

LOOKING FOR HOME IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES:  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AUSTRALIAN-IRISH WOMEN  
WRITERS AND THE PROBLEM OF HOME-MAKING



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***LOOKING FOR HOME IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES:  
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WRITERS AND THE PROBLEM OF HOME-MAKING***

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy by major thesis.

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## STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Mary A. Burston declare that the PhD thesis, *Looking for Home in all the Wrong Places: Nineteenth Century Australian-Irish Women Writers and the Problem of Home-Making*, is no more than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures and appendices, references and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signed

Name: Mary A. Burston.

Date..... *27<sup>th</sup> April 2009* .....

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the writing of Irish identity in Australia to explore how nineteenth-century Australian-born women writers negotiated their Irish emigrant heritage. A gap in knowledge about Irish women's emigrant experiences and those of their descendants provides an opportunity to investigate the translation of the Irish emigrant experience from the perspectives of first-born Australian daughters. A critical analysis of the writing histories of Mary Eliza Fullerton, Mary Grant Bruce and Marie Pitt (McKeown) will demonstrate the fragility of national identity in terms of the cultural and symbolic language used to define Irish emigrant and Australian settler culture identity between the late nineteenth-to-mid-twentieth centuries. The thesis provides an alternative reading of national cultures and histories to show how each writer used images of Irish national culture to clarify and elaborate notions of home in their Australian writing.

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Beginnings*

To begin life in a new country, or as a writer seeking to find the right type of language to express one's writing skills, involves a journey of self-discovery that has implications for the ways that the emigrant and the writer tell their respective stories.<sup>1</sup> In drawing from Edward Said's views concerning the nature of writing, beginnings are critical because they represent a state of suspense or a crisis point where a writer has to decide which means of representation are to be used to intervene in a particular field of knowledge in order to produce a new or different narrative. Beginnings involve tasks of 'rewriting and re-righting' – these tasks are constitutively subjective because these necessitate a re-crafting of identity through processes of self-reflection and self-awareness, self-scrutiny and self-criticism. In theoretical terms, these processes require the subject-as-the-writer to rewrite and re-right their language, and by inference, their identity. Beginnings have a significant bearing on the emigrant experience. Emigrants also rewrite and re-right their identities when attempting to relocate cultural and social spaces for self-representation and self-expression in national narratives. According to Avtar Brah, emigration has a significant impact on consciousness in terms of the relocation of identity. The emigrant experience literally means having to contest and contend with a '*confluence of narratives* as it is lived and re-lived, produced and reproduced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory'.<sup>2</sup>

When reflecting on the significance of beginnings as a way to interpret the narration of Irish and Australian identity, I am able to refer to the ways that my emigrant history and identity status of Irish woman in Australia have been shaped by cultural, historical, political and social narratives. The personal experience of emigration meant being challenged by historical and cultural meanings of Irish identity in Australia and

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<sup>1</sup>Edward. W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, Granta Books, London, 1998, xxi-xxii, p. 372.

<sup>2</sup>Avtar Brah, 'Thinking through the concept of diaspora', in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, Eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006, p. 444.

particularly, identity references of Irish women.<sup>3</sup> In turn, how Irish identity has been written about, has broadened my interest in the writing of national cultures as well as investigating images of Irish women in Australian historical, literary and cultural discourses. I wanted to know how earlier generations of women of Irish emigrant descent in Australia negotiated their identity through writing. In focusing on the writing journeys of a group of late nineteenth-century to early twentieth-century women writers, I wanted to explore the means of self-representation they used when rewriting and re-righting their identity as Australian-born daughters of Irish emigrant heritage.

My analysis sits between the fields of Irish-Australian emigration, Australian literary history and discourse and diaspora theories. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller help to illustrate how those fields link theoretically and conceptually in literary, cultural and historical contexts. Emigrant identity is continually shaped by ‘uprootings / regroundings’ which are analogous to having to metaphorically and culturally move house.<sup>4</sup> Such movements are synonymous with having to ‘re-write and re-right’ meanings of home, place and the self.<sup>5</sup> Home therefore represents a contested reference point for identity. In further qualifying the thesis topic, Ahmed et al. illustrate the type of identity and subjective work needed to make one feel at home:

The affective qualities of home, and the work of memory in their making cannot be divorced...Homing, then, depends on the reclaiming and reprocessing of habits, objects, names and histories that have been uprooted – in migration, displacement or colonization...Making home is about *creating* both pasts and futures through inhabiting the grounds of the present...both uprooting and regrounding can entail forms of mourning, nostalgia, and remembrance as well as physical sickness and experiences of trauma.<sup>6</sup>

Meanings of home occupy different hierarchies of experience, memory, identity, of place, and, realms of self-representation. In illustrating why the concept of home is a

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<sup>3</sup>Karrin Vasby Anderson and Kristina Horn Sheeler, *Governing Codes: Gender, Metaphor, and Political Identity*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto and Oxford, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller, Eds., *Uprootings / Regroundings*, Berg, Oxford and New York, 2003.

<sup>5</sup>Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, Eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice In Post-Colonial Literatures*, Routledge, London, 2002; Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires, Eds., *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1993; David Punter, *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000.

<sup>6</sup>Ahmed et al., op. cit., p. 9.

critical to my thinking in this thesis, I draw upon a recent study of Irish emigrant women's experiences in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>7</sup> The concept term 'Anglo-Celtic' identity is a problematic reference because it does not fully recognise the extent or influence of ethnic, historical, cultural and linguistic differences between emigrants from the British Isles.<sup>8</sup> Anglo-Celtic identity is assumed to seamlessly reflect cultural homogeneity in the Australian context. When gathering evidence about Irish emigrant women's experiences in Australia, Áine Foran's study showed there were subtle differences between Australian interpretations of Irish culture and the subjective experiences of Irish identity reported by Irish-born women:

*Irish people fit in, in the sense that they speak the same language, they look similar to the Mother culture if you like. But they are different because they sound different, they use the language differently and their experiences are different...they are never really part of the landscape; they are always a bit separate to it.*<sup>9</sup>

In one case, an 'Irish accent was deemed unsuitable...and...treated as a stigma that needed to be modified'.<sup>10</sup> Contemporary Irish emigrant women reported the difficulties of relocating themselves in Australian cultural discourses. They found themselves subjected to rewriting and re-righting their identity against the dominant culture's frames of reference.<sup>11</sup> Foran's subjects shared the common language of Australian nationhood yet were faced with psycho-cultural challenges in locating a self-congruent sense of Irish identity in Australia. One respondent described it as:

*Quite a difficult concept to get your head around really – the idea of identity and who you are when you live in a different country is a very challenging one.*<sup>12</sup>

Having to deal with such psycho-cultural, imaginative and affective effects can create conflicting desires and tensions in emigrant consciousness.<sup>13</sup> Feeling at home in a new location is an 'ongoing struggle' because it means that the new arrival's 'relation to the

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<sup>7</sup>Stephen Castles, Mary Kalantzis, Bill Cope and Michael Morrissey, *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1992; Geoffrey Stokes, Ed., *The Politics of Identity in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.

<sup>8</sup>Geoffrey Partington, *The Australian Nation: Its British and Irish Roots*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 1994.

<sup>9</sup>Audrey Keating in Áine Foran, 'Upside down and inside out: A psychoanalytic exploration of Irish women's experiences of migration to Australia in the 1980s/1990s', Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy thesis, LaTrobe University, Bundoora, Melbourne, 2000, p. 233.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p. 234.

<sup>11</sup>R. Radhakrishnan, *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1996, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup>Foran, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>13</sup>Alison Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford and Melbourne, 2005, pp. 5, 208, 210.

earth' must be re-negotiated.<sup>14</sup> Home and place are paradoxes of wanting to belong and feeling displaced: of wanting to feel a true inhabitant rather than merely living as a surface-dweller. Emigrant subjectivity therefore may be thought of as a complex performance of self-representation in terms of adapting and reframing ideas about ethnicity, gender, culture and identity.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the tasks of rewriting and re-righting identity involve a 'particularly tortuous' straddling of cultural, gendered, and ethno-political hierarchies as well as geographies of the mind, of place, symbolisms and cultural topographies.<sup>16</sup>

### **How they see us**

Much debate has been generated about how to place the 'Irish diaspora' in the context of the global and national histories of emigration from Europe from the eighteenth century onwards. The term 'Irish diaspora' has a relatively recent history in the academy. It was introduced in the late 1990s at the time of the 150<sup>th</sup> year commemorations of the Great Irish Famine.<sup>17</sup> Descendants of Famine emigrants were welcomed home as members of the Irish national family, albeit located in different geographies and differentiated by their contemporary nationality status. The 'Irish diaspora' also included all emigrant descendants, including those from previous centuries with different emigration histories. The political gestures of the 1990s have opened up debates about how to place Irish 'diaspora' identity in contemporary Irish national culture.<sup>18</sup> Irish 'diaspora' identity is considered to have been burdened with a complex relocation of home culture. First, leaving home was not given due attention in by Irish writers. Irish emigrant narratives were effectively rendered redundant by the weight and significance that revivalist literature in the nineteenth century received in cultural, literary and political discourses. There is still a 'palpable public silence' about

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<sup>14</sup>David Landis Barnhill, Ed., *At Home On The Earth: Native To Our Place, A Multicultural Anthology*, University of California Press, 1999, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*, Granta Books, London, 1991.

<sup>16</sup>Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1989, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup>Piaras Mac Éinrí, 'Introduction' in Andy Bielenberg, Ed., *The Irish Diaspora*, Longman, England, 2000, pp. 1-15.

<sup>18</sup>While symbolically, culturally and powerful in emotive terms, Irish 'diaspora' communities were not given full political or citizenship rights in Ireland. *Ibid*, p. 4.

the Irish experience abroad.<sup>19</sup> When Irish people left their homes, they disappeared ‘over the horizon, out of sight, out of mind and out of the story’:<sup>20</sup>

Migrants made relatively little impression on the...Irish...literary world. There were enough peasants left in the country to people the stories of minor characters...characterisations of the Irish immigrant are...depicted as stock types, incomplete characters with little evidence of their feelings, attitudes or the problems of assimilation and adjustment.<sup>21</sup>

Ireland’s history has required ‘rewriting and re-righting’ to include a space in the national culture for members of the Irish family living outside Ireland.<sup>22</sup> The gesture of inclusion has raised another set of problems in relation to reconfiguring Irish emigration experiences in narratives of Irish nationhood.<sup>23</sup> While reconciliation with the ‘lost’ Irish family may suggest a closure of Ireland’s historical pain, how to define those who belonged and who were excluded, further opened up questions of citizenship entitlement.<sup>24</sup> As an example, if not the same language, culture, and racially and ethnically similar to the majority Anglo-Irish population, how could Irish diaspora status be claimed?

### **The Irish in Australia: definitions of the Irish diaspora**

How to understand the experiences of the Irish diaspora in Australia from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries was the subject of Patrick O’Farrell’s panoramic history of Irish settlement.<sup>25</sup> In the chapter titled, ‘Settlers & Unsettlers’, O’Farrell characterised the Irish emigrant experience as an ambivalent hovering between two poles of identity: one as Irish-Australians looking to the future and the other as Irish exiles looking backwards to home. As ‘settlers’, the Irish went about re-making a new home in Australia in tandem with colonial and national needs for expansion and economic growth. For the Irish Catholic who carried the embedded history of English

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, pp. 33-34.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Patrick Duffy, ‘Literary Reflections on Irish Emigration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries’ in Russell King, John Connell and Paul White, Eds., *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 35.

<sup>24</sup>Graham Davis, ‘The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939’ in Andy Bielenberg, Ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 19-36; Donald H. Akenson, ‘Irish Migration to North America, 1800-1920’ in Andy Bielenberg, Ed., *ibid.*, pp. 111-138; Kerby A. Millar and Bruce D. Boling, ‘The Pauper and the Politician’ in Arthur Gribben, Ed., *The Great Irish Famine and The Irish Diaspora in America*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1999, pp. 196-218.

<sup>25</sup>Patrick O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia: 1788 To The Present*, Third Edition, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, New South Wales, 2000, pp. 115-196.

oppression, Australia represented freedom and ‘an opportunity to recapture [in real fact, invent] that which had been lost’.<sup>26</sup> Irish ‘settlers’ inserted themselves into economic, social and political spheres as the understudies of the Anglo-Australian establishment. The Irish got on with improving their life chances in Australia, and, were, for the most part, invisible and silent ‘settlers’.

On the other hand, the ‘unsettlers’ represented the intransigent Irish for whom ‘the Celtic rebel role’ symbolised the historical playing out of victim Ireland against the dominion of the Anglo-Saxon world.<sup>27</sup> The ‘Celtic rebel’ represented a motif through which Australian and Irish-born writers, playwrights and musicians could draw from as inspiration for counter-cultural responses to establishment society. The rebel, in form, daring and spirit, left his mark in Australian cultural and political discourses as the well-intentioned but not fully understood larrikin. The rebel motif enlivened an otherwise drab Anglo-Australian society and a bequest that is assumed to reflect the Irish experience in Australia.

In the cultural realm, the Irish experience in Australia was recorded through a ‘literature of nostalgia, not a literature of realism or social comment’.<sup>28</sup> A sentimentally preserved Irishness in Australia was an endearing charm that could be worn on Saint Patrick’s Day but it was a diluted version of Irish cultural and social life recreated in Australian poetic verse, music and popular culture.<sup>29</sup> Fashioned as an emotion, rather than an active self-identity, Irishness in Australia came to be understood as an internalised essence, a spirit, a way of interpreting the world that was both baffling and endearing but nevertheless not a fully functional or acceptable sign of nation-based identity in Australian national history.<sup>30</sup>

Irish identity in Australia has been characterised by assumptions that sought to instill ‘the idea of being “Irish” as a general identity’ rather than an understanding of the significance of the relationships between geographical place, regional identity, cultural

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid, p. 121.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, p. 138.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, p. 192.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, pp. 193-194.

<sup>30</sup>Maureen Waters, *The Comic Irishman*, State University of New York, Albany, 1984. Dominant modes of representation are identified as: The rustic clown or fool; the rogue; the stage Irishman; the comic hero.

image and historical associations with the place called home.<sup>31</sup> Where you came from in Ireland was the primary reference point of Irish identity. Place shaped the characteristics of local Irish culture, local Irish identity and social connections. Irish identity was regionally diverse but culturally local.<sup>32</sup> In Australia, Irish identity was, and still is seen as a culture separated into enclaves of Catholicism and Protestantism. How the Irish saw themselves has remained relatively unknown in the Australian context. On the surface it appeared that the Irish successfully transformed themselves as emigrants in Australia, but when describing how the Irish felt at home in Australia, the Irish were not completely successful in that transition. While visible in statistics or caricatured as the raw-boned fun-loving larrikin, ‘the frame and flesh of the typical Australian were not Irish...The Irish kept to themselves, rendering the archetypical Australian as a hollow man’.<sup>33</sup> At the surface level, the Irish appeared successful but at the deeper level of attachment, ‘Australia defeated them, and they defeated themselves’<sup>34</sup>. This is a rather puzzling statement given O’Farrell’s suggestion that Ireland provided ideal emigrant stock that ensured the successful colonisation of Australia.

O’Farrell’s historical accounts of the Irish in Australia have largely been premised on redeeming Irish women’s identity through the experiences of Irish male emigrants. Relatively little attention has been given to Irish emigrant women’s stories. In the major work, *The Irish in Australia*, Irish women’s stories were limited to ten pages of the chapter titled ‘Settlers & Unsettlers’. Irish women were stereotypically represented as Irish-Catholic mothers, nuns, convict women, house servants, or as loud, brash and bold hotel-and-boarding house-keepers in shanty towns and goldfields. Given the status of O’Farrell’s histories of the Irish in Australia, the lack of attention given to Irish emigrant women and their Australian-born descendants invites further exploration.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>O’Farrell, loc. cit.

<sup>32</sup>O’Farrell, op. cit., p. 197. This is also a point made by one of Foran’s narrators. Audrey Keating expressed her frustration with particular images of Irishness (terrorism, nationalism, Catholicism), ignoring ‘other elements of Irish national identity’. Keating in Foran, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>33</sup>O’Farrell, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Donald H. Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, The Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen’s University of Belfast, Belfast, 1996, p. 166.

Irish diaspora theorist Donald Akenson has claimed that the lack of knowledge about Irish women emigrant experiences represents ‘the single most severe limitation on our knowledge of the Irish diaspora’.<sup>36</sup> Despite the statistical evidence that Irish women constituted half of the global emigration outflow from Ireland between 1852 and 1920, the lack of knowledge is further exacerbated by emigration histories that spanned:

Five...time periods. Six distinct groups of women... Six major destinations...that divide...Irish female emigrants, four million of them, into 180 separate cells, each representing a distinct form of female experience within the Irish diaspora...that is just the beginning.<sup>37</sup>

In attempting to understand the mind-set of nineteenth-century Irish emigrants in Australia, David Fitzpatrick analysed a sample of letters written by men and women. Of the one hundred and eleven letters remaining, nearly seventy per cent of letter writers were men.<sup>38</sup> It was assumed that this gendered anomaly corresponded with the norms of that time. In contrast, journals, diaries and letters written by English and Scots women emigrants have generated a great deal of insight into Australian colonial society and lives of colonial women.<sup>39</sup> Why Irish women emigrants were reluctant to write may have been revealed in perceptions of inferiority about their writing. A sample from the Isabella Wyly collection of letters hinted at self-censorship:

Isabella Wyly...was more inclined to apologise for her ‘scribble’, though her tone conveys self-mockery...Isabella was a fluent if imprecise writer, whose thought outpaced her hand...Her zeal as a writer made her self-conscious about the tools of the trade, including her to castigate as ‘horrid paper’ a rather fancy sheet headed with an engraving.<sup>40</sup>

The problem of rewriting and re-righting is evident in this example because it shows how Isabella Wyly’s struggle for self-representation and self-expression impacted on her sense of self. We glean from the letters that Irish emigrants were materially and economically satisfied in Australia, yet, despite enjoying greater social mobility, they discouraged others in Ireland from emigrating.<sup>41</sup> The letters provide evidence of the subjective problem of beginnings, rewriting and re-righting in Irish diaspora

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p. 157.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, p. 173.

<sup>38</sup>David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1994. Table 6, p. 622.

<sup>39</sup>Kristi Siegel, *Gender, Genre & Identity in Women’s Travel Writing*, Peter Lang, New York, 2004. Travel writing became popular in the nineteenth-century and with class elites who recorded travel experiences in diaries, notes and letters.

<sup>40</sup>Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 474.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, pp. 609-627.

consciousness in Australia. Practically all letters spoke of a longing to return ‘home’ to Ireland in terms of the difficulties of recreating the feeling of being at ‘home’ in Australia:

In almost one case in seven, the word ‘home’ evoked specific comparison between *characteristics* of the two cultures or environments, a sense confined to letters from Australia...the word ‘home’ had powerful *emotional associations* for many correspondents, evoking an alternative world of recollection and imagination...the Australian ‘home’ was typically less rich in emotional connotations than its Irish competitor.<sup>42</sup>

Although Fitzpatrick acknowledged that the problematic relocation of home created tensions for Irish emigrant consciousness Irish identity in Australia, the study seemed to suggest that when letter writers stopped writing home to Ireland, transformation from emigrant to settler was a completed process.<sup>43</sup> Other studies have shown that the Irish in Australia and elsewhere did not abandon their cultural identity within the first generation. A different sense of Irish identity was recreated in new countries of settlement.<sup>44</sup> While Fitzpatrick provided a rare insight into the cultural psyche of the first generation of Irish emigrants in late nineteenth-century Australia, his study did not take into account how Irish identity was transmitted or experienced by subsequent generations. The manner in which the transition and transformation from Irish emigrant to Australian settler identity was undertaken opens up the possibility of exploring how this was conveyed in the writing of Australian-born daughters of Irish emigrants.

### **Rewriting and re-righting?**

The gap in knowledge about Irish emigrant women’s identity has been well established. This provides an opportunity to investigate how Australian-born daughters of Irish emigrants negotiated Australia’s cultural and social landscapes. How did Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent find the *right* language that

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid, pp. 625, 627.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, p. 627.

<sup>44</sup>David Foster, Ed., *In the New Country*, Fourth Estate, London, 1999; Colm Kiernan, Ed., *Australia and Ireland, 1788-1988: Bicentennial Essays*, Gill and Macmillan Dublin, 1986; Oliver MacDonough, Ed., *Ireland and the Irish: Studies in Cultural and Political History*, Croom Helm, London, 1986; Trevor McLaughlin, Ed., *From Shamrock to Wattle: Digging up Your Irish Ancestors*, Collins Books, Sydney, 1985; *Irish Women in Colonial Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1998; John O’Brien and Pauric Travers, Eds., *The Irish Emigrant Experience in Australia*, Poolbeg Press, Dublin, 1991; Patrick O’Farrell, *Letters from Irish Australia, 1825-1929* (Letters edited by Brian Trainor), New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1984; Patrick O’Sullivan, Ed., *The Irish in New Communities*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1992; *Patterns of Emigration*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1992; *The Creative Migrant*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1994; *Irish Women and Migration*, Leicester University Press, 1995.

made *their* sense of home as Australian subjects? Did the writers deploy images from Irish culture to clarify their location as Australian-born women?

In attempting to answer those questions, I offer a study of three women writers whose emigration histories link with the Irish diaspora between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I focus here on a group of rural women writers from the Gippsland region in Victoria who shared a common history with Ireland. Mary Grant Bruce (1878-1958) was a pioneer in the development of Australian juvenile fiction between 1910 and 1940. She was most well-known as the author of the *Billabong* narratives of Australian childhood which featured the fictional lives of Norah, Jim, and their father David Linton, and Wally Meadows, their adopted son and the future husband of Norah Linton. Mary Eliza Fullerton (1868-1946) and Marie Pitt (nee McKeown 1865-1948) are not as readily recalled. However, their lives and literary works also provide significant insights into the constitution of Australia's cultural, literary and social history through an assessment of their relationship to their Irish cultural heritage.

Academic interest in the above writers has been spasmodic. Brenda Niall remains the foremost Australian scholar on Mary Grant Bruce. Bruce's biography was written by Alison Alexander in 1979. A collection of Bruce's short stories was published by Prue McKay in the 1980s.<sup>45</sup> Colleen Burke's literary biography on Marie Pitt was published in 1985. Sylvia Martin's more recent work in 2001 investigated Mary Fullerton's gender identity in encoded signs of lesbian love and desire in Fullerton's poetry.<sup>46</sup> While Niall recognised the personal histories of the Irish emigrant Bruce family were critical to Mary Grant Bruce's constructions of Australian rural life, there is room to investigate the relationship between personal and fictional narratives and social, cultural and historical references of Anglo-Irish identity in Bruce's writing. Marie Pitt's writing is featured as an exposition of rebellion and radicalism that would benefit from a critical analysis of her Irish emigrant beginnings and her sense of home. Through examining a range of narratives and writing, including private letters, literary criticism,

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<sup>45</sup>Alison Alexander, *Billabong's Author: The Life of Mary Grant Bruce*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1979; Brenda Niall, *Seven Little Australians: The World of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1979; *Australia Through the Looking Glass: Children's Fiction 1830-1930*, assisted by Frances O'Neill, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

<sup>46</sup>Colleen Burke, *Doherty's Corner: The Life and Times of Marie E.J. Pitt*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1985; Sylvia Martin, *Passionate Friends: Mary Fullerton, Mabel Singleton and Miles Franklin*, Onlywomen Press, London, 2001.

unpublished and published works, this thesis hopes to redress some of the concerns expressed in Akenson's statement about having only one half of the Irish story in Australia told. I suggest here that these writers will deploy a range of writing styles to represent meanings of nineteenth and twentieth-century ideas of Irish and Australian nationality and that they are likely to articulate racialised and ethnic judgments to mediate their cultural location in Australian writing.<sup>47</sup>

Irish identity in Australia has principally been theorised through the male experiences of Catholic clerical leaders, writers and political activists. This thesis departs from the compendium of knowledge built around male literary figures of Irish emigrant descent like, Christopher Brennan, Victor Daley, Joseph Furphy, Daniel H. Deniehy and Bernard O'Dowd. I focus on the relatively silent voices of rural women of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent.<sup>48</sup>

My own beginnings and experiences of resettlement were, and still are, critical to how I am perceived as an Irish woman in Australia. Those beginnings coincided with the minutiae of Australia's resettlement history. I arrived at Station Pier in Melbourne on a hot summer day dressed for a new life in winter clothes. My small brown suitcase contained piano music and some books. Tucked away for safe-keeping were mementos of Ireland: the shamrock, rosary beads, photos, an Irish history book written in Gaelic. Those small objects were the cultural texts that symbolised 'home'.

Consistent with Said's premise that beginnings are theoretically constitutive of rewriting and re-righting the self, I begin with the individual genealogies of the writers' parents in Ireland. Chapter One, 'Fragile connections to home', investigates the imprinting of Irish nationality and claims of entitlement to Irish identity. Each family history is examined by referring to personal letters, family stories and memories and then linking these to the broader histories and character of nineteenth-century Irish society. It will be shown how determinations of Irish identity are problematised by the

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<sup>47</sup>Christopher Kelen, 'Hymns for and from White Australia' in Alfred J. López, Ed., *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*, State University of New York Press, Albany, United States of America, 2005, pp. 201-229; Castles et al; 1992.

<sup>48</sup>David Headon, James Warden and Bill Gammage, Eds., *Crown or Country: The Traditions of Australian Republicanism*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1994.

history of Anglo settlement in Ireland as well as by desires to belong to an Irish homeland.

The second chapter titled 'Across the water' examines the reception history of Irish emigrants in Australia. How Irish emigrant identity is understood in Australian national history allows an opportunity to critique how the writing of national histories is arrived at. This chapter challenges stereotypes and typologies of dysfunction concerning the constitution of Irish women's identity in Australia. Chapters One and Two tie together the pre-and-post emigration histories of the respective emigrant families so that it is possible to hypothesise how their Australian-born daughters interpreted Irish identity in their Australian writing.

Chapter Three provides the theoretical scaffold upon which the theoretical constructs of home, dislocation and the diaspora will be analysed. This overview will reaffirm the theoretical problem of relocating home in writings by Fullerton, Bruce and Pitt.

In Chapters Four and Five, I examine the writing history of Mary Eliza Fullerton. Chapter Four sets out Mary Fullerton's writing journey in terms of her location within the metaphoric and cultural symbolism of Australia's identity reference of the 'bush'. In an examination of sketches and a published fictional autobiography, it will be shown how writing from the bush contextualises Mary Fullerton's claims to establish her legitimacy as an Australian-born writer. The 'bush' represents a contested site of identity in terms of the subject-narrator's place in Australian cultural history. Chapter Four provides a context to reflect on the significance of domestic metaphors and spatial references of national and cultural identity.

In Chapter Five, I construct a theoretical debate between Mary Eliza Fullerton and her literary mentor Miles Franklin to examine how the notional construct of Australian 'home' identity is subjected to competing claims of entitlement. Through their voices, I show how ephemeral narratives such as letters, diary entries, private comments as well as poetic anthologies reveal subtle ideological nuances to conform Mary Fullerton's writing identity through her attempts to *rewrite* and *re-right* herself as an Australian woman poet.

Chapters Six and Seven focus on Mary Grant Bruce's authorship of the fictional Linton genealogical pedigree of the *Billabong* series. The *Billabong* narratives have been seen as creating the "right" kind of home for Australian national culture. Because of their significance to the constitution of Australian culture in the early twentieth-century, it will be shown in Chapter Six, 'Home Estates', how adaptations of the vernacular codes of Australian 'mateship' were shaped by the 'rewriting and re-writing' of Anglo-Irish identity. It is important here to distinguish how notions of Irish and Australian identity were arrived at.

Chapter Seven, 'Patriots games', links the biographical and fictional histories of the Bruce-Linton pedigree to illustrate how masculine metaphors of heroism were articulated as authenticating codes of Irish and Australian identity in the period 1911 to 1940. These chapters will show how concepts of Australian national identity were referenced and qualified through Anglo-Irish culture.

Chapter Eight will explore the unequal worlds idealised by *Billabong* Australia and that experienced and written about by Marie E. J. Pitt. The socio-cultural location of the stereotypical 'Bog Irish' sets the context against which Marie Pitt attempted to dismantle the Bruce typology of Australian nationhood. Marie Pitt characterised the traits of the Irish Celtic rebel-hero through her association with Australian activists, socialists, writers and radicals. Analysis of her poetic politics will indicate how her sense of home and subject-status were suggestive of a cultural homelessness that was refracted in ideas of her own subject-identity and that of Australian nationhood.

Chapter Nine, titled, 'Ave Australia!: A Boarder or Home at Last?' suggests that the journey of rewriting and re-righting would be complete when Marie Pitt wrote the winning entry for Australia's national anthem. I focus here on the incorporation and replication of imperialist ideologies on race and national identity as means of defending Australia's national home. Marie Pitt's sense of identity was underscored by her patriotic affiliation with 'Ave Australia' and her opposition to the social configuration of cultural inequality.

These writers provided individual readings of their own histories. I hope to show how both Irishness and Australianness were mobilised in the writing of these selected

authors. The thesis offers a critical analysis of the writers' attempts to resolve the place of home because there has not been sufficient acknowledgment of the generational effects of Irish emigrant culture in rural Australian women's writing. Analysis of references of Irish identity in their writing will show how the selected writers mediated images of Ireland to clarify their cultural location in Australian narratives. These writers did not abandon their Irish cultural heritage but sought to reclaim it by rewriting and re-righting Irish and Australian cultural landscapes.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Fragile connections to home*

The principal aim of this thesis is to develop an understanding of how the writers Mary Grant Bruce, Mary Eliza Fullerton and Marie Pitt (McKeown) represented their sense of identity as Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrants. Each of these writers shared a common history with Ireland through their respective Irish-born fathers. The paternal histories therefore map particular locations in nineteenth-century Irish cultural and political discourse narrated from the perspectives of the Anglo-Irish Bruces from Cork, the Scots Presbyterian Ulster-Irish Fullertons from Ulster and the Catholic Irish McKeowns from Armagh. Without knowing these histories and their perspectives, it is difficult to establish whether their Australian-born daughters found Irish identity problematic. This is not to say that maternal genealogies were less influential or important or that they are ignored in this thesis. For the purposes of the thesis, paternal genealogies constitute repertoires of identity that help to evaluate distinctions made between the women writers' own readings of Ireland and those in national narratives. The study is designed to respond to the lack of knowledge about Irish women's emigrant voices in Australian national narratives.

Each paternal genealogy is explored through analysing family letters, historical and cultural documents and linking these to the fashioning of Irish identity in nineteenth-century political, literary and cultural discourses. Why is it important to investigate Irish identity in this manner? A gap in knowledge has been indicated by Irish diaspora historians about the omission of Irish emigrant women's histories and experiences of settlement in Australia.<sup>1</sup> Although Irish populations were an integral part of Anglo-Celtic settlement in Australia, it appears that Irish women's identity has not fully appraised from the perspectives of cultural and critical analyses. Further, there has not been sufficient account taken in national histories about the diversity of Irish identity in Australia. Anglo-Celticism is assumed to represent a synonym of cultural homogeneity rather than one that has been shaped by

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<sup>1</sup>O'Farrell and Fitzpatrick, loc. cit.

conflicts around notions of cultural, race, social and ethnic identity associated with the making of Australian nationhood. While on one hand the Irish were critical to the formation of Anglo-Celtic Australian society, characterisations of Ireland and the Irish in Australian national narratives suggests otherwise.<sup>2</sup> How Irish identity is understood subjectively and culturally is a critical question when exploring the terms of kinship entitlement.<sup>3</sup> This chapter analyses the translation of Irish identity before the Bruces, Fullertons and McKeowns migrated to Australia to understand how these Irish emigrants understood the ‘metaphoric kinship ideology’ that symbolised their claims of entitlement.<sup>4</sup> The paternal histories paralleled English / British settlement of Ireland and iterated historical and cultural conflicts associated with defining the ‘Irish’ people. This chapter opens up those histories.

### **The Bruces**

Eyre Lewis Bruce was the father of the Australian writer Mary Grant Bruce. He migrated to Australia in the 1850s. The Bruces first arrived in Ireland in the seventeenth century and were rewarded for their imperial loyalty and service during the Cromwellian Wars in England. They were given lands in Cork later renamed as part of the Milltown Castle estate.<sup>5</sup> The estate consisted of approximately four hundred acres. In the socio-cultural and political contexts of nineteenth-century Ireland, the Bruce pedigree reflected the gentrified existence of a land-owning semi-aristocratic class known as the ‘Ascendancy’. Their political ideals and cultural philosophy were encrypted in the motto “*Pro Deo, Pro Rege, Pro Hibernia Unanimus* - One for God, King and Ireland”.<sup>6</sup> As part of the Ascendancy classes in Ireland, the Bruces represented the landed Irish who occupied the upper tiers of

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<sup>2</sup>James Jupp, *The English in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2004; Katherine Betts, *The Great Divide: Immigration Policies in Australia*, Duffy and Snellgrove, Sydney, 1999; Geoffrey Stokes, Ed., *The Politics of Identity in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel Druckman, ‘Explaining National Identity: From Group Attachments to Collective Action’, The Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (ACPACS), 2006.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, Pluto Press, London, 1993, p. 108; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Canto Press, Cambridge, England, 2000, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup>Alison Alexander, op. cit., pp. 52-53. Land holders records for the County of Cork (1700-1800) show that the Bruce family was made up of Church of Ireland Ministers, soldiers and lawyers. They owned approximately 400-500 acres of land in County Cork on an estate called Milltown Castle.

National Archives of Ireland.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, pp. 16-17.

government and the economy.<sup>7</sup> These ‘landed’ Irish reproduced a social order where ‘they ...were...indeed owners in absolute terms’.<sup>8</sup> Their power was maintained by intermarriage into other propertied Anglo and Irish families and by ‘complex systems of patronage’ that consolidated their wealth and property.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately Eyre Lewis Bruce did not leave personal papers that could be accessed in public libraries in Ireland or Australia.<sup>10</sup> To resolve this problem, a small collection of correspondence written by his Irish-born nephew George Evans Bruce was located at the State Library of Victoria. Those letters were part of the collection of papers held in Australian archives relating to the writing histories of Mary Grant Bruce and her husband George Evans Bruce. George Evans Bruce migrated to Australia permanently in the 1920s and died in Australia in 1948. Through analysis of letters written in the 1930s, certain inferences can be made about the ways in which the Anglo-Irish Bruces expressed their sense of Irish identity. In this selection of letters George Evans Bruce was responding to Anglo-Irish author Lynn Doyle’s (a.k.a Leslie Alexander Montgomery, 1873-1961) erroneous view of Irish identity.<sup>11</sup>

Doyle had written that no one could claim an exclusive right to Irish identity. He asserted that, ‘We are all mongrels’, indicating that Irish identity resulted from a heterogeneous mix of populations and influences that could not be defined by blood lines alone.<sup>12</sup> In Bruce’s view, his genealogical credentials and family name established particular characteristics of Irish kinship entitlement. He wrote:

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<sup>7</sup>National Archives in Cork and local press cuttings held in National Archives of Ireland reported on the social activities of the Cork elite.

<sup>8</sup>Philip Bull, *Land, Politics & Nationalism: A Study of the Irish Land Question*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1996, p.11.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>The research design did not anticipate interviewing surviving relatives of the respective families to access personal documents.

<sup>11</sup>Lynn Doyle was the pseudonym used by Leslie Alexander Montgomery, a writer of humorous images of Irish social life. *Ballygullion* (1908) is a well known novel about Irish cultural life. He also wrote short articles for *The Grand Magazine* and *The Strand* (published in London) between 1930 and 1931. Other works included *An Ulster Childhood* (1921) and *Yesterday Morning* (1944). Lynn Doyle letter to George Evans Bruce, 23 November, 1936, State Library of Victoria (SLV), J.K Moir Collection, 1299/5iv, (Bruce papers), MS. 2pp.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

As a Norman-Irishman...jealous to the bosom of my race, who have always been good friends with the Gael and never have been loved by the Sassenach. My first Irish ancestors fled there to escape Cromwell, married an Irish girl, and I have not a single drop of English blood in me.<sup>13</sup>

Lynn Doyle rebutted the fallacies of blood theory proposed by Bruce.<sup>14</sup> He retorted that ‘an ethnological discussion based on family names...makes it impossible to assign its proper tartan to...red or white corpuscle’.<sup>15</sup> He scorned Bruce’s proposition of blood membership as ‘Racial vanity... and...one of the stupidest and most dangerous traits of humanity’. This sample of correspondence implies that the type of connection George Evans Bruce felt towards Ireland was transmitted through genealogical heritage. Theories about bloodlines emanated from nineteenth-century notions about the ethnic, racial and intellectual superiority of white Europeans. Such ideology relayed a sense of ‘prestige nationalism’ and the ‘uniqueness...of...racial and national superiority’.<sup>16</sup> Doyle’s rebuttal of genealogical entitlement suggested that it was not the sole indicator of Irish identity. By introducing the notion of ‘mongrel’ identity, the Doyle letters identified a problem with Bruce’s notion of genealogical kinship entitlement as the sole definition of ‘Irish’ identity.<sup>17</sup>

George Bruce’s declaration of Irishness was contextualised through genealogical pedigree and suggested an anxiety to prove his cultural status against Doyle’s theories on the ‘mongrel’ or hybrid nationality status of Ireland.<sup>18</sup> Twelfth-century Anglo-Norman

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<sup>13</sup>George Evans Bruce letter to Lynn Doyle, *ibid*.

<sup>14</sup>The eugenic constitution of race, nationhood and culture is extensively documented in evolutionist theories of classical Darwinism and ideas of superior human species. Gobineau’s *Essay on the Inequality of the Races* (1853-1855) purportedly demonstrated the ‘scientific’ evidence confirming the positive-negative correlation of blood, race, ethnicity and gender. Nineteenth-century theorists were convinced that humanity could be explained through evolutionist hierarchies that conformed to biblical authority and histories of classical civilisation that supported notions about the superiority of Euro-centric culture. In the historical context of the letters, theories of blood superiority underpinned the 1930s political regime under which ‘non’ German ‘Aryan’ peoples were exterminated. Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, pp. 90-117.

<sup>15</sup>Doyle to Bruce, Malahide, Co. Dublin, SLV, 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1936, *op. cit.*, MS.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Huttenback, *Racism and Empire*, Cornell University Press, Cornell, 1976, pp. 15, 17.

<sup>17</sup>Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 18-21, 193-223.

<sup>18</sup>M.V Heslinga, *The Irish Border as a Cultural Divide: A Contribution to the Study of Regionalism in the British Isles*, Van Gorcum Press, The Netherlands, 1979; Michael Hughes, *Ireland Divided: The Roots of the Modern Irish Problem*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1994; Joseph Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1989.

Maurice Fitzgerald identified the problematic configuration of Irishness and Englishness when besieged at Dublin in 1171 by Irish forces. He noted how the terms ‘Norman’ and ‘Irish’ articulated a form of cultural estrangement where “we are English to the Irish...and...Irish to the English...for...one island does not detest us more than the other”.<sup>19</sup> Miscegeneration or hybridisation reproduced ambiguous lineages that were accepted neither by enemy nor friend.

Genealogy was mobilised as an ideal quality of national membership in eighteenth-century European political thought.<sup>20</sup> Irish political philosopher Edmund Burke defined national membership by way of ‘the image of a relation in blood’.<sup>21</sup> Burke envisaged Ireland as a member-nation of the English empire through familial and genealogical ties between Ireland and the monarchy. He did not promote an indigenous cultural entitlement because that remained the pejorative status of rural Irish Gaelic-speaking peasant society.<sup>22</sup> This did not mean that Anglo-Irishness was guaranteed legitimacy in Burke’s typology. Anglo-Irish writer Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) wrote about the precariousness of Anglo-Irish identity in Irish society and in Irish cultural references. She was born in England and came to Ireland in 1782 with her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth and his second wife. The family returned to England in 1792 but came back to Ireland in 1794.

Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s memoirs provide an image of a paternalistic Anglo-Irish landlord society desiring to improve and reform Ireland’s land economy. An advocate of political and parliamentary self-governance in Ireland, he argued against the incorporation of Ireland into Union with England in 1800. He proposed full political rights for Ireland regardless of religious identity.<sup>23</sup> Maria Edgeworth embraced her father’s liberal-progressive views on social and political reform in Ireland. She desired that, ‘we’ Irish

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<sup>19</sup>Maurice Fitzgerald cited in Julian Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, USA, 1995, p. 32.

<sup>20</sup>Esther Wohlgenut, ‘Maria Edgeworth and the Question of National Identity’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Autumn, 1999, pp. 645-658.

<sup>21</sup>Edmund Burke cited in Wohlgenut, p. 646.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 647.

<sup>23</sup>Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Richard Lovell Edgeworth: A Selection from His Memoir*, E-Book 16951, Gutenberg Project, 2005. E-book based on the Beatrix L. Tollemache edition of Edgeworth’s memoirs published by Rivington, Percival and Company London, 1896, p. 37.

should be an inclusive identity and that there should be no distinction between 'settler...and...native, country...and...town-bred'.<sup>24</sup>

The Edgeworths stood out for their unconventional thinking on Irish political and social issues. Beneath the visible affection for Ireland however, lay a dilemma about how to determine the authoritative voice that represented an Irish identity.<sup>25</sup> Thady Quirk's indigenous narration in *Castle Rackrent* (1800) provided realistic accounts of Irish peasant life; however, such artistic and literary representations of eighteenth-century Ireland were mediated through ideas of place and culture that reflected Ireland's economic and political subservience to England.<sup>26</sup> The indigenous narration of a culturally authentic rural Irish life did not change the hegemonic view that Ireland was a wild and strange place.<sup>27</sup> Twentieth-century Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen also expressed the difficulties of bridging the history of Irish and Anglo-Irish land relations when determining which people were authentically Irish.<sup>28</sup>

In exploring Anglo-Irish history, Bowen incidentally recorded the Bruce history in her autobiography *Bowen's Court*. The Bowen and Bruce genealogies intersected through marriage, cousinage, and by extension, membership of the landed society. The Bowen history of settlement paralleled the genealogical history that George Evans Bruce advocated through his theory of blood affiliation to Ireland. Bowen recorded the rise and demise of the Bowen family estate and aimed to commemorate an orderly society that brought civilisation to Ireland. She drew attention to disreputable actions and rivalries of family clans within the Ascendancy regime. Through revealing the underside of Anglo-Irish society, Bowen illustrated how greed and jealousy fuelled the Evans-Bruce family's desires to pursue adverse possession over the Bowen estate. A lengthy legal battle between

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<sup>24</sup>Edgeworth cited Moynahan, *Ibid*, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup>Lisa Moore, 'Acts of Union: Sexuality and Nationalism, Romance and Realism in the Irish National Tale', *Cultural Critique*, No. 44, Winter, 2000, pp. 113-144.

<sup>26</sup>Patrick Duffy, 'Writing Ireland: Literature and Art in the representation of Irish Place' in Brian Graham, Ed., *In Search of Ireland: A Cultural Geography*, 1997, p. 66.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid*, p. 69

<sup>28</sup>Elizabeth Bowen, 1942 in Phyllis Lassner, *Elizabeth Bowen: A Study of the Short Fiction*, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1991, p. 149.

the Bowens and the Bruces began in 1759 and remained in dispute ninety years later.<sup>29</sup> It established a dubious record in Irish legal history as one of the longest property battles heard.<sup>30</sup> The Evans-Bruces were eventually successful but the Bowens later regained the disputed parcel of land.

Descendants of the Evans-Bruce and Bowen dispute were George Evans Bruce, the future husband of the Australian children's author, Mary Grant Bruce, and Eyre Lewis Bruce who was Mary Grant Bruce's Anglo-Irish father. Rather than presenting the ideals of a civil Anglo-Irish society, Bowen's account of Bruce family history tended to confirm the Irish nationalist stereotype of greedy and self-interested Anglo-Irish estate owners.<sup>31</sup> She wrote that 'Mr Evans Bruce had been a wolf in sheep's clothing' and had betrayed the good will of the Bowen family by pretending to be an 'obliging and passionate friend'. The façade of 'cheerfulness' hid his deceit, greed, and the need for power.<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Bowen's insight into Anglo-Irish society showed how intense jealousies and rivalries constituted territorial battles within the confines of the Anglo-Irish estate. In exposing the character of the Evans-Bruce and Bowen property dispute, Bowen inadvertently corrected an instance in history that was mythologised in an Australian biography on Mary Grant Bruce as the taking over of the Bruce property by Fenian agitators.<sup>33</sup>

Nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish society was characterised by the symbolic presence of the Anglo-Irish 'Big House' that governed the Anglo-Irish estate. Anglo-Irish privilege might have been encoded in architectural grandeur and imposing structures but the experience of

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<sup>29</sup>Confirmed by legal records held in the Public Records of Northern Ireland (PRONI) in Belfast and in the National Archives of Ireland in Cork and Dublin.

<sup>30</sup>Bowen's chronicle about Anglo-Irish life intersects with the Bruce history in Cork by recalling the manner in which the Bruces lost the family property in Ireland. The Bruce-Evans family claimed Bowen property through adverse possession under common law. The battle lasted nearly 90 years (began in July 1759 over the Bowen estate lands known as Kilbolane or Brandon Castle estates) and it became known as one of the longest legal battles in Ireland as *Bowen v Evans and others* (1844). The Courts awarded the claim to the Bruces but they later lost their property due to bankruptcy and not the actions of Irish Fenian agitators as claimed in the Alison Alexander biography. Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court*, The Collins Press, Cork, 1998, pp. 21, 111-238.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 455-456.

<sup>31</sup>Timothy W. Guinnane and Ronald I. Miller, 'Bonds without Bondsmen: Tenant-Right in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 56, No. 1, March, 1998, pp. 113-142.

<sup>32</sup>Bowen, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

<sup>33</sup>Alexander, *loc. cit.*

living in cultural isolation paralleled the mannerisms of ‘only children’ who grew up to be ‘singular, independent and secretive’.<sup>34</sup> The Anglo-Irish chose to remain apart from Ireland, entrapped by egotistical images of their own importance. Although sympathetic to their demise, Bowen recognised that the imbalances of Anglo-Irish society created unequal relations of power between ‘two’ Irelands. She did not accept that the Anglo-Irish held absolute power over Irish populations. The Anglo-Irish were in a tenuous position because of their cultural and social isolation from England, and because of their ambiguous location in Ireland. To make themselves *feel* more at home in Ireland, the solution reflected in Bowen’s account was to grab more land, more property, accumulate more wealth so that material property would insulate them from Irish tenants living on the Bowen estate and from the rest of Ireland living beyond the estate walls.

When creating a space for the Anglo-Irish in her writing, Bowen’s sense of Irish identity took on the nascent logic of ‘prestige nationalism’ that George Evans Bruce expressed in his theory of cultural legitimacy. Underscoring Elizabeth Bowen’s desire to preserve the history and cultural symbolism of *Bowen’s Court*, she articulated the stereotypical thinking in late Victorian British and Irish bourgeois attitudes about the uncivilised Irish. In contrast, the Anglo-Irish were self-disciplined.<sup>35</sup> They appreciated and knew how to keep ‘dangerous power-ideas...in...their...scabbard, fairly safely at rest’.<sup>36</sup> Anglo-Irish society was born to rule and was accustomed to power and did not overtly abuse such privilege. In the main, the Anglo-Irish ‘honoured, if did not justify, their own class, its traditions, its rule of life’.<sup>37</sup> For Elizabeth Bowen, the metaphorical symbol of the ruined Bowen’s Court also reflected the fragility of the Anglo-Irish presence in Ireland. Anglo-Irish society shielded itself in the ‘Big House’ by virtue of buildings, enclosures and walls that preserved the civilities of the English way of life:

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<sup>34</sup>Bowen, 1998, op. cit., p.20.

<sup>35</sup>Attitudes to the Irish were shaped by political and economic crises relating to the imperial governance of Ireland. The Famine was seen as evidence of Irish incompetence while the 1798 Rebellion harboured notions of treachery and disloyalty. As Michael de Nie argued, most of the Irish were loyal to the Crown but stereotyping communicated negative characteristics of Irish identity to the broader public. Negative stereotyping in conservative metropolitan and provincial press and in popular broadsheet images had a lasting effect on the shaping of British policy towards Ireland in the nineteenth century. Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798–1882*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

<sup>36</sup>Bowen in Lassner, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>37</sup>Bowen, 1998, op. cit., p. 31.

This is Bowen's Court as the past as left it – an isolated, partly unfinished house, grandly conceived and plainly and strongly built...It is the negation of mystical Ireland: its bald walls rebut the surrounding, disturbing light. Imposed on seized land, built in the rulers' ruling tradition, the house is, all the same, of the local rock, and sheds the same grey gleam you see over the countryside. So far, it has withstood burning and wars.<sup>38</sup>

The 'Big House' represented an architecturally designed citadel to withstand assault. When examining the representational repertoires of Anglo-Irish society in Bowen's autobiography, representations of the 'Big House' merged with a landscape of *disconnection*. She described the land around Bowen's Court as having 'an unhumanized air...given to depths of...silence...in...the...virgin, anonymous countryside.'<sup>39</sup> Bowen acknowledged that the 'Big House' represented 'the negation of mystical Ireland' insofar as its presence was an unnatural and artificial disturbance on the traditional Irish landscape.<sup>40</sup> George Evans Bruce attempted to situate his sense of Irish identity by way of a pure genealogy uncontaminated by a 'single drop of English blood' to constitute kinship entitlement based on the history of Anglo-Irish ownership.

While Bruce's genealogical claim to Ireland may suggest a positive inclination to be known as Irish, his declaration of allegiance to Ireland posed another set of questions about how such entitlements of kinship came about. Nineteenth century religious, cultural, political and social meanings were inextricably bound up with distinguishing degrees of separation between Anglo and Irish people in order to legitimise Irish national identity.<sup>41</sup> Retaining an Irish cultural identity provided the Anglo-Irish a way to distance Englishness whenever it suited their interests to describe themselves as Irish.<sup>42</sup> But as Linda Colley has

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid, p. 454.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, Viking, London, 1996, pp. 29-32, 85.

<sup>42</sup>F.S.L. Lyons and J. Hawkins, Eds., *Ireland Under the Union: Varieties of Tension: Essays in Honour of T. W. Moody*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980; *Ireland After the Union: Proceedings of the Second Joint Meeting of the Royal Irish Academy and the British Academy*, Joint Meeting of the Royal Irish Academy and the British Academy, London, with an introduction by Lord Blake, Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1989; Marjorie Elizabeth Howes, *Yeats's Nation : Gender, Class, and Irishness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1996.

<sup>42</sup>The English/British army was used as guardians of law and order. Irish recruits represented one third of all recruits in the British Army between 1830 and 1840. E.M. Spiers, 'Army Organisation and society in the

indicated, the ambiguity of the term 'Anglo-Irish' was made more vulnerable because of shifting political allegiances between Ireland and England. The Anglo-Irish benefited through imperial largesse but they were also subjected to intense scrutiny about their loyalty to the empire.<sup>43</sup> By garnering the support of the Anglo-Irish through disproportionate favours of parliament, the imperial agenda implemented a successful blueprint for the colonisation of Ireland by recruiting selected Anglo, Catholic and Protestant Irish (the Ascendancy Irish) through grants of property, power and privilege. Imperial military service helped to secure the property interests of the Bruce family in Cork. George Evans Bruce followed the pattern of class identity set out for Ascendancy Irish. He attended Trinity College Dublin, but instead of graduating, went to Sandhurst Military Academy and later was deployed in the service of empire in Africa, India and Australia and the First World War.<sup>44</sup>

Ascendancy Irish were critical to England's imperial fortunes; however, their allegiance to England reflected the problematic location of Irish identity. Through successive regimes of imperial governance in Ireland, England's purpose varied from the ethnic seeding of Scots and English Protestants in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries to proposals for the culling of all Irish regardless of religious identity.<sup>45</sup> The imperial temper was continually frustrated by Irish refusal to conform to English hegemony. Protestant and Catholic Anglo-Irish revolted against England in 1798 and dared to demand a United Ireland. Political annexation under the Act of Union in the 1800s did not quieten Irish discontent about its loss of parliamentary independence. England was not prepared to concede to Ireland and responded by imposing more repressive laws to curtail agitation.<sup>46</sup> Continuing political,

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nineteenth century' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery, Eds., *A Military History of Ireland*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1997, p. 337.

<sup>43</sup>Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, Pimlico, London, 2003, pp. 6, 132, 163, 193.

<sup>44</sup>Bruce-Seton Papers, op. cit., MS.

<sup>45</sup>David Baker, *Between Nations: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marvell and the Question of Britain*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1997; Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, New York, 1999; Joep Leersen, *Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, Its Development, and Literary Expression Prior to the Nineteenth Century*, John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1986.

<sup>46</sup>Under Union, Ireland's parliamentary autonomy was ceded to Westminster and from 1801 onwards, Westminster was the central parliamentary instrument on Irish matters. Donald H. Akenson, *An Irish History of Civilization*, Volume One, Granta Books, London, 2005, pp. 398-404.

agrarian and social unrest between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries frustrated the Crown to the extent that it imposed extreme penalties for Irish dissent by way of transportation, execution and penal incarceration.<sup>47</sup>

So fanatical was anti-Irish prejudice in the nineteenth century that historian Linda Colley admits that she cannot explain the 'sheer scale of agitation against Catholic emancipation'.<sup>48</sup> English Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli recorded his feelings towards the Irish in this vitriolic statement:

This wild, reckless, indolent, uncertain and superstitious race have [sic] no sympathy with the English character. Their fair deal of human felicity is an alternation of clannish broils and coarse idolatry. Their history describes an unbroken circle of bigotry and blood.<sup>49</sup>

Blood asserted a valid entitlement to be named Irish as indicated by George Evans Bruce; on the other hand, an Irish genealogy did not necessarily translate as a barrier to Englishness. Allegiance to England or Ireland in absolute terms was particularly problematic given the hybrid nationality status of the Anglo-Irish who were also pressured by Irish nationalists to 'reject the position of superiority vis-à-vis the colonized into which they...had...been born'.<sup>50</sup> To declare allegiance to Ireland on the terms adopted in nineteenth-century Catholic nationalist ideologies would have been problematic for the beneficiaries of English imperial rule in Ireland.

### **Ambiguities of location**

As indicated in Linda Colley's analysis of the historical evolution of the United Kingdom, political conservatives were deeply anxious about containing the effects of cultural hybridity in order to retain Celtic-Anglo-Protestant allegiance to England. By subsuming Ireland's national interests under the political rubric of the United Kingdom, it was thought that this would put an end to Ireland's demands for national sovereignty. However, the

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<sup>47</sup>Nicholas Canny, 'The Formation of the Irish Mind: Religion, Politics and Gaelic Irish Literature 1580-1750' in *Past and Present*, 1982, Number 95, pp. 91-116; Robert Kee, op. cit., pp. 108-121.

<sup>48</sup>Colley, op. cit., p. 330.

<sup>49</sup>Cited in Huttenback, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>50</sup>David Cairns and Shaun Richards, Eds., *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988, p. 25.

political constitution of the United Kingdom was not necessarily representative of a collective sense of Britishness. As Linda Colley observed:

Identities are not like hats....Great Britain did not emerge by way of a 'blending' of the different regional or national cultures contained within its boundaries...The sense of a common identity...did not come into being...because of integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures...Instead Britishness was imposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above all in response to conflict with the Other.<sup>51</sup>

The Celtic-Anglo-Protestant alliance may have secured imperial interests in Ireland but whatever was seen to lurk in Celtic bloodlines represented a repository of loathsome behaviours. Social theorist Thomas Carlyle promoted the notion of the whip and the lash to cure Irish primitivism and advocated for the extermination of rural Irish in the manner used to exterminate 'wolves and various other obstinately *free* creatures before now!'<sup>52</sup> When he saw Irish Famine refugees huddled on the Liverpool Docks, American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne described them as moving about like "maggots in cheese".<sup>53</sup>

Coded through stereotype and in imperial discourses of 'otherness', the 'simianization of the Irish' in eighteenth and nineteenth-century images devalued them as 'a weaker life-form in the definition of the Anglo-Teutonic experience'.<sup>54</sup> Weaker forms of life could be mapped scientifically when determining typological race characteristics such as those associated with hair colour. The Celt was predominantly tabled at the highest range of nigrescence (those with black-curly hair) in comparison to lighter colours that reflected Anglo-Irish and Protestant settlements in Dublin, Limerick and Ulster.<sup>55</sup> Metropolitan areas of London, Liverpool and Manchester were coded black to record the presence of Irish, Scots and Welsh. Ethnographic maps facilitated a logical way to understand racial, cultural and social differences and expressed British racial hegemony through coded light and dark

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<sup>51</sup>Colley, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>52</sup>Carlyle cited in Joep Leersen, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, Cork University Press in association with Field Day, Cork, 1996, pp. 97-98.

<sup>53</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne cited in Colm Tóibín and Diarmaid Ferrier, *The Irish Famine*, Profile Books, London, 2002, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup>Murray G.H. Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999, p. 100.

<sup>55</sup>James Vernon "Cornwall and the English Imagi(nation)" in Geoffrey Cubbit, Ed., *Imagining Nations*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998, pp. 153-172.

characteristics. Encoded as blackness, Celticism symbolised a ‘Dark shadow...that...still sometimes rises, like a spectre, partially eclipsing the mild radiance of that Christian truth which shines upon the land’.<sup>56</sup> England capitalised on mobilising an intense paranoia about Celtic neighbours, imperial powers in Europe, and Roman-Catholicism to secure hegemony in the United Kingdom.<sup>57</sup>

Imaging and imagining Irishness as a negative polarity of Englishness provided a methodology for connoting the negative characteristics of ‘un-British’ nationality types.<sup>58</sup> Even if the Irish were loyal to the Crown and insinuated into the British establishment, it did not mean that they automatically became Anglicised facsimiles.<sup>59</sup> They may have adopted the identity-cult of elitism and the British penchant for stately homes and a love for military heroism and discipline, but while projecting an exterior image of Britishness, they remained ‘in their own minds and behaviour Welsh, or Scottish, or Irish as well’.<sup>60</sup>

Eyre Lewis Bruce, the father of Australian-born author Mary Grant Bruce, was remembered for his strong allegiance to the British monarchy. He was a defender of Protestantism and disassociated himself from Fenian Ireland. He was proud of his Irish origins and Irish culture.<sup>61</sup> Eyre Lewis Bruce was an inheritor of ideological, cultural, political and social traditions that historically fashioned Ireland’s subservient status. His social class witnessed the ascent of Anglican and Protestant power in Ireland from the seventeenth century onwards. During the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy faced the challenge of an emerging Catholic middle class and the emancipist desires of the majority Irish Catholic population to be freed from political subservience.<sup>62</sup>

The nature of Irish nationalism in the nineteenth century has been extensively debated in terms of the success or failure of efforts to collectivise and unify Ireland. The Young

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid, p. 157.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Pittock, op. cit., pp. 20-60.

<sup>59</sup>Colley, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>60</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>61</sup>Notes from Mary Grant Bruce Collection, SLV. MS.

<sup>62</sup>Patrick J. Geary, *The Myths of Nations: the Medieval Origins of Europe*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2002; Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.

Ireland Movement of the 1840s proposed an ecumenical nationalism that could recover a culturally authentic Ireland to mobilise the ‘superior idealism and imagination of Ireland’ through literature, art, music and cultural activities.<sup>63</sup> The more radical strategies of Fenian and republican nationalism called for collective uprisings, armed revolution and the overthrow of Anglo-Irish property and English rule. What challenged Anglo-Irish hegemony in the nineteenth century was the ability and power of Catholic clerical elites to mobilise the aspirations of the Catholic bourgeoisie and the majority Catholic population into a collective image of national identity synonymous with religious affiliation.<sup>64</sup> The moulding of Irish nationalist ideologies into ecclesiastical images of political Catholicism offset other entitlements to Irish identity. The fracturing of imperial privilege and power in nineteenth-century Ireland brought into question which ideological and cultural forms had the right to ‘employ the national nomenclature in the course of their own self-and-other constituting discourses’.<sup>65</sup>

The hyphenated space between Anglo and Irish identity expressed a problem of self-representation. Nineteenth-century Protestant Irish poet Samuel Ferguson described this dilemma as a ‘Dialogue between the Head and Heart’.<sup>66</sup> Later correspondence written to George Evans Bruce in Nigeria in the early 1900s confirmed how the dilemma of self-representation was exacerbated by continual conflict over the qualification of kinship entitlement to Irish identity.<sup>67</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, Evelyn Bruce-Seton had disassociated from the sense of Irishness that emerged from sectarian conflicts between Unionist Protestant and Catholic Ireland:

To us Ireland is unmeasurably greater than any Irishman...England is where an Englishman stands whether Flanders or Australia or England. *N'est ce pas?* ...Heaven forgive me, I don't love the Irish nation, any longer...But like you, there isn't a field in all Ireland that I didn't love. N & S are the same to me – its [sic] all *Ireland*

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<sup>63</sup>Kiberd, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>64</sup>Hugh Kearney, *Ireland: Contested Ideas of Nationalism and History*, 2000, New York University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 81-110.

<sup>65</sup>Julian Moynihan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, 1996, p. 40.

<sup>66</sup>Samuel Ferguson cited in Gerry Smyth, *Decolonisation and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature*, Pluto Press, London, 1998, p. 671

<sup>67</sup>Bruce-Seton papers, 1307/4 (b), 1910, 3 pp. nd., SLV., MS.

whether its [sic] Cork or Antrim, no spot can ever compare with it. That makes me loathe the men who have filled it up with treachery & murder.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Fullertons**

The Fullertons from Belfast were also part of an imperial history that converged with the sixteenth-century settlement of Scots-Presbyterians in Ireland. The 'Plantation' period between 1556 and 1649 represented the Crown's attempts to re-ethnicise Catholic Ireland through transplanting large populations of English and Scottish Protestants.<sup>69</sup> According to the *National Census of Ireland* (1851) the Fullertons came from a relatively poor social background. They lived in urban Belfast and worked as cottiers and weavers in the Irish linen industry. Although the Fullertons and the Bruces could be classified as a Protestant demographic, there was little commonality between their social, cultural and economic histories. Common ideological features were loyalty to the United Kingdom, the Crown, and opposition to Roman-Irish-Catholicism.

Mary Fullerton's unpublished memoirs recalled her father's arrival in Melbourne in 1853 with his seventeen year-old sister Elizabeth (a.k.a Lizzie or Eliza) following the deaths of their parents in Belfast. Ten surviving siblings remained in Ireland, leaving two to decide their future in Australia. Personal and family circumstances were behind Robert Fullerton's decisions to emigrate. Although brought up as a strict fundamentalist in the Ulster-Scots Presbyterian tradition, Robert Fullerton had a different attitude to Ireland and did not follow the sectarian ideology of Ulster loyalism. The comments made in the Fullerton memoirs suggest that Robert Fullerton had already turned away from his Protestant heritage before he migrated. Mary Fullerton recalled how:

My father used to tell me he was caught young and unthinking into Orangeism with its mean commemorations and paltry aspirations...he realized its ugly nature and broke away. He came in contact early with the people of the South & West of Ireland...he got to know the Irish Celt.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Evelyn Seton to George Evans Bruce, *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>W.A. Hanna, *Intertwined Roots: An Ulster-Scot Perspective on Heritage, History, Hostility, and Hope in Northern Ireland*, Columba Press, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 2000.

