

# Forests, character and conscience: Lane Poole in Western Australia as recounted mainly by John Thomson

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper offers a preliminary look at the role attributed to ‘character’, ‘manners’ and ‘conscience’ in the creation of support for policies promoted by British foresters in Western Australia. My data mainly concerns the period from 1916 to 1922 when Lane Poole was Conservator of Forests in WA. I outline how trained foresters, like Fairbridge, Lane Poole and John Thomson, argued that specific policy interventions required the development of a specific kind of moral person. By outlining these men’s accounts of the importance of ‘character’ and ‘manners’ the paper also seeks to understand how Australian radicals, such as John Thomson, came to support many of the ideas and policies of imperial foresters.

## 1 MORAL MEN AND GOOD FOREST POLICY

Cline-Cole and Madge (2000:4) in a recent overview of environmental histories of West Africa have argued that accounts of forestry cannot just be understood as ‘simply involving mostly technical and “scientific” activities aimed at harnessing forests, woodlands and trees for human benefit’ (2000:4). They argue that forestry and forestry histories are ‘primarily “about” relations between people’ (2000:4). They point to work outlining how the colonial establishment of forestry departments, legislation and reserves offered local communities opportunities for contesting the colonial forest order and negotiating identities (Sharpe cited by Cline-Cole and Madge 2000:4).

In this paper I briefly describe certain negotiations of identity that emerged largely in relation to Lane Poole’s influence on John Thomson (1902-1993), one of Western Australia’s first forestry apprentices (Perry 1999) who also was influential in the state’s conservation movement (Schultz 1999, A. Thomson 1999). Moving, at times, to something very close to a biographical approach I rely largely on a manuscript written by Thomson (1985). Written mainly in the 1980’s, Thomson was assisted by a ‘working party’ of friends. The manuscript’s subject matter is Lane Poole’s time in Western Australia (see also Carron 1985, Meyer 1985, Robertson 1956, Rundle 1996), but much of the content is autobiographical. Using this manuscript I outline the way Thomson believed Lane Poole’s ‘character’ helped create effects on locals, such as Thomson himself, so that they developed a forest conscience and supported Lane Poole’s forest policy and conservation generally. In doing this I seek to show how vernacular theories of ‘character’ and ‘manners’ might have assisted in the localisation of professional forestry’s environmental narratives and policies. Further research may well reveal further examples of ideas about the moral person playing a role in the more complete history of Western Australian forest policy (outlined in Meyers 1985; Robertson

1956; and Rundle 1996). But here I deal mainly with Thomson's account of the influence of character in reference to the policies espoused by Lane Poole.

## 2 LANE POOLE'S NARRATIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

One of the driving forces of Lane Poole's forestry policy for Western Australia was 'a set of powerful widely perceived images of environmental change' (Leach and Mearns 1996:1) many of which derived from Lane Poole's own training in French forestry science (Lane Poole 1921: 24-29). These narratives were also thought to apply to the African colonies – such as the Cape Colony and Sierra Leone – where he had worked prior to taking up his appointment as Western Australian Conservator of Forests in 1916. While McManus (1999) has started to outline the complexity of these global flows of ideas and policies and their influence on scientific forestry in Australia here I merely point to the way some elements of Lane Poole's environmental narratives were conveyed to his apprentices in West Australia, including John Thomson, (Lane Poole 1917) and to the wider public (Lane Poole 1921:24-29). Of course the message sent was not always equivalent to the message received – Thomson notes that while in the field engaged in the more practical side of his apprenticeship he was often too tired in the evenings to seriously study the notes prepared by Lane Poole.

