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'Genus barracker': Masculinity, Race, and the Disruptive Pleasures of Rowdy Partisanship in 1880s Melbourne

MATTHEW KLUGMAN 

This article uses the emergence of the cultural category of barrackers in 1880s colonial Melbourne to examine the way a spectator sport became a site of intersecting discourses around emotions, health, science, class, citizenship, masculinity, and partisanship. Drawing on suburban newspapers it traces those aspects of barracking that were disturbing and thrilling enough to occasion the popularisation of a new noun and verb. The article also explores how barracking became a middle-class behaviour, as well as a middle-class concern, and the way popular reactions to barrackers in the 1880s differed to responses to another much more studied cultural category: larrikins.

In 1890, while others worked to detail the emergence of an Australian national type, a writer going by the name of 'JEB' wrote an essay on the emergence of a local phenomenon in Melbourne: the Australian Rules football barracker.¹ JEB began by observing that 'For an Englishman to visit Australia, and go home without having seen an Australian football match, with its attendant multitude of ardent barrackers, would be as unintelligible as for a Colonial to see London and omit the tower'.² The only thing to do if you missed out was to 'come back and see one'. 'For what an experience it is to be at one of the big matches! What a babel of sound! What a magnificent uproar! What a glorious cloud-shattering eruption of profanity!'

Writing in the tone of a popular naturalist describing the latest wonder, JEB intimated that this noise was generated by partisanship. The greatest roars came when a barracker gave a 'sublime and glorious effort' to 'save *his party* from

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¹ JEB, 'Football and Barracking (An Essay)', *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 9 August 1890, 3.

² *Ibid.*

defeat'.³ Yelling in such a one-sided manner was not only 'a fine art', it was so 'enthalling' as to be addictive, 'as intoxicating as the use of opium'.⁴ And it led to a 'natural state of wild abandonment' wherein the barracker demonstrated the 'marvellous strength of the Australian lung', beside which non-barrackers necessarily appeared 'feeble'.⁵

I begin with this sardonic celebration of colonial howling because I am intrigued by the development of the cultural category of the 'barracker' in Melbourne in the 1880s – a cultural category that at its height extended to New Zealand and England, and which remains current (if substantially transformed) in Australia.⁶ JEB's sketch captured the way the minds and bodies of exuberant football spectators became a site of intersecting discourses around emotions, health, science, class, citizenship, and masculinity, where the pleasures of barrackers troubled optimistic notions of (white) racial progress. This article focuses on the emergence of these discourses around the passions of barrackers in colonial Melbourne. Drawing on Melbourne's suburban newspapers – where these discourses first emerged – I trace how barrackers came to threaten the association of Australian male health, strength, fairness, and sport, which was so powerful in Melbourne during the 1880s.⁷ At issue are questions of race, pleasure, partiality, masculinity, bodies, minds, and degeneration.⁸

At a time when public displays of emotions were viewed with suspicion as well as fascination in the Anglophone world, the prejudiced shouting of spectators was of particular concern to many observers.⁹ As George Lacon James advised prospective English migrants and businessmen in 1892, the so-called

³ *Ibid.*, my emphasis.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Searches of the New Zealand National Library's *DigitalNZ* on 10 January 2018 indicate that 'barrackers' and 'barracking' were common terms in New Zealand during the period from 1890 to 1913. Likewise searches of the British Library's *British Newspaper Archive* on 10 January 2018 indicate that both 'barrackers' and 'barracking' were relatively common terms in Britain during the interwar years. 'Barracking' continues to be occasionally used in Britain in a pejorative manner that reflects the early usage of the term, rather than its contemporary meaning in Australia.

⁷ Although it was not feasible to survey all of the 120-plus newspapers published in Melbourne during this time, the National Library of Australia's Trove database provides access to a substantial number of papers around Melbourne in the 1880s. On 10 January 2018 Trove provided 478 results in Victorian newspapers in the 1880s for the search 'fulltext:barracker*', and 208 for 'fulltext:barracking', many of which overlapped. For more on the use of Trove see Murray Phillips and Gary Osmond, 'Australia's Women Surfers: History, Methodology and the Digital Humanities', *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 2 (2015): 285–303; and Matthew Klugman, 'The Passionate, Pathologized Bodies of Sports Fans – How the Digital Turn Might Facilitate a New Cultural History of Modern Spectator Sports', *Journal of Sport History* 44, no. 2 (2017): 306–21.

⁸ My focus here is on men and masculinity because the women who barracked were barely mentioned in the newspaper coverage of the 1880s, and never in the critiques of barracking that I draw from in this article. For more on female barrackers see June Senyard, 'The Barracker and the Spectator: Constructing Class and Gender Identities through the Football Crowd at the Turn of the Century', *Journal of Australian Studies* 62 (1999): 46–55; and Matthew Klugman, 'Female Spectators, Agency, and the Politics of Pleasure: An Historical Case Study from Australian Rules Football', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 17 (2016): 2086–104.