<sup>70</sup>Mary Fullerton, 'Unpublished Memoirs', Fullerton Papers, Centre for Gippsland Studies, Monash University, Gippsland, Australia, nd., pp. 30-31, MS.

When he died in 1901, the Fullerton family rejected approaches from the Melbourne Loyal Orange Lodge for them to carry out Robert Fullerton's funeral according to the traditions of Presbyterian Orangeism. Robert Fullerton did not share 'the fanatic fury of nature necessary to active hatred' and discarded the divisive legacies of Ulster's history of religious sectarianism.<sup>71</sup>

What can be gathered from Fullerton family memoirs is that Robert Fullerton's affiliation with Celtic Irish culture upset the orthodoxies of separatism and sectarianism that shaped Protestant dominance in the province of Ulster. Robert Fullerton tested political, cultural and ideological devices that represented metaphors of division. He challenged the siege mentality of nineteenth-century Ulster-Presbyterian culture which sought to protect and defend territorial, political and cultural boundaries against Celtic and Catholic Ireland.<sup>72</sup> In one sense, he endorsed the ecumenical sentiment of Young Ireland nationalism of the 1840s as well as the traditions of independence and dissent characterised by the Irish revolutionary period of 1798.

### **The McKeowns**

Edward McKeown and Robert Fullerton shared the lower rungs of nineteenth-century Irish society. The McKeowns came from County Armagh in Ulster.<sup>73</sup> They typified the rural Irish-Catholic tenant farmer on a small land holding. In socio-cultural terms the McKeowns represented the predominant image of peasant Ireland at the turn of the nineteenth century. Like co-Irish émigrés already discussed, there is little documentary evidence of Edward McKeown's interpretation of Irish identity. What is known about Edward McKeown's life in Australia is gathered from his daughter's memories of a father who fulfilled the stereotype of the drunken, irresponsible Irish. Edward McKeown was remembered less for his commitment to Irish Catholicism or Irish nationalism than for his love of horse and

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>72</sup>James Johnson, *Human Geography of Ireland*, John Wiley and Sons, London, 1994.

<sup>73</sup>The history of the McKeown family in Armagh is traced through the family records of the McGarry and McAteer families in Randalstown, County Antrim; *Indices of Wills and Estates* (Ireland) 1830-1920 and *National Census of Ireland* records. National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

alcohol.<sup>74</sup> Edward McKeown arrived in Australia in the 1850s and set himself up as a small landholder near Bairnsdale in Victoria.

### **Images and memories**

Memories of Ireland captured in letters provide some insights into the fragile nature of Irish identity in nineteenth-century national and imperial discourses. Eyre Lewis Bruce espoused loyalty to the Crown and to Protestantism while Robert Fullerton rejected Protestant orthodoxy. Edward McKeown said little about Irish Catholic identity. These Irish-Australian emigrants sit outside the pantheon of Irish national history and Irish political leaders and literary figures. Anglo-Irish legatee George Evans Bruce's emphatic allegiance to Ireland was underpinned by those characteristics of identity supposedly guaranteed by genealogy.<sup>75</sup> Anglo rule in Ireland sought to remake Irish people into images of English and British identity.<sup>76</sup> Military service a means of discipline and manners used to encourage Irish men to develop the 'social and mental angle...to look and speak like an English public school man'.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, looking like 'an English public school man' did not negate the ambivalent status of Anglo-Irish identity. The Celt could be upheld as a hero and simultaneously derided for lacking the idealised qualities of English heroism.<sup>78</sup>

In entering into the subjective territories that shaped the lives of these Irish emigrants to Australia, it can be seen that Ireland's national identity was a fragile and illusionary icon. George Evans Bruce attempted to secure attachment to Irish identity through genealogical membership. Anglo-Irish legatees made considerable effort to retain connections to their Irish homeland. Evelyn Seton could not relate to continual sectarian conflicts over the features of Irish national identity but still articulated a patriotic love that embraced the whole of Ireland. Robert Fullerton may have desired to affiliate with Celtic Ireland through associating with southern Irish people. Robert Fullerton threw off the shackles of Protestant history by rejecting ideological and religious orthodoxies. Edward McKeown said nothing

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<sup>74</sup>Coleen Burke, loc. cit., p. 2.

<sup>75</sup>David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Viking, England, 1997, pp. 202-204.

<sup>76</sup>Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, Sage, London, 1993.

<sup>77</sup>Robertson in E.M. Spiers, 'Army organisation and society in the nineteenth century' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery, Eds., *A Military History of Ireland*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1997, p. 342.

<sup>78</sup>Pittock, op. cit., p. 43.

about his identity as an Irish Catholic. His life in Australia mirrored the stereotypical Paddy living in poverty on a barely sustainable block of land in the colony of Victoria.

When considering the constitution of Irish identity in historical narratives, iterations of identity in Irish nationalist histories tend to cluster the marginalising effects of religious affiliation and political domination. Ireland has been represented as the *bête noir* of English political thinking where imperial might sought to constrain or eliminate Catholic Irish identity through ethnic transplantation, legal process, and cultural and linguistic extinguishment. In his criticism of the telling of the Irish story in the mode of victim and oppressor, Roy Foster offered a provocative thesis concerning the narrative fabrication of Irish national histories. Foster proposed that the telling of Irish history acquired a structural paradigm of moral, spatial, and temporal sequencing of plot, actions, causation and respective characters' motivations that was similar to Vladimir Propp's theory on the structure of Russian fairy tale.<sup>79</sup>

Reducing the historical complexity of the Irish story to the formulaic structures and simple language of fairy tale tends to obscure the view that history is enacted through human agency and state-sponsored policies of exclusion, including extermination.<sup>80</sup> England relied on the forcible power of its own image to create systems of power that governed Ireland.<sup>81</sup> Foster's criticism however points to the central role of writing and the terms used to represent national histories. Rewriting and re-righting are central to the terms of qualification and exclusion. As this chapter has shown, narratives of identity constitute translation zones crafted into social, cultural, political and power relations.<sup>82</sup> Cultural bonds between England and Ireland were historically collaborative but also divisive in the sense that the imperial agenda was designed to preserve its narcissistic and self-idealised

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<sup>79</sup>Roy Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making It Up In Ireland*, The Allen Press, London, 2001, xi-xx.

<sup>80</sup>Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, Eds., *De-scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, pp. 3-5.

<sup>81</sup>Arif Dirlik, 'Rethinking Colonialism: Globalization, Postcolonialism and the Nation', *Interventions*, Volume 4, (3), 2002, pp. 428-448 [ISSN 1369-801X print/1469-929X online –Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2006].

<sup>82</sup>David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, Duke University Press, Durham, USA and London, 1993, p. 440.

power to justify, preserve and control the dominant discourse of superiority.<sup>83</sup> On the other, this chapter has shown that bonds of power were relatively fragile in terms of claims of entitlement to Anglo-Irish identity.

In terms of the rewriting and re-righting of Irish history, Foster raises questions about the selection of representational methods used by cultural and intellectual elites to validate claims of entitlement in historical and national discourses.<sup>84</sup> The individuals surveyed in this chapter straddled the ambiguities and contradictions of historical, cultural, and ethnic entitlements to Irish identity. Irish identity was an active and self-expressed desire to belong. In drawing attention to the ways that kinship entitlements were represented in nineteenth-century Irish national and English imperial discourses, this small selection of personal documentation has suggested that Irish cultural identity was held together by fragile political and cultural symbols of nationality.

Meanings of Ireland were to be subjected to other interpretations by generations of Irish emigrants and their descendants who lived outside the geographic boundaries of Ireland. The Famine era coincided with the Bruce, Fullerton and McKeown emigration histories to Australia. The symbolic death of Ireland is captured in the image of 'The Corpse on the Dissecting Table' following the 1845 Famine and the cyclical destruction of emigration and poverty that haunted nineteenth-century Irish society.<sup>85</sup> The Irish diaspora experience has been dominated by narratives about 'half-starved, mainly Catholic, paupers driven in blind panic against the rock of British indifference or hatred'; leaving little room to challenge dominant framings of Irish identity.<sup>86</sup> Between the 1840s and 1860s, millions of Irish emigrated to Australia, Canada, America, England, Africa and other places. The next chapter traces the Irish story from the time these respective emigrants stepped on to Australian shores and will draw attention to the writing of Irish identity in Australia that

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<sup>83</sup> Alistair Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998; Spurr, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>84</sup> Spurr, *ibid*, pp. 10, 16.

<sup>85</sup> Kee, op. cit., pp. 290-298.

<sup>86</sup> Donald M. MacRaild, Ed., *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2000, p. 2.

Australian-born daughters of these nineteenth-century Irish emigrants were to confront when negotiating their sense of home and their identity.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Across the water*

When the respective writers' fathers migrated to Australia in the mid 1850s, they were to confront the ways that Irish identity was understood in nineteenth-century Australian society. This chapter will elaborate how patterns of narration relayed particular ethno-cultural and political meanings related to the identity of Irish people in Australia.

#### **Foundations**

Foundational histories have an important bearing on the constitution of Irish identity in Australia, particularly the manner in which religious identity and political nationalism have set those precedents.<sup>1</sup> Notions about the criminal nature of the Irish people were introduced to Australia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at a time when transportation was used to curtail Irish social and political agitation.<sup>2</sup> Although the Irish were deemed to be more 'law-abiding than their Protestant Anglo-Saxon neighbours', their criminal nature was beyond dispute given the high ratio of Irish convicted transportees.<sup>3</sup> It has already been shown that that Irish courts and Irish magistrates preferred to enforce transportation than pursue proper legal justice.<sup>4</sup> Convictions and transportations for first offences in Ireland were ten per cent higher than in England.<sup>5</sup>

Characterised by a history of criminality and convictism, 'free' Irish emigrants also faced an Anglo-Australian colonial bourgeoisie suspicious about their capacity to become loyal imperial subjects. In the early nineteenth century, prominent anti-

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<sup>1</sup>Transportation of the Irish had been common before the first conscription to Australia. The American colonies supported the expansion of the colonial economy through the regular supply of indentured and slave labour. The Americas were convenient for clearing out "Idle persons....descended from...unlawfull propagations" from Ireland between the seventeenth to late eighteenth centuries in lieu of capital execution. An estimated 165,000 Irish convicts and indentured servants were transported to the American colonies by 1775. Bob Reece, *The Origins of Irish Convict Transportation to New South Wales*, Palgrave, London, 2000, pp. 1, 3, 10, 16, 34.

<sup>2</sup>A range of restrictive legislation under *Vagrancy Acts, Police Acts, Hard Labour Acts, Insurrection Acts* were enacted to contain political and social protest in Ireland.

<sup>3</sup>A. G. L. Shaw, *Convicts & the Colonies: A Study of Penal Transportation from Great Britain & Ireland to Australia & Other Parts of the British Empire*, The Irish Historical Press, Ireland, 1998, p. 167.

<sup>4</sup>An Irish House of Commons Report in 1796 confirmed the practice of certain Irish magistrates to confer in private without having full briefs of evidence or facts to convict. There was no censure of the abuse of magisterial power regardless of the implications of juridical misconduct, injustice or illegality. Ibid, p. 169.

<sup>5</sup>Stephen Nicholas and Peter Shergold, 'Convicts as Migrants' in Stephen Nicholas, Ed., *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's Past*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 43-61.

Catholic campaigner, John Dunmore Lang, felt that Australia could not accommodate the faith traditions of Irish Catholicism and Anglo-Protestantism. He was afraid that Irish Catholic emigrants in Australia would maintain their historical conflicts with England. Although a Scottish emigrant, Lang vehemently espoused complete loyalty to the empire through the select sponsorship of Protestant emigrants.<sup>6</sup> Irish Catholics were not accredited as the ideal type to represent British-Australian imperial nationality.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the rhetoric of anti-Irishness in nineteenth-century Australian social and cultural discourses, the practical needs of the economy were fulfilled by Irish emigrants from a variety of religious, economic and political backgrounds.<sup>8</sup> Reading into the philosophical and religious ethos of nineteenth-century notions of agency, spiritual salvation and social mobility, Irish emigration to Australia was encouraged to save the Irish from moral decline.<sup>9</sup> Caroline Chisholm, a prominent Sydney-based philanthropist, undertook a tour of Ireland in the mid-1800s to look for suitable emigrants:

At Cork...in the heart of that country where many pinned their hopes to the story of the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, the Irish paid homage to her as a great social reformer who had 'moralised emigration' by placing in the hands of the humble and the industrious the chance to move to lands where all honest labour might earn a just reward without detriment to their health, their self-respect or their morals.<sup>10</sup>

Although somewhat patronising in his judgments about Chisholm, Manning Clark observed that national histories are constituted by paradoxes. Chisholm's ideal Australian emigrants were rural Irish Catholic peasants. Australian colonial governments paid for Irish emigrant passages and subsidies.<sup>11</sup> Fifty-two per cent of Irish emigrants in the colony of Victoria were officially sponsored. The high rate of official sponsorship suggested little problem with governing the volume of Irish

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<sup>6</sup>Lang came from Scottish Presbyterian stock and was an important influence in Australian colonial society. Protestant emigration to Australia was part of his evangelical mission to recruit the correct genealogical type that would advance Australia. Rowland S. Ward, Ed., *Presbyterian Leaders in Nineteenth Century Australia*, Wantirna, Victoria, 1993.

<sup>7</sup>Frank Farrell, *Themes in Australian History: Questions, Issues and Interpretation in an Evolving Historiography*, New South Wales University Press, Australia, 1990, ix.

<sup>8</sup>Druckman, loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup>Margaret Kiddle, *Caroline Chisholm*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1996.

<sup>10</sup>C. M. H. (Manning) Clark, *A History of Australia: From 1824 to 1888*, Volume III, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1999, p. 241.

<sup>11</sup>Robin Haines, *Indigent Misfits or Shrewd Operators?: Government-Assisted Emigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia 1831-1860*, Working Papers in Economic History, No. 61, May 1993, pp.1- 46.

arrivals.<sup>12</sup> How to accommodate Irish Catholics and preserve a predominantly Protestant-Anglo-Saxon-Australian society was the issue under question. The issue of Irish identity was continually under review in Australia between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where:

An Irish background or an Irish name...might be something different altogether...By the end of the century...both recent immigrants and children of earlier Irish immigrants had to contend with a popular image of the Irish based on convict and peasant origins and assumed to be Catholic. In fact, about 30 per cent of Irish immigrants came from northern [sic] Ireland and were likely to be Presbyterian.<sup>13</sup>

Voluntary Irish emigration and enforced transportation of Irish prisoners operated side by side when Robert Fullerton, Eyre Lewis Bruce and Edward McKeown arrived in the colony of Victoria in the 1850s.<sup>14</sup> They were single, in their mid-twenties, and seeking new futures in Melbourne. Robert Fullerton was obsessed with finding gold and ‘followed the dream, the excitement from rush to rush...and...lived from day to day’ in the Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine areas.<sup>15</sup> Edward McKeown led an itinerant life searching for gold in the Gippsland region. Eyre Lewis Bruce from Charleville in Cork adhered to the traditionally conservative professions preserved for Bruce descendants in Ireland and joined the Victorian Public Service in 1858.<sup>16</sup> The number of Irish emigrants surged to eighty thousand during the gold rush era, with sixty thousand deciding to remain permanently.<sup>17</sup> On one hand, the Irish emigrant was a necessary fixture of the colonial economy; on the other, Irish political and religious identity was an available construct to use for categorising ‘un’ Australian qualities when Irish Home Rule debates and Irish political crises erupted.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Akenson, 1996, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>13</sup>Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia: Volume 3, 1860-1900, Glad, Confident Morning*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 1988, p. 124. One in three United Kingdom emigrants in the 1860s were Irish-born and their number significantly increased to 200,000 in the 1870s.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p.158.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup>Jonathan Bruce, ‘Address to the Berwick Historical Society’, November 1966, SLV, 9975/1315 (e), (Bruce papers), op. cit., MS.

<sup>17</sup>Akenson, 1996, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

<sup>18</sup>Malcolm Campbell, ‘John Redmond and the Irish National League in Australia and New Zealand, 1883’, *History* 86 (283), 2001, pp. 348–362; Gerard Carney, *The Constitutional Systems of the Australian States and Territories*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 2006, pp. 183-189; M. J. Kelly, *The Fenian ideal and Irish nationalism, 1882-1916*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK., Rochester, New York, 2006; John Kendle, *Ireland and the Federal Solution The Debate over the United Kingdom Constitution, 1870-1920*, McGill – Queen’s University Press, Montreal & Kingston,

### **Naming potential residents: the problems of loyalty**

One concern about the Irish presence in Australia was the potential for Irish Fenians to use Irish grievances to mobilise a relatively large Irish Catholic sector and agitate for political reform. Threats to the autonomy of the United Kingdom underscored tensions between Irish nationalists and Ulster loyalists regarding the constitution of Home Rule for Ireland.<sup>19</sup> A large percentage of parliamentary representatives in state and colonial governments were Australians from Irish backgrounds. To accommodate the sensitivities of Irish politicians and Irish Catholics in Australia, the hybrid identity of 'Anglo-Celtic Australian' was introduced in nineteenth-century political discourses. The semantic switch was subtle but necessary to provide a space in Australian political discourses where Catholic Australians of Irish descent could become 'Australian nationalists without being British imperialists'.<sup>20</sup> The rhetorical flourish may have provided a way to mediate the political environment of that time but it is not known whether the Irish in Australia were satisfied with the new name given to them.

Not all Irish in Australia were aligned politically in terms of forcing the issue of Irish independence. They appeared to be more concerned with establishing their futures rather than bringing historical and political enmity that would derail those aspirations. Although sympathetic to Irish Catholics and nationalist desires for political liberation, James Francis Hogan documented the Irish presence in Australia as positive and recorded that 'the great body of the Irish-Australians have done good service for their adopted land in a silent and unobtrusive manner'.<sup>21</sup> While the Irish went about rebuilding their lives, questions about the allegiance of Irish-Catholic Australians continued. Irish Fenianism was perceived as a violent aggressive anti-British ideology that threatened the foundations of the British Empire.<sup>22</sup> Fenians had already consolidated a reputation for notoriety and patriotic bravado. In April 1876 American Fenians freed six Irish political prisoners from Fremantle jail. This was known as the *Catalpa* incident.<sup>23</sup> Twenty years previously, other Irish prisoners escaped from

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1989, pp. 32-95; Gary Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish self-government, 1865-1925: From Unionism to Liberal Commonwealth*, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2001.

<sup>19</sup>M. J. Kelly, loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup>James Jupp, 'Immigration and National Identity', in Stokes, Ed., op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>21</sup>James Francis Hogan, *The Irish in Australia*, 1887, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>O'Farrell, 2000, op. cit., pp. 212-215.

<sup>23</sup>Another 60 Fenians were transported to Western Australia in 1865.

Tasmania.<sup>24</sup> John Martin and Kevin Izod O’Doherty were pardoned in 1869; however, those reconsigned to Fremantle jail were targeted under the 1876 *Catalpa* escape plan. While the Irish-American diaspora celebrated the daring of the enterprise, similar episodes would be difficult to contain if those generated a substantial political force against Australia’s colonial government.

It would appear that colonial Australia could accommodate the fluxes of imperialism, nationalism and patriotism with apparent ease. Such an example was witnessed when pardoned transportee and Young Irelander rebel leader Anglo-Irish Protestant William Smith O’Brien (1803-1864) was introduced to Melbourne audiences.<sup>25</sup> Previously convicted for high treason in Ireland and sentenced to be drawn, hanged and quartered, he, and other Irish Confederation members were transported for life to Tasmania on 5 June 1849. O’Brien was pardoned on the proviso he never returned to Australia. When welcomed at an official reception in Melbourne, he was rewarded a gold nugget for his patriotic sacrifice.<sup>26</sup> The future premier of the Victorian colony, Irish-born-Catholic John O’Shanassy, rebuked Australian and English colonial authorities for the extreme punishment handed out because of O’Brien’s patriotism.

The undersigned citizens of Melbourne and Geelong...express...an assurance of our sympathy and esteem...and...acknowledge the immensity of the sacrifice which you made from the noblest feeling that can actuate the heart — a pure and distinguished love of country...and...honour the manly bearing and dignified fortitude which have characterized you under a terrible adversity, and trust that this impolite restriction...may be speedily removed, and that you, consoled for the...trials of the past by a nation’s gratitude...so that...you may enjoy many years...in your native land...and...the prosperity and happiness of her sons.<sup>27</sup>

O’Shanassy’s speech could be read as patriotic bluster but key features of the speech indicated how it was possible to merge Irish patriotism with nineteenth-century concepts of the masculine hero.<sup>28</sup> Although configured in English and Australian legal

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<sup>24</sup>Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa (1843-1915) was a significant figure in the revival of Fenianism in America. His militarist nationalism was extreme. He was prepared to use violence to achieve the political goals of a united Ireland.

<sup>25</sup>R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context Irish Politics & Society 1848-82*, Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1998.

<sup>26</sup>Jarlath Roynane, *The Irish in Australia: Rogues and Reformers, First Fleet to Federation*, Penguin Books, Australia, 2003, pp. 123, 149, 157, 210.

<sup>27</sup>Sir John O’Shanassy 1854 in Bill Wannan, Ed., *The Wearing of the Green: The Lore, Literature, Legend and Balladry of the Irish in Australia*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1965, p. 65.

<sup>28</sup>O’Shanassy was ‘one of those vulgar, upstart petty-bourgeois Irish Catholic immigrants who had accumulated wealth as a pork butcher’ and was seen as having little social, political or cultural

and penal discourses as a criminal and a political traitor, O'Brien's 'manly bearing and dignified fortitude' transcended anti-Irish ideologies to converge as the idealisation of the 'Anglo-Celtic-Australian'. Masculinity mediated the complexities of hybrid allegiance embodied in the hyphenated terminology of Anglo-Celtic-Australianess. The Irish in Australia could thus publicly express their patriotism even though Irish nationalism was perceived as the enemy of imperialism.

As Derek Heater has argued, securing national and political allegiance is a complex task of mobilising 'habits of the heart', which in turn, can be used to create a sense of national community.<sup>29</sup> Loyalty to the Crown was central to the preservation of Anglo-Protestant power in Australia. While the majority of Irish were committed to Australia, demands for Irish independence challenged the functions of the State and Crown, national sovereignty, absolute property and right to rule, and questioned the ethics of 'centralised imperial power...and...morals'.<sup>30</sup> Ideally, Australia should have existed as an isolated outpost of homogeneous Anglo-Protestantism; instead, it was infected by convictism, the off-loading of workhouse poor, single women and emigrant Catholic Irish whose contradictory religious beliefs demanded devotion to foreign ecclesiastical rule and not to the imperial monarch.<sup>31</sup>

For the main part, Australian society was relatively tolerant of the Irish presence. Australians took part in Irish-Australian social and cultural functions, music and literature and wore the green on Saint Patrick's Day celebrations.<sup>32</sup> Irishness in Australia had little in common with the politics of American-Irish Fenianism. It was 'too strong a meat for the average Irish-Australian stomach'.<sup>33</sup> Saint Patrick's Day celebrations in Australia were also accompanied by scrutiny over Irish allegiance. Cronin and Adair have suggested that the Irish were made to feel ashamed of their

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decorum. C. M. (Manning) H. Clark, *A History of Australia: From 1824-1888*, Volume IV, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1999, p. 31.

<sup>29</sup>Derek Heater, *What is Citizenship?*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup>John Morley, 1868, p. 327 cited in Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule 1867-1921*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Deryck M. Schreuder and Brian H. Fletcher, Ruth Hutchison, Eds., *The State and The People: Australian Federation and nation-making, 1870-1901/John Manning Ward*, Federation Press, New South Wales, 2001.

<sup>32</sup>Oliver MacDonagh, *The Sharing of the Green: A Modern Irish History for Australians*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1996, pp. 113, 124-125, 139, 160. At the early stage of her writing career, Mary Grant Bruce wrote about the annual St. Patrick's Day races in country towns to record features of rural Australian life in the later part of the nineteenth century.

<sup>33</sup>O'Farrell, 2000, op. cit., p. 215.

identity and could not celebrate their cultural heritage freely. Consequently, the celebration of Irish culture lost its hard-edged, bellicose pride in being Irish.<sup>34</sup> Empathy towards the Irish began to evaporate in the late 1880s. Irish-Australian campaigns for Irish Home Rule reactivated tensions between Irish Catholic and Anglican clergy, Protestant Orange loyalists and pro-British Australians.<sup>35</sup> The nature of Irish-Australian relations has been the subject of many historical and political debates. It appears that nascent anti-Irishness would resurface whenever the Irish were perceived as a threat to established order.<sup>36</sup>

### **Keeping the house in order**

Australian colonial governments may have reluctantly accepted Irish Catholic emigrants but they could capitalise on the professional capacities of the Anglo-Irish-Protestant establishment such as Eyre Lewis Bruce from County Cork. Eyre Lewis Bruce represented the ideal Irish emigrant needed by the Australian colony to assist with legislative, government and bureaucratic administration. At the high end of the legal and political spectrum, Anglo-Irish emigrant class elites were central to the establishment of Australia's legal-parliamentary and public administration frameworks.

The educated professional emigrant represented another face of Irish identity in Australia. Jarlath Roynayne considers that the weight of nationalism and sectarianism has overwritten the Anglo-Irish emigrant experience. Irish identity was more complex than a simplification of politics and religion. Despite having an Anglo-Protestant heritage, 'Trinity-educated Irish had attitudes of mind and social and cultural values that set them apart from the English and Scottish immigrants, and some of the most distinguished were Trinity-educated Catholics'.<sup>37</sup> In Australia, as they had in Ireland and England, the Anglo-Irish negotiated the ambiguities and contradictions of cultural and national politics in such a way that having a 'dual nationality became a highly profitable reality'.<sup>38</sup> Equally, the sharing of Irish cultural sentiment was of little consequence when it came to conflicts over law and order in Australia. Different

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<sup>34</sup>Mike Cronin and Daryl Adair, *The Wearing of the Green: A History of St. Patrick's Day*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p. 59.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, pp. 88-92.

<sup>36</sup>Oliver MacDonagh and W.F. Mandle, Eds., *Ireland and Irish-Australia: Studies in Cultural and Political History*, Croom Helm, London, 1986; Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia: A Social History*, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, Victoria, 1992; Jeff Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia, 1910 to 1925*, Citadel Books, Sydney, 2002.

<sup>37</sup>Ronayne, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>38</sup>Colley, loc. cit., p. 162.

interpretations of Irish identity can be seen in legal / penal discourses and in Australian popular culture. When ‘sharing the green’ with the archetypal Irish rebel Ned Kelly, Irish-born trial judge Redmond Barry had little concern about executing his legal duties. The personification of Ned Kelly as the iconic victim of injustice has remained a popular image of Irishness in Australia. Such a characterisation has tended to reduce the complexities of Irish identity to simple stereotype without full recognition of the range of cultural diversity in Ireland or with Irish identity in Australia.<sup>39</sup>

Ronayne appears to suggest that elite Irish colonisers were more sympathetic to Indigenous Australians and showed a more humane consciousness towards them than had their English counterparts. In support of that argument, the Myall Creek massacre would not have been prosecuted had it not been for Anglo-Irish-Catholic trial judge John Hubert Plunkett who resisted the prevailing logic of race theories, and instead, sentenced the white murderers to death.<sup>40</sup> The benign effects of Irish colonialism have also been iterated in Catherine Killerby’s interpretation of the contribution made to Australian nationhood by Irish missionary nuns.<sup>41</sup> Ursula Frayne’s progressive Irish liberal humanism superceded ‘empire building inclinations’ because her affection towards Indigenous Australians was devoid of racially formed attitudes. Yet Frayne arbitrarily superimposed her own theological, cultural and imperial order by substituting quasi-regal names such as “Queens”, “Princesses” and “Kings” when renaming Aboriginal elders. She personally implored Queen Victoria to assist her Catholic mission so that her nuns could separate Indigenous children from their parents and from their cultural heritage. Frayne wanted Aboriginal children to adopt imperial values so they could be trained as servants and become useful to Australia’s agricultural and domestic economies.

If having an Irish identity produced a more humane attitude to race consciousness in Australia, Irish men and women were equally as proficient in adopting English imperialist attitudes towards Indigenous Australians.<sup>42</sup> O’Farrell alluded to the positive role played by the Irish in Australia’s colonial history by injecting a moral argument

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<sup>39</sup>Seamus Deane, 1991, xxiii in Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire, Colonial Legacies, Irish History and Culture*, Oxford University Press, England, 2002, p. 113.

<sup>40</sup>Ronayne, op. cit., pp. 61-66.

<sup>41</sup>Catherine Killerby, *Ursula Frayne: A Biography*, The University of Notre Dame, Fremantle, Western Australia, 1996, pp. 137-144.

<sup>42</sup>Akenson, 2005, op. cit., pp. 663-694.

about the ability of the Irish to recreate their historically subjugated status. By transforming themselves into sober and civil members of Australian colonial society, the Irish reconfigured their own traumatic histories by adapting the roles of colonisers. The Irish were not dupes but canny players of the 'English game of morals and respectability'.<sup>43</sup> These views suggest that O'Farrell has attempted to situate the Irish outside mainstream Anglo-Protestant colonisation of Australia.

The Irish in Australia may have been ambiguous colonialists and perhaps not necessarily united in relation to the common interests and aims of colonialism. Colonial relationships were complex and competitive, collusive and coercive. Colonial powers determined who would be the 'legitimate progeny and who would not'.<sup>44</sup> If colonising ideologies projected a collective sense of national community, that image was resisted by 'nationalist colonized populations to whom they were opposed'.<sup>45</sup> Here the notion of ambiguous coloniser becomes more critical in terms of determining which social, cultural and racial group would be assigned the status of 'legitimate progeny'. In Australia's socio-economic and political structures, Irish Catholics ranked at the lowest rungs. That order was reversed when it came to race. How Irish Catholics transformed from the lowest class of emigrants to impose the agency and force of colonial rule over Indigenous Australians to pursue their own colonising agenda is not explained in O'Farrell's views about the benign effects of Irish colonisation.

#### **Actors on the pages of history**

O'Farrell opened up questions about the representation of Irish identity in Australia by deconstructing myths about 'wild colonials' and Irish-Catholic oppression. He also differentiated between Irish identity in Australia and in America:

Irish Australia's version of Ireland was...strongly historical and rigorously idealistic. Essentially it was not an involvement in Ireland's contemporary life, but rather an identification with past glories, particularly its reputation as an island of saints and scholars in the days before the British came.<sup>46</sup>

O'Farrell's Irish were entrepreneurial and bequeathed to Australia a uniquely Irish attitude to the world. They were adept at colonial politics and mediated social and

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<sup>43</sup>O'Farrell, 2000, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>44</sup>Ann Laura Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule' in Nicholas B. Dirks, Ed., *Colonialism and Culture*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1992, p. 321.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>O'Farrell, 2000, op. cit., p. 219.

political conflicts in Australia through their improbable Celtic mystique. The Irish emigrant experience of Australia was relatively positive because emigration was seen as an opportunity for economic and social emancipation. The Irish emigration experience has been translated as:

A happy transformation...that was...liberated by Australian openness and...a belief that all could be aristocrats in Australia...Australian egalitarianism was not a process of leveling down...but the opportunity to level up...What was being pursued and liberated in...colonial environments was personal freedom, the flowering of individual identity.<sup>47</sup>

### **Stories of Irish women**

'Happy transformation' suggested that the Irish in Australia wove modernity's premises of individual choice and agency, autonomy, and socio-economic mobility and agency through their experiences of emigration. This ideological view was also iterated in Chris McConville's interpretation of the relationship between emigration and Irish women emigrants' moral and social redemption, particularly, their progression from servant to Australian citizen. Irish girls acquired greater agency to change the order of domestic servitude by demanding better conditions from prospective employers. Their reluctance to leave Adelaide hiring rooms suggested that they activated intuitive 'Irish' characteristics of self-reliance and confidence. On the other hand, it may have been recognition of their impending domestic enslavement.

Irishwomen delighted in a new authority from the moment they stepped ashore...in Australia they could pick and choose between the places offered. Many a prospective employer left the hiring rooms shocked by...Irish country girls...taking stock of household matrons...In fact the lady of the house often found herself waiting on the servant.<sup>48</sup>

As domestics, Irish women were represented in colonial media as incompetent, stupid, and insolent.<sup>49</sup> Australian colonial women regularly complained about the rebellious 'Biddy' although they were also shadowed by the order of gender relations of the time, where they, as well as their Irish servants, were consigned to domestic roles. Happy transformation is a problematic statement if Irish women were encouraged to migrate for self-agency and economic liberation but instead faced subjugation. Australian

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid, pp. 17, 20, 139.

<sup>48</sup>Chris McConville, *Croppies, Celts & Catholics: the Irish in Australia*, Edward Arnold, Melbourne, 1987, p. 87.

<sup>49</sup>Paula Hamilton, 'Domestic dilemmas: Representations of servants and employers in the popular press' in Susan Margery, S. Rowley and Susan Sheridan, Eds., *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1993, pp. 71-90.

colonial women were enabled through colonial policies to exercise power over other women of subordinate national status.<sup>50</sup>

American scholars are less constrained in their criticism of the levels of anti-Irish prejudice in countries of settlement. Indentured emigration labour programs, such as those offered by Australian and American governments, bore a similar trade economy to earlier slave histories.<sup>51</sup> Domesticity enslaved the Irish woman emigrant. She has been confined to the pages of 'real time history...that...put...her in families'.<sup>52</sup> In O'Farrell's version, Irish women were primarily seen as being devoted to house duties and living in family-type institutions of convents, hotels and isolated cattle-stations. How Irish femininity is imagined and imaged in Australia speaks to the problem of a lack of knowledge of emigrant women's experiences. Irish women were either constructed as moral and virtuous devotees of Catholicism and the idealisation of motherhood, or else as the rebellious heroine whose 'forceful, almost terrible vitality' mirrored the stereotypical larrikin image that bequeathed the 'generous, fun-loving... aura, 'feel'...and... style' associated with Irish identity in Australia.<sup>53</sup>

O'Farrell reproduced a range of ethnographical oddities and peculiarities and idealised rebellious traits and characteristics and has represented the Irish as innocent bystanders who were mostly unaware of their own participation in the colonial history of Australia. They danced through the tribulations of colonial life with energetic good humour tinged with nostalgic sentiment for Ireland. While elaborating the intricacies of Irish community allegiances and social networks and regional variations in Irish emigration patterns, a less harmful coloniser is represented as more sympathetic than the racially intolerant English. The Irish were either saviours of Australian colonial society or a doomed species marching to cultural destruction in a country that did not fully understand or appreciate them. As victimless victims of English history, a benign image of the Irish colonisation of Australia is preserved, although O'Farrell conceded that the Irish were artful colonialists and adept at acquiring property and social status.

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<sup>50</sup>Emily A. Haddad, 'Fatal Nationality: Suilemān Fayyād's Novel *Voices*' in Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton, Eds., *Borders, Exiles and Diasporas*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998, p. 286.

<sup>51</sup>Cohen in O'Sullivan, Ed., 1998, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>52</sup>Fiona Becket, 'A theatrical matrilineage?' in Scott Brewster, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Becket and David Alderson, Eds., *Ireland in Proximity: History, Gender, Space*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, p. 91.

<sup>53</sup>O'Farrell, 2000, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

Despite having positive attitudes to life and enlivening Australian cultural and social life with the 'fun factor', the Irish were not prepared to forget their cultural and historical origins and failed the test of citizenship when it came to redefining themselves as Australians.<sup>54</sup>

### **Home is where the heart is?**

The location of home was the most problematic concept for Irish emigrants to write about.<sup>55</sup> In the Australian context, home was simply a space to inhabit; it was a functional necessity as a dwelling place but it did not have the same symbolic attachment in the Irish sense of homeland.<sup>56</sup>

Contemplation of home was easily extended to discussion of return...This usage of the term was equally common among letters written by men and women, but far more common in letters written from Australia than in correspondence from Ireland...talk of returning 'home' was more important as an affirmation of belonging than a statement of intention.<sup>57</sup>

The notion that home was normatively associated as a woman's place seemed puzzling to Fitzpatrick's sensibilities about Irish masculinity and the culture of Irish men. There is a distinct sense of unease with having to write about Irish men in contexts of domesticity. In attempting to extricate Irish men from what appears to be an enslaving trope of dysfunction, Fitzpatrick has written that Irish emigrant women could have a purpose and place in Australia by 'bearing...children who could look forward to a more comfortable life than their parents'.<sup>58</sup> If Irish men were comfortable with being 'at home', Irish women reported that it took all their time to keep their place.<sup>59</sup> Mary Devlin wrote of the pain of elderly widowhood in Ireland when her uncaring son in Australia ignored her requests for help. She lives on in Australian historical memory as an acceptable representation of Irish womanhood as her 'letters to her son bear sober witness to her insecurities and anxieties, without resorting to uninhibited groveling or wailing'.<sup>60</sup> In authoring the Irish woman's diaspora experience, the historian has intervened to judge the Irish woman's capacity to express her own feelings.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup>David Fitzpatrick, "'This is the place that foolish girls are knowing'": reading the letters of emigrant Irish women in colonial Australia' in McLaughlin, Ed., op. cit., pp. 163-181.

<sup>56</sup>Fitzpatrick, 1994, op. cit., pp. 626-627.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, p. 432.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid, p. 180.

<sup>60</sup>Fitzpatrick, 1994, op. cit., pp. 372-373.

### Women of the house

Irish diaspora theorist Donald Akenson recognised a critical omission in the Irish emigrant story.<sup>61</sup> Irish women were central to the success of colonial societies because emigrant stock had to be physically sound for the hard work of frontier society. Irish women were noted for their fertility, and although conservatives in England, Ireland, America and Australia feared being over-run by ill-gotten progeny, the state also needed to renew itself. For Irish emigration to succeed, colonial countries selected the ‘strongest, healthiest, toughest women’.<sup>62</sup>

There is an idea that the Irish in Australia brought sexual repression to Australia because of Catholic moral values. Contemporary Australian gender relations are thought to exhibit what Miriam Dixson sees as the ‘rigid role stereotyping and Irish fear of sexuality’ that is assumed to reflect Irish Catholic identity.<sup>63</sup> How sexuality is fashioned in this manner raises questions about how moral judgments about one emigrant sector emerge ideologically and culturally. To single out Catholic Irish as the principal source or cause of dysfunctional gender relations has tended to over-estimate the influence and agency of Irish women (namely Catholic) to transform their own subjugation and the sexual economy of Australian colonial society.

Judgments about Irish Catholic morality and Irish women’s sexuality should qualify the perception that one cultural grouping contributed to dysfunctional sexual relations in contemporary Australian society. Emigration statistics show that most women emigrants were English and Protestant.<sup>64</sup> Irish women’s sexual identity cannot be assumed to reflect only religion.<sup>65</sup> Sexual morality and the economy are closely related when determining and enforcing sexual norms.

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<sup>61</sup>Kerby A. Miller with David N. Doyle and Patricia Kelleher, ‘“For love and liberty”: Irish women, migration and domesticity in Ireland and America, 1815-1920’ in O’Sullivan, Ed., 1997, op. cit., p.46.

<sup>62</sup>Donald Harman Akenson, *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants 1815-1922*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal and Kingston, London, Buffalo, 1991, p. 40.

<sup>63</sup>Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda*, Penguin Books, Third Edition, Australia, 1994, p. 155.

<sup>64</sup>The proportion of Catholics in Australia in Victoria varied between 18.8% in 1857 to 21.8% in 1891. In 1921, Catholics represented 21.6% of Australia’s population. The ethnic composition of Australian colonial society in 1891 was 48.8% English; 18.6% Irish Catholic; 14% Scottish and 7.1%. 1911 Australian Census data combined the nationality status of Catholics in Australia which suggested that Catholics had double the number of children of other nationality groups. Roman Catholics had 4.14 children while Catholics of other nationalities had 3.85; Anglican 3.82; Methodist 4.10 and Lutheran 4.87. Akenson, 1991, op. cit., pp. 62-63, 75.

<sup>65</sup>Pauline Rule, ‘“Tell father and mother not to be unhappy for I am very comfortable: a sketch of Irish women’s experiences in colonial Victoria”’ in Trevor McLaughlin, Ed., *Irish Women in Colonial Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1998, p. 131. For example, Presbyterian

Sexual prudery in nineteenth-century Ireland had little to do with the Church and all to do with the economics of the emerging middle class. Delayed sexual intimacy for women until marriage was thus to emerge as a most important social...norm... vigorously enforced in almost every aspect of life...Economics, and not sentiment, were the main issues.<sup>66</sup>

Corresponding evidence from other emigrant destinations should substantiate whether Irish sexual norms and values were significant in other countries of settlement. This should be more obvious in the American context given the higher numbers of Irish women who migrated there. Young Irish women left the shackles of traditional Irish life. Their willingness to emigrate, often on their own, helped to shape ideas about individual autonomy and the constitution of the modern family.<sup>67</sup> In contrast to Dixson, Hasia Diner concluded that Irish emigrant women challenged conventional nineteenth-century social and sexual norms and changed traditional economic and social roles set out for them in nineteenth-century Irish society.<sup>68</sup> They resisted paying remittances to support male relatives in Ireland. They became economically independent of men and while able to make incremental material changes in their lives, their economic roles were performed at the lowest end of factory and domestic service. The dream of economic and social independence was curtailed by sexual and moral economies that dictated how Irish women would be accommodated in countries of settlement.<sup>69</sup>

### **Cultures of displacement**

The imaging of Irish women in Australia's history gives the distinct impression that they upset prevailing class, race and social order by marrying Chinese and other

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church records held between 1845 and 1867 showed a 13 per cent pre-marital pregnancy rate. Catholic parish records at Kilrush recorded four pre-nuptial births between 1829 and 1850. Akenson, *ibid*, pp. 36-38.

<sup>66</sup>Dympna McLoughlin, 'Woman and sexuality in nineteenth Century Ireland' in Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, Eds., *The Irish Women's History Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p. 85.

<sup>67</sup>Hasia Diner, 'The search for bread: Patterns of female emigration' in Hayes and Urquhart, Eds., *ibid*, pp. 174-179.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid*, p.179.

<sup>69</sup>Kerby Miller et al., in O'Sullivan, Ed., 1997, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-65. Libby Connors, 'The Politics of Ethnicity: Irish Orphan Girls at Moreton Bay' in Rebecca Pelan, Ed., *Irish-Australian Studies: Papers Delivered at the Seventh Irish-Australia Conference*, Crossing Press, Sydney, 1997, pp. 161-166; Trevor McClaughlin, *Barefoot and Pregnant?: Irish Orphan Girls in Australia*, Genealogical Society of Victoria Incorporated, Melbourne, 1991; Deborah Oxley, *Convict Maids: The Forced Migration of Women to Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996; Portia Robinson, *The Women of Botany Bay: A Reinterpretation of the Role of Women in the Origins of Australian Society*, Macquarie Library, Sydney, 1988; Phillip Tardif, *Notorious Strumpets and Dangerous Girls: Convict Women in Van Diemen's Land, 1801-1829*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1990.

undesirables such as Aboriginal men.<sup>70</sup> Irish women were seen to be unworthy of Australian colonial society through keeping company with lowly peers. On the other hand, colonial employers defended Irish domestics and thought of them as “good-tempered, cheerful, and willing...and...pleasanter than many of these model English servants”.<sup>71</sup> Conservative nineteenth-century social commentators thought that Irish women’s sexual conduct was inherently immoral and problematic and that their sexual needs had to be constrained by marriage and welfare institutions. Irish women’s sexuality was seen to threaten morality and social order.<sup>72</sup> Governments in Ireland, England and Australia attempted to reform the sexual and social conduct of Irish and other women from the United Kingdom through institutionalisation and emigration.<sup>73</sup>

Pauperism, sexual licentiousness, and criminality constituted terms of address for Irish femininity in historical perspectives on the morality of Irish women. In post-Famine Ireland she bore the brunt of harsh welfare reforms that punished her for incurring her degraded condition. Although the moral agenda of nineteenth-century welfarism promoted the institutional confinement of women, in Ireland, women unequivocally used state and religious welfare programs as places of respite when unemployed, deserted or homeless:

Entering a refuge was, for the majority of women, a matter of choice. While it is true that many destitute women had only the workhouse or the Magdalen asylum to turn to in times of utter distress, it would appear that the second was the favoured option of many...the stability of life within a refuge, the order and discipline imposed, may have brought a sense of security, and made it an attractive option to remain.<sup>74</sup>

Emigration to Australia was an option for redundant women from the United Kingdom and Ireland to realise a chance for moral redemption. Voluntary women emigrants were also included as the downgraded refuse of empire because of colonial resentment and fears about how to manage women’s sexual and moral conduct when they arrived in Australia without men’s guardianship.

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<sup>70</sup>Rule in McClaughlin, Ed., 1998, op. cit., pp. 123-141.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, pp. 127, 130.

<sup>72</sup>François Crouzet, *The Victorian Economy*, Translated by Anthony Foster, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, pp. 19-30.

<sup>73</sup>Dympna McLoughlin, “‘Superfluous and unwanted deadweight’: the emigration of nineteenth century Irish pauper women’ in O’ Sullivan, Ed., 1997, op. cit., pp. 66-88.

<sup>74</sup>Maria Luddy, ‘Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland’ in Hayes and Urquhart, Eds., op. cit., p. 92.

Large groups of unaccompanied educated governesses were as unwelcome as independent colonial servants and farm hands. The women did not conform to colonial notions of respectability: viewed *en masse* they were ‘unprotected’...Not only were many of the women emigrating independently, bereft of a male guardian, but they had to work to support themselves in a time when it was considered that a genteel woman would not work. Thus a concept of independence ...was...translated into a rhetoric of immorality which over time has contracted to a notion of sexual immorality.<sup>75</sup>

When considering how sexual morality was conceptualised in nineteenth-century discourses, it is clear that Irish women were subjected to competing symbols of Irish femininity. In nineteenth-century Catholic ecclesiastical-nationalist discourses, Irish womanhood represented the symbol of Irish national purity. She was the virgin-like icon of Irish liberation propaganda and the cultural and political ideal to protect the Irish Catholic nation from the onslaught of secularism, modernity and the rapacity of English imperialism.

The ideal Irish woman — the self-sacrificing mother whose world was bound by the confines of her home, a woman who was pure, modest who valued traditional culture, especially that of dress and dance, a woman who inculcated these virtues in her daughters and nationalist ideology in her sons, a woman who knew and accepted her place in society — served the purposes of the ruling Irish male elite.<sup>76</sup>

With church and state operating as a dual political and theological apparatus, the sexual, cultural and social signs attributed to Irish woman revealed contradictory versions of morality. One version of Irish women’s sexual morality was represented in Irish ecclesiastical-nationalist discourses as an ideal virtue, while in conservative social discourses in Ireland, England and Australia, it was represented in images of moral and social degradation.

In the promised land of Australia, it appears that Irish women themselves were not prepared to submit to regimes of morality set out for them by Irish discourses of nationhood. Whether it came to a choice of remaining loyal to the spiritual aspirations of Irish Catholicism, or taking an opportunity to improve her social and economic circumstances, it would appear that Irish Catholic women were less inhibited about religious tradition and were more likely to marry into different religious groups unlike

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid, xi.

<sup>76</sup>Maryann Valiulis, ‘Neither feminist nor flapper: The ecclesiastical construction of the ideal Irish woman’ in Hayes and Urquhart, Eds., op. cit., p. 157.

their English and Irish Protestant counterparts.<sup>77</sup> Judgments made about Catholic Irish women's sexual morality, religious identity and cultural heritage raise questions about the reference points of such claims.<sup>78</sup>

### **Sexualising metaphors of transgression**

In nineteenth-century penal Australia, Irish women convicts were subjected to excessive punishment in comparison to women of other nationalities. While pointing out the differences in the treatment of Irish women convicts, Joy Damousi acknowledges the difficulties of verifying whether individual or generic anti-Irish prejudice explained the reason for the level of punishment meted to Irish women convicts.<sup>79</sup> For Portia Robinson, the attribution of 'the criminal whore stereotype' has overwritten the ways in which Irish women's identity was differentiated in Australian criminal discourse.<sup>80</sup> Because Damousi does not illustrate how anti-Irish prejudice was a significant point of difference in the constitution of Irish women's criminality, Robinson has argued that more attention should have been given to investigating the relationships between criminality and nationality instead of generalising that gender alone represented the universal indicator of women's oppression.<sup>81</sup> Gender is a dominant trope in national histories where women are claimed as 'biological and social reproducers' of the nation's interests.<sup>82</sup> Sexuality and gender operate in cultural, political, ideological and historical contexts and in social practices that seek to curtail and control women's lives and their capacity to become independent social actors. How Irish women are imaged in nationalist and historical discourses presents some methodological difficulty when attempting to differentiate Irishness as a part of, as well as being separate to, colonialist constructs of race, gender, ethnicity and nationality.

Historical and cultural interpretations of Irish women's identity in Australia are somewhat limited attributions based on religious identity, criminality, sexuality,

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<sup>77</sup>Eric Richards and Ann Herraman, 'If she was to be hard up she would sooner be hard up in a strange land than where she would be known: Irish women in colonial Australia', in McLaughlin, Ed., 1998, op. cit., pp. 82-104.

<sup>78</sup>Akenson, 1991, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>79</sup>Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.

<sup>80</sup>Portia Robinson, 'Thank God it can be no worse: Irish women transported to New South Wales, c. 1788-1828 – an Australian Irish identity' in McLaughlin, Ed., 1998, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Sita Ranchod-Nillson and Mary Ann Tétraeult, *Women, States, and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000, p. 6.

morality and social dysfunction. In terms of whether Irish women were able to recover a space to become entrepreneurial agents of their own destinies, some nineteenth-century Irish-born women emigrants broke through cultural and gender barriers as writers and academics. Anna Maria Bunn (nee Murray born in Limerick in 1808 and died in Australia in 1889) is credited as the first women writer to be published in Australia. Eva O'Doherty neé Kelly (born in Galway in 1829 and died in Australia in 1910) married Young Irelander Kevin Izod O'Doherty and was the iconic 'Eva of the Nation' who wrote poetry and articles about Irish liberation. Bella Guerin was the first Australian woman university graduate in 1883.<sup>83</sup>

Apart from some individual successes, Donald Akenson has articulated the epistemological dilemma of the disappearance of Irish women emigrants.<sup>84</sup> Historical authorities have offered representations of Irish women's identity but whether these accurately reflected the lives and experiences of Irish women is debatable and would suggest that when Irish women dared to speak, historians have ignored their voices.

### **Back to the beginnings?**

Ethno-cultural and political narratives have relayed particular images of Irish identity. Irish people were physically present in Australia but did not fully embrace Australia as their emotional home. The Irish acquired material and economic commodities but not a deep sense of cultural attachment to Australia. The relative silence of Irish emigrants may have indicated a withdrawal from public discourse as a result of continual scrutiny over political loyalties to Australia. Having an Irish name was enough to raise suspicions about Irish political allegiance. Irish feelings towards the monarchy were not as overtly hostile as presumed. Despite attempts by Irish nationalist leaders to defame the Crown, Irish populations of all religions were covert monarchists and were loyal to the Crown as well as being patriotically and culturally Irish.<sup>85</sup>

Mary Grant Bruce (1878-1958); Mary Eliza Fullerton (1868-1946) and Marie Pitt (1869-1948) lived through the era where Ireland occupied a significant space in Australian cultural, national and political debates. The campaign for Irish Home Rule

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<sup>83</sup>Pauline Clarke, *Pen Portraits, Woman Writers and Journalists in Nineteenth Century Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1988.

<sup>84</sup>Akenson, 1997, op. cit., pp. 157-188.

<sup>85</sup>James Murphy, *Abject Loyalty: Nationalism & Monarchy in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Victoria*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC, 2001, p. 287.

spanned the nineteenth century and culminated in Irish Civil War in the 1920s.<sup>86</sup> The problematic issue of locating home will become evident. In Chapter Three, I review aspects of the theoretical framework that support my analysis of concepts of home identity in these women's writing.

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<sup>86</sup>Kelly, M. J. *The Fenian ideal and Irish nationalism, 1882-1916*, Woodbridge, UK, Boydell Press, Rochester, New York, 2006.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Theory frameworks*

Gaston Bachelard has argued there is a strong link between psycho-cultural identity and one's spatial location as 'all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home'.<sup>1</sup> Home is a unique space of self-representation because it represents desires, dreams and memories that are locked into a virtual 'community of memory and image'.<sup>2</sup> Home may be a geographic space; home may refer to a community identity; home may also be articulated in nationhood statements.<sup>3</sup> Home has a unique ontological function because of its metaphorical links and identification with a specific architectural site and physical location. However expressed, home is central to the need to belong. Whether it a hut, a castle, a tent or a tenement, a home holds the stories of a life and its history. How home is represented is a critical focus of this thesis because it will help to contribute to an understanding of the multi-faceted negotiations of identity faced by Australia-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent in their writing.

Domestic spaces we occupy have significant symbolic, metaphorical and allegorical power. The words house and home have different meanings. When speaking about a house, we tend to describe it objectively in terms of function, size and its suitability as a residence;

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<sup>1</sup>Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Translated by Maria Jolas with a new foreword by John Stillgoe, Beacon Press, Boston, 1994, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994; Anne Brewster, *Literary Formations: Post-colonialism, Nationalism, Globalism*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1995; Christopher Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2000; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, London, 1994; Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, Eds., *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, USA, 1998; Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, Eds., *De-scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994; Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: the Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*, Cassell, London and New York, 1999; Young, Robert, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990.

<sup>3</sup>bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender And Cultural Politics*, South End Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1990; Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1989; Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*, Polity Press, Cambridge England and New York, 2003; Lynne Pearce, *Feminism and the Politics of Reading*, Arnold, London and New York, 1997.

whereas when we speak about home, we draw from a language of emotion that describes our beginnings, our history and our space relationship in the world.

The issue of home is not solely constrained to philosophical aesthetics or used as a conceptual tool to explore Irish-Australian women's writing. To comprehend the significance of home as a critical reference of identity, I refer to J. Douglas Porteous and Sandra Smith's study of the phenomenon of 'domicide'.<sup>4</sup> This conceptual reference was created by Porteous and Smith to interpret the psycho-cultural, social, and subjective impact of homelessness resulting from the destruction of urban landscapes, military conflict, political and ethnic eviction, or, as the psycho-cultural legacy of imperial histories of dispossession. Domicide signifies 'the forcible theft of the territory of others' and the eviction of people from their homelands.<sup>5</sup> It describes the depth of psychological distress felt when people have are left homeless. Domicide is as injurious as suicide is to psychological well-being. Domicide means the 'murder of home'—hence, the murder of the self.<sup>6</sup> Domicide is a rupture to people's lives and their encoded references of identity, place and community.<sup>7</sup> When a home is destroyed in this manner, there is a far greater impact on community and individual identity because it means the destruction of personal space, community, place, memory and history. When people lose their homes, they grieve the loss of belonging and experience the force of exile when relocated. While home signifies a deep attachment to place, identity and belonging: homelessness signifies disruption, dislocation and dispossession. Domicide represents the antithesis of belonging.

While the attribution of domicile in the Porteous and Smith study does not include the experiences of voluntary emigrants seeking social and economic mobility, I would suggest that emigrants are also left with the legacy of homelessness in terms of relocating their identity. Emigration also means finding another place called home in a world devoid of familiar identity markers and symbols. Relocating home demands a relocation of the cultural imaginary in terms of negotiating the references of the original place of home and

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<sup>4</sup>J. Douglas Porteous and Sandra E. Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, Ithaca and London, 2001, pp. 1-3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p.190.

its reconstitution in new countries of settlement. As domicide translates as the deliberate dispossession of home, I am reminded that the location of home in the writing of Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent is framed by histories of dispossession in Ireland and in Australia.

### **Issues of self-representation**

The nature of domicide raises critical questions about the terms of possession and dispossession in Irish-British-and British-Australian national histories. Imperial histories are thus described by Edward Said as ‘the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory’.<sup>8</sup> From Said’s perspective, emigration histories signify dispossession and are facilitated by the agenda of territorial, political and cultural imperialism. Even if benign in intent to enable settlers to re-establish themselves, such as through voluntary emigration, the imperialising agenda is maintained by processes of exclusion, by cultural and social alienation, and by hegemonic desires to expel native languages and cultures. Other theorists argue that national histories are transformed through on-going social and cultural processes rather than the imposition of a dominant supra-national group or entity.<sup>9</sup> Despite the historical inescapability that imperial regimes were historically involved in territorial expansion and that they changed the social, political, and cultural order of colonised countries, ‘locals...went along with, resisted, or appropriated...features of colonialism...in accordance with disparate, locally grounded interests and consciousness’.<sup>10</sup>

Others do not see colonial histories in terms of a domination model over another’s aspirations for national or social autonomy. Colonialism was a complex negotiation of identity where the colonised and the coloniser assumed different but complimentary roles. Colonising agenda were enacted through the ways that colonised peoples adapted to the

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<sup>8</sup>Said, 1994, op. cit., p.8; Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton, Eds., *Borders, Exiles And Diasporas*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998; Caroline Brettell, *Anthropology and Migration: Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and Identity*, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, California, 2003; Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996; Anne J. Kersten, Ed., *The Promised Land?: the Migrant Experience in a Capital City*, Avebury, Aldershot, England, 1997; Padmini Mongia, Ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory : a Reader*, Arnold, London and New York, 1996.

<sup>9</sup>A. Dirlik, op. cit. p.430.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p. 436.

'practices of administrative centralization and cultural homogenization that had characterized the formation of the nation-states of Europe'.<sup>11</sup> This view suggests that colonial histories were less violent in the extreme but rather were characterised by rational theories of governance. Stephen Slemon has criticised pedagogies of oppression that are mobilised in 'competing academic methodologies' far removed from the actual historical and political conditions that colonised 'others' lived in.<sup>12</sup> The replication of colonising ideologies in academic pedagogies is counter-productive and has been carried beyond 'scattered moments of archaeological research' to be reconstructed as evidence of general structures of oppression.<sup>13</sup> Notional oppression is recreated theoretically when intellectual and academic discourses consider oppression effects by replicating a 'spatial order of...parataxis—placing things side by side' Thus, the methodology for analysing colonial histories can ideologically reflect binary outcomes that lead to a rewriting of a victim-oppression model.<sup>14</sup>

Slemon cautions against symptomatic assumptions of victim-dominator to align causality of oppression in colonialist histories. On the other hand, colonialism was an historical enterprise *and* a system of intelligence built around desires to transform national, cultural, social and political communities. David Spurr has argued that the rhetoric of colonialism is fundamentally narcissistic and self-idealised and maintained by 'institutionalized ways of mapping out knowledge'.<sup>15</sup> Imperial power is preserved in a 'political and ethical order...that...justifies...authority' by controlling particular discourses through demonstrations of superior moral status.<sup>16</sup> While colonialism was knitted into a complex fabric of identities, cultures, and notions of self-representation, its power was disseminated across a range of signifying practices.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Dirlik, op. cit., p. 442.

<sup>12</sup>Stephen Slemon, 'The scramble for post-colonialism' in Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, Eds., 1994, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, pp. 29-30.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, pp. 17-18.

<sup>15</sup>Spurr, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>16</sup>Pennycook, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. 441.

One of the more vexing questions is to determine whether colonialism represented deliberate extinguishment of cultural identity or whether colonialism was enabled through the rewriting of existing social, cultural and political discourses and social relationships. According to Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, colonial systems of operation are maintained discursively and intertextually by rhetorical methods that are as equally efficient in terms of exclusionary effects as were military means of depopulation.<sup>18</sup> Subtle discursive forms of taking over make it possible to erect spatial hierarchies between the colonised and the coloniser within a single national formation. The rhetoric of imperialism articulates different spatial zones in relation to the translation of the 'other' where colonising ideologies constitute an affective register of fantasies and fears about race, culture and identity that express revulsion, fascination, pleasure or power.<sup>19</sup> These effects are disseminated rhetorically and discursively through institutional and discursive practices to govern the body politic.

An example of rhetorical exclusion can be seen in the ways that stereotyping, caricature and satire differentiated the characteristics of Englishness and Irishness in the nineteenth-century. As the 'other', the Irish were represented as primitive and in a lower alignment with Englishness.<sup>20</sup> Half-human-half-ape mutants purportedly signified the physical and intellectual inferiority of the Irish.<sup>21</sup> Stereotyping has bearing on the question of 'looking for home in all the wrong places' insofar as histories have constructed particular images of Irish identity and Irish womanhood through symbols of culture, gender and nationality in Australian historical narratives.

### **Writing back to home**

A paradoxical set of relations between home, country, and cultural identity can be seen in attempts to relocate Ireland's self-image in nineteenth-century discourses. Irish revivalist writers attempted to transform the symbolic and cultural order in which Irishness had been represented and thought that Celtic poetry, arts and literature would liberate Ireland's

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<sup>18</sup>Tiffin and Lawson, Eds., 1994, op. cit., pp. 3-5.

<sup>19</sup>Spurr, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels : the Irishman in Victoria Caricature*, Revised Edition, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 1997.

<sup>21</sup>Also Pittock and Colley, loc.cit.

cultural consciousness and theoretically heal the fractures of displacement in imperial history. Irish cultural revivalism however, revealed the paradoxes of language, identity and self-representation. A 'new' Irishness was conveyed by the imperialist language of English. Rather than producing a unifying effect, the language issue focused on the question of who had the authority to speak for the Irish, and showed:

What everyone...always knew...that, while...two cultures...experienced moments of interpenetration...they...were...separated by...exploitation practiced by one on the other. The nations that emerged from this battle of the shadows were fictions, imagined communities inserting themselves into...precarious zones between even more glaring make-believes.<sup>22</sup>

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poem *Ceist na Teangan* (The Language Issue) contextualises the subjective question of home when it comes to the choice of language used to express Irish identity. Gaelic and English languages show how the rhetoric of dispossession is enacted symbolically and culturally.<sup>23</sup> How to represent Irish identity in its own language indicated how 'home' culture could not be readily resolved because the Irish cultural estate was shaped by the exclusion of the 'other' Irish in favour of a select class of Anglo-Irish elites.<sup>24</sup> Claims to the home estate are critical to this thesis as it is dealing with the colonising histories of Ireland, England and Australia and with bonds of identity and differences formed by common imperial histories.<sup>25</sup> Here again, issues about the location of home are characterised by the Fullerton, Bruce and McKeown families' relationship to their Irish homeland and their new location in Australia where the codification of home made it possible for Australian-born writers to insert a space of self-representation in

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<sup>22</sup>Declan Kiberd, 'From Nationalism to Liberalism' in Susan Shaw Sailer, Ed., *ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup>Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, *Ceist na Teangan*, 1990, pp. 154-155 in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Why I Choose to Write in Irish: the Corpse that Sits Up and Talks Back' in Susan Shaw Sailer, Ed., *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class and Nationality*, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, Florida, 1997, pp. 55-56.

