

Framing Virtue: Public Portraits and Civic Identity in Victorian Adelaide

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*[A]pppearances were a matter of inescapably political significance,
no less so in art than in life.*

David H. Solkin ("Great Pictures" 42)

Introduction

Discussing portraiture in his essay on Joshua Reynolds in *Table Talk* (1821), the celebrated English essayist William Hazlitt reminded his readers that "in seizing the predominant form or expression and preserving it with truth throughout every part," the portrait becomes "historical; that is, it carries its own internal evidence of truth and nature with it" (Mulvihill 39). The authenticity of character revealed by an emphasis on "particularity and concreteness," defines, according to Hazlitt, a "true portrait and true history" and his insistence on individual character, eclipsing Reynolds's pursuit of the ideal, sought meaning through observation and appearance (Mulvihill 40-41; Barlow, "Facing the past and present" 226).

Hazlitt's commentary on personal identity and its historicising in portraiture coincided with the interests of a rapidly expanding mercantile class and spirit of individualism in the nineteenth century and, as Paul Barlow has argued, recast the way portraiture could represent civic virtues in light of new socio-economic conditions ("Facing the past and present" 224). An emphasis on individual accomplishment and middle class aspirations in the formative years of the new colony of South Australia – the timeframe of this paper – was epitomised in the words of the incoming governor Sir Henry Edward Fox Young in his first address to the Legislative Council, the day after his arrival in the colony of South Australia in August 1848. Young proclaimed that,

the sphere of official government was wisely limited, and that the numerous methods of social advancement in all free countries should derive their origin, maintenance, and progress from the energies and resources of private individuals (Hodder 238; Pike 499).

Art historians examining patterns of visual culture in early nineteenth-century Britain have observed how these socio-economic transformations correlated with increasing arts patronage among the middle class and the popularity of portrait commissions (Wilton 168; Solkin, "Portraiture in Motion" 2; Barrell). This article shifts focus to colonial Adelaide in the 1850s and investigates the translation of civic virtues and identity formation in the portrait representation of a male cultural elite. The portraits of three holders of high office are offered as case studies: the explorer and later colonial secretary Captain Charles Sturt, Justice (later Chief Justice) Sir Charles Cooper, and Reverend Thomas Quinton Stow. All three portraits, produced by artist John Michael Crossland (1799-1858), the most successful portrait painter operating in the colony at the time, can be read as expressions of civic identity and the professional class.¹ Signs – dress, pose, and the expression of character – betraying their individual personalities, augment the depiction of generalised qualities displaying their public role; these are not simply boastful representations trapping "evidence of status" (Gilmour 5).

¹ The artist's best known work today is his portrait of Nannultera, a resident of the Poonindie Training Institution for Aborigines, commissioned by Reverend Mathew Hale. On Crossland's Aboriginal portraits, see Graham, "The Catechist and the Cricketer."

In their interpretation of character, the portraits suggest an informal and clearly accessible register. The tension between likeness and the ideal implicit in Reynolds's *Discourses* is resolved in a Carlylean emphasis on venerating heroes that subtly combines reverence and intimacy, public and private virtues.

Staging simplicity: portraiture and professional identity

The portrait sitter plays a performative role. In the case of Crossland's portraits of his illustrious contemporaries, these were men making *another* public appearance, on this occasion caught in oils in a studio setting. The artist has dispensed with the formalities of an official commemoration in favour of an urbane, relaxed representation. Importantly, the subjects are not shown *at work*, and any narrative impulse is limited to select accessories distributed in the decor. The men are isolated in the painter's studio, beyond the reach of human commotion. There is an absence of perspectival recession; no windows or balconies opening up worldly vistas. Judge Cooper displays none of the attire of the judiciary, Sturt, the desert explorer, is not standing in an open-necked shirt and boots against an unrelenting stony prospect – as later images have fashioned him – and the portrait of Reverend Stow, the popular and learned Dissenting minister, is without external cues of his vocation. All three men, as members of the professional class, are dressed simply in frock coats and starched collars.

Pillars, pedestals and urns were still associated in the nineteenth century with classical education and good taste, but their almost systematic application had drained them of historical meaning and reduced the forms to stage props. Crossland has overhauled the flagging taste for classical columns, and focuses on accessories with use-value: eye-glasses in Cooper's fingers, and Captain Sturt with his books and surveyors map.² As John Steegman asserted, writing in the politically turbulent 1930s, "in a democratic age it is generally more satisfactory to find the Noble in a humble setting than in the remoter surroundings of the antiquity" (180-81). In a colony testing parliamentary self-determination in the 1850s, references in art to antiquity or the classical world were no longer suitable. The following case studies provide a snapshot of three important figures in Adelaide society and explore how Crossland's portraits communicate through their formal and iconographic properties middle class values and social differentiation in colonial South Australia.

Case study I: The Judge

Without wig, gown, or jabot, Justice Cooper lounges comfortably in an emerald-green upholstered chair with scrolled arms, his left hand placed on a folio and book lying open on a small cloth-covered side table, the other holding his gold-rimmed spectacles resting in his lap (Fig. 1). Cooper himself regarded the judge's wig and heavy gown as inappropriate for Adelaide's hot summers although, in a moment of self-deprecating humour, he did admit that "if indeed anybody is justified in wearing a wig, it is myself; for in summer I am tormented with the flies setting on my bare head" (Castles and Harris 74).³ The artist and sitter were not persuaded by William Hogarth's recommendation in his *Analysis of Beauty* (1753), that a judge's "full-bottomed wig, like the lion's mane, hath something noble in it and adds not only dignity but sagacity to the countenance" (Steegman 10). Instead, side-board whiskers

² Columns appear in only one of Crossland's extant portraits – that of *John Brown* (c.1855) in the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA).

