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Place and Displacement
as Major Structural and Thematic Elements
in Some Australian Novels

Kerryn Lee Goldsworthy, B.A. (Hons.)

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SUMMARY

The thesis concerns the notion of place and its importance in a selection of twentieth-century Australian novels. The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate the way in which the authors involved are concerned not merely with the ideas of landscape and 'spirit of place', but with the ways in which these and other aspects of the idea of place can be used as an important element in the thematic development of the novel, and as a determinant of its structure.

The thesis is divided into three main sections. The first of these examines two novels in the convict genre, Hal Porter's The Tilted Cross and Thomas Keneally's Bring Larks and Heroes. The first chapter concerns the notion of place as punishment, and examines the way in which Porter and Keneally emphasise the hostile and punitive aspects of the landscape and atmosphere of Australia. The second chapter deals with the novelists' use of the Antipodean myth and its underlying principle of inversion; the geographical reversals of the Southern Hemisphere are used to provide a parallel for the miscarriages of justice which occur in both novels. The final chapter in this section deals with the authors' use of classical and

Christian mythology and its archetypal places of punishment and reward.

The second section deals with some novels by Australian expatriate writers: Henry Handel Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, Christina Stead's *For Love Alone*, Martin Boyd's four Langton novels, and George Johnston's *My Brother Jack* trilogy. The first of the three chapters in this section concerns attitudes to place in expatriate writing generally, and makes some comparison between American and Australian expatriate writing. The second chapter deals with the themes of alienation and exile; the third examines the novelists' use of the Ulysses myth and the variations on this theme which relate to the idea of place: the use and significance of sea imagery; the theme of the quest and the search for a spiritual home; and the idea of the voyage.

The final section deals with the eleven novels of Patrick White. The first chapter examines the idea of place as a determinant of narrative structure in all of White's novels. The second deals with the relation between the individual and the landscape in *The Tree of Man* and *Voss*; the third with the theme of the journey and the parallels between physical and spiritual voyages in *The Aunt's Story*, *Voss* and *A Fringe of Leaves*. The last chapter concerns the importance of houses and the idea of the temple, the place of worship, in White's work.

The thesis is concluded by a brief comparative summary of the three sections. The different ways in which the authors discussed in the first two sections create and use a specific and sharply defined image of Australia are examined and compared with the approach of Patrick White, the 'universal' quality of whose work is regarded by many critics as a final stage in the growth to maturity of Australian literature.

STATEMENT

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university; nor, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does it contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text or footnotes.

Kerryn Goldsworthy

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ABBREVIATIONS

Section Two of this thesis deals with eleven different novels, two or more of which are often discussed together; to avoid confusion and for the sake of consistency, quotations from these novels are identified throughout this section with the following abbreviations:

AF: Australia Felix
WH: The Way Home
UT: Ultima Thule
FLA: For Love Alone
TCC: The Cardboard Crown
DYM: A Difficult Young Man
OL: Outbreak of Love
WBS: When Blackbirds Sing
MBJ: My Brother Jack
CSN: Clean Straw For Nothing
ACC: A Cartload of Clay

Page numbers given for primary sources throughout the thesis refer to editions cited in the list of works consulted.

INTRODUCTION

The thesis concerns the use of the idea of place in fiction, within the field of the twentieth-century Australian novel. The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate how the importance of place in Australian novels is not confined to the 'landscape obsession' which is the subject - or, as he puts it, the 'burden' - of Brian Elliott's survey of Australian poetry;[1] nor to the evocation of that 'spirit of place' which is almost a tangible presence in the Australian literary atmosphere. The novelists here discussed use the notion of place as a cornerstone in the construction of their fiction; landscape and setting are not merely a backdrop for the drama of human experience which is the stuff of fiction, but an essential part of, and sometimes a determinant of, that experience.

This much is true to some extent of all fiction. American novelist and short-story writer Eudora Welty argues that location is an essential factor in making fiction credible; that whatever vagaries of character and plot a writer might conceive, these can be brought to life in the reader's imagination only through their confinement to the unavoidable realities of place:

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[1] Brian Elliott, The Landscape of Australian Poetry (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1967), p. 321.

> Place in fiction is the named, identified, concrete, exact and exacting, and therefore credible, gathering-spot of all that has been felt, is about to be experienced, in the novel's progress ... place ... is for the writer writing simply locus. It is where the particular story he writes can be pinned down, the circle it can spin through and keep the state of grace, so that for the story's duration the rest of the world suspends its claim upon it and lies low ...[2]

Place is seen here as a basic structural element in fiction, a kind of ground plan against which the architecture of character and event can be developed. But in addition to this, within the context of Australian literature, the combination of the singular history with the even more singular geography of Australia lends itself generously to metaphor and symbolism; in Australian literature the recurrent themes of justice and authority, of alienation and exile, of reconciliation and redemption, are all inextricably bound up with the nature of the country, its social history and its landscape.

In the novels considered here, parallels are drawn between place and character, or between place and theme: the house is an extension of the self; landscape reflects society; physical journeys reflect psychological or spiritual journeys; homelessness reflects the alienation of the individual from society or from God. The symbolism of place provides a connection between the physical and the metaphysical in human experience; maps, journeys, temples, prisons, are all used as potent symbols in tracing the progress of the human spirit.

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[2] Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction," South Atlantic Quarterly, 55 (1956), 62, 69.

The novels considered here have been chosen chiefly because they invite comparison in this context. Certain themes and images pertaining to place recur throughout this selection of novels, while the novels within each section have obvious bases for comparison.