Nonetheless, Lane Poole did attempt to educate his apprentices (and the wider public) about the relationship between forestry and damaging environmental changes. One such narrative involved the claim that deforestation could lead to climate change and desertification (Leach and Mearns 1996). In Lane Poole's (1917:7) lecture notes for his forestry apprentices we find him arguing:

... once it is admitted – and there can be no doubt about it – that the mean temperature in the forests is lower than over treeless country, then it would be only right to argue that more rain will fall in the forest than outside it. If the relative humidity of the air blowing over the land is high and the air meets with a colder surface, precipitation will take place. It would be logical to argue that rain begins to fall in a forest before it falls in the surrounding country and goes on falling longer in the forest than on the plain. No-one who has seen the rain mists over the karri forests near the Warren or the tingle tingle country at Nornalup can have failed to realise that forests make more rain.

He worried about the possibility that 'our South-West', with its 30 inch rainfall, 'if denuded of its timber belt along the Darling Range, would find itself reduced to 25 inches or less, and, in addition would probably lose the cloudy misty days which are such a help to the agriculturist through the summer months' (Lane Poole 1917:8).

In another repetition of situations evident both in Africa (Leach and Mearns 1996; Lane Poole 1917:17) and in France (Lane Poole 1921:242), Lane Poole also argued there was a significant risk that over-clearing of trees and vegetation could contribute to sand drift. The existence of such drifts required urgent intervention by Forestry:

Near Denmark, along the Kent road, is a sand drift, which has entirely covered a patch of immense karri trees. Around Albany the same conditions occur and so on round the coast instances of drift sands can be multiplied. With the growth of the population of the State and the pushing forward of agriculture round the coastal belt, it will be necessary to take these sand drifts in hand, fix them and reforest them with pines. (Lane Poole 1917:16)

He blamed the farmers for clearing all the timber on his land irrespective of whether his land was suitable for wheat growing and other agricultural development. The farmer not only 'exposes his farm lands to the to the desiccating winds which now blow unchecked by tree growth, but also he exposes these lands to the invasion of the sand from neighbouring sand plains' (1917:16-17).

In this way many of the more generic environmental narratives of an emerging, increasingly global, professional forestry were merged with local conditions. They were also directly linked to various specific West Australian government policies such as excessive support of timber producers and farm-based settlement. Lane Poole felt that these policies were destroying the state's timber resources without any regard to their replacement. Lane Poole's understandings of the state's environmental history argued for the necessity of more rational and expert policy settings to regulate the rate of exploitation of timber and to reserve large parts of the available timber for conservation and sustainable use. The extent of the control Lane Poole hoped to achieve was often quite dramatic. His draft of a Forestry Bill for Western Australia includes Section 32 on the classification of forests, that states:

The Conservator [a typed reference to the Minister is deleted here by Lane Poole] shall cause a classification of the forest lands of the State to be made for the purpose of determining which of such lands are suitable to be permanently dedicated to State Forests; or temporarily reserved from sale as timber reserves. Until such a time as the classification is completed all that portion of the South West Division bound on the east by the Great Southern Railway, on the south by the Southern Ocean, on the West by the Indian Ocean bound north by a line drawn from Spencer's Brook due west to the Indian Ocean shall be closed as a temporary timber reserve and no land applied for therein shall be alienated without reference to the Conservator.

In this way the resource use practices of timber producers, government, and settlers were to be made less environmentally destructive by the political intervention of experts like Lane Poole.

### 3 CHARACTER, FORESTS AND FORESTRY

The transformation of these narratives of environmental change into effective state policy was crucially dependent on the scientific authority of the foresters, their experience in other colonies and their networks of influence with other foresters, botanists and relevant politicians. But in addition, the way such discourses gained credibility was partly a function of the capacity of these environmental narratives and their tellers to create effects in the local population. Local understandings - as exemplified by John Thomson's account of Lane Poole - suggests that some of the transferability of the environmental histories and forest policies of professional foresters was a function of the 'character' and 'manners' exemplified by the foresters. The ease with which the narratives of imperial forestry were accepted was understood to be a function of the development of a 'forest conscience' (Robin 1991). It was also linked to the development of an appropriate relationship with the forests that both reflected and created 'character'. Obviously the 'character' and 'manners' referred to in these diverse accounts was not a unitary concept, but involved a range of distinct understandings that entered into debates about the definition of moral persons and their relationship to their environment, especially forests.