³ Theresa Walker produced a wax medallion of Charles Cooper wearing a bench wig in the mid-1840s: see Hylton 57–58.

advance down his cheeks and a faint smile puckers at the corner of his lips. Above all, our attention is drawn to his prominent forehead, communicating – in the visual language of the period – intelligence and culture, and the candour expressed in his soft grey eyes.

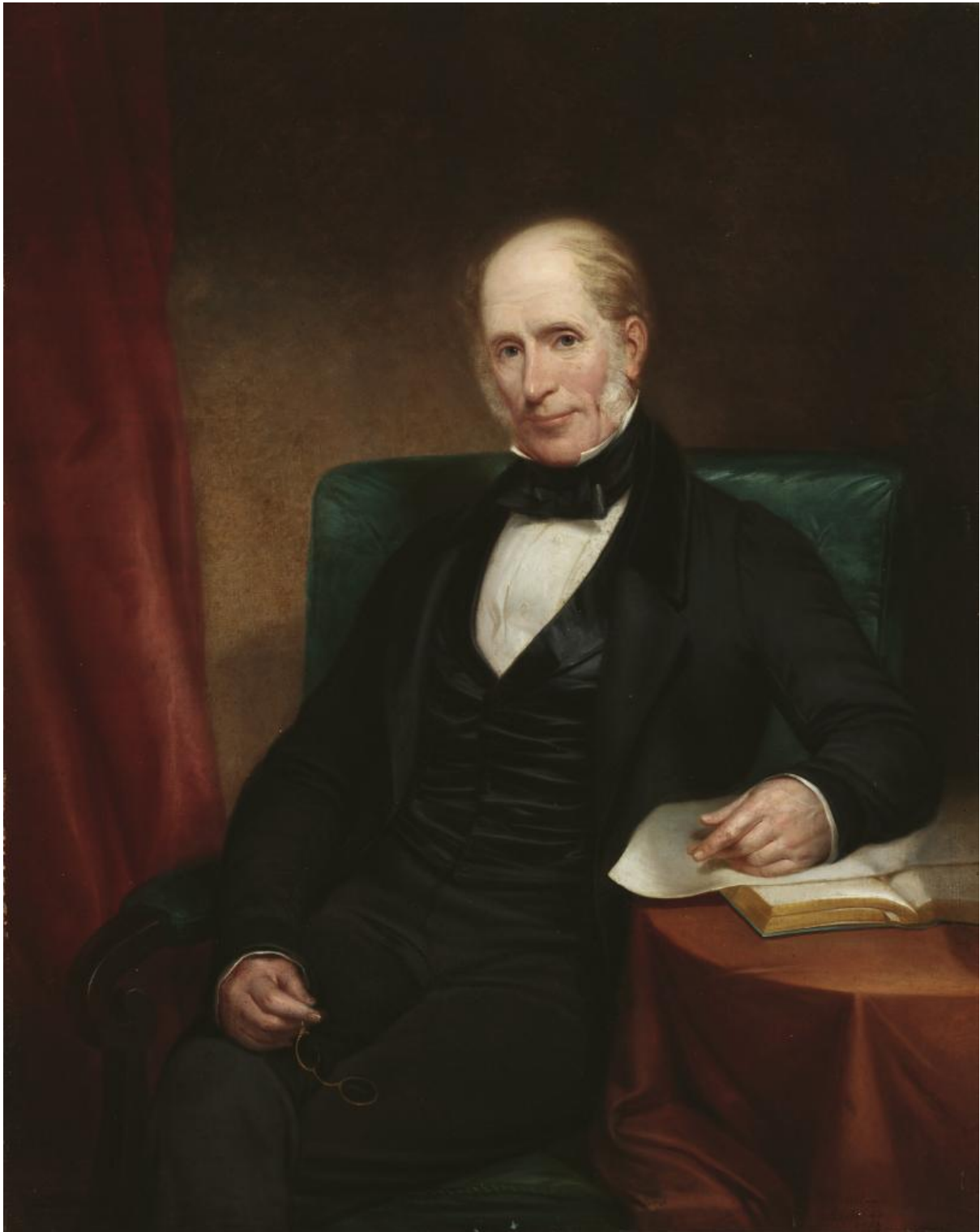


Fig. 1. J.M. Crossland. *Charles Cooper*. 1853. Oil on canvas, 127 x 101.2cm. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (accession no. 0.636).

Rather than displaying the signs of office, the artist allows the personality of the sitter to emerge. The burden of representation has moved from institutional to individual identity, a shift demonstrating the fledgling colony's self-conscious desire to express status in terms of liberal, middle class values. It is not the accessories of power – the 'scarlet and ermine' – that dominate the picture's surface, but rather the physical presence of the sitter: the slim, diagonally sweeping arrangement of Cooper's head and body, faintly reminiscent of the hallowed figures of El Greco. In contrast, in his study of portraits of Chief Justices in NSW, Moran observes that the "sitter's particular physicality tends to be largely obscured and overwhelmed" by the "voluminous robes and other paraphernalia of judicial dress" (Moran 299). The robes and wig deflect their identity, hiding behind the uniformity and formality of dress code.