<sup>24</sup>Phillip Darby, *The Fiction of Imperialism: Reading Between International Relations and Postcolonialism*, Cassell, London and Washington, 1998; D.K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire 1830-1914*, Macmillan, Basingstoke and London, 1994; Peter Hulme and Margaret Iverson, Eds., *Colonial Discourse: Postcolonial Theory*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994; Keith Jeffery, Ed., *'An Irish Empire?': Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1996; W. Ross-Johnston, *Great Britain, Great Empire: An Evaluation of British Imperial Experiences*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, London and New York, 1981.

<sup>25</sup>Dirlik, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

Australian writing so that could be enacted through distinctions of nationality, ethnicity, race and gender.<sup>26</sup>

### **At home in Australia?**

The language issue raises several problems concerning the encoding of home identity in Australian discourses where the design of an Australian 'native' culture was predicated upon the environmental, cultural and linguistic destruction of Aboriginal landscapes. The domestication of the Australian landscape emphatically mobilised wedges of racism to define and defend the symbolic, political and cultural motif of the transplanted settler home. Racial superiority gave rise to a new nation of home owners in Australia triumphant over both Indigenous, and, their former emigrant homelands.<sup>27</sup> When determining how to create new narratives of identity associated with the relocation of home in Australia, Australian writers desired to distance themselves from debilitating tropes of Englishness that perceived the home culture as an inferior reproduction. Paradoxically, at the political level, the notional home of empire dominated the Australian landscape as a sign of stability and permanence where Englishness recreated Australia as an ordered stable society.<sup>28</sup> Mary Fullerton, Mary Grant Bruce and Marie Pitt were involved in creating templates of belonging that would mobilise entwined characteristics of Australian, Irish and English national identity in their vernacular images of Australia's home culture. Their emigration histories intersect the transformation of Australian identity from colonial settler to national citizen.

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<sup>26</sup>Kiberd, in Sailer, Ed., op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>27</sup>Delys Bird, *Gender and Landscape: Australian Colonial Women Writers*, Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1989, 19p.; John Docker, *Dilemmas of Identity: The Desire for the Other in Colonial and Post Colonial History*, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 1992, 18p; Kirsten Holst and Anna Rutherford, *A Double Colonialization: Colonial and Post Colonial Women's Writing*, Dangeroo Press, Sydney, 1986; Anna K. Rutherford, Kirsten Holst Petersen and H. Maes Jelinek, Eds., *From Commonwealth to Post Colonial*, Dangeroo Press, Sydney, 1992.

<sup>28</sup>Katie Holmes, Susan K. Martin and Kylie Mirmohamadi, *Green Pens: A Collection of Garden Writing*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Publishing Ltd, Melbourne, 2004.

### **Looking for home in all the wrong places?**

Locating home is not simply an excavation of memories and recollections or symptoms associated with psychosis or sentimental yearning. bell hooks has argued that romantic and aesthetic illusions of history have reproduced idealised images of past lives and past traditions.<sup>29</sup> History did and does not stop happening for black people. Its presence continues to be felt because politicised metaphors of race and gender have framed home places of marginalisation. Thus, home-space and homeplace are represented, symbolised and grounded in material and metaphorical worlds, and are assigned a different order to people of colour. Moreover, housing the racialised and marginalised in rhetorical terms prohibits crossing over language barriers because race identity is embodied metaphorically and meta-socially in signified spaces of exclusion and marginalisation. Unlike the notion of beginnings that implies agency through rewriting and re-righting new narratives of identity, there is little room within dominant language structures to extricate racialised concepts of self-identity that are designated as different and which replicate the order of exile.

I do not intend to usurp the history of black struggle to generalise a theory of Irish women's oppression. I do, however, find resonance in hooks's interpretation of the subjective effects of history. She has spoken about the ways that black women have been written about as well as showing how the legacy of history impacted on black women in terms of their subjugated location in history as well as contemporaneously.<sup>30</sup> In the previous chapter I showed how Irish women and their daughters have been assigned a subordinate status in Australian national histories. Their oppression was mediated by social, cultural and economic determinations of ethnicity, religion and gender that were used to define their unsuitability as ideal Australian subjects. Australian histories suggest that Irish women's cultural identity was transformed for the good of the Australian nation by virtue of their endurance, the suffering of domestic enslavement and the stripping of their dignity through degrading punishment as convicts or as women of problematic sexual morality.

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<sup>29</sup>Bachelard, loc. cit .; bell hooks, loc. cit .

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, p. 42.

In their interpretations of the Irish experience in Australia, Fitzpatrick and O'Farrell have indicated that the Irish retreated from Australian settler society to the relative safety of their 'homeplace'. These historians have been unable to resolve why both Irish men and women felt so strongly connected to their Irish 'home'. This is where bell hooks can partially resolve this conundrum. When faced with the hostility of race relations, American slave families and descendants could retreat from public assault to the safety of their 'homeplace'. Home therefore became a politicised space in the history of American race relations where it was possible to develop strategies of survival to withstand the assault of white racial hegemony. In retelling the stories of black women's survival in America, hooks adds:

We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in that "homeplace" most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits.<sup>31</sup>

As a political space, home became 'a...site of resistance and liberation struggle...from...an oppressive and dominating social reality'<sup>32</sup> Homeplace enabled a politics of liberation in the security of home so that it was possible to counter 'political decisions that most affected...the...daily lives' of black Americans.<sup>33</sup> Home was a critical site of self-representation where ideas about self-identity could be expressed.<sup>34</sup> Homeplace was also a secret space of resistance and political autonomy that could be used to negotiate a hostile public sphere. Homeplace and home space therefore have critical significance as ways to investigate how the Irish emigrant experience became shrouded in silence and withdrawal.

In another context of Anglo colonial history, Alison Blunt also used the metaphor of home to investigate the identity of British-Indian-born women.<sup>35</sup> She described the work of rewriting and re-righting Indian identity as requiring the negotiation of 'imaginative geographies of feeling at home and not at home...because of...the dualities of imperial

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>34</sup>Blunt, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, p. 208.

identity and ‘native’ identity’.<sup>36</sup> Home-work is a work of rewriting and re-righting. It is subjective, political and articulated in ‘tensions...desires, nostalgia...and...yearnings to establish a sense of belonging...in the ...entangled ‘roots’ and ‘routes’ of home, identity, memory and belonging’.<sup>37</sup>

David Landis Barnhill’s anthology about place and home, origin, location, identity and culture suggests that concepts of home endure across time, space and generations.<sup>38</sup> Home on the land and feeling at home on the landscape are constitutive of the needs and desires to create a sense of belonging and not to remain a surface temporary dweller. Home, space and place constitute a paradoxical ecology of space and place, belonging and displacement. In Landhill’s anthology, Scott Russell Sanders takes exception to the ‘dogma of rootlessness’ that has permeated post-modern theories of the diaspora and believes that the promotion of hybridity, plurality, transience and impermanence in contemporary theories of identity encourages a fragmented sense of nationhood. Salman Rushdie’s concept of “migrant’s sensibility” is thought to exemplify the vagaries of unsettlement that cause confusion about national identity. Sanders’s identity politics link with earlier theories of national identity where cultural homogeneity was critical to national stability and cultural cohesion.<sup>39</sup> Reading Rushdie’s ‘dogma of rootlessness’ from contemporary America elaborates an underlying politics that resonated in British and Australian histories where the Irish were seen to threaten national homogeneity. To support his criticism of notions of ‘rootlessness’ in contemporary diaspora theory, Sanders has argued that:

People who root themselves in places are likelier to know and care for those places than are people who root themselves in ideas. When we cease to be migrants and become inhabitants, we might begin to pay enough heed and respect to where we are. By settling in, we have a chance of making a durable home for ourselves, our fellow creatures and our descendants.<sup>40</sup>

Rushdie’s notion of “migrant sensibility” recognises that emigrants have to reframe a number of rhetorical and cultural shifts of identity to establish a sense of home.<sup>41</sup> For the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p. 208.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, p. 210.

<sup>38</sup>Barnhill, Ed., op. cit., p.13.

<sup>39</sup>Rushdie cited in Sanders in Barnhill, Ed., ibid, p. 83.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>41</sup>Rushdie, loc. cit.

emigrant, as opposed to the settler descendant whose origins are disguised in history, the emigrant carries images of home with them as if frozen tablets of time and place. Emigrants have to make adjustments to their identity positions, not because of an incipient 'rootlessness', but because diaspora identity is faced with many challenges and transformations. The diaspora is a complex performance of self-representation. Diagnoses of 'unsettled' and 'settled' recycle a logic familiarised by nineteenth-century imperial discourses where Irishness was seen as the blight on imperial order. Concerns about national loyalty and allegiance historically echo conservative theories of nationhood when the presence of Irish emigrants was seen to lead to the destruction of civilised societies.<sup>42</sup> The emigrant experience cannot be reduced to a physical crossing over of national boundaries or an unloading of cultural baggage when emigrants literally step on to new shores to be re-clothed in the habits of settlement. Emigration is not an eradication of identity. Notions of home remain embedded in cultural and geographic spaces as well as in memory, and in constructs of self-identity and in metaphorical and allegorical landscapes that can be traced to the memories of homeplace.

### **The wonderings of exile**

Tracing the Irish emigrant home is akin to tracking disclaimers of marginalisation and exclusion that have been accrued through signs and connotations of banishment and exile. Exile has particular symbolic and national significance in Irish emigration history because of the effects of mass depopulation. Emigration has had another effect where the more serious impact of exile has resulted in cultural amnesia where emigrant Irish have virtually been wiped off the map of Irish literary and cultural consciousness.<sup>43</sup> Unlike the vast interest in nineteenth-century Irish literary and cultural revivalism and writing devoted to Irish political conflict, the Irish emigrant story received relatively little attention until recently in contemporary historical and emigration studies. When Irish people left their

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<sup>42</sup>Thomas P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers?: the Times and World of a Southern Catholic Irish Man (1876-1916) Enlisting in the British Army During the First World War*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, England, 1995; Michael Hechter, loc. cit; James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty : Nationalism and Monarchy in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Victoria*, University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2001; Alan O'Day, *The English Face of Irish Nationalism: Parnellite Involvement in British Politics 1880-86*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin and Toronto, 1977.

<sup>43</sup>Duffy, op. cit., p. 35.

homeland, they literally disappeared 'out of the story'.<sup>44</sup> The Irish diaspora experience was mostly narrated in family letters, newspaper articles, and second-hand accounts of family networks.<sup>45</sup> Thus depopulated in the metaphorical and allegorical sense, and exiled from the domestic culture of Ireland, the Irish emigrant is an extant example of 'rootlessness'. On both sides of the Atlantic, and in the Antipodes, the Irish have occupied a marginal space in the narratives of nationhood. Duffy and Fitzpatrick concur that the Irish emigrant experience was mostly confined to family narratives read and written in the home. The lack of knowledge about the Irish diaspora needs to be investigated to understand how experiences of Irish settlement in Australia were negotiated by Australian-born daughters.

### **Citings and sightings of home**

Locating home takes on greater complexity given the double effects of exile and homelessness, particularly where gender and race deny a cultural voice. For women-writers, issues of self-representation are 'doubly compounded by the double stigma of race and gender' because writing is never distanced from autobiography.<sup>46</sup> Colonising ideologies of gender, culture, identity and race implicitly impact on the 'damaging process of human internalization of negative stereotypes'.<sup>47</sup> Françoise Lionnet has described how women writers have to straddle different boundaries and hierarchies of gender, identity and subjectivity. Writing is more therefore more tortuous than pleasurable.<sup>48</sup> Language and self-representation constitute critical issues when analysing narratives of identity by Australian-born women writers of nineteenth-century Irish descent. My earlier use of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poem *Ceist na Teangan* (The Language Issue) illuminated how identity is borne upon fragile rafts of 'hope... in a...little boat of language...only to have it borne hither and thither not knowing where it might end up'.<sup>49</sup> The fragility of language exacerbates the problem of defining the means of self-representation of writers who were also beneficiaries of the colonisation of Australia.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>45</sup>Refer to Chapters One and Two and accounts of Irish emigration histories.

<sup>46</sup>Lionnet, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>49</sup>Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill in Sailer, Ed., op. cit., pp. 55-56.

### **The little boats: language and self-representation**

Rewriting and re-righting are not so much a lack of ability to use language but a recognition that writing styles are interpreted through cultural frames that may be at cross-purposes to what the woman-as-writer intended to achieve. In the case of women's writing, it is argued that an illusory 'other' self reflects the difficulties of reconstituting time, place and history.<sup>50</sup> This can generate 'conflicting creative impulses...that...complicate both the writer's and the implied reader's relations in (and to) the text under scrutiny'.<sup>51</sup> Language is more than the humanistic ideal promulgated in cultural aesthetics. For the 'other', what may lie behind the screens of language are layers of ideological and cultural repugnance that have been pathologised as imperfections of race, gender, ethnicity and nationality.<sup>52</sup> How home is written thus raises questions about whether home-making is a mimetic or a parodic reproduction of ideological, symbolic and signifying practices.<sup>53</sup> According to Maria Pia Lara, mimesis is an inaccurate explanation because it does not necessarily follow that rewriting and re-righting replicate the symbolic order.<sup>54</sup> Intervention and reinvention are critical for generating 'a sense of personal identity' where writers rework their pasts to create present and future identities.<sup>55</sup> In other words, those beginnings are critical to the women writer's work.

This chapter provided theoretical support for my analysis of the concept of home in the writing of Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent. Feminist, critical and postcolonialist theorists have posited the notion that the *citing* and *siting* of home identity are problematic constructs in imperial histories. Duffy's findings are significant for showing how Irish emigrant experiences were literally written out of Irish culture and their identities denied in their homeland. In reference to the notional home of Australian identity, I aim to open up Mary Fullerton's writing worlds to show how she attempted to transform her identity into the idealised image of Australian authorial selfhood. The next chapters will show how means of self-representation are shaped by

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<sup>50</sup>Lynne Pearce, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

<sup>51</sup>Lionnet, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>52</sup>hooks, loc.cit.

<sup>53</sup>Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 1994, p. 85.

<sup>54</sup>Maria Pia Lara, *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere*, Polity Press, Cambridge, England, 1998, p. 23.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, pp. 28, 93.

competing and complimentary ideologies, references to nationality and claims of entitlement to the collective 'home' of Australian culture.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Mapping the pathways to home*

The Fullerton story was among millions of silent emigrant histories that contributed to the foundation of Australian nationhood between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter examines the points of arrival and departure between emigrant and Australian settler culture that shaped the beginnings of Mary Fullerton's writing journey.

#### **Coming to**

When imagining what his family's ideal home would be like in Australia, nineteenth-century Irish-born emigrant Robert Fullerton would have dreamed of something better than a cottier's cottage in Belfast. For his English-born wife Eliza Leathers, family memoirs recalled the impulsive desires of Eliza Leathers's father to leave a reasonably comfortable life in Stowmarket to pursue the fantasies of wealth offered in Australia. He was purported to have been persuaded by stories of immense opportunities in Australia which were told by returning émigrés.<sup>1</sup> Those stories fell exceedingly short of the utopian transformation of social, class and economic status within the first eighteen months of the family's arrival in the Victorian colony in 1853.<sup>2</sup> Their ship *Saint George* ran aground in Port Phillip Bay. Passengers had to survive on dry rations until rescued by land parties from Melbourne a week later. With their possessions ruined, further shocks were in store in Melbourne when the Fullerton family had to confront their ideas about race:

The first man who greeted us was an African black...dressed in white. My parents scorned at the idea of going to a black's boarding house...but...they had to swallow... their...pride and ask the black man to take...them...in...he and his old Father were very kind...although...the fleas...were...numerous and busy.<sup>3</sup>

The Leathers family was forced to accept a subjugated status normatively characterised by primitivism, poverty and dysfunction. These white settlers began life in Australia as tent dwellers in Canvas Town on St. Kilda Road near Melbourne's city boundary. Domestic conditions were harsh and tragic for Mary Fullerton's emigrant grandmother.

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Eliza Fullerton, 'Unpublished Memoirs', op. cit., MS. p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>The Leathers family consisted of the maternal grandparents, their three daughters and one son, a nephew and a friend.

<sup>3</sup>Eliza Leathers in Fullerton, *ibid*, p. 24.

One of her children died of colonial fever. The family journal recorded the child's death and the family's feelings of helplessness at being unable to ease their dying child's 'delirious cries'.<sup>4</sup> Their situation improved marginally when they found a house to live in at East Prahran, an emerging settlement about 5 kilometres away to the east.<sup>5</sup> They bought a block of land in what was then rural Glen Iris with the intention of setting up a wagon-carting business to the goldfields. The dream of rebuilding a new home in Australia was shattered when William Leathers suddenly died in 1855. Eliza Leathers (Mary Fullerton's grandmother) was left alone, with little money, without relatives, and with a young family to support.

Robert Fullerton's emigration history began with his arrival in Melbourne in 1853. He was eager to join the gold rush. He spent approximately twelve years (1853-1865) at the Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine goldfields, eventually losing everything to speculative investments. He married Eliza Leathers at Castlemaine in the 1860s.<sup>6</sup> She wrote about life on the goldfields as a 'most exciting time...where people...could hardly talk of anything but shares and new finds'.<sup>7</sup> The marriage started promisingly, but within two years, the family's status had deteriorated to the life recorded ten years previously in the Leathers's family journal. The one last hope of finding a permanent home rested with the lottery system of land selection implemented by the Victorian government under Land Reform Acts.<sup>8</sup> Poorer emigrant-settlers and gold-miners could become farmers when land was opened up in the Gippsland region during the 1860s.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Australia's colonial infrastructure relied on two key inputs: emigrants and resource development (land and gold economies). So severe was the 'rush' that it compromised colonial infrastructure and Victoria's economic future due to the mass desertion of bureaucrats, administrators, shop-keepers, and professionals to the goldfields. Gold was the colony's economic salvation but gold rushes added to rapid population surges from discovery to discovery and problem of resettling thousands who never made themselves rich. The Fullertons were among those thousands of disappointed dreamers. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003.

<sup>7</sup>Leathers-Fullerton family journal, np., op. cit., MS.

<sup>8</sup>Irish-born Charles Gavan Duffy (1816-1903) migrated to Australia in 1855 and was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly in November 1856. As the Victorian Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey, he reformed land practices to ensure a more equitable system. Attempts of reform were frustrated by wealthy squatters who 'dummied' bids to increase their land-holdings to the detriment of poor selectors whose 'selections' were chosen from unsuitable agricultural areas. Duffy, *Guide to Land Law in Victoria*, 1862 and *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://gutenberg.net.au/dictbiog/0-dict-biogD.html>, pp. 1-3. [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2006].

<sup>9</sup>Eliza Leathers-Fullerton's memoirs place Robert Fullerton in Gippsland following their marriage in 1860. He returned to Castlemaine and left again to select land in Gippsland. Their arrival date in Gippsland is unknown but Eliza Fullerton travelled by boat to Port Albert and by road coach to Sale

The Fullertons then began the slow journey of rebuilding their lives on their selection at Glenmaggie.

The family stories had a great impact on Australian-born future poet Mary Eliza Fullerton (1868-1946). She wrote in her autobiographical text *Bark House Days* (1921) that ‘the building of the first home in the wilderness...was...not a small incident: the coming to it from a yet more inadequate tent meant much’.<sup>10</sup> Beginnings feature strongly at this juncture where cultural histories of Ireland, Australia and England merged and where the beginnings of Australian national culture were shaped. In this chapter it will be shown how those emigrant beginnings were important references of identity that framed Mary Fullerton’s Australian writing.

### **The Australian way of life**

In contrast to the grandiose traditions of European and English national self-portraiture, the culture of every day Australian life, even if mundane and ordinary, was seen to be worthy of painting and writing about. William Strutt (1826-1913); Streeton (1867-1943); McCubbin (1855-1917); Lindsay (1879-1970); and Roberts (1856-1931) memorialised the dangers and beauty of the Australian bush. Strutt’s *Black Thursday* bush fires near Melbourne in 1851 and Longstaff’s graphic colour images of *Gippsland, Sunday Night, February 20<sup>th</sup> 1898* recorded images of fleeing settlers and the bravery of women and men struggling to protect their children and property.<sup>11</sup> The tragedy of *A Bush Burial* or the shanty life of *The Selector Hut* portrayed the Australian landscape as a place of struggle, hope and despair, hard work and tragedy as well as showing how the entrepreneurial spirit of Australian pioneers reflected optimism, patience, persistence and a philosophy of taking on challenges and risk. Nineteenth-century cultural inspirations were pragmatic and built from the ground up – ‘in a selector’s hut, in the deserted mullock heap and in the city cottage’.<sup>12</sup> Settling on the Australian landscape was a matter of destruction. The bush was cleared out by poison,

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where she stayed for nine months. She buried one child and birthed another before making her way to the Glenmaggie selection where Mary Eliza Fullerton was born in 1868. See also Joy Hooton, ‘Pioneering and Feminism’, in Kay Ferres, Ed., *The Time To Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 38-53.

<sup>10</sup>Mary Eliza Fullerton, *Bark House Days*, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

<sup>11</sup>James Gleeson, Ed., *Australian Painters: Colonial 1788-1880, Impressionists 1881-1930, Modern 1931-1970*, Lansdowne Press, Sydney, Auckland, London, New York, 1986, pp. 128, 217, 224-227, 239-241, 254-255, plates 73, 79, 94, 105.

<sup>12</sup>Graham Connah, *The Archaeology of Australia's History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and Melbourne, 1993, p. 157.

ring-barking, fire and wholesale forest clearances.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the bush was reinvented in pictorial, poetic and prosaic imaginings that could be represented as a new vernacular in Australia's cultural history.

Australian newspapers, such as *The Bulletin*, *The Argus*, *The Australasian* and metropolitan journals such as the *Melbourne Leader* provided outlets for aspiring writers, poets and balladeers to tell their stories about bush life when recording their 'coming to' Australia. Mary Fullerton contributed a series of sketches titled 'Old Man Eloquent' to the Melbourne journal *Leader* between 1899 and 1901.<sup>14</sup> These sketches framed Mary Fullerton's sense of Australia and were used as drafts for later publications of poetry and semi-autobiographical documentaries and novels. The 'Old Man Eloquent' stories consisted of sixteen sketches. The sketches combined elements from the Fullerton family history in stories written for the twentieth-century generation Melbourne reader. These texts about Australian bush life were integral to Mary Fullerton's sense of Australia and the genealogical pedigree she believed reflected her claim of entitlement to Australian national portraiture.

#### **The beginning writer**

The grandfather's authority as the story teller anchored the pioneering legend that Russel Ward described as the proving ground of Australian national identity.<sup>15</sup> Through analysis of these sketches, some insights can be gained about the social and cultural backgrounds that shaped Mary Fullerton's identity as a writer. Sketch Eight recorded the effects of generational change between first generation pioneers and urban generations and illustrated an incomprehensible gap between the bush and the city. When the grandfather spoke about the hardships of bush life, he felt there was little appreciation from his urban granddaughter. In frustration, he recycled the well-worn adage about the 'soft' life of the young in comparison to their elders. Young urban Australians did not have the constitution of their forebears and lacked the ethos of hard work. They were too interested in the conveniences of the modern world. Sketch Eight exemplified the problems of modernity that were seen to be potentially harmful to the 'old' Australian way of life. At the turn of the twentieth century, forces of modernity

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<sup>13</sup>Holmes, Martin and Mirmohamadi, Eds., op. cit.

<sup>14</sup>Fullerton papers, State Library of New South Wales. What remained in the archived collection were photocopies of the articles cut out from the newspaper. There were no dates of publication to establish when they were written.

<sup>15</sup>Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1958.

and urbanisation had begun to create fissures between the idealisation of 'bush' Australia and a materialistic 'new' Australian identity. Melbourne was confident, forward looking, architecturally sophisticated, radical and 'bohemian' and represented a 'modern culture of novelty'.<sup>16</sup> Being opened up to the city meant the end of Gippsland's isolation. The coming of the railway and the telegraph made that possible. Aesthetic tensions between the city and the bush illustrated desires to maintain an Edenic ideal against the Bohemic aspiration of Australian identity.<sup>17</sup> Marcus Clarke described Australian culture as one represented by brevity and distraction. He wrote:

We are in the midst of a novel society...which...is too restless to sit for a portrait...A community that is often in motion sixteen hours of the twenty four, is rarely in the mood for literature of a high and exacting character.<sup>18</sup>

The Fullerton sketches traced changes in the Australian way of life between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sketch Ten indicated dissatisfaction with emigration policies. In differentiating between Australian emigrants and Australian settlers, the sketch showed how the grandfather's resentment was activated. In one sense he was defending the territorial gains he worked so hard for against what he perceived as preferential treatment of newer arrivals. The grandfather grumbled:

They are helped on to the land, and have a friendly Government behind them to see things don't go to cruel with them...No Government helped us start...We went into the bush, selected a piece, and there we stayed year in and year out.<sup>19</sup>

Although Australian emigration policy was premised on racial exclusivity, there were hints that settled Australian society was not so altruistic about sharing their homes with new arrivals from Britain. At the micro-level where emigrants and Australian settlers interacted, Sketch Ten indicated some level of hostility towards displacing the hard-worn efforts of pioneer settlers through indulgent government policies.<sup>20</sup> However, the grandfather's resentment was somewhat misplaced because colonial governments in Australia enabled selectors to claim their own entitlement to the national estate. Irish-

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<sup>16</sup>Andrew McCann, *Marcus Clarke's Bohemia: Literature and Modernity in Colonial Melbourne*, 2005, p.7.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup>Clarke cited in McCann, *ibid*, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup>Fullerton 'Sketches', nd., op.cit. MS.

<sup>20</sup>David Fitzpatrick, Ed., *Home or away?: Immigrants in Colonial Australia*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1992; Barry York, *Admissions and Exclusions: Asiatics and Other Coloured Races in Australia:1901 to 1946*, Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Canberra, Australia, 1995; Kevin Jones, *Free settlers 1891-1939*, Macmillan Education Australia, Melbourne, 2000.

born parliamentary reformer Gavan Duffy promoted the building of a new community identity in Australia through rural reform. He argued that:

The community most contented, most orderly, and where manners are simplest and morals purest – are that class of cultivators...who...obtain most from the soil and increase most rapidly the savings which constitute the wealth of a nation.<sup>21</sup>

As had the fictional grandfather, the Fullertons benefited from the ‘Small Proprietor Society’ egalitarianism that Duffy idealised. When Duffy toured the North Gippsland electorate in 1887, he marvelled at ‘the picture of happy homes possessed by a free, manly, yeoman proprietary’.<sup>22</sup> If Gippsland settlers were meant to show their gratitude, the delegated speaker from the Glenmaggie settlement ‘couldn’t get a word out, him a most eloquent man in his own house or paddock’. Isolation ‘made shy folk of the bush people...not only the wimmin and children, but the men folks too’.<sup>23</sup> Whereas macro politics featured tensions between Ireland and Australia, Sketch Sixteen revealed how the bush mediated sectarian conflict. When a Protestant church was to be built, it was a multi-denominational effort:

The Catholics gave to the buildin’ fund as well as the Protestants of all denominations. Then, when the Catholics built their’s [sic], we helped them in turn. A proper and kindly spirit, which one don’t always see displayed nowadays with the wranglins’ over Orange and Green, and suchlike that goes on in Melbourne these times...I mind that Carmody in a rather bigoted way made some fuss about Protestant clay, as he called it, bein’ used for the Catholic edifice. He was laughed at by neighbours, and Dawson, who by that time had got over his soreness, said: ‘The burnin’ will purify the bricks before they go into the buildin’.’<sup>24</sup>

According to the formula of identity adopted in the Fullerton sketches, the grandfather narrator’s ideal Australia was located in the bush. Sketch Five elaborated the extraordinary generosity of relatively poor bush settlers in the story about the grandfather’s trip to Melbourne to buy a piano. The piano was not only for the individual family to use but a shared possession for the entire community to enjoy. The grandfather commented how ‘we used to lend it freely, not being ones to keep to ourselves that would give pleasure to others’.<sup>25</sup> When questioned about whether he was a socialist, this comment brought into consideration the effects of changing social and

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<sup>21</sup>Shane Carmody, ‘Through Green Tinted Glasses: Barry, Kelly and Irish Sentiment’, *The La Trobe Journal*, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, No 73 Autumn 2004, pp. 29-41.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 35.

<sup>23</sup>Fullerton, ‘Sketches’, nd., op. cit., MS.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

cultural politics in late nineteenth to early twentieth century Victoria. Labor relations were marked by increasing class tensions and hostilities.<sup>26</sup> Experiments in socialism were promoted by city-based social reformers in Melbourne to halt the decline of family and social breakdown. A socialist commune was set up at Drouin in West Gippsland to supply 'milk palaces' as an alternative to the vices of alcohol and coffee. The Drouin commune would become an alternative, self-sufficient agricultural enterprise based on religious, organic and holistic principles. The experiment failed. The socialist experiment was perceived a threat to the interests of Victoria's agricultural economy if it meant the 'sacrifice of...wealth' that Gippsland selectors were reluctant to share.<sup>27</sup>

Sketch One confirmed how the isolation of the bush translated in women's experiences: "Wimmin" were stuck in the back blocks...Some winters, when it rained heavy...they...never got all season further than the backyard of their house'.<sup>28</sup> Women were literally left voiceless and 'silent in them days when troubles was [sic] to be met'.<sup>29</sup> Unlike the violence and abuse that Barbara Baynton's bush wives were subjected to, the Fullerton narrative attempted to project a more empathetic marital relationship. However attentive the grandfather was to his wife's distress at being 'homesick', the grandmother's role in the sketches was marginal and was used as a narrative device to authenticate the grandfather's stories. There were indications of a change in the grandmother's attitudes to her enforced domestication. She had been given feminist texts written by Harriet Martineau and Mary Wollstonecraft. The grandmother acknowledged that 'a book on women's rights...by...Mary Wollstencraft [sic]...was the first kind of the flood of books on women's rights that has unsettled things nowadays'.<sup>30</sup>

### **Foundational narratives**

The sketches provided a training ground for Mary Fullerton to chronicle her family history. Sketches Thirteen to Fifteen wrote of the disappointment of the Australian

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<sup>26</sup>Terry Irving, 'The roots of parliamentary socialism in Australia, 1850-1920' *Labour History*, Number 67, Nov 1994, pp. 97-109.

<sup>26</sup>Guy Featherstone, 'Co-workers with Christ: George A. Brown and Christian socialism in Victoria 1885-1894', *Victorian Historical Journal*, v.77, no.1, May 2006, pp. 16-33.

<sup>27</sup>Fullerton, 'Sketches', nd., op. cit., MS.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

dream that had persuaded the Leathers family and Robert Fullerton to come to Australia. There was a strong coincidence between her father's history on the Victorian gold fields and the grandfather's opinion about the false promise of wealth:

Like thousands of others, we thought Australia was an an El Dorado, gold to be had pretty well for the pickin' up. For about ten years most of us that came out as I did, in the early fifties, kep' follerin' this dream, with more or less success, from rush to rush... Anyhow, at the end of ten years, the bottom was out of the thing, so to speak, and men began to think of the land, of different quality from the gold bearin',<sup>31</sup>

The grandfather's story told about the rise and loss of fortunes on the goldfields. The competition for wealth demonstrated that Australian society was not crafted in the manner idealised by Duffy but by greed, power and opportunism that maintained class and social division. In particular, the squatter and selector were not equal but forced to accommodate each other in an artificial sense of community:

The squatters, havin' the land on easy terms, resented others comin', as was natural, I s'pose, though greedy, and bad for the country. Some...was friendly and reasonable, willin' for others to have a crust...McDermott...called the men into breakfast who was peggin' in sight of his house. But he was an exception. A Scotchman who isn't greedy is the most kindhearted and liberal – but the original occupier of the land wasn't of that kind.<sup>32</sup>

Sketch Thirteen raised the problem of accommodating the Indigenous presence in the Gippsland region. As indicated in the earlier part of this chapter, the Leather's family's arrival in Melbourne was made more confronting by having their racial and social status as a white English family reversed. The background to Sketch Thirteen began with a discussion of the 'negro' question in terms of the threat of rapid population increases seen in America and East and South Africa. The 'negro' question was put as an issue of whether black populations in Australia would also follow suit. The sketch read into normative expressions of race ideology into late nineteenth-century Australia.

Strange how civilization seems to kill them off; comfort don't appear to agree with them. They tell me the blacks is steadily diminishin' everywhere in Australia, even at the stations...there are some that don't agree with the idea that its because of them losin' their wild way of livin' that they're dying off, 'tis hard to account for it otherwise. The white man comin' didn't profit the blacks. Seems like two kinds of unfriendly chemicals that can't exist together.

Sketch Thirteen cannot be authenticated in Fullerton's autobiography to determine whether the Fullertons were involved in the killing of local Gippsland Aborigines.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

When asked about his role during this phase of Australian history, the grandfather indicated that he had arrived after the killings had happened. The Fullertons arrived in Gippsland in the late 1860s:

Like in every country where the native race shows fight to colonisers, I 'spose the early day folk had to hit back sometimes. Up here we was never put to the necessity of doin' do...Other parts of Gippsland there was skirmishes betwixt blacks and settlers. They were more plentiful ten years before our time, when the first settlers came, and had begun, perhaps, to feel themselves ousted. Of course, the blacks reckoned it was their land, and though they had done nothin' with it, didn't like other folk to take possession.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, as followers, rather than instigators, the Fullerton's arrival in Gippsland in 1868 cleared up doubts about the morality of taking over Indigenous land. The grandfather commented that 'we in this part, was never obliged to trouble our conscience about who had the right to the land'.<sup>34</sup> When he examined diaries and letters written by Gippsland settlers, Paul Gardiner estimated that the greater number of Aboriginal massacres happened between 1840 and 1850.<sup>35</sup> However, Dirk Moses believed that later killings happened but were not reported:

The massacre's other legacy...with which Australia is still trying to come to terms with...stems from the culture of silence that accompanied a culture that enables denialism to surface and deflect attention from reconciliation...and...inclusive nation-building.<sup>36</sup>

Settler society in Gippsland appeared to be aware about incidents that breached the laws of protection for Aborigines. In the later part of Sketch Thirteen, one of the settlers was deeply troubled by the immorality of dispossession and the manner in which local Aborigines were displaced from their land:

Mr. Thomas used to be very disturbed about the question of moral rights...There had been a big raid on a squatter's place down country, and some blacks had been killed over it.<sup>37</sup>

Mr. Thomas could not accept the practices of 'shootin' them, when they try to get what they regard as their own'. He urged that more should be done and took up 'preachin' to some of the more civilized of 'em'.<sup>38</sup> In contrast the grandfather felt that 'the blacks is

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Paul Gardiner, *Gippsland Massacres: The Destruction of the Kurnai tribes, 1800-1860*, Ngarak Press, Ensay, Victoria, 2001.

<sup>36</sup>A. Dirk Moses, Ed., *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004, p. 202.

<sup>37</sup>Fullerton, 'Sketches', nd., op. cit., MS.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

bein' killed with kindness'.<sup>39</sup> The Fullerton family was not completely rid of the Indigenous presence in the Gippsland region. Sketch Thirteen narrated the story of the ubiquitously named King Billy who travelled the Gippsland region with 'two or three gins trailin' after him' and who demanded 'tucker' at various selections.<sup>40</sup> Merging with the stories about 'King Billy's' like for hot mustard and the poor treatment of his 'gins', Billy maintained that the 'Government no right to sell him; him mine' indicating that he never relinquished sovereignty over Gippsland settlement areas. While not overtly generous in its acknowledgement, the grandfather reluctantly accepted that Billy 'being the original lord of the land, had a right to what we gave him', could demand food as a sovereign right.<sup>41</sup>

Sketch Thirteen also recorded local incidents in the settlement areas of Sale, Port Albert and Bairnsdale. When explaining the history of naming a place called 'The Heart' near Sale, an earlier squatter name McLennan came across a heart-shaped carving on a tree that was thought to have been too skillfully carved to be the work of Indigenous carvers. The strange finding of this love totem, together with stories of a white woman captive living with Aboriginal tribes, captured the imagination of the Gippsland settlement.<sup>42</sup> The sketch recorded a tragedy at Bairnsdale where a young Aboriginal woman was found dead with a new-born infant at her side. The baby was adopted by a family named Feany who 'brought him up real well as regards teachin' him and so on'.<sup>43</sup> He was well liked 'except for his gaudy taste in clothes and his black colour'.<sup>44</sup> Named 'Ebony', he grew up with white people but was never fully accepted because of fears that his 'blackfellow nature would show out some time'.<sup>45</sup> He died of consumption in his teens and was buried by the Feany's with a marker on his headstone that stated 'Ebony – white now'.<sup>46</sup> His epitaph articulates the ideological nature of colonial race relations in that whiteness signified conquest over the indigenous presence in Gippsland and assigned the appropriate order of colonial settlement.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>There was no factual evidence to substantiate the stories of the lost white woman in Gippsland, however, the search drove large parties to track down and kill many Aborigines. Peter Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1999.

<sup>43</sup>Fullerton, 'Sketches', nd., op. cit., MS.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

### **A masculine enterprise**

Sketch Fifteen appears to have been used as a template for Mary Fullerton to narrate her childhood experiences of Australian bush life by using a fictional male persona to test gendered discourses. The similarities between Benny's childhood and that recorded by Mary Fullerton in *Bark House Days* are more than coincidental. Benny learned to recite the Bible before the age of ten. Benny read Byron and had a poetic inclination. Although the fictional Benny was well regarded within the family circle and the wider settler community for exceptional skills of literacy, verse and recitation, the grandfather narrator indicated clearly that Australian pioneer culture had no time for aesthetic indulgence when the greater task was to clear the land. The story of the grandmother's uncle was a moral instruction about how self-indulgence would weaken Australian manhood. A grandmother's uncle 'pioneerin' in America' found his inspiration in art and poetry:

Instead of cuttin' down the forest, he put by time paintin' it, and hangin' splashes of views across his cabin. He was a failure...Paintin' and poetry don't work with pioneerin'...though you do puzzle me now and then with your moonin' about the paddocks with your paintin' things and poetry books.<sup>47</sup>

Masculinity and physicality were inseparable ethics in Australian frontier society. The uncle's story emphasised the decline of masculine potency should men relax their vigilance to pursue aesthetic interests. Boy children like Benny would not inherit the mythical mantle as Australian pioneers. His Australian identity was signified by ambiguous sexual leanings and self-indulgent pursuits and interests inherited from the failed uncle. The uncle's disgrace gave salutary warning about what would likely happen if men allowed themselves to enjoy literature and painting:

He was a failure, you may be sure, and a practical chap adjoinin' soon brought him out. He went to Paris after that, and took to the paintin' trade...they stopped mention of him in letters to mother.<sup>48</sup>

Fullerton's sketches were seen by one reviewer as exemplars of Australian pioneer life that 'young Australians of the motor-car and wireless age' should read.<sup>49</sup> While these sketches represented the beginnings of Mary Fullerton's writing journey and were used as background materials for the publication of *Bark House Days*, the issue of the morality of Australian settlement practices was excluded from that text. In the context of the thesis, the sketches offered a representational means for Mary Fullerton to

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Letter of offer to publish from P.B. Stephensen, editor of Dymock's Books, Sydney, 28.8. 1932, MS.

integrate her family's history of settlement with the broader cultural frames of Australian pioneer history. The pioneer family signified the characteristics of entrepreneurialism and endurance that were interwoven into the mythical genealogies of Australian bush culture. The sketches articulated one aspect of Mary Fullerton's writing journey. The next section of the chapter turns to an examination of the published narrative *Bark House Days*.

### **The Australian writer**

Mary Eliza Fullerton (1868-1946) was a child from the Gippsland bush whose literary aspirations were severely hampered by her socio-economic status and her lack of education. She was mostly home tutored until a new school was built in the Glenmaggie settlement. She left school at twelve. She had a prodigious reading ability. The family journal recorded that she had read *Paradise Lost* three times and could recite long passages from Shelley, Byron and the Bible by heart. She started to write verse as a child, and if given different circumstances, would have been able to advance her education beyond primary years.<sup>50</sup> Her formative and adult years were spent in a subsistence style life helping the family until she was expected to leave home to marry. That was never her intention.

She moved to Melbourne in 1897 and started working as a retail assistant at Hartleys in Chapel Street, Prahan and took an apartment in Tivoli Road, South Yarra. She returned to Glenmaggie for a holiday in March, 1898.<sup>51</sup> She began working in Payne's department store in April 1900 and then went to another department store called Foys which was on the other side of the Yarra River at Collingwood.<sup>52</sup> While living at Prahan she developed an interest in education and was elected to the Prahan School Board of Advice and served on the board between 1899 and 1902. Her father died in 1901 at Glenmaggie. She was to meet Vida Goldstein (1869-1949) when they were involved in the Women's Political Association (Victorian Branch).<sup>53</sup> Goldstein also edited a feminist journal, *Women's Sphere* (1900-1908), which provided an avenue for

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<sup>50</sup>Sally O'Neill, 'Fullerton, Mary Eliza (1868 - 1946), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 8, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981, p. 598.

<sup>51</sup>It is likely that she wrote the sketches when she visited.

<sup>52</sup>Mary Fullerton's own record, nd., op. cit., MS.

<sup>53</sup>Colleen Burke in Heather Radi, Ed., *200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology*, Women's Redress Press Inc. Broadway, New South Wales, 1988, pp. 84-85.

Mary Fullerton to contribute stories, articles and comments.<sup>54</sup> A move to Hawthorn in 1907 brought her into contact with Melbourne's literary and political circles, among them, Louis Esson and Vance and Nettie Palmer.

Although extremely reticent and self-conscious about her social background, Fullerton was involved with the Melbourne suffragist movement in the late 1890s and was encouraged to write for socialist journals *Ross's Monthly* and the Victorian *Socialist*.<sup>55</sup> Her literary influences were the English novelist Emily Brontë and the American poet Emily Dickinson. She fashioned the pseudonym "E" to disguise her authorship of *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy*, and *Poems by "E"*, both published in 1942.<sup>56</sup> Mary Fullerton was credited with five anthologies of poetry: *The Wonder and the Apple* was published posthumously in 1946; *The Breaking Furrow* in 1921, and *Moods and Melodies* in 1908.<sup>57</sup> She also used the pseudonyms of 'Alpenstock', 'Turner O'Lingo' and 'Robert Gray' to disguise her identity as the author of *Rufus Sterne*, (1932) and as the writer 'Gordon Manners' of *Murder at the Crab-Apple Café*, (1930). She used her own name to author *A Juno of the Bush*, (1930) and wrote semi-autobiographical histories about Gippsland selector life in *Australia and Other Essays*, (1918), *The People of the Timber Belt*, (1925), and a general account of *The Australian Bush*, (1928).<sup>58</sup>

Mary Fullerton left Australia permanently in 1922 to live in London and died in England in 1946. Long intermissions in her publishing were in part related to continued poor health, but also, as her letters indicated, anxieties to perfect her writing style. Her most successful publication was a semi-autobiographical co-authored novel, *Clare*, (1923) and was awarded a publisher's prize for its accuracy about life as an Australian girl. Interest in transforming this novel into film did not proceed because of the secrecy surrounding the authorial anonymity of the co-author 'Margaret'.<sup>59</sup> Fullerton's attempts to become a novelist suffered a number of setbacks. The Gordon Manners

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<sup>54</sup>None exist in public archives

<sup>55</sup>Unfortunately, no records remain.

<sup>56</sup>Following chapter

<sup>57</sup>Most of this poetry remains as a sub-category of Miles Franklin Papers (State Library New South Wales). The number of unpublished poems, articles, drafts, comments, notations represents a project of anthological recovery beyond the scope of this thesis. Mary Fullerton literary papers (1930-1950), SLNSW, 364/93-102, MS.

<sup>58</sup>Cited in bibliography.

<sup>59</sup>Memoranda notes Philpot Publishers England. July 16, 1923, Fullerton Papers, SLV, MS.

authored novel, *Murder at the Crab-Apple Café*, (1930), was assessed by the editor of A.M. Heath Publishers in England in this manner:

The Eildon press...quite like the story but feel that the writing is slipshod...some sentences lack necessary verbs....If you care, on behalf of the author, to go through the MS, and tighten it up considerably, the Eildon press...would...then give the book favourable consideration.<sup>60</sup>

Critical reviews literally sent her into a panic at being exposed to public condemnation. She wrote to relatives in Australia:

I am undone. Only to you in Aus [sic] will I send the press notice that came like a boom to me last weekend....if the mood of the press extends to Aus [sic] press which it will probably do I am undone. I try not to get down...but it takes some philosophy when taking it...I hate writing facts...narrative babble in itself is no good.<sup>61</sup>

Mary Fullerton was well aware that her writing was measured by a 'bad record for carelessness & ignorance'.<sup>62</sup> Despite criticism and perceptions of inferiority as a writer, she believed that Australian writers were better than their imperial counterparts. She wrote:

I have faith in Australia. The resources are there, and the people have grit. But the present condition is a strain to optimism...Do not lament over us because at this stage of evolution we are not producing a crop of cultured dramatists and producers. Stage art is only a section of art as a whole...what we lack in appreciation of art we make up in hospitality.<sup>63</sup>

Although no longer a resident in Australia, Mary Fullerton remained involved in promoting Australian writing to English audiences. London was a meeting place for Australian literary expatriates, including her mentor, Miles Franklin. She encountered 'apathy and even prejudice' in English reactions to Australian books. She wrote to the President of the Australian Literary Society that England had 'literally no interest' in Australian writers and was disillusioned by a lack of help from 'authorities at Australia House' in promoting Australian culture.<sup>64</sup>

In terms of the theoretical theme of beginnings outlined in the Introduction, Australian women writers also faced the challenges of rewriting and re-righting their means of

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<sup>60</sup>P.M. Ross to Gordon Manners (a.k.a Mary Fullerton), September 18, 1933, SLV, 2342 2-13, op. cit., MS.

<sup>61</sup> Fullerton letter 1928, SLV, op. cit., MS.

<sup>62</sup> Fullerton letter January, 10, 1938, SLV, op. cit., MS.

<sup>63</sup> Fullerton letter to the *Adelaide Observer*, May 29, 1930. SLV, op. cit., MS.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

self-representation. How to find an authentic authorial voice as an Australian writer appeared to have presented Mary Fullerton with a critical problem of self-representation in relation to the choice of cultural repertoires she could use. She kept her faith in the pioneer stories that relayed the genealogical inheritance of home made in Australia.

### **The building of the Australian House**

In merging the sketches of Gippsland life, autobiography and childhood memories in the fictional history of *Bark House Days*, readers were required to make a conceptual leap of faith in the portrayal of the selector hut that only existed in an imaginary topography. A drawing of a timber and daub hut stood for the pioneering spirit of Australia.<sup>65</sup> Fullerton admitted that the hut had fallen down when she was about three years of age. Its spatial, metaphorical, metaphysical and cultural meanings of belonging however, had more significance in that it merged with a morphology of meanings and cultural references that translated as Fullerton's 'virtual 'community of memory and image'.<sup>66</sup> Fullerton had already articulated how the 'coming to from a yet more inadequate tent meant so much' in terms of her family's history of settling in the Gippsland region. At the political level, the movement from settler hut to home traced the journey of Australian nationhood in terms of the interfaces between the beginnings of settlement and the 'coming to' of Australian national identity.

As Sketch Fourteen indicated, the settlement experience was transitory as 'People didn't settle for long in Australia'.<sup>67</sup> This sense of transience and impermanence was reflected in Fullerton's comment that 'the structures of pioneer days are not for permanency'.<sup>68</sup> Yet her father's construction of a 'house' with 'vast upstanding logs for verandah posts' suggested he was prepared to stay. But having a primitive hut built as a permanent structure caused her mother to distress about its appearance, as 'her home should have more of art about its shape and make'.<sup>69</sup> In this small vignette, the Fullerton family history reveals cues about how the settler experience was shaped by domestic aesthetics and meanings. In tandem with metaphors of domesticity and in the

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<sup>65</sup>J. Archer, *Building a Nation; A History of the Australian House*. Collins, Sydney, 1987.

<sup>66</sup>Bachelard, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

<sup>67</sup>Fullerton, 'Sketches', nd., op. cit., MS.

<sup>68</sup>*Barkhouse Days*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

familial role of bridegroom, Robert Fullerton intended to 'woo the bush' but also planned its destruction 'so that crops might grow...to feed the unborn us'.<sup>70</sup>

How the bark house transformed into an Australian home became the central tribute to Fullerton's mother. She was the archetypical representation of domesticity that materially changed the primitive 'stringybark' and 'bush timber' into a facsimile of the maternal home in England.<sup>71</sup> The matrimonial metaphor of 'wooing' correlated with the respective roles of domestication and the ordering of physical space into outside and inside territories. It was her father's role to conquer the bush outside. Her mother complemented his endeavour by re-papering chinks and gaps in the rough bark structure:

When the bush wept or howled without...Great logs roared, the more wood disposed of in that way the better....I first made the acquaintance of Topsy ...Tiny Tim...Robinson Crusoe...and...many more of the life-long friends of the inner me. The walls almost white...relieved her and there by...the 'Sea-King's daughter', with her fair face and blue eyes, condescended to smile upon use for years above the rude red-gum mantelshelf, and Stanley greeted Livingstone over the sofa.<sup>72</sup>

The domestic interior suggested a uterine intimacy that drew the girl child to images of femininity displayed on the shelves and mantelpiece. Queen Victoria's imperial grandeur was somewhat diminished by a lower order of signification in the Australian bush hut. The more significant image rested with English-born Eliza Fullerton and idealised images of gender, nationality and civilisation. The purity of English womanhood was reflected in the whiteness and 'joy of the clean hearth'. The radiant glow from the fire was mirrored in the fair faces of pioneers, English colonial heroes and the purity of the English monarchy staring down from the Fullerton mantelpiece.<sup>73</sup>

The bush girl was intuitively drawn to maternal images that symbolised the order of domestic life in a far-off corner of imperial dominion. Schooled in the mode of an English child, Fullerton read imperial classics brought by her mother's family to Australia. The 'old bookshelf' was stocked with the standard text of the Bible along with English poets Shelley, Keats and Tennyson. The world of Englishness was the metaphorical playground which crafted Mary Fullerton's literary aspirations. As was

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid, pp. 4-5.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

seen in Sketch Fifteen, stories of bush childhood differed in the gendered version of the child Benny. Whereas masculinity was the trope of identity that conveyed ambiguous meanings in the Sketches, Mary Fullerton also found femininity a problematic coordinate of her identity. She was uncomfortable with the burden of her gender and wrote about the impracticalities of wearing long dresses when playing with her brothers.

It was borne in upon me that there was a tyranny of garments—that the child of the skirted sex, is becoming subject to the skirt, thereby tamed... Was it, I wonder, symbol and epitome of such a woman's race in life?<sup>74</sup>

In *Bark House Days*, gendered identities conformed to familial and domestic roles. Her mother's ability to domesticate the primitive bush hut was evident in the ways she was able to convert the inside spaces of the hut into a home. Cloth remnants brought from England were re-made into coverings for chairs, tables, and as decorative touches. The transformation of primitive 'home-made chairs, father-made chairs' into 'chairs upholstered by my mother' signified a "coming to" of a different sensibility. The 'disused crimson curtains...rummaged from a box of old-time grandeurs' transformed the primitive into an aesthetic representation of colour, light and style. Fullerton recalled how 'it tutored our savage little souls, the crimson chairs on the white floor, the firelight over it all'.<sup>75</sup> The humble floor was later seen to have substantial cultural and social meanings in that notions of civilisation were embedded with the construction of a wood floor instead of earth. Almost unnoticed signs of class identity are signified in domestic ephemera and in notions of class prestige. When the neighbours built a wooden floor and allowed the front room to be used for religious meetings:

We smelt the green wood, sappy and tangy. My mother praised it all when we got home to our earthen floors. My father tended to disparagement; he had enough work ahead without rushing into imitation just then... The Spearys were proud of it. Mrs Speary dressed better, it was said, to live up to it... Lucy Speary began to put airs on the strength of it... we had quarreled... and she pushed me with a contemptuous sniff – "You haven't got a wood floor".<sup>76</sup>

The newly built school at the Glenmaggie settlement added to the symbols of civilisation:

Our eyes were positively dazzled by the beauty and the irradiation of learning on ignorance; of knowledge on innocence... The walls of the school were white... the

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, pp. 4-5.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, pp. 10-11.

building was cleaner than any school I have seen...It was white from the hands of the creator.<sup>77</sup>

While mass education in the Victorian colony during the 1880s formalised the processes of rewriting and re-righting, the presence of the school threatened the domestic authority of the Fullerton household. The 'opposing theories of parents and government' were most acute when children were expected to work on farms at harvest times and not attend school. Children were a vital labour resource. As an agent of the colonial government the teacher was required to retrieve truant children:

It was in truth a battle, parents and children both often pulling against her, while she sought to bring her little gang of primitives in learning and in manners up to standard.<sup>78</sup>

Australian childhood has been theorised as a site of resistance against the class pretensions of English bourgeois culture.<sup>79</sup> The Australian bush child theoretically bore the signs of independence that distinguished their nationality status from sedate images of the obedient English child. In Fullerton's reading of Australian bush childhood, she attempted to emulate the cultural mapping of Englishness. In one sense her identity replicated the Lockean image of discipline and domestication. On the other hand, Fullerton's determined stance to resist pressures to conform her writing identity suggested she retained characteristics of Irishness because she was not prepared to surrender her individuality.

Fullerton's recollections of Australian bush childhood attested to a psychology of shyness and inferiority. When relatives from the city visited their bush cousins, the bush child became aware of those differences:

They seemed so grand with the touch of the town about them, those aunts and girl cousins! I was so self-conscious, so diffident of myself, so admiring of them...I had a *gaucherie* from nervousness that made me hold myself badly...My shyness was an actual pain when it made me silent...Self-banished, I would watch...How I envied the something in those others...the something that I had not.<sup>80</sup>

The mother's world could not protect Fullerton from outside influences. It invited Fullerton into a domestic haven where Englishness resided at the hearth of attachment.

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid, pp. 9-10.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid, pp. 81-82.

<sup>79</sup>Jan Kociumbras, *Australian Childhood: A History*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1996.

<sup>80</sup>Fullerton, 1921, op. cit., p. 95.

This was psychically encoded in Fullerton's desires to mimic the greatness of the English poetic tradition so that she could transform herself into an Australian poet:

The poets and the inspirers of poets were not a mystic race apart...It was the first music that I knew...How could I miss that fact in reading these odes to the eyebrows of a woman who tucked me in at night? <sup>81</sup>

### **Shadows of home**

Home country was thus embedded in connotations of maternal whiteness and in literary and cultural symbols of the imperial ideal. In the Australian bush landscape, the mother's garden 'gathered England about her...with...daisies, violets, butter-cups and primroses.'<sup>82</sup> The imported fruit trees contrasted the unchanging palette of the grey-green bush with soft autumnal shades of amber, red and yellow. The image of a gentrified lifestyle was reinforced by images of leisured Sunday afternoon readings of English classical poetry in the 'sweetness of shade and grass...under...those apple and pear trees'.<sup>83</sup>

The mother's garden shone as a beacon of hope against weeds and wilderness and the existential loss of home. The ideology of domesticity was also co-opted through the mother's natural role of nurturer so that making the home garden became a testimonial of her own creation. The wholesomeness of the mother's enterprise privileged an ordered world of cleanliness, comfort and civilisation. In the way that Elias has described the manning of civilisation and the constitution of social and cultural taboos, the ideology of domesticity replicated civilising ideals of etiquette inasmuch as homeliness and motherhood stood for civilising influences against primitivism and wilderness.<sup>84</sup> The patterning of desired cultural identity was imaged by Fullerton through the maternal legacy of Englishness. Mother, hearth, and home symbolically recreated the possibilities of transcending the stigma of Australian 'native-born-Bark-House Brat' by copying the texts of civilisation. However, beyond the domesticated realm of the garden, other 'native-borns' also lived in outside spaces beyond the civilising metaphors of domesticity.

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid, pp.139-141.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>84</sup>Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners, and State Formation and Civilization*, Translated by Edmund Jephcott, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994.

### **The outside spaces**

The father's vegetable garden, which was the family's food source, symbolised the struggle to impose territorial dominion over the Australian bush. While the pastoral ideal of English order masqueraded as the success of colonisation of Australia, the father's weed-choked and unproductive garden characterised its failure. The characteristics of outsider also accompanied the father's elusive history in Ireland. While able to describe the world of Englishness in detail when referring to her mother's house and garden and domestic abilities, the father's cultural inheritance was more difficult to decode. The Fullerton relatives in Ireland were distant memories of a time and place that 'seemed strange and awed us a little'. The possibilities for understanding Robert Fullerton's cultural history were observed in 'one betrayal of sentiment' when the wearing of a verbena flower 'put him in mind of his mother'.<sup>85</sup> The imagining of the Irish-born father tended to sustain a distant, taciturn silence. In outside space beyond the boundaries of domestic order, however, his impenetrable silence could be broken when recalling visits by his Irish settler neighbour Mrs Dwyer McMahan.

Mrs Dwyer McMahan was large and loud, 'less like a woman than a solid shape of night...a woman who spoke to the point'.<sup>86</sup> She did not hide behind the screens of propriety and lived her life as she intended it to be lived; out in the open, free and unrestrained by domestic etiquette and clean white hearths and books. She arbitrarily rode her horse at night, in the rain, with men, and alone. This was an image of femininity that appealed to the child-narrator and her father. Mrs McMahan was a free agent and not given to conservative judgments about what women should do in their lives. She was equally respected by men who would never dare to make fun of her. There was no feminine daintiness with Mrs Dwyer McMahan as she had 'two feet...as fine and big as ever grew in Ireland'.<sup>87</sup>

An evening visit to the Fullerton home by Mrs McMahan produced a unique form of intimacy between two Irish co-exiles. Mrs McMahan's unexpected visit generated an involuntary expression of pleasure in Robert Fullerton's response that, 'Upon my word...it's Mrs Dwyer McMahan or I'm dreaming'.<sup>88</sup> Once inside the Fullerton home, she ignored the imperial matriarch glowering in splendour on the Fullerton mantel.

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<sup>85</sup>Fullerton, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid*, p. 71.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid*, p. 72.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid*, p. 71.

Within seconds of arrival, the domestic order of Fullerton propriety in the home was overthrown. In full view of Robert Fullerton, she removed her wet clothes, addressed him as Stevenson, and ordered him to give her advice on the prospective purchase of cattle. In response to a gesture of hospitality by Mrs. Fullerton on seeing a half-clothed woman in front of her husband, Mrs McMahan, 'declined the offer of a skirt of my mother's as being hopeless about the waist; so there she sat, in her red and black petticoat, as a matter of course, conversing with my mother and father'.<sup>89</sup>

This Irish woman proved to be an appealing image of femininity that Mary Fullerton also covertly admired as the violator of the norm. Mrs Dwyer McMahan also offered the possibility of breaking open the father's silence in the autobiographical narrative. The story of Mrs Dwyer McMahan was the only episode that recounted differences in the father's demeanour, suggesting that he felt most at home in Australia with a woman from his 'home' country:

Many a time he had thawed his limbs before her fire, and satisfied his hunger with the rough, wholesome fare of her board...we knew her well by hearsay...before that night when her burry voice burst on her home. It was to my father she came.<sup>90</sup>

Mrs Dwyer McMahan violated the legitimate wife's role in the family home when she put her two big feet into Robert Fullerton's slippers. This was an expression of intimacy that contrasted with the relative distance between the Fullerton parents. Until that evening, Mrs Dwyer McMahan was unknown to Robert Fullerton's wife and family, yet, her presence in the family home confronted the rules of domestic etiquette that were so carefully constructed by the mother's English sensibility. Mrs McMahan was an unsettling presence whose ambiguous femininity resisted the norms of nineteenth-century Australian settler society.

Mrs Dwyer McMahan's face and form...her voice, a huge head and face, looking strong and square, and capable — and more too, that we could not define...the masculine possibilities of...woman.<sup>91</sup>

### **Black spaces**

Domesticity superimposed an ideological screen over issue of race, for, contained within the Fullerton bush block were archaeological reminders of Indigenous occupation beyond the borders of the domestic garden.

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid, p. 74.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid, p. 75.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

Once we discovered a very fascinating bit of evidence as to the blacks having been somewhere in the past beneath the old tree. It was more than the nicks that...had left a record. It was an actual tomahawk that marked their Stonehenge. We found it one day when trying to establish a garden under the old tree.<sup>92</sup>

Gippsland was supposed to be emptied of blacks in the 1840s but stories persisted about the kidnapping of a white woman and her child by Gippsland Aborigines transpired in the colonial imagination. No evidence was found but the myth confirmed racialised fears about black assault on the sexual purity of white women.<sup>93</sup>

At the site where the emigrant dream was envisaged were Indigenous artifacts that signified the failure to rid Gippsland of the Aboriginal presence. Unlike Sketch Thirteen's attempts to distance the Fullertons from this part of Australian history, Robert Fullerton played an active role to mediate the cultural synergies between Aboriginal and Celtic histories. As Robert Fullerton had known the Celt in Ireland, his knowledge about the 'other' opened up a space in colonial discourse where artifacts of 'blackness' merged:

He...gave us a dissertation on the method of the making; how the blacks grew a handle into it, as into all their primitive tools; in their lazy way content with Nature's slow and silent forgiving, where we, the impatient rush to glowing fires and anvils. It was lore that charmed us; in its nature as fascinating as anything of the Druids; it was something that the children of the future, even the bush children, will have to take on trust.<sup>94</sup>

This was a parody. Neither Fullerton nor Aborigines were allowed a space in the national narratives where they could give a 'dissertation' of any cultural or anthropological significance. The text which allowed Robert Fullerton to cite cultural similarities between Indigenous American and Australian artifacts was interpreted from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Although it was a favourite text borrowed by settlers in Sketch Thirteen, this was not the case in *Bark House Days*. Stowe's book remained on the Fullerton bookshelf and was rarely read. It was 'never applied for by anyone in Australia Felix'. It was the practice of settlers in the Gippsland region to pass on books as well as garden cuttings and seeds. The American text may have provided a meaningful translation for Robert Fullerton to use, although incorrectly, when comparing an Aboriginal stone axe as technologically similar to an Indian tomahawk. The encounter between colonial settler and Indigenous Australian cultural references

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>93</sup>Also a theme in Sketch Thirteen

<sup>94</sup>Fullerton, op. cit., p. 26.

suggested that Robert Fullerton mobilised authenticating codes from colonial fiction to make sense of the Indigenous presence. By attempting to rewrite and re-right those cultural spaces, literally, he, and the discursive frameworks he used were irreconcilable representations when interpreting the products of Australian settler history.