⁹ Tiffany Watt Smith, *On Flinching: Theatricality and Scientific Looking from Darwin to Shell Shock* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

'barrackers' in 'football mad' Victoria were defined by their 'rowdy partisanship'.¹⁰ Both JEB and James were implicitly contrasting the behaviour of barrackers with the dominant code of English manliness in the late 1800s.¹¹ John Tosh has observed that the ideal (middle-class) English man maintained self-control at all times, and behaved in a rational manner.¹² He resisted the dangerous pleasures of addictive vices like opium, choosing virtue over effeminacy.¹³ He was also white, although often only implicitly so. Indeed, the 'compelling fantasies of mastery' which drove the formation of the British empire were based on the purported self-control of civilised white men. 'Again and again control of the passions, restraint of the appetites and moderation in sex were emphasized. A man who would have authority over others must first master himself'.¹⁴

Yet JEB's account highlighted not only the 'wild abandonment' of football barrackers, but also their strength and the one-sided nature of their bellowing. In so doing JEB was also contrasting the behaviour of football barrackers with the emerging ideal Australian man. The notion of this 'Australian type' had developed in response to earlier concerns that Englishmen were not strong enough to thrive in the harsh climate of places like Victoria.¹⁵ The first British men to try to 'master' Australia were celebrated for their manly 'responsibility, self-discipline, independence, and reason' despite their acts of invasion, violence and dispossession.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as the colony of Victoria boomed after the gold rush of the 1850s, these qualities of English manhood were threatened by an environment so severe it seemed to have a degenerative effect on the bodies and minds of strong white Englishmen.¹⁷ Melbourne's asylums, for example, appeared replete with white middle-class men deemed fragile rather than strong, irrational rather than in control, and frequently maddened rather than

¹⁰ George Lacon James, *Shall I Try Australia? Or Health, Business and Pleasure in New South Wales: Forming a Guide to the Australian Colonies for the Emigrant Settler and Business Man* (London: L. Upcott Gill, 1892), 129, 254.

¹¹ Both accounts seemed to presume that barrackers were male, a common assumption of articles detailing barrackers in the 1880s and early 1890s.

¹² John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 30. See also J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

¹³ Tosh, 56. For an overview of the way theories of the disease of addiction were used to shape concerns with the 'bad habits' of the white middle class in the nineteenth century, see Anita Kalunta-Crumpton, *Drugs, Victims and Race: The Politics of Drug Control* (Winchester: Waterside Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Tosh, 40, 56. For more on the links between whiteness, masculinity, and the discourse of civilisation in another part of the Anglophone world, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Louis Moore, *I Fight for a Living: Boxing and the Battle for Black Manhood, 1880–1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

¹⁵ Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 177–8.

¹⁷ W. Anderson.

civilised.¹⁸ By the 1880s, however, a renewed medical, social, and cultural optimism had taken hold that a new (white) Australian man was beginning to emerge that actually ‘demonstrated an improvement in type’ over British stock, as Warwick Anderson put it.¹⁹ While perhaps rougher than his English counterparts, this new Australian type was celebrated as stronger and fairer.²⁰

Anderson has traced the emerging theories of health that helped shaped the optimistic assessment of (white) masculinity in southeastern Australia in the 1880s, detailing the way doctors shifted their concern from the ‘natural’ environment to the importance of social worlds and mores.²¹ But sport had also helped redeem English masculinity in the colonies. Indeed, as Martin Crotty has shown, a fear of racial decline led many Australians to embrace sports as providing an effective means of turning boys into good, strong, manly citizens who upheld the importance of ‘fair play, loyalty, acceptance of victory and defeat, fortitude, discipline and obedience’.²² Thus, in his pioneering study of cricket and nationalism, Bill Mandle could note that even from 1874 onwards, cricket victories against the English were not only taken as refuting fears that the English race would degenerate in Australia, but also as vindicating Australian manliness more generally.²³

The optimism regarding the new Australian man was particularly strong in Melbourne during the 1880s as the generation born to gold-rush migrants came to maturity.²⁴ While their parents frequently made unfavourable comparisons with life back ‘home’ in England, many in this generation embraced the challenge of improving upon the ‘old world’.²⁵ The creation of a fairer, more egalitarian society was central to this agenda, and was reflected prominently in the aims of the Australian Natives’ Association.²⁶ Formed in 1871, this Association flourished in Melbourne through the 1880s, with influential members such as Alfred Deakin famously extolling the need to create a society free of the partisanship which had seemingly blighted England.²⁷

¹⁸ Leigh Boucher, ‘Masculinity Gone Mad: Settler Colonialism, Medical Discourse and the White Body’, *Lilith* 13 (2004): 51–67.

¹⁹ W. Anderson, 67.

²⁰ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 71–84.

²¹ W. Anderson, 67–70.

²² Martin Crotty, ‘Manly and Moral: The Making of Middle-Class Men in the Australian Public School’, *International Journal of the History of Sport* 17, no. 2–3 (2000): 10–30, 24. See also Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870–1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001); J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

²³ W.F. Mandle, ‘Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 59, no. 4 (1973): 225–46.

²⁴ Many of the pieces debating the ‘Australian type’ can be found in Stephen Alomes and Catherine Jones, *Australian Nationalism: A Documentary History* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1991), 46–73.

²⁵ Bob Birrell, *Federation: The Secret Story* (Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2001).

²⁶ John Menadue, *A Centenary History of the Australian Natives’ Association 1871–1971* (Melbourne: Horticultural Press, 1971); and Alex McDermott, *Of No Personal Influence: How People of Common Enterprise Unexpectedly Shaped Australia* (Melbourne: Australian Unity, 2015).

²⁷ ‘The Australian Native’s Association’, *Age*, 10 May 1888, 6.

The new post-gold rush generation also embraced Australian Rules football as a cultural creation which had improved upon the English football codes. Codified in 1859, the game started to develop an intense spectator culture in the 1870s, and by the 1880s was blossoming into Melbourne's largest weekly spectator sport.²⁸ Part of the game's appeal was its purportedly 'manly' character, and it too became one of the sports lauded for helping turn boys into strong, disciplined and fair men.²⁹ Australian Rules football was therefore one of the sports where ideals of Australian citizenship 'were widely promulgated within the rubric of "manliness"', to borrow Crotty's phrase.³⁰ Moreover, in the sports pages of Melbourne newspapers in the 1880s, manly was frequently used as a synonym for fair when describing esteemed Australian Rules football players.

