

FOOTNOTING: LANDSCAPE AND SPACE IN THE EXPLORATION DIARY OF EMILY CAROLINE CREGAGHE

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Saw traces of our late party. Affecting sight on the track of a feminine foot round edge of lagoon and an empty cocoa tin.

1. See historian, *Bulletin* writer and explorer Ernest Favenc's diary of his Macarthur River expedition in the Barkly Tableland, Northern Territory, 30 May 1883, page 7. They're the only words you'll find about Emily Caroline Creaghe, the woman he'd just explored with, a devout 22 year old and wife of his expedition partner, Harry Creaghe.¹ She's just a passing reference, like a footnote, buried at the bottom of a standard day's entry of range crossing, plain traipsing and longing for water. They'd explored up the Nicholson River together that same month, along with Harry and Lindsay Crawford, had been thirsty, starving and in danger together. Yet he leaves no word on the Nicholson trip, and his Macarthur River diary suggests she is barely noteworthy.² She's a sign of what is left behind. He moves on without a further word on her.

2. In Cheryl Frost's monograph, *The Last Explorer: The Life and Work of Ernest Favenc*, I found Caroline Creaghe by happy accident, while looking for sources on why exploration in Australia was purely a masculine practice (40-47). Like a steep range they altered my direction, pushed me off onto a more interesting course: a PhD about Australian women explorers. They've sent me searching for footnotes, other chance mentions, sights and citations.

3. Caroline isn't footnoted in most histories of exploration. The flow of the mainstream, the Leichhardts, Gregorys and Stuarts, wash her away like a record-breaking Wet. Yet sometimes she emerges above the floodmark, in small footnote-like mentions, hitched onto other important concerns. Cheryl Frost is more interested in Favenc (1983), Winsome Maff (1986) and Glenville Pike (1980) in local history, Barbara James in women and station life (1989), and Lyn Riddett in relationships between black and white women (1993). Dictionaries of biography skim bare details (*Australian Dictionary of Biography* 13, *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* 1) and Anne Robinson in her *Sydney Morning Herald* articles provides more quotations than analysis. (*Sydney Morning Herald* 13, 14, 20 May 1976, 12, 10, 13 respectively).³ Yet if the writings of Creaghe, and other women explorers, such as early bushwalkers, cavers and botanists, ventured off the endnotes and into the middle, their stories might point to new ways of thinking about non-Aboriginal people, gender and landscape as well as Aboriginal peoples and colonisation. They could be read not as a simple

story, but as clues suggesting complications, like footnotes themselves.

4. Many of the footnotes I want to follow in theoretical work seem to have wandered off the edge of the page and gotten lost in the tall grass of the plain. I'm searching for references which will help me analyse the texts of non-Aboriginal women explorers: women who actively name and make home land which seems unknown to their people, via representations like painting, photography, maps or writing. I hunt through the work of Paul Carter, which proves very useful, explaining how the land is known and made through language, in a process of metaphoric colonisation, but while there are women settlers in his work there are no women exploring (Carter). Turning towards Australian feminist work, Kay Schaffer claims to have found woman in the bush, symbolised as the land which male explorers define themselves against. Women who do try to describe the land in their writing are ultimately seen to speak phallogocentrically (Schaffer). There are no women explorers in this bush. Sue Rowley looks at paintings and stories and says women ultimately journey into the interior of the home, are seen behind slip rails or doors. Women who have gone further away are portrayed as disguised men, or are out of her sight (Rowley). Helen Thomson and Susan Hosking find women in the garden, the cultivated bush, but leave no words on the Eves who've left it (Thomson; Hosking). Overseas work on women travellers and explorers proves most helpful. Dea Birkett notes that women tend to engage in small explorations, use national symbols and maps less in their accounts. Sara Mills shows how feminine and colonial discourses interact and how British women carried aspects of their domestic roles with them (Birkett; Mills). Yet they don't deal with the specific history or the distinctive landscapes of Australia. Australian theory of landscape needs footnoting, needs additional detail and discussion about non-Aboriginal women who went beyond homes and gardens to deserts, mountains and caves. Caroline's diary is one of many possible places to begin footnoting from. My footnotes, as presented here, are a supplement to the diary text, separate but linked tracks, which attempt to give perspectives on gendered representations of land—such as the diary as a landscape, writing the land, mobility, and Aboriginal peoples. They are some ways into stories the diaries don't fully tell, neither Favenc's nor Creaghe's diaries having actual footnotes to help us.

