In the form of a model or little world, both Melbourne and Taronga zoos reflected the ideological aspirations of their designers and political enablers. However, they differed quite radically in their aesthetic. Similarly, zoos in Adelaide, Perth and Hobart also were influenced by both imperial and colonial ideology and aesthetics. This chapter takes as its subject the shifts in architectural and landscape design at Australian zoos during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with reference to some of the broader cultural trajectories of British imperialism and colonialism during this period. It addresses and comments on the importance of the imperial and colonial context to architectural and landscaped spaces at the zoo, and their significance to the constitution of human–animal relations.

When in the early 1860s, a section of Royal Park in Melbourne, later to become the Melbourne Zoo, was first dedicated to the keeping of animals, it was in the form of a government land grant to an elite society of gentlemen who wished to pursue the ideals of acclimatisation. Among the most passionate of the society’s members was Edward Wilson, owner of Melbourne’s Argus newspaper and devotee of the principles of acclimatisation as set out by French naturalist Isidore Geoffroy Saint Hilaire. Wilson’s interests focused on the acclimatisation of animals for the benefit of pastoralists and to provide the pleasures of the English countryside for colonists – the colonial government made the land grant in the belief that the principles of acclimatisation were vital enough for state support. The gardens in Royal Park in their early development, as described by Linden Gillbank and Catherine De Courcy, were more in the vein of an experimental farm than a modern zoo. Large paddocks were fenced in order to hold a range of creatures freshly imported from around the globe, as well as native animals, including kangaroos and emus, which were considered to be of some interest to audiences. From the decades of the late nineteenth to those of the early twentieth century, Melbourne Zoo was subject to considerable reworking, as the lucrative and attractive entertainment business of a modern zoo outstripped the acclimatisation imperative.

Sydney’s Taronga Zoo, built during World War I and opened in 1916, was the result of a quite different set of cultural, political and economic circumstances. This zoo was financed by a generous grant and provided with land on the city’s foreshore by the new Labor Government of New South Wales. The zoo was managed by the Taronga Trust, made up of members of the state’s zoological society along with several government representatives. Premier William Holman and his political supporters saw their zoo as akin to a fantastic textbook – not only would children imbibe natural history, but a general audience would benefit from the entertainment and leisure promised by exotic captives in their ‘natural’ surrounds. The German-inspired design of barless enclosures and a new overt emphasis on the Australian flora were largely driven by the curator, Sherbourne Le Souef.
A significant shift in the symbolic and performative relationships between animals and humans has been located in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly within the culture of imperial hunting. Because of doubts about the capacity of nature to supply the hunt, there was an increasing focus on the preservation of animals and their environment. The pursuit of knowledge about and relationship with nature was encouraged through photography and the mechanism of the camera, in preference to the gun.

There was a period of overlap, when both the camera and the gun were in use, but developments in camera technology eventually made photography a feasible and attractive replacement for the kill. Similarly, the framing of animals through landscape and architectural design at Australian zoos during this period represented both the imperial intent to expand control and authority over landscapes apparently denuded of the cultural values and practices of indigenous people, and the increasing focus on preservation and ecological understandings of animals in relation to their habitat.

**Zoo Landscapes and Garden Design**

The reading of landscapes and garden design as texts, and as operatives of imperial and colonial power, have become respected techniques of historical investigation over recent decades. Indeed James Ryan has argued that a landscape aesthetic was integral to the concept of Empire, that the ‘very idea of Empire depended in part on an idea of landscape, as both controlled space and the means of representing such control, on a global scale’. Empire, according to W J T Mitchell, was ‘an expansion of landscape understood as inevitable progressive development in history, and expansion of “culture” and “civilization” into “natural” spaces in a progress that [was] itself narrated as “natural”’. Landscape aesthetics was in evidence at Australian zoos in a variety of forms: as naturalised settings for the display of animals, and as spectacle in miniaturised form. Within the zoo, layered understandings of landscape were augmented by the production of unique (exotic) aural experience, ranging from the calls of animals to the performance of popular music concerts, that fostered identification for zoo audiences through the recognition of particular social and symbolic cues. On a larger scale, acclimatisation projects facilitated the moulding of a ‘new’ colonial landscape, and knowledges generated at the zoo and authorised by the professional elite continued into the twentieth-century to affect relationships between people, animals and the land.