In 1883 the English writer Richard Twopeny lauded both the emerging Australian type, and the game of Australian Rules football. For Twopeny, on balance, the local men were indeed an improvement on their English counterparts, particularly with regard to their democratic tendencies.³¹ And Australian Rules was 'altogether the best' of the football codes.³² Twopeny made this pronouncement after having played the game in Adelaide, but he also marvelled at the popularity of the game in Victoria, and the spectacle it provided. 'A good football match in Melbourne is one of the sights of the world', Twopeny proclaimed, noting approvingly that 'Old men and young get equally excited'.³³ Yet to many regular observers of Australian Rules football in Melbourne it seemed that the intense excitement that the game provoked in barrackers was actually undoing all the good which the game had produced.

Historians of Australian Rules football, however, have been more interested in the origins of the game than in the fervent passions of supporters, and the way others responded to this fervour. Debates over links to England and the *Djab-wurrung* football game commonly known as *Marn-grook* dominate the historiography.³⁴ The contested etymologies of 'barracker' and 'barracking' also hint at the tensions and complexities of a British colonial settler sporting culture shaped by invasion, migration and the displacement of Aboriginal peoples. Early lexicographers suggested possible links to 'poke borak' (poking fun) from *borak* (no) of the *Wathaurong* language, to the Northern Irish word barrack (to brag and boast of fighting powers), and to the Cockney word 'barrackin'

²⁸ Rob Hess, Matthew Nicholson, Bob Stewart and Gregory de Moore, *A National Game: The History of Australian Rules Football* (Melbourne: Penguin, 2008).

²⁹ W.F. Mandle, 'Games People Played: The Development of Cricket and Football in England and Victoria in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Historical Studies* 15, no. 60 (1973): 511–35.

³⁰ Crotty, 'Manly and Moral', 20.

³¹ Richard Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia* (London: Elliot Stock, 1883), 171.

³² *Ibid.*, 74.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ For two recent overviews and attempts to re-orient questions of race and Australian Rules football, see Sean Gorman, Barry Judd, Keir Reeves, Gary Osmond, Matthew Klugman and Gavan McCarthy, 'Aboriginal Rules: The Black History of Australian Football', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 16 (2016): 1947–62; and Roy Hay and Athas Zafiris, 'Australian Football's Indigenous History', *Meanjin* 76, no. 3 (2017): 196–202.

(shouting).³⁵ Later, Geoffrey Blainey argued that the terms reminded Melbournians of the British soldiers from the Victorian barracks, while the *Australian National Dictionary* came down on the side of the Northern Irish barrack.³⁶

Yet despite speculation around the origins of ‘barracker’ and ‘barracking’, the barrackers themselves, and those who commented upon them, have received relatively little attention. In a groundbreaking exception exploring the emergence of the Australian Rules football crowd, June Senyard argued that ‘barrackers’ and ‘barracking’ were terms deployed specifically against working-class football supporters as part of an attempt to shame them into aligning themselves with the cultures of middle-class respectability.³⁷ As Senyard saw it, the calm, rational middle-class male spectator was separated in the Melbourne press from the wild, irrational, working-class men and women who followed the game with disconcerting passion. More recently, Robert Pascoe and Mark Pennings have charted the way the behaviour of these barrackers was often grounded in the traditions of working-class leisure.³⁸

This article builds on the pioneering work of Senyard, and Pascoe and Pennings, by exploring the emotional behaviour of barrackers that so disconcerted football reporters. In so doing I also place recent scholarship on the passions of contemporary Australian Rules football players and supporters in a broader historical context.³⁹ One underlying question here is whether barracking also became a middle-class behaviour, as well as a middle-class concern. A second underlying question is whether reactions to barrackers in the 1880s

³⁵ Edward Morris, *A Dictionary of Austral* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1898); Gerhard Leitner, ‘The Aboriginal Contribution to Australia’s Language Habitat’, in *The Habitat of Australia’s Aboriginal Languages: Past, Present and Future*, eds Gerhard Leitner and Ian Malcolm (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 220–1; Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (New York: Macmillan, 1970 [orig. pub. 1937]); and Gerald Wilkes, *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996).

³⁶ Geoffrey Blainey, *A Game of Our Own: The Origins of Australian Football* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2003), 87–8; Bruce Moore, ed., *The Australian National Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2016), 94. While Blainey provides no sources for his theory, he might have been following the early twentieth-century journalist Guy Innes via a note from Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 53.

³⁷ Senyard.

³⁸ Robert Pascoe and Mark Pennings, ‘Watching Football in Marvellous Melbourne: Spectators, Barrackers and Working Class Rituals’, *Sporting Traditions* 28, no. 1 (2011): 1–20. Other studies that touch upon barrackers and Australian spectator culture more generally include: Richard Cashman, *Yabba: Cricket’s Legendary Barracker* (Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2015); John O’Hara, ‘Barracking’, in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, eds Wray Vamplew, Katherine Moore, John O’Hara, Richard Cashman and Ian Jobling, 2nd edn (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 53; Rob Lynch, ‘Disorder on the Sidelines of Australian Sport’, *Sporting Traditions* 8, no. 1 (1991): 52–75; and Martin Sharp, ‘“A Degenerate Race”: Cricket and Rugby Crowds in Sydney 1890–1912’, *Sporting Traditions* 4, no. 2 (1988): 134–49.