The outside spaces of the Fullerton selection denoted other forms of primitivism in the weed-choked garden. The father's horse-dray 'was the only thing that wore a coat of paint'. Unlike the draughty timber 'house', his 'wonderful shed' was so well constructed that 'rain never came through'.<sup>95</sup> In the shed, Mary Fullerton could read non-standard books 'displaced by the Royal Readers' and enjoy the forbidden pleasure of non-conformity.

### **Homelessness?**

The father's world represented an unfinished project to tame the bush. The outside spaces were littered with the debris of colonisation signified by images of weed-choked gardens, poorly painted wagons and fences. By contrast, the maternal English estate was organised as an aesthetic array of texts, flowers, decorative touches that maintained a semblance of civilisation. Mrs McMahan's presence in the narrative appeared to confound conventional notions of gender identity and the social role of settler women. Fullerton's autobiographical text *Bark House Days* invoked the mythology of Australian pioneering heritage. Fullerton's autobiographical narrative conformed to and deployed mythologies of Australian nationhood. It was invested with the metaphoric and cultural iconography of the Australian bush that helped to make sense of an identity reference played out at the edges of Australian settlement in the late nineteenth-to-early-twentieth centuries, and one which came to denote her inferiority as an Australian writer.

The representational repertoires used by Mary Fullerton show how domestic domains hold cultural relevance as signs and symbols of race, culture and nationality. How Mary Fullerton negotiated the cultural inheritance of Irish identity was suggested by the improbability of having to define absence. She could see how her mother's cultural inheritance was transmitted through decorative aesthetics in the home but was unsure of where to place the symbols of her father's cultural history within that domestic context. The sketches recalled how the bush mediated tensions between Irishness and

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid, pp. 10, 38.

Englishness through community effort and co-operation. The bush harmonised religious and national differences whereas the city emphasised sectarian division. In mapping the pathways to home taken by the Fullerton and Leathers' families, the sketches captured moments in Gippsland settlement history that have remained relatively silent. Settlement in Gippsland related ideologically to the fashioning of race-based identity in Australian colonial history. However, the relatively small evidence brought forward about the dispossession of Gippsland Aborigines suggested that not all settlers were morally comfortable. The Fullerton narratives traced the progression of civilisation through metaphors of the 'hut' 'home' and the 'bush' that served the agenda of Australian nationhood but they also showed the fragility of those metaphors when traversing cultural geographies between Irish emigrant, settler and Indigenous Australians.

In the next chapter I will visit another phase of self-representation by Fullerton to investigate how the intimacies of personal friendships and literary criticism affected Fullerton's strategies to re-right her identity as an Australian-born poet. In this chapter the intangible effects of 'rewriting and re-righting' will be contextualised through two Australian voices. One is Mary Fullerton and the other is her literary mentor Miles Franklin. I examine how modes of writing determined Mary Fullerton's admission to the 'home' of Australian authorship.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Trespassers prosecuted*

One of the aims of this thesis is to discover how Australian-born women writers of nineteenth-century emigrant status negotiated their identity as Australian national subjects. Given that the lack of knowledge about Irish women emigrant experiences in Australia has been theorised as the 'great unknown', it is worthwhile to record Mary Fullerton's observations about the time it would take for emigrant generations to feel at home in Australia. Fullerton wrote:

The beginnings of a new country's literature are generally the mere echo of that of the home country of the immigrants. The new-comer does not once absorb the colour and spirit of the land of his adoption. It usually takes a generation or two of native-born people before the spirit of the place gets into imaginative literature...Marcus Clarke wrote of his grim despair, the brooding tragedy of the bush ranges and gullies...and the Australian landscape...Beloved of the native, only repelled.

This observation challenged pre-conceptions about a seamless transformation of Anglo-Celtic emigrant identity to that desired of Australian nationality. For the purposes of discovering how Mary Fullerton negotiated the generational transition from emigrant to 'native-born', I present the views of two Australian-born women writers whose concepts of national culture signified meanings of Australian identity between the 1920s and 1940s. The name of Miles Franklin has been well established in Australian literary history for her semi-autobiographical account of life on a cattle station at Brindabella. Her first novel *My Brilliant Career* (1901) cemented Franklin's literary and cultural worth as an Australian woman writer. For the purposes of argument, the writers are located at different ends of the cultural and literary spectrum in terms of Franklin's iconographical status of Australian literary authorship and Mary Fullerton's aspirations to become an Australian poet. In exploring meanings of national culture, national identity and the symbols of national membership that each writer identified, it will be shown how intimations of exclusion and belonging were written into Australian national self-portraiture.

These women-writers had a personal and literary friendship that began in the 1900s and ended with Mary Fullerton's death in 1946. Their friendship also traced the historical evolution of Australian nationhood and paralleled the changing political landscapes of World Wars One and Two. Instead of using conventional literary critique to determine the relative value of each author's respective works, I adapt a methodology that Marilla North used when she analysed ephemeral narratives such as letters, diary comments and notes that were located at the margins of Australian literary history. Through using a domestic typology, North was able to show how Australian women writers such as Dymphna Cusack (1902-1981), Florence James (1902-1993) and Miles Franklin (1879-1954) set out on their writing journeys.<sup>1</sup> By using the metaphor of 'yarn-spinning' to explain the complexities of personal and literary friendships that evolved along those journeys, North elaborated how 'home-spun' narratives significantly shaped the history of Australian women's writing. Yarn-spinning defined and described the type of literary, cultural and social networks that 'home-made' Australian women writers used to challenge literary and cultural conventions about gender and women's writing ability. Yarn-spinning underwrote a new consciousness about Australian women's writing and also enabled both Australian men and women writers to see their own cultural representations as equally comparable with those of the imperial literary tradition. In effect, the traditions of Australian women's writing emerged in the ephemera of social relationships rather than through formal constructs of literary and cultural conventions and aesthetics.

Mary Fullerton was also a member of Australia's literary 'yarn-spinning' network in the later part of the nineteenth century up to the mid-1940s. She was acquainted with Melbourne-based writers and poets such as Vance Palmer and Nettie Higgins (Palmer), Louis Esson, Mary Grant Bruce, Marie Pitt and Bernard O'Dowd. Through literary and personal connections, Mary Fullerton's work in Melbourne feminist and literary circles had become known to Miles Franklin and Mary Gilmore. Franklin and Gilmore were later to become exemplars of Australian women's fictional and poetic writing. Mary Fullerton aspired to become as well known an Australian women poet as had Miles Franklin had become as an Australian woman novelist. In terms of reconstituting the generational dilemma that Mary Fullerton identified as a problematic issue of self-

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<sup>1</sup>Marilla North, Ed., *Yarn-Spinners: A Story in Letters between Dymphna Cusack, Florence James and Miles Franklin*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, 2001.

representation, Mary Fullerton and Miles Franklin represented competing and complimentary 'modes of competence' of representing Australian culture.<sup>2</sup> These writers contextualise the problem of rewriting and re-righting narratives of identity hidden by normative accounts of Australian literary history.

### **The Franklin perspective**

The Franklin-Fullerton literary enterprise traversed the time when Australia separated as a British colony. While federal nationhood enabled Australia to legitimise powers of independent governance, separation was a double-sided construct of national status and cultural identity, as 'Australia was an English-speaking country with an obviously British culture'.<sup>3</sup> In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Australian writers such as Lawson, Furphy, Rudd and Patterson created a 'home-spun' Australian culture that combined their personal histories together with characterisations of the bush, the paddock and the stockman that embedded the cultural parameters of Australianness. Australians were ordinary, down to earth, creative and entrepreneurial in practical ways. C.E. W. Bean aligned the bravery, courage and independence of Australians at war as the evidence of the character building nature of bush life. While novelists like Vance Palmer, who was also a literary friend of Mary Fullerton, understood the metaphorical and cultural symbolism of bush literature and poetry and the bush balladeer tradition, he recognised that 1920s and 1930s Australian society had changed. When explaining how writers should approach 1920s and 1930s Australian culture, Palmer could not completely dismiss the influence of the bush tradition. He used it to draw inspiration from the quintessential legacy of pioneer writing as means of promoting the rewriting of a modern Australian cultural identity. He wrote:

There is in Australia a different spirit, submerged and not very articulate, that is quite different from these bubbles of old-world imperialism. Born of the lean loins of the country itself, of the dreams of men who came here to form a new society, of hard conflicts in many fields, it has developed a toughness all its own.<sup>4</sup>

Although not wishing to recycle cultural references of twentieth-century Australia in the same vein as late nineteenth-century writers, Palmer articulated the difficulties of rewriting post-Federalist Australia that continued to cling to the heritage of 'blood ties

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<sup>2</sup>James Faubion, Ed., *Michel Foucault, Aesthetics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Penguin Books, London, 1998, xxvii.

<sup>3</sup>Alastair Davidson, *From Subject to Citizen: Australian Citizenship in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge England, and Melbourne, 1997, p.49.

<sup>4</sup>Vance Palmer, in Jenny Lee, Philip Mead and Gerald Murnane, Eds., *The Temperament of Generations: Fifty Years of Writing in Meanjin*, Melbourne, University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p. 8.

and racial commonalities of belonging to the British Empire'.<sup>5</sup> Rather than Australia moving more assertively towards the development of a uniquely Australian writing identity, conservative and pro-imperialist politics reinforced the colonialist hold by preserving the ambiguous nationality status of British-Australian citizenship.<sup>6</sup> The period of the 1920s to the 1930s has been described as a 'quarantined culture' that was incapable of letting go of the colonial relationship with England or embracing the challenge to modernise Australian national culture.<sup>7</sup> In other political contexts, Ireland separated from the United Kingdom to become an independent republic. Russia overthrew Czarist imperialism and adopted communist-socialist values. Alongside the changing political landscapes of Europe and Ireland in the 1920s-1930s, art and forms of cultural expression were also changing.<sup>8</sup> Modernism was seen as an antithesis of moral and societal values that harboured unwanted foreign influences that could contaminate Australian culture. Geographical isolation ensured that Australia remained relatively undamaged and protected from outside infection.<sup>9</sup>

When commenting on the state of Australian culture, Miles Franklin lamented at Australian Writers' Week in 1935, 'we are more...a mental colony of England...today than...when...we were physically in the old garde-major days'.<sup>10</sup> Marjorie Barnard, who was Franklin's biographer, noted the inconsistency in Franklin's statement because Franklin gave 'back to her own countrymen their own image in the most acceptable form'.<sup>11</sup> In assessing Barnard's comment in light of John Williams's

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<sup>5</sup>Davidson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup>Australian politics were also dominated by the high-imperialist and conservative Stanley Bruce (1883-1967), leader of a National / Liberal / Country Party Coalition. Bruce's conservatism promoted the ethos of a dependant British Australia. W.J. Hudson and Jane North, Eds., *My Dear P.M.: R. G. Casey's Letters to S. M. Bruce, 1924-1929*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, ACT., 1980.

<sup>7</sup>John Williams, *The Quarantined Culture: Australia's Reactions to Modernism 1913-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and Melbourne, 1995.

<sup>8</sup>Twentieth-century modernism sought to redefine its contemporariness by rejecting the ethical, cultural, political and social traditions of the previous century. Rather than looking to the past for inspiration, modernists saw themselves as experimenters seeking to develop new and alternative models of society, culture and politics.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Frontier: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995; Graeme Turner, *National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of the Australian Narrative*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonard's, New South Wales, 1986; Gillian Whitlock, Ed., *Images of Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1992.

<sup>10</sup>Miles Franklin in Paul Brunton, Ed., *The Diaries of Miles Franklin*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 2004, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup>Marjorie Barnard, *Miles Franklin*, Hill of Content Books, Melbourne, 1967, p. 158.

observations about the 'quarantined' nature of Australian culture in the 1930s, and Leonie Kramer's description of Franklin's novel *My Brilliant Career* as a clichéd and stereotypical morass of Australian sheep station life, Franklin's writing did not appear to have made a significant move away from its bush origins.<sup>12</sup> Nineteen thirties literary critic P.R. Stevenson described Australian culture as 'something betwixt and between...something vaguely called a 'Dominion'.<sup>13</sup> Australia was introspective, self-conscious and insecure and seen to demote itself to secondary significance when defining Australia's cultural destiny.<sup>14</sup> Although a strong supporter of local Australian writers and Australian literature, Miles Franklin's cultural politics were challenged by the exodus of Australian writers to England.<sup>15</sup> Franklin's sense of cultural duty to Australia contrasted against her earlier history of expatriate roaming between England, Europe and America.<sup>16</sup> Her somewhat caustic diary entries reflected her sense of dissatisfaction about the character of cultural deserters who left Australia at a time when they were most needed:

They flee to environments...englamoured by time & distance, where there is romance in the daily sunset because it has been evident [sic] by a cloud of balladists. They shirk...tenacity...strength of belief & purpose...The first are worthy but feeble folk and the others are ignorant, unguarded [sic] and in trying to skip fundamentals...have missed the significance of those fundamentals...that the art...the Australian bush scene contains the only indigenous original culture yet nurtured in Australia.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, Franklin was effusive in praising Australian-born writers, artists and musicians like the Boyds, the Palmers, Judith Anderson and the Lindsays when they

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<sup>12</sup>Leonie Kramer, Ed., *The Oxford Book of Australian Literature*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1981, pp. 100-101.

<sup>13</sup>P.R. Stevenson, 'Foundations of Culture in Australia: An Essay Towards National Self-Respect', 1936, pp.18-19 in Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson, Eds., *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*, Macmillan Education Australia, South Melbourne, 1990, p. 341.

<sup>14</sup>James Page, 'Is Mateship a Virtue?' *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 2002, 37 (2), pp. 193-200.

<sup>15</sup>The Fellowship of Australian Writers was established in 1928 to bring together Australian writing talents and to find ways to promote Australian literature. First began in New South Wales, it later incorporated Victoria and other states. 1935 Writers' Week was an opportunity for Australian authors like Franklin, Nettie Palmer, Cusack and others to showcase their works.

<sup>16</sup>Between 1906 and 1915 Franklin worked as a secretary for Australian-born feminist Alice Henry at the National Women's Trade Union League in Chicago and co-edited its journal *Life and Labor*. She continued to write. *On Dearborn Street* (posthumously published in 1981) was American in context. She went to England in 1915 and became a nurse in the First World War in the Serbian Campaign of 1917-1918. She stayed in England writing and working as a secretary until her father's death in 1931 forced her to return to Australia.

<sup>17</sup>Miles Franklin, 'My Life and My Books', Schools Broadcast, March 21, 1938, ML. MSS 364/76-77 Miles Franklin Collection at the State Library of New South Wales, Electronic Collection, <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/franklin/> [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006].

became internationally known figures. She believed that those writers and artists were made from the pioneering stock that writers Furphy and Lawson represented. Franklin's complaints about the state of Australian domestic culture in the 1930s were not just expressions of pique. She articulated her sense of cultural patriotism in her views about the weakness of character displayed by cultural deserters and in her conviction that Australian-born writers were duty-bound to demonstrate loyalty to Australia. She strongly believed that Australia's domestic culture was not inferior to England's. Icons of Australian literature, such as Henry Lawson and Joseph Furphy, did not turn neglect their cultural duty and showed the Australian spirit by staying.<sup>18</sup> Lawson was particularly close in Franklin's affections and had been the mentor who persuaded his publisher Blackwood Press in England to consider *My Brilliant Career* (1901).<sup>19</sup>

Franklin's diaries and letters provided an insight into a value-system that underpinned the quintessential image of Australian identity. She idealised Henry Lawson as 'a mate...tall and slim, with exceptional physical beauty' who exuded masculinity and intellectual sensitivity.<sup>20</sup> In a broadcast about Australian literary culture in the 1930s, Franklin described the formula that Australian writers should aspire to. It was a masculinised ideal derived from the traditions of 'mateship' that put Australia on the map. This metaphorical and conceptual map was to have resonance in her criticisms of Mary Fullerton's poetry and style of writing. Franklin projected a no-nonsense, plain, basic vocabulary free from the adornments of classical traditions imported from England and Europe. Australian writers should aim for a cultural form that could be read by 'tanned' Australians. She wrote:

We all want to communicate our ecstasy or discontent. Such communication in the written word if sufficiently articulate becomes literature. And so amorphous, so free, so in the making, so living and unfinished is our language that sometimes the illiterate, if he has the talent or genius, produces a work that can become a classic of our literature, or one at least will have great popularity through its entertainment or aphoristic value....Don't imitate the work of people at a distance which because of distance seems more glamorous...Look around you at the "beef fed men and

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<sup>18</sup>Lawson wrote the preface of *My Brilliant Career* and remained a strong supporter of Franklin's writing talent. Furphy was another writer admired by Franklin. Miles Franklin, *A Personal Tribute To Henry Lawson*, Escutcheon Press, Pearl Beach, New South Wales, 1999.

<sup>19</sup>Lawson to Franklin, September 6, 1900. Franklin/Lawson letters, 1899-1902, ML MSS 364/6, Miles Franklin Collection, SLNSW, <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/franklin/> [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2006].

<sup>20</sup>Miles Franklin, 'My Life and My Books', Schools Broadcast, March 21, 1938, ML. MSS 364/76-77 Miles Franklin Collection, SLNSW, Electronic Collection, <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/franklin/> [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2006].

the full chested women” whom Kipling saw here, or those that are tanned like leather and as wrinkled as the sun here can make them.<sup>21</sup>

Implied in this statement was its reference to the cultural denominators that Lawson and Furphy pioneered. This was a home-grown and home-spun writing style associated with the ‘bush’ genre of the late 1890s. In the chronology of Australian nationhood, the bush was a critical symbol of identity that emerged from the ‘scraps, patches and rags of daily life...into...a coherent national culture’.<sup>22</sup> Franklin associated those qualities of independence with the expressions of characteristic forcefulness she saw in the writing of Irish-Australian Dymphna Cusack. She described Cusack’s writing as ‘bitingly brilliant’ exposés that challenged the ‘lick-spittling’ subjugation to English cultural tropes by Australian writers in the 1930s.<sup>23</sup> In one sense, Franklin aligned elements of Australianness with the quintessential notion of the Irish rebel.

Dymphna Cusack (1902-1981) was an Australian-born writer with an Irish-Catholic background.<sup>24</sup> While an admirer of Cusack’s writing ability,<sup>25</sup> Franklin’s diary comments revealed that sectarianism in Australia in the 1930s had not quite dissipated. Franklin’s private thoughts revealed her ideological attitude to the location of Irish-Catholicism in Australian national culture. Franklin seemed to suggest that Cusack’s success as an Australian writer might be a signal for Catholic Australians to impose their theology on Australian public life. Australia would then have ‘to genuflect...to the Cardinal instead of the English Governor’.<sup>26</sup> Read on those terms, Franklin’s Australia could only accommodate one form of national allegiance. Her Australia was not English, nor was it Irish either. It was born in the bush and in landscapes unique to the Australian way of life.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid, np.

<sup>22</sup>Homi Bhabha, 1994, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>23</sup>Franklin, February 4, 1938 in Brunton, Ed., op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>24</sup>Cusack was born in 1902 at West Wyalong, New South Wales to James Cusack and Bridget Crowley. The maternal family came from County Clare and arrived in Australia in 1858. The paternal family came from County Roscommon and arrived in Australia in 1854. Franklin’s paternal grandparents also came from County Limerick. They arrived in Australia in 1839. Her maternal ancestors came from a mixed convict and European heritage with the earliest ancestor transported to Australia in 1817. Florence James seemed to suggest that her own writing style lacked the ‘Irish touch’ that Cusack and Franklin had and described Miles Franklin’s wit as characteristic of the ‘quick Irish tongue’. North, op. cit., pp. 2-4, 72, 78.

<sup>25</sup> Franklin and Cusack collaborated in writing the novel *Pioneers on Parade* (1939) and shared a close personal and literary friendship. When reviewing the novel, *The Catholic Weekly* (1939) said, ‘we need more forthright books like this’ while the *Sunday Sun* criticised it for being ‘unworthy of Australia...and that it had...no real literary merit’. Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>26</sup>Brunton, Ed., loc. cit.

Concepts of Australian identity have been under review since first settlement. Kay Schaffer has suggested that 1930s Australia was undergoing another phase of rewriting and re-righting its national identity as a consequence of historian Keith Hancock's (1898-1988) interpretation of Australian history. In Schaffer's thinking, Hancock's vision of masculine mastery left little room for women to locate their sense of Australia because the national narrative was written from the perspective of the 'matey, egalitarian native son of the democratic nationalist tradition'.<sup>27</sup> In terms of the exclusionary effects on women's cultural space within the national narrative, Miles Franklin, Dymphna Cusack and Mary Fullerton were challenged to find the means of self-representation that would be coherent with their sense of Australian identity. Australian women writers could not completely disable the iconographical bush trope of Australia's pioneer history nor the legacy of its imprint on women's writing. Schaffer described its disempowering effect on women writers in this way:

Within the Australian tradition...the drover's wife comes to represent not women's interests or strengths but those of a (masculine) national character. If men fail to exhibit the necessary characteristics desired for the country, then women can stand in their place, but at the expense of their difference within the masculine economy.<sup>28</sup>

The Franklin diary entries suggested that Franklin was confronted with other meanings of Australian identity. In her view, having to negotiate the dualities of allegiance to country and Catholicism would be as problematic as jumping 'out of the frying pan into the fire'.<sup>29</sup> Franklin's politics appeared to conform to hegemonic Anglo-Protestant-imperial Australian identity in the 1930s and 1940s in terms of an underlying fear that Irish Catholics would reassert a space in national discourse, and so, impose their will on Anglo-Australia.

Franklin's success as an Australian novelist appeared to articulate essential nation-forming tropes of bush Australia. In cultural and literary terms, she had overcome the uncertainties of beginnings and arrived at her destination as an authorial figurehead. On the other hand, she seemed somewhat unsure where to align her cultural politics with Dymphna Cusack's Irish-Catholic Australia. Franklin's diary entries revealed how

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<sup>27</sup>Kay Schaffer, 'Landscape representation and Australian national identity' in *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4.2, 1987, pp. 47- 60.

<sup>28</sup>Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 127, 138.

<sup>29</sup>Brunton, Ed., op. cit., p. 104.

questions about Australian identity were not resolved with the generational transformation from Irish emigrant to settler Australian.<sup>30</sup> The remaining section of this chapter traces Mary Fullerton's writing journey between the 1920s to the 1940s to examine how the relationship between Franklin and Fullerton played out respective roles of power and dominance, struggle and resistance in writing.

### **Literary aspirations – the Fullerton perspective**

Mary Fullerton desired to become recognised as an Australian writer and anchored her aspirations to a long literary and personal friendship she shared with Miles Franklin. She met Franklin who was on a long leave of absence from Australia in England, during which she continued to write the first series of the 'Brent of Bin Bin' novels.<sup>31</sup> Between 1920 and 1926 Fullerton and Franklin were part of the Australian expatriate writing network in England. When Franklin returned to Australia in 1932, Fullerton remained in England. Their friendship continued and included Fullerton's sisters. Mary Fullerton died in England in 1946. The appearance of mutual collegiality appeared to veil an uneven power dynamic in the literary friendship between Franklin and Fullerton. Australian academic Maryanne Dever has suggested that Mary Fullerton felt that her writing was inferior to Franklin's even though Franklin encouraged Fullerton to continue to write and used her authorial status to persuade publishers to take more notice of Fullerton's work.<sup>32</sup>

While there was some collaboration on Franklin's part to help Fullerton overcome the difficulties of publishing her writing, it would appear that Franklin did not share all aspects of her own work with Fullerton. When the Franklin authored 'Bin-Bin' novel was published in 1931 there was much debate about the author's identity. Franklin kept it secret from her publisher Blackwoods in England. Fullerton wrote under the names of Robert Gray and Gordon Manners when attempting to have her novels *Murder at Crab Apple Café* (1933) and *Rufus Sterne* (1932) published by the same press. Fullerton's work sold about ten to twenty copies. Even if Franklin and Fullerton shared a personal friendship, Franklin was not open to disclosure about the identity of the

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<sup>30</sup>Stokes, op. cit., p. 133; Elizabeth Kwan, *Flag and Nation: Australians and Their National Flags Since 1901*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, Australia, 2006.

<sup>31</sup>Jill Roe, 'Franklin, Stella Maria Sarah Miles (1879 – 1954)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 8*, Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp. 574-576.

<sup>32</sup>Maryanne Dever, 'The complexities of female friendship', nd.

See <http://www.emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/recent/131/p.html> [Accessed 20.8.2008].

author of *Brent of Bin-Bin*. One of Fullerton's letters to her sister suggested that she had been hurt because of Franklin's reluctance to reveal the true author.<sup>33</sup> As María Pía Lara has noted, struggles for representation are not necessarily virtuous or collegial when determining the terms of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>34</sup>

Franklin enjoyed the disguise of anonymity and the opportunity to play semantic games with the identity of her literary colleague. In the frontispiece of *Back to Bool Bool* (1931), there was a dedication to "MF...for whose loyalty and support this effort could not have thriven".<sup>35</sup> The play on the initials 'MF' equally applied to Franklin and Fullerton. In a letter written after Mary Fullerton's death, Mary Gilmore began to suspect Franklin's motives for keeping Fullerton's identity a secret. She chastised her for being:

A dramatic hussy, or a hussy for the dramatic! I have just read you're [sic] article (and revelation) on 'E' whom I had thought a *nun* because of the similarity in the examples in the verse you sent me, written in pain & forgotten when consciousness returned...I once asked you if you were "E", as I had an idea it might be you all the time. Anyhow I am glad I saw her as an individual & not an ex-stirp (if there is such a word for Emily Dickinson).<sup>36</sup>

In the context of this correspondence, the significance of the word 'ex-stirp' becomes an important indicator of the status of Mary Fullerton's writing. The meaning comes from the Latin *extirpare*- to root out, totally destroy, eradicate, much in the manner of weeding. There is a hint in Gilmore's letter that Franklin had protected Fullerton's literary reputation by shielding "E" from criticism. Gilmore pressed Franklin to reveal the authorial identity of a novel written about the Gippsland region of Victoria. She believed that the Eve Langley text *The Pea Pickers* (1942) was either a Franklin-authored work, or a collaborative effort between Franklin and 'the unknown poet'. Franklin enjoyed this authorial charade and wrote in her diary that; 'Wonders will never cease. Mary Gilmore thinks I wrote this plus my unknown poet'.<sup>37</sup> Gilmore's instincts about differences in writing styles refused to be quieted. She continued to push Franklin about the writer's identity.

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<sup>33</sup>Fullerton, nd, op. cit., MS.

<sup>34</sup>María Pía Lara, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>35</sup>Miles Franklin, *A Ramiparous Novel with Several Prominent Characters and a Hantle of Others Disposed As the Atolls of Oceania's Archipelagoes*, by Brent of Bin Bin, Blackwood Press, England, 1931.

<sup>36</sup>Mary Gilmore, 1942, in William H. Wilde and Tom Inglis Moore, Eds., *Letters of Mary Gilmore*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1980, p. 211.

<sup>37</sup>Franklin in Brunton, Ed., op. cit., p. 144.

I felt ...Stella Miles Franklin's mind all through it...the feeling did not die...I found all my responses in it but for which I have never found words...That is up to Celtic Bronze...Anyhow whoever Eve Langley is – you or another...I sometimes wondered was the writer Stella Miles Franklin plus the unknown poet S.M.F. found.<sup>38</sup>

Nettie Palmer could not bring herself to condemn Fullerton's efforts at novel writing and preferred to remain silent. She wrote that the Fullerton-Gray authored *Rufus Sterne* 'was so bad...the best that I could do for it was to say nothing'.<sup>39</sup> Despite Gilmore's assessment of Fullerton's novel, Miles Franklin supported the publication of *Rufus Sterne* and urged the editor P. M. Ross to:

Extend to this writer...the same splendid and impenetrable mantle of silence as has enwrapped Brent of Bin Bin, and do not let it be known that either Miss Fullerton or I had a hand in this manner...anonymity promises to be one of the great literary adventures.<sup>40</sup>

Franklin wrote that Mary Fullerton lacked 'the ruthless self-determination...to...override obstacles to the full development of her gifts'.<sup>41</sup> Similar faults of character were invested with writers who left Australia to return 'home' to England. When Fullerton died in 1946, Franklin gave a posthumous reprise of Fullerton's anthology of poetry *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy* (1942). It would appear that after her death, Franklin defended Fullerton's poetic ability and put on notice the 'carpers' who effectively destroyed Mary Fullerton's writing career:

The complaint of the conventional was that Mary would not put sufficient work into her novels & poems...she missed chances through carelessness...She had none of the ruthless self-determination that would override obstacles to the full development of her gifts...she may have drawn into herself to protect her work from some prosodist who pecked at her waywardness of metre...neither would Mary conform.<sup>42</sup>

This statement contained particular inferences about the quality of character needed to become an Australian writer. In Franklin's assessment, Fullerton compromised her

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<sup>38</sup>What made Gilmore more suspicious was that she knew Franklin spent some time in a convent. In a later part of their letter, Gilmore assured Franklin that 'I have not mentioned the convent, so that is safe'. Franklin suffered severe depression following her mother's death in 1939 and could have sought refuge to isolate herself from the demands of caring for her mother and an alcoholic brother. Gilmore in Wilde and Moore, Eds., op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>39</sup>Nettie Palmer in Drusilla Modjeska, *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925: 1945*, A Sirius Book, Angus & Robertson, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1981, p. 97.

<sup>40</sup>S. Miles a.k.a Miles Franklin to P. M. Ross, November 1931, SLV, 2342-2/13, op. cit., MS.

<sup>41</sup>Miles Franklin, miscellaneous letter, 1931, Fullerton Papers, SLV, op. cit., np. MS.

<sup>42</sup>Miles Franklin, miscellaneous letter, SLV, np. nd., op. cit., MS.

writing success because of a lack of discipline, care and determination and refusal to conform to literary convention.

### **The dangers of writing: reactions and criticisms**

The anthology of poems titled *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy* (1942) was invested in Fullerton's hopes of being accepted as an Australian poet. Her friend and literary compatriot Miles Franklin was entrusted to write the Foreword. Miles Franklin praised Fullerton's capacity to 'write musically...coin phrases...as well as her gift...for sudden illuminating images'. The more substantial criticism related to the limitations of a 'homespun poet whose writing was seen to be 'Tense and epigrammatic...wayward in form and metre...perverse and careless...far too frequently...and who lacks...rhythmic texture'.<sup>43</sup>

The Fullerton letters indicated Fullerton's despair at what she perceived as criticism of her class and social status. She wrote, 'I wouldn't have thought it possible, nor perhaps would it have been had the writer been just a Bark House brat of a sunken lineage and no education'.<sup>44</sup> Conversely, Tom Inglis Moore believed Fullerton's poetry was:

Characteristically Australian in her individuality of utterance, just as in spirit...with full-blooded vigour which contrasts sharply against the anemic disillusionment of those English poets, who whimper, whine and protest against a world that reveals them as spunkless.<sup>45</sup>

When reviewing an earlier anthology of Fullerton's poetry titled *The Breaking Furrow* (1921), Australian literary critic Frederick Macartney commented that:

Mary Fullerton sympathizes with beings and things of low degree for their own sake. Her poems are few in number and variable in quality. The sonnets reveal the restraint of the philosophical mind with a touch of spirituality...but generally lack the fire of the lyricist. The [sic] *Breaking Furrow*...expresses sympathetic contacts with human outcasts...in...poems that have the primitive ballad in them.<sup>46</sup>

Moore thought that Fullerton's poetry represented the high end of Australian writing because its forcefulness whereas Macartney categorised Fullerton's writing with the outcasts she wrote about. Moore saw English poets as 'spunkless' whereas Macartney thought Fullerton's poetry lacked lyrical qualities. Moore perceived those as evidence

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<sup>43</sup>Miles Franklin in Mary Fullerton, *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy, Poems by "E"*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1942, pp. 8-14.

<sup>44</sup>Mary Fullerton letter, October 13, 1942, SLV, op. cit., MS.

<sup>45</sup>Wilde in Fullerton, 1942, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>46</sup>Frederick Macartney in E. Morris Miller, Ed., *Australian Literature: a Bibliography to 1938 Extended to 1950*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1956, p. 144.

of the weaknesses of English poetry. English editors saw the potential in Fullerton's writing. Memoranda of Agreement from various English publishers indicated they would consider Fullerton's manuscripts if she attended to errors and careless writing.<sup>47</sup>

A. Eyre Macklin was a sympathetic editor who had read an earlier anthology of Fullerton's poems called *Moods and Melodies* (1908). He wrote that the poems were 'lofty in thought and beautifully expressed'.<sup>48</sup> His letter of 1926 spoke of the fickle nature of the audience that Fullerton attempted to reach when writing about Australian pioneer history. Responding to poor sales of *The People of The Timber Belt* (1925), Macklin wrote:

I am very sorry...there is no better royalty account for this book...we have not sold many more...than 60 or so which have gone to Australia. But there it is - the book, good as it is, has shared the fate of hundreds of other novels in these days of overproduction, the rule apparently being that a new author either sells largely or practically not at all.<sup>49</sup>

Mary Fullerton withdrew from the harsh glare of criticism as a way to cope with the burden of social inferiority. The effect of silence was similarly noted by historian Patrick O'Farrell when referring to the suppression of Irish emigrant voices in the Australian story. When the semi-fictional documentary *The Australian Bush* was published in 1928, critical reviewers disparaged Fullerton's image of Australian life – a situation that brought her to near collapse over the shame of public exposure of errors and carelessness. Fullerton wrote that she 'had been through hell over it'.

The Macklin letter indicated that Australian audiences had changed and perhaps it was a gentle way of alerting Fullerton to either change her writing style or attend to stylistic issues that prevented her from enjoying greater public attention. Fullerton was uncomfortable with having to change her writing style so that it could conform to the style of 1930s Australian writers. When responding to Franklin's novels, Fullerton noted:

It is the fashion to be coarse nowadays...I think it...such a big mistake...I dont [sic] like it...most of the books go in for bloody and suchlike too and for giving "bedroom scenes"...theres [sic] plenty of life without...common or vulgar things without giving it all verbatim. In Rufus Sterne I have entered into things that arnt [sic] just Victorian in morality but I...can do without being too graphic or offensive...the strict poetic realist looks one way, the poetic type the other...I

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<sup>47</sup>Miscellaneous articles of agreement between 1930 and 1933. Fullerton Papers, SLV, op. cit., MS.

<sup>48</sup>A. Eyre Macklin, 'Commentary' in Mary Fullerton, *Moods and Melodies*, Lothian Press, Melbourne, 1908, np.

<sup>49</sup>Macklin letter to Fullerton, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1926, SLV, 2342 (2-13), np., op. cit., MS.

argued with Miles a lot on the subject but she is as she is...I fear she is really trying to go up to date (note what she says about a course in indecency). False ideals all together and not natural...to her... I will do what I can to moderate her attempt to go farther, perhaps she will drop it in the end...I think a novel may firstly discuss many things other than the legalities of human conduct.<sup>50</sup>

The type of Australian writing that Fullerton aspired to was not in step with her literary colleagues. Vance Palmer felt that the 1930s Australian audience needed imaginative prose to overcome the 'state of barbarism' that had befallen Australia's literary efforts. Palmer wanted Australian writers to look outwards and not backwards to the bush ballad style of writing. The novel form was necessary to 'stimulate our own instincts... for the sake of the country as a nation'.<sup>51</sup> Palmer was not an advocate of poetry and saw it as an individualistic, subjective self-indulgent style of writing that only elite and quasi-academic audiences were prepared to read. In contrast, Mary Fullerton maintained that 'poetry is first a thing of a mood' and believed that there was a place in Australian literary culture for poetry. While Tom Inglis Moore had been receptive to characteristics of Australian spirit shown in Fullerton's 1942 anthology, he was uncertain about whether Fullerton's writing was representative of Australian culture.

Fullerton had lived in England since the 1920s, and, apart from her correspondence contacts, was a distant figure in the 'yarn-spinning' networks of Australian domestic culture. Fullerton could not be placed in Australian literary culture by virtue of nationality status alone. Moore wrote there was 'little specifically Australian in this poet...she is a moralist...and...a true Symbolist...when...trying to read "our cosmic metonymy"'.<sup>52</sup> This insight illustrated the problem of rewriting and re-righting the concept terms of 'native born' Australian identity. Although upset by the severity of literary criticism, Fullerton defended her writing style as 'natural rather than concentrated in the strictly poetic way'; and, while criticism could be valuable, she was 'by no means sure that you [meaning Frederick Macartney] are nearer right than I am'.

### **Conspicuous violations**

Criticism had a significant impact on Mary Fullerton's estimation of her writing. In her unpublished writing, she wrote about the effects of misrepresentation and traced how women's identity had been misrepresented in history and in everyday assumptions:

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<sup>50</sup>Fullerton letter, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1933, SLV, 15123-3395/63, np., op. cit., MS.

<sup>51</sup>Vance Palmer, 'The Spirit of Prose' in Imre Salinsky, Ed., *The Oxford Book of Australian Essays*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 111.

<sup>52</sup>Moore, 1946, op. cit., pp. 5, 7.

Men in speaking about women (specially the writers of a bygone era) were wont to use one broad general phrase which was supposed to sufficiently portray woman...as...the whole sex in one class by this lumping process of classification of women in proverbial sayings which refer to our own sex...Woman who handicapped as she is...by prejudice is stepping out on the mental plane, so... men are anxious about their laurels.<sup>53</sup>

The psychological effects of critical reviews had bearing on how Mary Fullerton articulated her feelings about being an Australian 'native'. As Sylvia Martin recounted in her analysis of Mary Fullerton's relationship with Mabel Singleton, Fullerton had grown up with a radical sense of femininity in comparison to gendered conventions of the time.<sup>54</sup> She defied sexual and social conventions and left Australia permanently in the 1920s to take up domestic residence with Mabel Singleton and Singleton's infant son John in England. Fullerton wrote her own self-image as a paradoxical sexual and self-identity:

**M**-ary – She's complex and simple and witty  
**A** – as foolish as God ere created  
**R**- ather stern of mouth and kind as to eyes  
**Y**- to paradox queerly related.

Sylvia Martin provided rich information on the relationship between Mabel Singleton and Mary Fullerton. They met in Melbourne in the 1900s when Vida Goldstein was president of the Victorian Women's Association. Although aligned with the broader project of women's emancipation, Fullerton did not pursue higher office in the Australian feminist movement.<sup>55</sup> She preferred to remain in the background and maintained a strict regime of privacy about her relationship with Mabel Singleton. She wrote to Miles Franklin that when leaving Australia she 'got away from everyone and what they say, and don't care if I'm never mentioned after my death'.<sup>56</sup> But Fullerton did not completely exile herself from Australian literary and cultural networks as the history of correspondence between herself, her sisters and Miles Franklin showed.

Fullerton had an alert sense about the impact of prejudice on women's career aspirations. She portrayed herself as 'unwomanly...and...cold-hearted' but as her correspondence indicated, she was extremely sensitive about being exposed to public

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<sup>53</sup>Mary Fullerton, 'Unpublished memoirs', 1904, np., loc.cit.

<sup>54</sup>Eve Blackmore, 'Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy: The Paradoxes of Mary Fullerton as "E"', Unpublished Thesis, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, 1996.

<sup>55</sup>Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, University of New South Wales Press, 2001, pp. 32-3, 108-111, 188.

<sup>56</sup>Cited in Martin, op. cit., p. 9.

criticism. Those traits in part were shaped in part by the isolation of Gippsland settler life.<sup>57</sup> Other observers have also commented on the phenomenon of alienation associated with Australian settler consciousness. Richard Nile described it as a 'kind of spiritual exile' caught between repatriating the past and the ghosts of emigrant culture, and, desires to reinvent new images of Australian identity.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, how to locate a sense of place and belonging iterated the difficulties of forming an Australian national identity out of migrant and 'native-born' sensibilities.<sup>59</sup> Fullerton's sense of alienation was also psychologically profound. She described it as an awareness of *being* or an existential loneliness of not belonging:

The loneliness of it...descended...its frightening force. Here was I, no one else, what I was — what I did, and I only responsible. The terror of the responsibility of being a Being gripped me. That sense of Time by the mirror was the second occasion of that sense of being a lonely self, a doing and a being individual.<sup>60</sup>

Fullerton interpreted criticism as an assault on her worth as an individual. She traced her sense of inferiority to socio-cultural deprivation. Her sensitivity about class identity was reflected in criticisms suggesting a lack of control or discipline over her means of self-representation. She was not a perfect writer in the sense that literary theorists wanted. On the terms that Miles Franklin and Mary Fullerton interpreted Australian national culture, the differences between their socio-cultural backgrounds articulated the critical task of rewriting and re-righting, when:

You have the problem of cultural difference...when something is being challenged about power and authority...a particular trait or cultural tradition...the accent they

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<sup>57</sup>Patrick Morgan, *The Irish in Gippsland*, Centre of Gippsland Studies, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria, Unpublished Monograph, nd, 18p; 'Forgotten in the Fertile Crescent' in *Quadrant*, November, 1983, pp. 52-56; Peter Wells, *Gippsland: People, A Place and Their Past*, Landmark Press, Drouin, Victoria, 1986.

<sup>58</sup>Richard Nile, 'Civilisation' in Richard Nile, Ed., *The Australian Legend and Its Discontents*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, 2000, p. 49.

<sup>59</sup>Ann Curthoys, 'Mythologies' in Nile, Ed., pp. 11-41; Marilyn Lake, 'Helpmate, Slave and Housewife: Women in Rural Families 1870-1930' in Patricia Grimshaw, Chris McConville and Ellen McEwen, Eds., *Families in Colonial Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1985, pp. 173-185; Linzie Murray, 'Australian Legend and Australian Men' in Richard Nile, Ed., op. cit., pp. 81-94; Gail Reekie, 'Contesting Australia: Feminism and Histories of the Nation' in Whitlock and Carter, Eds., op., cit., pp. 145-155; Susan Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s to 1930s*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1995; Graeme Turner, *Making it National: Nationalism and Australian Popular Culture*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1994.

<sup>60</sup>Fullerton, 'Unpublished Memoirs', np., op. cit., MS.

...speak with...their particular history, be it Irish or Indian or Jewish...becomes a site of contestation.<sup>61</sup>

While cultural homogeneity was prefaced as a galvanising agent of Australian society, differences in cultural backgrounds were played out in different readings of Australian national culture and in relation to 'shifting relations of domination and subjugation' that determined the terms of cultural authenticity and writing authority.<sup>62</sup> Franklin's squatter middle-class Anglo-Irish genealogy was in distinct contrast to Fullerton's social status as the child of selectors. Although it is not known to what extent Franklin's thinking on Mary Fullerton's work could be causally linked to class differences, it was noted in the Fullerton sketches that a distinctive class and social gap existed in Australia rural settlements. Squatter and settler were held together by both opposing and colluding forces based on property interests, land ownership, wealth and social status.

Reactions to Franklin's criticism of Fullerton's poetry appeared to trigger a hidden class consciousness about her inferior cultural background. Franklin may have been overtly critical of Fullerton's 'lack of spunk' as a means of forcing Fullerton to conform to literary standards or to distance her own writing from an inferior literary colleague. On the other hand, Franklin was the inspiration of hundreds of poems of dedication and admiration written by Fullerton. Most were never published and remain uncollected in archival storage.<sup>63</sup> In her analysis of Fullerton's poetic language, Sylvia Martin identified how Fullerton used coded visual and symbolic metaphors derived from the Australian landscape to create an 'Arcadian space of female sensuality' in her many poems.<sup>64</sup> The wild bush violet was an indigenous Australian floral emblem that Fullerton used as a cryptic symbol of beauty and love in her poetry. However, the very dense symbolism in Fullerton's poetic images made it difficult for literary critics to interpret. Franklin preferred simple prose language whereas Fullerton was prepared to test concepts, language, ideas and literary and social conventions. One such example

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<sup>61</sup>Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham, 'Staging the Politics of Difference: Homi Bhabha's Critical Literacy' in Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham, Eds., *Race, Rhetoric and the Postcolonial*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1999, p. 16.

<sup>62</sup>Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography*, Cassell, New York, 1999, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup>Franklin-Fullerton Collection, SLNSW, op. cit., MS.

<sup>64</sup>Sylvia Martin, 'Becoming Violet: Mary Fullerton's Poetry and Lesbian Desire', *Land and Identity, Proceedings of the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, The University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, 1997, pp. 99-104.

was the poem titled 'Two Women' from the anthology *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy* (1942). The poem's title is somewhat ambiguous in terms of the poetic subjects. The kiss between the female and male counterparts speaks of a heterosexual romance but the juxtaposition of the title, 'Two Women', context and content, leaves open to interpretation whether a conventionally written poem was a disguise for Fullerton to express unconventional sexual feelings:

Lightly she kissed and went,  
And never a word again,  
But the touch of the delicate kiss  
On the mouth that she kissed will remain  
Gentle her kiss and word,  
Tender the eyes with their pain;  
Oh, he carried it all in his heart-  
To the gate at the top of the lane

Fullerton's symbolic language resonated with the traditions of English romanticism whereas Australian prose novelist Miles Franklin preferred writing in vernacular language to connect to Australian audiences. Franklin preferred simple language whereas Fullerton saw writing as an extension of her identity and sought to use language to explore the testing of concepts, language, ideas, literary, and social conventions.

### **Homelands**

Mary Fullerton was unconventional in her choice of subject matter and faced the challenges of negotiating the generational transformation from emigrant to Australian 'native' identity. Irish emigrant Robert Fullerton was a less a successful image of the Australian bush pioneer. His attempt at house-building failed within three years. The selector block at Gippsland was littered with broken tools, weeds and disrepair. While the interior of the Fullerton bark hut reiterated the civilising ideals of Englishness, the outside was a badly maintained space that could not control the primitive bush. Attraction for the outsider may have been more influential to Mary Fullerton's Australian identity than one conformed to the culture of English domesticity. Robert Fullerton and co-Irish emigrant Mrs Dwyer McMahan shared cultural spaces that appeared to symbolise non-conformity. Mrs Dwyer McMahan remained an important trope of freedom and individualism in Fullerton's poetic writing. Mary Fullerton's writing history was represented by an ambivalent palette of English conformity and Irish contradiction. Several poems written about Ireland were perhaps indicative of

Fullerton's attempts to reconnect to her Irish cultural inheritance so that she could use more radical images of national identity.

One poem titled 'William Butler Yeats' was dedicated to the role that Yeats played in Irish national culture. It was included in the Fullerton anthology of *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy* (1942).<sup>65</sup> The first stanza begins with the promise of the Irish Revival where Yeats mobilised Irish fairy tales as a means of reconstructing Ireland's cultural identity. Yeats 'rode the leprechaun...Found fairies under fern...he...knew the dancing light / That shines but does not burn' (Stanza one). In using romanticised symbols, Fullerton constructed an image of Irish culture consistent with the manner in which Australian writers imagined Irishness. It was a conceptualisation of Irish culture that provided a 'suitably adaptable iconography for depicting the otherwise baffling forms of the Australian landscape'.<sup>66</sup> The later stanzas reflected Fullerton's concerns about the denouement of Revivalism in Ireland. When Yeats turned away from the Celtic past and 'to Man'; the symbolic connection to Fullerton's imagined homeland was broken. Yeats had betrayed his, and by inference, Mary Fullerton's connection to her Celtic inheritance when he rejected the 'leprechaun' and the 'fairies'.

While the poem did not elaborate the nature of Irish identity politics, it could have been an indication of Fullerton's disappointment with the passing of Ireland's poetic genre. She had consistently rejected modernising influences in Australian novel writing and also seemed to be disappointed that the Yeatsian ensemble of fairy and leprechaun had been dismantled in modern Irish culture. In post-nationalist Ireland prose fiction and realistic drama were preferred to romanticised versions of Celtic mythology and fantasy.<sup>67</sup> In part, by attempting to reconstruct Irishness by way of an outdated mode of writing, Fullerton may have been trying to negotiate the effects of exclusion on women's cultural spaces that resulted from the over valorisation of Yeats poetry in the Revival period.<sup>68</sup> The second stanza of the poem suggested that a return to the traditions of Irish writing may bring hope that Celtic symbols would revitalise the Irish poetic tradition:

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<sup>65</sup>Fullerton, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

<sup>66</sup>Peter Tregear, Fritz Hart and the 'Celtic Twilight' in Australia', *Literary Review*, Fall 2001, Volume 5, Issue 1, 6 pgs, p. 173.

<sup>67</sup>Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Irish Dramatic Movement*, Methuen, London, 1977.

<sup>68</sup>Rebecca Pelan, *Two Irelands: Literary Feminisms North and South*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 2005.

He gave them back to men-  
The elves they had denied-  
And Ireland lived again,  
The Ireland that had died.

Yeats' Irish fantasies facilitated a way for Fullerton to reconnect to her Irish inheritance and relive her identity imaginatively. She could metaphorically step into the vacated spaces of the paternal homeland to reclaim a piece of Ireland. The leprechaun and fairy were not available in the settler landscapes of Gippsland. The Irish Celt lured Robert Fullerton away from Ulster-Scots Presbyterian orthodoxy by the spell cast by fairies and magic. The only indication of any connection to Ireland in Fullerton's *Bark House Days* was when her father wore a verbena flower in memory of his mother. Her Irish relatives were hard to imagine as real people. The third stanza of the poem registered Fullerton's disappointment with Yeatsian images of Celtic fantasy:

And then he turned to Man-  
His life of strain and stress-  
And limmed the common plan  
With austere loneliness.

The secular world of 'Man', either as a generic sex, or a generalised reference of humanity, had degraded the symbolic imagery that Yeats had carefully crafted. It is at this point in their histories that English conquest intervenes in determining whether Yeats and Fullerton can claim full entitlement to Irish cultural references. Fullerton may have been frustrated with had denied her attempts to reconnect to Ireland. It would also seem that Yeats understood the effects of exclusion when recalling Ireland's history in a poem called 'The Curse of Cromwell'. In the Yeats' poem, 'Cromwell's murderous crew' had beaten 'lovers and the dancers...into...clay' and left an absolute silence where 'all neighbourly content and easy talk are gone'.<sup>69</sup> When writing about the effects of their histories, Fullerton and Yeats approached the writing of Irish identity from geographically different but culturally related trajectories. In her unpublished memoirs, Mary Fullerton wrote that the legacy of her Ulster-Scots heritage destroyed the Celtic dream.<sup>70</sup> She was an inheritor of Cromwell and Ulster-Irish-Presbyterian history. Her genealogical legacy prevented her from sharing the sense of Irishness projected by Celtic fantasy. She wrote how the impact of that history was 'felt in my blood / My bones, my flesh, my hair / Aghast my heart has stood / and felt it

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<sup>69</sup> W.B. Yeats, *Selected Poems*, Phoenix Edition, London, 2002, p.119.

<sup>70</sup> Fullerton, loc. cit., MS.

creeping there'.<sup>71</sup> In Frederick Jameson's succinct description, history does hurt once political consciousness is released.<sup>72</sup>

The poem 'Fear' projected how her 'ancestral legacy' articulated the problem of reconnecting with her Irish homeland. This poem exhibited the characteristics of diaspora consciousness in the image of a flower shaped by 'twin stems upbringing sadly from twin cores / Twin grains of sand along a desert blown'. The poem 'Transmigration' signified the problem of writing out the 'ancestral legacy' of emigrant identity from the perspective of a 'pale southern reflex of the traditional fairies and gnomes of the northern mythologies'.<sup>73</sup> Claims of entitlement to Irish history and culture reconstituted an inexorable problem for the legatees of Cromwellian history when it came to the way that Fullerton poem used 'referential processes' that articulated a masculine model of Irish culture to make sense of Ireland.<sup>74</sup> A masculine image was inappropriate to Fullerton's sensibility and frustrated her attempts to reconnect with her Irish cultural heritage. Referential processes used by Yeats also encoded signs of exclusion. This was unsolvable paradox of self-representation. She was unable to reclaim an entitlement to Irish identity burdened with the legacy of imperial history. In reaching towards the Irish landscape for some resolution to the generational transition of the native-born, Fullerton took an alternative route to models of Australian identity proposed by Miles Franklin.

The second poem called 'Salt Bay Galway' spoke to the history of Irish emigration. The poem may have articulated Fullerton's attempts to link with her father's emigration history by imagining her Irish family's responses to the loss of a son and a daughter. In this poem, the mother acted as the narrator to tell the familiar story of Irish emigration:

My brave boy Terence went over the sea,  
Went over the blue of the sea,  
The spit of the shape of the Arans themselves  
Was his ship to the eyes of me.

Why Fullerton chose the Aran Islands as a site for her poem is unclear. The Aran Islands were a long way from Belfast and were located off the west coast of Ireland but were icons of Gaelic Irishness known to nineteenth-century Australian writers. The

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<sup>71</sup>Fullerton, 1908, p. 30.

<sup>72</sup>Frederick Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, Methven, London, 1981, p. 102.

<sup>73</sup>Fullerton, 1928, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>74</sup>Mary Orr, op. cit., 2003, p. 14.

Aran Islands attracted the attention of cultural anthropologists, academics, writers, poets and painters because the Islanders managed to retain their Gaelic culture and Gaelic language despite attempts to Anglicise Ireland. Thus preserved as a cultural anomaly or a cultural relic, the Aran Islands were thought to have restorative qualities that would:

Bring back to the English theatre the poetry that it had missed...presenting it, if not in the terms of English society at least in a language which Englishmen could understand, not leaving it to them to make either translations or selections.<sup>75</sup>

Fullerton's poems about Ireland appeared to be lodged with symbolic images associated with her father's life in Ireland.<sup>76</sup> Her connection to Ireland's cultural landscape was an imaginary one. She could not replicate the actual experience of loss that resulted from her father's emigration to Australia, however, her attempts to resolve the dilemma of identity and exile suggested difficulties with rewriting and re-righting Irish history and her Irish cultural inheritance.

I have suggested that Fullerton saw herself as an outsider. In theoretical terms, Relph qualified how 'outsideness' and 'insiderness' reflect attempts to reconnect to landscape and places. Existential, objective and incidental outsideness are mostly symbolic fleeting visits that tend to be emotionally detached and *disconnected* from the actual experience of living in those landscapes.<sup>77</sup> While the actual experience of the landscape is out of reach, 'vicarious outsideness' can close this gap imaginatively.

The depiction of a specific place corresponds with our own experiences of familiar places – We know what it is like to be there because we know what it is like to be here.

Vicarious outsideness is empathetic in intent. The 'Salt Bay Galway' poem could be rendered authentic through anchoring it to a specific geographic space in Ireland where the Aran Islands could function imaginatively to recontextualise Ireland's emigration history and rewrite experiences of exile associated with her father's emigration history. The Fullerton poem may not have displayed the type of literary credentials associated with Yeats. In closing with a riddle, 'and what is the sense of the Arans themselves / Or the use of the things that stay?', it would appear that Fullerton has iterated the problem of writing about home by attempting to synthesise the cultural geographies of Ireland

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<sup>75</sup>Ellis-Fermor, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup>Andrea A. Lunsford in Olsen and Lynn Worsham, Eds., *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>77</sup>E. Relph, *Place – Placelessness*, Pion Limited, London, 1976, pp. 5, 51-53, 55, 83.

and Australia. A third poem about Ireland was left with scrapbooks of writing in the Fullerton archives. It was dedicated to a Kate O'Brien who had written to the *English Standard* about her wish to return to Ireland and build a grey-green house between Quilty and Kilkee.<sup>78</sup> Fullerton noted that it 'sounded better with a 'slight Irish brogue'.<sup>79</sup> The last stanzas read:

Of the grey-green stone from the lovely land  
I will make it of grey-green stone  
Oh Clare has the finest in all the world  
For a cabin of one's own.  
It's there that I'll live and its [sic] there I'll die  
In the sight of the lovely see [sic]  
In my grey-green house on the thymy shore  
By Quilty beyant Kilkee.

Irish culture figured strongly in Australian writers' responses to national politics and Australian culture. A number of literary figures known to Mary Fullerton, for example, O'Dowd, Louis Esson, Mary Gilmore, Nettie Higgins [Palmer] were either descendants of Irish emigrants or expressed interest in Irish culture in their Australian writing. Only a small selection of Fullerton's poetry could be used to explore the use of metaphorical and cultural symbols from Ireland in her writing repertoire. These poems are directly attributed to Ireland, however, Fullerton continued to explore notions of home in the Australian context.

Poems from *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy* titled 'Homelove' and 'The House' and 'Roofs'; and 'Face' from *The Wonder and the Apple* suggested that Fullerton had not resolved the location of 'home'.<sup>80</sup> The poem 'Roofs' spoke about 'the primal ache for Home... in terms... of...a...longing for a resting place / Near Nature's arms'. The desire to return home to Australia has both cultural and theoretical significance. Yearning to return to the Irish homeland has been articulated in Irish emigrant letters. The desire to return home has been theorised as a desire to belong. As such, Mary Fullerton's diasporic status was indicative of the problematic location of Irish identity in Australia. She desired to imaginatively reconnect with a cultural heritage that represented aspects of her Irish identity, and, also desired to find a native birthplace that authenticated her sense of Australian national culture.

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<sup>78</sup>Quilty and Kilkee are towns in County Clare, Ireland.

<sup>79</sup>Fullerton scrapbooks of writing, MS 12191, SLV, op. cit., MS, nd.

<sup>80</sup>Mary Fullerton, *The Wonder and the Apple*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1946, pp. 9, 47 and *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy*, loc. cit. pp. 56, 59.

I sometimes think the nearest hut  
Is matter for a thrill of pride  
For ere a roof upheld the sky  
A thousand races strove and died.

The poem 'Face' characterised Fullerton's longing for the Australian bush. Her 'Soul is wistful for the Bush / The myrtle and the sassafrass...where the scent of...shining, uncommercial musk / breathes upon you as you pass'. The image of an Eden-like garden registered strongly in Fullerton's landscape images. As argued by Eisenberg, the search for an ontological beginning was 'not just a sentimental journey' inasmuch that if 'the green cabinet of Arcadia' were to be found, we could then recover the ontological loss of home when 'we were kicked out of Eden'.<sup>81</sup> The poem 'Face' traced the beginnings of the Fullerton history in Australia. Here, the autobiographical narrative *Bark House Days* converges with the poetic mood of reflection. The poet wishes to reconnect with that 'face' that once had 'smiled on me...and to the place where...that cool home ...which...Softened the sun's authority'. The final stanza of the poem suggested that Fullerton's enforced exile in England had a significant emotional impact:

I'll not go back; the mock of years  
Has changed the nymph, and all the scene;  
Not that which memory keeps today  
Remain as it has always been.<sup>82</sup>

The poem 'Impermanent' implied that Fullerton was resigned to never leaving England. It was where she would die. The melancholy sentiment suggested that Fullerton was grappling with the ultimate problem of where she would be buried:

I lay me down in England,  
On England's ancient turf,  
And felt her circled beaches  
Receive the old salt turf.<sup>83</sup>

Memories of 'home' were central to the themes that Fullerton attempted to articulate in the collections *The Wonder and the Apple* and *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy*. How home was imaged in 'Homelove' articulated the depth of Fullerton's affiliation to the Australian landscape:

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<sup>81</sup>Evan Eisenberg, *The Ecology of Eden, Humans, Nature and Human Nature*, Picador, Basingstoke and Oxford, England, 2000, pp. 147, 222, 227.

<sup>82</sup>Fullerton, *The Wonder and the Apple*, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid, p. 40.

The grey-green bush,  
And all the high Divide;  
The immemorial bush:  
There my soul's pride.<sup>84</sup>

In contrast, the English landscape represented a 'wet wood / With bluebells lush / And the wild spring mood / Of the springtime thrush'. Dissimilarities between England and Australia were qualified by respective colour palettes. Australia was an energetic landscape of vibrant 'yellowed chrome' while England was dull, sedate and controlled. Read together with the poem 'Return', Fullerton's Australian bush images resonated with organic metaphors and sensual images of 'pungent dog-wood' and 'purple peppermint'. Here again, home was evident in the poet's wishes to return to Australia:

I stumble on the little burrowed home,  
And chuckles overhead  
Ring back my yesterdays until  
Nothing of all the past is dead  
All here again, I hear, the bird, the bush,  
Expelled for many a year ....  
If I return, then why not they?  
We are all native here.

Mary Fullerton literally experienced the impact of homelessness as an Australian expatriate living in England. Her poetic attempts to recreate a sense of connection to her Australian homeland conveyed the problem of returning to cultural landscapes she no longer resided in.

### **Transgression as a metaphor of empowerment**

To say that Fullerton's writing had 'no distinctive national features' is a failure to comprehend the problem of rewriting and re-righting maps of Australian cultural identity. Fullerton tried to fashion her writing style by drawing upon cultural symbols from Ireland as well as natural landscape images of Australia to anchor her cultural location. Fullerton aligned herself with topographies of identity displaced to the margins of Australian society. In *The Breaking Furrow* (1921), Fullerton's Australia was denoted by 'The Outcast'; 'The Widow'; 'The Priest'; 'The Deaf-Mute'; 'The Drone'; 'The Blacksmith' and 'The Bottle-O'. These were the people whose ordinariness was thought to have constituted Australia's sense of egalitarianism that broke the legacy of class elitism. Fullerton's bush people, however, were not builders of nations but vandals who pillaged the Australian bush and left it 'Scarred by the blaze

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<sup>84</sup>Fullerton, *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy*, loc. cit., p. 59.

/ Of the pioneer's axe'.<sup>85</sup> The bush spectacle of 'September flaunts of...golden wattle blooms...where...hangs the purple festoons...of...the Bush the royal home of nature'<sup>86</sup> disappeared under the grinding 'teeth of the mill'.<sup>87</sup> The bush was disfigured by machines and men whereas in Australia's pre-history, 'Nature had sown...a faultless symmetry'.<sup>88</sup>

The Australian landscape had been poisoned and was decaying: 'At an old-water-hole ...Bones lay in the hide / Of things that had died'.<sup>89</sup> In taking on the mantle of environmentalist Fullerton hoped there would be time to 'Mend...the gape in the wound...and...Unite it afresh' to restore Australia's Garden of Eden.<sup>90</sup> When using a biblical analogy to describe the extent of damage caused by English colonisation in Africa, Fullerton noted that the iconic symbol of power, being the Lion, could not be saved from the onslaught. The lion was killed with 'no ceremony / No dramatic moment' to mark his passing.<sup>91</sup> The paradoxical pleasure of making a home was enacted through violence and the slaying 'of tawny brutes'. Fullerton's insight into the paradoxical nature of white settlement in Africa recognised that settlement also translated a complex culture of violence. It was only through killing that the Englishman 'healed his grievous wound'.<sup>92</sup> While the poem foreshadowed environmental destruction in Africa, Fullerton acknowledged that Australian settlement practices caused the widespread destruction of the natural landscape. The vaunted skills of the bushman's axe were responsible for the destruction of bush forests. Fullerton was forced to ask whether she could envisage a future Australia, 'When the last god perished...What next shall he lose... In his large going?'.<sup>93</sup>

The destruction of the Australian bush was further elaborated in the poem 'Crows'. The images of death, desolation, and drought immediately conjure images of the arid Australian 'outback'. The poem's title has associations of scavenging and survival. In its role of predator, the crow picked on a carcass rotting in the sun with 'its teeth

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<sup>85</sup>Fullerton, 'Flesh', 1942, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>86</sup>Fullerton, *Bark House Days*, 1921, op. cit., p. 60.