When Albert Le Souef first took direction of the Melbourne Zoo in the 1870s, he set about improving its appeal as a place of popular recreation and amusement while also conducting experiments in acclimatisation. The best source of evidence we have for the layout of the gardens is a plan drawn by Caroline Le Souef, who lived and worked with her husband in the grounds of the zoo. Her plan (Figure 1) shows large paddocks, but also the beginnings of the formal garden entrance and pathways that can still be traced in the layout of the zoo today. The plan, reproduced in the early Melbourne Zoo guides, features classical garden motifs. An arch with dividing crossroads contains the grounds, and a series of dissecting pathways is marked at their juncture by circular gardens with either a single tree or a fountain. Arbours line some of the paths. The overall effect is symmetrical, with a sense of expanding order in a park-like setting. The periphery of the garden is depicted as less orderly, with dense vegetation, water and roaming animals.
John Prest suggests of early botanical gardens, which often included collections of animals, that European garden design drew on ‘a period of over two thousand years of gardening history’ when the ‘four quarters’ design had represented the four corners of the earth and, later, the four continents, Europe, Asia, Africa and America. Thus the botanical garden emerged at the beginnings of modern science and from the historical context of the ‘re-creation of the earthly Paradise’. After seventeenth-century navigators established that the Garden of Eden had not survived the Fall and Flood, it was alternatively conceived that the garden had been fragmented and strewn across the world. The object became the collection of the scattered pieces. The significance of this project was that it motivated comprehensive, encyclopaedic knowledge: ‘since each family of plants was thought to represent a specific act of creation, the scholar would come to understand God best who found room in a pulvillus for every genus’. This desire to reconstruct the Garden...
of Eden from its scattered state has some resonance with the objects of the acclimatisation society at Royal Park. They too were operating out of a sense of duty and their impetus was to facilitate the earthly Paradise offered up by the colonial project: ‘We are anxious to do justice to vast opportunities … a boundless area is opening before us day by day, and we feel ashamed of letting it lie idle while swarms of animal life are panting to get access to it’.11

According to Prest, the two most striking features of classical garden design deriving from the civilisations of the Mediterranean and Middle East were ‘the belief in a perpetual Spring, and the desire for peace with, and among, the animals’. Biblical allegory and meaning ascribed to enclosed gardens in the Middle Ages was extensive, and included descriptions of the Virgin Mary as a Paradise in whose womb lay Christ, the tree of life, and as the enclosed garden of the Song of Solomon.12 The fountain of life, which fed the four rivers of the Garden of Eden, was a motif of symmetrical garden design. In enclosed gardens, straight, raked alleys ‘reflected the conduct to be expected of a Christian’, while ‘the summerhouse served as a garden chapel for reflection’,13 and the walls themselves, like those of a church, offered refuge from the deformed world outside. Another important development was the distinction made between the hunting park (descended from the Assyrian paradise park) where animals could roam, and the enclosed garden where animal and plant were domesticated:

The practice of recasting life-forms for food, energy, warmth, sport, company, and so on, came to be narrated positively as a process of cultivating nature. To cultivate nature was to draw it into a moral order where it became civilized. Indeed, it was the practice that signified culture itself, a term, which, in its earliest European use, meant to cultivate or tend something – usually crops and animals … Inversely, nature beyond the orbit of cultivation came to signify a space of danger, death, and distance.14

From Le Souef’s plan and other early records of the Melbourne Zoo it is possible to determine spatial and organisational practices that contributed to human–animal relations in colonial Victoria of the 1860s and 1870s. Animals deemed useful to the improvement and sustenance of the economic and cultural activities of colonists were protected, domesticated and cultivated within the setting of an enclosed garden.