The bituminous, shadowy background, leavened by a brackish pool of yellowed light centre left, frames the focus of the portrait – the Judge's impressive forehead and wistful gaze. The uncluttered space provides a foil to the complex structures of the sitter's head and face. Despite his semi-formal attire, the Judge's relaxed pose and expression contribute to an atmosphere of intimacy. A passage in Hazlitt's essay "On the look of a Gentleman," first published in 1821, may be read alongside a survey of the painting:

Ease, it might be observed, is not enough; dignity is too much. There must be a certain *retenu*, a conscious decorum, added to the first – and a certain "familiarity of regard, quenching the austere countenance of control," in the other, to answer to our conception of this character. Perhaps propriety is as near a word as any to denote the manners of the gentleman (Hazlitt 183).

Crossland's portrait certainly suggests a sense of moderation – a *retenu* – and an intimate regard, qualities of the gentleman in question often remarked upon in the press. In an address presented to Cooper on his retirement, James Hurtle Fisher acknowledged Cooper's contribution to the judicial administration of the colony, and testified to his "upright, benevolent and unostentatious example" (Bennett 108).⁴

The 44-year old English barrister arrived in Adelaide in March 1839 aboard the *Katherine Stewart Forbes* to take up the position of Judge of the Supreme Court (in 1856 he became South Australia's first Chief Justice). The chemist Henry Watson, travelling out on the same ship, warmed to his fellow passenger: "He is a man of most amiable disposition and cultivated mind, of gentlemanly manners, and is unmistakeably popular" (Kerr 28). Watson recounts in his journal an episode on the voyage when, standing on the poop deck, a violent swell brought waves leaping over the bulwark, drenching the Judge "like a drowned rat." While passengers were sent sprawling, the Judge calmly stood his ground (Kerr 28). Eye-witness accounts frequently comment on the mild-mannered, hardworking nature of the Judge. While complaints occasionally targeted delays in his judicial decisions and the meekness of his voice to contain tumultuous proceedings in the court room, he had more friends than enemies in the colony (Bennett 40). No longer the "disconsolate old bachelor," as he referred to himself, Charles Cooper married Emily Grace Newenham in July 1853, just prior to sitting for his portrait (Bennett 96). He turned 58 that year.

Charles Cooper took an avid interest in the cultural and intellectual life of this eager, young colony. He was an active member of the Adelaide Philosophical Society and the South Australian Book Society, becoming President of the latter in 1848 (Bennett 111). The Judge

⁴ For a discussion of Cooper's role and judgement in a trial involving a commissioned portrait, see Graham, "Patron versus Painter."

was also on the Board of Examiners which played a significant role in the progress of school education in Adelaide and he was a member of the South Australian Society of Arts established in 1856, elected Vice-President in 1861 the year he retired as Chief Justice (“Board of examiners” 5; “South Australian Society of Arts,” *South Australian Register* 3). Demonstrating his largesse and support for the arts, the Society of Arts’s Annual Report for 1861 recorded that the highest prize drawn in the Art Union that year, valued at £25, “fell to the lot of Sir Charles Cooper. His Honor, however, with great generosity, subsequently remitted the amount into the hands of the Society, to go towards the next Exhibition” (“South Australian Society of Arts,” *South Australian Register* 3).

The painting is first mentioned in the *Adelaide Times* in August 1853 where it is reported that the portrait of Judge Cooper was seen carried along Hindley Street by the framer David Culley and his assistant. The freshly framed picture was most likely being returned from Culley’s shop in Waymouth Street to Crossland’s studio, located at the time in rooms at Peacock’s Building on Hindley Street. The keen-eyed reporter who spotted the merchandise in transit noted that “the painting appeared to us to be well executed, and also a fair copy of the original [ie the sitter]” (“Judge Cooper’s Portrait” 2). The work – as well as Crossland’s portrait of Captain Sturt discussed below – is praised in the press some two months later when reference is made to their fidelity of likeness and “the happy and characteristic manner in which the subjects are treated” (“Portraits of Mr Fisher and Mr Gilbert” 2). Such vivid descriptions in the press reflect the importance of artworks as dynamic agents in the social life of the colony. The virtues of benevolence and fairness, combined with the subject’s unaffected nature praised in Fisher’s endorsement quoted above, characterise Crossland’s portrait of the Judge, where the formal, public dimension of the work is mitigated by a personalised, accessible treatment.

The portrait of Charles Cooper was on public display at the Second Exhibition of the South Australian Society of Arts that opened in March 1858 and, according to newspaper reports of the exhibition, was also included in the Society’s First Exhibition of the previous year (“South Australian Society of Arts,” *Adelaide Times* 3).⁵ Reviews of the early exhibitions of the Society of Arts emphasised the socially elevating character of the art works on display catering “for the public gratification”, and their manifest contribution to and evidence of progress in the colony: “an index to our existing condition” as one newspaper report phrased it (“South Australian Society of Arts,” *Adelaide Times* 3; “The Art Exhibition” 2). The portrait was lent to the Society of Arts Exhibition by Mr Hughes, MP, a reference to pastoralist and politician John Brewster Hughes, who may have commissioned the portrait. The painting later transferred to the family of the sitter and stayed in Australia with Cooper’s sister Sarah Ann when, on his retirement, Cooper and his wife returned to England in 1862. Sarah Ann Cooper married William Bartley, Senior Solicitor to the Lands Title Office, in 1852. William passed away in 1885 and legatees of Sarah Bartley gifted the portrait to the Art Gallery of South Australia after her death in 1895 (“Obituary” 2).