The contrast between Australia and Europe is implicit in *The Tilted Cross* and *Bring Larks and Heroes*, and explicit in the works of the four expatriate writers. Porter and Keneally use as part of their overall design a specific interpretation of the relation between landscape and society; while Patrick White emphasises in several novels the contrast between the subtle beauties of landscape and the crude ugliness of settlement, and, in *The Tree of Man* and *Voss*, explores the relation of the individual to the landscape. Variations on the themes of journey and quest appear in the works of the expatriate writers and again in three of White's novels, *The Aunt's Story*, *Voss*, and *A Fringe of Leaves*. A preoccupation with particular houses is apparent in some of the expatriate novels, especially *The Cardboard Crown* and *My Brother Jack*, and reappears in more than half of White's novels. Land and sea, sea and city, city and country are contrasted to symbolise opposing values and ideas in, especially, *The Fortunes of Richard*

Mahony, For Love Alone, and Voss; and the use of places from classical and Christian mythology as symbols of various kinds is surprisingly frequent in all three groups of novels.

The first section is a close comparative analysis of Hal Porter's The Tilted Cross (1961) and Thomas Keneally's Bring Larks and Heroes (1967). It examines the ways in which, and the reasons why, these two authors have resurrected old ideas about the Antipodes in the semi-mythic landscapes which loom in the foreground of their novels. In The Landscape of Australian Poetry, Brian Elliott observes that

> [The] concept of the 'reversal of nature' was a commonplace of late eighteenth century thinking about antipodean countries ... Whatever contributed to the view of 'nature reversed' was seized upon eagerly ... So long as these antipodean perversities were merely noted, the information was curious and interesting. But we see they were also constantly exploited in an emotional way, so that prejudice commonly clouded judgement.[3]

Porter and Keneally, in a detached and deliberate way, make use of the same kind of emotional exploitation; their convict-era landscapes are heavily weighted with negative emotional connotations. The first chapter in this section deals with the novelists' emphasis on the hostile and destructive aspects of landscape and the way that this is used to mirror the brutality and injustice of human character and actions in the societies of the penal colonies. The second chapter examines the novelists' use of the Antipodean myth; not only are details of landscape and climate used to project the view of 'nature reversed', but this principle of inversion is extended to the two novelists' common theme of justice. In a land which seems to its inhabitants a parody of the world they know, the codes of human conduct and belief are likewise parodied.

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[3] Elliott, pp. 14-15. For earlier antipodean visions, see Ian Donaldson, The World Upside-Down: Comedy From Jonson to Fielding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 78-98.

The last chapter in this section deals with Porter's and Keneally's use of the myths of place. Australia is represented as the Hades of classical mythology, as a parody of Eden, and as an ironic reversal of the Utopia which the country was once supposed to be. Porter and Keneally are, moreover, engaged in a kind of myth-making of their own. In using their landscape caricatures as a framework for novels that are more akin to moral fable than to historical fiction, they are representing the convict era as something even worse than it actually was; as a manifestation of evil victorious and unredeemed. It is as though both novelists are trying to encapsulate and perhaps thus to exorcise the amorphous and ambiguous guilt that is a legacy left by the convict era to the Australian imagination, in the same way that writers of the American South express and attempt to contain and define, through the violence intrinsic to much of their work, their consciousness of the violent history of the region.

Writing of the convict era in Australia, Judith Wright observes that

> It is perfectly true that America was once a convict settlement and has vigorously forgotten the fact. We could not do it - we have not even tried to do it. The fact of Australia's convict-settlement origin has a deep meaning in our twentieth-century consciousness, as it had in the nineteenth century. It symbolizes a kind of split in our collective mind that is as important today as it ever was.[4]

This 'split', Wright argues, is a separation still discernible in our collective consciousness between the promise of regeneration and hope and the guilt of exile, both of which were implicit in the convicts' arrival in a new land. The continuing preoccupation of such as Porter and Keneally with the convict era and its relevance to contemporary Australian society - and this is also apparent in Patrick White's Voss and A Fringe of Leaves - is perhaps an attempt to define, comprehend, and finally exorcise the obscure sense of historical guilt which Wright still saw in 1961 as responsible for the 'split of consciousness' in the Australian imagination.

In the second section, selected works by four expatriate Australian novelists are considered in the light of recurrent themes pertaining to the notion of place. The novels discussed in this section are Henry Handel Richardson's The Fortunes of Richard Mahony (1930);

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[4] Judith Wright, "The Upside-down Hut" (1961); rpt. in The Writer in Australia, ed. John Barnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 332.

Christina Stead's For Love Alone (1945); Martin Boyd's four Langton novels - The Cardboard Crown (1952), A Difficult Young Man (1955), Outbreak of Love (1957), and When Blackbirds Sing (1962); and George Johnston's trilogy - My Brother Jack (1964), Clean Straw For Nothing (1961), and A Cartload of Clay (1971).

The first chapter in this section, "Expatriate Writing and Attitudes to Place", is intended merely as a general summary of the extensive work already done in this field, and to provide a wider context of social and literary history as a background for the more specific critical analyses of the above-named novels in the two following chapters.

On the whole, the expatriate experience - at least in so far as it is reflected in Australian literature - seems characterised by two contrasting aspects: firstly, the emotionally or spiritually negative sense of alienation and exile; secondly, the more positive notion of having some mission or quest.

Chapter Five examines aspects of the theme of alienation which recur in three of the four works under discussion - The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, the Langton novels, and the My Brother Jack trilogy. These three works are pervaded by an uneasy sense of displacement, a consciousness of geographical insecurity and flux which heightens the feeling of alienation and separateness, from society or from God, experienced by the novels' major characters. This sense of displacement is expressed in a variety of ways. In Boyd's novels, the Langtons are concerned with preserving their ancestral and family ties on both sides of the equator, and coming to terms with the resulting 'geographical schizophrenia'; in Johnston's trilogy, the breaking of family ties - David Meredith's realisation that he does not really fit in the family pattern - is closely equated with his recognition of himself as an expatriate. In the work of all three novelists, a preoccupation with disbanding or disintegrating households is part of a more general concern with the idea of perpetual homelessness, the feeling of not really belonging to any society or country. Finally, one of Boyd's novels and two of Johnston's examine the disorienting effects of war on the individual and society.