<sup>87</sup>Fullerton, 'Flesh', 1942, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>88</sup>Fullerton, *Bark House Days*, 1921, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>89</sup>Fullerton, 'Crows' in *The Breaking Furrow*, 1921, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>90</sup>Fullerton, 'Englishman', 1942, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>91</sup>Mary Fullerton, 'Lion' in Susan Hampton and Kate Llewellyn, Eds., *The Penguin Books of Australian Women Poets*, Penguin, Australia, 1986, p. 31.

<sup>92</sup>Fullerton, 'Englishman' in *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy*, 1942, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>93</sup>Fullerton in Hampton and Llewellyn, Eds., op. cit., p. 31.

gibbered up'. As the animal died in the waterhole, it poisoned the most critical resource that Australian settlers could use. A settler 'son of the plain...tortured of thirst...came to the mud...and... sank where he stood' and died of thirst even in sight of water. In contrast, the 'native', being the native Indigenous Australian, intuitively avoided the poisonous water-hole. Whether Fullerton was referring to colonial practices of poisoning water-holes is unknown; however, the focus on the different actions of the 'settler son' and the 'native' suggest this meaning was intentional. Fullerton's writing and reading of the Australian landscape was not celebratory but a condemnation of environmental destruction which exposed the fragility of the pioneer myth in Australian writing.

Fullerton's reputation as an Australian writer suffered from the impact of literary criticism. She showed an alert intellect that could engage with the philosophical conundrum of 'Civilisation'. This unpublished poem explored the roles of criticism and writing and aesthetic postures undertaken in the illusionary pursuit of perfection. While criticism had a negative impact on Fullerton's self-confidence as an Australian writer, it also exposed how delusions of 'Civilisation' masqueraded in literary and cultural costumes. It was as if she slipped into a different stream of consciousness when reflecting on her development as a writer. As an older version of herself, 'She grew conscious like old Eve / Of her barbaric state / And bade the raiments of Genius' to transform her primitivism. Civilisation demanded a 'nobler home' and an empire of 'cities shelving to the sea', and architectural monuments in 'cities vast' that proclaimed the 'old barbarian...had passed'.<sup>94</sup> The symbolic 'she' was used to refer to the poetic subject and represented a universal signifier of womanhood that Fullerton could draw from to interrogate conventions of civilisation that were constrained by gender inequality. She 'asked for knowledge to be taught...eager many a day she sought / Bland science in her signs & charts'. She 'stooped & plucked the Kneeler's gown / Draped on her breast with Fashions Art' but, when the gown of civilisation was stripped, all was revealed was 'her bloody heart'. The disavowals of publishers, literary authors and critics were indicative of the problematic regime of civilisation that Fullerton attempted to counter as a woman writer.

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<sup>94</sup>A note in the Fullerton papers suggested it might have been written in 1942. SLNSW, op. cit., MS.

Françoise Lionnet has described how women's attempts to achieve perfection in their writing effectively reconstitute a sense of unworthiness to participate in dialogues with civilisation.<sup>95</sup> The disavowals of editors, publishers, literary authors and literary critics were indicative of the problematic regimen of civilisation that Fullerton attempted to counter through asserting her own individuality, her own writing style and the content materials she chose to use.

### **Self-representation and the dilemma of language**

The obtuse language and ambiguous content in the poetic anthology of *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy* suggested that Moore and Franklin had difficulties with locating Fullerton as an Australian writer. Fullerton appeared to have broader philosophical concerns with the nature of human existence. While she may have attempted to capture the authentic essence of the Australian spirit in her bush writing, she was literally at cross purposes with Franklin's 'outback' stereotype. To the end, however, Mary Fullerton was determined to retain the quintessential characteristics of individuality associated with Irishness and Australianness and wrote:

I resent great instruments  
Celebrating my heart's events;  
Not for my private joy  
Would I a band deploy.  
I sing my own song  
In the high hour;  
And when the Dark Power  
Bade me mute,  
Yet is a secret lute  
Awake in my heart.<sup>96</sup>

Fullerton was not prepared to compromise her individuality. She aligned her identity with outsider communities and displaced cultural relics. While on the one hand, her thinking on race conformed to normative views of Australian-British racial identity, Fullerton was also prepared to speak about the place of Aborigines in Australian cultural production.

### **Race matters: Art and civilisation**

Fullerton's interest in Aboriginal art seemed to suggest a more conscious recognition of the artistic capabilities of Aboriginal people. In the first collection, *Moods and*

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<sup>95</sup>Lionnet, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>96</sup>Fullerton, 'Independence' in *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy*, op. cit., p. 30.

*Melodies* (1908), she appraised Aboriginal artwork in the poem 'The Artist'. Here, Fullerton observes similar aesthetic expressions:

How came this picture? By your hand I know,  
Poured from your boundless soul to fit a frame.  
The Art is not the wonder, but the flame  
That makes it infinite. How much you owe  
That uncouth savage of long ago  
Who, gazing on the morning as it came  
Across his forest, felt but knew no name  
For the quick flash that lit an inner glow.

That thrill inspires this picture; and that Art  
That holds some hint, some touch, some tone, some word  
That sweeps along the tideways of the heart  
Sets us on charmed shores 'mid sounds new heard;  
We are his children who are raised and stirred  
And you, his child, and Shakespeare, and Mozart<sup>97</sup>

This poem could have been linked to the reporting of Aboriginal archaeology in the Gippsland bush in *Bark House Days*. The question of 'native-born' cultural identity represented a critical test for Mary Fullerton to step outside her own cultural boundaries when appraising Aboriginal artwork. Art symbolised the creative aesthetic shared between the poet and the maker of the picture. Racial logics of the time could not reconcile the possibility that an 'uncouth savage of long ago' could produce high art forms. Aboriginal artwork again exposed the fallacies of civilisation when it came to representations of Australia's 'native-born' culture. The poet could not answer the cultural dilemma except to reiterate that Art transcended race and that creative inspiration was a universal trait of humanity.

A later version of 'The Artist' appeared in posthumous anthology *The Wonder and the Apple*. The poem was melancholic and reflective and perhaps indicated Fullerton's disappointment in failing to achieve literary acclaim in Australia:

'Tis a terrible thing to grow old,  
And nothing done,  
Nothing done (refrain).  
When he painted stones,  
He painted not stones  
But souls in stones  
And when he was mould  
These words he won (refrain).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>Fullerton, 'The Artist', 1908, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>98</sup>Fullerton, 'The Artist', 1942, op. cit., p. 2.

Fullerton may have come to realise that her own literary work was less significant than Aboriginal art and may have conceded that the term 'native-born' was not an accurate representation of Australian settler identity. In another unpublished poem called 'The Aborigine', it would seem that Fullerton understood the implications of assigning the title of 'native-born' Australian identity because it marked the eviction of the 'native' from their rightful home.

Sadly the Black Man goes  
Evicted by the ploughs  
(Beneath his darkened skin)  
He seems half-holy now.<sup>99</sup>

Although Fullerton may have been attempting to relocate her own identity as an Australian 'native-born' by creating a sense of aesthetic communality between her literary field and that of Aboriginal culture, her core philosophy on race endorsed the temperament of 1920s Australian settler society. The genre of poetry may have provided opportunities for Fullerton to creatively experiment with language forms to test different means of cultural expression but her attitudes to race suggested little empathy with Aboriginal Australia:

Civilisation disagrees with this primitive people...He has little idea how to contend against such adversities as shortage of food and water in his native state, nor does he seem able to learn civilised arts in his contact with the white man....There has been little difficulty with the native in Australia, owing to his rude and backward condition, his crude war weapons, and his separation into dissociated tribes. Spasmodic, and almost futile, were his early efforts to keep his domain for himself. His occasional assaults on the white invader have dwindled into isolated spearings of pioneering parties venturing into the far Interior. As a menace to settlement, however, the native is practically dead. He will linger on, a wretched remnant to be cared for by the whites, for fifty years or so yet; when he must disappear, leaving hardly a mark of his poor vagrant existence on the face of the land.<sup>100</sup>

### **Irishness and inspiration**

I have referred to the image of independence implied by the presence of Mrs Dwyer McMahan, the Irish co-exile living in the Gippsland settlement. This image of Irish independence and feminine autonomy was not dissimilar to unconventional means of self-expression that Fullerton conveyed in *The Breaking Furrow*. In her poetry, Fullerton reconfigured Mrs Dwyer MacMahan's physical size and strength into an

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<sup>99</sup>'The Aborigine', nd, loc. cit., MS.

<sup>100</sup>Fullerton, 1928, op. cit., p. 61.

aesthetically desirable and mystic image in the woman who 'lives on the peak / Where the furies call'. Attention to the language of the poem demonstrates uncertainties about Fullerton's strategies to reconstruct Mrs MacMahan's ambivalent sexuality. The woman over the range is 'dark and wild...with strange eyes...that fright...me'. Her form is straight...and tall...and she...moves like Night / In the dark of the stars...and...vague moonlight'. Despite the poet's fears about the mysterious woman's identity, the poet could not disguise the attraction she felt. Despite the trepidation that the world over the range might be 'hell...or...heaven', the poet's imaginative curiosity could not resist the 'charm...of a ...dark...wild...rich and strange woman'.<sup>101</sup>

Mary Fullerton's poetry tells of the struggle to locate her identity in the Australian cultural landscape. Fullerton's writing covered a range of subject-material and included unpublished works that criticised the aesthetics of civilisation. She expressed the frustration of gender in relation to her own submission to the false idols of civilisation and art. Critically, Fullerton's ideas about race did not support O'Farrell's notions that the Irish were devoid of racial thinking and therefore representative of a less coercive form of colonisation. Fullerton's racial demeanour could be identified where she mobilised racist thinking to support the normative view that Aborigines had been bypassed in the civilising process. She also found that the façade of civilisation constituted a means for critics to disparage her means of self-representation when perceived as not measuring up to Australian standards of literary classification. Exile was transplanted onto Fullerton's poetic consciousness when dealing with the legacies of an imperial history that separated her from the Irish Celt. The imaginative return to Ireland did not address the sense of alienation she expressed when attempting to reconnect with her cultural history. It was impossible to reach the 'real' Ireland through Yeats' creations of fantasy and fairy. The 'real' Ireland was personified by the disenfranchised Aran Islander who recycled one aspect of Irish emigrant history that shaped Fullerton's writing identity.

I focused on the relationship between Miles Franklin and Mary Fullerton to indicate that writing is never an objective art. Fullerton was hurt by Franklin's criticism and wrote about the effect it had on her. It was important to show how conflicting terms of address were used to represent Australia's self-image. Mary Fullerton was not

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<sup>101</sup>Fullerton 'Woman over the Range', loc. cit., 1921, pp. 30-31.

comfortable about her place in the Australian landscape and resisted attempts to subordinate her individuality and ideas. Fullerton's writing history was interwoven with the ambiguities of generational transition and the problems of re-writing and re-righting her 'ancestral legacy' to that of Australian 'native born' identity.

Mary Fullerton's statement about the difficulties of relocating oneself in Australia was used to reflect on the nature of Australian writing between the 1920s and 1940s. It also contextualised how the issue of home identity was approached through two women's writing styles of which one was an exemplary Australian novelist. I adapted Marilla North's approach which proposed that ephemeral social networks, women's friendships, letters, diaries and social commentaries are productive sites to analyse. I examined a range of letters, literary and editorial comments, and comments from literary colleagues to assess how each writer interpreted the style and standard of writing that signified Australian nationality status. Fullerton resisted the attempts of literary critics and publishers to remodel and conform her writing style. The effects of criticism translated subtle ideological nuances and cultural inferences of inferiority that had a significant impact on Fullerton's self-identity. Fullerton's poems suggested an unsatisfactory homecoming to Ireland as well as reflecting a writing history interwoven with ambiguities about her place in Australian culture.

In the following chapters I examine the writing history of Mary Grant Bruce who was an authorial identity synonymous with the development of Australian children's literature. While Bruce was well-known for her depictions of Australian rural childhood, there is room to explore whether her Irish emigrant culture was a significant trope in her interpretation of home-identity and Bruce's ultra-masculine notions of Australian mateship.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Home estates*

The previous chapters focused on Mary Fullerton's writing journey to show how the notion of 'home' was a contested site for the negotiation of Australian identity. In exploring the selection of metaphors, meanings and methods of representation used by Mary Fullerton, it was shown how the right type of "metaphoric kinship ideology" was assumed to reflect authentic Australian national culture between the 1920s and 1940s. By posing the question of 'home' as an issue of language and self-representation, my analysis reflected tensions between Mary Fullerton's and Miles Franklin's claims of entitlement to Australia's national self-portraiture. Critical assessments of Mary Fullerton's writing style and content focused on metaphorical themes that, on the one hand celebrated Australia's cultural inheritance and its 'bush' origins; on the other, she found that her writing style distanced from that genealogical inheritance although her cultural status as the 'bark house brat' represented her claim for legitimacy.

The texts to be examined in this chapter were, by contrast, considered to have contained the 'right' credentials that would sustain Australian national culture. The foundational authority of the Billabong series of Australian children's literature and the identity of the writer Mary Grant Bruce (1878-1958) were synonymous with meanings of British-Australian society in the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Brenda Niall, the foremost Australian scholar on the Bruce genre of Australian writing wrote that:

The idyllic background of pastoral Australian life...became a permanent part of the mythology of outback Australia, endlessly appealing to city children who made up most of Bruce's readership. The Bruce novels...were...distinctively Australian in a style equally suited to readers at home or abroad...and...were nostalgic celebrations of the 'vision splendid'; they led nowhere except back to Billabong.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Saxby, *A History of Australian Children's Literature 1841-1941*, Wentworth Books, Sydney, 1969, pp. 93-99; Lynne Strahan,, 'Bruce, Minnie (Mary) Grant', in Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle, Eds., *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1979, pp. 452-453.

<sup>2</sup>Brenda Niall, 'Children's Literature' in *Australian Literary Studies*, Volume 13, Number 4, October 1988, p. 549.

Billabong's fictional Australian squatter dynasty appeared to seamlessly compress the ideals of Australian citizenship in Bruce's representations of class and social identity. Billabong provided 'no better picture of the ideal – or legend – of rural Australia'.<sup>3</sup> It appeared that the author's and the fictional identities were inseparable:

Mary's own views are clearly much the same as the Lintons...class differences...should be minimized by equal treatment, friendliness, lack of ceremony...upper class should remain in control, setting the easygoing tone themselves, rather than having...it...forced on them from below.<sup>4</sup>

The Billabong series 'helped to provide Australian children with a sense of national community, a sense of belonging to a country and a society with seemingly enduring rock-like values'.<sup>5</sup> Linton men were 'excellent specimens' of race and genealogical pedigree. Born and bred in the Australian bush, those 'bronzed...lean...broad-shouldered...giants...with keen eyes...looked...straight at the world'.<sup>6</sup> Norah Linton carried the same genealogical traits. She was sun-tanned with above average height, long legs and a lean figure. Unlike her 'fair and plump' New Zealand school-friend Jean, and the fair-complexioned English-born Tommy Rainham, Norah's sun-burnt leanness highlighted her identification with Australia.<sup>7</sup> Like her father and brother, Norah exhibited great self-reliance and emotional control and followed the Linton doctrine for 'doing...the decent thing'.<sup>8</sup> The long-serving housekeeper Brownie described the uniqueness of the Billabong clan in these terms:

One time I'll admit I was prejudiced [sic] agin Miss Tommy 'er bein' English with a dash of French, which ain't accordin' to Australian taste; but I lost it the first day I see 'er workin in the kitchen. She an' Mr. Bob are just as good as Aussies as anyone else, now.

When speaking about Jean: some'ow I dunno—she don't seem the same, for all she's Australian born...Town's 'er place...she likes being' 'ere, but always I've the feelin' she's got a good laugh at the country, sort of up 'er sleeve.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Alexander, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p.100.

<sup>5</sup>Maurice Saxby, *Books in the life of a child: Bridges to Literature and Learning*, Macmillan Educaiton, South Melbourne, 1997, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Norah of Billabong*, Ward Lock, London, 1913, pp. 12-13.

<sup>7</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Billabong Adventurers*, Ward Lock, London, 1927, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 52.

Jean's preference for 'Town' instead of the 'country' conveyed how such meta-geographies articulated the authentic (the bush) against the artificial (the city) in Australia's cultural maps.<sup>10</sup> Vernacular symbols of Australian culture such as 'mateship', the 'bush' and the 'outback' validated the mythical legend of Australian cattle station life and the evolution of Australian egalitarianism. According to Russel Ward, the 'typical' Australian was:

A practical...rough mannered...self-effacing...man.  
He was a...great improviser...and willing to have a go at anything...content with a task done in a way that...was...near enough.  
He swore...and...used profanities....he...gambled...drank...and...believed himself an equal of the boss...taciturn rather than talkative...and...a great knocker of eminent people.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, the Lintons characterised Australia's rural aristocracy, demonstrating little in common with those characteristics of Australianness bred from rough bush life and hardship. Membership of the mythical Billabong estate replicated the structures of Anglo-Irish land-relations. Although located in Australia, the Billabong estate did not typify Ward's idealisation of Australian egalitarianism. As this chapter will show, Billabong reproduced a sense of Australia patterned on the Bruce family history in Ireland. Paradoxically, the idealisation of Australian egalitarianism was based on entitlement to the mythical Billabong estate that represented the 'ascendancy' status of Anglo-Irish property, privilege and power.

### **Genealogical credentials**

In Chapter Two, I showed how the hyphenated space represented by the term 'Anglo-Irish' had the effect of creating intense scrutiny of the relationship between Irish and English national identity. The Bruce dynasty in Cork symbolised the historical problem of Anglo ethno-cultural transplantation in Ireland showing how the positioning of Irish identity was fraught with tensions, ambiguities and claims of entitlement. Extracts from private diaries and letters revealed how the Anglo-Irish Bruces attempted to connect to their Irish cultural heritage. George Evans Bruce claimed his entitlement to Irish identity through genealogical

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<sup>10</sup>Richard Nile, Ed., loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Russel Ward, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

pedigree while the constant conflict over cultural and national allegiance would eventually diminish his sister's patriotic feelings for Ireland.

Anglo-Irish writers have spoken about the effects of cultural and social estrangement when attempting to re-balance the legacy of Anglo settlement history in Irish culture.<sup>12</sup> Anglo-Irish and Gaelic-Irish identity were referenced by a complex politics of self-representation.<sup>13</sup> Each cultural regime deployed 'secret codes' that conveyed signs of community and belonging: each seeing the other as disqualified in terms of their claims of entitlement.<sup>14</sup> The Gaelic Irish saw the Anglo-Irish as:

Strangers in a land they called theirs, strangers here and strangers everywhere, owning no country and owned by none; rejecting Ireland and rejected by England; tyrants to this island and slaves to another; they stand...alone in the world and alone in its history, a class by themselves.<sup>15</sup>

Anglo-Irishness has historically and culturally been represented as an ambiguous identity. Anglo-Irish identity has been thought of artificial rather than a sign of cultural authenticity associated with indigenous Gaelic-Irishness. Their place in Irish culture displaced Ireland's sovereignty.<sup>16</sup> As 'imaginative refractions' of English imperialism, Anglo-Irish culture was incapable of adopting the subject-consciousness of Gaelic Ireland.<sup>17</sup> Although instrumental in the 'revival' of Irish literature in the nineteenth century, their motives have been treated with some suspicion because they have been seen as reproducing ideologically coherent

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<sup>12</sup>See Chapter One.

<sup>13</sup>Marilyn Butler, 'Edgeworth's Ireland: History, Popular Culture, and Secret Codes', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Volume 34, No 2, The Romantic-Era Novel, Spring, 2001, pp. 267-292.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid*, p. 292.

<sup>15</sup>James Finton Lalor, 1848 cited Julian Moynihan, op. cit., p. 200. His youngest brother Peter Lalor led the Eureka Stockade in 1854, later became a Member of Parliament for Ballarat, and Speaker of the Australian Parliament between 1880 and 1888. Ian Turner, 'Lalor, Peter (1827-1889)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pp. 50-54.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism, 1912-1916*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998; A. Bourke, 'The Baby and the Bath-Water: Cultural Loss in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' and Willa Murphy, 'Maria Edgeworth and the Aesthetics of Secrecy' in Tadhg Foley and Seán Ryder, Eds., *Ideology and Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, Four Courts Press, Ireland, 1998, pp. 79-92 and pp. 45-54.

<sup>17</sup>Maria Tymoczko, *The Irish Ulysses*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1994, pp. 21, 226.

forms of Irish culture adapted to the tastes of English audiences and English cultural consumption.<sup>18</sup>

While pre-eminent in public and political life and played central roles in the colonisation of Australia, however, the presence of the Anglo-Irish in the Australian-Irish diaspora is also ambiguous. The emphasis on Irish-Catholic identity has had the effect of creating a gap in knowledge about how Anglo-Irish identity was understood in Australia.<sup>19</sup> By problematising the issue of home in the context of Anglo-Irish identity in Australia, this chapter offers critical insights into the Mary Grant Bruce reconstitution of the Anglo-Irish estate in Australia.

#### **The resettlement process: the Anglo-Irish emigrant and the colony**

Eyre Lewis Bruce arrived in Australia in 1853. He was written into Australia's exploration history as an understudy when Alfred Charles Howitt explored the eastern states of Victoria and New South Wales.<sup>20</sup> Bruce's future wife Mary Atkinson was born in Australia. She was descended from the English and Welsh Grant-Whittakers family which had established a cattle selection in the Monaro region of New South Wales in the 1830s.<sup>21</sup> Eyre Lewis Bruce married Mary Atkinson at Tubbut in 1870 after which the extended Grant-Whittakers-Bruce clan moved to Gippsland.<sup>22</sup> Eyre Lewis Bruce established a

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<sup>18</sup>Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation: Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism, 1890-1916*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2002; David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994; Joe Cleary and Claire Connelly, Eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2005; Maurice Goldring, *Pleasant the Scholar's Life: Irish Intellectuals and the Construction of the Nation State*, Serif, London, 1993.

<sup>19</sup>Patrick O'Farrell, *Vanished Kingdoms*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1990, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>He took part in Alfred Charles Howitt's surveying parties in Gippsland during the 1860s. Howitt documented cultural activities, rites and ceremonies of Gippsland Aborigines and contributed a number of articles on Indigenous life, anthropology and topography of Gippsland. W. E. H. Stanner, 'Howitt, Alfred William (1830 - 1908)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 4, Melbourne University Press, pp. 432-435.

<sup>21</sup>Her uncle Charles Whittakers managed one of the James Tyson cattle properties at Heyfield in North Gippsland. Mary Grant Bruce holidayed there as a child. This property was to become re-imaged as Billabong Australia. James Tyson (1819-1898), as did Sydney Kidman (1857-1935), accumulated extensive cattle 'runs' from Queensland to Victoria. The Tyson estate was valued at £2,300,000. The Heyfield property was dismantled after Tyson's death and sold in smaller lots. Patrick Morgan, 'Cattle Kings of Old Australia', *Quadrant*, Volume XL11, Number 6, 2003.

[http://quadrant.org.au/php/archive\\_details\\_list.php?article\\_id=238](http://quadrant.org.au/php/archive_details_list.php?article_id=238)

<sup>22</sup>*Traralgon History Society Extracts*, Traralgon, Victoria, 1920, np. nd.

surveying company in Sale. The Bruce family was not wealthy but comfortable. What can be deduced from Alexander's biography, Niall's analysis, and the limited autobiographical recollections of Mary Grant Bruce's childhood, are memories of a family structure where Mary Grant Bruce's mother reared and educated the children while her father Eyre Lewis Bruce pursued his interests as an amateur anthropologist in the Gippsland Lakes region. The Bruces followed the religious, social and class traditions of Anglo-Ireland. The Billabong series closely parallels the Bruce family history which was reproduced in the Billabong narratives. Instead of having a paternal Irish lineage, Norah Linton's mother was Irish. The fictional maternal estate in Ireland had fallen into ruin and correlated with the decline of the Bruce estates in Cork.

The Billabong cattle station was a somewhat diminished image of the grandiose 'Big House' that Ascendancy society in Ireland occupied. In *Mates at Billabong* (1918), the city cousin Cecil Linton notes how the Billabong homestead had fallen into a state of shabbiness incongruent with the relative wealth of the Linton owners. He writes:

The place is certainly very nice...though...old-fashioned...I can't understand any man with money being content to live and die in a hole like this out-of-the-way place...one has no ideas in common with these Bush people...I must prefer Town on a Saturday morning to all Billabong and its bullocks.<sup>23</sup>

In relation to the author's social and cultural status, the Bruce family maintained a semblance of relative privilege due mainly to Eyre Lewis Bruce's status as a professional surveyor in the regional town of Sale in Gippsland.<sup>24</sup> Bruce sons were educated at the University of Melbourne while Bruce daughters were expected to marry into local rural farming families.<sup>25</sup>

Mary Grant Bruce was the fourth of five children. Her birth on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1878 was marked by the serendipitous coincidence of Empire Day. She matriculated from Miss Estelle Beausir's Ladies High School at Sale in 1895 with Honours in English, History and Botany and won the Melbourne Shakespeare Society's dissertation prize. Like Mary

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<sup>23</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Mates at Billabong*, Ward Lock, London, 1911, pp. 45-47.

<sup>24</sup>Peter Synan, *Gippsland's Lucky City: The History of Sale*, 1994. Sale was a prosperous regional town with an established professional class.

<sup>25</sup>Alexander, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

Fullerton, Mary Grant Bruce showed exceptional literary talent in childhood. She aspired to study at university but her academic potential was denied by gender conventions of the time. Her first attempts at writing began in 1898 with a story called 'Her Little Lad' for the Melbourne *Leader*. A later article titled 'Dono's Christmas' in December 1900 led to greater interest in her writing.<sup>26</sup> The Billabong series was to emerge from journal articles and short stories about Australian rural life that Bruce had been writing since the early 1900s. Until the publication of *A Little Bush Maid* in 1910, Eyre Lewis Bruce remained unconvinced about the career path his daughter had taken.<sup>27</sup> The success and popularity of the Billabong books prevented Mary Grant Bruce from venturing into other writing fields. In frustration at Mary Grant Bruce's unwillingness to change her writing style and identity as a children's author, Evelyn Seton wrote to her brother George Evans Bruce that:

All she needs for success is to go to life & put down real men & women as they are...with blood in their veins. I don't see why a fiction should be kept up that she writes children's books – probably, they tie her hands...get Mary to feel free...from what Carlyle calls "fixed ideas" & let herself go utterly, not to think of her publishers or her readers or her royalties but go straight to life & use her talent....She has far too much ability to go turning in a squirrel's cage. She ought to break loose.<sup>28</sup>

### **Going home?**

Between sequences of Billabong time and the Bruce emigration history, there were several episodes where Ireland intersected with the Billabong narratives. Mary Grant Bruce originally left Australia in 1912 to visit her father's birth place in Cork. There she met her future husband and Irish-born relative, George Evans Bruce. George Evans Bruce agreed to migrate to Australia to marry Mary Grant Bruce in Melbourne in 1914. The First World War interrupted their honeymoon.<sup>29</sup> George Evans Bruce was recalled by the Imperial War Department in London so he could recruit Irish soldiers for the war front. Their sons Patrick and Jonathan were born in Ireland. The Bruces returned to Australia because of fears of sectarian reprisal following the Declaration of Irish Independence in 1916. Between 1919 and 1926, the Bruces resettled in the regional town of Traralgon in

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<sup>26</sup>Lynne Strahan, 'Bruce, Minnie Grant (Mary) (1878 - 1958)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp. 452-453.

<sup>27</sup>One of his letters indicated his surprise at his daughter's success as a writer. Bruce collection, SLV, op. cit., MS.

<sup>28</sup>Seton to George Evans Bruce, op. cit., nd., np., MS.

<sup>29</sup>McKay, Ed., loc. cit.

Gippsland. Because of the pre-nuptial agreement to temporarily migrate to Australia, the Bruces again returned to Ireland. Ireland was a different geographical and political entity when they returned as it had been partitioned into sectarian geographies of Protestant Northern Ireland and the Catholic Irish Republic.<sup>30</sup>

The Bruces did not return to the ancestral home in Cork in the Irish Republic. They settled at Omagh in County Tyrone in 1927 in the partitioned Protestant province and intended to stay permanently. Tragically, their youngest son Patrick, who was twelve years of age in 1927, was killed when left unsupervised with a shotgun. He was interred in Omagh cemetery.<sup>31</sup> The bereaved parents sought sanctuary in England and remained there until the Second World War when they again re-emigrated to Australia. The last Billabong novel was written in 1942 when Mary Grant Bruce was domiciled in Australia. George Evans Bruce died at Beaconsfield in Victoria in 1948.<sup>32</sup> Mary Grant Bruce left Australia permanently and died in England in 1958.

Throughout critical incidents in Irish and Australian history and the personal family tragedies that beset the Bruce family, the Billabong series continued. The novels *From Billabong to London* (1914), *Jim and Wally* (1915), *Captain Jim* (1916), and *Back to Billabong* (1919) paralleled the Bruce histories of resettlement in Ireland. These novels were central to the repatriation of Anglo-Irish identity and the manner in which Anglo-Irishness was featured in Mary Grant Bruce's representations of Australian nationality status and citizenship during the 1914 -1918 period. These novels are examined in greater detail in the next chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to show how the notional construct of 'home' exemplified the credentials for entitlement for belonging to Billabong Australia.

#### **The power of address: the right way to write about the home country**

The fictional Linton family projected an idealised Australian family life. The Linton creed exalted characteristics of manliness, self-sufficiency, duty, respect and honour through mobilising vernacular codes of Australian mateship that symbolised the essence of

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<sup>30</sup>*Government of Ireland Act, 1920.*

<sup>31</sup>His headstone bears his name, age and is located in the Anglican section in the Omagh cemetery.

<sup>32</sup>Niall, loc. cit.

Australia's nationhood.<sup>33</sup> Gender, genealogy and militarism merged as character traits of the 'Australian' hero legend, where:

The bushman is the hero of the Australian boy; the arts of the bush are his ambition; his most cherished holidays are those spent with country relatives or in camping out. He learns something of the arts of a soldier by the time he is ten years old – to sleep comfortably in any shelter, to cook meat or bake flour, to catch a horse, to find his way across country by day or night, to ride, or, at the worst, to 'stick on'.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, the male characters in the Billabong narratives and future heirs to the Billabong estate, Jim Linton and Wally Meadows, practised the art of war as part of their childhood training. Billabong was a self-enclosed empire ruled by the autocratic patriarch David Linton. This micro-empire was isolated from the influences of the city, cultural and social change and everyday contact with rural farming society adjoining the Billabong precinct. Its geographical location was assumed to represent authentic 'outback' Australian rural life in the arid hinterland. Its actual geographical location was in Gippsland about 160 kilometres east of Melbourne. Gippsland was prized for its European-like greenness and was an anachronism in relation to the arid bush landscapes conventionally associated with the 'bush' and 'outback' Australia.<sup>35</sup> Billabong was a fictional topography made up from Bruce family stories and histories of the settlement of Gippsland squatter society.<sup>36</sup> The geographical artifice of the Billabong station mirrored the symbolic restoration of the Anglo-Irish estate.<sup>37</sup> This passage from *Billabong's Luck* (1933) illustrated how the architectural symmetry of Anglo-Irish Ascendancy history entered the landscape consciousness of the Australian bush:

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<sup>33</sup>Saxby, op. cit., pp. 93-99.

<sup>34</sup>C.E.W. Bean in Alomes and Jones, Eds., op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>35</sup>When calculated in distance from Melbourne, the Fernhill property at Traralgon is approximately 160 kilometres (100 miles) east of Melbourne and accessible by train. The former Tyson property at Heyfield is about 60 kilometres north of Traralgon. Local place names mentioned in the Billabong narratives, such as the 'Haunted Hills' are closer to Moe (100 kilometres from Melbourne).

<sup>36</sup>The maternal grandfather William Whittakers wrote about the early pioneering days in the 1840s when the Whittakers took up a cattle-run in the Snowy Mountains. His son Jim Whittakers was a dare-devil horseman and a capable bushman. His escapades in the bush were family legend. Jim Whittakers and the fictional Jim Linton shared the same traits of adventurism. The characterisation of the Australian 'bush' legend in the Billabong narratives is likely to have been modeled on Mary Grant Bruce's great-uncle Jim. 'Whittaker Diaries', Centre of Gippsland Studies, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria, Undated Monograph, np.

<sup>37</sup>Anthony D. Smith, 'Chosen Peoples' in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, Eds., *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 188-197.

Beyond the red-brick homestead of Billabong Station, with the outlying buildings of stables and men's quarters that made it like a village set in a tree-clad expanse, the ground sloped gently away until it ended in a wide lagoon...the lagoon was always fresh and the carefully-tended native bush...fringed its banks...Bathing huts were built near the deepest part, with springboards jutting out over the water; all the children at Billabong had learned to swim almost as soon as they could walk...there was...a boat-house with a miniature landing-stage.<sup>38</sup>

When comparing the fictional landscapes of Billabong Australia and the historical Anglo-Irish estate, key signifiers link the spatial symmetry of the Australian 'bush' and images of the Irish landscape. In the Irish context the land was partitioned into productive agricultural land and demesnes<sup>39</sup> which were located beside natural lakes and rivers or artificially manufactured water systems. Wooded areas of natural vegetation were kept in reserve for the game sports of fishing and shooting as well as sites for preserving natural flora for decorative garden purposes. Defects in the landscape were transformed into aesthetic formations according to the cultural tastes of the owner and the dimensions of the estate grounds.<sup>40</sup> In Billabong, a similar spatial pattern is found where 'the lagoon...was preserved as...a bird-sanctuary. No gun might be fired anywhere in its neighbourhood'.<sup>41</sup> There was a lake system made at Billabong for the Lintons to use for boating and swimming. It could be used as a refuge from the heat of an Australian summer. Unlike its environmental counterpart in Ireland where water was abundant, the manufactured idyll was a scarce commodity in a country of drought.

The Australian bush in Billabong was 'carefully-tended' and transformed into a space for meditation and reflection for the Linton family. Crafted through re-aestheticised landscapes of a tamed Australian bush, associative metaphors of sovereignty were interspersed throughout the narrative to indicate the unique character of the 'People of Billabong'. The eighteenth-month-old David Meadows, son of the marriage between Norah Linton and Wally Meadows, was given the designation of 'Ruler-of-all-Billabongs' to signify his

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<sup>38</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Billabong's Luck*, Ward Lock, London, 1933, p. 23.

<sup>39</sup>Meanings attributed to the word 'demesne': (a) the possession and use of your own land, as opposed to the ownership of land...occupied by tenants; (b) an extensive landed property; (c) estate grounds attached to a mansion for the private use of the owner.

<sup>40</sup>Guy Felhmann, 'The Big House in Western Ireland' in Jacqueline Genet, Ed., *The Big House in Ireland: Reality and Representation*, Barnes and Noble, London, 1991, pp. 15-29.

<sup>41</sup>Bruce, 1933, op. cit., p. 23.

property status as the future inheritor of Billabong. The child's temperament had 'already...given evidence...of his genealogical pedigree...for...he...inherited the swift and unexpected movement which distinguished his father...and...was too good a possession to be marred'.<sup>42</sup> In relation to merging the geographical topographies of the Anglo-Irish estate into a fictional representation of the Australian landscape, expressions of Irish culture were compressed into representations of Irishness that could be understood by Billabong readers.

In a chapter titled 'Murty tells a story', the 'King-of-all Billabongs found himself bereft of subjects' and wandered off in search of adventure.<sup>43</sup> The child-inheritor to the Billabong estate had escaped the watchfulness of a trusted dog named Kim which had been Jim Linton's childhood companion.<sup>44</sup> Since Davie's birth, the dog 'had installed himself as guardian to the new monarch' whenever the child was allowed outdoors. The child's near disaster with agricultural equipment brought Murty O'Toole into the narrative. He was an entrusted employee on the Billabong estate who emigrated from County Galway and had been Norah's guardian during childhood. His role of guardianship over the potential ruler of Billabong was preserved through the type of servant-master tenure associated with the socio-class history of Anglo-Irish land relations but it was one which supposedly was an uncommon feature in classless egalitarian Australia.

Specific references to the re-sculpting of Ireland's imaginative and cultural landscapes indicated the realignment of the Irish experience in Australia. Before telling his story, O'Toole was first subjected to the scrutiny of the generically named Australian-born narrator Bill. His part in the dialogue was to act as the 'analytic window into the...structure or cultural schema being used'.<sup>45</sup> The roles enacted by the rational critic and the Irish storyteller revealed how the Irish cultural voice was remade in the schema of Australian cultural meanings. O'Toole had to defend the contention that his stories about the 'Little People' in Ireland were made up and therefore untrue:

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<sup>42</sup>Bruce, 1933, *ibid*, pp. 24, 26.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid*, p. 77.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid*, p. 78.

<sup>45</sup>Roy D'Andrade in Naomi Quinn, Ed., *Finding Culture in Talk*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005, p. 61.

Out here in Australia folks don't think about...anything [sic] like that...perhaps there wouldn't be anny of them here, the way it's a new counthry. It's different in ould-ancient places. We grew up hearin' old stories.<sup>46</sup>

In his attempt to validate his story, O'Toole related an incident where an English land-owner upset Irish customary culture by ordering Irish workers to destroy ancient Irish raths on his property so he could build a 'summer-house there for his wife'.<sup>47</sup>

He was very scornful – like you, Masther Bill – an' he made fun of them until they were all ashamed of the way he'd be speakin' to them. In the latther end he offered to dig the first sods himself, an' they agreed to go on wid the wurrk if he did. They reckoned he'd get the bad luck; an' bein' an Englishman, they didn't mind.<sup>48</sup>

The O'Toole narrative brought together elements of Irish history that contextualised the politics of Anglo-Irish land relations. By ignoring customary Irish laws, the Englishman's disrespect was further punished by misfortunes that forced him to abandon the project. However fanciful the story appeared to Bill, Murty related a system of meaning that made sense in Irish symbology. Stories about people who tested the authenticity of Irish myths were recorded by nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish cultural anthropologist Francesca Wilde, a.k.a. Speranza. She wrote:

The fairies have a great objection to the fairy raths...being built upon by mortal man. A farmer called Johnstone, having plenty of money, bought some land, and chose a beautiful green spot to build a house on, the very spot the fairies loved best. The neighbours warned him that it was a fairy rath; but he laughed and never minded (for he was from the north), and looked at such things as mere old-wives' tales. So he built the house and made it beautiful to live in; and no people in the country were so well off as the Johnstones, so that the people said the farmer must have found a pot of gold in the fairy rath.<sup>49</sup>

Speranza's version was more dramatic and tragic than the Bruce version although both embedded a similar moral tale. The fairies revenged their dispossession. The death of the Johnstone child was a warning to those who dared to interfere with the 'ancient rights and

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<sup>46</sup>Bruce, 1933, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, p. 84.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>A ráth (anglicised as rath), was made of earth, caiseal (northwest Ireland, anglicised as cashel) and cathair (southwest Ireland) were built of stone. A dun was more a prestigious seat for a ruler. Lady Francesca Wilde (Speranza) wrote that the best agricultural land had been cleared by the 'good people' of ancient Celtic Ireland and made ready for the English to transform economically. *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland with Sketches of the Irish Past*, 1888, Online National Library of Ireland website <http://www.libraryireland.com>

possessions and privileges' of the fairies.<sup>50</sup> Murty's reinvention of the Irish fairy story was designed to make it congruent with Australian meanings. In O'Farrell's observations, the narrative power of Irish culture was diluted when reconstructed in images of folk-fantasy and nostalgic sentiments of song, dance and music. Having been subjected to rational critics such as the pragmatic Australian named Bill, Murty was under pressure to capitulate to reason and admit his story about the Irish fairy kingdom was an exaggeration of fantasy and make-belief. Since Murty's stories about Ireland were literally untranslatable in Australian cultural discourse, he was confronted with a dilemma about how to translate Irish cultural narratives and render them coherent in the Australian context.

Well, Masther Bill, there's wan thing I know; an that is, the oulder I grow the less I feel like sayin' I don't believe anything. The ould stories get trimmed-up and embroidered, till ye wouldn't know what was truth. But it's no bad thing to remember that when ye find a great many people believin' a thing, even if that thing seems foolishness to ye, there's apt to be a bit of truth in it sometime.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless he continued with another story about the way that a mortal (Critchey O'Halloran) dared to correct the Irish King's version of a favourite Irish song:

They were singin' in Irish, of course, an' where they'd ought to have sung:—  
'Da Sahern, da Downig, agus Diardin', they sang, 'Da Luan, da Mairth, agus da Caeduin'.<sup>52</sup>

Grateful for O'Halloran's insight, 'the King called for order, an' they all sang the song together, with Critchey leadin' them'. Instead of following the sequence in the refrain, Dé Sathairn (Saturday); Dé Domhnaigh (Sunday); Dé hAoine (Friday) or Déardaoin (Thursday), the King had been singing, Dé Luain (Monday); Dé Máirt (Tuesday); Dé Céadaoin (Wednesday). The King might well have confused the logic of the refrain. What mattered was the rhythm and enjoyment of singing together. While the story may appear to have had little cultural consequence in Billabong Australia, the almost unnoticeable translation of Gaelic words revealed features of linguistic and grammatical competence that were embedded with Irish cultural meanings and knowledge of Gaelic language.<sup>53</sup> This is an example where indigenous Gaelic language and meaning-making systems were

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Bruce, 1933, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, pp. 86, 87.

<sup>53</sup>Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, Eds., *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Sage Publications, London and New York, 2001, p. 67.

subjected to rewriting and re-righting. That modification can be linked to the sub-editorial interpretations of Anglo-Irish George Evans Bruce. His knowledge of Irish culture and Gaelic language was critical because he acted as the interpreter of Irish culture to ensure that Mary Grant Bruce perfected the 'correct' linguistic emphasis of Irish speech sounds and stories in the Australian context. He recognised that Irish social and cultural identity was critically signified in language. He wrote: 'I don't think you realise how very local the Irish dialect is, & how careful you must be not to mix the six or eight score different dialects you find in the country'.<sup>54</sup> George Evans Bruce was not a native Gaelic Irish speaker but had an anthropological interest in Gaelic language texts. He had Gaelic texts sent to him when serving in Nigeria in the early 1900s.<sup>55</sup> By having the power to decode Irish culture and speech patterns in the Billabong narratives, George Evans Bruce could reclaim a vicarious entitlement to Irish identity through his positional authority as an Anglo-Irish surrogate.<sup>56</sup>

In another narrative, Mary Grant Bruce used a different fictional character to reconstruct the culture of Irish settler identity within reach of a Billabong-like family. The novel *Glen Eyre* (1910) was dedicated to her father Eyre Lewis Bruce and her brother Patrick. As if a premonition of her own son's tragic death in Ireland in 1927, Patrick Bruce also suffered the same fate at the same age on the family's country property in Gippsland when killed in a shot-gun incident. Mary Grant Bruce was seven at the time. The trauma and psychological pain of her brother's death haunted her entire life. *Glen Eyre* was a bleak narrative about the disintegration of the family and the family cattle station. The mother died, leaving two young children to fend for themselves. The father isolated himself from his children. He also gave up his duty to educate his children. They were left to bring themselves up as best they could with the limited help of an uneducated local housemaid. The young daughter Nancy Olgivie tried to make her father happy to fulfill the death-bed

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<sup>54</sup>George Evans Bruce cited in Niall, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>55</sup>Archived with the Bruce-Seton Papers at the State Library of Victoria were articles on Sinn Féin, including the Sinn Féin manifesto for a united Ireland. Also included were the history of 'The Bruces in Ireland' in the *Ulster Archeological Journal* as well as Gaelic language texts and instructions for pronunciation, miscellaneous papers on the Roger Casement trial, and English newspaper tributes to Irish soldiers serving in the First World War.

<sup>56</sup>Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Random House, New York, 1979, p. 3.

promise made to her mother. The Olgivie household was ‘untidy...ill-kept...musty, unaired’.<sup>57</sup> Added to the psychological dysfunction was the problem of geographic isolation. The sole visitor to the Olgivie homestead was the local parson.<sup>58</sup> The oldest son from Olgivie’s first marriage left because of his father’s indifference.

After many attempts to bring happiness to her father’s life, Nancy Olgivie organised an entertainment evening at the Clancys. In contrast to the relative privilege of Glen Eyre, the Clancys were small land-holders who lived in a modest cottage and struggled on a barely sustainable selection. Compared to the dourness of the Olgivie household, the Irish Clancys represented an ideal family to Rob Olgivie. The reticent Nancy was captivated by their ‘mellow voices’ that had withstood the generational dilution of Irish identity in that the grandchildren ‘had no trace of the Australian twang’.<sup>59</sup> Rob wanted to have a father who could show affection in the manner of Bill Clancy’s Irish father. He identified strongly with the openness of emotion in Irish family life and the general energy of the Clancy household. Open displays of affection appeared to unsettle the taciturn Scottish demeanour inherited by Nancy Olgivie. To curb Rob’s enthusiasm for Irish family life and Irish music, singing and dancing, and to prevent Rob from living with the Clancys, Nancy criticised her brother’s idealism: ‘Bill’s daddy isn’t half as good as ours...Lots of – lots of good people don’t go about hugging’. Rob’s retort that ‘it’s nice when they do’ did not persuade Nancy to switch her allegiance as quickly as her brother had despite the imperfections of Olgivie fatherhood.<sup>60</sup>

In the same way that O’Farrell reported the meaningfulness of Irish identity as a ‘fun factor’ that energised Australia’s cultural life, that analogy was evident in Bruce’s narrative. Irishness restored the Olgivies to full mental health, gave back the missing father and returned Glen Eyre to its glory. The simplified clichés and stereotypes used in the Bruce writing repertoire could be overlooked when examining how idealised images of Australian national identity and caricatured images of Irish identity were articulated to child readers. As a cultural and literary artifact of Australian identity, Bruce’s finely

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<sup>57</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Glen Eyre*, Ward Lock, London, 1910, p. 151.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid*, p. 141.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 179, 186.

chiselled crafting of the ideal Australian family rejected emotionalism in any form. There was little room for sentiment in the Bruce genre. The Ogilvies nearly gave in to desires to belong to a less than perfect Irish family. Displays of self-indulgence, fun and emotion could compromise the Linton dogma of self-sufficiency, self-reliance and hard work that characterised membership to the Billabong estate.

### **The new settlers**

The unique characteristics of the Linton pedigree advocated exclusive admission to the home of Australian culture by submitting to the shared values of the Linton philosophy. Hard work led to discipline and order, duty was a reciprocal obligation, an outdoors lifestyle led to physical strength and endurance. Billabong children did not have the physical deficiencies of English 'white-faced babies of the slums'.<sup>61</sup> Australian bodies and minds developed a 'lean hardness...and...certain keenness...born of watching far blue distance'.<sup>62</sup> Their muscles were hardened by the harsh ecology of bush life. Self-indulgence of any kind compromised the Linton dogma of self-discipline. City-bred wastrels and the metropolitan lifestyle disgraced the Linton name. The genealogical crest of the Anglo-Irish estate was imprinted in images of property, status and complete autonomy of rule. In terms of raising Australia's awareness about its identity status, the Anglo-Irish Lintons:

Did more to mould our characters than home and church, State and school combined...Norah...was so much more than a character in the pages of a book...She was US...We dressed as Norah did...our bearded fathers...were seen as counterparts of David Linton.<sup>63</sup>

Keenly emphasised in the Billabong philosophy was the preservation of class power and status that the Anglo-Irish Bruces replicated through the amortisation of property and class and British nationality.<sup>64</sup> For citizens in the making, Australian child readers were presented with a signifiers of identity that showed how new settlers, such as the English-born siblings, Cecilia (Tommy) and Bob Rainham, could be remade into ideal Australian British citizens through converting to the creed of Billabong.

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<sup>61</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, 'Bush Babies' in McKay, Ed., op. cit., p.226.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Mary Walker, *Bulletin*, July 1958, p. 53.

<sup>64</sup>The 'marrying in' tradition continued as Bruce's autobiography revealed. She married her second cousin George Evans Bruce whose genealogical history could be traced through intermarriage with the Eyre-Evans families in Cork.

Tommy and Bob...were recent settlers, making their way on a little farm by dint of hard work and dogged courage...They knew that whatever matters were very strenuous at the Creek farm the Billabong family would appear suddenly with a car-load of provisions and tools, plunging into the work blithely, attacking it with practical knowledge, iron muscles, and best-ingredient of all-laughter. Tommy and Bob owed much to Billabong. Billabong...and Billabong...knew itself well paid.<sup>65</sup>

In *Back to Billabong* (1921), the English Rainham siblings were rescued from the decline of a previous privileged lifestyle because of their father's marriage to a lower-class London Cockney. Having endured their step-mother's intense hatred, Bob Rainham kidnapped his sister and planned to escape to Australia. Fortuitously, they met the Lintons while waiting at a railway platform in London. The Lintons insisted on their company during the return voyage to Australia after the First World War.<sup>66</sup>

Norah had to be convinced that the Rainham pedigree had not been harmed by the mixed marriage or contaminated by Cockney step-siblings. The character reference ensured that the Rainhams could be transformed into the 'right' kind of British mates needed to build up the imperial estate in Australia.

Norah: You're the right kind of people who must do well, because you are so keen. And Billabong has adopted you, and we're going to see that you make a success of things. You're our very own immigrants!

Tommy: It's nice to be owned by some one who isn't my step-mother...

Norah: I'm very glad you panicked, since it sent you straight into our arms...If we had met you in an ordinary, stodgy way...it would have taken ages to get you know you properly...<sup>67</sup>

Tommy showed a willingness to be 'owned' by subjecting herself to the status of chattel on the Billabong homestead rather than taking up the stance of autonomy that underpinned the ethos of the governing structures of Billabong. How to recreate a fictional image of an independent woman presented Mary Grant Bruce with some difficulties. Australian

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<sup>65</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Bill of Billabong*, Ward Lock, London, 1931, p. 11.

<sup>66</sup>The narrative constructs the adventures of the Rainham escape from the clutches of their evil step-mother and equally distant and uncaring father Mark Rainham. The parents predict the siblings' plan to migrate to Australia and are intent on thwarting the escape before the siblings board the ship for Australia. The Rainhams are aged 22 (Captain Bob following demobilisation) and Cecilia (Tommy) is aged 19 and 'under-age' according to English law. The nick-name Tommy is a left over of Cecilia's unhappy childhood. She has sworn never to be called Cecilia again because it reminded her of her life with the Cockney step-family in London. Bruce, 1921, pp. 7-112.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, p. 157.

feminists in the 1920s were calling for greater recognition of women's domestic roles in the family.<sup>68</sup> National media debated whether it was proper for women to be paid a house-keeping wage. *The Bulletin* cartoons portrayed how feminism threatened marital order. In one cartoon, a wife is seen to be engrossed in reading feminist literature while her husband's evening meal is left unprepared. *The Age* in Melbourne was equally reactive if women were allowed more freedom. The publication of *Back to Billabong* in 1921 coincided with those debates. Bruce has been credited with presenting Australian girls with a model of femininity that incorporated notions of independence and autonomy with the role of domestic subservience that expressed gender inequality. Yet Bruce herself disagreed with liberating women from domestic roles as wives and mothers. Women were needed in the home to preserve the wholesomeness of the family unit.<sup>69</sup> The education of girls led to dissatisfaction and false expectations that would encourage them to abdicate their natural roles.<sup>70</sup> Women wishing to work to escape domestic routine and child-rearing would not only impoverish women's domestic skills but women's participation would compromise men's rights to full employment.<sup>71</sup>

In one article Bruce stated that a marital income should be shared because marriage represented 'a partnership, not an autocracy!'<sup>72</sup> The rejoinder that she 'could never make out why some men desired their wives to be implicitly dependent on them' was somewhat ambiguous because in her novels the domestic submission of Australian women's lives was made coherent by reinforcing the patriarchal hierarchy of the Billabong family. Mary Grant Bruce's attitudes towards loosening the patriarchal hold on women's lives suggested that she was in fear of moral and social breakdown should women escape their domestic domains. In another sense, Bruce's anti-feminism reflected the ideological constraint that Bruce created in that she could not extricate herself from the 'squirrel cage' that constrained women's attempts to become independent in their own right. Her

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<sup>68</sup>Patricia Grimshaw and Graham Willett, 'Women's History and Family History: an Exploration of Colonial Family Structure' in Norma Gieves and Patricia Grimshaw, Eds., *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1981, pp. 134-155.

<sup>69</sup>Bruce, 'Overtime for Wives' in McKay, Ed., op. cit., pp. 210-218.

<sup>70</sup>Bruce, 'Daughters of Today', ibid, pp. 221-225.

<sup>71</sup>Bruce, 'The Amateur Woman Worker', ibid, pp. 208-209.

<sup>72</sup>Bruce, 'Overtime for Wives', ibid, p. 217.

Linton cemented the notion of subservience to the patriarchal familial order of Australian society.

### **Old settler ideals**

American feminist and social reformer Jesse Ackermann noted the strong correlation between the centrality of the family and Australian hegemony. Australia's political culture was built from 'the clan spirit of the home'.<sup>73</sup> In broad terms, the ideological foundations of Australian nationhood were reinforced through regimes of domestication familiarised by family structures and gender roles. As interchangeable identities, the Australian nation was mirrored through 'the home life of the people...and invested in...a spirit of nationalism rarely seen in new countries'.<sup>74</sup> Australian daughters complied with domestic order. Their political interests were copied in an 'irrational and almost stupid way'.<sup>75</sup> R.E.N Twopenny also questioned whether Australian women could freely exert their political franchise especially when unquestionably their political decisions were based on how their fathers and families voted. Having electoral autonomy appeared to reinforce structures of patriarchy rather than liberate Australian women's voices.

In the Billabong series, the idealisation of Australian girlhood was personified by the horse-loving, cattle-droving, relatively uneducated but socially privileged Norah Linton. A surface reading of Norah Linton would appear to endorse Jessie Ackermann's and Twopenny's readings of Australian gender relations in the late nineteenth century. Norah Linton was characterised as an icon of morality, duty and virtue. This pleasant, simple and naïve girl would reproduce the family lineage by marrying a suitable mate. On the Billabong estate, she undertook the roles of wife substitute caring for her widowed father and as a cattle owner in charge of the Billabong agricultural enterprise. The illusion of independence that was created by the characterisation of Norah Linton was an ambiguous one. Norah had never had any opportunity to assert her own individuality. This passage from *Norah of Billabong* illustrates this point:

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<sup>73</sup>Jessie Ackermann, *Australia From A Woman's Point of View, 1913* (with a new introduction by Elizabeth Riddell), Cassell and Company, London, 1981, pp. 71-73.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid, p. 77.

<sup>75</sup>R.E.N. Twopenny cited Stephen Alomes and Catherine Jones, Eds., op. cit., pp. 69-70.

Until she was fourteen, Norah had known only home and its teachings. And home was Billabong Station. She had lived her father's life — a life of open-air, of horses and cattle, and all the station's interests... Bush teaching makes for self-control and self-reliance, and a simple, straight outlook on the world that is not a bad foundation of character.<sup>76</sup>

The Billabong model of Australian girlhood offered the possibilities of projecting a notion of independence by having a complimentary role alongside those of men's activities on the cattle station. Thus, this combination of roles facilitated a convergence of the masculine code of 'mateship' that appeared to equalise gender differences by creating a fictional social and cultural space where Australian girls such as the like of Norah Linton could be aspire to become autonomous social actors. Norah was:

As handy as any man...Boyish and offhand to a certain extent...but...the solid foundation of womanliness in her nature was never far below the surface. She was perfectly aware that while Daddy wanted a mate, he also wanted a daughter...she did not lack housewifely accomplishments, and Mr. Linton was wont to say proudly that Norah's scones were as light as her hand on a horse's mouth.<sup>77</sup>

Norah was neither lady nor lad but a caricature of female independence and one whose feminine identity was characteristically ambiguous and one that required her to make sense of her own world through that of male counterparts. As Evelyn Seton had observed, Mary Grant Bruce fictional characters had created a prisoner of the author where Bruce was entrapped in a 'squirrel's cage' of her own making. Such was the constraints placed on the development of Norah's feminine identity as well as other female characters in the novels.

### **The squirrel's cage**

The metaphorical reinvention of the social order of the Anglo-Irish estate facilitated a way to resume control of the domestic realm and to monitor signs of any transgression from Bruce's characterisation of feminine identity. English-born Tommy was never left alone without her brother's supervision. Their sibling relationship was characterised as a form of marital domesticity. They were 'riotously proud of their home...on any moonlit night they might be found walking around it, purring loudly'.<sup>78</sup> Renamed in Australia as Tommy, instead of her English name of Cecilia, she migrated to Australia to become her brother's

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<sup>76</sup> Bruce, 1913, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce, 1911, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Grant Bruce, *Billabong's Daughter*, Ward Lock, London, 1924, p. 33.

house-keeper. It was a strict form of domestic dependence enacted through Bob's rules of 'never leaving her alone'.<sup>79</sup> Predictably when left unsupervised, unwelcome strangers threatened domestic harmony.

As reward for submitting to the order of the Billabong estate, the Rainhams were offered a residence closer to the Billabong homestead. The location of the Rainham home at Billabong authenticated characteristics appropriate to the social make-up of the Bruce history in Ireland and the symbolic order of privilege, power and status denoted by the Anglo-Irish estate. Creek Cottage was located near water. Like the Billabong house, it was 'cool and spotless...with a wide verandah...and drawing room'.<sup>80</sup> While not as grand as the homestead at Billabong, the domestic order resonated allegorically and functionally in the architectural symbolism of Anglo-Irish property relations. In Ireland, the 'great house' relayed the symbolic convergence of national and natural harmony and operated as a functional political metaphor to signify the ideal community in which people could live together.<sup>81</sup> In the Australian context, a similar sense of unity was conferred by the topography of calmness where:

The Billabong homestead lay calm and peaceful in the slanting rays of the sun that crept down in the western sky...If you came nearer, you found how the garden rioted in colour under the touch of early summer...Further back came a glance of rippled silver, where the breeze caught the surface of the lagoon...to faintly stir the reed-fringed water...<sup>82</sup>

The Billabong estate preserved the image of the Bruce ancestral home and suggested how membership to this exclusive community could be achieved. Bob and Tommy Rainham exemplified that realisation:

Bob: I never thought of more than a workman's cottage...And now—look at us! Bloated capitalists and station owners.

Tommy: I've risen in the world...Left my situation to better myself...And we've got the jolliest home in Australia—thanks to all of you.

Narrator:...there was no loneliness, since all the big new country stretched out hands of friendliness. They came back slowly to their house, arm in arm; two young things, like

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>80</sup>Bruce, 1921, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>81</sup>Malcolm Kelsall, *The Great Good Place: The Country House in English Literature*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, pp. 5, 135, 161.

<sup>82</sup>Bruce, 1911, op. cit., p. 7.

shadows in the gloom, but certain in their own minds that they could conquer Australia.<sup>83</sup>

In the new country, the old order was replicated. When recreating the empire in Australia, the logic of Irish Ascendancy society was retained by the select few. In the last novel written by Mary Grant Bruce, the Rainhams were firmly installed in the Billabong hierarchy. In *Billabong Riders* (1942) Tommy Rainham (formerly named Cecilia) had become Jim Linton's wife, thereby guaranteeing the line of succession between their former homeland of England and the new country of Australia.

### **Monitors and mentors**

Although her status at Billabong was guaranteed by her genealogical pedigree, Norah Linton was also subjected to the monitoring regime of Billabong society. Her father David Linton, her brother Jim Linton, and her surrogate brother Wally Meadows, mobilised codes of mateship to account for the special familial bond the Lintons shared. Norah subscribed to the notion that gender did not matter on the Linton estate as she was as competent as her brother and Wally at horse-riding, cattle mustering and helping around the cattle station.

The novel *Norah of Billabong* (1913) canvassed the possibilities of the break-up of the Linton family when Norah had been sent to Melbourne for her education. Until the age of fourteen, she had been home-schooled in the arts of bushcraft rather than formal schooling. When dispatched to an elite girls' boarding school in Melbourne, Norah felt she had been abandoned by her male protectors. For the first time in her life, Norah had to submit to school rules, wear a uniform, and acculturate to girls' company. School was like a prison compared to the relative freedom of Billabong. In the school environment Norah had to conform to the authority of women, whereas at Billabong her autonomy was mediated through the paternal authority of David Linton.

During the twelve-month absence from Billabong in the company of women, Norah changed. The girl child had become a woman. When the Linton males arrived at her school to collect Norah for the summer holidays, Jim and Wally could not avoid staring at 'the

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid, pp. 200-201, 206.

slim figure that was the main thing in their lives'.<sup>84</sup> The screen of gender neutrality had become unravelled. The child-woman was fifteen years of age. Norah had reached a stage of sexual development that would become more noticeable in a male-only household. When David Linton reacted towards seeing Norah again, his composure was momentarily unguarded when he uttered the statement that Norah 'looked so fine that I almost feared I had lost my little Bush mate'.<sup>85</sup>

There was a strong reaction from the Linton men that suggested they needed to increase their surveillance over the centre-piece of their affection. The mysterious culture of female education had awakened Norah's consciousness about her gender identity:

Jim: When young Norah's alone, she gets dressed as quickly as you or me; but now she has Jean, they spend ages in getting togged up.

Wally: No-body seems to know what girls are up to...Norah never seemed quite like a girl until she went to school...you can see there's a difference.<sup>86</sup>

When relating the fictive icon to the hegemonic construction of Australian femininity in the Mary Grant Bruce era, we can see that there was a corresponding moment in Australia's gendered history where the 'New Woman' threatened the 'confines of traditional domesticity'.<sup>87</sup> What was at stake was the potential destruction of the image of the 'Australian' girl who, like Norah, was a physically perfect specimen with a sunny disposition and with little education. The 'Australian' girl led a healthy outdoors lifestyle: as a woman she would be confined to domestic enslavement. As the earlier part of the chapter showed, Bruce did not support the liberation of Australian women from their domestic roles and duties and feared familial and social breakdown. Her own personal history was a contradiction of the fictional history given to Norah Linton. Mary Grant Bruce left the confines of Australian rural culture in Sale so that she could begin a writing career in Melbourne. Bruce's personal circumstances reflected the modern image of the independent woman who earned her own income and whose life was not controlled

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<sup>84</sup>Bruce, 1913, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid, pp. 90-91.

<sup>87</sup>Susan Margarey, op. cit., p. 43.

financially by her husband.<sup>88</sup> By contrast, the fictional Norah's life was dependent on men's surveillance over her actions and economic status.