My outline of a number of the contexts where such understandings were deployed starts around the time Thomson had his first meeting with Lane Poole in 1917. At this time there were a number of arguments circulating about the relationship between national 'character' and forests (Schama 2004). One of these controversies was outlined by Mr Siebenhaar who, in a 1918 edition of *Jarrah*, argued for a direct link between Western Australian forests and the English 'character':

The Western Australian Bush has some of the qualities of the bull-dog, and should therefore appeal to Englishmen. Repellent and forbidding at first sight, it is in reality far more good-natured than the forests of most other countries, which are, as a rule, the haunts of dangerously hostile animal life. Those who do not fear it, and who trust themselves freely to its company, soon become aware, often with astonishment, of its friendliness, and in due course begin to love it. (1918:17)

What this highlights is that the very complex interrelationship between a sense of ‘English’ character – and being ‘British’ – was at that time linked, via specific places such as the bush, to a sense of being Australian or in this case ‘Western Australian’ (McGregor 2004).

In the same edition of *Jarrah* Kingsley Fairbridge outlined further links between character and the forests that gave salience to the active engagement with the forest environment undertaken by professional foresters. Fairbridge was Oxford trained in forestry (Creelman 1988:131) and was a friend of Lane Poole and his family in Oxford and in Western Australia (Fairbridge 1937:154-6; Creelman 1988:137). But Fairbridge is better known as the founder of the Child Emigration Society and the Kingsley Farm for Orphans at Pinjarra. Both the Society and farm were based on the assumption that British working class orphans could become farmers imbued with the values of ‘imperial citizenship’, and become ‘patriotic, capable and self-reliant citizens’ (Sherrington and Jeffrey 1998: 27). But his reformism was marked by an acute pessimism concerning those sections of the working class that were unredeemable and a threat to his project, and the future of Britain and the imperial order (Sherrington and Jeffrey 1998:49). This anxiety over the threat posed by an emerging working class and socialism to the imperial project paralleled concerns with environmental catastrophes – such as reduced rainfall and depopulation – associated with the Empire’s destruction of its forests resources (Barton 2002:29).

Fairbridge also believed there was a strong association between the properties of trees, how they can be cared for by foresters, and the kind of ‘character’ that would develop in a nation-state that seriously practiced forestry. In 1918 he wrote:

Dr Montessori has demonstrated the fact that vocation reacts upon the mind. So then the vocations of a number of individuals must react upon the collective life of the people; and vocations that demand wisdom, patience, and foresight will add to the sum total of the nation’s good character ... The forester planning his regeneration to-day looks ahead two hundred years to the reaping of his crop. To at least some extent he must be imbued with the wisdom to understand that he is merely the trustee of Nature’s bounty, with the patience that toils for its children’s children rather than itself. (1918:16)

Here the emergence of a professionally trained elite to work in forestry is said to have an effect on national ‘good character’ by expanding the nation’s ‘wisdom, patience and foresight’. Character is here understood as a set of externally available virtues (such as patience) that derive from specific modes of practical engagement in the world, in this case defined by forestry. These virtues are understood to be externally available given the right relationship to the environment and can then be ‘incorporated in to the self’ (Hunt 1999: 4).