Chapter Six, "Looking For Ithaca", examines the more positive aspects of the expatriate experience in these four works. The ideas of freedom and quest - the obverse, as it were, of alienation and exile - are important in all four works, and are specifically and closely associated in two of them with the Ulysses myth; Stead and Johnston both equate their central characters with the figure of Ulysses. All four works, however, deal with wanderers in search of some ultimate goal. In all but the Langton novels, the sea is an important symbol of freedom, but also of potential danger and destruction; with regard to The

Odyssey - although none of the novelists specifically alludes to this - it is interesting to note that although Ulysses is by nature a seafaring wanderer, and the sea is the element with which he and his home are most closely associated, it is the sea-god Poseidon who is mainly responsible for the trials and delays suffered by Ulysses during his voyage home. As The Odyssey is as much about the nature of Ulysses' voyage itself as about his homecoming, so, in Stead's and Johnston's novels, the idea of the voyage as an end in itself is emphasised. Each makes use of the idea of a journey through life; the voyage becomes a metaphor for the individual's progress towards understanding and fulfilment.

The theme of the quest is a central element in all four works. The quest is always for some state of mind or way of life, not for any specific place; what the characters seek is the achievement of, or return to, some ideal state of existence. In his essay on expatriate literature, "Literature and Exile",[5] Harry Levin argues that

> The history of civilization itself could be reckoned by an endless sequence of migrations ... Somewhere in the dark backwards behind them all looms the archetype of a Paradise Lost, a glimpse of a primeval garden or ideal realm from which mankind has been exiled for its sins. The Judeo-Christian tradition has constantly looked back toward that original idyll and ahead toward a Paradise Regained.

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[5] Harry Levin, "Literature and Exile" (1961); rpt. in his Refractions: Essays in Comparative Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 67-68.

Movement about the world, the act of voyage itself, is the only way that the characters in these novels can express their quest through action; the ideal state of existence which they seek is symbolised by the lost Eden, mankind's true home.

The final section of the thesis deals with the novels of Patrick White: *Happy Valley* (1939), *The Living and the Dead* (1941), *The Aunt's Story* (1948), *The Tree of Man* (1956), *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961), *The Solid Mandala* (1966), *The Vivisector* (1970), *The Eye of the Storm* (1973), *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), and *The Twyborn Affair* (1979). It is intended to provide a contrast with the two preceding sections, in which the novels discussed have obvious thematic similarities but different authors; this section examines the importance of place in a group of novels with varying themes by a single author.

In the first chapter of this section, all of White's novels have been included to test the theory of the structural importance of place in fiction against the whole body of White's work as a novelist. The importance of place is implicit in the subject matter of the novels discussed in the first two sections; but here the work of a single author is examined to assess the relation between place and narrative structure in each work.

The remaining three chapters deal with specific and recurrent themes and images related to the notion of place in White's work. Chapter Eight examines the relation of the individual to the Australian landscape in *The Tree of Man* and *Voss*. Chapter Nine, "The Journey", deals with the theme of the journey and its symbolic significance in *The Aunt's Story*, *Voss*, and *A Fringe of Leaves*; and the final chapter is a discussion of White's preoccupations with particular houses and with the idea of the holy place, both of which are apparent throughout his work.

The thesis is concluded by a brief discussion of the differing images of Australia which the seven novelists project; and, further, of the ways in which they use the features of locality and the imagery of place to establish and develop themes which are not merely national, but universal.

Section One:

The Convict Novel

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CHAPTER ONE: PLACE AS PUNISHMENT

Australia's convict history has always provided a wealth of material on which novelists might draw. The first novel ever published in Australia was Henry Savery's Quintus Servinton (1831), a semi-autobiographical work about the trial and transportation to Van Diemen's Land of an Englishman convicted of forgery. 1977 saw the publication of Richard Butler's And Wretches Hang, also a novel about transportation to Van Diemen's Land; and Colin Free's Vinegar Hill, in which the central episode is based on the 1804 Castle Hill rebellion in New South Wales, was published in 1978. James Tucker, Caroline Leakey and Marcus Clarke in the nineteenth century, and William Hay, Hal Porter and Thomas Keneally in the twentieth, have all made significant contributions to Australian convict fiction.

This section deals mainly with Hal Porter's The Tilted Cross and Thomas Keneally's Bring Larks and Heroes. Both Porter and Keneally use the idea of place as a vital part of the pattern of their novels in a way which sets these two works apart from other convict fiction. Marcus Clarke (For the Term of His Natural Life, 1874) makes use of the geography of Van Diemen's Land in his construction of plot; William Hay (The Escape of the Notorious Sir William Heans, 1919) gives the landscape of his novel an aura of mystery and menace appropriate to this kind of historical romance. But the idea of place, and the profusion of imagery connected with it, play a far more complex and important part in the overall design of the comparatively recent novels of Porter and Keneally.

Both novelists use their settings to establish, immediately, the notion of place as punishment; it is no accident that the first sentence of each novel is an eloquent comment on the suffering which climate alone promises to inflict on the characters in the course of each novel. By focusing their attention chiefly on characters who are not, strictly speaking, convicts, and who are certainly not typical of the convict population as depicted in L.L. Robson's carefully detailed and documented study _The Convict Settlers of Australia_,[1] Porter and Keneally emphasise the fact that punishment and suffering were not reserved for those who were actually serving a sentence. In these novels the landscape and climate inflict suffering on convicts, officials and free settlers alike.[2]

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[1] L.L. Robson, _The Convict Settlers of Australia_ (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965).

[2] 'Leaving the U.S. for Australia amounts to punishment,' American lawyer Peter Aitken is reported to have said after the trial, early in 1979, of his client, an American citizen convicted of drug charges. The offender, Robert Taylor, was fined $U.S. 10,000 and 'sentenced ... to three years' "transportation" to Australia', where he has an Australian wife, by American State Supreme Court Judge James Reasbeck. Australian migration officials were 'reportedly angry'. Don Willesee, "Bob Exiled to 'Botany Bay'," _The News_ (Adelaide), 13th. March 1979, p. 3, cols. 4-5.