³⁹ See for example Leigh Boucher, ‘Public Emotions and Their Personal Consequences: The Nationalizing Affects of the Australian Football League since 1990’, *International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 13 (2015): 1546–66; John Cash and Joy Damousi, *Footy Passions* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009); and Matthew Klugman, *Passion Play: Love, Hope and Heartbreak at the Footy* (Melbourne: Hunter, 2010).

differed from reactions to another much more studied cultural category: larrikins.⁴⁰

Anger, partisanship, and masculinity

Like all cultural categories, precisely what was meant by the terms barracker and barracking eluded neat and contained definitions, and varied depending on who was deploying it, and who their intended audience was. While the contemporary meaning of 'barracker' generally equates to supporter/fan – with 'barracking' being the expression of this support – both terms tended to have a pejorative edge when they rose to prominence in colonial Melbourne. Although they might have been first applied to rowdy cricket spectators, by the early 1880s both terms were associated with unruly football spectators.⁴¹ 'Barracking' largely signified the act of shouting or jeering, typically in a profane manner while watching games of Australian Rules football, while 'barrackers' were those who shouted out in such a fashion. Yet from the early 1880s there were mentions of people 'barracking for' as well as against. Some writers quickly took 'barrackers' for granted as just another part of Melbourne culture, and others went further and celebrated their existence.⁴²

My aim here, however, is not to provide a definitive account of these terms and all their uses, but rather to explore a key strand of commentary and critique in the 1880s – indeed arguably the most dominant strand about barrackers and their barracking – that was focused on the deleterious consequences of this notably vocal, if not necessarily unique, form of sports spectatorship. Despite JEB's claim, the seemingly intemperate 'hooting' and 'howling' of spectators was associated with a number of sports in the Anglophone world in the late nineteenth century.⁴³ Yet while commentators in the US were concerned about the belligerent bellows of baseball supporters, and others in the UK worried about the yelling of (Association) football followers, only in Australia – and in colonial Melbourne first – were new words coined to denote the passionate shouting and jeering of sports spectators.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Studies of larrikins include: Melissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2012); Hugh Anderson, *The Rise and Fall of Squizzy Taylor: A Larrikin Crook* (Sydney: Pier 9, 2013); and John Hirst, *Australian History in Seven Questions* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2014), 122–38.

⁴¹ The earliest references to barrackers that I have found were in a series of letters concerning the behaviour of spectators in an 1878 cricket match between the South Melbourne Imperial and Hillside clubs. See Hillite, 'Cricket', *Record and Emerald Hill and Sandridge Advertiser*, 15 February 1878, 3; Hillside Umpire, 'Cricket', *Record and Emerald Hill and Sandridge Advertiser*, 22 February 1878, 3; and A Lover of Cricket (When It Is Fair), 'Cricket', *Record and Emerald Hill and Sandridge Advertiser*, 8 March 1878, 3.

⁴² See for example 'Great Meeting at Carlton', *Melbourne Punch*, 27 July 1882, 1; and 'Football', *Mount Alexander Mail*, 30 July 1883, 2.

⁴³ Klugman, 'The Passionate, Pathologized Bodies of Sports Fans'.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* In the US the word that was initially associated with passionate baseball supporters – crank – testified to their seeming insanity, rather than specifying their shouting. No new word appears to have been developed to denote fervent Association football supporters in the UK, however they

What, then, was so disturbing about the hollering of Australian barrackers? Senyard has observed that the terms barracking and barrackers initially had negative class connotations: football barrackers were not behaving as per the norms and expectations of the respectable middle class.⁴⁵ But which norms were they breaking? To those first writing about football barrackers in the sports pages of Melbourne's suburban newspapers, the problem with barrackers was that they were unable to control the frustration that watching the game provoked in them. Indeed, newspaper accounts continually drew attention to the enraged shouting and swearing of barrackers, as well as to any acts of violence – to signs of their anger, in other words.⁴⁶

In their groundbreaking history of anger in America, Carol and Peter Stearns detail the way anger was continually linked to discourses of control, or the lack thereof.⁴⁷ They also contended that spectator sports in the late 1800s became a 'durable outlet for expressing anger and enthusiasm that could not be safely displayed in ordinary life'.⁴⁸ In contrast, Eric Dunning and other members of the Leicester school of figurational sociology have argued that in the late 1800s Association football in England roused working-class spectators to an anger which they could not control, and which therefore led to violence.⁴⁹ While histories of anger in Australia remain to be written, the intemperate outbursts of Australian Rules football spectators in Melbourne were not initially seen as the safe, controlled venting of wrath.⁵⁰ Instead, newspaper accounts in the 1880s positioned the swearing and jeering of spectators as threatening, and at times,

were frequently described as suffering from various maladies, especially fever and mania. My argument is not that the spectators in Melbourne were necessarily unique, but that looking at the reaction to barrackers provides an insight into the particularities of the sporting culture which developed in Melbourne. For an argument against the exceptionalism typically associated with Australian Rules football, see Tony Collins, 'The Invention of Sporting Tradition: National Myths, Imperial Pasts and the Origins of Australian Rules Football', in *Myths and Milestones in the History of Sport*, ed. Stephen Wagg (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 8–31.

⁴⁵ Senyard.

⁴⁶ For a general introduction to modern acts associated with anger, see Carol Tavris, *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion* (New York: Touchstone, 1982).

⁴⁷ Carol Stearns and Peter Stearns, *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁴⁹ For an overview see Eric Dunning, Dominic Malcolm and Ivan Waddington, eds, *Sport Histories: Figurational Studies of the Development of Modern Sports* (London: Routledge, 2004). Both the Stearns and figurational sociologists were following a longer tradition of linking the control of emotions to civilised behaviour, which Norbert Elias theorised in his influential work, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994 [1939]). The clearest contestation of the Eliasian analyses of anger can be found in Barbara Rosenwein, ed., *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 233–47. In turning instead to analyse particular discourses around the control of anger I am following the lead of Linda Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', *Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): 567–90; and Kristine Steenbergh, 'Emotions and Gender: The Case of Anger in Early Modern English Revenge Tragedies', in *A History of Emotions 1200–1800*, ed. Jonas Liliequist (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 119–34.