But such positive moral qualities could be easily lost at the level of the individual, nation and even Empire. Character was easily threatened by moral degeneracy, confusion and greed. And so like many of his peers (Rose 1985:47-61,75-89) we find Fairbridge worrying about the demoralised quality of the post-war character of the English population and the British Empire:

I venture to think the character of the British Empire is still very much in the melting pot. The war may have a considerable effect upon us, though at present we are too near to it to gauge its significance; but four years ago when greed and folly were rampant and the word “patriot” was a synonym for “scoundrel”, the middle aged pessimist had some excuse for declaring that England was decadent and we were all going to the dogs. If nothing else, we were certainly blind to our own interests and our country’s interest in the matter of our timber resources; England was importing annually 20 million pounds worth of softwood that she could have grown herself, Western Australia was busy buying Japanese oak and Yankee Oregon when she contained one of the finest stands of timber in the world, Canada was burning her pines to the tune of millions sterling and South Africa, an almost timberless country, had shortened her forest rotation to suit the “demands” of an untutored electorate. These incidents, though they may appear insignificant to the lay mind, represent a ruthlessness unashamed ... A stratum of thoroughly trained foresters throughout the length and breadth of the Empire, and a properly

organised and co-ordinated forest policy would tend to give us as a nation both the stability and the distant vision...he would be either a very bold or a very ignorant man who would argue, in the light of recent events, that specialisation, either in forestry or otherwise, does not add power and ability to the nation that practices it. (1918:16-17)

Here 'greed', 'folly', 'unashamed ruthlessness' and the instability of the Empire as a post-war 'melting pot' are made evident by the British Empire's treatment of its forests. What is required is the 'distant vision' and 'stability' that would enhance national 'ability' and 'power'. Here we find a decadence of character threatening the future of Empire and English values being opposed to a progressivism linking the professional paternalism of scientific foresters distributed across the Empire with a version of ecological stability ensuring a kind of eternity to the Empire, grounded in the treatment of the forests. The new professional foresters would avoid the mistakes of the past and develop 'progressive schemes for responsible forest management' (Anker 2001:81; Lane Poole 1921:35-40) that could serve the British Empire.

#### 4 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND LANE-POOLE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In this kind of professional progressivism, often linked with variants of resurgent social imperialism exemplified by Fairbridge, it was not typically capitalism in itself 'that was the cause of social ills, but rather its distorted forms with monopolies and cartels' (Hunt 1999:129). While capitalism should be allowed to develop subject to correcting such distortions, what was really important was that the spirit or values of capitalism should not be allowed to become the ethical basis of society (Osborne 1994:303). The aim was to create an administrative elite that would exemplify non-capitalist morals such as public responsibility, perseverance, self-denial and public accountability. In reference to Empire forestry a professional clerisy would attempt to create a neutral space of government beyond the control of the politicians or the capitalists. Lane Poole was partly influenced by these kinds of ideas as when he outlined a forest policy for Australia and argued in quite strongly anti-capitalist terms:

Private commercial enterprise knows no other motive than private gain: it sees no further than the profits of today. If it looks forward at all, it is only as far as the time taken to write off its depreciating assets. The forests in such hands are naturally doomed; and so it is that no nation that has given the matter thought has allowed its forests to fall into the hands of the private individual or corporation. (Lane Poole 1919:1)

His support for state intervention by experts was reinforced by his forestry training in France that exemplified the cameralist tendency to amplify state power and environmental discipline (Gordon cited in Osborne 1994:293). In addition, by the time he arrived in Western Australia, he had considerable experience in colonial Africa where forestry's environmental tasks were crucial to the construction of specific forms of colonial state power that involved surveillance, deterrence and draconian measures for social control (Sivaramakrishnan cited in Barton 2002: 165 fn 72).

But Lane Poole was also a stubborn – at times counter-productively arrogant – defender of his forest policy (Robertson 1956; Carron 1985). He preferred to resign rather than acquiesce to the demands of the Western Australian politicians and the Millar's combine of timber producers. Lane Poole's response could be understood to exemplify the best ideals of the Colonial Service whose permanent public servants should, according to Northcote and Trevelyan, be relatively autonomous 'possessing sufficient independence, character and ability to advise, assist and to some extent, influence, those who are from time to time set over them' (cited in Osborne 1994: 294). The character at issue here involves certain 'English' capacities to engage in impartial public service:

An Englishman cannot be comfortable if he is in a false position; and he never allows himself to be in a true position unless he is proud of his occupation and convinced that success will

depend upon his own effort. ... He is the member of an official aristocracy, owning no social superior, bound to no man, fearing no man ... he is well aware that his advancement does not hang upon the will and pleasure of this or that great man, but is regulated by the opinion entertained of his ability and character by the service in general. (Trevelyan cited in Osborne 1994:294)

## 5 JOHN THOMSON'S ACCOUNT OF LANE POOLE'S CHARACTER

Such ideas make character crucial to public administration. And John Thomson's account of Lane Poole reiterates this point by arguing that Lane Poole's good character should have led to good forestry policy. In demonstrating this point he outlines how Lane Poole's character also had a profound influence on his own life.

Some sense of this is conveyed in a section of the Thomson narrative entitled 'first meeting'. This is something like a key event in Thomson's life that commits him to forestry as an occupation. It involves John, then aged 14, meeting Lane-Poole as part of the process of becoming an apprentice forester. John and his mother meet Lane Poole on 10th March 1917:

I remember as if it was yesterday that sunny summer morning, when my mother and I were ushered into Mr Lane-Poole's office. He instantly arose from his office chair and advanced across the room, with outstretched hand, to greet my Mother. I have forgotten now, but no doubt he greeted me similarly, but I was rather overcome by the occasion ... His natural spontaneous courtesy immediately produced a warm atmosphere. He beckoned us both to chairs and resumed his office seat. He was a tall, lean, dignified figure. (Thomson 1985:3)

Thomson further states that Lane Poole's 'dignified' and 'courteous' treatment of his mother immediately won his admiration. More importantly Thomson was sure his mother felt 'that under such a man, I would have a model of highest integrity to guide me and that I had undertaken a most worthwhile calling' (Thomson 1985:4). A few days later – on 14 March – he officially became one of the first forest apprentices in Western Australia.

John's memory of his meeting with Lane Poole also creates an interesting equivalence between the human and natural orders. The properties of the forest timbers in the office and those of Lane Poole's character seem to mutually echo each other in an epiphany. During the first meeting John Thomson became:

... aware of the deep wine-red exquisitely polished jarrah timber of his office table and furnishings and lined walls. Its superb quality lent beauty and profound dignity to the room! Looking back over those long years, it also seemed to say, this rich elegance is what the jarrah forest was meant to be grown for, to be nurtured for, cared for, preserved for, and entrusted to all generations of Australians and tree lovers for all time. For this is what I am certain it meant to this great man, and for what his professional ethics as a forester stood for. Lane Poole has graced that stately room I believe to a degree that will be rarely, if ever, equalled but never eclipsed. (Thomson 1985:4)

What is evoked is an equivalence of trees and person expressed by Lane-Poole's capacity to 'grace' his office that was decorated in jarrah timber. This was linked to Lane Poole's character such that his 'professional ethics' and the timber in the office were commensurable and helped created a state of grace that has in Thomson's view never been surpassed. In another unpaginated part of the manuscript this point was reiterated by Thomson noting that Lane Poole's 'successors, of whom there have been six, just lacked his courageous determination and high professionalism' (1985 unpaginated manuscript).

## 6 LANE POOLE'S TRANSACTABLE CHARACTER AND GOOD MANNERS

In addition merely remembering Lane Poole 'from 36 to 65 years ago' gives Thomson a 'spiritual uplift'. It is in these transformations from admiration to self-enhancement that Thomson edges towards self-description. At another point Thomson writes in a self-reflexive mode 'I keep saying to myself – there was a man, a great man, for all others to admire and emulate, that all men might measure themselves by, and strive to achieve his standards of wisdom and understanding, his courage, his integrity and above all, in seeing all people as fellow human beings, each of whom has some spark of greatness if we could only find and kindle it and Charles Edward Lane Poole certainly had that rare gift' (Thomson 1985:8).

