

Douglas E. Darbyshire, *In Time for Lunch*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle 1991, pp.108, \$19-95 pb.

Henry Richardson, *A Pleasant Passage: The Journals of Henry Richardson, Surgeon-Superintendent aboard the convict ship Sultana*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle 1990, pp.211, including illustrations, \$16.99.

These two books, with the more lavish *The Voyage Out* (1991), represent a new and commendable initiative from Fremantle Arts Centre Press: the publication of archival sources which must otherwise have remained beyond the public gaze. All three reproduce the flavour which perhaps only first-hand narrative can give to accounts of sea travel, with the two texts reviewed here both dealing with specific episodes of government-assisted migration - forced and voluntary - to Western Australia from Britain. The 'unwilling' and willing emigrants are, on the one hand, a group of 224 convicts transported to Western Australia in 1859; on the other a group of young single women given colonial government assistance to travel to the colony at the height of the 1890s gold boom, to enter domestic service.

Although the 'emigrants' themselves are the subjects of these two narratives, both these accounts are written not from between decks but by the surgeon-superintendent. As the name implies, the role of this figure far exceeded that of merely a ship's surgeon, but instead involved responsibility for maintaining discipline and welfare on board. Introduced to the colony at government expense (the colonial government in the case of the women, the British government in the case of the men), the 'well-being' of these travellers was closely, even jealously surveyed by the authorities, with the surgeon-superintendent responsible to the government which paid his stipend. Thus the position was well described by one contemporary observer as that of both 'sanitor and magistrate'. Kim Humphrey's recent

work on surgeons-superintendent on convict vessels clarifies the control functions of the role further.

Richardson's journal, issued as *A Pleasant Passage*, is in fact an account of two of Richardson's journeys, the first as surgeon-superintendent on the convict vessel *Sultana*, the second on a return trip to England as surgeon on board the *Lord Raglan*. The contrast between the two passages indicates very markedly the differences between the role of surgeon and surgeon-superintendent, with the journal of the return passage taken up almost entirely with Richardson's whist prowess and the petty jealousies and intrigues of first-class seaboard life portrayed so effectively in Golding's *Rites of Passage*. (As surgeon, Richardson travelled as a cabin or first-class passenger.) The two journeys are linked by an account of a four month travel interlude - 'a short sojourn' - in the colony, particularly the Vasse region and around York, during which Richardson socialised with many of the 'society' families of the colony. One amusing anecdote relates to Richardson's arrest for 'furious riding' on horseback in Fremantle.

Several of the individuals Richardson mentioned, being from a class much recorded by photographers of the day, appear as illustrations at the end of this section, as do some of the places he visited. Three photographic appendices, located one at the end of each interval in the journal, are an enjoyable addition to the lucid and mannered text. Although I personally would have preferred to see the illustrations integrated within the text, the editor may have preferred to retain the 'authenticity' of the journals by presenting them as discrete photographic essays.

In Time for Lunch is a rather less conventional shipboard journal. The text is a skilful interweaving of two journals produced simultaneously by surgeon-superintendent Douglas Darbyshire, namely his personal diary complete with original delightful and absurd illustrations, and his 'official' journal. The journal and diary are presented on facing pages, with the diary and sketches fleshing out the rather terser public record of the passage. Together the two provide an attractive and coherent account of shipboard life as experienced by nearly fifty of the 700-odd young women who chose to emigrate to Western Australia in the 1890s as part of the colonial government's attempt to provide domestic servants for its newly-rich gentry. Their passage was a happy one; although we have no record of the immigrant women's personal response, shipboard journals of other passages reveal clearly that circumstances were not always so pleasant. The control exercised by the surgeon-superintendent (and by the matron) on this passage wore a much more benevolent face than in Richardson's journal. This was not always the case on emigrant vessels however. The editor rightly points out in the brief historical note which concludes the text that these late nineteenth century immigrants were better provided for than some of their predecessors but, benevolent or otherwise, government-assisted female immigrants were subjected to rigorous forms of shipboard discipline and control throughout the century. Darbyshire's journal, and the programme of assisted female immigration which it represents, are in fact unique in Australian colonial history in terms of the apparent ready compliance of immigrant women with the controls exercised over them. It is perhaps surprising that there are few if any examples in Darbyshire's journals of overt rejection of the shipboard discipline.

Both these publications provide fascinating detail of the conditions of both shipboard and colonial life and as such merit publication and wide circulation. However, Fremantle Arts Centre Press has been shortsighted in not providing more than the briefest of editorial notes in either work. Some further discussion of colonial government programmes of assisted female immigration would surely have been in order to introduce *In Time for Lunch*. *A Pleasant Passage* suffers from a more serious oversight. Apart from one reference to the year - 1859 - inside the loose dust jacket of the book, the first reference I found in the text to the year of the *Sultana's* passage was on page 65, as part of the appendix to the first journal. A

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clear indication of the date of the passage is obviously imperative. More important, for readers who may not be aware of the details of transportation to Western Australia some background discussion of the timing, duration and rationale for the introduction of convict labour to the colony is vital. Western Australian historians and publishers cannot yet assume any real knowledge about Western Australia's colonial history outside this State. Publication of works such as these gives greater currency to details about this history but they would be circulated more effectively if accompanied by more comprehensive introductions.

Apart from this gripe, the texts are a fascinating, indeed unique, addition to published accounts of shipboard life. Both are as well presented as one expects from Fremantle Arts Centre Press, with Darbyshire's journal in particular, printed on recycled paper, an extremely attractive little volume.

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