In both novels, extremes of weather are stressed; summer heat and winter cold help to make life in the colonies insufferable. In Bring Larks and Heroes, the heat of summer destroys crops and gardens and reduces the settlement to a state of semi-starvation. In The Tilted Cross Hobart Town is represented as being itself imprisoned within an icy barricade, 'between a height of stone and a depthless water' (p. 10). And in both novels the landscape is bizarre and sometimes downright ugly, providing as little pleasure for the eye as for the stomach or the spirit.

Both settings display a hostility of atmosphere as well as of appearance. In Bring Larks and Heroes this emanates from the countryside rather than the settlement; in The Tilted Cross it is the town itself that has a repellent atmosphere, whether it be from the hellish noise and smell of Campbell Street or from the civilised venom of Cindermead. In both novels, the alien weirdness of both landscape and atmosphere intensifies another kind of suffering; several of Porter's and Keneally's characters are victims of homesickness. The country inflicts suffering not only because of what it is, but also because of what it is not.

In both The Tilted Cross and Bring Larks and Heroes, there is more emphasis on the punitive aspects of the country itself than on the specific situation and treatment of convicted felons. The country deals out its own kind of punishment, independent of human injustices and indifferent to any innate virtue in its victims. Unlike earlier writers in the field of convict fiction, neither Porter nor Keneally takes for his hero a man who is in fact a transported convict. Judas Vaneleigh, at the beginning of The Tilted Cross, is already an ex-convict, who has served his term and is technically a free man; Queely Sheill, the 'good boy' (p. 329) of the same novel, is a free citizen of Hobart Town and is imprisoned for a brief time only, near the end of the novel; and Phelim Halloran, in Bring Larks and Heroes, finds himself in Keneally's anonymous antipodean penal colony not as a convict but as an unwilling Corporal of the Marines. Yet suffering is a major concern of both novelists, and all three characters are victims of it, not because they are personally acquainted with any of the more sensational aspects of the penal system - the lash, the stocks, the chain-gang - but simply because they share the fate of transported convicts through being in the colonies at all.

Robert Burns observes somewhat sardonically that a preoccupation with suffering is not, as far as Australian literature is concerned, exclusive to Porter and Keneally:

> ... a major tendency of Australian fiction ... is the tendency to figure the character who bears the fullest weight of attention as the scapegoat, the man of suffering whose pains have some sort of representative significance, are in some sense the woes of mankind. The grand pioneer of the representative sufferers is, of course, Richard Mahony ... Michael Baguenault of Seven Poor Men of Sydney ... goeth down into darkness (quite literally) in a moment, the horror of which rivals Mahony's long drawn out agony. If we add the central characters of Voss, The Tilted Cross, To The Islands, The Fear, and Bring Larks and

> Heroes to this group ... it is possible to say that, overall, the inspiration for this representative figuring is sometimes the passion of Christ ... this is a fiction which possesses, in toto, a Biblical resonance. (Why it does may be more a subject for the geographer than the student of literature.)[3]

It may also be a subject for the historian. The suffering which marked the beginnings of Australian history is something which still haunts the imagination of Australians; the fifth stanza of R.D. FitzGerald's "The Wind at Your Door"[4] is one of the most memorable statements in Australian literature about the uncomfortable ambiguity of our attitudes to the past:

> That wind blows to your door down all these years.
> Have you not known it when some breath you drew
> tasted of blood? Your comfort is in arrears
> of just thanks to a savagery tamed in you
> only as subtler fears may serve in lieu
> of thong and noose - old savagery which has built
> your world and laws out of the lives it spilt.

One wonders, incidentally, why Burns's list of 'representative sufferers' does not contain the name of Marcus Clarke's Rufus Dawes. For the Term of His Natural Life is surely a more obvious example of Burns's argument than any of the novels he cites. Rufus Dawes is almost the definitive Australian scapegoat; Richard Mahony, who brings much of his own suffering on himself, pales by comparison.

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[3] Robert Burns, "Out of Context: A Study of Thomas Keneally's Novels," Australian Literary Studies, 4 (1969), 39.

[4] In The Penguin Book of Australian Verse, ed. Harry Heseltine (1972; rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979), p. 179.

But if Australian writers do have a disproportionately predominant concern with suffering, perhaps it is because of what has been referred to as 'that whole brooding sense of guilt that is preoccupied with the ambiguous legacy of the past'.[5] Many Australian writers attempt, directly or indirectly, to expiate this sense of guilt by exploring the nature of the suffering which originally helped to create it; to redeem the guilt of the past in the collective Australian imagination - which is itself ambiguous, involving the crimes of the convicts themselves as well as the brutalities that were perpetrated against them - through their work, producing 'redemptive fictions that bring about imaginative release'. In the light of this, it is surely not surprising that much Australian fiction 'possesses ... a Biblical resonance'; it is inevitable that 'the inspiration for this representative figuring is sometimes the passion of Christ'.

Porter and Keneally go directly back to the origins of this two-hundred-year-old inheritance, and use it as the most obvious historical setting, the most suitable conjunction of time and place, for such fiction. In each novel, the history of Australia's penal colonies has been imaginatively transformed into what almost amounts to a fable of suffering. It is the act itself of creating such fables which could be described as 'redemptive'; in the novels themselves there is an ironic lack of anything to balance such suffering. Here there is no redemption; the emphasis is on the pointlessness of each of the heroes' fates. Queely Sheill in The Tilted Cross is the most obvious example of this. Porter makes frequent direct references to the story of the crucifixion in connection with Queely; he is innocence betrayed, and he dies for the sins of others.