5. Footnoting need not only be an academic practice or idea, it could also be groundwork, the practice of writing and exploring. The footnotes that Creaghe and Favenc create are made through physical engagement with the land. They're words that have been ridden, walked, sunburnt and flyblown, made thirsty and tired by the time they land on the page at the end of the day. The words, affected by the landscape itself, also make a landscape on the page. See the shapes of Caroline's and Ernest's diaries from different expeditions in the same region. Both follow conventions of form, with dates, times and distances, and both are written documents. Yet the ground covered by their records shows differences, shaped by gender roles and different levels of access to knowledges. Their differences are not glaring, but are little marks, like the numbers of footnotes in text, differences made physical.

6. Caroline's diary is a thick, brown Letts, filled cover to cover with words. At first, the entries fit into the assigned space of days, but once she's exploring, she sets her own boundaries, words flowing over like a Northern river, flooding the plain of the page. Sometimes the stream disappears underground, scribbles hiding her anger at Favenc's moods. Heat melts bone hard convention: 'Mr. Favenc' becomes simply 'Favenc', heavy commas are dropped, she's not making full stops, but moving on. Recording in words she describes their movements. Favenc's diary is a columned accounts book, filled with small entries, mere damp patches compared to her torrents. His words are curt shortcuts. He records not only with words, but with compass and axe, his days and nights crossed with longitudes and latitudes, directions, the strange hieroglyphic sketches of tree markings. He carves himself into the land, maps and history. The endnotes of their diaries measure land and futures differently. He reads

the compass needle:

SSW 2 miles
WSW 1 mile
W 14 miles
WSW 1 mile (n.p.)

She replies looking at knitting needles, making a baby's shawl:

slip 1, make 1, Knit 22
make one, knit one, (3 times)
sl, m1, k 25,
m1, k1, (3 times). (n.p.)

They are footnotes to different experiences of place, records and futures.⁴

7. Caroline's footnotes are like a full body text when compared to Ernest's leaner words, hers describing in greater detail adjustments made to climate and landscape, the physical effects of exploration. While still only a visitor's perspective, she gives more of a sense of what it's like to live there temporarily. Amidst the flat plain details of weather, the regular refrain of setting out times are unexpected poetic spots, where her position as a novice gives freshness to description. Far beyond the coastal greenery of Sydney for the first time, she's shocked initially at the flatness of the Gulf country and writes, amazed: 'Nothing to be seen. No houses but the telegraph station' (10). She remarks on efforts made to overcome the oven-like heat, such as wearing veils—which were also worn to prevent flies—and of travelling in the cool, black and moonlit night. Mentions of mud, dust and a desire to wash, fleck the narrative. Creaghe's footnotes succinctly convey the relief of rest, after travelling until late at night, with little food or water: 'We did not put up the tents, but just lay down in our clothes under a tree + needed no rocking to send us off to sleep immediately. It was so delightful to get between the blankets after the long, cold riding' (106). As Cheryl Frost notes, Favenc was already familiar with the region from previous explorations and droving work, so he records less, being used to the wider range and life in the saddle (42).

8. Though Favenc and Creaghe are referring to the same source or landscape, their footnotes show different readings taken from gendered vantage points. At a surface glance they desire the same things of the land: waterholes, shade, feed for their horses. They remark upon features which enable them to rest, feed and drink their story along. But beneath this surface agreement are diverging streams of thought. She's not there on business looking for grassy plains for cattle, not trying to sell the area to the South Australian government or private investors like Favenc is. There are no joyful responses such as that in Favenc's *Queenslander* diary of 1879 that it is: 'first class cattle country' (10a). Caroline is on a pleasure trip. The only interest grass has to her is its use as feed for the horses, or if it provides ease of passage and can be covered quickly, in text, in journey.⁵ Her evaluation of land is based on her role as a traveller. She rates areas for their scenic value or difficulty of movement, noting that there are 'tiresome gullies to cross' (64) and grumbling that the country has 'no scenery worth anything'. (74-75). More favourable words flock around water features and while Favenc appreciates them for aesthetic reasons too, he doesn't linger beside them as long as she does. Gorging on rivers, she fills her parchment paragraphs with greenery, delight in the shock of water and colours other than the black of soil and the blue of sky; the rest of the spectrum vividly recalled. She writes: 'Rather an exciting day. We went through a magnificent gorge almost directly we started this morning. The rocks on either side of us were so immense and a creek of lovely dark looking water by the side of where we were riding' (68). Other unexpected details about areas of no pastoral value to them, draw pleased poetic responses from her for their relief to the eye, and suggest a tourist's attitude to the landscape. Caroline almost sounds like she's shopping for souvenirs in the Barkly: 'There was some lovely pink heather growing about the country today but unfortunately we could not get a plant as to carry such a thing on packhorses would be impossible' (73). Creaghe uses familiar common names for plants that