Contradictions between the fictional characterisation of Norah and Mary Grant Bruce's own history set up different performances of Australian femininity. The need for greater surveillance over Norah was refracted through the vernacular code of 'mateship'. In turn, the masculine sign of friendship articulated brotherly and paternal concerns to preserve the wholesomeness of the Linton estate and vis-à-vis, desires to reinstate patriarchal control over Norah's actions. On the return journey to Billabong, Norah and her father knew that the term 'mate' had changed since a 'year ago...when Billabong had meant all her world...Now she had a wider horizon'.<sup>89</sup> Moving forward in narrative time to *Billabong's Daughter* (1924), Norah continued to live at Billabong so that she could perfect the skills of domesticity in the role of female companion for her widowed father. The hierarchical order of the all-male household was unchanged except for the fact that the gauche adolescent had become the mistress of the house. In *Billabong's Daughter* there were signs that Norah's emotional needs were met through a complex genealogical and psycho-sexual dependency.

A particular dinner occasion called for the family members to dress more formally than usual. Norah arrived in a blue dress, and immediately partnered her father by assuming the partner-role left absent by her mother's death. She had become a defacto mistress of the house: a role which appeared to reinstate the strength of the familial bond between members of the Billabong estate.

She had come in, unnoticed, and now she went up beside him, rubbing her cheek on his arm – a slender figure in white, with a blue band in her brown curls.<sup>90</sup>

Norah's actions could be perceived as daughterly affection; however, the intimacy revealed on Norah's part suggested that terms of membership were mediated by metaphors denoting feline domesticity. The Rainhams (brother and sister) were 'mates' in the sense of being portrayed as a married couple. They were described as 'purring loudly' with pride when

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<sup>88</sup>Bruce, 1913, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, p. 157.

<sup>90</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Billabong's Daughter*, Ward Lock, London, 1924, p. 33.

admiring their new home on the Billabong estate. The iconography of 'mateship' created a screen over an obviously mismatched domestic relationship between a brother and sister who could not procreate. But Bruce was determined to maintain this illusory union when Bob and Tommy had borrowed a neighbour's baby girl to complete the illusion of marital bliss.

In *Billabong's Daughter*, Norah and her friends were in their mid-twenties. The fictional characters had outgrown childhood. Signs of sexual tension could be identified following Norah's return from Melbourne ten years previously. In recounting the adventure of camping out on a bush track, readers of the Bruce fiction recognised the difficulties of maintaining the illusions of mateship. The Linton party camped out for the night 'On the track'. Jean and Norah slept in a tent and 'were envious of the men...who disdained to erect a "wurley" and slept bushman fashion in the open'.<sup>91</sup> Living in a tent was an ultimate adventure that gave Norah some relief from her father's surveillance and her brother's guardianship. The temporary suspension of brotherly and paternal surveillance also introduced the problem of managing the sexualisation of the Australian centerpiece. Norah had become aware that Wally had also been watching her. That moment was described as 'the curious way...we become conscious that the thoughts of another have entered into our solitary places'.<sup>92</sup>

Mary Grant Bruce wanted to preserve the iconic image of the submissive Norah rather than capitulate to readers' knowledge that Norah's sexual identity could not be ignored.<sup>93</sup> Pressured by readers for a marriage between Norah and Wally, Bruce conceded in *Billabong's Daughter*. Norah's partner was carefully chosen. Wally Meadows came from a propertied Queensland family. He was reduced to impoverished circumstances through the mismanagement of his parents' estate and the malfeasance of relatives. He was reliant on the Lintons whom he regarded as his family. His destiny as a titled property owner would later be fulfilled when his property rights were restored, thus qualifying him as the right choice for insuring his son's genealogical entitlement as a future heir of Billabong.

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid, p.156.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid, p.157.

<sup>93</sup>Niall, op. cit., p. 179.

Norah's marriage cemented the bonds of property as well as reconstituting patterns of domesticity that preserved the ideological contract of 'mateship':

Wally: Getting married couldn't break the old Billabong partnership that we've always known...Our marriage has brought something new and wonderful into it for us, but it isn't going to lessen the old tie.<sup>94</sup>

The order of Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in Australia was elaborated through the ways that 'Big' and 'Little' Billabong mirrored each other:

Whenever one might be about the two Billabongs, each house was always conscious of the other. The trees between, that hid them, did not keep them apart. An imaginary ring-fence encircled them, holding them together, so that the two houses made one thought, one life.<sup>95</sup>

Although a married woman, Norah remained the subject of her father's attention. Each imagined the other's presence, not as a separate identity, but a symbolic union lived through the other.

So it was that the old home of Billabong seemed split into two. But there was no real cleavage. They were still one home; and the four inmates wandered in and out of the two houses until Jim said that it was difficult to tell where each belonged. Norah called each house "home" impartially, and Wally declared that she constantly forgot that she had ever been married.<sup>96</sup>

Bruce's sister-in-law Evelyn Seton wanted to see Bruce's writing liberated from the 'squirrel's cage' of Billabong. In effect, Mary Grant Bruce's writing had become entrapped by the fiction she created. Through the fictional topography of Billabong Australia, the Anglo-Irish estate was able to be replanted through the preservation of Australian bush mythology. This marriage between the old symbols of Anglo-Irish heritage and its new location in Australia enabled Mary Grant Bruce to transfer the logic of class, power and property relations that supported the genealogical status of Billabong Australia.

### **The unsettlers**

The presence of emigrants from Northern Ireland required a different set of conditions to assess their suitability for admission to the Billabong home. Mary Grant Bruce's novels paralleled her family's personal history through adapting fictional persona to articulate

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<sup>94</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Billabong Adventurers*, Ward Lock London, 1942, p.100.

<sup>95</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Bill of Billabong*, Ward Lock, London, 1931, p. 16.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid*, p.19.

events happening with the Bruce family. The 1914 to 1918 period brought sharply into focus the conflict of home in the context of the Irish political independence. Evelyn Seton's letters of the period graphically illustrated the vulnerability of the Anglo-Irish when faced with the decline of imperial power in Ireland:

The Black & Tans are nothing but a rabble...sent out from England to...loot...They shoot at cattle...murder here & there...A young woman belonging to very superior people was sitting outside a farmhouse...with her small children...A lorry of Black & Tans...let fire into the little group...The military called it 'Death by Misadventure.'<sup>97</sup>

While Mary Grant Bruce did not directly engage with Irish politics, there were seven chapters in the novel *Billabong's Daughter* that told the resettlement experiences of Irish political refugees in Australia. Kent Fedorowich explored this relatively unknown emigration history and described it as 'forced migration':

Many former policemen, ex-servicemen and southern Irish Unionists, fearful of intimidation and assassination, dared not remain in Ireland. Equally important was the plight of the isolated and beleaguered Protestant community in the southern twenty-six counties whose population declined by 34 per cent between 1911 and 1926. This included 20,000 Irish refugees who fled to the United Kingdom in 1922 to find sanctuary from continuous and sometimes violent nationalist persecution.<sup>98</sup>

Australia was reluctant to take Irish political refugees because of underlying suspicions about Irish nationalist politics. Earlier episodes in Australian history had raised suspicions about Irish loyalty to British-Australia:

The Easter Rising of 1916 and the Australian conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917...pitted these two elements firmly against each other in the domestic arena during the war... conscription crises...became tests of national and imperial loyalty... hardy Anglo-Saxon stock was an effective countermeasure...against Bolshevism and Sinn Fein ...Prime Minister Stanley Bruce was reported to say that he could identify disloyal Australians by virtue of having an Irish (presumably Catholic) surname.<sup>99</sup>

The ideological climate of Irish-Australian relations between the First World War to the late 1920s presented Mary Grant Bruce's *Billabong* with a problem of accommodating this form of Irishness in *Billabong's Daughter*. Norah Linton characteristically took charge of the situation when demonstrating her superior horse-skills which helped to stop a runaway

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<sup>97</sup>Seton letter, November 1916, 1299/4 (v), SLV, op. cit., MS,

<sup>98</sup>Kent Fedorowich, 'Reconstruction and Resettlement: The Politicization of Irish Migration to Australia and Canada, 1919-29' in *The English Historical Review*, 1999 114 (459), pp. 1143- 1178.

PDF file @ <http://ehr.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/citation/114/459/1143>

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

carriage carrying Delia and Mary-Kate Reilly to their new home of 'Bog Cottage'. The reassignment of domestic spaces is critical to the metaphoric language used here to express the conditions of conversion to Australian settler identity. When Delia Reilly expressed the loneliness of life in Australia, Norah's response to the apparent lack of hospitality was invested with the mythologising of 'bush' Australia:

Some of the women in the cities and the little townships aren't too friendly to newcomers. But out in the country we know too well how lonely it is, and people are glad enough of new neighbours. All the women about here are sensible....wives of hard-working farmers...once they know you, you can always depend on them. Why, it would be too silly if we didn't welcome British people out here—weren't most of our grandfathers and grandmothers emigrants themselves?<sup>100</sup>

The subtle assimilation of gender, national and cultural politics is linked to the social realms of domesticity and the rhetoric of homogeneity assumed to represent the similarities between British and Australian nationality status. To convince Delia Reilly that eventually she would be accepted into Billabong society, Norah then traced her own emigrant history in Australia through the lineage of her English grandfather and her Irish mother. When Norah indicated that she was familiar with Reilly's home in Ireland, this became a reference point to translate Irish identity to Australian audiences. Norah remembered 'little, clean whitewashed cabins everywhere...and...beautiful knitting...that Irish women did...when walking on the roads or sitting on the stone walls'.<sup>101</sup> The size differences of land-holdings in Ireland seemed odd to Norah's perspectives of Australia's rural landscapes; 'Why, if you gave all that country to an Australian he'd think he couldn't make a living off it. My father said he wouldn't have believed it, if he hadn't seen it'.<sup>102</sup> Norah observed Irish culture at the surface level: Delia Reilly's experiences were different. The Donegal landscape symbolised hardship, exploitation and the struggle to survive.

Delia Reilly: And if you'd been there at other times you'd have seen the women carryin' seaweed...in big baskets up the hills from the shore...Quare little crops, Miss. But people lived on them.<sup>103</sup>

When Wally killed a snake and used it as a trophy to signify what Australian mateship meant according to the codified cliché that 'Every good Australian should know how to kill

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<sup>100</sup>Bruce, 1924, op. cit, p. 25.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

a snake', he assumed that Mary-Kate would accept his definition.<sup>104</sup> He declared that 'Mary-Kate's going to be an excellent Australian': she emphatically retorted 'I'm not...I'm Irish'.<sup>105</sup> In signifying the cultural differences between Irish and Australian identity, the referent to Australianness ironically provided a strategic separation between Irish identity and Englishness. If mistakenly thought of as English; Mary-Kate retorted, 'An if they call me a Pommy I'll teach 'em manners...If 'tis a Pommy I am, then I'm the sort of Pommy that can hit hard!'<sup>106</sup> These dialogue fragments suggest this cultural distinctiveness was to be silenced by the Billabong theory of identity. All national identities were only validated if they conformed to the hegemonic order of Anglo-Australian-Britishness. When Norah discovered that Dan Reilly served in the Munster regiment in Ireland, Irish loyalty to the empire was proved. Simultaneously George Evans Bruce's own military history was re-enacted as he had been recalled to Ireland to recruit the Munster regiment in Ireland for the British war during World War One.<sup>107</sup>

Another strategy was deployed to remake the Reilly home into a symbol of Billabong harmony. It was known as the 'Bog Cottage'. Norah ordered it to be modernised and renamed as 'The Kingdom of Delia Reilly'.<sup>108</sup> The allegorical transformation of the Reilly home transferred the logic of Australian citizenship through a virtual repositioning of domestic spaces within the Billabong estate by stripping the Reillys of agency during the transformation process. Delia Reilly was removed because of an unfortunate illness. In her weakened state, she was unable to resist Billabong hospitality. During her recuperation, she was treated as 'Royalty herself', and as an 'honoured guest', Delia Reilly was permitted to recover in 'the space and quiet of Billabong'.<sup>109</sup> In the meantime, Norah and Tommy Rainham combined their domestic skills to transform the 'Bog Cottage' to the Billabong design.

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid, p.33.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>107</sup>The total number of Irish soldiers is not known but an estimated 140,000 volunteers enlisted. The Royal Munster Fusiliers included Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Clare. The Royal Munster Fusiliers were disbanded in 1922. Department of the Taoiseach, Irish Government, Dublin, <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/>

<sup>108</sup>In the narrative, five chapters debated Norah's attempts to conform the Irish emigrants into the model of Australian mateship.

<sup>109</sup>Bruce, 1924, op. cit., pp. 212-213.

Narrator: The crowning wonder was in the kitchen...Mrs Reilly had endeavoured to cover up its deficiencies, but she had suffered many things because of it. Now it had gone, and in its place gleamed a new stove of the latest pattern...Mary-Kate was still unable to exist without constantly making a tour of all the new wonders in the cottage. But always at the end of the tour she came back to the stove, and purred.  
Mrs Reilly: If 'twas Ireland itself, I couldn't be gladder to come home.  
Narrator: Mrs Reilly had entered into her kingdom.<sup>110</sup>

Assimilation to the norms of Billabong was complete and reaffirmed through the domestic economy that also provided the solution for removing the dissident Mary-Kate. Once made over, the Reillys remained spatially at a distance from 'Big' and 'Little' Billabong and 'Creek Cottage'. However, the rebellious Mary-Kate was excused from school to remain at home as her mother's carer. Any signs of rebellion could be contained in the 'Kingdom of Delia Reilly'. Significantly, once made over by the mode of occupation at Billabong, the Reillys were never invited back into the Rainham and Linton homesteads.

Themes of domesticity in the Billabong narratives were articulated in metaphorical strategies to reinstate the Bruce Anglo-Irish estate in Australia. In exploring metaphors of domesticity, it was shown that terms of belonging called attention to generic characteristics of 'mateship' corresponding with ideological and cultural configurations of Australian identity. While simplified for child readers, dialogue patterns in the Billabong texts set up chains of signification and significance regarding constructions of ethnicity, gender, identity, class and nationality.

On the other hand, the 'vision splendid' that was seen to represent a central trope of identity in the Billabong narratives appeared to be recycled through "anxious repetitions" and assertions of privilege that replicated the order of Anglo-Irish land relations in Australia.<sup>111</sup> My analysis of the relationships between biographies, cultures and writing genres shows how social bonds, cultural fiction and imperial histories merged as 'the spontaneous manifestation of...Australia's ...willing allegiance to the Union Jack'.<sup>112</sup> Privilege, exclusion and stereotype mobilised a particular construction of identity that

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid, pp. 211, 216.

<sup>111</sup>Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, pp. 72-77.

<sup>112</sup>*Sydney Morning Herald*, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1912 – coincidentally Empire Day and Mary Grant Bruce's birthday.

preserved the ideological function of hegemonic order in the Billabong narratives.<sup>113</sup> Anglo-Irishness was critical in shaping the cultural topographies of Billabong Australia. The signifiers of hegemony were authenticated by the Bruce family history and recounted through fictional genealogies as long as these could be adapted to Mary Grant Bruce's philosophy of keeping one's sense of humour.<sup>114</sup> Autobiographical links to the Bruce history in Ireland indicated how editorial interventions made by George Evans Bruce were used to decode and rewrite meanings of Irish culture in Australia.

The simple logic of the Billabong narratives could be explained on one level by generic techniques of language use, plot, and narrative character of juvenile writing. However as this chapter has shown, Bruce's writing communicated aspects of citizen identity and entitlement through iconic representations of Australian 'bush society. The Bruce philosophy saved Australia from becoming unruly by transforming Australia's genealogical inheritance of Anglo-Irish Britishness them into robust specimens through the agenda of self-discipline and duty, privilege and property.<sup>115</sup> In the Bruce schema, Billabong represented the elitist world of the Anglo-Irish 'Ascendancy' rather than an egalitarian and free Australian society.

Through examining the logic of the Linton imperial creed, the next chapter traces the destruction of the iconic symbols of the Anglo-Irish estate in the period following the First World War. What has been unrecognised in previous accounts on Mary Grant Bruce is the significance of the relationship and influence that Anglo-Irish George Evans Bruce exerted on Bruce's writing.

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<sup>113</sup>Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory & Children's Literature*, Blackwell, Oxford England and Cambridge, USA, 1994, pp. 138-152.

<sup>114</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, 'Autobiographical Notes', 11251 (a), SLS, op. cit., MS.

<sup>115</sup>Stella Lees and Pam McIntyre, Eds., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Children's Literature*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 52-53, 71-73.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Patriot Games*

As seen in the previous chapter, conversion to the Billabong creeds of military heroism, patriotic duty, and submission to autocratic rule, was facilitated by ideologies of domesticity that prevented imperial nation-states such as England and Australia from disintegrating. Simplistic stereotype and cliché projected the mythical supremacy of imperial membership where selective criteria of race, ethnic, class and cultural characteristics conformed to prescriptive images of Australian national culture.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The unravelling of empire?**

Anglo-Irish narrators George Evans Bruce and Evelyn Seton have been given prominence in my analysis because they provided insights into the subjective negotiation of Anglo-Irish identity in national histories. Their cultural history was deeply embedded with the agency of the British / English empire in Ireland. The first chapter debated the ambivalences of Anglo-Irish identity and claims of entitlement to Irish cultural references. Although interwoven into the fabric of socio-economic and political power since the seventeenth century in Ireland, the Anglo-Irish Bruces also witnessed the disestablishment of imperial power when Irish independence politics forced them again to re-write Anglo-Irish identity during the war periods of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. The credibility of Evelyn Seton's letters can be substantiated because of her inside knowledge of the bureaucratic heart of the British empire. Her husband Malcolm Seton, also descended from a prominent Anglo-Irish Cork family, was an Assistant-Secretary to India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Letters to her brother George Evans Bruce while on service with the British Army in Africa, recorded trivial and significant events in the empire's calendar as well as providing commentary on Irish politics of the time. While culturally patriotic to

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<sup>1</sup>Clare Bradford, 'Centre and Edges: Postcolonial Theory and Australian Picture Books' in Clare Bradford, Ed., *Writing the Australian Child: Texts and Contexts in Fictions for Children*, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, West Australia, 1996, pp. 92-110; Paul Heins 'Coming to terms with criticism' in Virginia Haviland, Ed., *Children and Literature*, Scott, Foreman and Company, Glenview Illinois and Brighton England, 1973, pp. 408-412.

Ireland on the one hand, Seton wrote: 'Time was I was red hot Paddy...politics...killed it in me...but like you, there isn't a place in Ireland that I didn't love'.<sup>2</sup>

The Seton correspondence demonstrated contradictory readings of empire mythology in that Evelyn Seton knew that Anglo-Irishness would be constrained by the conditions of Protestant imperial loyalty. Her letters of the 1916 period suggested she maintained the hegemonic line against Irish nationalism. In one letter she wrote about the 'cool impudence' of Irish nationalists to chastise ultra Protestant patriot Edward Carson for arming Northern Irish Protestants against Irish-Catholic nationalists:

The new Nationalists have the cool impudence to tell us Sir Ed. Carson began the arming of Ireland!!...what he did...was...to drill & discipline his men...whereas Redmond's followers had for years been letting off rifles & revolvers promiscuously into each others [sic] bodies.

In the same letter she spoke of the ineptitude or reluctance of the Irish political leadership to take control:

Hugh Law [a member of the Redmond government]...is sailing around London...to show off his pretty daughters & drink tea, while over 500 soldiers & policemen are killed & wounded trying too late to stop the mischief he & his Party have worked over 10 years....Irish MPs...are content to sit on here talking, talking ever talking while Ireland is seething & Irish men are murdering women and priests.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, English solutions to Ireland were as equally inappropriate. The Joint Under Secretary to Ireland, Sir John Anderson, was considered to have little interest in Irish matters. He was 'very Scotch &...had...no connection with Ireland...he...was...a total stranger...to Ireland generally...and looked...on Ireland as a country with distinct grievances'.<sup>4</sup> England was also indicted for compromising the ideals of empire chivalry when Winston Churchill 'ordered the British fleet to shell Belfast in July '14 because Ulster would not accept Home Rule'.<sup>5</sup> If radical Irish republican nationalists threatened the unity of the Empire in 1914-1918, England was not redeemed as the moral response to Ireland's problems. Although her brother George Evans Bruce manifested his imperial politics through military service, Evelyn Seton was less convinced that the Empire held to

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<sup>2</sup>Evelyn Seton, 1915. SLV., op. cit., MS

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, Seton to George Evans Bruce, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1916.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, Seton-Bruce, November 1916.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

such high chivalric ideals. While fearful about Sinn Féin retribution, she could not exonerate English politicians for licensing Black and Tan atrocities. She had to write the unpalatable truth.

ES to GEB 10<sup>th</sup> November 1916...I want to put down what M & I learned for the first time...when R.I.C & soldiers are murdered he thinks it is justifiable for the unit to which they belonged to go out & exact revenge...the Black & Tans are nothing but a rabble...sent out from England to...loot...they scour the country in motor lorries & armoured cars...with machine guns. They shoot at cattle...murder here & there... A young woman belonging to very superior people was sitting outside a farmhouse, on her knee a baby of 9 months, 2 toddlers playing around her & a new baby on its way. A lorry full of Black & Tans came along, they let fire into the little group & the mother died in 2 hours. The military ...called it...'Death by misadventure'...you see the difficulty of getting at the truth from papers.<sup>6</sup>

Seton's attitude to Irish nationalists had not significantly changed in the subsequent Second World War period. Her letters in 1944 expressed frustration about the sovereignty rights of Irish nationhood. She criticised the audacity of 'Cardinal Gilroy in Eire and Mannix in Victoria...for stressing...the admirable bravery of Eire at present' and believed they blatantly mobilised Irish-Catholic anti-English sentiment in Australia and disregarded the extreme situation England was facing.<sup>7</sup> While not overly sympathetic to Ireland's stance of neutrality, a later letter in June 1944 suggested that Seton was forced to reconsider her views about the mythological virtue of the English empire:

Time was when I purred that English people rhapsodized over Ireland—but not now—I've found out what underlies it. They don't care a rap for Ireland...the 'charm' they rave about is that they think Ireland is a thorn in England's side & will result in doing her a fatal injury.<sup>8</sup>

The letter also suggested that Evelyn Seton's pro-imperialist attitudes to Ireland began to waiver. When responding to criticisms that Ireland turned its back on England's crisis, she immediately defended Ireland's neutrality and stated that 'it's very hard to hear sailors say that...Ireland...cost thousands of...English...lives'.<sup>9</sup> Unofficial readings of imperial histories revealed contradictions between subjective negotiations of Anglo-Irish identity and political constructs of Irish nationhood. Anglo-Irish-Australian emigrant George

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<sup>6</sup>Seton-Bruce, November, 1916, SLV, 1299/4 (v), M refers to Malcolm Seton.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, Seton-Bruce, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1944.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, Seton-Bruce, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

Evans Bruce also found himself confronted by received histories of English military conquest in Ireland.

I was always taught that the marlclad English ...were superior to...the wretched Irish with no armour [soc]... gallowglasses...could & did hew their way through the best of the English pikemen...and...could stand up to the English at their own pet game...and...would have made England the doormat.<sup>10</sup>

While Evelyn Seton was outspoken in her criticisms of Ireland and the British Empire, her brother George Evans Bruce personified the ultra-heroic ideals of British military and imperial history. He served with the First Battalion (Territorials and Volunteers) of the Norfolk Regiment in India, Burma and Afghanistan between 1888 and 1898. He was promoted to the rank of Captain in 1899 to oversee the British penal colony in the Andaman Islands and later served in the West Africa Force in Nigeria between 1905 and 1910.<sup>11</sup> Bruce's imperial service embodied British bravery.<sup>12</sup> His letters showed the workings of empire in Southern Nigeria:

Our policy is to back up the chiefs & big men...as long as they behave, but to make them feel that as soon as they go against the government...they are of no more account than a slave...if he still refused, he will have his house burnt & will be hunted into the bush...till all fines are paid & all orders obeyed...they wont [sic] be able to farm...will be hard pressed for food...will probably have to sell all they have.<sup>13</sup>

The Ogwashi-Oku campaign was designed to keep rival European colonial powers from gaining a hold in the Niger Delta region.<sup>14</sup> George Evans Bruce's letters revealed the ideological demeanour of British race politics in the early twentieth century. There was some suggestion that he was prepared to put aside military convention regarding the treatment of prisoners of war:

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<sup>10</sup>Bruce to Seton 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1909.

<sup>11</sup>His service history in Nigeria was awarded the Africa General Service Medal and promotion to Major. Patrick Morgan, 'Life and Letters in early Australia: Major George Bruce, *Margin*, Gale Press, 2005, 3 p. Online article [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_mOPEH/is\\_65/ai\\_n](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_mOPEH/is_65/ai_n) [Accessed 1.7.2006].

<sup>12</sup>John Springhall, 'Up Guards and At Them: British Imperialism and Popular Art, 1880-1914' in John McKenzie, Ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1986, pp. 49-72.

<sup>13</sup>Bruce to Seton, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1910.

<sup>14</sup>David K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914*, Macmillan London, 1984, pp. 146-7, 292, 299, 316-329; John Fage and William Tordoff, *A History of Africa*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, pp. 381, 388, 394-5, 413-6.

I wish I had been far enough up country to hang my interpreter friend...if I get leave, I'll hang him. He is responsible for many deaths, both of our men & the enemy...the Governor is not the man to do it...if he gives me a loophole, I'll do it.

He wrote about the sport of killing African rebels. If given an opportunity he would 'take no prisoners...and kill every man in the bush'.<sup>15</sup> There was no indication of a moral or humane consciousness about the destruction and killing that accompanied English colonial policies in Nigeria. Bruce rationalised the methodology because 'killing them...is the only way to keep them quiet & its [sic] much more merciful than devastating their crops and letting them starve'.<sup>16</sup> In the letter of the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 1910, it appeared that his blood lust was exhausted and he did not 'want to kill any more of the brutes if I can help it'.<sup>17</sup>

The Seton-Bruce correspondence provided readings of imperial history from the underside of official extracts. This series of letters also considered the similarities between British colonial methodologies in Ireland to control national aspirations and those used in Southern Nigeria.

The more I see of affairs here, the more they remind me of Ireland in the '80s. Parnell & the professionally agitators are represented by book-savvy lawyers, the EKUMEKA society is the Land League, the chiefs & juju are the priests, & in the constant change of civil offices...you have the want of a continuous policy which has always been the curse of Ireland.<sup>18</sup>

While these letters may be seen as incidental narratives rather than official historical recordings, their currency is critical to the narration of Billabong masculinity and Mary Grant Bruce's reconceptualisation of Australian heroism during the First World War. Evelyn Seton's letters did not evince characterisations of docility and submission to patriarchal dominance like Norah Linton and Tommy Rainham had in the Billabong narratives. Her letters instead suggested an ambiguous positioning of empire loyalty and Irish patriotism that focused on the dilemma of constructing *Britishness*, *Irishness* and *Australianness* in terms of its reference to a 'distinct Anglo- type...whose habits of

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<sup>15</sup>Bruce to Seton, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1910.

<sup>16</sup>Bruce to Seton, 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1910.

<sup>17</sup>Op. cit. 17<sup>th</sup> May 1910.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

political thought...and...racial sympathies...were purely British'.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the template of imperial masculinity exemplified by George Evans Bruce's military exploits could be mobilised in reconstructions of Australian masculinity and self-disciplined patriotism in the war novels *From Billabong to London* (1915), *Jim and Wally*, (1916), and *Back to Billabong* (1921). The previous chapter indicated how modes of Australian identity were referenced through implied synergies of autobiographies and histories that linked the Anglo-Irish and Billabong estates. This chapter examines the illusory stability of membership entitlement.

### **Real heroes?**

The novel *From Billabong to London* (1915) introduced Australian readers to the First World War. On the home-front, Billabong Australia faced labour shortages, 'increased taxation, political troubles and drought'.<sup>20</sup> Being kept on the farm 'was a sore point with the son of the house...who...had not been permitted to join the Expeditionary Force with the men he had so often ridden at work'.<sup>21</sup>

All the fellows I knew best have enlisted; some of them younger than I am; and I'm standing out. They used to look up to me...when I was captain of the school. They can't do it now. They're doing their share, and I'm just a shirker...who really isn't tied, has no right to stay behind. Lots of fellows younger than I are joining in England—boys of sixteen are getting commissions.<sup>22</sup>

Differences in the enlistment ages of Australian and English World War One volunteers allowed the Lintons to exploit a loophole in Australian military regulations that stipulated eighteen years as enlistment age. England accepted sixteen-year-old volunteers.<sup>23</sup> On their journey to enlist in England, the Lintons encountered and overcame a German spy on board their ship and witnessed war at sea that resulted in the destruction of a German naval boat named the *Emden*. Norah expressed the core duty of Australians to defend the empire:

Where great matters of duty and honour are concerned, individual matter drop out. The nation's honour was the individual's honour: therefore the individual became as

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<sup>19</sup>Thomas Tanner, *Compulsory Citizen Soldiers*, Alternative Publishing Co-Operative, Ltd., Sydney, 1980, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *From Billabong to London*, Ward Lock, London, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p.16.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, pp. 16-17.

<sup>23</sup>The fictional ages were not always accurate. Jim was 19, not 16, at the time of enlistment in England. Wally was 17 when he enlisted. Mary Grant Bruce, *Jim and Wally*, Ward Lock, London, 1916, p. 18.

never before, a part of the nation, and forgot his or her concerns in the greater responsibility. Suffering and trouble might come: but there would always be the pride in the knowledge that honour was the only thing that lasted.<sup>24</sup>

What was at stake in First World War enlistment criteria was the redefinition of Australian citizenship in terms of the relationship and 'implications of the citizen contract with the State'.<sup>25</sup> The rhetoric of citizenship mobilised in juvenile literature, schools and in Australian national politics identified how features of nationality could be attached to martial prowess and masculinity so that juvenile subjects could be bound securely to national hegemony. The fictional Norah Linton knew that the core duty of citizenship was to defend the empire corroborated by hegemonic ideals of military heroism. The Linton boys assured Australian readers that they would bring back 'a large bunch of assorted German scalps...from the Front. They'll look lovely in the hall at Billabong, among the native weapons'.<sup>26</sup>

The Billabong heroes served the empire well in the fight for Australian national honour. In the novel *Jim and Wally* (1916) the Linton boys had been moved to the battle front. They were aged eighteen and nineteen and facing German bombardment during the Flanders campaign. Life in the trenches was a test of self-endurance that added character to the Australian military presence:

Jim Linton...was a huge boy, well over six feet, broad-shouldered and powerful; ... the bronze of his native Australia...had been proof against the trench experiences that had whitened English cheeks, less deeply tanned.<sup>27</sup>

The hegemonic view indemnified the imperial hero from breaking the rules of war. Empire heroes displayed codes of chivalric conduct that exalted their masculinity through characteristic Linton traits of self-discipline and control. The antithesis was anti-imperialist Germany which broke the rules of military conduct when releasing gas attacks on imperial soldiers:

It was not easy to realize, unseeing, the full horror of that most malignant device with which Science had blackened War...The men were utterly unprotected...Like sheep

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<sup>24</sup>Bruce, 1915, op. cit., p. 250.

<sup>25</sup>Martin Crotty, 'The Anzac Citizen: Towards a history of the RSL' in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 53, Number 2, 2007, pp. 183-193.

<sup>26</sup>Bruce, 1915, op. cit., p. 254.

<sup>27</sup>Bruce, 1916, op. cit., p. 9.

waiting for slaughter they stood rigidly at attention, waiting for the evil green cloud that blew towards them, already poisoning the clean air with its noxious fumes.<sup>28</sup>

Jim and Wally were caught up in the gas attack. The chapter titled 'When the boys come home' traced their recovery. So that autobiographic and fictional narratives could synthesise chronologically with the Bruce's return to Ireland, the fictional Billabong family became their travel companions. Despite the political turmoil described in the Seton letters of 1916, David Linton assured Australian readers that Ireland was peaceful as long as 'you don't talk politics'.<sup>29</sup>

### **When the boys went home**

The novel *Jim and Wally* provided an opportunity for the Lintons to visit the maternal homeplace in Ireland. Returning home was a central theme in the Irish emigrant psyche. Irish emigrants often expressed desires to return 'home' as a means of maintaining an imaginative connection to Ireland. Regardless of years of absence, the dream of returning home was thought to have shaped the paradoxically settled but unsettled nature of Irish diaspora consciousness in Australia.<sup>30</sup> That sense of the Irish diaspora was refracted through the voice of an elderly Catholic priest aboard the same ferry carrying the Lintons 'home' to Ireland. He had been in America for many years and was returning to be buried in his homeland. Like Irish counterparts in Australia, he described America 'as a good country; but it...never gets to be home'.<sup>31</sup> Between Ireland and the priest's dream of returning home was an armed German patrol boat seeking to destroy the civilian ferry. Political differences between Irish Catholic republicanism dissipated within sight of the Irish coastline as the imperial heroes (the Lintons), with Irish-Catholic support via the aged priest, joined forces to fight the traitorous Germans. The drama was magnified by the subsequent tragedy of the priest's unfulfilled dream to land on Ireland's shores. The exertion weakened his heart and he died heroically at sundown as 'a little shaft of sunlight stole out and lay upon the coast...to welcome back her son'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid, pp. 33-34.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 41.

<sup>30</sup>David Fitzpatrick, 1994, loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup>Bruce, 1916, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, p. 64.

The fictional history revealed how empire patriotism was converged with the agenda of securing 'good' citizenship through military self-sacrifice. The fictional episode also provided an opportunity for David Linton to become more amenable to disclosing his own history. He recalled the family's pioneer legacy of settling in Australia and, in relating the lack of religious discrimination in the bush, was perhaps the narrator's way of dealing with the conflicts of sectarianism that Evelyn Seton had described.

David Linton: It was in a wild part of the bush, and whatever clergyman came along used to use it—Roman Catholic, Protestant, Presbyterian or Baptist; it didn't matter. Everyone used to roll up, for it wasn't often there was a chance of a church service...My mother had three children before ever a chance of baptism...I was the eldest...Two of my mother's babies died without ever seeing a clergyman; to the end of her life she worried about the little souls that had gone out unbaptized.<sup>33</sup>

On the Donegal visit to their deceased mother's estate, Norah Linton immediately adopted the cultural posture of Anglo-Irish society. She entered the Irish landscape as if she had never left it. The farmhouse where they were accommodated was described as having 'such a home-y feel about it'. For the Lintons, there was no difference between their relationship to the Irish landscape and that at Billabong. Jim confirmed the cultural symmetry between Irish and Australian topographies in his statement that: 'I haven't seen anything like it since we left Billabong'.<sup>34</sup> Although the Lintons had never visited Ireland, they assumed the social and class status of Anglo-Irish gentry and acknowledged the deference of Irish locals as normal. Their presence in the Irish homeland appeared to activate the sentiments of Irish-born and tenant-custodian Dan Burke for a return to days before the 'land war and the famine'.<sup>35</sup> The prompting of such sentiment was signified by the ruined remnants of the 'big house' on Burke farmland.

In the same manner that the Anglo-Irish identity was personified by politics of domesticity associated with Anglo-Irish history and social status, it also constituted Norah's imaginative connection to the 'Big House' as a place of culture. The ruination of the imperial dream was described similarly in the Bowen autobiography. In the Bruce version:

Above them the gaunt old house towered, bosomed in its trees, dim with the night mist from the lough. Lights were beginning to twinkle from the windows, and the faint

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 78.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, p. 85.

acrid smell of turf fires stole upon the still air. To Norah's fancy the silent garden was peopled with shadowy forms —tall gallants and exquisite ladies of a bygone day...the dream visions made her feel an interloper as she crossed the threshold into the lit hall.<sup>36</sup>

The former O'Donnell estate relayed permanency, stability, and endurance. As Dan Burke observed, 'Me gran'father, and his gran'father before him, was tenants under them...now — all their houses is sold, or falling to pieces, an' they at the ends of the earth, seeking their fortune'.<sup>37</sup> Its ruination symbolised the breakdown of the Anglo-Irish estate in twentieth-century Ireland's nationalist history. The decline of the house itself was not interpreted in the same way by the Linton men. Their interests were projected through sport, play, hunting and fishing, and similar recreational activities to those pursued in Australia.

### **The sport of kings**

The Linton men carried on the traditions that George Evans Bruce was familiar with in Ireland. The fictional characters acted much in the same way that a privileged Anglo-Irish childhood allowed Bruce to do. Interspersed with the fictional recreation of military and imperial history in the Billabong narratives were insights into George Evans Bruce's childhood in Cork. His father died when he was young, leaving the young George to roam the Irish countryside shooting game. He had his first gun at ten, and from that age onwards, spent his life shooting at whatever moved. He had 'no remorse or feeling of responsibility for the mass slaughter of pigs, birds, fowl, wildlife' during his tours of duty in Africa and India.<sup>38</sup> This psycho-pathology underpinned the model of imperial heroism for Australian child-readers to aspire to as well as characterising a colonial mindset which perceived the Irish landscape for sport and play as their pleasure desired.

They played about Ireland as they had played all their lives in Australia. The Irish blood that was in them made them curiously at home; they liked the simple, kindly country-folk, and found a ready welcome in the scattered cottages, where already Norah had made friends with at least half a dozen babies. Her education developed on new line: she picked up a great deal of Irish, and became steeped in the innumerable legends of the country, not in the least realizing that in being told the "ould ancient"

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<sup>36</sup>For the sake of authenticity, Bruce used the Irish word 'lough' for lake and 'turf' for the peat fuel used for fires. *Ibid*, p. 85.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid*, p. 84.

<sup>38</sup>George Evans Bruce, 'Days in the Rough', *Blackwoods Magazine*, December 1941, p. 372.

stories she was being paid a compliment for which the average tourist might sigh in vain —for the Irish peasant is jealous of his folk-stories, and seldom tells them to anyone not of the country.<sup>39</sup>

Remarkably in Ireland, Norah showed intellectual capacities that an expensive boarding school in Melbourne could not transform. Ireland appeared to bring out the best of Norah's attributes. Her intelligence appeared to have been freed from the constraints of male monitoring at Billabong. Having entitlement to an Irish genealogical pedigree befitting the status of an Anglo-Irish estate owner permitted her to insinuate herself into a community of native Irish speakers who allowed her to hear the 'ould ancient' stories. Irish rural culture theoretically rebalanced Norah's agency to act with greater autonomy than at Billabong. As metaphorical landscapes, Ireland and Billabong Australia reciprocated those similarities in images of domesticity:

In the great stone kitchen Mrs. Moroney gave her lesson in the manufacture of potato-cakes, colcannon, soda-bread, and other national delicacies...for Norah to pass on to Brownie to cook at Billabong.<sup>40</sup>

The effective rehabilitation of rural Ireland was maintained as an Arcadian idyll of pastoral tranquility.<sup>41</sup> For the Bruce imperial home to be restored, at least in fictional images, the writing strategy had to rectify the loss of the paternal estate at Milltown Castle in Cork.<sup>42</sup> The opportunity came with the characterisation of Sir John O'Neill. The O'Neill name transcended the gulf between Anglo-Irishness and Celtic Ireland by linking the genealogical pedigrees of the fictional Linton family and the Bruce historical connections with Ireland.<sup>43</sup> The fictional O'Neill invited the Lintons to share their Celtic lineage through the dynastic rule of Ireland.

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<sup>39</sup>Bruce, 1916, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>41</sup>J. Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914*, Quartet Books, London and Melbourne, 1982.

<sup>42</sup>The loss of Milltown Castle estates in Cork (apart from the Bowen-Evans case spoken about in Chapter One) caused great distress for the Bruce relatives. By 1944, Evelyn Seton was widowed and living at Hamstead, London where her previous lifestyle in the upper echelons of English political life had been reduced to that of a landlady in greatly reduced circumstances. She wrote in 1944 that 'the sheer boredom of being...a... general servant in my own house...gets me down' and appreciated food parcels sent by her brother. Seton to George Evans Bruce, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1944, 1300/1 (xv), op. cit., MS.

<sup>43</sup>George Evans Bruce had been reading the O'Neill history of the Norman invasion of Ireland during his tour of duty in Nigeria in 1910.

O'Neill: I did want you to realize something of what Ireland was. There were great men in those days, and the fighting-men had high ideals of what great champions should be...

Narrator: The proud soul, pent in the misshapen body, found comfort in turning from the present, back to the mighty past when the O'Neills, too, had been chieftains and champions.<sup>44</sup>

O'Neill's estate was located on the Donegal coast to the north-west of Ireland and retained the system of tenant-landlord dependency and agricultural subsistence associated with the historical divisions between Anglo and Irish Ireland. O'Neill was immune to Norah's comments about the relative poverty of Irish farmers. O'Neill's dismissal was instructive in the sense of showing how ethno-cultural characterisations of the Irish as peasant persisted. He stated that Irish subsistence farmers had become 'accustomed to living on very little, and...scarcely need more than they have...They look wild enough; but...are intelligent, even if ignorant'.<sup>45</sup> Appropriately Jim exemplified their usefulness as 'great fighting men' by having similar physical attributes to the Lintons. Codes of masculinity functioned in simplified clichés to reflect characteristics of imperial ideology in the Bruce version of Irish identity. Bruce's fiction also showed up discrepancies in Irish nationalist ideology. Despite the fractures of Irish politics in 1916, forty one percent of Irish men enlisted for British military service. Approximately half of the estimated forty to fifty thousand killed were Catholic.<sup>46</sup> The Irish were still integral to the empire's fortunes for they remained British. Their loyalty could be rehabilitated through military service. Irish women could be co-opted as imperial patriots as well:<sup>47</sup>

Did you hear, by the way, of the women of Limerick, when some of the disaffected idiots of whom there are too many in the country made a pro-German demonstration there lately? They chose a day when most of the loyal men of the city were away; these fellows were from Dublin, and they made a procession and planned quite a show. But they reckoned without the women...They broke up the procession completely, and the gallant rebels had to be rescued by the police. The women had a great day. I asked one why she didn't leave the matter entirely to the police...she looked at me in scorn and asked why would they accommodate themselves with the

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<sup>44</sup>Bruce, 1916, op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, p.179.

<sup>46</sup>Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, The Blackstaff Press, Dublin, 1996, p. 461.

<sup>47</sup>Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, Eds., *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Melbourne and New York, 1995.

ignorance of policemen? ... After all, some things are managed better without the law.<sup>48</sup>

Fictional recreations of the empire maintained an illusory harmony between imperial nationalities but the Billabong narratives could not transcend the political gap that emerged between Ireland and England in relation to national identity. Ireland facilitated a space for the Linton men to recover from the rigours of war but Mary Grant Bruce could not erase the complexities and divisions of Anglo-Irish imperial history.

A final attempt was made to absorb Ireland into the empire partnership when German spies landed on the O'Neill estate in Donegal.<sup>49</sup> In defending his homeland from the common enemy, Anglo-Irish O'Neill redeemed Ireland through giving his life. He shot at the German submariners only to be mortally wounded himself. The courage of the 'fighting Irish' was manifested by the image of the deformed O'Neill standing as upright as he could, despite infirmity and age, to defend the empire. At the moment of death, he earned the reward of imperial citizen, when:

Something of new beauty crept into the high-bred features; and when he opened his eyes again they were like the smiling eyes of a child. They met Jim's, and the lips smiled too, while his weak hand rested on Norah's head. 'And I worrying', he said, 'because I was out of the war'.<sup>50</sup>

Ireland serviced the empire ideologically and politically through the demonstration of heroism and self-sacrifice. Historical authenticity was critical to rewriting and re-righting Irish identity where it was possible for Mary Grant Bruce to fuse her own family's history through drawing on the personification of the Irish military hero George Evans Bruce to authenticate the Linton pedigree at war. Through this fusion of history, culture and genealogy, Ireland could be recovered through military service to the empire.<sup>51</sup> Ireland's usefulness to the empire ceased when the Lintons returned to England.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid, pp. 179-180.

<sup>49</sup>Could be a reference to Casement's attempts to have German guns offloaded on the Donegal coast in 1916.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, p. 224.

<sup>51</sup>Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World*, HarperCollins Academic, London, 1991; Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994.

### **Back to Billabong**

*Back to Billabong* (1921) was published three years after the First World War. Unlike previous narratives, this novel did not correspond as closely with the histories of the Bruce and Linton families. In fictional time it was assumed that Jim and Wally returned to France after their recuperation in Ireland and served three years there. In the 1921 novel it was learned that Jim Linton had become Major Linton and was awarded three medals. Wally had become a Captain. There was no mention of their war-time experiences nor what occupied the Linton family in London in the years between 1918 and 1921. The novel *Jim and Wally* gave the impression that Norah Linton enjoyed being in Ireland although she had not made friends in Ireland with the same ease as she had with English-born Cecilia Rainham:

The two girls had become sworn friends during the long voyage out, in the close companionship of sharing a cabin—which is a kind of acid test that generally brings out the best—and worst—of travellers.<sup>52</sup>

The welcome home to Australia was a chapter that celebrated the return of the ‘Australian Digger’. Instead of waiting for the city welcome, Jim and Wally only wanted to come home to Billabong:

No music had ever gripped at their heartstrings like the music of the little backblocks band that stood on the gravelled platform at Cunjee and played to welcome them home.<sup>53</sup>

The focus of Norah’s attention in *Back to Billabong* was to restore the Billabong homestead to its pre-war status. During the Lintons’ absence, the homestead had been placed in the trust of the Billabong employees to maintain the family estate. According to Murty, the Lintons had been away for five years.<sup>54</sup> Modernity was to arrive at Billabong. Cars were to replace horse-drawn carriages. Agricultural machinery was to transform physical labour. The telephone added to the technological sophistication of Billabong Australia. The metaphorical building up of the Linton estate coincided with the rebuilding of Australian nationhood in the 1920s as well as with the surge in post-First World War English migration to Australia. Emigrants mostly settled in urban Australia rather than

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<sup>52</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Back to Billabong*, Ward Lock, London, 1921, p. 114.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid*, p. 141.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid*, p. 148.

being dispersed to the 'bush' in search of the Australian dream.<sup>55</sup> Having English emigrants at Billabong was seen as a novelty and as much an incongruity as seeing Norah driving around the Australian 'bush' in the family's Rolls-Royce. Englishness would be transformed through the Linton dogma of hard-work.

The education of the new-chums began next morning, and was carried out thoroughly, since Mr.Linton did not believe in showing their immigrants only the pleasanter side of Australian life.<sup>56</sup>

The physicality of Australian bush life would provide an antidote to counter the softness of town-bred Australians and English immigrants. Town-bred Cecil Linton was an anathema to Australian masculinity and was seen to be 'much more lady-like' than Norah.<sup>57</sup> War service had not expelled Cecil's feminine-like tendencies.

Jim: Even serving in war didn't keep Cecil from manicuring his nails—he gets a polish on them that beats anything I ever saw.

Norah: Never mind—he's got a limp.

Jim: Well, he has. But he limps in a lady-like way...And has no time for Wal and me.<sup>58</sup>

The ultra-masculine bush-bred hero type that differentiated Australian characteristics from English typologies and town-bred masculine deficiencies also had an effect on the fashioning of Australian femininity:

English-born Cecilia: You don't look much like a boy.

Australian-born Norah: No, but I really believe I feel like one — at least I do when I am with Jim and Wally...And when we get back to Billabong it will be just as it always was — we'll be three boys together.<sup>59</sup>

To transform Englishness into the idealised stereotype of Australian femininity meant stripping Cecilia of her feminine name and renaming her as Tommy. Renamed and culturally expunged of her 'little Miss Immigrant' status<sup>60</sup>, the Australian version of femininity would re-emerge at 'The Home on the Creek'. The re-naming of Cecilia's personal identity may go unnoticed as a quirk of Australian slang but, what was suggested, was that Cecilia Rainham voluntarily permitted Norah to re-write her identity. In

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<sup>55</sup>Jupp, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-32.

<sup>56</sup> Bruce, 1921, *op. cit.*, p.158.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, p. 249.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, p. 250.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid, p. 115.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid, p. 247.

ideological terms this transformation neutralised any signs of cultural conflict in Billabong Australia.

The 'home on the creek' was to become the symbol of Tommy's domestication. It signified its newness by being 'fresh, bright and dainty...pleasant and home-like...cool and spotless...fresh-painted walls...shining white tiles...and...dazzling tin-ware'.<sup>61</sup> By erasing English texts of home, and remaking them into companion pieces, made it possible for the Billabong empire to contemplate its success.

Three months later, and Billabong lay in the peace of an exquisite autumn evening...there was utter content upon the face of David Linton, as he stood on the broad stone steps of his home, and looked towards the setting sun. Beyond the garden gleamed the reed-fringed waters of the lagoon; further yet, the broad paddocks stretched away...It was the view, of all others, that he loved—his soul had longed for it during weary years of exile and war. Now, it seemed that he could never tire of it.<sup>62</sup>

Modes of address in the Billabong narratives used simplistic ethno-graphic and gendered characterisations of national identities and cultures. Ireland and Australia emerged as synthetic genealogies to denote Irish allegiance to the British state. George Evans Bruce's military service history was enacted through a unique ecology of fiction and autobiography. In contrast, Evelyn Seton's letters recorded the breakdown of the empire in 1916. Her letters emphasised the fragility of empire iconography whereas Bruce's fictional characters mobilised attempts to shore up the architectural symbols of imperial culture and imperial nationhood.

When providing a 'good recipe for happiness', Mary Grant Bruce's narration of Australian and Irish identity fulfilled the ideological contract to project a unified image of the empire at war. The effect of rewriting and re-righting the national and cultural histories of Ireland, Australia and England voided the problems of self-representation that Evelyn Seton and George Evans Bruce were confronted with as Anglo-Irish nationals. How Irishness was recreated in Australian fictional narratives also underscored the critical problem of locating

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid, pp. 193-194.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, p. 243.

Ireland's agency in British colonial history.<sup>63</sup> Anglo-Irish subjects Evelyn Seton and George Evans Bruce occupied different parts of the political spectrum as far as Mary Grant Bruce's idealised images of Australian nationhood were concerned. Seton's letters suggested that her accounts of empire behaviour in Ireland would be difficult to use as a template of Irish identity for Norah Linton. Masculine templates of empire heroism and sporting prowess fused qualities of Irishness and Australianness to reconfigure idealised ethno-characteristics that functioned as metaphoric protectors of the imperial estate.

Determinations of Australian national identity were reinvented in a complex network of contradictions and ambiguities that were framed by questions of self-representation.<sup>64</sup> While other critics contend that Mary Grant Bruce provided a positive image of Australian girl-hood through the characterisation of Norah Linton, my analysis sought to discover how such an image was made coherent ideologically, socially and culturally.<sup>65</sup> Background texts (such as the Bruce-Seton correspondence) illustrated how these interrelated with ecologies of fear about the type of Irishness that was 'thought to produce...disorder or dis/ease'.<sup>66</sup> The Bruces held to the honour codes of Englishness by ritualising the formalities of 'Anglo-Saxon citizenship' where the 'very word "home"...resonated....in perfect unison with the best and truest notes of happiness...through...authentications of...an endless assurance of quality'.<sup>67</sup> Notions of domesticity mirrored the supreme character of empire.

My consideration of the Billabong homeland has drawn attention to the problem of self-representation from the perspective of an Australian-born daughter of nineteenth-century Irish descent. I have shown how images of home articulate uncertainties of location according to the symbolic genealogy of national cultures. In this chapter, notions of Anglo-Irishness and Australianness were played out in semantic and ideological constructs of United-Kingdom-

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<sup>63</sup>A proposition much disliked by Patrick O'Farrell when characterising the Irish as anti-imperialist. See Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies, Irish History and Culture*, Oxford University Press, England, 2002.

<sup>64</sup>Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, Eds., *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, Ashgate, Aldershot, Burlington USA, Singapore, Sydney, 2002, pp. 3-25 and Leonie Sandercock, 'Difference, Fear and Habitus' in Hillier and Rooksby, Eds., pp. 203- 218.

<sup>65</sup>Alexander, Niall, Loc. cit; Dale Spender, 1988, op. cit., pp. 149, 220, 229-33, 280.

<sup>66</sup>Sandercock, op. cit., p. 203.

<sup>67</sup>Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character 1650-1850*, Oxford University Press Oxford and New York, 2000, p.109.

Australianness were played out in semantic and ideological constructs of United-Kingdom-Australian homogeneity which fictional Billabong preserved. In contrast, the correspondence history showed that imperialising ideologies were not sufficiently persuasive to extinguish the bonds of Anglo-Irish cultural affiliation to Ireland.

In raising questions about the constitution of nationality and culture in the Billabong fiction, it would appear that Mary Grant Bruce articulated her sense of home identity through recreating the military heroics of Anglo-Irish imperialist George Evans Bruce. His presence in the narration of Billabong Australia is a critical one in that he represented an authentic template of Britishness. He was a soldier, an adventurer, a risk-taker, and a man prepared to challenge rules and act on his own authority. His military service in Nigeria authenticated the boy soldier image of the Australian Anzac and its personification in the Linton aesthetic. In her designs of Australian cultural identity and constitution of Australian citizenship in the early part of the twentieth century, Mary Grant Bruce mobilised a gendered metaphorical regime of masculinity, muscles and mateship. The Australian bush, Anglo-Ireland and empire nationalism converged autobiographically and textually to authenticate symbols of identity associated with Australianness. By contrast, in the next chapters, Marie E. J. Pitt represented the radical voice of a socialist poet who challenged images of privilege and elitism popularised in the Billabong dynasty between 1910 and 1940. In these chapters, it will be seen how the iconography of the 'Bog Cottage' sets up a different narrative register of Irish identity in Australia relative to the ways that Marie Pitt negotiated the construct of home in her poetic and political writing.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Not such an endearing charm: Life in the 'Bog Cottage'*

*I hold that hate has also a legitimate place and no human instrument is perfectly strung without its harsher chords...hate is as healthy and wholesome and virile either in individuals or nations as the capacity for loves...without the capacity to hate and sing of hate, the power to love, the song of love would be a lesser thing than it is...*<sup>1</sup>

The unequal relationship between Billabong Australia's world and the status of those Australians excluded from that privileged image of Australian rural society were contextualised by Marie E. J. Pitt's location in Australian society.<sup>2</sup> The presumptive status of Irish Catholicism represented the historical profile that located Marie E.J. Pitt (nee McKeown) as an Australian writer. The hard-edged quotation at the beginning of this chapter provides a background for examining how Pitt developed a rationale of hatred that contributed to her sense of marginalisation. In examining how Marie Pitt articulated her world, I will show how these phases constituted themes of disconnection in Marie Pitt's writing. The three phases of residence—the Gippsland period, 1869 and 1891; the marriage phase in Tasmania, 1891-1905, and the Melbourne period from 1905 to her death in 1948—tie together the significance of exile that Marie Pitt interpreted. Why Marie Pitt would prefer to endorse hatred as a productive methodology of self-expression requires an analysis of the life conditions she experienced and wrote about.<sup>3</sup>

Marie E. J. (Elizabeth Josephine) McKeown was born in the Gippsland gold mining town of Bullumwaal in 1869. Similar to the Fullerton family at Glenmaggie, the McKeown family took up a small selector holding at Wy Yung on the outskirts of the regional town of Bairnsdale. The similarities to Mary Fullerton's emigration history in Australia were evident. Their fathers failed as gold miners. Their childhoods were shaped by poverty and limited social mobility. Both had to work as child labourers on the family selections and suffered from the physical toll of early childhood work. Like Mary Fullerton, Pitt's adult

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<sup>1</sup>Marie J. Pitt's response to Bernard O'Dowd's ideas about Australian society in the *Socialist*, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1912, Pitt Papers, Moir Collection, SLV, MS.

<sup>2</sup>In my discussion on Marie E.J. Pitt, I will be drawing from Colleen Burke's excellent biography and using references from that text where my own research crosses that mentioned by Burke.

<sup>3</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp. 15-18.

life was to be affected by illness. Marie McKeown suffered anaemia and neuralgia. Those formative experiences of an Australian bush childhood were to have a significant influence on Marie McKeown's poetry. Those early years critically framed her politics. Pitt acknowledged them as instrumental in developing her self-reliance and independent thinking.<sup>4</sup>

The socio-cultural similarities between Mary Fullerton's and Marie McKeown's lives in nineteenth-century Gippsland diverged in terms of their engagement with Australian politics. Marie Pitt was an associate of Melbourne-based Irish-Australian feminists and political activists who included Vida Goldstein, Elizabeth Ahern and Mary Fullerton.<sup>5</sup> Vida Goldstein presented another facet of Irish-Australian emigration. Goldstein's father was an Irish-born émigré from County Cork, also the birth-place of the Bruces, whose Irish identity and that of his Australian-born daughter remains a point of interest.<sup>6</sup> While I have argued that the writing of Irish women's identity in Australia has been limited to tropes of criminality and social dysfunction, there is another body of knowledge to be discovered about Jewish-Irish emigrants like the Goldsteins regarding translations of their Irish identity in Australia.<sup>7</sup> The construct of 'home' in this thesis has been adapted to present an alternative analysis of Irish emigrant history by examining the terms of self-representation used by Mary Fullerton, Mary Grant Bruce and Marie Pitt when negotiating their Irish cultural inheritance in their Australian writing.

#### **Locating Marie E. J. Pitt**

The legacy of Marie Pitt's impoverished Irish childhood in rural Gippsland has been offered as the motivation that inspired Pitt's radical poetry.<sup>8</sup> Although acknowledged as having a minor role in the constitution of Australian literature in the early part of the

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<sup>4</sup>P.D. Gardiner, *Five Years of Mountain Echoes*, Ngarak Press, Ensay Australia, 2001.

<sup>5</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp. 15-18.

<sup>6</sup>Jacob Robert Yannasch Goldstein was born in County Cork; the same county where Eyre Lewis Bruce and George Evans Bruce were also born. Born in Ireland in 1839, Goldstein also arrived in Australia in the mid 1850s which also coincided with the emigration histories of Eyre Lewis Bruce, Robert Fullerton and Edward McKeown. Janice N. Brownfoot, 'Goldstein, Vida Jane Mary (1869 - 1949)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1983, pp 43-45; Joy Damousi, *Women Come Rally, Socialism, Communism and Gender In Australia, 1890-1955*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

<sup>7</sup>Dixon, op. cit., pp. 153-155.

<sup>8</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp. 1-3, 19, 40-41, 67.

twentieth century, Marie Pitt's contribution to Australia has remained largely in the shadows of more prominent women activists and writers. Dale Spender acknowledged the problem of anonymity as an ambiguous category of 'The major role of the minor writers' where that designation has indirectly reinforced a second-order status of literary and cultural value to such writers'.<sup>9</sup>

Marie E. J. Pitt arrived on the Australian literary scene in the early 1900s. She was a local Gippsland writer from Bairnsdale whose poems were published in the regional newspaper, the *Bairnsdale Advertiser*.<sup>10</sup> She wrote for the *Bulletin* between 1900 to 1933 on contemporary political issues, and particularly, criticism of Australia's slavish support of the empire.<sup>11</sup> The 'Ode to the Fatman' (1900) was a derisive parody of Australia's involvement in the Boer War.<sup>12</sup> Four anthologies of poetry were published from articles written for the *Bulletin* newspaper and *The Socialist* journal. These were *Horses of the Hills* (1911); *Bairnsdale and other Poems* (1922); *The Poems of Marie E. J. Pitt* (1925) and *Selected Poems of Marie E. J. Pitt* (1944).

### **Beginnings**

The Gippsland phase of residence (1869-1891) is an appropriate starting point to examine the constitution of home-space and home-place in Pitt's writing. The weight of cultural stereotypes and characterisations of Catholic Irishness in nineteenth-century discourses appeared to have had significant bearing on Marie Pitt's subjective positioning of Australian nationality and identity. In using the antithetical metaphor of 'Bog Cottage' as a counter image of the 'Big House', social and cultural meanings of the 'Bog Cottage', and its etymological and cultural history, require unpacking to understand the resonances of displacement in Pitt's Australian landscape poetry. In nineteenth-century Anglo discourse, Irish bog lands were perceived as places of fear, 'mystery and terrifying inscrutability'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Spender, op. cit., pp. 200-217.

<sup>10</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp. 12-13..

<sup>11</sup>The Sydney published *Bulletin* gave rise to the literary development of writers and poets such as Henry Lawson, Christopher Brennan, Bernard O'Dowd, Steele Rudd, Joseph Furphy who are anthologised as Australian nationalist writers. Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Ed., Op. Cit., Ken Stewart, Ed., *Australian Literature and Literary Culture*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1996.

<sup>12</sup> *The Bulletin*, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1900, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup>Willia Murphy, 'Maria Edgeworth and the Aesthetic of Secrecy' in Tadgh Foley and Seán Ryder, Eds., op. cit., p. 46.

Bogs were dark and primitive.<sup>14</sup> To the English cultural aesthetic, Ireland was ‘a place which delights one by its actual sensual beauty...and while containing...some unique and an almost impersonal charm...was...unwritable [sic].<sup>15</sup> The ‘bog’ was a powerfully laden stereotype associated with Irish primitivism. In the nineteenth century Irish bogs had to be transformed to improve the land so that its inhabitants could be liberated from ‘primeval ooze’.<sup>16</sup> Not only were Irish boglands symptomatic of Irish dysfunction, they represented the antithesis of modernity, progress and civil society. They were seen as a threat to English political rule and haunted the imperial imagination as places of infamy and lawlessness. In Australian discourses stereotypical ‘bog’ Irish characteristics have been associated with ‘mob’ traits of clan collectivism, social excess, poor work ethic and other dysfunctional elements.<sup>17</sup> Australian media circa 1888 also mobilised stereotypical memes of the ‘Bog’ to characterise derogatory images of Irish class identity.<sup>18</sup>

### **The legacy of the bog**

The inheritors of the Irish bog cottage found that their lives did not significantly alter when they migrated to Australia.<sup>19</sup> The McKeown family followed the gold trail to Gippsland and settled temporarily in the small mining settlement of Bulumwaal (Boggy Creek) where Marie Pitt was born in 1869.<sup>20</sup> From gold-mining to farming in rural Gippsland, Edward McKeown failed the project of transforming the confines of the Irish bog cottage into the egalitarian image of Billabong Australia. The McKeown property at Wy Yung (also known

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<sup>14</sup>Anonymous, *A Looking-glass for a Tory, or, The Bogg-Trotter's Glory*, London, 1682, 2p. Duke University Library, L3015. Early English Books, Chadwick-Healey <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/about/about.htm> [Accessed 12.8.2006].

<sup>15</sup>Anne Thackeray Ritchie, ‘Introduction’, in Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, 1895 Edition. Electronic text sourced from The Project Gutenberg Ebook, Release Date: February 18, 2006 [EBook #1424]. [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org) [Accessed: 3.7.2006].

<sup>16</sup>Kate Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, USA, 1997, pp. 42-43.

<sup>17</sup>Dixson, op. cit., pp. 153-155.

<sup>18</sup>Simon Caterson, ‘Irish-Australian attitudes’ in *Quadrant*, Volume 48, Number 11, 2004 [online at <http://find.galegroup.com.ez.proxy.lib.monash.edu.au/its/informark.do&contentSet=IAC> [Accessed 19.4.2006].