Case study II: The Explorer

Thea Hodges, the pre-adolescent narrator of Barbara Hanrahan’s seductive Gothic tale *Where the Queens all Strayed* set in the Adelaide Hills in the very early years of Federation, makes this pronouncement: “Explorers weren’t ordinary” (Hanrahan 128). And in the village

⁵ The painting however does not appear in the printed catalogue of the First Exhibition: South Australian Society of Arts. *First exhibition: catalogue of pictures, and other works of art*. Adelaide: Shawyer, March 1857.

classroom she learns that “Captain Sturt crossed the Stony Desert where the heat was intense, causing the ink to dry on the pen, and the fingernails to break like glass” (Hanrahan 128).

The supremely quixotic nature of Charles Sturt’s personality is hard to ignore. Tenacious, foolhardy and brave, Sturt was a dilettante surveyor, yet undeniably determined explorer. Enduring eighteen months in the Central Desert (1844–46), isolated and far from permanent water for much of that time, Sturt made repeated attempts to push deeper into the unbearable heart of the country in search of a chimerical inland sea. Daniel George Brock, a member of Sturt’s exploration party, mocked the Captain’s guilelessness in his own account of the desperate journey: “[Sturt] is as sanguine as ever of falling with a large body of water – if anybody wants to please him, they have only to tell him they heard swans” (Brock 106).

Sturt’s resolution and confidence was buoyed by the boat he dragged with him on a bullock dray before, finally, abandoning it, marooned on a desert ocean beneath heavens made of brass (Brock 205). He returned to Adelaide a broken man, devoured by scurvy and the ache of failure. In his journal dated Sunday 5 October 1845, he wrote, “my prayer had been rejected, my petition refused ... and I now stood blighted and a blasted man over whose head the darkest destiny had settled” (Sturt, *Journal* 79). His morale had evaporated like the ink on his pen.

Nicolas Rothwell points out in his introduction to Sturt’s *Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia* (1849), the “sublime futility” of his ordeal, conferring on it today a “mythical resonance” (Sturt, *Narrative* xi). It was no doubt the literary success of Sturt’s *Narrative*, a prose Rothwell describes as “intensely emotive, self-conscious, vivid and unalloyed,” which contributed to his stature, as Paul Carter has penned, of “explorer-writer” (*Narrative* xii; Carter 90).⁶ The rhetorical presence of an inland sea was, Carter argues, essential to the process of transforming the landscape he traversed into a symbolic pilgrimage (91). Like Rothwell, Carter recognises the deferred nature of Sturt’s journey expressed in the *Narrative*: a description, not of the Promised Land, but only of its promise (98).

The circumstances surrounding the production of his portrait only reinforced his – almost mythical – reputation (Fig. 2). Commissioned in his honour by public subscription, the party of subscribers asked permission to hang the portrait in the Council Chamber, “as a lasting memorial of the discoverer of the province” (“Captain Sturt” 3).⁷ Captain Sturt requested a copy made of the three-quarter length portrait, a practice not uncommon in the day, and he dispatched it to family in England, where it is now in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in London. Portraiture, as Marcia Pointon writes, “was the one genre in which copies increased rather than diminished the standing of the original” (46).⁸

Vision as a means of knowing is suddenly problematised in the figure of Sturt, whose well-documented near-blindness led him to depend entirely on the members of his party. Strained by the unforgiving Australian sun, Sturt was almost blinded as a result of his earlier explorations down the river Murray in the 1830s. The dazzling glare off the water burned up his retina; his eyesight never recovered. His single-minded perseverance echoes the attempts of early-nineteenth-century scientists who, researching retinal afterimages, damaged their

⁶ See also Mitchell, 56–57, for a discussion of Sturt’s ‘speculative imagination.’

⁷ This reference “discoverer of the province” refers to his overland expeditions opening up land along the Murray between Sydney and Adelaide, a grotesque exaggeration argues Beale (see Works Cited) in his debunking of the Sturt myth.

⁸ For the National Portrait Gallery version, see Ormond, 437–38.

eyesight – leading sometimes to permanent blindness – by staring too long into the unseeable sun (Crary 141).⁹



Fig. 2. J.M. Crossland. *Captain Charles Sturt*. 1853. Oil on canvas, 141 x 110.5cm. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (accession no. 0.598).

⁹ See also the phenomenon of terrestrial refraction documented by explorer E.C. Frome in the report of his 1843 expedition to Lake Torrens, in Bell, 50.

Crossland's grand portrait completed in early 1853 is a tranquil hagiography which memorialises rather than analyses the personality of the sitter. Absent are signs of the psychological anxieties Sturt experienced in the early 1850s when his deteriorating sight forced him to resign from the role of Colonial Secretary, a position he had coveted for many years. This change of fortune precipitated his retirement in December 1851 and, in addition to financial considerations, contributed to Sturt's decision to return to England with his family in March 1853, shortly after the portrait was finished (Sturt, *Life* 306-7; Cumpston). Although his local popularity was unequivocal, and the publication of his *Narrative* earned him official recognition, privately Sturt was frustrated by the miscarriage of his plans of exploration and his failure to secure more prestigious government posts (Hodder 254; Beale 3, 243-44).¹⁰ Although he had planned to stay in Australia post-retirement, he would never return.