she sees, rather than the precise terms of Favenc's diary. They're used descriptively and are easier to read, not being bogged down in the jargon of the geographer. For her, country is downs, plains, ranges, desert or scrub of varying degrees of 'niceness' and cover. In Ernest's *Queenslander* diary—less so the Macarthur River one—his plants almost need translation. They are a mantra of mulga, polygonous scrub, blue bush flats and gidea, a sign of the constraints of purpose and knowledge he is working with. Their footnotes cross but start and finish from different senses of what is noteworthy and why.

9. Caroline's footnotes do not wander north and south as much as the men's, since her movements are more tightly reigned in by gendered notions of space and roles. She records in the smaller letters of the footnote, in scaled down detail. Early in the diary, it didn't seem that she would manage to roam at all. A change of plans meant that the men wanted to leave her at the station while they explored, much to her annoyance.⁶ Like footnotes, she is seen as dispensable, the first item to be edited from the exploring story. Caroline's footnoting for much of the diary encircles the camp, placed there by the men's traditional ideas on women's capabilities, ideas as Pre-Cambrian as the rock tableland they cross. Unlike the men, she is seen to need protection from exertion and Aboriginal people and is never left alone, in or out of camp. While they round up the horses and look for water or go shooting, she is treated like a child in need of babysitting:

We are in the really dangerous country now, and Mr Crawford who has been staying in camp getting breakfast while Mr Favenc and Harry went for the horses says he will not stay anymore as the responsibility of having to take charge of me is too great, when Blacks are all around us so Harry is going to take his place and stay in camp. (69)

There's a hint here too that Crawford felt he was being made effeminate by being in camp instead of 'exploring'. This was also a cause of dispute on the all male *Queenslander* trip.⁷

10. Yet it's not as if she meekly sits still, pliable and obedient all the while. Her feet and mind get restless, she longs for movement, action and variety. She *does* manage to move further afield, beyond the party's regular exploratory movements every day between camps. Caroline takes advantage of Harry's fear of leaving her alone in camp when he is too sick to explore, by going with him to hunt for the horses, brazenly recording that she rode barebacked returning to camp (102). Later on, Harry has no hope of restraining her when they sight Aboriginal people and the others start to chase them to what they hope is a waterhole: 'Favenc made a gallop and Crawford followed from behind with us and we knew they must have seen niggers. I wanted to go on too, but Harry wouldn't hear of it, much to my disgust. However we went on with the horses after them' (87). Here Caroline gets and goes her own way: a footnote that complicates gendered notions of mobility by stretching them beyond the camp.⁸

11. On most occasions though, she footnotes in camp, giving a more intimate and social view of landscape than Favenc does. Caroline speaks not only of forks in rivers and the setting of the tableland, but the actual processes of making meals, providing detailed menus and accounts of the effect of landscape on food. She writes about drinking black cocoa, graced with spoonfuls of dirt rather than sugar, and of her Barkly breakfast special—a duck curried with flies from the grass—which she didn't see since they breakfast in the dark before sunrise (67, 63-64). Elsewhere, she gives a strong sense of the pleasure of food when hungry after travelling all day and night:

While they were away Crawford and I got a sumptuous supper ready consisting of something of everything we had in camp such as it was...we boiled our last bit of beef which I cut into small pieces to take less time cooking. Cooked some rice + preserved potato, dried apples stewed and a nice hot damper. We did enjoy our meal having fasted 26 hours. (94)