⁵⁰ For a recent overview of the field see Sarah Pinto, 'The History of Emotions in Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 1 (2017): 103–14.

dangerous. 'I can stand "barracking" when it expends itself in noise merely', wrote the Australasian's 'Peter Pindar' in 1883:

but when it assumes the shape of abuse and insult to all around, and such inciting to players as 'Go for him!' 'Burst him' 'Breakhisneck,' etc, as that of these young blackguards assumed, it is high time that effectual means be taken to check it ere a general riot ensues.⁵¹

The threatened violence sometimes occurred, although the escapades of barrackers never received the sensationalised coverage frequently directed at larrikins.⁵² Yet while instances of spectator violence among barrackers brought opprobrium from football journalists, these writers were particularly concerned with the way angry barrackers tended to focus their enmity on a specific individual: the umpire. The *Leader* newspaper's main football correspondent 'Follower' was particularly vocal in decrying umpire abuse. 'This abominable "barracking" mania is becoming simply insufferable', Follower wrote in 1883, complaining that those attending the football were 'too often compelled to listen' to a 'yelling chorus' 'without intermission', which frequently 'assumes the form of hostility to a capable and *impartial* umpire, probably for fairly and strictly enforcing the laws which are supposed to regulate the game'.⁵³

In one of the many striking resonances with contemporary Australian Rules football culture, it was already clear by the mid-1880s that many spectators were becoming so frustrated with umpires that they responded to unfavourable decisions with angry shouts and jeers.⁵⁴ As a sardonic letter to the *Melbourne Punch* put it in 1885:

Football umpires in all our big matches are the most disobliging set of individuals in existence. They seldom if ever comply with the wishes of the thousands of spectators who assemble every Saturday to witness our big events.⁵⁵

In the same month the *Leader's* Follower noted in a report of a game between Carlton and Essendon that, 'As usual when a football umpire endeavors to strictly enforce the rules' their decisions led to 'cheers from the partisans of those in whose favor he decided, and groans from the enemy's camp'.⁵⁶

Follower was alarmed that umpire-abuse seemed to be increasing to the extent that it was 'an inseparable characteristic of the game'. While previous critiques of barracking had tended to naturalise shouting as a natural (and uncontrollable)

⁵¹ Peter Pindar, *Australasian*, 11 August 1883, 14.

⁵² See Pascoe and Pennings; and Simon Sleight, *Young People and the Shaping of Public Space in Melbourne, 1870–1914* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 137ff., for more on the way Melbourne's newspapers reported on larrikins.

⁵³ Follower, 'Football Gossip', *Leader*, 18 August 1883, 19, my emphasis.

⁵⁴ Matthew Klugman, "'My Natural Environment Has Provided Me with about Fifty Different Ways of Expressing Frustration": Mining the Visceral Angst of Australian Rules Football Followers', *Emotion, Space and Society*, 12 (2014): 24–31.

⁵⁵ Behind-Kicked, 'Letter to the Editor: Football', *Melbourne Punch*, 30 July 1885, 3.

⁵⁶ Follower, 'Football Gossip', *Leader*, 18 July 1885, 21.

behaviour of uncouth working-class men, Follower responded to the growth of barracking by introducing notions of pleasure and choice into the equation. The ‘mass of those who *allow* themselves to become victims to excitement’ became ‘senseless’ and incapable of judging ‘the merits of the game dispassionately’.⁵⁷ The result, Follower concluded sorrowfully, was ‘that your real red hot “barracker” is as a rule singularly blind to that which he would rather not see’.⁵⁸ The problem was not only that barrackers were expressing their anger in a crude manner; it was that they were also indulging in the delights of partisanship and at the same time loudly maligning those tasked with being impartial. Justice might be blind, but this was in the service of fairness, rather than the partiality of selective blindness. And while justice was typically represented as a Goddess, Australian Rules football was supposed to couple manliness with fairness.

It is not so surprising, then, that the seemingly unfair barracking of spectators was seen by commentators as threatening the manly nature of football. Umpires needed to be protected ‘from the jeers and taunts of leather-lunged partisans’ if the game were ‘to be carried on as a manly sport’, editorialised the *Sportsman* in 1885.⁵⁹ An 1888 letter to the *North Melbourne Advertiser* made a similar point that the frequent ‘obscenity’ of barrackers, and ‘the disregard of the first principles of respectability’, were a ‘great pity’ for football which might otherwise ‘be rendered a manly game’.⁶⁰ A year later, Follower complained again in the *Leader* that barrackers ‘had created an unfair, unmanly and unsportsmanlike spirit’ around a ‘game of which Victorians especially are so proud’.⁶¹

As always, dominant notions of masculinity were not completely stable. Follower, for example, felt that his critique of the unmanly spectator culture of football might lead some people to call him a ‘wet blanket’ or ‘soft’.⁶² He denied both charges, claiming the ‘right to distinguish between enthusiasm and vulgar partisanship’.⁶³ Nevertheless, his comments allude to a counter-narrative that equated desirable masculinity with strength above the softer ideal of fairness. This suggests a different contest around masculinity from that which Marilyn Lake has traced between manly independence and providing support for a family.⁶⁴ It also hints at tensions between the unspoken violence and proclamations of responsible

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, my emphasis.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* This is the first instance I have found of the metaphor of the blinded, or one-eyed, barracker that would become increasingly common over the next two decades and remains in popular use today.