The history of gardens tells not only of the technical capacity to (re)produce ideas of Paradise or Eden, but also of the structuring and ordering of knowledge with an emphasis on spatial relations that is closely attuned to the pictorial conventions of cartography and painting.15 Of significance to this study is how these conventions develop and are transformed. The contrast in spatial layouts of Melbourne’s nineteenth-century zoo, and of Sydney’s Taronga Zoological Park, commenced in 1914, is a case in point. The ‘Key Plan’ to Taronga Park (Figure 2), unlike Caroline Le Souef’s illustrative plan, depicts an organic structure of roadways, similar to a suburban plan, that provides access to a series of enclosures numbered in reference to the animal in residence or a public facility.
Figure 2: Key Plan, Taronga Zoological Park
The physical area allotted to Taronga Zoo was bounded by a major road and by Athol Bay in Port Jackson. Planting and building were carefully planned so as not to interrupt the general foreshore, as part of a new preservation aesthetic. The impression from the ‘Key Plan’ is of carefully allocated space defined by classification of animal species, and of topography interpreted in accordance with the functions of preserving animals and providing a place of entertainment and recreation:

The natural beauty of the site will remain. From the harbour one will see no sign of habitation. No bricks, no red tiled roofs, will mar the beauty of the bush … nothing will be used except the rock that is lying there. Straight lines and all formality will be taboo. The creek running through the centre of the ground will become a fern gully. Lyre birds and many other species of Australian birds will flit from bough to bough. Large ponds will be made by blocking the creek and they will be full of our waterlilies.¹⁶

Discursive spaces, such as those defined by species classification and geography, existed in a dynamic relationship with the art of a new ‘naturalised’ garden design (Figure 3), and a moral reframing of human–animal relations. Imperial expansion as realism or naturalised narrative of progress was, however, still implicit in this design. For example, the popularity of their miniature train may be interpreted as a reference to the imperial experience of travel through the landscape, on a scale that was popular and accessible to all. The train (and later the skylift) was an expansion of the elephant ride, which also functioned to give the zoo visitor a privileged view over the an-
imals – the *bowdah* (traditionally a seat with a canopy) being a clear reference to the imperial elite’s appropriation of the *shikar* (hunt) in the Indian Empire of earlier centuries.\textsuperscript{17}

When the president of the Taronga Trust was asked about the name of the new park he explained, in a romantic gesture towards the Aboriginal people who had previously occupied the land, that an ‘aboriginal title’ was thought most appropriate, and that ‘in consideration of the magnificent harbour view to be obtained he had chosen Taronga, signifying beautiful sea view’.\textsuperscript{18} In 1911, when plans and designs for Taronga were in process, replicas of the Orphan Rock and the Three Sisters (a well-known rocky landscape visited and viewed by tourists in the Blue Mountains outside Sydney) were proposed as central structures in two of the monkey enclosures.\textsuperscript{19} Other, less specific, landscape features paralleled similar structures at London Zoo, such as Monkey Hill (Figure 4), a giant replica of a rocky outcrop that had in turn been influenced by the centrality of landscape to what became known as the Hagenbecks’ design. Both Taronga and Hobart Zoo (built in the 1920s) were heavily influenced by European zoo design initiated by the German Hagenbeck family in the late nineteenth century. The barless zoo, where animals were enclosured by a series of moats, responded to growing public dissatisfaction with animals being kept in small cages.