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[5] John Colmer, in a lecture on the fiction of the American South, Adelaide University, March 1979.

In two novels in which Christian myth and morality play such a vital part, it is inevitable that a parallel should be drawn between the workings of human justice and the workings of divine justice; between crime, punishment and expiation on the one hand, and sin, retribution and redemption on the other. In an earlier and very different piece of convict fiction, William Hay's The Escape of the Notorious Sir William Heans, there is a passage in which Hay seems to imply that the difference between these two systems of justice is more or less negligible by deftly reducing it to a terminological quibble, and implying thereby that Sir William's banishment is as much God's punishment as England's:

> Sir William Heans' crime - his sin - ... had pushed him from the places that he loved into exile and boredom on a wild island at the bottom of the world ...[6]

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[6] William Hay, The Escape of the Notorious Sir William Heans (1919; rpt. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1955), p. 3.

Sir William's offence - the abduction of a lady of his acquaintance - is both a sin according to Christian teaching and a crime according to the British penal code, so he is twice condemned. But poor Mr. Blythe in Bring Larks and Heroes, though ostensibly on the side of authority, is also in the colonies against his will as a punishment for his sins, which are not so very different from those of Sir William:

> For Mrs. Blythe had confided ... the story of how her husband had walked disorderly with a domestic in Portsmouth ... Mrs. Blythe's father had obtained this expiatory post on the edge of the Southern Ocean for his son-in-law, and bullied him into it. (p. 11)

It is the place itself which constitutes the punishment; and the central characters of The Tilted Cross and Bring Larks and Heroes are subjected to several varieties of suffering inflicted by place. Judas Vaneleigh, Queely Sheill and Phelim Halloran are all victims of the extraordinary kind of society bred by the penal colonies, and all three suffer not only because of the workings of the societies in which they live, but also from the physical qualities of the places themselves. The geography of Porter's Hobart Town and Keneally's unnamed Pacific-coastal settlement is as hostile to the individual as the kind of society it breeds. Both Porter and Keneally take pains to establish, in their opening sentences, the hostility and harshness of landscape and climate which haunt the reader and hound the characters throughout both novels. The elaborate first paragraph of The Tilted Cross is studded with menacing adjectives and forbidding images which are combined to evoke an alarmingly miserable and threatening piece of landscape:

> Van Diemen's Land, an ugly trinket suspended at the world's discredited rump, was freezing. From horizon to horizon stretched a tarpaulin of congealed vapour so tense that it had now and then split, and had rattled down a vicious litter of sleet like minced glass, that year, that winter, that day. (p. 9)

Keneally chooses to inflict the opposite extreme of weather on Phelim Halloran, but his tone, in the first sentences of Bring Larks and Heroes, is as forceful and as negative as Porter's:

> At the world's worse end, it is Sunday afternoon in February ... The afternoon is hot in this alien forest. The sunlight burrows like a worm in both eye-balls ... the canvas shoes are too light for this knobbly land. (p. 7)

These early passages immediately establish an idea which is to become a major theme in both novels, namely, the grim effect of the country itself on human endeavour and hope. Crops, trees and flowers are reduced by winter in Hobart Town and summer on the Pacific coast to a skeletal parody of the beauty and plenty which they have been expected to provide; and both Porter and Keneally use the sorry state of the newly-imported vegetation as a kind of introduction to their novels, a hint of the nature and the impending fate of the equally newly-imported human population. Porter's description of the grounds of Cindermead, in the opening pages of The Tilted Cross, is an example of this:

> The walnut-trees and peach-orchard and lilacs were pick-pocketed leafless. The elm avenue was just old enough, and rooted just deeply in enough toward the frozen core of hell, to indicate without chance of being misunderstood the pointless falsity of its perspective. Intimating the grand manner of an hereditary wealth and aristocracy, though all-bones as Job's turkey, it led down barbaric and final slopes to nothing ... (p. 10)

This might well be a description of the Cindermead household itself, whose members display the same pretentiousness, sterility and meanness of spirit as the ground which surround them; the elm-avenue's 'pointless falsity of perspective' is also shared, less literally perhaps, by the household, whose barbaric and greedy attitude to life eventually results in the needless suffering and gruesome demise of Queely Sheill.

In a similar passage in Bring Larks and Heroes, Keneally describes the native landscape's unequivocal rejection of cultivated plants and crops in an even more detailed and emphatic way:

> December had come rampaging amongst the carnations along Government Road, had trampled on the last blooming of expatriate stocks. It had crushed the title Advent, which the two parsons had tried to lay upon its back, until every hint of juice and fruitfulness had been ground out. In dutiful vegetable gardens, the leaves of carrots and turnips had tettered and split, shot full of holes by antipodean summer ... there would be no harvest at Government Farm, where muddied stooks of young corn stood like the camp wreckage of a beaten army. (p. 21)

Keneally, too, uses the failure and destruction of crops and flowers not only to illustrate the country's hostility to human hope and effort, but also as a hint of what is to come, and as a starting point to the downhill slide of events which culminates in Ann's and Halloran's death by hanging. The failure of the crops increases the burden on the already half-starved colony; the desperately needy state of the colony is embodied in the anonymous lady who, insulted by Terry Byrne's gift of two ounces of meat, betrays him and thus sets in motion the trial and execution of Halloran and Ann. In both novels the physical hostility of the landscape is evoked in such a way as to predict the tragedy of subsequent events.

Both Porter and Keneally emphasise the negative, destructive aspects of place not only to predict and sometimes precipitate the action of the novels, but also as a parallel, a reflection of the state of human affairs. Kerin Cantrell makes a comment on Bring Larks and Heroes which is also applicable to The Tilted Cross:

> ... always there is the landscape, its stunted growth providing a physical counterpart for the failure of hopes and ideals. The sense that Mr. Keneally conveys of the dreadful inevitableness of events is created partly by pertinent detail in the landscape.[7]

The landscape of Bring Larks and Heroes is scattered with images of death and decay. The cliff-top where Ann and Halloran spend a Sunday afternoon suggests a graveyard; the sun 'burrows like a worm in both eye-balls'; the transported felons replacing the roof of Government House move about

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[7] Kerin Cantrell, "Perspective on Thomas Keneally," Southerly, 28 (1968), 62.