⁵⁹ ‘The Football Dispute’, *Sportsman*, 9 September 1885, 5.

⁶⁰ Common Decency, ‘Letter to the Editor: A Discreditable Gathering’, *North Melbourne Advertiser*, 31 March 1888, 2.

⁶¹ Follower, ‘Football Gossip’, *Leader*, 25 May 1889, 21.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Marilyn Lake, ‘The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context’, *Historical Studies* 22, no. 86 (1986): 116–31; Chris McConville, ‘Rough Women, Respectable Men and Social Reform: A Response to Lake’s “Masculinism”’, *Historical Studies* 22, no. 88 (1987): 432–40; and Judith Allen, ‘“Mundane” Men: Historians, Masculinity, and Masculinism’, *Historical Studies* 22, no. 89 (1987): 617–28.

citizenship of the early Australian 'pioneers'.⁶⁵ Yet while the physical strengths of barrackers – especially of their 'iron jaws' and 'leather lungs' – increasingly featured in accounts in the late 1880s, Melbourne newspaper writers turned to new models of racial health to characterise such strength as brutal, wild, and degraded.⁶⁶

Science, race, and pleasure

If playing Australian Rules football made for strong men of good, fair character, observers of the game in Melbourne became increasingly concerned that the men excited by watching the game were risking both their bodies and minds. The intimations that barracking was a physically, as well as mentally, degrading activity were made explicit by a number of writers. In 1887 Edward Dyson (writing under the pen-name of Silas Snell) even claimed to have conducted an in-depth study of the 'scientific phenomenon' of 'the barracker's mouth': 'practice has made it so perfect that when its owner lays it well open he is put right out of countenance. It is the greatest proof of the evolutionary doctrine of self-elevation by use and effort'.⁶⁷ Maligned umpires remained central to this account, with Dyson describing them as the barracker's most 'dire foe' and the reason for the frequent yelling and the consequent evolution of the barracker's mouth.⁶⁸ The enraged shouting of barrackers at umpires so intrigued Dyson that two years later he provided a more extensive, if still sardonic, reflection on their evolution. 'One of the most distinctive out-growths of colonial life is the barracker', began Dyson, before crediting the influence of the 'climate', 'room to yell', and the 'capacious lungs of the early settler' as evolutionary influences.⁶⁹ 'This interesting physiological study is of comparatively recent growth', Dyson continued. 'He made his appearance in Australian history contemporaneous with the acceptance of football as a national pastime, and has been screaming on and off ever since':

I have watched the rise and progress of the barracker with great interest. I have noted the development of his lungs, and seen, the corners of his mouth drive his ears back, till they will nearly meet and tie behind ... and I foresee the time when his mouth will run down to his hips, and he'll split apart like a clothes horse when he desires to express the warmth of his feelings at a future match.⁷⁰

Although Dyson's humorous account played up the grotesque aspects of barrackers, his deployment of the language of evolutionary science reflected the

⁶⁵ Woollacott.

⁶⁶ Descriptions of 'leather-lunged barrackers', for example, remained popular until World War II.

⁶⁷ Silas Snell (Edward Dyson), 'The Barracker', *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 13 July 1887, 1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Silas Snell (Edward Dyson), 'The Barracker', *Melbourne Punch*, 23 May 1889, 15.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Cartoonists were also fascinated with the seemingly immense jaw of barrackers. See for example 'Ideals No. 5 – The Barracker', *Melbourne Punch*, 7 July 1892, 3.

changing medical notions of health in Melbourne. The environment still had a place, but concern was shifting to social (and anti-social) behaviours and public morals. As Anderson puts it:

In late-nineteenth century Australia, a liberal, professional elite in Melbourne came to dominate debates over the character of disease, man's place in nature, and civic responsibility ... they called for more self-restraint and self-possession, for manly forbearance ... While an earlier generation had sought to master its physical circumstances, the more wowserish sect that came to prominence in Melbourne in the 1870s and 1880s hoped mostly to master its own society.⁷¹

Dyson was not alone in his adoption of this language. While I am yet to find doctors in Melbourne who critiqued barrackers in medical or scientific terms in the 1880s, a number of newspaper commentators saw barrackers as a threat to the health of society, and in the late 1880s they turned to the language and metaphors of evolutionary science to detail this threat – a vocabulary which remained grounded in notions of racial progress and degradation.

According to Anderson, by the 1880s medical science 'had come mostly to provide a vocabulary for discussions of civic responsibility and social citizenship. Medicine and public health made it possible to differentiate the irresolute subject in need of surveillance and discipline, from the reliable self-governing white citizen'.⁷² To these newspaper writers, barrackers were unreliable subjects who lacked discipline. More specifically, barrackers were depicted as choosing the pleasures of partisanship over self-control, and their consequent outbursts of anger had profound consequences for their rationality, and thus their ability to function effectively as healthy citizens. In 1889, for example, 'Viator' of the (Melbourne) *Weekly Times* was both appalled and fascinated by the way barrackers 'contorted their faces and their bodies', all the while 'yelling' themselves hoarse.⁷³ 'What will become of the great army of barrackers', asked Viator. Their 'brains are out, but the men don't die'.

Such was the focus on using evolutionary science to understand – and combat – the threat of shouting and jeering spectators, that the category of barracker was turned into a scientific classification: '*genus* barracker'.⁷⁴ Senyard argues that the deployment of such evolutionary metaphors was one more means of separating wild, working-class barrackers from civilised middle-class spectators. Viator's account attests to this, claiming that 'the typical barracker' bore 'resemblance to the higher order of apes', and demarcating barrackers from the 'many intelligent men' at the game.⁷⁵ However, other depictions of the evolution of barrackers indicate that the practice of shouting out and being

⁷¹ W. Anderson, 69.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷³ Viator, 'The Football Barracker', *Weekly Times*, 17 August 1889, 4.