When describing his designs for the Hobart Zoo, its director Arthur Reid reported that ‘the site includes grassy slopes where kangaroos and deer will run, sheltered places for the small

\textbf{Figure 4:} Monkey Hill, Taronga Zoo.  
PH/00467, Taronga Archive.
variety of birds and a wonderfully fine rocky spot; where in comparative freedom the lions will be able to prowl at leisure’. On top of the hill opposite the entrance gates, Reid proposed two well-planned concrete and netting runs to hold the Tasmanian tiger and devil. The design of the lion den he claimed to be ‘the finest of its kind in Australia because of its naturalness’. While preferring the natural designs of Taronga Park to those of Melbourne and Adelaide, where he said ‘the animals are confined in the approved iron cage which savours of a prison more than anything else’, Reid believed that at Taronga ‘there is too much of artificiality about the den, concrete being utilized and manipulated’. However, it was Taronga, of all the zoos, that provided the most overt representations of ‘naturalness’. Taronga was publicised at the planning stage as respecting the natural instincts of animals, and enclosure designs were described as being in keeping with the barless, nature principle:

For the housing of the carnivora, the latest system of barless cages will be adopted ... There are natural rocky enclosures in the park and these with little difficulty can be made into large cages, walls of rock with moats are aimed at ... It is recognized that many animals are of a very bright and attractive appearance when placed in cages, but in their proper habitat they naturally blend with their surroundings and become inconspicuous. The new enclosures will illustrate this and give an added interest to the exhibit while at the same time making the captive feel at home ... The object will be to make the grounds popular with all classes.

The new Taronga Zoological Park opened as a work in progress, and the construction of barless enclosures continued into the 1920s. The bear houses were altered in 1925 when some additional funding was received. They were remodelled from cages to a moated enclosure with the wall built several feet high. In the same year, new enclosures were built for the leopards, jaguars, pumas and other carnivorous animals previously housed in cages (Figure 5).

The emphasis on the containment of animals in illusory natural surroundings facilitated the audience’s experience of proximity to animals, which were portrayed as both curious and threatening. Sherbourne Le Souef described the hesitant reaction of most visitors to the barless zoo encounter:

I must say that looking at unbarred wild animals took some getting used to. Una [his sister] was present on the day before we opened, and I took her up in pride to the wonderful new type of cage. She looked across the moat at the lions, said nothing and edged away. So did nearly everybody.

Similar spectacular devices were the aspiration of Ambrose Pratt, director at Melbourne’s zoological gardens in the 1920s and 1930s, in his plans for redevelopment. In 1935, Pratt proposed that ‘each exhibit or series of similar exhibits, should where possible be seen from two or more sides, and should be camouflaged with trees and flowers. The general effect is thereby much enhanced, in the same way as a suitable background and framing shows up a picture’. Pratt and members of the Melbourne Zoo’s council were no less concerned than the Taronga Trust with the appeal of their displays and the satisfaction of the public with regard to the care of captive animals:
The way in which animals are shown makes a great difference in their exhibition value. Suitable surroundings and a pleasing environment enhance the effect on the visitor. A wild goat in a paddock is commonplace and uninteresting, but the same thing on a miniature mountain crag is spectacular. The designing of the enclosures and their surroundings is therefore of great importance ... There is throughout the civilized world a growing sentiment for the kindly feeling towards animals. This is indicated in many ways but especially in the attempt to break away from the menagerie type of zoo towards an animal park, where the appearance and effect of confinement is eliminated as far as possible.\textsuperscript{26}

It is evident that the semblance of animals in their ‘natural’ state had become the highest priority for zoo designers. Nigel Rothfels has argued that the Hagenbecks’ design, which purported to provide for the welfare of animals, was not necessarily motivated by altruism towards the captives; rather it was an entrepreneurial response to public demand for spectacle and for benevolence towards animals (Figure 6).\textsuperscript{27} The Hagenbecks’ image-conscious formula extended to the reframing of their highly successful international wild animal trading company. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the animal trappers’ task was re-narrated (particularly in popular children’s novels) as an expression of love of nature, and justified by the increasing importance attached to the capture of wild animals for projects of conservation and education:
'In short, the business was whitened and professionalized in much the same way as other colonial industries had been ...'\textsuperscript{28}

**THE SOUND OF THE ANIMAL ENCOUNTER**

The sounds made by animals were considered an important element of the sensory experience for the zoo-going audience. Zoological and acclimatisation society members had sought to increase the aural pleasures of the Australian bush through the introduction of English and other birds for their song. In 1902, the Adelaide press argued that:

> In a few years we may expect that in South Australia, as is already the case in Tasmania, the long cherished memories and old associations of English rural life will be frequently reawakened by the mellow music of the blackbird, or the shrill, ringing notes of the skylark and the thrush, while the feathered immigrants will be serviceable in a more practical way by assisting the farmer in contending against the insect enemies.\textsuperscript{29}

The exotic sounds of the jungle captivated Dudley Le Souef, as he recorded in the diary of his animal collecting travels in Asia during the 1880s:

> It was very pleasant to hear the various sounds in the early morning issuing from the jungle. The Iguana makes a sound very similar to two branches
creaking against one another in the breeze and you often hear it, then comes the Mouse deer, which make a curious guttural sound and you can hear it a long way off, they are very plentiful and are eaten by the natives. The Argus Pheasant utters a call sounding like coup coup, it has the habit of perching on the top of trees in big jungle and on anyone approaching they fly away, pigeons are very numerous and noisy, there is a large tree near here that almost always has some birds on and the deep sounding noises they make sound very different from the soft cooing we are accustomed to hear ... As night approaches the different sounds die away and the jungle is very quiet, but you hear frogs, crickets and a few night birds, and occasionally the deep voice of a tiger as he wanders round the clearing about 20 yards from the bungalow.30

Zoo officials thus noted the sounds of animals as part of the collecting experience, and these sounds became part of the replication of that experience at the zoo. Sounds were reported in the press as representative of, and contributive to, the atmosphere and experience of exotic ‘other-worldliness’ at the zoo. In their enclosed setting, the collected animals contributed to a unique aural experience:

After the heat of the day it was delightful to sit at evening in front of the director's house, smoking a cigar and contemplating the scene around ... On a sudden the lion roared, the hyena screamed a monkey rattled the bars of its cage, the macaw gave a deafening screech, the flamingo sounded their strange note in chorus and then all was still again ... To me the sight of the hawks and the bat and the chorus of cries recalled Kipling’s ‘Night Song in the Jungle’... But things are topsy turvy at the Zoo, because the beasts do not have to hunt for their food. They eat their fill of horseflesh in the afternoon, and then sleep on it, and who shall say especially if the meat is a bit tough, that they do not dream of forest haunts and good hunting.31

The reporter’s reference to Kipling’s poem evokes the mystery of the aural zoo at night. The wild animals are anthropomorphised and romanticised through their ‘dreaming’ of the jungle or savannah, where sound is a primary conveyance of meaning. Further to the perception of zoo animals as listening and dreaming subjects is the imagined experience of the jungle and its natural law. The play within the article is on the zoo animal as a lapsed hunter, suggesting the unnatural circumstances of captivity and the subsequent haunting of the animal by memories of the natural order and law of survival. Implicit is the hunting experience, in which both hunter and hunted are dependent upon acuity of hearing.

Another contribution to the zoo’s aural landscape was music. Concerts were an important attraction. The zoo as a public garden where citizens could enjoy musical performances located the colonial audience in a spatial network. This network was informed by perceptions of appropriate musical genres, interactions of social groups and places, the physical presence and techniques of the performers on stage, the ‘open-air’ architecture of the bandstand, and the exotic and imperial aural space.32 Yet, while such social events contributed to a sense of common civility, the
sounds of the zoo also produced ambivalence about the keeping of wild animals in captivity. In one case, the cry of the elephant caused some public anxiety:

Mr Minchin said that he saw the elephant that morning, and there were no marks on her to indicate that the iron prod had been used. The probable explanation was that owing to the wet weather Miss Siam was kept in, and when she did take her walk she was fresh. In such a case she bellowed when touched by even a small cane, and ladies who heard her were often under the impression that she was hurt.

Councillor Sellar said that it was a lady who informed him of the occurrence. When the welfare of the animals was called into question, zoo authorities took the opportunity to reassure the public that the care of the animals was carried out to the utmost of their abilities, and emphasised scientific and moral justifications of their position as the keepers and preservers of animals.