Crossland also produced a very fine head and shoulders portrait of Sturt (Fig. 3) and both portraits reflect mid-Victorian male sartorial fashion that contributes to the subject's cultural identity. Gone is the flamboyance of the previous century; the painted surface in the smaller portrait in particular is dominated not by colour but by the cut of his clothes, revealing particular attention to the texture and textiles of his liquorice-black costume and silk cravat knotted in a bow. For the large-scale portrait, the artist has adopted a classical contrapposto scheme, the uneven distribution of weight generating rhythm in Sturt's bearing, a sinuosity echoed in the bowed arm of the soft leather chair beside him. A drawing of Sturt and a cousin when boys (Fig. 4) shows Sturt, with one arm resting on the back of a chair and a riding crop in the other hand, in a similar relaxed standing pose, the curvilinear form of his body accentuated by his cocked head. We can also see this sinuosity and the heightened importance of bearing and physical presence in Crossland's portrait of Cooper.



Fig. 3. J.M. Crossland. *Captain Charles Sturt*. 1853. Oil on canvas, 75.9 x 63.2cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (accession no. 0.635).

¹⁰ Sturt applied unsuccessfully for governorships in South Australia, Victoria, Queensland, and Tasmania.

Besides his *Narrative* published in 1849, Sturt had written about his earlier journeys along the Macquarie and Darling rivers and later the Murrumbidgee and Murray river systems in *Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia*, an account published in 1833. In the three-quarter length portrait, three books are stacked on the cloth-covered table beside him. Though partly indecipherable, the spines of two of the books read *Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia* Vol. II and *South Australia Legislative Council Votes of Procedure*. The choice of featuring *Two Expeditions* was no doubt a reminder of his role in the foundational story of the colony, while the latter alludes to his recent appointment as the colony's Colonial Secretary. There is also a chart half-unfurled across the table that references his role as a surveyor and explorer. While allowing more than a glimmer of Georgian romantic bravura in the sweep of Sturt's hair, the clean-shaven face and quince-coloured satin waistcoat, the artist has displayed, with discretion, the sitter's reputation as explorer-writer and most recently as public servant.¹¹ In this portrait of Sturt, Crossland moves closest to the heritage of portraitist Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), combining a sense of what Andrew Wilton describes as both "glamorous and dignified" (174). In the spirit of Carlyle's defence of portraiture as the genre of authenticity, Crossland consciously ties his portrait to the "materiality of historical fact", resisting the bombast of heroic symbolism (Barlow, "The imagined hero" 531).¹² Sturt's self-fashioning in portraits produced both for public consumption in the case of the publicly commissioned work and for his family, reveals a social identity that defines, above all, a natural, dignified, yet congenial gentleman.



Fig. 4. Unknown. [*Portrait of Charles Sturt*]. Circa 1805. Watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 14.5 x 17.5cm. National Library of Australia, Canberra (nla.obj-136643614).

¹¹ Jane Hylton makes a similar point regarding Crossland's Sturt portraits: see Radford and Hylton, 132.

¹² Barlow elucidates: "The authentic portrait was seen as one which articulated the sitter's identity within terms which proclaimed its status as an historical document; its authenticity resided in the fact that it "belonged" to the historical moment within which the sitter's identity formed itself" (519).

Future memorials to Sturt, in contrast, have forged a mythologising narrative. The sculpture erected in Victoria Square, Adelaide, in 1916, displays Sturt as the intrepid explorer in an open-neck shirt and rolled-up sleeves, shielding his eyes below a broad-brimmed hat as he stares into a fathomless distance. In Ivor Hele's painting *Sturt's reluctant decision to return* from 1937, Sturt, the rugged, bronzed trailblazer, makes a similar demonstration. In the period following nationhood, a public desire for nation-building divinities saw Sturt recapture the status of virile pioneer explorer (S. Cameron 68-73; Deegan). As Hanrahan conjured, "God had turned into a man, very tanned, crossing the desert on a camel" (140).

Case study III: The Priest

"It was my misfortune", wrote Hazlitt in his essay "On the Conduct of Life", "to be bred up among Dissenters, who look with jaundiced an eye at others, and set too high a value on their own peculiar pretensions" (198). Hazlitt's candid reminiscence about his own upbringing was not, according to biographical accounts of Thomas Quinton Stow, a measure of the founder of the Nonconformist Congregational Church in South Australia. On the contrary, Stow was held in high esteem as a "truly good man" and an anecdote recounted by the daughter of William Giles, lay preacher and friend of Stow, about the Reverend's involvement in building the first Congregational Church in early 1838 with walls "of pine, the roof of thatch, the windows of calico, the floor of mother earth," reveals an egalitarian and humble nature:

[The church], mean and shabby as it was, answered its purpose well enough for a time, and all honour be to the man of learning and culture, the noble-minded Christian gentleman, who could surrender the studies and literary pursuits wherein he delighted, to devote himself to the distasteful manual labour involved in its construction (Watts 74).

Stow's willingness to engage in manual labour did not stop there. In 1843 he purchased land on the banks of the Torrens and supplemented a meagre stipend from the Colonial Missionary Society with farming. This decision apparently alienated some members of his congregation who even resigned from the Church (Mole 20; J. Cameron 10).¹³ There are echoes of George Eliot's fictional character Edgar Tryan in the biography of T. Q. Stow. Tryan, the evangelical curate in Eliot's story "Janet's Repentance" in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), was held in high esteem by many in his congregation and the broader community for his "true compassion" and "fervent faith" (Eliot 351). The curate, an imperfect hero in the novella, was a scholar nourished by deep spiritual knowledge, exhaling "the air of a gentleman," yet, like Stow, at ease taking "tea with tradespeople" (Eliot 223).