Caroline's representations of herself engaging in classic feminine pursuits like sewing and

knitting in the middle of the plain, seem to turn the huge wide space into a kind of living room or backyard. They create an intimate yet odd space, since these activities occur *outside* of the traditional, four-walled context of the home: 'I was patching my riding habit all the afternoon under a large shady tree on the banks of the water. It would have been pleasant if the flies were not so troublesome' (97). Favenc's diary never records such details; he refuses to be hemmed in and is always exploring. Caroline's diary seems not only more intimate but also more peopled, the entries full of notes of what 'we' did, or what the men are doing. Initially Favenc seems distinctly anti-social, according to both his and Caroline's diaries.⁹ Other party members get little mention in his notes and might as well be non-existent. Yet if I thought I could anticipate the solo, macho content of his footnotes, if I could almost skip reading them, a surprise was in store. While the party are ghost presences, his wife Bessie is more alive in his notes than ever, as a constant imagined companion.¹⁰ Parts of the diary read like an uncanny prelude to Patrick White's *Voss*, where the explorer Voss engages in an imagined exploration with Laura, who supposedly rides and speaks with him in the middle of the desert, though she's actually in Sydney (216). In Favenc's Macarthur River diary, an affectionate 'God Bless my Podge'—Podge being his nickname for his wife—footnotes every entry. He imagines her assessing the landscape with him, dare-devil like: 'From the top of the cliffs the view was splendid, only if Podge was here, she would insist on leaning over the edge I know' (19-20). Caroline's and Ernest's footnotes suggest that lurking in the pages of men's and women's accounts are the presences, real or imagined, of more women exploring the landscape than much Australian history would seem to have referenced.

12. Creaghe's diary, as a record of engagement with landscape, the 'first' white foot on this soil and page, is a mere footnote to an extensive body of Aboriginal knowledge and travel over thousands of years. As an exploration diary, her account is an afterword, an endnote since the land is already full of footprints, songlines and sites. It is named, known and home to the Aboriginal peoples. In many ways Caroline fails to note this. Western and racist ideas about land being 'unnamed' snake through both her and Ernest's accounts. She describes an area they look at as 'Broad's Country', as if it were never Aboriginal country. She also refers to Favenc 'giving all the rivers names for the South Australian government' and she names a supposedly 'unnamed' lagoon, assuming Aboriginal people didn't name and know their own places (80, 72-73, 67). Elsewhere she calls them 'wretches' and speaks of them 'infesting' the Nicholson river area (65). Her racism is like the sandy blight disease she suffers before exploring; it blinds her eyes which swell with fear, limiting her footnoting. Yet later the swelling subsides slightly and she manages to peer through and see that they manage the land. Caroline acknowledges in her footnotes that the land is their home, to a greater extent than Favenc's diary suggests.

13. Caroline constantly looks for Aboriginal footprints and signals of smoke from their fires, reading Aboriginal people as signs in the landscape. Her smoke-scented pages are traversed with entries like 'No tracks of Blacks', 'saw tracks of Blacks' (68, 72) repeated like a charm, as if saying it will ward them away. These anxious notes suggest that she is aware she's invading, though it's never explicitly stated as such. She seems to recognise that she is in Aboriginal-run country and feels pursued. It's like an ironic reversal of the usual reading of a map: for her, the white so called 'blank spaces' of the centre are actually black, while the city is the white space. The diary is full of present tenses, with whites and blacks hiding from each other, vying for space in the story and in Aboriginal land. She can't slip easily into the past tense and mourn the loss of Aboriginal culture since she comes face to face with a *living culture* using the landscape.¹¹ She's in their living room. Her account of the party's arms stockpile is a clear footnote to their fear and siege mentality: 'We sleep every night now with two revolvers in bed with us and a double barrelled breech-loader. Outside the tent door a loaded carbine schneider stands all ready for use' (64). Not that she's reassured by the weapons; she doesn't sleep much or sleep well, keeping watch by default. Even after they have finished

exploring, Harry and Caroline have dreams of Aboriginal attacks. Ernest's dreams or fears don't even make the page.