Thomson's descriptions also, at times, represented elements of Lane Poole's person as taking on a transactable character:

I am sure too that by his superlative example a little of it must have brushed off on most of those he knew. If everything that the legendary Midas touched turned to gold, then everyone that Lane Poole's personality touched, gave them some special quality that gold can never buy. (Thomson 1985:8)

Along with a capacity to influence people through the transformative effects of his 'personality' Lane Poole also emerges as a person who transcends historical or other discontinuities. Certainly there is a collapse of the distinction between the past (Thomson in 1917) and the present (Thomson in the 1980s) - 'I remember as if it was yesterday that sunny summer morning'.

According to Thomson, Lane Poole's style of interaction hid or made irrelevant, the obvious social differences between the two men. And the differences between the two men should not be downplayed. Thomson was a Catholic who later joined the ALP and the Communist Party. Lane Poole was the protestant son of the Englishman Sir Stanley Lane Poole who was for a time the Trinity College Professor of Arabic Studies (see John Dargavel, this volume, for further details). Moreover, at various times in his life Lane Poole privately expressed sarcastic contempt for the kind of egalitarianism supported by John Thomson. Writing to his wife, while he was in Papua and New Guinea, Lane Poole made the point that 'a democracy like Australia should have evolved an Autocracy like this place is one of the anomalies that makes one hope that democracies cannot be wholly bad methods of government' (Lane Poole 1923). He also felt 'no one could live cheek by jowl with the working classes of Australia without realising the futility of most of the tenants of liberalism particularly "Education for the Masses"' (Lane Poole 1922).

This contrasts radically with what Thomson remembered about Lane Poole. Thomson emphasises a Lane Poole who is good mannered to his Australian workers. Thomson's account of Lane Poole's character shows that it can transcend class and the national differences. This Lane Poole is committed to a kind of egalitarianism that is very similar to Thomson's. And so we find Thomson recalling how Lane Poole, whenever he visited Western Australia, 'always expressed the wish to meet again as many of his original staff as conveniently possible' (1985:74) and then documenting every meeting he had with Lane Poole. The last of Lane Poole's visits took place in 1946 when Thomson was living at Denmark. Lane Poole was acting as guide and counsellor for 'around twenty professional men' travelling from Victoria in a bus to inspect the South West forests. Included were:

... botanists, biologists, ornithologists, entomologists etc, including the well-known and popular Crosby Morison, naturalist, editor of the Wild Life Magazine who gave weekly radio talks on wild life subjects ... They were a lively good humoured and intensely interested and interesting bunch of fellows. (1985:76)

Despite the lively company it was Lane Poole's manners that were the highlight of Thomson's memory of this visit. As Thomson was escorting the bus in his own car, he came upon a truck from a Denmark store offloading goods onto a settler's horse drawn cart.

The settler's wife evidently on the spur of the moment had decided that even the sight of the store truck and another face would be a relief from the dullness and drudging of life on a Group Settlement block at that time, so she accompanied her hubby still wearing her work soiled everyday dress. When I arrived on the scene and bid her good morning, she was not unduly disturbed ... Suddenly the bus arrived and stopped about fifty yards away. Lane Poole was the only passenger to alight and immediately walked towards us I could not only sense, but see the poor woman's intense embarrassment as I was sitting in my car only a few metres away. She stepped back into the tall karri wattle undergrowth that lined the road, wishing no doubt that the earth could swallow her. But Lane Poole walked straight to her, raising his hat with most natural courtesy, and said something like 'Good morning Madam.' The effect was instantaneous and such was the charm of this nature's gentleman that instantly both were engaged in animated conversation for the remaining few minutes period required for the unloading, and I am sure the lady forgot all about her soiled working dress but would always remember the Prince Charming she met that day. This incident was fully in keeping with this man's manner to all people. It impressed me so much that I always associate it with the memory of his Denmark visit. (Thomson 1985:80)

After leaving them at the Valley of the Giants where the group marvelled at gigantic Karri and Tingle trees Thomson notes 'I was never to see Lane Poole again, but if I lived to be a thousand I am sure that the memory of this great man would remain indelibly stamped on my memory' (Thomson 1985:80).

