Jacob van Ruisdael’s seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting, a tradition with which Glover was perfectly familiar. Dutch realist conventions have been used to depict an unmistakably Australian landscape. It is perhaps the first triumphantly Australian landscape painting, and it remains one of the great works of Australian art.<sup>43</sup>

While correctly pointing to the heterogeneous nature of Glover’s picturesque style, Radford is also keen to show (after McPhee) that in Tasmania “Glover loosened the European landscape formulae which had constrained his earlier work. A new natural landscape was now his guide.”<sup>44</sup> However, instead of grounding Glover’s Australian art in the look of the new antipodean landscape, Radford’s argument against the Claudeanism of Glover’s Australian paintings only further implicates them in European landscape formulae—Dutch realism is substituted for Claudean neoclassicism.

Glover’s relationship to Claude is also central to Hansen’s argument. Hansen at least faces up to rather than wishes away Glover’s undeniable “Claudolatry” (as he aptly puts it).<sup>45</sup> For Hansen it is problematic for two reasons. First, it interferes with an accurate description of place; and second, it sets Glover against the tide of history.

Hansen also (rightly) points out that the main culprit is Glover's paintings, while his sketches are generally more naturalistic. Thus Hansen asserts: "Glover's success (or failure) as an artist is ultimately to be gauged by the distance between the painting and the sketchbook; between the pictorial and the actual; in the dialectical tension between the ideal and the real." This dialectic was "a tension that characterises his era."<sup>46</sup> "As the nineteenth century progressed," says Hansen, "the naturalistic perspective...triumphed"—as is evident in "the posthumous 'discovery of Constable'.<sup>47</sup>

This bald modernist teleology, which imagines Claudeanism and naturalism as opposed ideologies engaged in a fight to the finish, is the architecture of Hansen's argument. After his migration to Tasmania Glover rides the tide of history away from the Claudean picturesque of his English paintings and towards the free naturalism of modernism. Australian pastoralism sheds its picturesque origins (in Englishness) for a modernist vision befitting the essential Australianness of the new nation. The argument has a considerable pedigree, previously being used to great effect in Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific*. But it is an argument that reflects the ideology of our times rather than any innate logic of naturalism.

If Hansen (like many of us) feels a tension between the ideal and the real in Glover's paintings, many of Glover's contemporaries believed he had discovered a perfect accord between the two. This is not surprising, as in Glover's time naturalism and classicism were not necessarily considered antithetical in art—indeed the aim was to synthesise them. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the empirical verities of the *moderns* were not irrevocably set against the neoclassical virtues of the *ancients*, but were woven together into the fabric of Enlightenment thinking. Claude's neoclassical schema is not anti-empirical. He was an advocate of plein-air sketching. If today some of us baulk at his poetic effects, in Claude's day and in Glover's, Claude was primarily admired for his "unsurpassed imitation of nature"—to quote one of his late seventeenth-century biographers.<sup>48</sup> According to the *Somerset House Gazette* (in 1823), Claude was the best model for an English art because he was "certainly one of the closest imitators of nature." If twentieth-century Australian critics admonish Claude for the distorted effects of his classical compositional devices, early nineteenth-century English critics praised his paintings in an exact opposite way: they "are as near perfection as art has yet been known to proceed in the imitation of scenes in nature."<sup>49</sup> To follow Claude was, in Glover's time, to be a naturalist, to be a devotee of *genius loci*—which is why Glover was Claude's disciple.