14. Occasionally in Caroline's diary, her fascination with Aboriginal lifestyle and land management seems to walk over the imprints of fear. In scattered references she recalls seeing gnyahs or Aboriginal dwellings and abandoned tools, as well as trying sweet native blackcurrants and unripe oranges, wild duck and scrub turkey. She details the Aboriginal people's use of holes in trees for collecting sugarbag and possums, and their firing of the country for game: 'We passed several burnt pieces of country where the blacks have lately been burning to catch animals. The way they manage is to light a big fire over a good space of country and as the animals run out to escape being burnt they catch and kill them' (78). This knowledge, probably gleaned from the men as well as observation, doesn't lead her to use the land carefully. The party display disrespect by using all of a waterhole (in a drought) and killing animals for food, depriving Aboriginal people of supplies. They leave careless footnotes of their presence: a cocoa tin, Favenc's sleeping mat, the bodies of dead horses, footprints. They walk into the Aboriginal people's living room without knocking, raid their pantry, litter their floor and leave without an invitation or even a thankyou.¹²

15. The explorer's following of Aboriginal people's footsteps, their dependence for survival on Aboriginal knowledge of the landscape, is also shown more clearly in Caroline's diary than in her husband's. She details graphically the violence involved in taking hostage a group of Aboriginal people in order to get water, a footnote that cuts up the neat white page notion of the land as blank, empty and peaceful. While she shows the men using revolvers and tying up Aboriginal men, she doesn't depict herself using any weapon. Yet patronising and pitying, half defensive of their aggression, she argues that 'We were not going to do them any harm we merely wanted them to take us to water' (87), as if to convince herself this was the case. Her notes on the event are edged with ambivalence, shock, and a sense of rupturing domestic space:

The gins bolted at our appearance and we saw nothing of them. One poor little baby was left by the mother in her fright and it was toddling about crying. The blacks wear no clothing of any sort. One man had a carpet snake which he had killed round his waist ready to cook for his supper. The poor things were quiet and frightened. Not having been molested by white men they did not attempt to do us any harm. (88)

Her bare words read as if she is almost as disturbed as the dinner preparations of the Aboriginal group. Later, in a calmer moment, at a distance, they share damper with the Aboriginal people. Though she leaves traces of her discomfort with the aggression, she seems to recover and justify it. Her feelings are hidden away again in the quiet space of an ended entry.¹³ A spinifex-like scramble of conflicting details, her representations of Aboriginal people in the landscape are footnotes to confused and ambiguous ideas about race and gender.

16. Footnotes are frustrating—they don't offer neat conclusions or tell much of the story. They are disjointed leads that create suspense, then move on again. From Caroline's footprint at the edge of Favenc's lagoon entry and onwards through her work, there are smudged prints of a gendered groundwork, footnotes which seem a different size and shape from his. Caroline's notes are single detailed prints, not a measurement guide. They are full of flowers and gorges, travel concerns and scenery rather than science and grass. They show the close fieldwork of the camp with some straying, rather than wide ranging plain. There are crying babies, sugarbag, disturbed dinners: all footnotes Favenc left out. Whether they mark a trace of a white feminine approach to landscape is as hazy as a Dry horizon. More diaries of women in the area and of explorers of same period need to be read for possible gendered representation of landscape, since the differences between Favenc's and Caroline's footnotes may be as individual and idiosyncratic as footsize. Her footnotes, and those of other Australian women explorers, seem worth following, if only for the adventure of seeing how far beyond the

lagoon they might go. See further work on Australian women explorers, pages yet to be written...

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Notes

- 1 Dictionaries of biography use the family name 'Barnett' for Caroline Creaghe, since she remarried after Harry's death in 1886 to a Joseph Barnett in 1889.
- 2 Favenc may have kept a diary but it does not seem to be held in any public collection. Perhaps it has been lost. It seems odd that there is no diary record of the