<sup>19</sup>1851- All Ireland Census, Public Records of Northern Ireland (PRONI).County Armagh is located in Northern Ireland. When the McKeowns lived there, Armagh would have been considered Irish, not Ulster-Irish, Northern Irish, or British-Irish.

<sup>20</sup>Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2002.

as Doherty's Corner) was located on a poorly selected piece of land was subjected to the vagaries of flooding from the Mitchell River. Life in Australia was fated to drudgery and hard work with little chance of moving beyond the lowly caste status associated with Irish Catholics. Edward McKeown lived up to the stereotype of 'Irish' non-conformity. He saw compulsory state school education as an "interference of the liberty of the subject" and was prepared to pay fines for his children's non-attendance rather than losing them as valuable agricultural labour.<sup>21</sup> Further, Edward McKeown demonstrated habits most commonly associated with the 'Bog Irish', those being, a 'partiality for whisky...and...horses'.<sup>22</sup> Whether Edward McKeown was aware that his non-conformity reinforced the stereotype of 'bog' Irish is unknown. His unpredictability may have been a sign of psychological and social dysfunction in an isolated region where relatively few Irish emigrants settled.<sup>23</sup>

The Gippsland period of 1869 -1891 was an important reference of socio-cultural identity that gave rise to Marie Pitt's doctrine of hatred. An impoverished childhood at Doherty's Corner established the signs of alienation associated with the social and cultural connotations of the 'Bog Irish' in Australian cultural discourses. Seasonal flooding of the family farm reinforced the precariousness of living in Australia. In winter:

The monotonous drumming of falling rain...filled our ears for days...Far off the river heaved its foaming spate through the calm brown waters of the inland sea...the floodwater cut off all supplies from the people of Doherty's Corner.<sup>24</sup>

The young Marie McKeown remembered how she first perceived social displacement. She was a 'skinny lanky little wretch who was looked at askance somehow...and noted that...I seemed to be a piece that wouldn't fit in'.<sup>25</sup> She also faced the stigma of class and social inferiority that neither the fictional centre-piece at Billabong nor the author Mary Grant Bruce could relate to.

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<sup>21</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp. 1-14.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Hal Porter, *Bairnsdale: Portrait Of An Australian Country Town*, Memorial Edition, John Ferguson, Sydney, 1985.

<sup>24</sup>Pitt in Burke, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, p. 12.

Metaphors of domesticity are intimately bound to gendered and ethnic spaces of identity.<sup>26</sup> It was shown in the previous chapters how Australia's national character merged traits of identity with the symbolism of lowly selector huts and isolated selector settlements such as Gippsland.<sup>27</sup> When illustrating the difference between the Billabong version of Australia and its replication of the grand Anglo-Irish house, this image of domesticity signified an iconic commemoration of a 'golden era...of aestheticism and patriotism...that signified...the loveliness of England'. In contrast, the 'bog cottage' at Doherty's Corner constituted an opposing view.<sup>28</sup> Doherty's Corner was a space that radiated immobility in terms of its location in the metaphorical landscape of Australian settlement narratives.<sup>29</sup> According to Gaston Bachelard's theories of space and domesticity, corners represent a paradoxical absence and negation. Those living in the corner are literally banished. They conceptualise their 'presence' through terms of disassociation. Hence corner dwellers interpret their relationship to the landscape differently and relay that feeling of abandonment in negative or pejorative language.

All those who live in corners... characterize...the dialectics of full and empty...and...correspond to two geometrical non-realities. The function of inhabiting constitutes the link between full and empty...from the depths of...the...corner, the dreamer remembers...the mere fact of having been forgotten, abandoned in a corner...A gloomy life, or a gloomy person, marks an entire universe with more than just a pervading coloration. Even things become crystallizations of sadness, regret or nostalgia...where...the world is not so much a noun as an adjective.<sup>30</sup>

Relegation to the corner means an extreme form of exclusion which shapes 'our selves, our bodies and...emotions.'<sup>31</sup> To assume that Pitt's statement about the paradoxical productivity of hatred was irrational and emotive excludes the manner in which psycho-spatial dynamics of corners correlate with perceptions and feelings of lower valued self-and-social identity.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Bachelard, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>27</sup>Kelsall, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, p. 161.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, Bachelard, p. 137.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, pp. 140, 142-143.

<sup>31</sup>Deborah Lupton, *The Emotional Self: A Socio-Cultural Exploration*, Sage Publications, London, 1998, p.166.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, pp. 1-30.

### **Rising from the bog?**

In poetic allegory Marie McKeown Pitt could escape the confinement of Doherty's Corner by transforming the degraded landscape into a Celtic wonder-land. The poem 'Doherty's Corner' permitted this imaginative escape by connecting with the topographies of Celtic folk-lore where 'little people...Under the darkened hillside...Sing...the world to sleep!'<sup>33</sup> In this imagined way, Gippsland landscapes were similar to Ireland's but at the same time alien to Irish fantasy tropes. Although sharing characteristics of greenness, Gippsland's mountain ranges were portrayed as 'strange green hills... with...alien faces...that...stilled the heart of the singing forest...and...stolen her fairies too'.<sup>34</sup> In the imaginative spaces of the Celtic fairy world, the poet-narrator invoked Celtic mythology in drawing from images of 'pipes of Faery playing together / Down by the old lagoon' so that it these would appear to manufacture a sense of symmetry between Ireland and Australia.<sup>35</sup> The poet-narrator recognised the difficulties of connecting to Ireland and the Celtic world. The reality of settlement life was accompanied by the destruction of the Australian landscape. The 'old black log and bracken' signified settler destruction. While Celtic mythology may have helped to recover an imagined synthesis of landscape spaces, its potency had been diminished by 'the years...half-forgotten' since the family's arrival in Australia.<sup>36</sup>

The final stanza of the poem attempted to resolve these dislocated landscape images by reaching into the mythological traditions of English culture. The place of 'Avalon' in English cultural history was symbolised in Arthurian legend and in chivalric myths of romance and heroism.<sup>37</sup> However, Celtic symbolism and legend and borrowings from English and Irish cultural meanings could not be placed in the representational topography of a destroyed Australian landscape. 'Hill Ghosts' was another example where Marie Pitt crossed into imaginative and topographical landscapes of Scottish places to reference her place in Australia. This poem was written while Pitt was living in Tasmania between 1891 and 1905 but it illustrated the problematic modes of self-representation used to describe

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<sup>33</sup>Marie Pitt, 'Doherty's Corner', 1927 in Burke, op. cit., p.77 and *Bulletin*, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1924, p. 47.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 77.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, p. 78.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Alan Lupack, *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2005.

Australia. Fingal and South Esk were Scottish place names. Fingal and Malahide were Irish-Celtic anthropological sites but were not metaphorically useful place names when applied to describe Australia's topography. Those place names had more in common with 'old Fingal...a world away'.<sup>38</sup> Remnant traces of Irish and Scottish culture were embedded reference points to locate Pitt's Australian identity. She was a proficient writer of Scots border dialect and comfortable with moving between Celtic cultural registers. Those cultural traces were significant and meaningful to Pitt's sense of place in the Australian context. The poem was suggestive of the remaking of Australian-born-Irish emigrant identity through the retention of those cultural markers.<sup>39</sup> The first verse of the poem reads:

There's a wind that cries in the hills today  
(Fingal, Fingal, and the low mists creeping!)  
And it's O for South Esk under skies of gray...  
South Esk and the brown trout leaping!<sup>40</sup>

If approached as an example of Australian poetic writing, the topographical signifiers and semantic markers here are different to those used to describe the Australian 'bush'. The repetitive motifs of brown trout leaping in the South Esk river are images familiar to the old country's cultural tastes. The simple rhyme and uncomplicated language could describe a Scottish highland scene in ballad form; however, the subject of the poem is somewhat obscure. The second stanza describes a love scene where 'Robin...jerkined in scarlet feather; was...Trysting there with his dear wee bride'. Because of the obscurity of the subject in this poem, this poem expresses a sense of disconnection between the language registers of Scottish and English cultural histories and in Pitt's adaptation of Scots, Irish and English cultural symbols to rewrite the Australian landscape.<sup>41</sup> What can be detected are synonyms of homelessness that diaspora consciousness has been theorised to represent. These stanzas reflect that emigrant voice:

Only we have left our places  
Desolate and cold,  
Only we have turned our faces

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<sup>38</sup>Pitt in Burke, op. cit., pp. 107-108.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 107.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, pp. 107-108.

From the glades of gold;  
Seeking for the things that perished,  
Lights that failed afar.

So we journey half forgetting, there are fairies still  
Where the little winds are fretting  
Round the hollow hill.<sup>42</sup>

The 'Mathinna' poem also shared the same tendency to over-write the topographical landscape of Tasmania by superimposing Scottish highland geography.<sup>43</sup> In Pitt's poetic geography, Mathinna was located 'Behind Ben Lomond's purple head'.<sup>44</sup> The 'Mathinna' poem is undistinguishable from landscape images familiar to Scotland's 'glen and gorge...All wild and red and thunder-fed'.<sup>45</sup> The last stanza reads:

I turned me from the mountains tall;  
Behind me distance built her wall;  
But still I hear thee call and call —  
The sweetest, saddest voice of all—  
I hear thee call, Mathinna.<sup>46</sup>

The landscape symmetry in the last stanza abruptly shifts in reference to an anonymous identity whose 'sweetest, saddest voice of all' penetrated the poetic scene. This poem has drawn attention to place and the history of race relations in Tasmania. While Pitt was referring to a gold-mining town in Tasmania, the name-sake Mathinna could be traced to colonial practices of removing Aboriginal people from their homelands. Mathinna was an Aboriginal child from South Western Tasmania whose people were relocated to Flinders Island under the Robinson policies of the 1830s. Mathinna came to the attention of Governor John Franklin's wife when they visited Flinders Island in 1838. In 1840 five-year-old Mathinna was taken into care so she could be trained in the etiquette of civilisation by Lady Franklin. Mathinna became a celebrity in colonial Hobart. Artist Thomas Bock painted her portrait.<sup>47</sup> Lady Franklin kept a diary of Mathinna's progress.

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<sup>42</sup>Stanzas 2 and 3 and final 'The Faery' p. 38 of 121.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, pp.119-120. First appeared in the *Bulletin*, 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1913, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid, pp. 107-108.

<sup>45</sup>Loc.cit.

<sup>46</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>47</sup>Thomas Bock (1793-1855) and his son Alfred Bock (1835-1920) were among a number of artists who painted and sketched scenes from colonial life in Tasmania. The Bock collection is stored at the State

The Franklins returned to England in 1843 but left Mathinna at the Queen's Orphan School in Hobart. Mathinna was returned to Flinders Island in 1844 but her parents had died. She was readmitted to the orphanage in 1847. Her life ended in 1856 at twenty one years of age as a result of an accidental drowning from alcohol abuse.<sup>48</sup> While not directly a critique of colonial practices or those of settler-Indigenous relations, there was some recognition that the 'sweetest, saddest voice' gave a glimpse of Australian colonial history.

Dust is the white rose by the door  
And dust the scarlet poppy core,  
But thou wilt breathe for evermore  
On winds of some enchanted shore  
Red rose of dreams- Mathinna. [Final stanza]

It is difficult to resolve whether Pitt reconstructed Mathinna's story to voice her own social displacement.<sup>49</sup> The poem 'A West Coast Silhouette' indicated Pitt's disenchantment at being forced to remain isolated in this geographical corner, where:

A bleak Sou'wester screaming without,  
Hard through the "horizontal" scrub,  
Like the sibilant hissing of angry snakes  
- O it comes back like a song to my brain:  
I hear the thresh of the spiteful hail.  
O, children of softer climes  
You that welcome the violets  
You, fenced afar with the glad, green years  
From the stress and struggle of iron coasts  
What should you know of the spears of sleet  
Stabbing the skin and pricking the veins  
And biting the bone as the axe-blade bites.<sup>50</sup>

Her poetic engagements with place seemed to suggest some difficulties with finding a counter-intuitive language of landscape aesthetics to express the sense of disconnection she felt in the Australian landscape. Replicated place names from Scotland offered the possibilities of adapting metaphors of place associated with the old country's topography

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Library of Tasmania. Adrienne Eberhard, *Jane, Lady Franklin*, Black Pepper Publishing, North Fitzroy, 2004.

<sup>48</sup>Nan Chauncy, *Mathinna's People*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967.

<sup>49</sup>Pitt in Burke, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>50</sup>Pitt, 'A West Coast Silhouette' in *Selected Poems*, Lothian Publishing Company, Melbourne and Sydney, 1944. Reproduced by SETIS, University of Sydney Electronic Text Collection, New South Wales, 2002, p. 14 of 121. <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/oz/texts> [Accessed: 3.7.2006].

so that Pitt could make sense of Australian landscape imagery. Phases of residence in rural Tasmania and in Gippsland framed a paradoxical love-hate relationship with Australia that would later find inspiration in socialist politics. Her later poetry was to become more vehement and was illustrative of the paradoxes of hatred and creativity that Pitt used when writing about Australia's industrial and social landscapes.

### **Syndromes of hatred**

The Gippsland phase of childhood and young womanhood set up topographical landscapes that Marie Pitt would later deploy in her attacks on the conservative world of Australian privilege. Marie McKeown (Pitt) was deeply affected by the stigma of birth circumstance. The bog lands of Gippsland did not easily transform into a Celtic fairyland in poetic allegory. Pitt used domestic topography at the McKeown selection in Doherty's Corner to express the problematic rewriting of Irish identity references in her Australian writing.

There are no fairies at Doherty's Corner,  
Where dusky spider orchids and wild white daisies grew;  
Time that stilled the heart of the singing forest  
Has stolen the fairies too.

Poverty prevented the McKeowns from attaining their social destinies. Nature was seen to conspire with the elements that created their enslavement. The poem 'The Reiver' was an analogy of Pitt's precarious connection to Australia. It was narrated through dramatic images of evil rising out of the river like 'a ruthless slayer ready to smite' despite all human efforts to stem the flood tide. Once aroused from its 'straightened bed' the river mutated into the image of a biblical charioteer riding 'a craft...with never a light' and steered by 'the man at her wheel...Pilot Death'.<sup>51</sup> The 'Reiver' tossed aside 'the sludge-bar...That gapes like a skeleton's sundered ribs' to triumphantly continue its 'death-dirge roll' across the river flats. After each flood, the bog lands had to be cleaned up and made habitable. This was the toll extracted each time the river flooded.

Plunder, full plunder of horn and hoof,  
Of torn green tresses and whitening bone,  
And a darker tribute, deep housed aloof  
Where the vespering pines on the hillside moan,  
Man, beast and bird, and the twisted bole—

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<sup>51</sup>'The Reiver' Ibid, p. 82. First appeared in the *Bulletin*, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1913, p. 14.

So the reiver takes toll, takes toll!<sup>52</sup>

In comparison to the Bruce reinvention of the Anglo-Irish estate in Australia where the river and the creek symbolised leisure and pleasure and a space for reflection and recovery, Pitt recorded images of destruction. Life on the Gippsland selection at Wy Yung catalogued local events in pioneer settler history opposed to images of an egalitarian and socially mobile collective. To illustrate, Bruce's prose writing exemplified privilege, social mobility and the capacity to have complete control over the Billabong land and its occupants. Pitt's poetic writing articulated the opposite. Life at Doherty's Corner characterised poverty, despair, depression and fear. Poems such as 'Wy Yung', 'Bairnsdale', 'Suggan Boggin', and 'Old Hop Kilns' recorded the McKeown's contribution to Gippsland's agricultural economy but Pitt's poetic realism was at odds with idealised images of Australian society that Bruce represented.<sup>53</sup> In the Bruce narratives, water was associated with leisure and pleasure and a natural source of reinvigoration and restoration. In the Pitt poem, water was the enemy. Seasonal flooding meant a re-making of the flimsy selector hut when the family was rendered homeless. Living in such a precarious environment exemplified an unsettled relationship with the Australian landscape.

Although Marie Pitt thought herself as 'the child of mother bush', and that the 'winds and waters and all wild things' instilled her poetic creativity, her Gippsland poems suggested a problematic negotiation of that landscape.<sup>54</sup> The 'Wy Yung' poem related to an Aboriginal place name that eluded the cultural and linguistic topographies of Celtic fairyland. First of all, it was located 'Over the edge of the world...Beyond the ridge of Never Forget...Where curlews call and the reed-beds shiver'.<sup>55</sup> Wy Yung was a ghost-like phenomenon that had made 'Change on the grey land...work...his will...and...a spectre...that stalks through the

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<sup>52</sup>Loc.Cit. The spelling of 'river' as 'reiver' may be a translation of her parent's respective dialects. Dymphna Lonergan, *Sounds Irish: The Irish Language in Australia*, Lythrum Press, Adelaide, 2004.

<sup>53</sup>Known as Suggan Buggan and located in East Gippsland / Snowy Mountain ranges between the Victorian and New South Wales borders. Wy Yung was a small settlement of farms adjacent to the Mitchell River. Bruthen and Bairnsdale are approximately 350 kilometres east of Melbourne at the foot of Snowy Mountain country. The poems, 'Wy Yung', 'Bairnsdale', and 'Suggan Boggin' appeared in the *Bulletin*, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1918, p. 3, and formed part of a collection of poems written for the Back to Bairnsdale Committee, 1922. They were later anthologised in *Bairnsdale and Other Poems*, 1922.

<sup>54</sup>Pitt, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1941 in Burke, op. cit. p. 12.

<sup>55</sup>Pitt 'Wy Yung' in SETIS, 2002, p. 57 of 121.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

dappled maize / Where dead flags rustle and tassels quiver'.<sup>56</sup> The distinctively named 'Suggan Boggin', 'Hidden far from human ken / And the kindly feet of men' was conceptualised as a 'House of Terror...where...Strange wild things without a name...creep...down...Spectre footed of the past...Shapeless, voiceless....Moving, moving all about...When the candle-bright went out'.<sup>57</sup>

The 'Suggan Boggin' poem was resistant to the transformation of Celtic fantasy. Terror and fear were attributed to that 'Strong, and terrible and strange' place.<sup>58</sup> As Paul Gardiner has argued, Gippsland settlers were very secretive about disclosing their part in the killing or removal of Aboriginal tribes. There were hints of a massacre of Aborigines at Suggan Buggan in a settler's diary of 1850. Reprisal attacks by squatters were common when settler expansion forced Aboriginal tribes out of the mountain areas of East Gippsland. The inferences of terror in the Suggan Boggin poem may have been referring to the possibility that this site was a place of massacre.<sup>59</sup> Pitt described it as a:

House of Terror when there came  
Strange wild things without a name  
Creeping down from Suggan Boggin  
When the tempest swept the hill  
Fierce things plucked the window-sill  
Fierce things known of Suggan Boggin.

Semantic markers such as the repeated exclamation mark after 'Suggan Boggin!' and images of 'shapeless wild things...moving, moving all about' draw the reader's attention to the notion that a ghost-like haunting has been retained in settler memory. Although unable to be fully articulated, the reference to this place has remained written 'on the white page' of Australian cultural history. Each stanza reverberates the black character of the poem when the 'Black Mountain' revealed when 'Years o'night the lonely wind....Told me tales

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid, p. 28 of 121.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Gardiner, *Gippsland Massacres: The Destruction of the Kurnai Tribe, 1800-1860*, West Gippsland and Latrobe Community Centre, 1983, Marguerita Stephens, 'White Without Soap: Philanthropy of Caste and Exclusion in Colonial Victoria 1835-1888—A Political Economy of Race', Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History, The University of Melbourne, 2003.

<sup>59</sup>Could not substantiate whether this poem was a factual recollection of an Aboriginal massacre at Suggan Buggan (contemporary name) in Gippsland.

of Suggan Boggin'.<sup>60</sup> Pitt's poem suggested a distinct uneasiness about having to represent dark spaces associated with the pre-history of Gippsland.

### **Returning home**

The 'Hill' poem was written to commemorate Pitt's return to the family selection and was selected from the *Bairnsdale Poems* anthology published in 1922.

I went one day of days that pass  
To seek the house called "Home",  
And there was only green grass  
And Heaven's high dome.<sup>61</sup>

The eighteen stanzas of this poem set out stages in the emigrant journey associated with the McKeown family history on the Mitchell River flood plains at Wy Yung north of Bairnsdale. The transplanted garden had become 'a forgotten, forgotten place...where...the Christmas lilies...and...dark rosemarye...rose...and...pear tree...have...all gone—gone!'<sup>62</sup> Pitt strove to recreate a vista where 'I watched the angels dancing...On long waves of gold'.<sup>63</sup> Read together with another poem titled, 'A House', the house 'that was "home" yesterday...met... me with a mute reproach'.<sup>64</sup> Like the ruins she saw before her, the remains of the house were entrapped with memories suspended 'between the midmurk and the gray...where...Thy last fire dwindled to a sullen spark'.<sup>65</sup>

And slow, reluctant as expiring hope,  
Thy last lamp died and left us in the gloom,  
To-morrow stranger feet shall come and go,  
And alien shadows fall across thy door.<sup>66</sup>

Although the Pitt Gippsland poems may appear to be over-sentimental and dramatic in tone, I am not as concerned with their literary evaluation as with the need to examine how Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent represented their identity. One of my criticisms of historical accounts of the Irish in Australia is that Irish identity was not fully given its measure in Australian cultural history because of

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<sup>60</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>61</sup>Pitt 'The Hill' in SETIS, op. cit., p. 82 of 121.

<sup>62</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>63</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>64</sup>Pitt, 'A House' in SETIS, ibid. p. 45 of 121.

<sup>65</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>66</sup>Loc.cit.

associations of dysfunction or nostalgia. I do not want to invest Pitt's poetry with disabling tropes.

Desires to find home in Marie Pitt's poetic responses to Australian landscape imagery were idealised in the poetic / balladic allegory of neo-Celticism. How Pitt expressed her relationship to Australia seemed to suggest that her energies were generated through a psycho-cultural mode of melancholia that also was manifested in William Butler Yeats's interpretation of Irish history. He described how Irish history had alienated his feelings about Ireland to the extent that its legacy was manifested as a "Great hatred...maimed us at the start...from where...I carry from my mother's womb / A fanatic heart".<sup>67</sup> In this instance it could be seen how Irish history was intimately bound to self-identity. While not sharing the same geographical spaces, Pitt articulated the paradoxes of Australian history in terms of the iconography of Australian 'nationhood and the phenomenology of corner-dweller intimately bound up with Pitt's marginalised social status. Instead of celebrating the mythical promise of wealth and happiness that Australian nationhood eulogised, hatred was predominant in Marie Pitt's writing strategies. Gippsland provided the training ground for deploying the rhetorical power of hatred to demonstrate how poverty and little opportunity for social and economic advancement shaped an underprivileged Australian society. The Tasmanian phase elaborated Pitt's political engagement with a socio-economic order that consigned lives to be lived out of sight and in corners such as those from the 'Bog Cottage'. Hatred and hope represented antithetical responses used by Marie Pitt in her role of radical political poet during her phase of residence in Tasmania.

### **The marital home**

When Marie McKeown married and left for the West Tasmanian goldmines, she inherited the ideological mantle that propelled Edward McKeown's migration to Australia. From an impoverished childhood to the roles of mining wife and motherhood in the Tasmanian period, Marie Pitt developed a more sophisticated way to use the motivational logic of hatred to challenge social inequality, gender discrimination, class hatred and the

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<sup>67</sup>William Butler Yeats in Thomas Whitaker, *Swan and Shadow: Yeats's Dialogue with History*, Catholic University of America Press, 1988, p. 160.

exploitation of Australia's working-class.<sup>68</sup> The Tasmanian period would generate an uncompromising political attack on the myths of homogeneous Australian society.

She became part of a community of a like-minded marginalised under-class of Australians. Pitt became Vice-President of the Workers Political Association at the Mathinna mine and took on the role of advocate and critic of mining conditions. She has been credited as the driving force behind publicity campaigns about miners' rights and was instrumental in galvanising Labor support for the election of local Queenstown Labor politician George Burns to the Tasmanian parliament in 1903.<sup>69</sup> If worker politics were signified by connotations of 'mateship', Pitt identified how that colloquial symbol of egalitarianism represented an excluded class of people based on the interests of capital and property rather than social and class equality. If Australian mateship was meant to represent egalitarianism, Pitt vehemently denounced this supposition.

The Great Lie Press goes to some trouble to preach the brotherhood of man, and more particularly the brotherhood of Capital and Labor...the Reptile Press...is a pure-bred relation of the great mongrel...so full of malignant venom that it sloughs its mask and appears in its naked ugliness, a social adder, whose head is bruised, but whose back is not yet broken...Workers usually get injured by the machines they use, it says, in a voice of astonishment...it requires a strong mental effort to deduce from the expression of surprise that the statement is incorrect, and that it is the poor, weary, overworked Capitalist, who lays his life down on the machine.<sup>70</sup>

Marie Pitt found a legitimate way to express her hatred through her roles in the Tasmanian Labor movement. She endured the tragedies of mining life and wrote about its dangers and the 'incessant dirge...of...the grinding gear...when...the siren shrieks at the change of shifts...for...‘more blood!’—‘more blood!’<sup>71</sup> Death appeared to be an economic inconvenience to mine owners because they believed that 'men were cheaper than timber'.<sup>72</sup>

The Australia that Marie Pitt wrote about was locked in class apathy and the incompatibility of labour-capitalist relations. Political attack was warranted to raise

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<sup>68</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp.15-23.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>70</sup>Marie Pitt, 'Capital's Real Attitude to Labor', *Socialist*, 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1912, *ibid*, Burke, p. 32.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid, pp. 21-22.

political and social awareness about the toll of fatal accidents and disease. Instead of the lyrical balladry of earlier landscape poems, the language register had to be different from the aesthetic lyricism of bush balladry. This hard and uncompromising counter-language neither disguised nor constrained its vehemence about social inequality. The poem 'Anathema' was consistent with Pitt's philosophy of the paradoxical creativity of hatred:

*Anathema*

Silent, all silent! To your tasks, ye boors  
And human clods that grovel in the dust  
And serve Oppression for her bitter bread!  
Blind, bloodless worms with senses dull as lead!  
Spawn of starvation and the Spoiler's lust,  
The earth is cursed! —and only Greed endures.<sup>73</sup>

In speaking out against the tyrannies of the world, Marie Pitt risked being criticised for being too bellicose in her strident propaganda attacks against Australian society, but by releasing the paradoxical creativity of hatred, she could communicate the antithesis of belonging, that being exclusion.

The Tasmanian period brought different rhetorical responses to interpretations of the Tasmanian landscape. The West Coast provided a palette for the poet to dream. The natural beauty of mountain wilderness could be appreciated when cherished fragments of summer warmth allowed diminutive slivers of self-reflection.

Almost as though a wizard waved his hand, one feels it coming- an indefinable lightness and sweetness- a new presence...little more than a breathing space that dreams above the world...scarcely a zephyr lifts the leaves and the grim old sentinel peaks are swathed in a fairy gossamer...suggesting exquisite peace saved for the eagle poised on motionless wings high above the valley to seaward.<sup>74</sup>

The uplifting mood of 'fairy gossamer...and...zephyr breeze' changed abruptly with seasonal change when the 'damp seawind and the stealthy fog...wraps... everything in its melancholy mantle'. The hovering eagle broke the illusion of serenity. As an allegory of predation, the eagle symbolised the 'other' Australia hidden by the panorama of natural wilderness. Under the ground was an inferno where men and machine stripped the earth of

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<sup>73</sup>Marie Pitt 'Anathema' in Paul Gardner, 'Marie E. J. Pitt, (1869-1948)' <http://www.takver.com/history/index.htm>, October 2002, np. [Accessed: 3.7.2006].

<sup>74</sup>Ibid, p. 18.

her treasures ‘at the cost of all that makes human comfort’.<sup>75</sup> Beneath the pristine images of the West Coast highlands, miners toiled to tunnel ‘the rocky ribs of the world above the clouds’. This combination of prose and poetic imagery indicated how Pitt’s reading of the Australian landscape was allegorically at odds with the ‘bush’ sentimentality of nineteenth century representations of Australian life. Marie Pitt’s interpretations of Australian society were not attuned aesthetically to idealisations of national self-portraiture.

The task of Pitt’s radical poetry was to raise awareness in a relatively apathetic Australian society that appeared to be closed to the sufferings of others. An uncaring Australia had the effect of creating an internal sense of disconnection with broader Australia because in Pitt’s view, social inequality directly correlated with the lack of human dignity. In the poem ‘Discontent’ Pitt literally hurled epithets against the walls of privilege and power.

Of beauty one shall sing,  
Another Love shall praise,  
As Faith or Fancy wing,  
Or Fashion-flight essays.  
I strike the lyre she lent  
My dame of willful ways —  
My Lady Discontent.<sup>76</sup>

In another poem titled ‘The Enslavement’ Pitt could see how Australian society had failed its purpose.

Rail not a Mammon, helots of today,  
Nor curse Bellona, goddess of the sword,  
Nor Tryanny, of Toil meet overlord:  
This is your covenant – “you must obey!”  
Under its ban you helot-mothers lay;  
Your sires, slave-born to slave-mothers, poured  
The glutton’s win, or cringed for bed and board:  
Why murmur then? And whence your blank dismay?

In the poem ‘Society’ she wrote that Australian society symbolised an ‘OBUBBLE blown on rotting sons of Crime!’. Pitt’s antithetical stance to her Australian homeland suggest how the psychological impact of industrial brutality and poverty experienced during the Gippsland and Tasmanian periods had such an unsettling effect. Celtic bardic traditions and

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<sup>75</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>76</sup>Pitt, ‘Discontent’ in Burke, op. cit., p.123.

folk elements from Scottish and English traditions were merged into reactive and provocative ensembles designed to rupture Australia's apathetic silence. The final stanza of the poem 'Discontent' appealed to Australia's writers to light the 'daze...for...Poor souls in bondage pent' to advance a more compassionate humanity.<sup>77</sup> As the poet-bard, she walked a lonely road:

*I am — poetry*

All men see me even though they are blind. All men hear me even though they be deaf. All men speak to me even though they be dumb...I am poetry!—whom poets speak of cunningly, not always perceiving the truth whose law I am...they make images of me according to their comprehension—dressing them with the fabrics of their fancy...Assonance and dissonance, syncopation and *vers libre* are some of the materials that they jumble with such consummate confusion as to baffle the elite. And to the forum come the critics, dressed in much solemnity and great show of wisdom, and they pass certain judgements...dip your pens in the blood of your own hearts—and write, because ye must, of that thing ye have found.<sup>78</sup>

Pitt was not a devoid social commentator whose writing identity was solely shaped by vitriolic poetry. An emerging philosophy of hope can be detected in the manifesto titled 'Credo'.

Let misers keep their god, kings keep their power,  
 And petty princelings hug the chains of pride,  
 I claim no part or place within the train  
 Of pageantry, or aught that pageant gives—  
 Nor join in vain Te Deums o'er the slain...  
 But in the larger life which circles all,  
 Shall keep mine own from me, or steal withal...  
 My right to live, not to myself alone;  
 My right to toil for which others share;  
 My right to bring Truth's white altar stone  
 My right to oneness with the souls that dare...  
 To lead the listless listless legions of despair...  
 Let misers keep their gold—my gold is Love.<sup>79</sup>

In speaking out against tyranny in Australian society, the poet's dream was threatened by the greed of capitalism and the apathy of egalitarianism. The Tasmanian landscape poems—'Ballade of Autumn', 'Autumn in Tasmania', 'A West Coast Silhouette', 'Ballade

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<sup>77</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>78</sup>Pitt in Burke, *ibid*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>79</sup>Extracts from the poem 'Credo' SETIS electronic text 2002.

of Bitter Memories', 'Mountain Myrtle', and 'The West Coasters'—constituted a repertoire of images that theoretically correlates with Bachelard's phenomenology of negation.<sup>80</sup> This fascination was apparent in the 'Ballade of Autumn' poem: 'lilies have faded like ghost and ghost... blooms are shed...a haunted coast...Mournful the uplands, all ashen sere —stars are dead...broken issues of life are wed.'<sup>81</sup> A Tasmanian autumn was described as a place where 'The soft sad winds of mourning March complain...Olive-shadowed musk / Sheds funeral incense over ridge and fell'.<sup>82</sup>

The west Tasmanian coast represented a wind-swept and hostile geography where the continual 'black Sou'wester screaming without...sounds...and...the sibilant hissing of angry snakes' made it almost impossible to live. The wind-forces were fearsome and violent. Gale force winds beat 'the bole and blight...the leaf...As we crouched in the heel of the tempest's grip...In the moonless madness of windy night / High on the shoulder of Hamilton'.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, the 'Ballade of Bitter Memories', reiterated a melancholic tone that threatened to compromise the poet's dream.

We build and gather, in vain, in vain,  
 Tempests of Chance with our castles play,  
 The weevil winnows the gold o' the grain,  
 Gold o' the morning glooms to the grey  
 Salt dews of sorrow the sere blooms wetting?  
 Nay, gods of the desert of Dreadful Day  
 Give us the gift of a great forgetting!<sup>84</sup>

### **The ache of homelessness**

It is possible to consider Marie Pitt's responses to her environment in Tasmania in terms of the effects of alienation associated with the experiences of a 'corner dweller'. When writing about memories of Gippsland, Marie Pitt attempted to soften the landscape metaphors of blackness and terror by transforming them into Celtic symbols and images.

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<sup>80</sup>Following from Kristeva's conceptualisation of abjection and negation theorised as psycho-linguistic negotiations of exile in language. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, (Translated by Leon S. Roudiez), Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, pp. 1-31.

<sup>81</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid, p. 102. This poem was written for the inauguration of the Melbourne Literary Club in the journal *Birth* 1916. Furnley Maurice, Frederick Macartney, Mary Fullerton, Nettie and Vance Palmer, Louis Laveter were part of the membership.

<sup>83</sup>Pitt in Burke, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid, p. 122. Refrain 'Give us the gift of a great forgetting!' in each of four stanzas.

The poem 'Crooked River' suggested that she could reclaim spaces she once inhabited so that this could enable her to 'writ my hills a mountain range / With title cold and alien!'

"Australian Alps?" Nay, nay, there thrills  
Through Memory skies a-quiver,  
The glory of *my hills* — *the hills*  
*Beyond the Crooked River*".<sup>85</sup>

Marie Pitt sought to redefine the landscapes of Gippsland and Tasmania in her idealisations of Celtic poetic images. In effect, her negotiations of homescape relied on reclaiming the cultural authenticity of Gaelic Ireland when 'Green pipers blew for us, fairy bells rang for us...when...all the world sang to us / All the world loved us and told us so'.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, the poem 'The Valley' reiterated poetic desires to find the 'lost green valley by the River'.<sup>87</sup> Home was encoded in references to Celtic imagery that Pitt associated with green valleys, pipers and Faery that were imported cultural references borrowed from Celtic symbology.<sup>88</sup> The difficulties with reconfiguring Australia through Celtic imagery are suggestive of the ways that a 'migrant's sensibility' is weighted by the tensions of relocating home. In theoretical terms, this bi-focal perspective is experienced as a 'vestigial ability to be in two places in one identical moment and also, at the same time, at a remove from both'.<sup>89</sup>

Colleen Burke hinted at the problematic translation of Australian identity when describing Pitt's writing as examples of 'internal assonance' resulting from the influence of Irish and Scottish cultural dialect patterns.<sup>90</sup> Pitt wrote in the language she understood as it was an embodiment of her own means of representation and self-expression. Irish dialect language survived although there is little known about the extent of its influence in Australia. Dymphna Lonergan has concluded that Irish speech patterns were strongly evident in the

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid, pp. 93-94. First appeared in the *Bulletin*, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1910, p. 43.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid, p. 128.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid, p. 124.

<sup>88</sup>Fitzpatrick, loc. cit.

<sup>89</sup>Katherine Kearns, *Psychoanalysis, Historiography & Feminist Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1997, p. 61.

<sup>90</sup>Burke, op. cit., p. 53.

poetry of late nineteenth century Irish-born Queensland poet Fionán Mac Cártha.<sup>91</sup> As Chris McConville's history of Irish settlement in the Western District of Victoria has indicated, Irish dialect could still be detected in everyday Australian speech up to the early twentieth century. Mary Grant Bruce also noted that the Clancy grandchildren spoke with Irish accents although they were the second-generation of Australian-born settlers in Gippsland.<sup>92</sup> Rural isolation indirectly preserved Irish dialects although Bruce Moore found little evidence of remnant Irish language despite the relatively high number of nineteenth-century Irish emigrants in Australia.<sup>93</sup> While unable to explain all of the reasons for the decline of Irish language, Moore attributed it to pressures of assimilation and the effects of historical prejudice. When Said described how beginnings were constitutively a struggle of self-identity and for self-representation, he theorised that in using the *right* language, this also represented the capacity to perfect those means of self-representation at the exclusion of others.<sup>94</sup> Here, the issues of rewriting and re-writing represent a contested reference of identity. Marie Pitt's approach to language suggests how the problem of using Celtic symbology reflected the difficulties of resolving those representational means when defining vernacular Australian identity.<sup>95</sup>

Trace elements of Gaelic cultural patterns and word associations were apparent in Pitt's poetry and were interwoven into the meanings of emigrant culture in the Australian context. As interchangeable cultural references, Pitt's poetic writing may also have indicated anxieties about performances of identity when using 'imitation and substitution' to negate her own cultural history and critique her own self.<sup>96</sup> While Australia's literary history was shaped by attempts to 'initiate an indigenous' writing tradition to counteract

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<sup>91</sup>Dymphna Lonergan, 'Fionán McCártha: Gaelic Poet in Queensland' in *Táin*, June-July, Issue 25, 2003, pp. 12-14 [Electronic text citation: <http://hdl.handle.net/2328/616> : Accessed 3.7.2006]; 'An Irish-centric view of Australian English' in *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, Volume 23, Number 2, October, 2003, pp. 151-159; 'Ned's Irish Accent' in *Táin*, August-September, 2004, pp. 18-20 [Electronic text citation: <http://hdl.handle.net/2328/609>: Accessed 3.7.2006].

<sup>92</sup>Mary Grant Bruce, *Glen Eyre*, loc. cit.

<sup>93</sup>Bruce Moore, 'The Dialect Evidence' in *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, Volume 24, Number, 1, 2004, pp. 21-40.

<sup>94</sup>Said, 1993, loc. cit.

<sup>95</sup>As indicated by Dymphna Lonergan's analysis of the Ned Kelly 'Jerilderie' letter. Op. Cit.

<sup>96</sup>Paul Kane, *Australian Poetry: Romanticism and Negativity*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 46.

England's dominance in the Australian cultural economy, the threads of Irishness were already woven into an anti-establishment attitude in Pitt's poetry where she wove a poetic politics to shout against a world that treated her with indifference.<sup>97</sup>

### **The mourning period**

The Tasmanian period, between 1891-1905, arguably shows out the problem of negotiating the bog lands of inhumanity and indifference and identity references of an Australian-born daughter of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent. William Pitt was dying from a respiratory disease known as 'black lung'. It was a legacy of mine practices of blasting and rock drilling in dust-filled work spaces. Australian authorities were slow to act on improvements to mine conditions despite inquiries and medical reports on the excessive number of deaths from respiratory disorders.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the Australia that Marie Pitt saw as inhumane was confirmed by the mining operators at Mathinna. Her plea was rejected on the excuse of insufficient funds.<sup>99</sup> Her response is recorded in the poem 'The Keening'.<sup>100</sup>

We are the women and children  
Of the men that ruined for gold,  
Heavy are we with sorrow,  
Heavy as heart can hold;  
Galled are we with injustice,  
Sick to the soul of loss—  
Husbands and sons and brothers  
Slain for the yellow dross!<sup>101</sup>

The ten stanzas of this poem evoked extreme emotional despair. Stanzas one to three began with the invocation that —'We are the women and children'—so that she could plead a case for a more compassionate society. Miners' lives had little meaning. Employers' children could 'reap the whirlwind / On the terms that the gods...of the Stock Exchange...arrange'. Miners 'moiled like gnomes...choked in the "fracteur" fumes...that paved the pathways / That led to... early tombs' in order for the elite to maintain their privileged status.

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>98</sup>Blainey, op. cit., pp. 207-229, 292-306.

<sup>99</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp. 25, 40.

<sup>100</sup>Pitt, 'The Keening' in Burke, ibid, pp. 130-132. First appeared in the *Bulletin*, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1911, p.32.

<sup>101</sup>Stanza one.

And ye, who counsel the nation,  
Statesmen who rule the State!  
Foolish are ye in your weakness,  
Wise are we in our hate!<sup>102</sup>

Marie Pitt's rage against social injustice extended to capitalism's hypocritical devotion to religion. She described it as 'the House of Pilate...who gibber of Christ... where...the fat blasphemers' poppet-heads mock the sky!'<sup>103</sup> Although the subject matter referred to the Australian context, themes of bereavement and injustice shared similar characteristics to an Irish lament poem written in the eighteenth century. I refer to *Caioneach Airt Uí Laoghaire* (*The Lament for Arthur O'Leary*) written by his widow Eibhlín Dhubh Ní Chonaill (Eileen O Connell) following her husband's murder in 1773.<sup>104</sup> Pitt's poem adapted traditions of bereavement that survived in Ireland well into the 1990s.<sup>105</sup> Irish death laments were usually reserved for funerals but keening poems were also sung to farewell emigrants because their leaving meant an exile that was as painful as death.<sup>106</sup>

Keening poems were used to 'wake' the dead so they could hear the pain of those left behind. Irish bereavement poems recorded the emotional fury of victims of unfairness and injustice that entwined their fate and destiny. The expression of that emotional pain can be seen in Eibhlín Ní Chonaill's keening poem. Her pain rages across histories and cultures as a universal symbol of grief and injustice. Her husband was shot dead because he would not give up his horse to an English landlord as legislated in Irish Penal Codes. Using the Irish lament poem may be seen to be out of place with the characteristic 'bush' poetry that celebrated Australia's national iconography.<sup>107</sup> At the same time, exhibitions of 'keening' may have demonstrated the excesses of Irish emotionalism and sentimentality that

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<sup>102</sup>First four lines of stanza eight.

<sup>103</sup>Excerpt from stanza nine.

<sup>104</sup>A.A. Kelly, Ed., *Pillars of the House: An Anthology of Verse by Irish Women from 1690 to the present*, Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1997, pp. 31-32.

<sup>105</sup>Patricia Lysaght, 'Caoineadh os Cionn Coirp: The Lament for the Dead in Ireland' in *Folklore*, 108, 1997, pp. 65-82.

<sup>106</sup>Honko, 1974, p. 9 cited in Lysaght, *ibid*, p. 65.

<sup>107</sup>Pressures from the Catholic church and modernising influences combined in not so subtle ways to dissuade Irish people from having traditional 'wakes', *ibid*, p. 68.

exhibited a lack of self-discipline and control that did not cohere with conservative Australian society.<sup>108</sup>

Marie Pitt perceived that she lived in an uncaring Australia. She was born into a life of mourning. Destruction and death haunted her when she and her family would have to clean up after seasonal flooding of the Gippsland farm. Death sculpted the landscape and resisted the aesthetic restoration of fairy-folk and pipers. Ghosts haunted the Gippsland mountains and exuded a consciousness of fear about what the Black Mountain held in its history. She could hear Mathinna's voice echoing in the Tasmanian wilderness. The haunted past produced a deep melancholy where she, 'Baffled and blind and athirst...prayed for...the gift of a great forgetting!'<sup>109</sup> Although privileged by the racial and cultural terms of white Australian identity, Pitt's community of Australians was consigned to corners, out of sight, forgotten and considered to have little value. As the final validation of hatred, William Pitt died in 1908 from the dreaded 'black lung' disease. Marie Pitt was left homeless, with no money and with three children to support.

It was the foreshadowing of impending death that compelled the Pitt family to return to Melbourne in 1905. The Melbourne Period 1905-1948, constituted opportunities for Marie Pitt to mobilise politically with like-minded feminists and radicals to share in a collective prepared to challenge the status quo of early twentieth-century Australian society. The following chapter follows Marie Pitt to Melbourne and its central role in shaping Marie Pitt concepts of her ideal home.

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>109</sup>Pitt in Burke, op. cit., p. 122.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Ave, Australia! : A boarder or home at last?*

For most of her writing life, Marie Pitt spent her poetic energy criticising social inequality as well as the apathy of Australian bourgeois society. Pitt's views about the social effects of displacement were argued in poetic language. Her writing style reflected a challenge to determine how those metaphorical and spatial topographies caused marginalisation and social oppression. Pitt retained cultural markers of Celtic-Irish and Scottish emigrant heritage where emigrant cultural referents, word associations and metaphoric symbols suggested that Pitt's poetic writing retained traces of her cultural histories. It was also evident in the chapters relating to Mary Grant Bruce's writing that metaphorical and cultural signifiers of Anglo-Irishness were used to authenticate meanings of place, identity and culture in her Australian writing. To Paul Kane, the symbolic mixing of metaphorical strategies and interpretations reflects a problem of cultural identification in Australian writing. Emigrant references of 'home' have been perceived as the cultural baggage of imitation and substitution that impeded the development of an authentic Australian writing style.<sup>1</sup> More appropriately, what should be considered are how language, metaphor and symbol denote specific relations of power. Pitt's strident rhetoric may not have appealed aesthetically to Australian audiences but its generative power emerged in a discursive realm of melancholia and mourning.<sup>2</sup> It was borne out of a life in the corner.

The significance of corner-dweller consciousness can be appraised through Bachelard's concepts of space-self-identity relations. The corner is generative of psycho-pathological responses of negativity and exile and strongly supports the idea that subjective locations of place are synonymously interwoven with social identity, spatial ecologies and societal infrastructures. French critical feminist Julia Kristeva observed how unpalatable representations of society are problematic to analyse because these exhibit a psychical obsession with suffering, tragedy, fate and death. Representations of melancholia are

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Kane, *Australian Poetry, Romanticism and Negativity*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 45-46.

<sup>2</sup>Kristeva, Bachelard, loc. cit.

confronting, challenging and disturbing to read: their meanings are often difficult to interpret in terms of that intended by authors, writers and artists.<sup>3</sup> When representing melancholia in anti-social or anti-cultural forms of address, writers adopt different rhetorical techniques to dramatise and exaggerate emotions, feelings and experiences so that they can find ways to express unspeakable or uncomfortable truths. Discourses of melancholia are designed to stir social conscience and to confront society about conditions of life and lives hidden from public viewing. They are outside the norm because they are representations of the abnormal and the aberrant. Writing about melancholia can be an uncomfortable metaphoric and cultural negation of aesthetic style, genre and content that produces paradoxical outcomes for writers, artists and their intended audiences. In approaching Pitt's poetry as a melancholic genre, Kristeva's theories facilitate a way to interrogate how the derivative ecologies of oppression, marginalisation and suffering elaborate a phenomenology of bereavement in terms of 'spacings, blanks, discontinuities, or destruction'.<sup>4</sup> According to Kristevan thinking, a philosophy of hatred calls 'for instant realism or, better a grating irony...to bring...forth the "danse macabre" and disenchanting profligacy inborn into the ...artist's...style'.<sup>5</sup>

### **Placing the placeless**

It has been argued elsewhere that insecurities about place were symptomatic of the difficulties in locating Australian culture to differentiate it from English cultural history. Australian writers battled with the legacy of a 'bastard complex' in terms of its perceived status of inferiority to its English counterpart as well as in relation to creating a cultural topography that displayed unease about the Australian physical landscape and its Indigenous presence.<sup>6</sup> The 'bastard complex' conjured meanings of illegitimacy, yet, the term 'bastard' converged as a paradoxical mode of address for Australian men to express their sense of belonging and sense of Australian national identity. The Tasmanian period between 1891 and 1905 arguably affected Pitt's poetic attitude in terms of the

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<sup>3</sup>Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1989, pp. 105-138.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Hodge and Mishra, op. cit., p. 23.

representational methods she used to negotiate the incompatibilities between aesthetic images of nature, society and Australian culture and the reality of facing the bog lands of inhumanity and indifference. The Melbourne period of residence between 1905 and 1948 would be nearest to the place that Marie Pitt would call home, although being resident in Melbourne would also have tested her allegiance to Celtic symbology given the political climate of anti-Irishness and inferences of Irish-Catholic disloyalty to Australia during the First and Second World Wars.

### **The Melbourne Period**

Prior to moving to Melbourne to wait out the death of her husband William Pitt from respiratory disease in 1912, Marie Pitt's poetry was mainly restricted to observations of her own social and cultural location in rural Gippsland and to responses to life circumstances of the displaced in Tasmania. Her political advocacy in the Tasmanian union movement had relatively little effect in changing miners' working conditions. She wrote:

To those who have always lived outside the 'vicious circle' of a mining town, it is...impossible...to convey any conception of impending evil...when...the grisly obsession of 'who next'...tugs at the heart of every woman whose husband, son, brother or lover goes 'below'.<sup>7</sup>

The move to Melbourne changed how Marie Pitt would attack the myths of Australian egalitarianism. She identified with an ideal community in Melbourne's embryonic socialist / unionist / labour movement where her voice would be given greater strength to redress inequalities between capitalist and working-class Australia.<sup>8</sup> She would meet her life partner, Irish-Australian poet Bernard O'Dowd, and the avant-garde of Melbourne literary culture, some of whom would later become acclaimed Australian poets and writers.<sup>9</sup> Nettie

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<sup>7</sup>Pitt in Burke, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>Verity Burgman, *In Our Time: Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985; Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales, 1880-1890*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1988.

<sup>9</sup>Some groups and solidarities in Melbourne were: Melbourne Anarchist Club, 1886; Australian Socialist League / Party (founded in Sydney in 1887); Socialist Democratic Foundation (Victoria, 1889); Victorian Socialist Party (Tom Mann, 1902); Christian Socialists George A. Brown; 'Australian Church' with Rev. Charles Strong (former Scots Church); 'Our Father's Church' under Archibald Turner. John Ross was president of the Democratic Association of Victoria and the Victorian Co-Operative Society; *Ross's Monthly* (was an alternative socialist journal); Political Labor Council; Women's Franchise (1903). Burgman, 'Victorian Socialism', op.cit., pp.105-135; Joy Damousi, *Women Come Rally, Socialism, Communism and Gender in Australia, 1890-1955*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994; Frank

Palmer wrote a biography on O'Dowd.<sup>10</sup> Mary Gilmore was a devotee of socialist evangelist William Lane (1861-1917) and voluntarily exiled herself to Paraguay in the 1890s to become part of Lane's experimental colony of socialists.<sup>11</sup> She believed that socialism would compel Australia to become a republic. She wrote that socialist politics typified the 'energy of an adolescent country...the mood of the nineties...and...the boundless possibilities for social progress'.<sup>12</sup> Pitt and O'Dowd were mentioned in Gilmore's private correspondence. She recollected meeting O'Dowd in 1908 when he was 'at the height of his queer powers'.<sup>13</sup> She never accepted Marie Pitt as a moral equal believing that Pitt was the instigator of O'Dowd's separation from his wife Eva Pryor.

O'Dowd was a poet, a political radical and a foundational member of the Victorian Socialist League.<sup>14</sup> He was also the editor of the socialist journal *Tocsin* which became a publishing vehicle for Marie Pitt's political poetry.<sup>15</sup> O'Dowd's poetry has been seen as having contributed to Australia's 'nationalist aspirations...by promoting the ...mystique of the bush that was paramount to the writers of the era'.<sup>16</sup> Although Marie Pitt and Bernard O'Dowd shared a similar cultural genealogy as the first-generation Australian-born children of Ulster Irish emigrants, those genealogical similarities significantly diverged in relation to the gendered criteria that determined their social status and social success. It is

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Farrell, *International Socialism and Australian Labor: The Left in Australia, 1919-1939*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1981.

<sup>10</sup>Vivian Smith, *Vance and Nettie Palmer*, Twayne Publishers, Boston, Massachusetts, 1975, pp. 96-99.

<sup>11</sup>Lloyd Ross, *William Lane and the Australian Labor Movement*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 2001.

<sup>12</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>13</sup>W.H. Wilde, *Courage and Grace: A Biography of Dame Mary Gilmore*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 82-83, 141, 183, 207.

<sup>14</sup>William Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889*, Yale University Press, London and New Haven, 1975.

<sup>15</sup>O'Dowd was the son of Irish emigrants Bernard Dowd and Ann Dowell from Ulster. Although of an Irish-Catholic background, he was educated at non-Catholic schools to have a better chance at matriculating into university. He graduated with an Arts degree from the University of Melbourne in 1891, followed by a Law degree in 1895. He wrote with an intensity of style that literary editor of the *Bulletin* (A.G. Stephens) commented on as dry and lacking in humour. His poetic inspirations were Walt Whitman and Sydney Jephcott. O'Dowd remained steadfast to socialist ideals. He was an assistant librarian at the Supreme Court in Melbourne and assistant and State Parliamentary draughtsman from 1917 to 1935. His socialist politics were at odds with his working career in State Parliament. He died in 1953 and was survived by the wife whom he deserted in 1920 so as he could cohabit with Marie Pitt. Chris Wallace-Crabbe, 'Bernard Patrick O'Dowd (1866-1953)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 62-63.

<sup>16</sup>Smith, op. cit., p.97.

likely that O'Dowd's reputation as a radical socialist and their domestic situation negatively affected the reception of Marie Pitt's work in Australian literary anthologies. This was implied in literary criticisms of the era. Mary Gilmore's letters hinted that O'Dowd would only feel 'kindly to anything that mentioned...Tyr Nan Og' while Pitt's poetry 'stopped at Doherty's Corner'.<sup>17</sup> Vance Palmer urged Pitt to allow her poetry 'to blossom again and break up the cracked pavements'.<sup>18</sup>

Literary conservatives Walter Murdoch and James McAuley respectively assessed O'Dowd's poetry and his socialist politics as antithetical to Australian values. Murdoch wrote that 'Wealth is a red rag to him, the press is another, the church is another...Mr O'Dowd's poems are hymns of the abuse of things'.<sup>19</sup> McAuley wrote that O'Dowd was 'an embarrassment to the anthologist because he was a clumsy utopian bard, not a poet'.<sup>20</sup> Morris E. Miller saw Pitt's poetry as 'too rough-hewn, rugged...intense...and...almost masculine'.<sup>21</sup> Poet and radical activist Harry Hooton (1908-1961) considered Marie Pitt's poetry to be equal in stature to the Lawson vintage and believed that class and gender prejudice were reasons for little recognition of Pitt's work in Australian literary anthologies.<sup>22</sup> Pitt identified herself and John Shaw Neilson (1892-1944) as the 'stepchildren' of Australian culture.<sup>23</sup> She memorialised her feelings for Neilson in 'Dirge John Neilson':

Gently he walked with us, and gave of his spirit  
Magic of dusk and dusk and the inner voice of the rain  
Gently he went from us and his place shall know him  
Never again!

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<sup>17</sup>Wilde, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>18</sup>Smith, op. cit., pp.59, 244, 385.

<sup>19</sup>Walter Murdoch in J.A La Nauze and Elizabeth Nurser, Eds., *Walter Murdoch and Alfred Deakin on "Books and men": Letters and Comments, 1900-1918*, Melbourne University Press, 1974, p. 85.

<sup>20</sup>James McAuley, *A Map of Australian Verse: The Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1975, p. 80.

<sup>21</sup>Cited in Burke, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>22</sup>Sasha Soldatow, *Poet of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Harry Hooton, Collected Poems and Prose*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1990.

<sup>23</sup>Cited in Burke, op. cit., p.12.

He has gone hence to his own with the White Evangels,  
Who shall return to the earth from their white domain,  
Though we call, though we speak with the tongues of men and angels,  
Never again!<sup>24</sup>

Jane Hunt has argued that women's cultural work in Australia has been hidden by gendered constructs of domesticity. Women's cultural activism in Australian literary culture and in Australian politics has tended to be screened by domestic relationships which reflected the less obvious but important support role in ensuring the success of men's careers. Men were the dominant wage earners. Their roles had to be protected. As cultural nurturers, women's cultural work in Australia has been consigned to the ephemera of domesticity rather than the public sphere.<sup>25</sup> In relation to Marie Pitt's profile in late nineteenth-to-early-twentieth century Australian labour politics, her public profile and history of political activism were well known during the Tasmanian period. When adapting to the changing cultural and political contexts of labor relations in Melbourne, Pitt did not take a secondary role to O'Dowd. She used her poetic capacities to reconnect with a community of collective socialists and others marginalised in mainstream Australia. The poem 'City Hunger' disabled the bush rhetoric associated with Australia's nationalist aspirations and instead translated Pitt's celebration at being part of this city-based membership.<sup>26</sup>

A TENT 'neath the gum trees! —Oh No! Oh No!  
Give me the stream of which I am part—  
The red stream filling the old world's heart  
With life and laughter, with rapture and glow.  
Give me the battle the strivers ken  
With comrades beside and the goal before.  
O tears and laughter and strife to the core—  
I love you, I love you, cities of men!

In preference to the solitude of the bush, Pitt preferred to be 'tossed / 'Mong the soul-ships  
cleaving a treacherous tide...of ...the rabble, clean and unclean'.<sup>27</sup> The third stanza of the

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<sup>24</sup>First and final stanzas, 'Dirge to John Neilson', 1944, SETIS. <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/oz/texts> [Accessed: 3.7.2006].

<sup>25</sup>Jane E. Hunt, 'Finding a place for women in Australian cultural history: female cultural activism in Sydney, 1900-1940' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Number 124, October, 2004, pp. 221-237.

<sup>26</sup>From 12% in 1901, the percentage of Irish-Australians in the Labor Party grew to 40% in 1951. Peter Love, 'The Great Labour Split of 1955: An Overview' in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, Eds., *The Great War Schism*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2005, pp.1-20.

<sup>27</sup>Pitt, 'City Hunger' in Burke, *ibid*, p. 108.

poem suggested a strong link to the McKeown family's predicament in Gippsland. Pitt may also have been criticising the sentimental idealisation of the bush in late nineteenth-century Australian lyrical poetry. In Pitt's poetic imagery, the city represented her intellectual regeneration. In that sense, the city stood outside the traditions of the 'bush'. The 'bush' represented a landscape of exclusion.

Sing not of far folden hills agleam,  
Of Sun-Kissed valleys where strife is not,  
The sylvan Nirvanas where ripe to rot  
The Fruits of Toil and the Flowers of Dream.

The 'City Hunger' poem was a clear indication of Pitt's commitment to remain part of marginalised Australia. It took its theme from deconstructing the mythologies upon which Australian identity was founded. In the bush period, Pitt's writing was significantly informed by memories of childhood, memories of settlement and perceptions of inferiority that were linked to her social class and status. As a lone critic, her poetry tended to reflect an individual struggle against social injustice and inequity; however, the move to Melbourne produced a form of writing that was attuned to the ideological mind-set of socialist action. There is a distinctive shift between the lyrical experimentation in Pitt's landscape images in Gippsland and the more radical counter rhetoric expressed. Lyricism had have given sway to radicalism.

A tent 'neath the gum trees! No! Not I!  
I'll march with the rabble and the unclean  
Judas, Barabbas, or Nazarene!  
And die as I lived when it's time to die.<sup>28</sup>

This interesting collection of name-terms from Christian texts connotes meanings of treachery (Judas); criminality (Barabbas); and sanctity (the Nazarene). That Pitt prefers the company of such radical figures, reiterates Pitt's preparedness to use these iconoclastic figures to challenge tradition. Although socialism was predominantly a secularist political movement, it also drew from religious iconography as a way to negate the influence and power of conservative religious authority by providing a counter-religious, hence a secularist solution for social justice. Marie Pitt re-educated her children to the socialist

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<sup>28</sup>Excerpt from the final stanza, Burke, *ibid*, p. 108.

cause at secular ‘christening’ rituals and subjected them to socialist ideals.<sup>29</sup> Early twentieth-century Australian political radicals mobilised elements of pro-Irishness and Catholicism to manufacture a ‘quasi-iconoclastic; quasi-anarchist attitude’ that expressed a consciousness of oppression.<sup>30</sup> Religious symbolism was used by socialists as a means of gathering more members. Christian-Catholic theology merged with socialist ideology to generate a sense of collective suffering. By adapting the inspirational forces of religion and the nascent histories of Irish-Catholic oppression, socialism could be mobilised to restore the loss of faith in the Australian dream.<sup>31</sup>

The theological intermix was evident in Marie Pitt’s poetry and reflected her familiarity with the cultural history of Irish-Catholicism in Australia. Biblical references were used in Pitt’s poem ‘City Hunger’ when declaring her preference for the company of ‘Judas, Barabbas or Nazarene’<sup>32</sup>. The ‘Ecce Homo’ poem also incorporated Christ-like images that ennobled the humanitarian vision of socialism by aligning its purpose with spiritual salvation and redemption.<sup>33</sup> In this poem, Pitt attempted to reconfigure the classical image of Christ as an icon for Australia’s working class:

Christ of the Grecian brow and gracious lily hands,  
 They bear his banner through all earth’s heathen lands.  
 Christ of the Grecian brow that never knew despair,  
 Or love or hope or that white wrath no craven soul may dare.  
 Christ of the hermit’s cell and painter’s brooding brain,  
 Who keeps o’er death and hell his eminent domain,  
 Yea, Christ, and Messiah, Prince of David’s royal stem,  
 Not Christ the anarchist of old Jerusalem!  
 Not Christ the anarchist with fearless heart of youth,  
 Who laid his manhood down to keep the gates of Truth!  
 Jesus the Carpenter, the man from Galilee  
 Who died for his faith’s sake, nail-triced upon a tree!  
*He* gave not dole by dole the life he scorned to keep,  
*He* knew the ache of toil, of rest the healing balm,  
*He* knew and felt it good—the clean grain running true,  
*He* drank from earth and sun and all the glad things the food

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<sup>29</sup>Burke, op. cit., pp. 15-33.

<sup>30</sup>Patrick O’Brien, *The Saviours: An Intellectual History of the Left in Australia*, Drummond Publishers, Richmond, Victoria, 1977, pp. 131-134, 137.

<sup>31</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., p.233.

<sup>32</sup>Barabbas as cited in Pitt, ‘City Hunger’, SETIS, op. cit., p. 71 of 121.

<sup>33</sup>Ross, op. cit., p. 13.

That made his quick blood run, that made his manhood good.<sup>34</sup>

The poem was consistent with the philosophy of the Victorian Socialist Party. Its founder Thomas Mann (1856-1841) sought to redefine an alternative vision for Australian society, and wrote that:

Socialism does not seek to destroy but to build up...to build fine cities, in which shall be the most magnificent edifices the mind of men can conceive, where every building whether for public use or private use shall be aesthetically beautiful.<sup>35</sup>

In fashioning socialism as a Christian aesthetic, the Mann brand of socialism also set a high moral code that followers were expected to adopt.<sup>36</sup> O'Dowd and Pitt dissented from these constraints of morality when O'Dowd chose to end his marriage in order to cohabit with Marie Pitt.