THE LARGER LANDSCAPE

Zoos interacted with their audiences in ways that had implications beyond the spaces of the institution, especially as part of the broader project to improve and reconstruct the colonial landscape. Thus the ambitions of Ernest Le Souef, second son of Albert and Caroline Le Souef and director of Perth Zoo 1897–1932, for his newly adopted city and the southwest region of Western Australia were informed by his personal aesthetics and derivative of the values of an imperial landscape. Le Souef was enthusiastic about the beauty of palms, and cultivated an extensive collection at the Perth Zoo. He was happy to donate plants to town council projects as part of his vision to line sections of the Swan River bank with tropical palms. Perth Zoo’s Acclimatisation Committee had sought to improve the ornamentation of the river by encouraging the populations of both white (introduced) and black swans. An enclosure was built at the causeway crossing the river, and a keeper was appointed to look after the swans, particularly to protect their nests from egg-hunting children.

Le Souef was also influential in the communication of pastoral technologies. His authority as a veterinary surgeon with knowledge of developments in scientific agriculture is documented in oral histories of the early group settlement schemes of the 1920s. In these schemes, returned soldiers and British settlers were encouraged to develop the southwest into a pastoral paradise:

the introduction of kikuyu grass to Margaret River ... was brought in by our friend Colonel Le Souef, who brought a small handful of it and he said to us, ‘Now this is kikuyu grass, just been introduced into Western Australia. I think this will be the grass that can make the Sou’ West of Western Australia’. My dad was always one for following his advice. And so we got this little handful of kikuyu grass, put it in a patch in our vegetable garden ... from that we planted quarter of an acre and the following year sold, I think it was two hundred bags of kikuyu grass to the group settlements.
Grasses were grown at the zoo to allow visiting farmers to assess exotic crops. From newspaper, photographic and oral history accounts it would appear that Le Souef came to embody the project of landscape improvement, particularly concerning the southwest of the state. He was a popular and respected public figure, having been a colonel with the Veterinary Corp in Egypt during World War I. On returning home to Perth, he expressed relief at what he perceived as the developing ‘white’ landscape.

Le Souef’s brothers, Sherbourne and Lance, were also concerned with what they considered the important task of protecting the Australian landscape from being ‘over run’ – by cats, dingoes and the flying fox. Among many schemes to improve agricultural industries (particularly wool), including experiments with insecticides and fumigants, Lance Le Souef proposed the extension of the dingo fence principle in correspondence with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the prime minister in the mid 1920s.

Sherbourne Le Souef had previously written on ‘The Dingo Question’, stating that the fence built in the northwest of New South Wales had fallen into disrepair during the war, and that the ‘prevailing drought drove numbers of dogs eastwards’. He emphasised that dingoes were presenting a problem to the ‘flocks of the Commonwealth’ in New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia: ‘They breed up in the uninhabited interior, and a continual influx occurs into the settled parts’. Both Sherbourne and Lance Le Souef pushed for an integrated approach to the control of dingoes by all the states. Lance wrote to a number of pastoral associations regarding the dingo and fox question, and sought funds from the national Bureau of Commerce and Industry to research the most effective means of dingo destruction. He felt the method of poisoning then in use to be ‘crude in the extreme and very cruel’:

The dingo question has become a very serious one all over Australia. It can be dealt with quite effectively by cooperation. Two things must be done: First to draw up and issue a pamphlet of instructions setting out the best method of dingo destruction [sic] based on practice and science: Second, the establishment of a depot where poison baits will be properly prepared as well as poisons.

Lance Le Souef based his proposal for dingo-proof fencing on the theory that dingoes travelled well-defined routes (over smooth ground in search of water and food) from ‘the open country of the interior into the pastoral areas’, and that such routes were not more than 100 to 250 miles across. Therefore he suggested that fences across these routes, patrolled ‘on the same basis as a railway line’, would keep the dingo migration in check:

From the National point of view such a scheme would operate to the general benefit of the community by making it possible for the Wool Growing Industry to expand … from the point of view of the individual States their organisations for checking the dog pest would be greatly helped by the fact that each State would only have to deal with dogs within its borders.