⁷⁴ The earliest use of this phrase that I have found is a passing comment in 'Sporting Life', *Melbourne Punch*, 12 April 1888, 11.

⁷⁵ Viator, 'The Football Barracker', 4.

partisan seemed to be spreading beyond the working class. Indeed, towards the end of the 1880s, articles started asserting that people from any class could be a barracker. Dyson's account in 1887, for example, asserted that 'The barracker belongs exclusively to no grade of society. He may be a counter jumper, grocer's clerk, or young mechanic. Even the gentle civil servant becomes energetic enough to howl'.⁷⁶ A year later a column in the *Melbourne Punch* suggested that the '*genus*' of barrackers included both the 'low barracker' and those of a 'gentlemanly' nature. These gentleman barrackers – including a high civil servant, an esteemed pedagogue, a bank manager, a member of parliament, an editor, a police magistrate, and even 'the Governor of Her Majesty's Gaol' – did not vent their fury by roaring themselves hoarse. Yet:

the quick 'Ha!' whenever some unit of a particular side secures a temporary advantage, or the vicious stab of the umbrella or a stick into the turf when the opposers are asserting their supremacy, proves to demonstration that he is neither impartial nor neutral.⁷⁷

In other words, it seemed to at least some observers that the excitement of football games threatened the impartiality – and thus rationality – of all classes. The result of such racial degradation could also be seen as jeopardising future generations, with a writer claiming in the *Melbourne Punch* in 1889 that 'the great-grandchildren of the football barracker' would be 'paupers, lunatics, or criminals'.⁷⁸

Kylie Smith has noted that the intemperate pleasures of larrikins resisted the ideals of respectability (upheld by the middle class and many elements of the working class).⁷⁹ The pleasures of barracking – of partisanship, and often rude partisanship at that – also resisted the ideals of respectability. Yet while the cultural category of larrikins remained largely delimited to the working class, by the late 1880s even the Victorian Football Association seemed concerned that many in the middle class were also enjoying being partial *and rowdy* at the football. In April 1888, T.S. Marshall, the honorary secretary of the Association, made an intriguing intervention in the debates about football barrackers. In his annual report to the Association, Marshall blamed club committee members for the 'unduly rough play and nasty spirit displayed' by a number of teams in the 1888 season. And he reprimanded these committee members for behaving like barrackers:

Committees must not usurp the prerogative of the *genus* 'barracker' and rob him of the delightful privilege of abusing umpires, and players to the top of his bent. I do not, for one moment, say that all clubs or committees should

⁷⁶ Snell (Dyson), 'The Barracker', 1887, 1. Dyson's essay also refers to gambling, a thread of concern around barrackers that is beyond the scope of this article.

⁷⁷ 'Sporting Life', *Melbourne Punch*, 22 March 1888, 11.

⁷⁸ 'Current Notes', *Melbourne Punch*, 16 May 1889, 1.

⁷⁹ Kylie Smith, 'Subjectivity, Hegemony, and the Subaltern in Sydney, 1870–1900', *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture and Society* 19, no. 2 (2007): 169–79.

be included in this category, but I am sure it will be admitted that many of you have had experiences of this kind.⁸⁰

Marshall seemed to be hoping that he could dissuade the middle-class officials of clubs from losing their composure and their (manly) sense of fair play along with it. But of perhaps more interest in Marshall's report is the notion that barrackers had the 'delightful privilege' of howling insults at umpires and players. While the phrase might be tongue-in-cheek, it attested to both the pleasure of shouting at figures who were supposed to embody the esteemed ideals of impartiality and manliness, and the right of barrackers to be uncivil in public.⁸¹

Perhaps unintentionally, Marshall's report anticipated a future where the pleasurable act of barracking would become largely accepted by all classes as an inalienable right of Australian Rules football supporters. Nevertheless, this notion was ahead of its time, and his report was not generally read as sympathetic to barrackers. The snippet on the 'delightful privilege' of barrackers was reprinted throughout the country, with an introductory note that the Victorian Football Association's annual report alluded to 'that football pest, the "barracker"'.⁸² In May 1889, however, 'Goalpost' of the *South Australian Register* quoted Marshall in order to defend the privilege of barrackers to abuse umpires, reasoning that 'umpires may be satisfied that they are successful when cries of disapproval greet them from both sides'.⁸³ Nevertheless, in the same month in Melbourne, the *Argus* referred to Marshall's report in order to condemn the abuse hurled by barrackers, arguing that football clubs were:

in a sense responsible for the actions of the mad-headed leather-lunged fanatics who attach themselves like an unpleasant mildew to a healthy and manly sport, and are present in more or less proportion upon the members lists of all clubs.⁸⁴

One voice starkly missing from the accounts and descriptions of barrackers was that of the barrackers themselves. In 1890 'JM' purported to redress this absence with a confessional essay in the *Australasian*. Writing about his experience 'as a warning to others', JM related how 'I have of late become what is vulgarly termed a "football barracker"'.⁸⁵ This 'stage of *degradation*' meant that JM spent 'every Saturday afternoon' 'yelling himself hoarse' in partisan fervour.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Marshall's report was reprinted in full in several Melbourne newspapers including the *Argus*, 13 April 1889, 12.

⁸¹ As Leigh Boucher noted to me informally, this may also point to tensions in Melbourne liberalism between free speech and decency (that is, whether one had a right to behave disrespectfully in a society where democracy was being extended beyond the middle class).