This difference between these modern and Enlightenment attitudes is evidence of naturalism's essential subjectivity. Naturalism is not a clear glass, but always has an

ideological tint. This is evident in the close relationship between Glover's naturalism and an emerging British politics of identity. While Glover's naturalistic style owed much to the example of Claude, its defining character derives from the ideological climate of post-Napoleonic Britain. It is the key to understanding Glover's extraordinary success in England—which was due to the leading role his art played in defining an emerging "Englishness." A critic of Glover's 1822 exhibition wrote: "The water-colours exhibit the greatest proficiency of the British school in this branch of art, which we are peculiarly entitled to call our own."<sup>50</sup> If history painting was indelibly associated with Italy and France, and still-life and genre painting with the Dutch, a growing number of English critics in the early nineteenth century felt that the new generation of British artists (and Glover especially) had successfully claimed landscape for Britain through their truthful depiction of distinctively British scenery.

Glover's reputation in Britain for picturing Englishness rested on exactly the same credentials that McPhee and Hansen claim for his Tasmanian paintings, and that critics from McCubbin to Hughes claimed for the impressionists: namely their truth to nature. In 1813 *Ackerman's Repository* wrote of Glover's *View in Cumberland*: "The utmost truth of nature prevails throughout this performance."<sup>51</sup> (Not being able to reproduce this painting, I have included Glover's *Ullswater Early Morning* c.1824.) One critic in 1826 was so moved by Glover's naturalism to doubt his own critical standards:

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"We are perhaps cavilling with Nature, rather than with the artist, who has imitated her appearances under peculiar situations which are new to us. Almost tired with being pleased with the varied merits of Mr. Glover, we become cavillers to pretend that we are critics."<sup>52</sup>

So what happened when this devotee of naturalism and Claude came to Australia? Did Glover, as McPhee and Hansen argue, repent his "Claudolatry" as a snake sheds its skin, and discover the Australian bush? It is at least conceivable. Glover clearly had the skills and ambition for naturalistic painting, and he also was attuned to picturing a sense of place. And, as Hansen rightly asserts, he set about "getting it right." However, he did this from the emotional viewpoint of an eighteenth-century English settler in an outpost of empire. Instead of turning his talents towards the nationalist ends of twentieth-century Australians, he surely did something more obvious: he turned them towards the ends of the British Empire, and in the process, retained his life-long allegiance to Claude.

### **Postscript: Glover and the Postcolonial Picturesque**

Until now interest in Glover has focused on his picturing a *genius loci*. Today, I would suggest, Glover's art has something different to offer. Glover might appear adept at uncovering the *genius loci*, but wherever he does it the place *feels* much the same—allowing us to feel at home everywhere. In this respect Glover's picturesque is a particularly fluid and postmodern type of aesthetic.

Glover's landscapes appear true to place because they are homely, and to this we owe their Claudeanism. Glover showed that his Italianate picturesque aesthetic worked just as well at uncovering the *genius loci* of Tasmania and England. For Glover, Claude was not simply a paradigm with which to replicate a European vision of the empire. Rather, Claude's vistas provided an imaginary locus for the psychological and geopolitical displacements of empire and indeed the modern era. McPhee suggested somewhat implausibly that Glover turned away from Claude because Tasmania "was never part of the classical world."<sup>53</sup> However, not only was Britain never really part of the classical world, but also the classical world Claude depicts was already a foreign country to him, his seventeenth-century patrons, and later admirers like Glover. In Claude's paintings we find an important source of the romantic exoticism that was such a feature of empire art and of Glover's own "colonial picturesque", and it is precisely for this reason that Glover felt so at home in Tasmania.

Glover's last known work is a sketch of a castle on a mountainous outcrop. Hansen concludes his essay with an apt description of it: "a Welsh-looking fortress on an Italian-looking outcrop before a range of Lake District-looking mountains dappled

with Australian-looking foliage.”<sup>54</sup> This is a succinct summary of Glover’s imaginary world as well as the habitats of both the picturesque and empire art. If Hansen had begun his essay on this note, he may not only have discovered Glover as an artist of empire but also realised that Claudeanism is a synthetic or hybrid aesthetic wholly suited to the global stage of the colonial project.