Despite gaining the attention of the prime minister and the director of the Institute of Science and Industry, Lance Le Souef’s proposal was deemed impracticable and, as an alternative, farmers were reimbursed individually for netting purchased to vermin-proof their properties, a policy first enacted in South Australia. While the dingo fence project was unsuccessful at the
time, it is a significant example of the activities and initiatives of zoo authorities in relation to the constitution and control of animal populations and the larger landscape.

CONCLUSION

The origins of Australia’s nineteenth-century zoos in the acclimatisation project made them quite different to the zoos of Britain. While London Zoo did conduct acclimatisation activities its predominant functions, as described by Harriet Ritvo, were to represent the ubiquity of British power and to distinguish between those capable of safeguarding the Empire and those unable to appreciate the scientific potential of wild animals. Such class exclusions were soon undermined, however, as the ability of the wild animal in captivity to carry the romance and reverence of imperial glory had a very popular appeal.45

In contrast, while Melbourne’s nineteenth-century zoo did cater to the public’s desire for the exhibition of animals, it was at first primarily a model farm or enclosed garden, set up to sustain and improve the variety of species available for domestic use, and thus to foster and create a living paradise on earth. The object of acclimatisation was to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by imperial expansion and colonisation, and there were strong affinities with the moral values embedded in the extension of agriculture and domestication of the landscape. These values were expressed by the picturesque and orderly structure of the gardens, and by the containment and protection of the experimental animals. The anticipated outcome was the proliferation of certain animal species that would contribute to particular cultural and economic activities in colonial Victoria.

Many of these values endured into the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century projects of zoo authorities, but an increasing familiarity and (national) identification with the native fauna and flora, as well as ties with imperial developments, caused a shift that is best illustrated in the quite different spatial layout and design of Taronga Zoo in Sydney. Taronga was similarly described as an Australian Garden of Eden, but in this case the earthly paradise was defined by the preservation of a ‘wild’ landscape.

As John M Mackenzie has argued, imperialism ‘needs to be understood through the heterogeneity of its forms and in popular, intra imperial and centripetal terms’.46 Australian zoos in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries replicated the popular functions of display and spectacle of their European counterparts, and were subject to the same public concerns regarding the welfare of the wild animals kept in captivity. Whereas Melbourne’s zoo had been an idealistic rendering of a colonial project, Sydney’s Taronga Zoo was inspired by a general imperial response to ambivalences and anxieties about the nature of the colonised world. The practical result for the zoo animals was not markedly different. Rather, it was the power to resemble and exhibit a wild and romantic nature to urban audiences that took precedence.

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Royal Zoological Society of South Australia Inc, group no. SRG 263, Newspaper Cuttings, vol. 2: 1, 13 September 1881, Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia.

W H D Le Souef, ‘Travel Diary’, series 01, file 026, box 3, Austhec Archive, entry for Sunday 31 August 1884, while staying at Mr Stephenson’s pepper plantation near Klang (Malacca).

South Australian Register, 1 December 1902. Kipling’s poem ‘Night-Song in the Jungle’ from The Jungle Book reads:

‘Now Chil the Kite brings home the night
That Mang the Bat sets free.

The herds are shut in byre and hut –
For loosed till dawn are we.

This is the hour of pride and power,
Talon and tush and claw.

O hear the call! Good Hunting, All
That keep the Jungle Law!’


Twenty-second Annual Report of the South Australian Zoological and Acclimatisation Society, 1900, Book II.

Annual Report of the Western Australian Acclimatisation Committee, 1913, Perth Zoo Archive.

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Interview with Thomas William Doyle by Michael Adams, 1978, OH297Tr, Oral History Collection, Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia. Kikuyu grass is now recognised as a weed in Western Australia. Subterranean clover was to prove the principal pasture for livestock grazing and was sown throughout the southwest region during the 1920s.
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