'with the effective indolence of maggots in a skull' (p. 48). These brutal similes, along with Mrs. Blythe's ulcerous leg and the hospitalised Mealey's flogged and gangrenous back, effectively create an all-pervading atmosphere of rot and disintegration which makes Halloran's resentful and constant awareness of his own mortality seem like a direct premonition of the novel's final outcome. Porter, too, uses the same kind of imagery to evoke a landscape bristling with evidence of failure and death and nullity:

> She had travelled for forty years to arrive too late at void; to arrive, under the impulse of revenge and lust ... in a narrow street, near the waterfront of a convict town at the world's icy margin ... She was repeatedly lost, repeatedly confronted and turned back by the hideous flange of her world - the slaughter-yard with its crow's-nest heaps of rib-bones, skulls and horns, the navy-yard rock-fenced on its headland of roadless rock, by scrublands, by quarries, by outrider burial-grounds, and - always and finally - by the Estuary and its scale-coated depths, and the steeper foothills buttressing the base of Organ-pipe. (pp. 152-53)

It is almost as if the process of disintegration itself has been used as a kind of model for the pattern of events in both novels. What happens to Halloran and to Queely Sheill is shown as an inevitable process, impossible to stop once set in motion, which gathers impetus as it progresses. If we are surprised at the deaths of Halloran and Queely, it is not because we have not been carefully prepared for them. Robert Burns observes of Bring Larks and Heroes that

> ... the bald, ruthlessly directing first sentence of the novel ... is a pushing of the reader's attention down a funnel, one closed watertight at

> the narrower end. It is also ... a gaining of inspiration from the very first sentence, which it resembles so closely, of Hal Porter's The Tilted Cross.[8]

A watertight funnel, in fact, is what the entire structure of both novels resembles. In both cases the narrative follows a kind of downward spiral; each novel begins with a loosely connected set of characters and circumstances which appear to have been almost arbitrarily chosen, but which, as the narrative progresses, combine to become more and more tightly interconnected until they reach a tragic end point which seems, in retrospect, to have been inevitable all along. And, as with the process of decay itself, the final outcome of each novel is nothingness, a void. At the end of The Tilted Cross, the Cindermead household, unchanged and unrepentant, is contemplating a return to England; Vaneleigh is dying; and Queely is dead, after a sort of virtuoso passage from Porter near the end of the novel in which a specific instance of the process of decay, the gangrenous disintegration of what remains of Queely, is examined in gruesomely microscopic detail.

Bring Larks and Heroes also ends in dissolution, as Brian Kiernan points out in the essay on Keneally in his Images of Society and Nature:

> In Halloran's poem, which the Governor throws on the fire before the hangings, there is

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[8] Burns, p. 35.

> a longing for a reconciliation of ... personal values with society and for a life in harmony with Nature ... The pastoral ideal is seen as unattainable in the landscape of the novel, in the denatured continent on the world's edge ... What the ideal could mean is promised in the love of Halloran and Ann; only they in the novel have the potential of achieveing the calm, fruitful balance the poem suggests ... The novel probes life at its extremes; but fundamental to its form is that Halloran and Ann represent the possibilities of life, and social life, unattainable in such a denatured society.[9]

Ann and Halloran never produce the hypothetical child which haunts Mrs. Blythe, Halloran, and Ann herself at different stages of the novel and which causes such an uproar during the trial. Like the colony's failed harvests, or the 'rusty saplings ... without a hint of growth or expectation' (p. 84), Ann's possible pregnancy remains an unfulfilled promise; for Mrs. Blythe it is a fearful probability, for Ann and Halloran a false alarm, and for Mr. Blythe a deliberate lie which costs him much and accomplishes nothing. Like Queely Sheill, Ann and Halloran are exterminated, and leave no legacy of hope or fruitfulness behind. The events of both novels are worked out against the background of a landscape littered with hints, threats and evidence of failure, sterility and death; and this conjunction, as the narrative of each novel progresses, makes their similar endings seem more and more like the only possible ones.

Less tangible, but no less real, than the hostility of the landscape in these two novels is the hostility of the atmosphere which it produces. Keneally, particularly, invests the setting of Bring Larks and Heroes with what almost amounts to a personality, whose antipathy Halloran feels as though it were an actual presence:

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[9] Brian Kiernan, "Thomas Keneally: Bring Larks and Heroes," in his Images of Society and Nature (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 157-58.

> They sidled past the crazy hut. Beyond it, they were aware of being in a sack-cloth forest, in a forest that mad, prophetic, excessive, had heaped dust on its own head ... For some distance, he was more aware of hostility than he was of Ann. It seemed that in these poor scrubby woods, all his judgements on what a forest should look like were being scarcely tolerated by the whole pantheon of gods of this, the world's wrong end. (pp. 23-24)

The whole colony suffers not only from the appearance and physical effects of the country, but also from its powerful and malevolent personality. Nothing human thrives or is welcome in the 'self-contained and ancient ease' (p. 167) of the continent; the country and the colonists are more or less at war, and the setting of the novel has the atmosphere, if not the appearance, of a battlefield:

> All the young subalterns ... held that here was a stage in the general policy of deceit in which the new land dealt with them ... Some weeks later they wrote with bitter zest of an incident ... which they saw as the summit of the almost personal guile of the land they garrisoned. (p. 25)

In The Tilted Cross it is the settlement itself which seems to be the source of the threatening atmosphere. In Porter's novel, the enemy is not so much the countryside as the society of Hobart Town, and the hostility of the place is generated not only by the freezing weather and the uncompromising geography of the mountains and the coast, but also - and perhaps more menacingly, because less tangibly - by the town that has been created in the middle of it:

> 'It has,' said Mr. Vaneleigh, 'a square, hard, clumsy look even though set on hollows and uprisings ... Split me! it has the very atmosphere of a spa stuck down for outcasts to take the waters of fear ...' (p. 35)

One aspect of the suffering of convicts and non-convicts alike, in both novels, is intensified by the weird and sometimes terrifying atmosphere of their surroundings; this is related to their awareness of their own exiled state. The burden of homesickness is added to that of the isolation and physical hardship of the colonies; and the alienating, eerie atmosphere of the colonial landscape increases their sense of homelessness. Characters hankering wistfully after 'Home' haunt the pages of much Australian fiction like so many hopeful poltergeists; at one point in The Tilted Cross, in the household at Cindermead, motives and emotions have reached such a pitch of chaos that the general feeling in the house can be summarised in a single utterance. Sick with hysterical jealousy and port wine, the little West Indian servant Teapot reacts with a violent desire to be quit of Hobart Town and go home to England:

> He stared at the ceiling with a black fixity as though his sight made it a pane on some landscape beyond even that blue umbrella of spring through which the source of light lit up the welts of the foothills ... the mother-of-pearl surface of the Estuary, the medallions of snow plastered on Organ-pipe.
>
> 'Home,' Teapot was saying with unassuming directness, and had long been saying, and intended to keep on saying, 'home, home, home ...' (pp. 189-90)

In *Bring Larks and Heroes*, the emphasis is not so much on Halloran's longing for his home as on the awfulness of the place to which he has been forced to come, and the consequent impossibility of calling the colony 'home' instead. Early in the novel Keneally refers to him as 'dispossessed Halloran' (p. 15), and on the night of the rebellion at the Crescent this sense of deprivation invades Halloran himself:

> ... he waited there, stock-still ... He didn't want to be there, but neither did he want to go to the kitchen to boil his beef. At last his errant legs took him there ... There he was at the door, aimed nose-first into the rotten bonhomie of his brothers-in-arms. He dipped his raw soul into the place and followed bodily, thinking, how long can I stand the sorrow of these evenings? ... I'm not what you'd call a man of affairs, he said blinking at the heart of the flames. I'd shoot myself or drop the business of any mangey empire because of the pain of being homeless. (p. 138)

Both Porter and Keneally use the curious figure of the convict artist to establish a particular perspective on the colonial landscape and society; and a comment in Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones's *The Convict Artists* on the work of Thomas Watling, artist, transported felon, and protégé of Governor MacQuarie, seems worth including in this context:

> ... he did not consider the scenery of New South Wales pleasing material for an artist. He found the monochrome Australian bush hostile and monotonous and lacking in picturesque variety ... Watling ... reinterpreted the landscape according to picturesque conventions ... This desire to reinterpret the Australian landscape in terms of European conventions stemmed not only from the artist's aesthetic dissatisfaction with his surroundings but also from a feeling of nostalgia and homesickness. Furthermore Watling's situation as a convict, with its attendant restrictions upon his freedom, exacerbated this feeling of

> isolation and melancholy and alienated him still more from his antipodean environment.[10]

Other colonial artists, notably Watling's fellow-felon Joseph Lycett, painted Europeanised Australian landscapes in order to cater for the tastes of English patrons, but Watling, apparently, was simply aesthetically offended and homesick. Ewers, the convict artist in Bring Larks and Heroes, is as unimpressed as Watling was, but for different reasons:

> 'If I painted this landscape ... those who ever saw it would think that the forests behind the beaches were teeming with fruit and game. They would think that this river led to a kingly town, that Eden lay at the headwaters ... Yet all it serves is to connect the world's worst town to the world's worst village, tyranny to tyranny, slave to slave ... I find this land a land of broken promises to the artist, as it is to the stomach.' (pp. 36-37)

This passage is the first hint in Bring Larks and Heroes that the countryside is perhaps not as bleak and forbidding as has hitherto been implied. With occasional exceptions, of which the above passage is one, Keneally - like Porter - deliberately evokes the worst aspects of the Australian landscape, for reasons which are more fully discussed in a later chapter. Ewers's observations about the scenery serve to remind the reader that Halloran's dislike of the appearance of the place may be the result of association rather than of dispassionate observation; it is easy to see the worst in a place where one is hungry, harassed and homeless.

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[10] Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones, The Convict Artists (Sydney: Macmillan, 1977), p. 16. There were a dozen or more convict artists, most of them transported for forgery, whose work is still well-known and commonly referred to in studies of the history of Australian art.

Judas Vaneleigh in The Tilted Cross is Porter's portrait of another real convict artist, Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, who was transported to Van Diemen's Land for forgery. Indirectly and minimally involved in the actual plot, Vaneleigh is nevertheless in some ways the central character in The Tilted Cross. His position as an artist - that of mediator between the world as it is and a particular and ordered vision of it - is reflected in almost every aspect of his life, and this sort of association is deftly used by Porter in order to heighten both the reader's and Vaneleigh's own awareness of his homeless state. He occupies the no-man's-land between the society represented by Cindermead and the teeming, steamy, stinking underworld of Hobart Town's Campbell Street; as an ex-convict he has no right of entry to the former, and as a gentleman he has no place in the latter. He has neither the innocence of Queely Sheill nor the corruption of the Cindermead household; he is knowing and utterly disillusioned without being evil. He is alive, but dying; free, but trapped on an impossibly remote island with no chance of getting home to England, where in the past he has been betrayed by his wife and abandoned by his friends. He is utterly homeless in every possible sense of the word; he has no place, anywhere.