Claude has been a convenient scapegoat for Australian art historians, as if he single-handedly is responsible for foisting picturesque formulae on the Australian landscape. However, as a style the picturesque also owes much to Chinese landscape art, and is found across the globe wherever the footprint of empire left its mark.<sup>55</sup> Nor did Glover blindly replicate the picturesque pastoralism of Englishness in Tasmania. As Smith has shown, empire art was rarely this simplistically imperialistic, and not just because the landscapes it conquered resisted its gaze. To the contrary: when the English colonists arrived in Australia many (including Glover) were surprised to discover a country already laid out in picturesque fashion. This was not just due to the Claudean glass stuck in their eye but also to Indigenous landscape management.<sup>56</sup> The taste for the picturesque, it seems, is not just British, Italian and Chinese, but also Aboriginal. Glover’s Tasmanian paintings can still teach art historians something today; that is, that they should abandon their habit of ascribing the picturesque to an anachronistic and purely Eurocentric mindset, and instead see it as the first truly global style that could readily adapt (as all successful global enterprises must) to local situations. If this is what empire art is really about, then Glover’s picturesque paintings of Wales and Scotland are just as much colonial, just as much part of the art of empire, as his picturesque landscapes of northern Tasmania.

*Ian McLean, FALVA, University of Western Australia*

## NOTES

- 1 Readers should note my close association with the exhibition. I was on the initial planning committee (with John McPhee and Max Staples) convened by Hansen, and like them, contributed an essay to the catalogue. I would particularly like to thank David and Max for all the fun and ideas we shared over the years in chasing Glover and the picturesque from one Patterdale to the other.
- 2 Bernard Smith, “The Myth of Isolation”, *The Death of the Artist as Hero* (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1988) 223.
- 3 *Ibid.* 225.
- 4 Frederick McCubbin, “Some Remarks on the History of Australian Art”, *The Art of Frederick*

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- McCubbin, *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia 1770–1945*, ed. Bernard Smith (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1990) 272.
- 5 Terry Smith, *Transformations in Australian Art*, 2 vols. vol. 1 (Sydney: Craftsman House, 2002) 9.
- 6 William Moore, *The Story of Australian Art*, 2 vols. vol. 1 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934) 34.
- 7 Ibid. 87–8.
- 8 Margaret Preston, "Survey of Australian Art", *Art of Australia 1788–1941* (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1941) 20.
- 9 Ibid. 22.
- 10 This was the Art Gallery of South Australia, at the recommendation of Sir Kenneth Clark. In 1939 the State Library of New South Wales purchased paintings by Glover, well before any mainland state art gallery. They bought *Aborigines Dancing at Brighton Bay*, Tasmania (1835), a year after they received *Hobart Town, taken from the Gardens where I Lived* (1832) from Sir William Dixson.
- 11 In *Place, Taste and Tradition A Study of Australian Art since 1788* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1945) Smith mentions him twice, first in a quote by the nineteenth-century Polish scientist, Dr John Lhotsky, which is critical of Glover for not being "a sufficient observer of nature" (91), and second in a brief notice that he had come "out to Australia in his old age." (103) By contrast, the colonial painter Conrad Martens is given star treatment, and even Thomas Watling receives considerably more attention.
- 12 Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) 263.
- 13 Ibid. 265.
- 14 Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1970) 41–2.
- 15 Paul Heinrichs, "He Captured the Gums", *Age*, Melbourne (26 November 1977).
- 16 John McPhee, *The Art of John Glover* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1980) 51.
- 17 Heinrichs, "He Captured the Gums."
- 18 Brian Hoad, "The Hack who became Master", *The Bulletin* (10 December 1977).
- 19 Hughes, *Art of Australia*: 41–2.
- 20 Frederic Rogers, "Glover on Display", *Sunday Mail*, Brisbane (15 January 1978).
- 21 Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985) 47.
- 22 Christopher Allen, *Art in Australia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) 28.
- 23 Ron Radford and Jane Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art 1800–1900* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 1995) 71.
- 24 Allen, *Art in Australia*, 28.



