

In a dry season

Draw a wire fence and a few ragged gums, and add some scattered sheep running away from the train. Then you'll have the bush all along the New South Wales western line from Bathurst on.

The railway towns consist of a public house and a general store, with a square tank and a school-house on piles in the nearer distance. The tank stands at the end of the school and is not many times smaller than the building itself. It is safe to call the pub "The Railway Hotel," and the store "The Railway Stores," with an "s." A couple of patient, ungroomed hacks are probably standing outside the pub, while their masters are inside having a drink--several drinks. Also it's safe to draw a sundowner sitting listlessly on a bench on the veranda, reading "the Bulletin". The Railway Stores seem to exist only in the shadow of the pub, and it is impossible to conceive either as being independent of the other. There is sometimes a small, oblong weather-board building--unpainted, and generally leaning in one of the eight possible directions, and perhaps with a twist in another--which, from its half-obiterated sign, seems to have started as a rival to the Railway Stores; but the shutters are up and the place empty.

The only town I saw that differed much from the above consisted of a box-bark humpy with a clay chimney, and a woman standing at the door throwing out the wash-up water.

By way of variety, the artist might make a water-colour sketch of a fettler's tent on the line, with a billy hanging over the fire in front, and three fettlers standing round filling their pipes.

Slop sac suits, red faces, and old-fashioned, flat-brimmed hats, with wire round the brims, begin to drop into the train on the other side of Bathurst; and here and there a hat with three inches of crape round the crown, which perhaps signifies death in the family at some remote date, and perhaps doesn't. Sometimes I believe, it only means grease under the band. I notice that when a bushman puts crape round his hat he generally leaves it there till the hat wears out, or another friend dies. In the latter case, he buys a new piece of crape. This outward sign of bereavement usually has a jolly red face beneath it. Death is about the only cheerful thing in the bush.

We crossed the Macquarie--a narrow, muddy gutter with a dog swimming across, and three goats interested.

A little farther on we saw the first sundowner. He carried a Royal Alfred, and had a billy in one hand and a stick in the other. He was dressed in a tail-coat turned yellow, a print shirt, and a pair of moleskin trousers, with big square calico patches on the knees; and his old straw hat was covered with calico. Suddenly he slipped his swag, dropped his billy, and ran forward, boldly flourishing the stick. I thought that he was mad, and was about to attack the train, but he wasn't; he was only killing a snake. I didn't have time to see whether he cooked the snake or not--perhaps he only thought of Adam.

Somebody told me that the country was very dry on the other side of Nevertire. It is. I wouldn't like to sit down on it any where. The least horrible spot in the bush, in a dry season, is where the bush isn't--where it has been cleared away and a green crop is trying to grow. They talk of settling people on the land! Better settle in it. I'd rather settle on the water; at least, until some gigantic system of irrigation is perfected in the West.

Along about Byrock we saw the first shearers. They dress like the unemployed, but differ from that body in their looks of independence. They sat on trucks and wool-bales and the fence, watching the train, and hailed Bill, and Jim, and Tom, and asked how those individuals were getting on.

Here we came across soft felt hats with straps round the crowns, and full-bearded faces under them. Also a splendid-looking black tracker in a masher uniform and a pair of Wellington boots.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:01 AM

Comment [1]: homodiegetic narration

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:03 AM

Comment [2]: negative adjectives, few, ragged and scattered suggests empty expanse of landscape, and that it is unchanging

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:06 AM

Comment [3]: Imperative voice gives command to audience to sketch the repetitive images he is seeing from his train window. Invites reader to participate in the story and witness the journey at close hand.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:06 AM

Comment [4]: Use of plural reiterates the sameness of all outback towns.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:10 AM

Comment [5]: Lawson suggests the stereotypical inhabitants of outback bush towns are also to be found everywhere. Shows effect living in these monotonous towns has had on inhabitants "ungroomed" "listless" and most likely drunk.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:12 AM

Comment [6]: Buildings also described negatively, unpainted, leaning, half obliterated, empty, reiterating inhospitable environment and its effect on the people searching for work.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:22 AM