The Melbourne period is of political and cultural importance when analysing Marie Pitt's poetic interpretations of Australian society between the 1900s and the 1940s. Mann's idealistic vision of Australian socialism collapsed in state rivalries and political factionalism. Interstate bitterness between New South Wales and Victorian socialists led to the eventual destruction of Marie Pitt's ideal community. The poor treatment Pitt received by fellow socialists ended the Marie Pitt / Bernard O'Dowd association with Australian socialist politics.<sup>37</sup>

#### **Exiled again or liberated?**

Marie Pitt once declared that the place that she identified as most like home was in the company of radicals like 'Judas, Barabbas and Nazarene'. The Melbourne period began with promise but ended in the betrayal of the socialist commune she wished to be part of. However, being freed from the constraints of politics would allow her imagination to explore Australia's history from a different perspective. Although included in the 1944 anthology, the poet herself provided the historical contexts in which the poem

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<sup>34</sup>Pitt, 'Ecce Homo', SETIS, *ibid.*, p. 109 of 121: lines 11-12, 12, 15, 17, 19-20.

<sup>35</sup>Tom Mann, *Socialism*, Melbourne, 1905, pp. 9, 11-12, 20 in Bruce O'Meagher, Ed., *The Socialist Objective: Labor and Socialism*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1987, pp. 27-29.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>O'Dowd resigned in protest at the under-handed way in which the Australian Socialist League treated Marie Pitt. The Sydney based organisation dismissed her claim for wages. The factional split meant her loss of income. This treatment had an earlier history when Pitt applied for assistance from her husband's employer because of the respiratory disease he contracted in the workplace. Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

'Disinherited' was written. The preface may have been inserted in the 1944 edition but the poem referred to the historical context of the arrival of the American Navy in 1908.<sup>38</sup>

While Fleet Week celebrated Australia's newly fledged nationhood and its political alliance with America, the poem also provided interesting social commentary on the nature of Australian race relations in 1908. In the poem 'Disinherited', the poet and her subjects are gathered to watch the passing parade of American sailors in Melbourne. This was a festive occasion where 'Fleet Week' erupted in spontaneous celebrations of Australian national pride. While part of the crowd, the poet happened to observe 'little groups of Aborigines in gaudy second-hand apparel...standing...a little apart from the laughing crowd...to watch...the illuminations'.<sup>39</sup> Immediately the inappropriateness of their 'gaudy second-hand apparel' stood out from the better dressed Melbourne crowds. Pitt observed how differences in dress codes fashioned the critical displacement of race identity.

Mid her raiment of laughter and light,  
Of her splendour the pity,  
You are drifting like ghosts of the carnival night  
Of the beautiful city.<sup>40</sup>

As displayed in this poem and others, the metaphorical language of Pitt's own 'native' culture was inserted into the poem as a representational strategy to overcome the obvious dilemma of mismatched histories of oppression. In addressing the 'disinherited', the poem gave the impression of empathy towards Aboriginal Australians. They were perceived in the same way as the ethereal Celtic fairy folk and represented as 'Sad elves from a wistful wild glamour of Dream...where the lost Alcheringa fire smoulders and dies'. At one level, she saw them as the victims of the 'conquering races...which have...whirled...the forest havens from which You pass'. Their presence, like that of Celtic myth and fable, would disappear 'In the 'eddy stream...of history'.<sup>41</sup> The rehabilitation of Celtic fantasy would be used to counter the historical displacement of Aborigines so that they could join

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<sup>38</sup>First appeared in the *Socialist*, 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 1906. Pitt may have inserted the preface later. Melbourne celebrated the arrival of 'Fleet Week' following Federation in 1901 and a later visit was followed up in 1908. Also noted in Alfred Deakin's 'Defence Policy', *Parliamentary Papers*, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1907, pp.1-29. Series Accession Number A 5954/69. [http://www.naa.gov.au/the\\_collection/prime.ministers/deakin/photo.html](http://www.naa.gov.au/the_collection/prime.ministers/deakin/photo.html) [Accessed: 6.8.2006].

<sup>39</sup>Pitt, 'Disinherited' in SETIS, op. cit., p. 98 of 121.

<sup>40</sup>Stanza one and final refrain. Loc. cit.

<sup>41</sup>Stanzas two, three and eight.

with 'forest...elves...enjoying themselves in...gay saturnalia...of...mirth and merriment'.<sup>42</sup> Consistent with race presumptions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there is evidence that Marie Pitt endorsed the prevailing ideology in terms of thinking that Aborigines were not fully mature or adult enough to enact their own agency. They were described as:

Wild children, sad children, deep whelmed by the roar  
Of the tide that effaces,  
You shall pass and your forest shall know you no more,  
Brown faces! Brown faces!

When considering Marie Pitt's racial attitude in the *Socialist* journal, the poem 'Disinherited' may appear to support O'Farrell's thinking that Irish colonialism was a less severe form of racial thinking. Stanza seven appeared to assail Australian attitudes:

Deaf, deaf are your ears to the passion and pain of a grief unavailing,  
Dumb syllables set to the sobbing refrain of swans sunward sailing.

However, the poem did not completely erase Pitt's race beliefs. Although she was committed to the liberation of the working-class from the clutches of capitalist exploitation, socialists were not entirely committed to race equality and desired to keep Australia white. Racism was rampant in the post-Federal era because of fears of a Japanese invasion of the north of Australia.<sup>43</sup> In the context of Australia's race history, Marie Pitt could not disguise her own racism, and described Asians as:

Half-breeds...who...maintain...the worst traits, the cunning, the unrestrained ferocity of the coloured parent, the half-breed invariably adds the greater reasoning facilities of his white-parent—usually with unpleasant and if not disastrous results...The thing is repulsive, and quite impossible from the normal white women's point of view, however feasible it is to the white man.<sup>44</sup>

Pitt recommended the stripping of Australian citizenship if white Australians dared to have sexual relations with Asians and advocated their deportation to China regardless if one was a 'white' Australian citizen.<sup>45</sup> The socialist vision for Australian equality contained a deeply embedded racism that conflicted with the liberationist working-class ideologies that

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<sup>42</sup>Stanza four.

<sup>43</sup>Bob Birrell, *Federation: The Secret Story*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 2001, pp. 279-302.

<sup>44</sup>Marie Pitt, 'Brotherhood' in the *Socialist*, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1907, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup>Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, 2004, p. 94.

Marie Pitt espoused. Marie Pitt was unambiguously ultra-nationalist in seeking to preserve the homogeneous character of Anglo-Celtic Australia. She constantly shouted her rage against a social order that contributed to the degradation of Australia's working class but her attitudes towards race indicated that she adhered to an ideological politics that were not as altruistically liberal in the treatment of other marginalised groups. In this sense, Marie Pitt and Mary Grant Bruce were not dissimilar in their projections about protecting Australia from racial and cultural contaminants. Both Pitt and Bruce took on the role of defenders of Australia, although the Bruce template of class elites in Billabong Australia would have affronted Pitt's notions of social equality.

Pitt articulated her world through the logic of oppression. In the previous chapter I suggested that the legacy of Irish history replayed the circuitous logic of bog-dweller to illustrate how the derivative contexts of Irish history and socio-politics of Irish-Catholicism constituted a psycho-cultural legacy of bereavement. In turn, the Gippsland and Tasmanian periods contributed to the specific societal displacement of white Australians. In reading Marie Pitt's vision of Australia as a racially uncontaminated ideal vision of egalitarianism, it is clear that Pitt's anger was directed at class differences that impacted negatively on the corner dwellers of Australian society but it was also ideologically blinded by racism. In arbitrary definitions of oppression related to the province of labour-work-capitalist relations Pitt instigated vengeful attacks on inequities in Australian society. In reference to the treatment of workers facing redundancy, the poem 'Rejected' was written about the fate of workers who became too old to be useful in the labour economy:

He stands accused of the deadly crime  
The thrice accursed crime of being old.  
To-morrow, ten will quarrel for his place,  
...let the grey-beard go!  
...wherefore shall he turn  
To learn new arts and wield new weapons, now  
That the tower of manly strength, which stood the shock  
Of deadly combat, totters at its base  
And reels before the dastard strategy.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Pitt, 'Rejected' in SETIS, op. cit., p. 103 of 121: lines 10-13, 17-21. First appeared in the *Socialist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1907, p. 7.

The social commentary in the poem is important because it shows Pitt's ability to engage with theories of work-labour-economics that were reduced to simple formula to the detriment of workers. Values like loyalty and commitment were meaningless regardless of whether workers had sacrificed their bodies to the grind of work routines. Although the poem was published in 1907 to draw attention to the plight of Boer War returnees, it predicted a larger problem of reintegrating returned soldiers into the work force after the First World War.<sup>47</sup> The poem suggested that Australia had turned its back on an Australian war hero who had affirmed the values of sacrifice, loyalty and commitment in service of Australia and who continued to exert those characteristics of self-sacrifice through physical toll simply to be at work. That sense of duty, stoicism, character and suffering was reflected in the 'rugged features in lines of stress ...that ...set the silver in his hair'.<sup>48</sup>

There was a general climate of pessimism in the 1920s about Australia's national and economic well-being, although socio-economic indicators were relatively healthy. Australians were generally better off than the rest of the world because of improvements in nutritional standards and reduced working hours.<sup>49</sup> However this reflection of Australian life would not have been enough to satisfy Marie Pitt's poetic responses to the betrayal of the dream of a better society.<sup>50</sup> In the poem 'Evil', she mobilised the symbolic power of biblical history and biblical texts to capture the morality of her quest to awaken Australia's consciousness to suffering and the impact of social marginalisation.

Not Beelzebub, but white archangel, I  
Turn the dim glass and shift the sands again,  
And touch the eyelids of the sons of man  
Lest they forget—forget and drowsy lie.  
With kiss of wind and sun and wizard tears  
Of fugitive clouds to wake them from their sleep.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>As the poem was published in 1907, it is likely that Pitt was referring to the Boer War and follows Pitt's satirical attacks in the 'Ode to the Fat Man' published in 1901.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, lines 1-3.

<sup>49</sup>Greg Whittwell and Stephen Nicholas, 'Weight and Welfare of Australians, 1890-1940' in *Australian Economic History Review*, Volume 4, Number 2, July 2001, pp. 159-174.

<sup>50</sup>Pitt, 'Evil', SETIS, op. cit., p. 63 of 121. Also anthologised in Walter Murdoch, *The Oxford Book of Australian Verse*, 1918, p. 237.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, lines 1-4, 8-9.

By the time this poem was published in 1918, cracks were already apparent in the egalitarian veneer of Australian society.<sup>52</sup>

### **Disillusions about home**

The character of Australian politics in the World War One period has been extensively commented on as a time when Australian political conservatives struggled with anti-conscriptionism and the emergence of Irish nationalist-republican ideology in Australian political discourse. The First World War has been mythologised as the sacrificial birth of Australian nationhood but it also signalled the breaking up of the old empire. Given the prominence of Marie Pitt's radical politics and the level of oppression she wrote about, it would be expected that the subject of Ireland would have attracted Pitt's interest.<sup>53</sup> In my research, I traced one poem titled 'Ireland' that had been published in 1919 in the *Bulletin*. It was not selected in the poetic anthologies. The relatively short poem argued for perseverance against the 'arrogant isle that oppresses you' but it did not expand on factors of religion or colonising histories.<sup>54</sup> Paradoxically Pitt did not appear to be as occupied with Irish matters in the way that Mary Grant Bruce was. Mary Grant Bruce attempted to re-right and rewrite Irishness into the currency of imperial discourse when focusing on the military characteristics of Irish populations and their imperial allegiance. There is little evidence to indicate that Irish politics concerned Marie Pitt's socialist conscience or that she was prepared to launch poetic attacks against imperial oppression in Ireland. The Pitt poem about Ireland was not significantly different in theme and content to four other poems published during the war period. These were 'The False Dawn', 'Muffled Drums',

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<sup>52</sup>Niall Brennan, *Dr Mannix*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1964; Cyril Bryan, *Archishop Mannix: Champion of Australian Democracy*, The Advocate Press, Melbourne, 1918; Edmund Campion, *The Meaning of Dr. Mannix*, Aquinas Library, Queensland, 1983; J. M. Main, Ed., *Conscription: The Australian Debate, 1901-1970*, Cassell, Australia, 1970; Colm Kiernan, *Daniel Mannix and Ireland*, Alella Books, Morwell, Victoria, 1984; Michael Gilchrist, *Daniel Mannix: Priest and Patriot*, Dove Communications, Blackburn, Victoria, 1982; Rev. T. E. Ruth, *Wake Up Australia: Sectarianism, Sinn Feinism, Sedition, I.W.W.-ism*, Modern Printing Company, Melbourne, 1917; Francis Barrymore Smith, *The Conscription Plebiscites in Australia, 1916-1917*, History Teachers Association of Victoria, 1981; *The Menace of Mannix: A Reply to "Captain" Cyril Bryan With the Cartoons He Condemns*, Issued by the Loyalist League of Victoria, 1919 (pamphlet).

<sup>53</sup>Eric Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations During World War 1*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England; Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, Cambridge University Press, England, 2000.

<sup>54</sup>First appeared in the *Bulletin*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1919, p 9.

'Mater' also known as 'Mater Dolorosa', or 'Mater Creatorix', and 'Confiteor'.<sup>55</sup> When analysing these poems, I will be looking for relationships between Pitt's emigrant heritage to explore whether the content of the poems supports my argument about rewriting and re-righting Irishness in Australia.

The poems 'Confiteor' or 'Confession' and 'Mater Creatorix' used Latin terms of address that were familiar to Catholic theological traditions. Further evidence of the relationship between Pitt's emigrant culture and subject status of poet-narrator were detected in ritualised enactments and desires to expiate guilt. The contextual references to Catholicism were apparent in the intonations of confession - *mea culpa! mea culpa! mea maxima culpa!* - I am guilty! I am guilty! I am most guilty! The 'Confiteor' poem reproduced the dialogic flow between penitent and confessor. Catholic ritual contrasted with the secularist themes of socialism. The poem was also indicative of powerlessness to change the course of history.

Here in this hour,  
This hour of silence from fierce sound  
That girdles the gray world round,  
Here in the hush that was Death,  
That is Life ebbing backward to breath,  
In a twilight of awe;  
Life that was drunk with the damned,  
That has visioned Despair,  
Naked and bare;  
Life that has trailed like the snake,  
Belly-deep in the dust,  
That has felt the sharp lunge and the thrust  
Of the conquering heel.....  
To implacable infinite skies,  
Cries for a sign!<sup>56</sup>

The 'Cries for a sign!' appealed to the 'Keeper of all the keys / Lord of the balances / That weigh the shivering worlds' in hope that this omniscient presence will 'Hear and forgive!'<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>'The False Dawn' was published in the *Bulletin*, 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1915, p.48; 'Muffled Drums' was published in *The Bulletin*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1915, p. 22; 'Mater' was published in the *Bulletin*, 26<sup>th</sup> December 1918, p. 3; 'Confiteor' was published in *Birth: A Little Journal of Australian Poetry*, Volume 3, 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1918. 'Mater Creatorix' and 'Confiteor' were anthologised in the 1944 collection.

<sup>56</sup>Pitt, 'Confiteor', SETIS, op. cit., p. 25 of 121.

<sup>57</sup>Stanza two and final verse.

'The weight of despair led to the question of whether we shall 'beat the brand of Cain /Into the greater brows that are to come...we have sinned / In the fevered urge / That broke like a red surge / On pain-pale coasts of life'.<sup>58</sup> The 'Confiteor' poem was in distinct contrast to the secularist philosophy of socialism and the idealised heroism in Billabong Australia. These poems referred to the severe psychological impact of Australia's post-First World War history and generational loss from war casualties. By way of adapting penitential rituals of confession and the cultural inheritance of Irish Catholicism, Pitt mobilised the conceptual and metaphorical language appropriate to discourses of mourning. The second poem, 'Mater Creatorix' or Mother Creator, symbolically reconfigured a woman's search for a lover or a son who died 'In the field of death'. The publication date of 1918 suggested that Pitt had been writing about the impact of the loss of men killed at the Front. The 'Mater Creatorix' poem mourned the fate of women who birthed their sons in 'Sweat of blood and tears...is...my portion...so that his fate...but his?...was ...to die....to die!'<sup>59</sup>

The evisceration of Australian masculinity was symbolised by phallic connotations that metaphorically described the 'bruised reed waiting for the wind to reap as it blew by...and the...smoking flax awaiting to be quenched for evermore!'<sup>60</sup> The second stanza reiterated those sexualised metaphors where word associations connected the subject's desires 'graven with cunning purpose' to symbolic intercourse with the 'smoking flax...of Aaron's budding rod' so that 'the broken reed...could conquest over Death!'<sup>61</sup> The sexual content of the 'Mater Creatorix' poem would have challenged moral sensibilities in 1918 Australia. Stephen Garton, Joy Damousi and Linzi Murray have argued that women were co-opted into the project of Australian nationhood so they could help Australia to recover from the trauma of war and generational loss. Discourses of sexuality were mobilised to regenerate women's desires to reproduce another generation of young men.<sup>62</sup> Reading the 'Mater

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<sup>58</sup>Lines 40-41, 44-47.

<sup>59</sup>Pitt, 'Mater Creatorix', SETIS, op. cit., p. 80 of 121.

<sup>60</sup>Lines 3-4.

<sup>61</sup>Lines 11-12.

<sup>62</sup>Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, Eds., *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995; Damousi, *Living With the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2001; Stephen Garton, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Number 56, 1988, pp. 86-95;

Creatorix' as a project of sexual recovery appeared to have mobilised eugenic desires to preserve and regenerate the 'seed' of Australian manhood. As a committed socialist, feminist and anti-conscriptionist, Marie Pitt would have been disillusioned by the carnage of war. While the poem 'Confiteor' alluded to the emotional pain of generational loss, the 'Mater Creatorix' poem articulated how myth, masculinity, war and nationhood intersected with ritualised language and concepts familiar to Pitt's Irish-Catholic heritage when these merged with aspirations for a 'new' Australia.<sup>63</sup>

In terms of women's roles in the project of Australian nationhood, an earlier poem 'Woman' published in 1909 admitted that women's identity was subjected to forces not of her making. Rather than preserving women as curios of helplessness and inability to exert their own agency, Pitt celebrated women for their inner strength, beauty and wisdom.

A Reply

"God! Be sorry for women? "Nay, singer and sister women,  
Sing the woman triumphant!—"the face turned from the clod"—  
Wave of the mystical ocean, thro' season and changing season,  
Intoning its grand Te Deum on cosmical bars of God!

The purpose of the poem was to challenge the supposition that women were secondary to men. Pitt liberally interspersed religious motifs in her political poetry. She likened the image of women to 'Mary of Nazareth...with the infant Jesus in her arms' to counteract inferences of secondary subjugation.

God be sorry for women? that men her sport defile her?  
Lo, to the dark she has flung them, pilotless, rudderless, blind,  
For prey to the shark-toothed foes of their vanity's vile creations;  
To reap the wrath of the whirlwind where laughing they sowed the wind.<sup>64</sup>

In another poem 'The 'Recantation' (with casual comments to the Women's Movement)', Pitt dissented with gendered constraints on women's capacity.

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Linzi Murray, 'The Australian Legend: Writing Australian Masculinity / Writing 'Australian Masculine' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Number 56, 1988, pp. 68-77.

<sup>63</sup>A.G. Stephens was the editor of *The Bulletin* Red Page section and supported the publication of Marie Pitt's socialist poetry. Manning Clark, 'A Prelude to 1890' and Patrick Morgan, 'Australian nationalism as a religion substitute' in Axel Clark, John Fletcher and Robin Marsden, Eds., *Between Two Worlds: 'Loss of Faith' and Late Nineteenth Century Australian Literature*, Wentworth Books, Sydney, 1979, pp. 36-52 and 53-72.

<sup>64</sup>Marie Pitt, 'Woman', SETIS, op. cit., 67 of 121. First appeared in the *Bulletin*, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1990, p. 3.

*The searchlight of biology on the sex question has revealed the fact that the female is the primary or root sex, of which the male is a projection or secondary extension as it were, created by the primary sex probably in the interests of the division of labour and the better service of the race. Will the female biologist of the far future trace with the graphic pen the gradual but deliberate extinction of the creature of her experiment?*<sup>65</sup>

The 'Recantation' was anthologised in the 1944 selection of poetry. It had none of the fiery sexual symbolism of the 'Mater Creatorix' poem written thirty years earlier. The 'Recantation' wrote of the poet's disillusion. The poet was 'Grey with the grief of the world and supremely alone / Weary of Cavalries climbed, cruel stone by red stone!'<sup>66</sup> At this time, Marie Pitt's health was in decline. She suffered a stroke in 1945 from which she never recovered and died in 1948. The assertive pro-feminism of 'Woman' had lost her edge in the 'Recantation' poem. She wrote of her disappointment with her own idealism and saw 'Glory...mocking me, mirage-like, and afar...Patient, aye, patient with patience...I have smiled on your vauntings and pitied your pride'.<sup>67</sup> Ironically, motherhood was the one role that superceded Pitt's other achievements.

I am immutable motherhood, grim as the grave,  
Old as the hills and the sea and the quickening spark,  
Back I say, back to the sunless and being dark!  
I have grown weary of giving and the gift I gave!<sup>68</sup>

The 'Recantation' poem could be read as a rejection of the socialist dream as well as a final indication that Pitt's literary career did not achieve the greatness she deserved. Her poetic voice alone could not change Australian society. Her last poetic interpretation of Australian nationhood was a national anthem written for an Australian Broadcasting Commission competition in 1942.

### **National affiliations**

Marie Pitt's anthem *Ave Australia!* was selected as the winning entry. It was a stirring rendition of Australia's national identity when set to music.<sup>69</sup> The first and final stanzas read:

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<sup>65</sup>Pitt, 'The Recantation', SETIS, op. cit., pp.106 -107 of 121.

<sup>66</sup>Lines 1 and 4 Stanza one.

<sup>67</sup>Stanza five, lines 17-18; Stanza nine, lines 35-37.

<sup>68</sup>Final stanza.

<sup>69</sup>Pitt, 'Ave Australia!', SETIS, op. cit., p. 4 of 121. *Ave Australia* was set to music by Sir Robert R. Garran, Nicholson's Sydney, 1946. Music manuscript score, 2p.

Fling out her flag to the world and the wrong in it!  
Thunder her name to the dawn that shall be!  
Ave Australia! Name with a song in it—  
Name of the free!

The 'old' nineteenth-century nationalist dream for a new 'dawn' for Australia resonated in the first and last stanzas. The second stanza paid homage to the exploration legacy of 'DeQuiros, Dirk Hartog and Flinders' when they followed the 'Cross of their dreaming...to break out the...ensign of a higher law'.<sup>70</sup> The anthem appealed to the 'Sons of the vanguard' to protect the genealogical pedigree of the pioneers who 'Quarried her quick soul from matrix and clod'.<sup>71</sup> The socialist dream lived on in the 'Pledge of faith that shall shrive glad earth again / Purged of decay'.<sup>72</sup>

The reference to 'De Quiros' in stanza two was followed with other poems written by Pitt about Australia's pre-foundation history. These were titled 'The Promised Land: De Quiros' Dream', and 'The Fulfilment: Australia'.<sup>73</sup> The name De Quiros may have been a perplexing identity to nominate as an historical founder given that official Australian histories nominated Flinders and Cook. The De Quiros name was raised by Cardinal Moran of Sydney as a counter-historical narration of Australia's foundation. Moran used this Spanish-Australian connection to assert Catholic claims to Australian foundational history. De Quiros apparently had named Australia as Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo or the southern land of the Holy Spirit.<sup>74</sup> G. F. Barwick translated the DeQuiros exploration journal in 1922 and noted how the discovery of Australia was impelled by Spanish-

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<sup>70</sup>Stanza two.

<sup>71</sup>Stanza three.

<sup>72</sup>Stanza four.

<sup>73</sup>First appeared in Edward A. Vidler, Ed., *Arts and Letters*, Hassell Press, Adelaide, 1922, pp. 15-17; Pitt, 'The Promised Land 1: De Quiros' Dream (Terra Australia\* del Espiritu Santo)' and 'The Fulfillment: Australia', SETIS, op. cit., pp. 5-10 of 121; B.J.Coman, 'La Australia del Espiritu Santo: Captain Quiros and the discovery of Australia in 1606', *Quadrant*, Volume 50, Number 5, May 2006, pp. 60-64; John Healey, 'The origins of the name 'Australia'', *South Australian Geographical Journal*, Volume 101, 2002, pp. 94-109.

<sup>74</sup>A. C. Macdonald, *Alleged Discovery of Australia by de Quiros in 1606: A Reply to Cardinal Moran's Second Pamphlet*, Melbourne, 1909, 26 p.; Patrick Francis Moran, *Was Australia Discovered by de Quiros In the Year 1606?*, Paper to the R.G.S. [Royal Geographic Society] of Australasia, 1st May, 1901, Observer Printing Works, Queensland, 1921, 23p.

Catholic interests in the southern oceans.<sup>75</sup> Given that Pitt's radical interpretations were underscored by explorations of marginalisation, the controversial name of De Quiros most likely suited her purpose to question historical myths since controversies remained about the historical accuracy of Australia's exploration history. Although published prior to the McAuley publication of the 'Captain Quiros' poem of the 1960s, Pitt's poems did not generate the same attention as the McAuley version did, including a theatrical production in the 1980s.<sup>76</sup>

Pitt attributed the history of Australia's foundation to De Quiros's individual initiative to explore the southern seas. Pitt ignored factual histories to capture the excitement and anticipation of the voyage that De Quiros was about to embark and which represented a poem about beginnings of Australian history:

In Callao the church bells ring,  
The pious people kneel and pray,  
The Mass is said, the sweet choirs sing  
For "such as tempt the sea today".  
But never merchant sailed so far  
For spice and gold and ivory,  
As these who track Adventurer's star  
Across a grey and ghostly sea.  
Westward they watched them sinking slow  
Three hundred years ago,  
Hull down, hull down from Callao  
For "*Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo*".

The De Quiros journey was narrated as an allegory of pilgrimage. Poetic license was taken in the third stanza with the reference to 'the white Cross in heaven swings'.<sup>77</sup> It was later discovered that De Quiros disobeyed regal protocol and flew his own personal standard.

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<sup>75</sup>G.D. Barwick, Ed., *The Discovery of Australia: Discovery Made by Pedro Fernandez De Quiros in the Southern Land and Completed For Him by Don Diego De Prado Who Was Afterwards a Monk of the Order of S. Basil, 1607*, Manuscript held in the State Library of New South Wales, 1922. Electronic resource: University of Sydney and State Library of New South Wales, 1998, 45 p.

Electronic citation: <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/oz/lit> [Accessed: 3.7.2006].

<sup>76</sup>The McAuley poem was the inspiration of the Peter Sculthorpe / Australian Broadcasting Commission 1982 operatic production of *Quiros*. Deborah Hayes, 'A Musical Vision of Australia', *Antipodes*, Volume 12, Number 2, December, 1998, pp. 73-80, James McAuley, *Captain Quiros: A Poem*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1964.

<sup>77</sup>The Cross represented the De Quiros name.

This act of disobedience would have appealed to Pitt's history of radicalism.<sup>78</sup> In terms of the poet's emigrant history, the journey of expectation that De Quiros took to Australia resonated with emigrants' desires to rehabilitate their lives in new countries. 'The Promised Land' was meaningful to the poet's emigration history and the poet's response to the Gippsland and Tasmanian periods:

The dreamers dream their dreams and die;  
Perhaps with hope their heaven is starred;  
Their way was rude, their goal was high,  
The stuff of dreams was their reward.

The imperial search for 'Austrialia' was propelled by colonial rivalry between England and Spain and to ensure Spanish dominance in the Pacific.<sup>79</sup> The epic poem 'The Fulfilment' was a thirty-one stanza appraisal that symbolised the promise of a new civilisation in the southern hemisphere — 'When the noontide splendour / Of Europe's pride had dwindled down to grey / When Greece and Rome had sunken in surrender / To baser triumphs of a lesser day'.<sup>80</sup>

The question of where 'We thy native-born' were located in this grandiose vision of civilisation was addressed through Pitt's adaptation of Australian pioneering history. Emigrants 'set their tents beside thy grey Gulf Waters...brave sons and braver daughters...wrest from Bush primeval vine of dreams...the splendid spirit of the Pioneers'.<sup>81</sup> There was a gesture to the Irish presence in the reference to 'Banshee winds down sunset gullies sobbing...ever shrouded...in the...sacrificial rite / Of earth's wan

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<sup>78</sup>'The Discovery of Torres Strait', *The Geographic Journal*, Volume 98, Number 2, August, 1941, pp. 91-102.

<sup>79</sup>Miguel Luque and Carlos Mondragón, 'Faith, Fidelity and Fantasy' in *The Journal of Pacific History*, Volume 40, Number 2, September, 2005, pp. 133-148. Also Robert J. King's analysis of the effects of Spanish/Portuguese treaties and subsequent impact on international treaties in the Pacific and state borders in Australia. The pre-histories of English sovereignty of the Australian mainland as an entire possession affect both the official history of Australian penal settlement in 1788 to show that England's imperial pride was stung into action because the Dutch and Spanish had beaten England in the Pacific region by having prior claims of sovereignty. Robert J. King, 'Terra Australis, New Holland and New South Wales: The Treaty of Tordesillas and Australia' in *Journal of the Australian Map Inc: The Globe*, Number 47, 1988, pp. 35-40.

<sup>80</sup>Pitt, 'The Fulfillment II', SETIS, op. cit., pp. 6-10 of 121.

<sup>81</sup>Excerpts from stanzas 8 and 11, *ibid*, p. 8 of 121.

millions climbing towards the light'.<sup>82</sup> The last stanzas of the epic reiterated Australian desires for freedom:

Let the old order go!— new faiths will quicken,  
New revelations flood the ways untrod,  
Levin the vales where old disorders thicken,  
And Justice shuffles at a monster's nod.  
Bid usurers and money-changers go....  
That made our father's house a house of woe!<sup>83</sup>

The final stanza of 'The Fulfilment' reiterated the Pitt ideals of a fair Australia 'clear above the fretting / Turmoil of Trade and blood-feud of the West...so that the... Eldorados man ...shall have to deal no more in fears and hates...in order...to...dwell beside thee at the Eastern Gates'.<sup>84</sup> The New Jerusalem beckoned in the chance for a new civilisation in the Antipodes.<sup>85</sup> Marie Pitt conceptualised an ideal Australian society through grandiose rhetoric and the symbolic iconography of religious metaphor and biblical allegory. The epic narratives of 'promise' and 'fulfilment' contextualised Pitt's vision of Post-Federalist Australia. Paradoxically, the symbolic language that was used in Marie Pitt's vision of Australia reinforced the ideological hierarchies of race in the socialist design for new utopias.<sup>86</sup>

### **The end of the journey?**

In speaking about her home country, Pitt's poetry dripped with visceral images of blood, damaged bodies and minds ignored in the mythologising of Australian cultural and social egalitarianism. She dealt with landscapes hidden from the mainstream. The question of 'looking for home in all the wrong places?' suggested difficulties in negotiating a cultural image of Australia that relied for authenticity on the use of symbolic language associated with Celtic mythology. The Gippsland period awakened a consciousness of inferiority associated with the lower rungs of Australian society. The Tasmanian period activated a political interest in writing about the gulf between bourgeois Australia and ordinary

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<sup>82</sup>Excerpts from stanzas 14 and 25, *ibid*, pp. 8-9 of 121.

<sup>83</sup>Stanza 30, *ibid*, p.10 of 121.

<sup>84</sup>Stanza 31, *ibid*, 10 of 121.

<sup>85</sup>Leo Scheps, 'Unkellying Quiros: A Gloss on Part II of James McAuley's 'Captain Quiros' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, September, 1994, pp. 18-31.

<sup>86</sup>D. R. Walker, Ed., *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 615-616.

workers and women. The Melbourne period directly attacked conservatism and apathy. Poetry written in the Melbourne period ranged across categories of social realism, balladic verse and epic narrative. Her poems articulated the problem of home-identity as an Australian-born daughter of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent. Despite feelings of displacement, marginalisation and dissatisfaction with Australian domestic society, the critical impasse of race could not be transformed by Celtic aesthetics. The poems analysed in this chapter suggest that Pitt's concepts of home country were underscored by a paradoxical sense of disconnection that simultaneously was underwritten by ultra-nationalist declarations of affiliation to 'Ave Australia!'

## CONCLUSION

### *And in the end?*

The thesis began with the proposition that beginnings are constitutively important when it comes to the type of language writers use to tell their stories. The theoretical construct of beginnings enabled an investigation of how rewriting and re-righting are analogous of journeys of identity that emigrants also undertake in re-fashioning their identities in countries of destination. In entering into the territories of culture, nationhood and identity, the question of ‘looking for home in all the wrong places?’ facilitated a way to intervene in the telling of stories about an earlier generation of Irish emigrants who appeared to have effortlessly have transformed themselves into a homogeneous Anglo-Celtic-Australian culture. Reflections on how Irish cultural identity has been framed in Australian historical, social and cultural discourses, as well as in my own emigration experiences, framed the interest of this thesis.

The challenge was to find a space in the writing of Australian and Irish cultural, political, national histories to discover how Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent wrote about *their* sense of home. I hypothesised that the writing of Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent would elaborate the critical problem of self-representation through an analysis of the writing histories of Mary Fullerton, Mary Grant Bruce and Marie Pitt. The aim was to redress the level of silence about Irish women’s experiences in Australia. The question for me has been: how did Irish women emigrants or their Australian-born daughters see their identity in relation to their Irish emigrant and Australian settler cultures? In reflecting on my own emigrant history and identity as an Irish woman in Australia, the means of my self-representation were freighted with the symbolic and tangible contents of a small suitcase that accompanied my journey to Australia. This obscure cultural object contained scraps and mementoes of my life and history that connected me imaginatively and emotionally to my Irish home. Through linking my own emigration history with the symbolism of that small brown case, the critical link to identity in turn rested on the constitution of home. The analytical question of ‘looking for home in all the wrong places’ helped me to conceptualise how

issues of self-representation are critical both to the histories of Irish women's identity in Australia and to the gendered exclusion of Irish women's experiences of settlement and also those of Australian-born daughters.

My approach was premised on individual readings of Irish identity that were marginal to public narratives of nationhood. The first chapter located the paternal genealogies of Irish emigrants George Evans Bruce, Robert Fullerton and Edward McKeown to investigate how claims of entitlement to Irish identity were shaped. Anglo-Irish George Evans Bruce read Irish identity through genealogical status and imperial pedigree. His notions of Ireland were influenced by Anglo settlement history in the seventeenth century and the propertied status of the Anglo-Irish establishment. Additional information on Anglo-Irish identity was traced through Elizabeth Bowen's intimate knowledge of the Bowen-Bruce history to show how Anglo-Irish claims of entitlement were maintained socially, culturally and politically. While Bruce's claims of genealogical entitlement suggested positive feelings towards Ireland, Linda Colley indicated that the term Anglo-Irish was subjected to intense scrutiny within English and Irish national narratives. The ambiguity of Anglo-Irish identity was inextricably bound up with imperial destinies and entitlements of kinship associated with English referents for national community and national identity. Evelyn Seton and George Evans Bruce found themselves confronted by the hyphenated spaces of Anglo-Irishness. They desired to be culturally aligned to Ireland but were constrained by their imperial histories and ambivalences of allegiance bound up with the imperialising of Ireland.

The small remnant of letters and family stories relating to Robert Fullerton's Ulster Presbyterian Irish identity indicated dissension from Protestant hegemony. He appeared to have betrayed the logic of separatism between Celtic Ireland and Protestant Ireland. He broke away from the Protestant-Loyalist traditions of Ulster Ireland prior to migrating to Australia. Fullerton's reading of Irish identity suggested an unorthodox rejection of sectarian nationalism. Edward McKeown was a silent figure in this chapter whose cultural history was read through dysfunctional tropes of social excess. This chapter illustrated that the notional concept of Irish identity was a contested term of reference in nineteenth-century discourses as well as a problematic and ambiguous metaphor in terms of defining an Irish cultural identity.

The second chapter explored the reception history of Irish emigrants in accounts of Australian nationhood. The aim was to elaborate how patterns of narration relayed particular ethno-cultural and political meanings of Irish identity that have constrained how Irish identity has been understood in Australian narratives. On one level, Irish identity has been limited to stereotypes and dysfunctional elements of criminality, political nationalism, social status and religious identity. On another level, their roles in history were played out as larrikins, rebels, or given to emotion, sentiment and nostalgia. Irish women's identity has also been subjected to determinations of morality, sexuality and class status in terms of her location and position within Australian history. Because of a limited understanding of Irish women's emigrant experiences in the Australian context, the extent of the gap in knowledge about Irish women and Australian-born daughters was revealed.

Irish women constituted half of the Irish migration chain since the eighteenth century but despite their numbers, little is known about Irish women's emigrant experiences. The accommodation of Irish women in Australian historical accounts raised questions about judgments, speculations and assumptions concerning sexuality, morality and social dysfunction and whether these accurately represented the lives and experiences of Irish women in Australia. Moreover, the Irish emigrant experience has been rendered silent in Irish national discourse. Their leaving made little difference to Ireland, and once forgotten, they literally disappeared from Irish national history. A similar silence was also noted in the Australian context. The Irish were presented in statistics but their settlement experiences reflected isolation. Particular ethno-cultural, social and gendered meanings of Irish identity in Australia lead to the question of how Australian-born women of Irish emigrant heritage negotiated Irish identity in their Australian writing.

In Chapter Three, I revisited theoretical concepts of home to further refine my approach in the thesis. Theories posited by Gaston Bachelard and references to the terms of 'domicide', homelessness, emigrant diaspora and dualities of location, indicated that identity is knitted into a complex fabric of signifying practices and cultural representations. Home is a critical site of self-representation inseparable from autobiography; hence metaphors of emigrant culture are constitutive reference points of identity. Home-making involves a complex rewriting and re-righting of identity as well as metaphorical, cultural and social landscapes.

Chapter Three considered the manner in which home functions anthropologically and metaphorically as an ideological and cultural sign of privilege and exclusion in the constitution of national histories. In reflecting how colonialising ideologies affect subjective and representational language, it was shown how colonising ideologies maintain and distinguish discursive and spatial hierarchies through the lenses of race, gender, nationality and class. The later part of the chapter explored how language exemplified the problem of self-representation in terms of how women approached their writing and indicated how choices about styles of writing and cultural frames of address can be at cross purposes to self-and-national portraiture.

In Chapter Four, I approached the notion of home through examining Mary Fullerton's writing journey. It was shown how the domestic space of Gippsland settlement expressed differences between the cultural geographies of Ireland, Australia and England. Home place was replete with metaphors of domesticity that reiterated the civilising metaphors of England that stood in contrast to the uncivilised and radical presence of Aboriginal Australia and Irish emigrants Robert Fullerton and Mrs Dwyer McMahan. The sketched versions of Gippsland selector society provided a template through which Fullerton attempted to insert her family's history into the story of Australian nationhood. The iterative symbols of self-sacrifice, endurance and stoicism were woven into Australian vernacular culture at the micro-cultural level of trivial and everyday domestic relations. These sketches framed Fullerton's thinking on race, gender and nationality and critically informed her notions of home in her later poetry and published texts.

The published version of *Bark House Days* may appear to have conformed to the mythologising of Australian nationhood but it was shaped at the margins of Australian settlement. This text showed how attempts were made to civilise the bush through replicating English culture. Her mother's attempts to enforce some semblance of domestication, either through having books in the house, or by her exhibiting exemplary domestic skills, or by having a neatly tended garden, ran counter to the temporary nature of settlement and the precariousness of settlement life. In turn, domestic metaphors offered insights into the construction of national identities and cultures, particularly in terms of English cultural and literary references that informed Mary Fullerton's literary aspirations.

Cultural references contained within the Fullerton bush home were related to performances of identity that have remained invisible. By investigating those ephemeral spaces, it was shown how they functioned to apportion gender, race and culture and the genealogical claims of Australian 'bush' history that patterned the writing protocols that Fullerton would use.

The designation of Irishness was accommodated in the metaphorical and cultural blackness of outside dwellings and life on the outside where the redoubtable violator of Australian social and cultural norms resided in the personage of Mrs Dwyer McMahan. In the wilderness Robert Fullerton and Irish co-exile Mrs Dwyer McMahan traversed a different space of identity that signalled non-conformity and autonomy but this also created conflicts when traversing the cultural geographies of Irish emigrant and Australian settler status. The shadows of English imperial history overlaid Fullerton's attempts to articulate the Irish emigrant experience through the cultural and historical geographies of Australia, Ireland and England. Moreover, spaces of domesticity indicated the failure of Australian settlement because it could not erase the Aboriginal presence in Gippsland. The sketches provided an unofficial reading of Australian settler-Aboriginal relations in Gippsland that suggested that not all settlers were morally comfortable with practices of eviction or indeed, with killings.

Chapter Five approached the issue of home by juxtaposing two voices at different ends of the Australian cultural and literary spectrum. Representations of home culture were submitted through Miles Franklin's iconographic status and Mary Fullerton's aspirations to become an Australian writer. Intimations of exclusion were found to be written into Australian national self-portraiture in my examination of ephemeral narratives of identity in diaries, social commentaries, letters, and literary criticism. Mary Fullerton's 'home-spun' writing seemed to create problems with identifying her nationality status as an Australian writer. Her unconventional writing and dense subject matter seemed to be too abstract for Miles Franklin's pragmatic prose style. Paradoxically, both Franklin and Fullerton strove to represent their claims of entitlement to Australia's cultural estate by referencing their identities through their bush pedigrees. Fullerton preferred to maintain an

individual sense of ownership in her writing that did not conform to the model of Australia that Franklin's writing personified.

Chapter Five showed how literary and cultural criticism maintained a gate-keeping role over what kinds of language that denoted Australian national culture. The pejorative self-nomenclature of 'Bark House Brat' symbolised a critical difference between Fullerton's writing and appropriate representations of Australian identity. Fullerton's writing was dismissed as 'home-spun' and primitive according to literary critics. Her expatriate status as an Australian writer compounded the problem of identifying where to place Fullerton on Australia's cultural register. Tom Inglis Moore saw Fullerton's poetry as characteristically Australian and forceful whereas McCartney criticised the lack of lyrical quality in Fullerton's poetic repertoire. A distinctive problem of self-representation related to language, type and style and hierarchy of values that was considered the *right* way of fulfilling the contract of Australian national identity. Fullerton attempted to step outside the norms of Australian literary aesthetics to represent the 'other' Australia, that being, the Aborigine and ordinary Australians. She grappled with the ambiguities of Australian 'native-born' culture in relation to a gendered and social inheritance that bore the shame and stigma of inferiority in assessments of her literary work. The effects of cultural and literary criticism needed to be investigated to show how the processes of rewriting and re-righting were constrained by opposing but complementary tensions and desires to authenticate the cultural home of Australia.

Criticism had significant impact on Fullerton's self-esteem and self-confidence as a writer. My analysis of her poetry, prose and private correspondence indicated the complexities of rewriting and re-righting her 'ancestral legacy' in order to become an Australian writer. Home was of consequence in Fullerton's writing, not only as a means that literary critics used to qualify the credentials of writing that represented Australian culture, but also an issue of significance where Fullerton's poems exhibited the characteristics of dislocation, exile and homelessness. Mary Fullerton covered a range of subject-material and writing genres, subjected herself and her writing to scrutiny, and struggled to resolve the problem of self-representation as a 'native-born' Australian. Writing the metaphorical maps of her father's Irish homeland was an unsatisfactory homecoming, not only because of her

disappointment with Yeats' vision of Irish culture but because the synthetic address to Celtic fantasia placed Fullerton in an unresolvable position as the paternal history of imperialist invader of Ireland disconnected her from the Celt. That disconnectedness was also felt in poems about Australia. On one hand, as the transgressor of norms, Fullerton could reach out to different topographical landscapes and engage with controversial topics, such as Aboriginal art. On the other hand, Fullerton grappled with the ambiguous location of Australian 'native' identity but maintained that Aborigines and other races were not to be included. The 'Bark-House brat' was a term signified an inheritance of exile that bore the shame and stigma of inferiority in assessments of her literary work.

In contrast to Fullerton's self-conscious efforts to repatriate a sense of connection to Ireland in her Australian writing, Ireland was a central trope of identity mobilised in Mary Grant Bruce's writing where Billabong Australia replicated the Anglo-Irish model of privilege, status and class. The fictional characters and genealogical credentials of Anglo-Ireland were culturally inscribed through codes of domesticity that connoted an ideal family life. The Bruce family history in Ireland was conveyed in landscape symbols associated with the Irish 'Big House' and 'Big' and 'Little' Billabong. Editorial sub-commentaries from George Evans Bruce were inserted into the Billabong narratives as a means of authenticating Irish cultural narratives. In the Billabong schema, George Evans Bruce and Mary Grant Bruce could claim vicarious entitlement to Irish identity through the positional authority of their Anglo-Irish surrogate status as well as through genealogical inheritance. The allegorical Anglo-Irish 'Big House' symbolised the epitome of imperial nationhood in terms of masculine metaphors of mateship, gender and status. The merger of those estates in Bruce's narration of Australian nationhood membership projected an ideal community in which people could live together. It was shown how the 'unsettlers' represented by the rebellious Irish-born emigrant Mary-Kate Reilly could be dispatched out of sight through subtle maneuvers to enforce the domestic order of Billabong. Signifiers of cultural homogeneity were authenticated by the Bruce family history and recounted through fictional genealogies that replicated the order of Anglo-Irish society in Australia.

Unlike her famous sister-in-law, Evelyn Seton's letters demonstrated contradictory readings of empire mythology. Seton was as critical of the British Empire, and while overtly imperialist in her thinking, was prepared to show how England's political ineptitude had contributed to worsening the problem in Ireland in 1916 and in the 1940s. Her letters indicated an ambiguous patriotism for Ireland and one that had been eroded by constant conflict about Irish identity. As the exemplar of empire hero in the Billabong series, George Evans Bruce's letters conveyed a chilling psychopathology with which colonialism was enacted in Nigeria and elsewhere. Those incidental narratives were linked into the mythologies of Australian imperial history during the First World War in terms of Mary Grant Bruce's attempts to secure her fictional characters to national hegemony. The autobiographical relationship to Ireland in the First World War facilitated a way for Bruce, through the Lintons, to literally step back into Irish history to take up the vacated power of Anglo-Irish history. The symbolic decline of the British Empire in Ireland was represented through the metaphorical ruins of the O'Donnell estate.

Mary Grant Bruce's fictional recreations of rural Australian life presented a challenge to read beyond the scripts of Australian national culture between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries where the fictional world of Billabong Australia reproduced the class identity of an Anglo-Irish genealogy privileged and made coherent by virtue of race, socio-economic status and property. The crafting of idyllic Billabong adhered closely to the genealogical profile of the imperialising history of the Bruce family in Cork and was encoded into the domestic structures of the Billabong homestead and hierarchical accommodations of masculinity, femininity, race and ethnicity contained within its precinct.

The child-woman icon of Australian girlhood, Norah Linton, mobilised a sexual economy through an inclusive and idealised father-daughter relationship that articulated an intense familial surveillance to prevent the order of Billabong from disintegrating. Unique characteristics of 'mateship' were employed to show how the genealogical pedigree of Billabong Australia would remain preserved. The exchange between recently arrived Irish child-emigrant Mary-Kate Reilly, and the Australian-born daughter of Irish emigrant descent, Norah Linton, indicated how the Reillys were to be re-made into an acceptable

image of Australianness. Under the disguise of Australian hospitality, the Reillys had their autonomy removed when their 'Bog Cottage' was restored to the model that Norah and Tommy desired. In compliance with Norah's wishes Mary-Kate was removed from school. Thus, their voices were made redundant in the commission of imperial nationality. The Reillys remained secluded in the 'Bog Cottage' which was of less importance than 'Big' and 'Little' Billabong and the pretty 'Creek Cottage' where the ideal genealogical pedigrees of Australianness and Englishness cohabited as reciprocal nationalities and inheritors of the Billabong empire.

Ireland was a critical referent of identity in the Billabong series. Bruce could rehabilitate its ideological function to mediate the dilemma of Irish politics. Anglo-Irishness would assist in the recovery of the imperial nation. Her father, husband and sons were Irish-born. Irishness mediated social conflict in Billabong, allowed a means for restoring the Olgivie estate. Anglo-Irishness was written into military honour, and importantly, was a valuable asset that could reclaim a space for Anglo-Irish identity in Australian culture. Chapter Six drew extensively on the role of the Bruce narration of Australian childhood to demonstrate how the iconographic status of Norah Linton iterated the claims of Anglo-Irishness to an Australian identity. Anglo-Irishness certified the 'right' characteristics of national entitlement as well as shaping the desired form of respectable femininity that Australian womanhood was deemed to be.

Chapter Seven turned to another aspect of the telling of the story of the Irish in Australia in my examination of the correspondence history of George Evans Bruce and Evelyn Seton. That correspondence relayed the ambivalences of Irish cultural identity in the roles of imperial coloniser and as Irish national subjects. This is an important chapter because it showed how autobiographic realism represented markers of Irish cultural authenticity in the Billabong narratives. The Bruces served the empire well through the mythologising the characteristics of heroism and self-sacrifice and the authentication of imperial loyalty whereby Ireland was positioned within the empire and not as a separate national identity. Billabong Australia was reflected through George Evans Bruce's military history and in imperialising ideologies of race and nationality.

Letters written by George Evans Bruce when on military tour in Africa however, traced the ambivalences of Anglo-Irish allegiance to empire. The Bruce-Seton letters showed how cultural patriotism for Ireland was measured against the fissures of national histories, cultural identity and imperial rule. Evelyn Seton's wrote about the level of terrorism unleashed on Irish civilians during the 1920s. The fictional recreation of empire in the Billabong series maintained the illusions of heroism in the portrayal of ultimate sacrifice and actions of the loyal Anglo-Irish O'Neill and the returning Irish emigrant priest. Mary Grant Bruce's fictional writing recreated a unique ecology of personal experiences and patriotic duty to secure the symbolic legacy of the paternal estate that had been brought to ruination in Ireland. Billabong and Ireland merged as equivalent genealogical destinies that perpetuated the order of ascendancy undertaken by rural Australia's land-holder classes. In preserving the imperial estate, Billabong Australia ensured that the 'Big House' retained its significance despite the denouement of Irish national politics.

In Chapters Eight and Nine, I adapted the appellation of 'Bog Cottage' from *Billabong Australia* to understand how Marie Pitt articulated her life as the Australian-born daughter of nineteenth-century Irish-Catholic emigrant Edward McKeown. In Chapter Eight, I proposed that the etiology of the 'bog' resided in stereotypes and connotations of Irishness that represented primitivism and ignorance. In portraying those characteristics, Edward McKeown was presented as indifferent image of responsible citizenship in Australia by refusing to have his children educated and by his preference for alcohol and horses. The analogical signifier of the 'Bog Cottage' has metaphorical and cultural significance when it comes to describing phases of residence synonymous with the phenomenology of corners and Marie McKeown-Pitt's philosophy of hatred towards Australian society.

The boglands at Doherty's Corner presented Pitt's poetic imagination with an opportunity to reclaim a lost childhood through Celtic myth and fairy. The metaphorical symbolism of the Celtic world helped to restore an imaginative symmetry with an Australian landscape continually denuded by flood and fire. Traces of Pitt's emigrant heritage were seen in her use of the compositional techniques of ballad and Irish lament poems. The language register of mourning and bereavement was evident in both subject matter and in the themes of injustice, hate and hope. The phases of residence in Gippsland and Tasmania informed a

repertoire of hatred that related to the degraded status of gender and nationality that Marie Pitt refined to attack Australian society through socialist philosophies.

The poet's dream of resolving the crisis between the social and cultural stigma of gender, class and ethnicity would be carried into the politics of Australian nationhood between 1905 and 1948. Marie Pitt's poetic responses to the location of home-identity were framed by a consciousness of exile which contributed to the sense of inferiority she endured as one of the rejected of Australian society. The effect of exile is evident when comparing the general silence of Irish women's voices in Australian national histories.

In adopting the political tenets of socialism, Marie Pitt was drawn into an alternative community of Australian-born people of Irish emigrant descent. Her literary and political world merged with aspirations to challenge the constitution of Australian imperial nationality. Pitt's poetry took on the symbolic role of Irish rebel in promulgating a new future for Australia. Socialism held the ideal solution for class, social and gender equality. Her poetic appeals to Jesus of Nazareth and her preference to be in company of 'Judas, Barabbas or Nazarene' adopted a quasi-religious iconography associated with the traditions of Irish Catholicism. Pitt's role in Australian literary politics, however, was shadowed by a better-known Irish-Australian writer, the poet Bernard O'Dowd. The O'Dowd-Pitt common-law relationship set a problem of determining the level of influence the partnership had on Marie Pitt's poetry and the reception of Marie Pitt's writing in Australian literary anthologies and by literary critics.

When writing about her home country, Pitt's poetry engaged with the viscerality of life, with damaged bodies and minds ignored in the mythologising of Australian egalitarian society. Her cultural patriotism was testified by the winning entry of 'Ave Australia!' that exalted Australian nationhood. Instead of drawing from foundational narratives, Pitt rewrote Australia's beginnings by recalling the less well-known history of Ferdinand de Quiros who set out to find the great southern land of the Holy Spirit. The vision of a New Jerusalem emerged in Pitt's attempts to recreate an iconic vision of Australian nationhood.

I anticipated that home would represent a problematic metaphor of identity for Irish-Australian women writers between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. I disagreed with the ways Irish identity has been written in Australian national and historical discourses and believed that stories about Irish women's identity could be revealed by an examination of ephemeral narratives of identity. While historians, including David Fitzpatrick and Patrick O'Farrell, provided extensive scholarship on the nature of Irish identity in Australia, the term 'great unknown' described the extent of the lack of knowledge about Irish women's emigrant experiences. The gap in knowledge extended to questions about how Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent constructed the terms of their self-representation. Assumptions, inferences and speculations about the nature of Irishness invited a re-thinking of Irish-Australian emigrant identity as histories have predominantly articulated how Irish clerical, literary, political and religious elites contributed to the making of Australia. Further, the imaging of Irish women's identity has tended to cluster the performance of Irish womanhood in pejorative and dysfunctional tropes and ethnographic characterisations.

Historical meanings of gender, morality, sexuality and dysfunction have produced a way of 'knowing' the Irish in terms of religion, culture and politics and in ethnographic generalisations that have occluded the diversity of Irish culture. The Irish were portrayed as victimless victims of imperialism, a fun-loving antidote to a conservative colonial order, or the quintessential rebel fighting for lost causes while personality characteristics have written over the critical effects of race-relations. Irish womanhood has been reconstructed according to ideas about motherhood, faith and sanctity and conversely, immorality, religious, social and sexual dysfunction. Signs of criminality and social displacement convey a moralising of Irish womanhood mobilised by assumptions about the deficiencies of gender and Irish Catholicism. The Irish constituted an historical paradox because they were generally well received in Australia but not treated as equal colonial citizens or national subjects because of incipient fears about their allegiance to Australia an imperial nationality based on its relationship with England.

This thesis is my own interpretation of how each of these women writers negotiated their nationality and citizenship status as United Kingdom-Australian imperial settlers. Rather than showing an unproblematic seamlessness between emigrant and settler cultures in Australia, the notional constructs of home and beginnings reveal that Australian-born daughters of nineteenth-century Irish emigrant descent did not find such seamlessness in their writing. Race theories were not the exclusive provenance of Anglo-Protestantism as suggested by O'Farrell's victimless theories of Irish-Catholic oppression. Catholic-Irish Marie Pitt was vociferous in attacking the potential racial contamination of White Australia and recommended transportation for cross-racial intercourse. Symptomatically, Mary Grant Bruce replicated the racialised thinking of George Evans Bruce by deferring to the masculine logic of an imperial hero protecting the empire's ideals. Mary Fullerton attempted to locate Aboriginal Australia through merging the histories of paganism associated with Celtic archeological remains but could not concede Aboriginal art work as having the same creative aesthetic identified in English poetry and literature. How race identity is constituted is most critical in determining how Irish concepts of race identity relate to the broader racialisation of Australian colonial history. Post-colonial theorists suggest that colonised peoples take on dual identities of resistance and collaboration to preserve their interests and agency in the process of colonisation. In conceptual and cultural terms, Aboriginal Australia remained at the edges of Irish consciousness, outside the radical revisions of Australian identity promulgated by the socialist humanism of Marie Pitt.

Further areas of research were opened up in the process of investigating the nature of the Irish diaspora in Australia. As an example, Vida Goldstein's cultural identity was shaped by nineteenth-century Irish-Australian emigration history. Little is known about the history or experiences of nineteenth-century Irish-Jewish emigrants to Australia. Such research would demonstrate another instance where the diversity of Irish emigrant identity in Australia has not been fully appraised. By raising some of the difficulties of locating home as an issue of rewriting and re-righting, and not as a question of loyalties or allegiances to a presumed image of national culture, I hope that a different understanding has been revealed about the Irish women's experiences in Australia. The writing of national histories deserves

to be scrutinised. Beginnings are valid analytical pathways to trace discursive and cultural links hidden from view by official anthologies, showing that writing is not simply a technical skill, but an embodiment of aspirations, hopes and dreams in the fragile boats of language that determine how the journey will be experienced and represented.

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## ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

### Mary Grant Bruce (1878-1958)

(a) State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Library, Australian Manuscripts Collection  
Personal and family documents, newspaper cuttings, handwritten notes and typescripts of literary works, family photographs and personal ephemera.  
Correspondence between Mary Grant Bruce and Ward Lock and Co., 1939-1954.  
Correspondence between Ethel Turner and Ward Lock and Co., 1928-1954.  
Royalties, sales figures, and problems with printing during World War II.  
Personal correspondence to family members in Australia, including the death of son Patrick Bruce in Ireland.  
Bruce-Seton papers consist of correspondence with publishers and family members, manuscripts and typescripts of literary works and miscellaneous items on Irish history.

(b) National Library of Australia, Manuscript Section (ANL:MS)

Bruce papers

Manuscript drafts of *Hugh Stanford's Luck*, Cornstalk, Sydney, 1925 and *Robin*, Ward Lock, London, 1926.

### Mary Eliza Fullerton (1868-1946)

(a) State Library of New South Wales (NSL:R)

Miles Franklin papers.

Unpublished novels, 1900-1949.

Short stories and sketches, 1905-1954.

Unpublished plays, 1908-1952, including *Call Up Your Ghosts*, 1945, written with Dymphna Cusack and Tom Collins at Runnymede.

Film scripts, 1920-1925

Verse written with Kate Baker.

Draft of *Laughter Not For A Cage*, 1951-1954

Essays and articles, 1939-1946 on Joseph Furphy.

Talks, 1937-1951 on Joseph Furphy and Rose Scott, 1951.

Miscellaneous papers, 1901-1954

Papers collected, 1902-1951 include notes on Tennyson by Joseph Furphy.

Verse, 1902-1951, including poems by Mary Fullerton, Ray Mathew, 1951, Rose Scott, 1902, Ian Mudie.

Fullerton papers 1910-1946

Manuscript drafts and literary reviews

(b) State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Library, Australian Manuscripts Collection

Fullerton papers and correspondence

Letters to Emily and Sophie Fullerton, 1929-1932.

Mary Fullerton to Alma Chester, her nephew's wife, 1946.

Miles Franklin to Emily Fullerton 1933-1944 concerning Mary's writing and money advanced to

Emily by Franklin for Emily to purchase a millinery business.

Manuscript poems and short stories.

Scrapbook of material relating to Mary E. Fullerton and the Fullerton family, containing drafts of

poetry by Mary E. Fullerton, newspaper cuttings on various topics, and other miscellaneous material.

Also album of newscuttings

(c) National Library of Australia, Manuscript Section (ANL:MS)

Fullerton papers

Articles and stories by Mary Fullerton taken from periodicals when first published (95 articles).

Unpublished literary manuscripts written by Fullerton.

1920s-1940s letters to relatives in Australia.

Photograph album. 6.

17 monographs including *The Legacy Of Bunyon* by Rev. W.Y. Fullerton, London, 1928 inscribed by Mary Fullerton.

Scripts of *The Australian Bush*, 1928, *The Breaking Furrow*, 1921 and *Moods And Melodies*, 1908.

Marie Pitt (1869-1948)

(a) Australian Defence Force Academy, University College Library - Australian Special Research Collection (ADFA)

Colleen Burke manuscript collection- drafts for *Doherty's Corner: The Life And Work Of The Poet Marie E. J. Pitt*, 1985.

(b) National Library of Australia, Manuscript Section

Pearce Papers (Harry Hastings, 1897-1984).

Personal papers of Harry Hastings Pearce and early twentieth century Australian literary figures collected by Pearce.

Family and general correspondence, diaries, biographical papers, notebooks, scrapbooks, writings by Pearce including poetry, articles, speeches and pamphlets.

Photographs, drawings, articles, publications relating to Pearce's interests in Australian poetry and literature, folklore, book collecting and rationalist and free thought movements in Australia & N.Z.. Involvement in organizations, Henry Lawson Memorial and Literary Society, Bread and Cheese Club, Australian Poetry

Lovers' Society, Folklore Society of Victoria. Pearce's works on 'The true John Shaw Neilson' and 'On the origins of Waltzing Matilda'.

Correspondence, literary manuscripts, notebooks and scrapbooks on Bernard O'Dowd, E.J. Turner,

Henry Lawson, Ethel and G.W. Fielding, John Shaw Neilson, Alfred John Jarvis, Edward Harrington,

Marie Pitt, E.J. Brady and others.

(c) State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Library, Australian Manuscripts Collection

Pitt papers

Four letters to E.J. Brady, three concerning Brady's attempts to write a biography of J.F. Archibald, editor of the *Bulletin*.

Signed carbon copies of letters from Brady to Pitt.

Letter from Bernard O'Dowd to Brady with a short reminiscence of Archibald Frank Williamson letter to Pitt, 1924.

Three page poem dedicated to the late J.F. Archibald.

Cutting from the 'Red Page' of the *Bulletin*.

Proofs of *The Horses Of The Hills* poems with corrections.

Letters to James Devaney, 1939-1941.

Harry Hooton letter to James Devaney, 29 April 1941.

Bernard O'Dowd letters to E.J. Brady, 6 February 1922 explaining his relationship with Marie Pitt.

O'Dowd letters to R.H. Croll, 5 June 1909, John Le Gay Brereton, 1 July and 22 August 1915.

Draft by Brereton satirizing O'Dowd's poetry.

Group photograph of Pitt, O'Dowd, Vance and Nettie Palmer and R.H. Croll.

#### National collections

*Indices of Wills and Estates* (Ireland) 1830-1920

*Public Records of Northern Ireland, 1850-1922*, Belfast.

*National Archives of Ireland, 1850-1922*, Dublin.

*National Census on Ireland, 1851-1911*, Dublin.

*County Records Cork, 1740-1850*, Cork.

*Thoms Directory, Indices of Wills and Estates in Ireland: 1800-1922*, National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

State Library of Victoria – SLV

State Library of New South Wales – SLNSW

Public Records Office of Northern Ireland - PRONI