Much of Thomson's high opinion of Lane Poole rested on his knowledge that Lane-Poole was polite and 'that he always extended friendliness, consideration and understanding to all he met, and this [plus] his uncanny ability to thus weigh up people, helped to make him such a formidable adversary and champion in the cause of forestry in a country almost entirely lacking in a forest conscience' (Thomson 1985:4-5). Here Thomson seems to be linking a forest 'conscience' and a friendly disposition or 'manners'. What is occurring here in Thomson's text is the repetition of the 'unmistakably Victorian' (Himmelfarb 1995:21) conjunction of manners and morals. Lane Poole's manners and character were in Thomson's account able to further the cause of forestry by extending 'friendliness', 'consideration' and 'understanding to all.' There is a hint here that the well-mannered or moral treatment of humans is equivalent to the moral treatment of the forests.

## 7 LANE POOLE, FOREST CONSCIOUSNESS AND 'FOREST CONSCIENCENESS'

This notion of the moral equivalence of humans and forests is also found Lane Poole's use of the term of 'forest conscienceness' (see Robin this volume). While Robin (1991:124 fn 4) has started to write a history of the more orthodox term of 'forest consciousness', Lane Poole's use of the word makes this task more complex because, as a speaker of French, he was aware that the French 'conscience' can cover both awareness and moral concern. Lane Poole's use gives emphasis to a transformation of awareness (consciousness) into a moral or policy judgement. And he seems to emphasize this French connection by his spelling. At one point Lane Poole argues a 'forest conscienceness' would have the effect of transforming human voting into support of a forest policy that would protect the forests. This transformation would effectively be equivalent to extending voting rights to trees:

It is true that trees today have no votes, but when people develop a forest conscienceness the position will be entirely altered, and they themselves will see to it that the forest policy is maintained and the forests are used for the benefit of the community as a whole for ever, and not for the benefit of the few sawmillers, timber hewers and timber merchants of to-day. (Lane Poole 1921:34)



Forest conscientiousness ensures that trees can find an adequate representational space in human politics equivalent to granting them the vote. This expanded notion of politics – into a more ecological notion - is an aspect of a forest conscience. There is for a moment a blurring of human and forest values into a less anthropomorphic entity. We seem to be offered here an interesting negotiation of identity and politics. But Lane Poole, rather than consider these possibilities in any depth, goes on to argue for a publicity campaign to make people more ‘conscious’ of the largely economic value of forests:

... the object of which would be to form strong public opinion regarding the proper management and utilisation of the forest heritage of the State. Some foresters who have visited this state ... have said that there will be no forestry in Western Australia until the last tree has been cut down. I do not share this pessimistic view, but consider that, by a publicity campaign, the democracy will realise the wealth that the forests represents. (Lane Poole 1921:34)

## 8 CONCLUSION

In this paper I have sought to link histories of forestry to the histories of the social relations and identifications transacted among people involved in forestry issues in Western Australia. Dealing mainly with arguments and ideas relating to character, manners and morals as outlined by Fairbridge and Thomson I have argued that the capacity of Imperial foresters like Lane Poole to create supporters in the colonies was, in part, related to their capacity to demonstrate and create moral and character effects. Far more important to their capacity to create and implement policy was their scientific authority and political power. But what I have begun to explore here is the limited, but nonetheless significant, cultural power of notions of the ethical person and the way such understandings helped with the localisation of professional forestry, its environmental narratives and policies. I have shown in some detail how John Thomson’s ideas about character and manners facilitated his support of Lane Poole and his policies. Given the material considered here it was definitions of the virtuous person that crucially helped link professional forestry to local concerns about the environment.

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