Comment [7]: High modality, hyperbole suggesting little variation in landscape

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:56 AM

Comment [8]: Depict an image of men working on the railway using Australian colloquialism (fettler, billy etc) A reference to artworks by Tom Roberts or Frederick McCubbin.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:22 AM

Comment [9]: Clothes symbolize low income and struggle, also suggests that people are only differentiated by their clothes. They are not characterized, and are left anonymous.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:32 AM

Comment [10]: Paradox, emphasizes harsh environment and difficulty inhabiting it. Lawson is cynical about this lifestyle

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:32 AM

Comment [11]: Detailed description of a stereotypical swagman, again his clothes symbolize his struggle, old damaged,, falling apart material.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:33 AM

Comment [12]: First person, directly showing Lawson's opinion.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:34 AM

Comment [13]: Third person suggesting "government," demonstrates Lawson believes social injustice is evident here.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:35 AM

Comment [14]: Simile, despite having money, they still dress scruffily and blend in with the vagrants and drunks.

One or two square-cuts and stand-up collars struggle dismally through to the bitter end. Often a meQmber of the unemployed starts cheerfully out, with a letter from the Government Labour Bureau in his pocket, and nothing else. He has an idea that the station where he has the job will be within easy walking distance of Bourke. Perhaps he thinks there'll be a cart or a buggy waiting for him. He travels for a night and day without a bite to eat, and, on arrival, he finds that the station is eighty or a hundred miles away. Then he has to explain matters to a publican and a coach-driver. God bless the publican and the coach-driver! God forgive our social system!

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:54 AM
Comment [15]: Cumulative list of attire. Clothing is again the signifier of character and status.

Native industry was represented at one place along the line by three tiles, a chimney-pot, and a length of piping on a slab.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:50 AM
Comment [16]: Religious Exclamations show Lawson's frustrations with system that allows and encourages men to work in inhospitable environment

Somebody said to me, "Yer wanten go out back, young man, if yer wanten see the country. Yer wanten get away from the line." I don't wanten; I've been there.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:51 AM
Comment [17]: Juxtaposition of industry with minimal development.

You could go to the brink of eternity so far as Australia is concerned and yet meet an animated mummy of a swagman who will talk of going "out back." Out upon the out-back fiend!

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:52 AM
Comment [18]: Auditory imagery of Australian dialect using phonetic spelling and colloquialism.

About Byrock we met the bush liar in all his glory. He was dressed like--like a bush larrikin. His name was Jim. He had been to a ball where some blank had "touched" his blanky overcoat. The overcoat had a cheque for ten "quid" in the pocket. He didn't seem to feel the loss much. "Wot's ten quid?" He'd been everywhere, including the Gulf country. He still had three or four sheds to go to. He had telegrams in his pocket from half a dozen squatters and supers offering him pens on any terms. He didn't give a blank whether he took them or no. He thought at first he had the telegrams on him but found that he had left them in the pocket of the overcoat aforesaid. He had learned butchering in a day. He was a bit of a scrapper himself and talked a lot about the ring. At the last station where he shore he gave the super the father of a hiding. The super was a big chap, about six-foot-three, and had knocked out Paddy Somebody in one round. He worked with a man who shore four hundred sheep in nine hours.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:53 AM
Comment [19]: Hyperbole about the wide expanse of environment. Negative image of "mummy" swagman suggests the impact of the dry climate

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:57 AM
Comment [20]: Exclamation and insult show Lawson's anger at romanticised idea of the cruel "outback"

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:55 AM
Comment [21]: Here dialogue is paraphrased with "blanky" inserted to suggest profanity. Australian slang again shows characterisation. Allows reader to imagine dialogue and hear it in his head.

Here a quiet-looking bushman in a corner of the carriage grew restless, and presently he opened his mouth and took the liar down in about three minutes.

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:58 AM
Comment [22]: Short and simple sentences cumulate to represent the liar's extensive deception. This helps the reader imagine being present.

At 5.30 we saw a long line of camels moving out across the sunset. There's something snaky about camels. They remind me of turtles and goannas.

Somebody said, "Here's Bourke."

Ms Galea 11/3/2014 11:59 AM
Comment [23]: He has reached his destination, but he has nothing to describe as it is similar to all the other towns he has passed.