Stow was passionate about the opportunities for members of Dissident churches afforded by the new colony and he fostered cooperation and ecumenical relations between all denominations. In a speech delivered at a conference of Congregational delegates in Melbourne in 1855, Stow compared Britain – a tree atrophied and "torn with furious storms" – with its "offshoots transplanted to Colonial soils [... without] the inequalities and contortions of the disfigured and storm-injured parent, but present[ing] the free growth, the fair proportions, and the graceful forms, which are their proper nature" (Stow 12). Pushing against perceived legislative and educational inequalities existing in Britain, Stow held that,

[i]n a Colony there is more freedom in the thoughts of men, more independent action, more love of self-management, and far less of conventional restraint – a state of society favourable to principles which seek no ascendancy in control for a class –

¹³ Stow also ran a school for boys in Adelaide for a number of years to support his family.

principles which aim to establish no authority but their own truth, and no power but their own moral force (19).

A tireless advocate of the principle of ‘self-management’ and religious independence, Stow’s optimism and desire to release religion from potential state interference translated above all in his opposition to Government grants to churches, known as voluntaryism. The voluntary principle was a touchstone for Dissident churches in the formative years of the colony, culminating in a successful campaign by Voluntarists in the Legislative Council election of 1851 to remove the policy of State-funded financial aid for churches (see Hodder 253; Pike 421-37).

The proposal for Stow’s portrait is first mentioned in the press in January 1854 (“Right about Face” 3). At the time he was visiting Sydney on business and returned to Adelaide in late February 1854. By this stage, however, Stow’s health was already failing and the report of an evening in March of that year celebrating the Wesleyan Minister Reverend Hull on the eve of his departure to England, noted that a “letter was read from the Rev. Stow, apologizing for his non-attendance on account of illness” (“Testimonial to the Rev. Mr Hull” 3).¹⁴ Indeed, from a letter to the editor of the *South Australian Register* in September 1855, it would appear the public subscription for Stow’s portrait had still not commenced (“Portraits of Early Ministers” 3). The portrait was no doubt precipitated by Stow’s retirement in September 1856 due to ill health, and completed sometime that year. The work is referred to in a newspaper report from 1863 of a fundraiser “in aid of the proposed church to the memory of the late Rev. Thomas Quinton Stow,” where the oil painting “from the easel of the late Mr. Crossland” was exhibited and *cartes de visite* of the portrait taken by photographer Townsend Duryea were on sale (“Stow Memorial Church Bazaar” 2).¹⁵

In the portrait of Reverend Stow (Fig. 5), recently restored and now on display in the Pilgrim Uniting Church (formerly the Stow Memorial Congregational Church), Adelaide, Stow is depicted wearing a gentleman’s costume rather than the clerical gown. The portrait highlights his reputation as an eloquent speaker and scholar, surrounded by his books and letter-writing apparatus. A testimonial appearing in the press in 1853 declared that, as “a powerful and eloquent preacher he ranks in the highest class; and as a scholar and an orator he yields to none” (“Testimonial to the Rev. Thomas Quinton Stow” 2). In contrast, Crossland’s portrait of colonial chaplain, the Reverend James Farrell, clearly indicates the subject’s profession: Farrell is standing – one could imagine at the pulpit – wearing traditional Anglican robes and reading from the bible resting in front of him.¹⁶

¹⁴ The article also mentions the gift of two portraits by J. M. Crossland to the departing Reverend Hull and his wife.

¹⁵ Crossland’s portrait of lay preacher William Giles was also on exhibition at the bazaar. Crossland died from tuberculosis in January 1858.

¹⁶ The portrait of Farrell is on view in the Refectory at St Peters College, Adelaide. Though currently unattributed, the style of the portrait would affirm Crossland’s authorship. Evidence that Crossland produced a portrait of Farrell can be found in the Catalogue of the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition (1869) from the South Australian Society of Arts, lot 255: “Portrait of the late Dean Farrell by Crossland, owned by Trustees of St Peters Collegiate School.”