⁸² See for example 'Football', *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 20 April 1889, 819; and 'Football', *Capricornian*, 27 April 1889, 14.

⁸³ Goalpost, 'Football Notes', *South Australian Register*, 25 May 1889, 3. The article cautioned that football players needed to respect umpires as men whose impartiality should not be questioned.

⁸⁴ Observer, 'Rougher Football', *Argus*, 13 May 1889, 7.

⁸⁵ JM, 'A Skeleton at the Feast', *Australasian*, 26 July 1890, 45.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, my emphasis.

In consequence, he noted that 'my moral perceptions have been blunted, my conscience seared, and my peace of mind destroyed'. JM promised to use his malady to provide the first 'scientific' account of the 'nature and habits of the "barracker"'.⁸⁷ But instead the rest of JM's essay focused on how he had been converted from the perils of barracking to a more spiritual existence by a friend who valued the desert Christian fathers and deserted libraries over games of football. Thus, the supposed account of a barracker turned into another critique of the racial degradation that barracking entailed, a critique most notable because it was from a purportedly white middle-class man warning an audience of his peers against the perils of such behaviour.

Conclusion

In 1894 the renowned Melbourne doctor Patrick Moloney puzzled over the 'extraordinary thing' that led 'a crowd of perhaps the fairest men in the world' to spend their time 'yelling anathema at one poor umpire'.⁸⁸ Moloney laid the blame on the physiology of the umpires who necessarily made poor decisions because the blood had drained from their heads to their legs as they ran around the field. This innovative, scientific theory contrasted starkly with the concern of football observers through the 1880s that barrackers were behaving in a partisan, unfair and unmanly manner that demonstrated physical and mental degradation. While news of larrikins was often splashed across front pages to sell newspapers, Melbourne's sportswriters wrestled most with the emergence of a spectator culture that seemed to threaten the potential of sport to redeem (white) Australian masculinity.

Accounts and depictions of Melbourne's barrackers would change further in the 1890s. Commentators focused more on the violence of barrackers as economic depression took hold, and the question of female barrackers also began to interest journalists.⁸⁹ At the same time some expressed the contrasting notion that shouting out abuse might be a safety valve that was good for society.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, scientific descriptions of the maladies of barrackers continued to flourish, as did the notion that members of any class could fall prey to the degradation of barracking. In 1900, new and old concerns combined in Melbourne's labour newspaper *Tocsin*: not only did barracking transcend 'social distinction', it also transcended 'sex', and 'the female enthusiast, both highborn lady and daughter of the people, forms not an unfamiliar variation in Australian crowds' who 'may yet achieve the distinction of being remarkable enough

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ 'Victoria', *Advocate*, 24 February 1894, 15–16.

⁸⁹ Pascoe and Pennings; Senyard; and Klugman, 'Female Spectators, Agency, and the Politics of Pleasure'.

⁹⁰ Wat Tyrell, 'Football Mems', *Bendigo Independent*, 20 May 1893, 2.

in character to be given a place in a menagerie of curiosities for foreign exhibition'.⁹¹

This disturbing statement – referencing the way some Indigenous peoples were exhibited as racial ‘curiosities’ for European audiences – makes explicit the concerns of racial degradation that were a prominent feature of critiques of barrackers.⁹² Such links were neither arbitrary nor innocent as writers emulated Melbourne’s doctors in attempting to use the language of science to foster a healthy white race comprised of impartial manly citizens who had mastered the urge for brutal pleasures. Further work remains to be done on the circulation of the terms and metaphors of science, race, modernity, citizenship and health in Australia. The popular emotional cultures and practices which emerged and developed in Australia also require further research.⁹³ One of the most striking aspects of this study is the apparent similarities between the frustrations of Australian Rules football barrackers in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries. Yet more work is required to chart elements of continuity and change, and comparisons of expressions of anger, and other emotions, are needed.

One of the standard explanations of the emergence of the football codes is that they were developed to foster the growth of boys into strong and fair men. This preliminary history of the emergence of the cultural category of barracker – and the act of barracking – suggests a possible counter-narrative that Australian Rules football became popular because it provided an emotional outlet: it so excited and frustrated the bodies of some spectators that they felt compelled to shout out at the top of their voices, over and over again. As barracking – and the partiality at its centre – became increasingly accepted in the twentieth century, the seeming unmanly act of yelling abuse would come to be part of the hegemonic masculinity of Australian sport.⁹⁴ Moreover, barracking would come to be seen as a democratic right for the women and men who paid their money to attend sporting events. Indeed, the sense that any abuse was acceptable would only start to be publicly challenged in the 1980s with the beginning of a movement against the racial vilification of Indigenous football players. And the many defences of the racially inflected abuse of Adam Goodes in 2015 provide testament to the ongoing power of the notion that

⁹¹ Jarno, ‘Australian Types – The Barracker. An Apology for His Life’, *Tocsin*, 4 January 1900, 6.

⁹² Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁹³ The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions is facilitating such research, although its initial focus was on the period from 1100 to 1800. See www.historyofemotions.org.au/

⁹⁴ Raewyn Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987). See also Matthew Klugman, ‘“I Love Him in an Absolutely Gay Way”: Heterodox Fragments of the Erotic Desires, Pleasures, and Masculinity of Male Sports Fans’, *Men and Masculinities* 18, no. 2 (2015): 193–213.

barrackers have the 'delightful privilege' and unalienable right to hoot and howl at games of football as they please.⁹⁵

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⁹⁵ Gregory Phillips and Matthew Klugman, 'The Land We Stand On', *Griffith Review* 53 (2016): 185–227.