- Nicholson trip, since it was a government funded expedition and the diaries from his other expeditions—both the Macarthur River and the *Queenslander* expedition—have been preserved (Mitchell Library). The only record of the Nicholson trip is contained in his general official report to the South Australian Parliament. Since it is a report, a different form from Caroline's account, it didn't seem appropriate to compare them here, hence the use of the Macarthur diary.
- 3 In the foreword to *The Australian Writers Book of Days*, Alison Crook comments incisively that: 'the courage and vigour evident in the diaries of unknown women explorers such as Emily Caroline Creaghe, explodes the notion that the most dangerous steps taken by Victorian women were around embroidery patterns'. However, this brief comment and the small entry about her, do not provide a detailed analysis.
 - 4 All citations regarding Caroline Creaghe's diary are quoted from the handwritten original and/or the microfilm of it, using printed page numbers in the diary (in the case of Favenc, handwritten page numbers). The typed version/summary which follows the diary on microfilm, has had many of the obviously gendered and racist remarks culled from it and the grammar has been changed. The original diary seems more 'informative' for my purposes.
 - 5 Her only pastoral-type assessment notes: 'spinifex is a grass which nothing eats, so this country is of no value' (74). Even this remark follows another which claims the land is 'uninteresting'.
 - 6 Ernest Favenc's wife Bessie, also part of the expedition, became ill before they started exploring and Favenc had to return with her by steamer to Sydney. Harry and Caroline were forced to wait for him to return at the Shadforth's Station. Favenc and Harry consequently planned to go exploring with another male helper and 'get the work done in 3 months instead of four and a half, as they would have done if we had gone' (11).
 - 7 Frost notes that Anthony Briggs, the surveyor, asks whether it is his responsibility to do certain camp based tasks. Favenc is always exploring in this diary too, while Briggs confined to camp, worries about him. (Endnotes Ch. 2, 19) It seems that when no white female was present, a hierarchical arrangement among the men ensured someone adopted the role of 'camp-wife'. The negotiation of roles in all male camps warrants more attention than I have space to give it here.
 - 8 Earlier on the trip, Caroline represents herself as unwilling to be left at home waiting. Harry and Ernest refuse to take Bessie and Caroline on their sailing trip, so the women accept an invitation to go to a pearling station with friends, without telling their husbands they are going. According to Caroline, Bessie and herself return home late to 'serve Mr. Favenc and Harry right' (7).
 - 9 Creaghe mentions on a number of occasions that she finds his 'sulks' and 'grumpiness' annoying. Many of these comments have been scribbled over, but are still decipherable from the original (98, 104).
 - 10 Favenc also mentions collecting an Aboriginal person's skull for her, and comments that he's found no land good enough for her on another occasion (*Journal* 22-23). I disagree with Frost, however, that this diary was 'written chiefly for his wife' (47). There are proportionally more measurements, technical terms and observations obviously taken for an official report than there are asides to his wife. It seems more of a hybrid form, an experiment in recording the official and the affectionate.
 - 11 This contrasts with the accounts of women in twentieth-century bushwalking groups like the Hobart Walking Club, who collect 'relics' and try to protect cave paintings, regarding Aboriginal culture as extinct, as history rather than living culture.
 - 12 Her comments suggest interesting links with Jeannie Gunn's representation of Aboriginal land use in *We of the Never Never* (Caroline stayed at Elsey Telegraph

Station, briefly, close to the area used as the setting of Gunn's text, on her way back to Darwin). Gunn speaks of Aboriginal people altering a water course to fill a billabong with water and birds as creating 'a plentiful larder' (276). Unlike Caroline, she notes that the Europeans have disrupted Aboriginal food supplies by taking land and claims the station makes amends by judicious donations of cattle to the Aboriginal people (264). (There's no mention here of what the Aboriginal people thought of this unequal deal!) Since Gunn *lived* near Aboriginal people, rather than simply travelling through their country like Creaghe did, she seems more aware of the consequences of white land use. I plan to do some comparative work on these women's accounts of the Elsey area.

- 13 Other horrific incidences of violence are recorded in the diary, prior to the exploration. She recounts a story told to her of forty pairs of Aboriginal people's ears being nailed to the rails of Lawn Hill station as a supposed warning against cattle 'stealing'. This is recorded in pencil, not pen like other entries, as if an afterthought, or perhaps as something that could be erased and wiped from memory. Her handwriting is extremely shaky here too. Was she perhaps disturbed by the story (23)? Elsewhere she rationalises violence, such as the beating of a captured Aboriginal woman, with patronising severity (31). Her representations of Aboriginal people and violence towards them are extremely ambiguous.