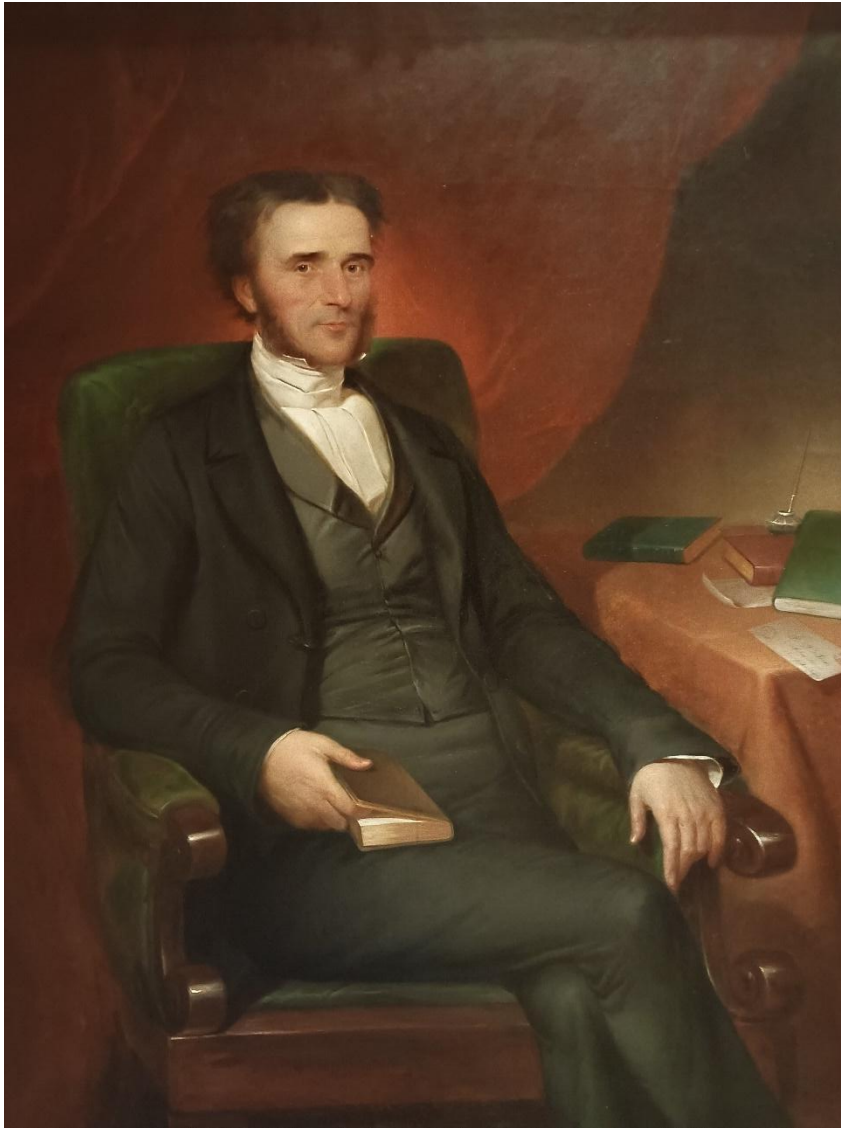


Fig. 5. J.M. Crossland. *Reverend T.Q. Stow*. 1855-56. Oil on canvas. Pilgrim Uniting Church, Adelaide.

Reverend Stow's social status is nevertheless identified by his frock coat, neatly combed hair and, above all, the starched white wing collar and shirt 'points' framing his chin. Like the portraits of Cooper and Sturt, Crossland offers the viewer a partial profile, softening the frontal view by angling the seated figure across the painted surface from top-left to bottom-right. In addition, the sitter is positioned slightly elevated, enhancing his dignified presence against a background curtained in folds of sullen garnet red.

Crossland's portrait of Stow exemplifies the art of concealment: a balancing act portraitists were often required to play between ensuring a likeness of the subject and yet smoothing over any less than desirable physical traces. In his *Brief Survey* of Stow's life, George C. Morphett refers to the Reverend's health in decline "some years before his death" and in 1855 Rev C.W. Evans was called out from England to assist Stow in his duties (Morphett). As mentioned earlier, Stow was forced to resign from the ministry the following year due to poor health, just as the overworked and consumptive character of Tryan is replaced by a new curate (Eliot 347). A photographic portrait of Stow (Fig. 6) from Adelaide photographer Townsend Duryea, most probably taken in the late 1850s, reveals a blemished face with deep-set eyes, worn and ravaged by illness. His intense, yet uncertain gaze is at odds with the

fresh, airbrushed features displaying warmth, energy and almost a smile in his eyes and on his lips in the oil painting. As Eliot's narrator in "Janet's Repentance" describes Tryan in his twilight months, there "is an unspeakable blending of sadness and sweetness in the smile of a face sharpened and paled by slow consumption" (Eliot 346). We are not led here to speculate, as indeed we are not led to speculate in the portrait of Sturt, on his future (see Arscott 158). The two portraits are a generous approbation of the subjects' public careers and private virtues, yet withhold signposting significant preoccupations and their dramatic impact – in Stow's case ill-health and its sombre outcome, and in Sturt's his disability and unexpected departure for England.