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- 25 David Hansen, "Catalogue of Paintings and Drawings", *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and Art Exhibitions Australia, 2003) 206.
- 26 ABC Radio National, 4 July 2004.
- 27 Hansen, "The Life and Work of John Glover", *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*: 98.
- 28 As a raft of English art historians have recently argued, e.g. John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980); David Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction* (London: Tate Gallery, 1982); Michael Rosenthal, *Constable: The Painter and His Landscape* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983); Nigel Everett, *The Tory View of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994).
- 29 He would have known this because his sons preceded him, and also because, intending to get a land grant and farm, he probably familiarised himself with books like *Godwin's Emigrant's Guide to Van Diemen's Land more properly called Tasmania, containing a description of its climate, soil, and productions: a Form of Application for free grants of land...and other information useful to emigrants* (originally London: Sherwood, Jones, and Co, 1823; facsimile edn. Hobart: Tasmanian Government Printing Office, 1990) 1–2.
- 30 Clive Turnbull, *Antipodean Visions* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1962) 4–5.
- 31 Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 263–4.
- 32 Daniel Thomas, *The Outlines of Australian Art: The Joseph Brown Collection*, expanded edn. (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1973) 15.
- 33 Quoted in Hansen, "The Life and Work of John Glover", *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, 98.
- 34 *Ibid.* 98.
- 35 J. S. MacDonald, "Arthur Streeton", *Art in Australia* 3.40 (October, 1931) 22–3.
- 36 Carol Lansbury, *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth Century English Literature* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1970) 163.
- 37 Indeed McCubbin admitted as much by quoting the English writer George Borrow, who exhorted English artists "to bide in thy native land" rather than travel to Rome for inspiration: "what has thou to do with Rome, and thou an Englishman? Did thy blood never glow at the mention of thy native land as an artist merely?...Seek'st models? To Gainsborough and Hogarth turn; not names of the world, may be, but English names.'...In the same spirit as Borrow", said McCubbin, "I would address the young Australian artists." (McCubbin, "Some Remarks on the History of Australian Art", 277–8.
- 38 *Ibid.* 271.
- 39 "The Rise and Progress of Water Colour Painting in England no IX", *Somerset House Gazette* XIII (3 January, 1824) 193.
- 40 *Somerset House Gazette* IX (6 December, 1823) 132

- 41 See W. K. Hancock, *Australia* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1930) 53–68.
- 42 Glover famously exhibited his work in London in the company of paintings by Claude that he owned.
- 43 Radford and Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art*, 58.
- 44 *Ibid.* 56.
- 45 Hansen, “The Life and Work of John Glover”, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, 44.
- 46 *Ibid.* 45.
- 47 *Ibid.* 48.
- 48 Filippo Baldinucci, quoted in Humphrey Wine, *Claude the Poetic Landscape* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1994) 13.
- 49 “The Rise and Progress of Water Colour Painting in England no III: Turner and Claude de Lorraine”, *Somerset House Gazette* VII (22 November, 1823) 97–9
- 50 *Ackermann’s Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics*, Series 2, vol. XIII, LXXXVII (May 1822) 303.
- 51 *Ibid.* vol. IX (May 1813) 53.
- 52 *Ibid.*, Series 3, vol. VII, XLI (May 1826) 299
- 53 John McPhee, “The Symbolic Landscape”, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, 110.
- 54 Hansen, “The Life and Work of John Glover”, *Ibid.* 106.
- 55 See W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1994)
- 56 J. S. Benson & P. A. Redpath, “The Nature of Pre-European Native Vegetation in South-eastern Australia: a Critique of Ryan, D. G., J. R. and Starr, B. J. (1995) The Australian Landscape—Observations of Explorers and Early Settlers”, *Cunninghamia* 5.2, (1997) 285–328. See also replies to this article in 5.4.