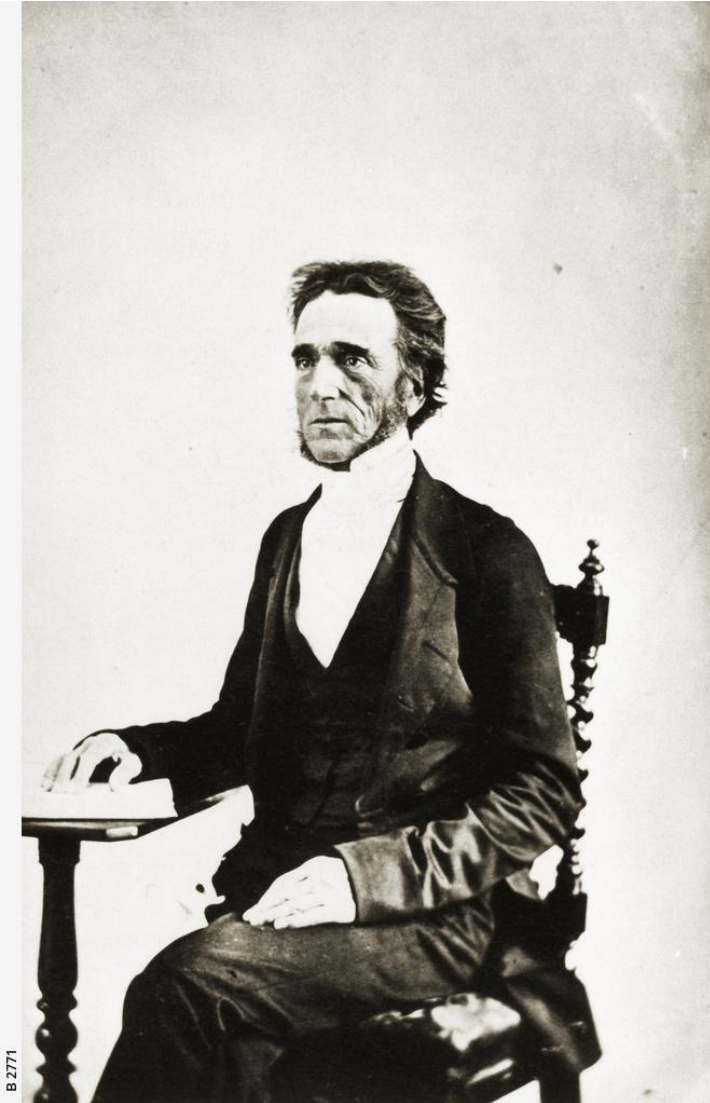


Fig. 6. Townsend Duryea. *Thomas Quinton Stow*. Late 1850s. Photograph, 13.2 x 8.2cm. State Library of South Australia, Adelaide (B 2771).

While on a visit to Sydney, Stow died in July 1862 at the age of 61. His funeral in Adelaide was attended by leading state dignitaries and "representatives of all religious bodies, including the Roman Catholic and Hebrew churches, so highly esteemed was the Reverend ... for his unsectarian breadth of mind" (Morphett). Banks, the parliament, shops closed on

the day and, like the commission for Crossland's portrait of Stow, a public subscription paid for an elegant monument to be erected over his grave at West Terrace Cemetery.¹⁷

Conclusion

By the nineteenth century, a successful public portrait – a work fostering broad interest – was considered to embody aesthetic value independent of the sitter. In the eyes of contemporary critics, Crossland's portraits successfully demonstrated the artist's ability to conflate artistic sensibility with technical skill ("Captain Sturt" 3; "Portraits of Mr Fisher and Mr Gilbert" 2; "Right about Face" 3).¹⁸ The study of character, in addition to picturing the sitter's professional or social status, closed the gap between individual and universal qualities conveyed by the subject (Shawe-Taylor 29-30). In his *Discourses*, Reynolds had maintained that the true subject of art is not the world after all, but "the mental forms constituted in the painter's mind by a process of abstraction from particularity", rejecting, as Norman Bryson expressed it, "the demeaning descent into specificity" (41, 43). Yet in his essay "On the Pleasure of Painting," Hazlitt took issue with Reynolds's claim that truth in painting relied on the absence of singularity, writing that, on the contrary, "the perfection of art consists in ... giving general appearances with individual details" (44).¹⁹ Hazlitt engineered a discursive bridge from Reynolds to a new aesthetics for the Victorian age, a bridge Crossland passed over and whose output consolidated this shift for a colonial audience. Indeed, by the mid-nineteenth century, specificity in the subject had replaced signs and symbols external to the self.

This article demonstrates how public-driven portraits in Adelaide's early years reshaped conventional tropes of portraiture, redrawing the boundaries between formal/informal and public/private typologies. Avoiding explicit iconography of the sitters' professions transmitted through props, details or gestures, the portraits display values that emphasise what Governor Young, quoted in the opening paragraph, described as "energies and resources of private individuals", in a tone that is democratic and accessible.

The (public) portraits examined here align with a Carlylean view of history popular in the mid-Victorian era that marked the lives of heroes as casting the mould of history (see Carlyle). Barlow describes how a historical process "which centred on the working of individual agency, was clearly connected to the perceived need to generate images and narratives which would produce a culture conducive to moral and economic health" (Barlow, "The imagined hero" 524). What distinguishes Adelaide and the repertoire of public portraits produced by Crossland in the 1850s, was the emphasis on individual traits that blend intimacy and propriety. The artist offered his patrons an identifiable visual lexicon capable of "providing a register for the period", interpreting the lives of his sitters within aesthetic and moral conventions shared with his audience (Pointon 8; Brilliant 36). His subjects are not weighed down by the trappings of office – their sense of self, indeed a corporeal insistence, bristles beyond the bounds of their status as public figures. Like the description of a

¹⁷ His memory was also celebrated with the publication of *Dedicatory Discourses by the Late Rev. T.Q. Stow with the Funeral Orations*. Adelaide: J.T. Shawyer, 1862. The Stow Memorial Congregational Church, erected in 1867, was dedicated to the memory of Reverend Stow.

¹⁸ Consistently positive reviews in the press enhanced Crossland's profile as portraitist, and his most intense period of activity 1853-1856, was only cut short by his deteriorating illness and early demise in 1858. On Crossland, patronage, and the art market in Adelaide, see Graham, "Patron versus Painter."

¹⁹ Reynolds uneasily acknowledged, however, that "the habits of my profession unluckily extend to the consideration of so much only of character as lies on the surface, and is expressed in the lineaments of the countenance" (Shawe-Taylor 32). See also Barlow, "Facing the past and present" 224; Barrell 82-87.

gentleman in Hazlitt's essay cited in the first case study, they command self-possession and convey virtues of natural dignity, civility, and probity equally at home in the private as well as the public realm. The portraits of Charles Cooper, Charles Sturt, and T. Q. Stow are anchored to a perceptual reality – in a studio setting – rather than a Reynoldsian ideal: this was the self-image of nineteenth-century cultured Adelaide.

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