The impossibility of leaving a place to which a convict had been transported, even after a ticket-of-leave had been issued, is something which both Porter and Keneally use to point out that the sheer distance between the colonies and 'Home', combined with the fact that a man with a newly issued ticket-of-leave was inevitably penniless, made a mockery of any ex-convict's newly won freedom. In *Bring Larks and Heroes* the convict Quinn, whose seven-year sentence is about to expire, is horrified to discover that not only does the Governor have no proof that this is so, but that when he does eventually get his ticket-of-leave he will have to pay the full price of his passage home. In *The Tilted Cross*, Vaneleigh is eloquent about the idiocy, in his own case, of the word 'freedom':

> '... For the *first* time in nine years I am *free* ... You *observe* that I am free ... *freedom* is... what? One is free to listen to the rats in the ooze under this arch, to overhear exiled humanity - you hear? you hear? - gulping and drowning in the dead black waters, to see the staringly obvious mountain, the town that is the birthplace of no one, the tides that are permitted to take me nowhere ...' (p. 37)

An understanding of this mass sensation of not being at home is essential to the appreciation of much Australian literature, particularly that written or set before the end of the nineteenth century. Richard Campbell, in "The Character of Australian Religion", defines this sensation of homelessness in philosophical terms:

> In his analysis of human being, Heidegger introduces a word which assumed increasing centrality in his thought. Taking up the point that as human beings we simply find ourselves 'thrown' into a world which yields no ultimate reasons for being, he claims that our basic feeling is one of uncanniness. The German word

> for 'uncanny' is unheimlich, which literally means 'unhomelike', and he makes full use of this literal meaning ... Thus far, I suggest, we in Australia can recognise ourselves in this condition perhaps even more clearly than can people in Europe. For we know ourselves to be thrown into a world in which we are not at home.[11]

One of the reasons that 'we know ourselves to be thrown into a world in which we are not at home' is that in Australia, 'uncanniness' is an almost tangible quality of the landscape itself, as Noela Cameron points out:

> That the Australian landscape is different, possessed of a brooding, lurking ambivalent quality, is a theme which appears again and again in Australian fiction. Undoubtedly, the convict novel allows the best usage of this element, and novelists such as Hay and Porter have imbued the landscape and surroundings of the colonies with a Gothic aura of mystery, terror and perversion.[12]

D.H. Lawrence's novel Kangaroo contains a memorable account of his impressions of the Australian bush:

> ... there was something among the trees, and his hair began to stir with terror, on his head. There was a presence. He looked at the weird, white, dead trees, and into the hollow distances of the bush. Nothing! Nothing at all ... But the horrid thing in the bush! He schemed as to what it would be. It must be the spirit of the place ... the roused spirit of the bush. He felt it was watching, and waiting. Following with certainty, just behind his back. It might have reached a long black arm and gripped him. But no, it wanted to wait. It was not tired of watching its victim. An alien people - a victim. It was biding its time with a terrible ageless

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[11] Richard Campbell, "The Character of Australian Religion," Meanjin, 36 (1977), 186.

[12] Noela Cameron, "The Convict in the Australian Novel," Armidale and District Historical Society Journal and Proceedings, No. 14 (1971), p. 49.

> watchfulness, waiting for a far-off end ...[13]

Little could be more _unheimlich_ than this. There is much in this passage to suggest that even Lawrence's pagan imagination equated eeriness with evil, and there is a passage in _Bring Larks and Heroes_ which indicates that Lawrence's reaction was a common one:

> Only he and Halloran, perhaps, in that whole town, did not resent the grotesque land, did not call it evil because it was weird. But the busy compilers of journals called it evil at some length. (p. 27)

Lawrence, as a newcomer from the northern hemisphere, saw in the alien atmosphere of the landscape the element of menace, of threat, which both Porter and Keneally evoke as part of their design.

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[13] D.H. Lawrence, _Kangaroo_ (1923; rpt. London: Heinemann, 1966), p. 9.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PRINCIPLE OF INVERSION

In The Tilted Cross and Bring Larks and Heroes, the complex antagonism radiated by the country itself is expressed largely in terms of reversals and opposites. The characters in these novels experience both the country's uncanniness and its more tangible manifestations of hostility most vividly when the country reveals itself to be the opposite of things they have always considered to be familiar and good. The principle of inversion is a vital element in both of these novels; and both Porter and Keneally put to good use those features of the Australian landscape and climate which are demonstrably the reverse of their counterparts in England. In The Tilted Cross, Hobart Town is represented as a shabby mockery of London; the countryside round the Crescent in Bring Larks and Heroes is 'a caricature of the Pastoral landscape' (p. 69).

In a landscape which is in many respects the reverse of the northern hemisphere, the ideals of morality and justice are likewise reversed. In both novels, especially The Tilted Cross, the constellations are seen as sinister as well as unfamiliar; and given the traditional association of the stars with human destiny, this adds to the general atmosphere of perversity and foreboding. The image of a place where the stars and seasons are back to front and upside down is one which recurs frequently in both novels, haunting the reader and eventually establishing the vision of a world in which the corresponding inversion of the workings of human judgement and divine justice begins to seem no more than an extension of the local geography. The ends of both novels see the victory of evil over good, guilt over innocence, and death over life.

In his Introduction to the 1971 edition of The Tilted Cross, Adrian Mitchell's response to the suggestion that the book is 'a monstrous parody of Christian myth and morality' is that it is the principle of parody, not the parody itself, which underlies the novel:

> The point is not in the parody, the inverted Christian myth and morality, but in inversion itself ... What Porter does ... is to show the verifiable details of antipodeanism, and to extend the concept into the context of ideas and values. Not only are the compass directions changed about; so are the moral directions. Not only is the geographical landscape grotesque and disorderly, so is the moral landscape. Hobart Town is the moral and cultural antithesis of London, darkness to Europe's Enlightenment.[1]

It is not possible to summarise Bring Larks and Heroes as deftly as this. Keneally is less of a blithe and crystalline fabulist than Porter and more of an opaque and anxious moralist; his intentions in Bring Larks and Heroes are far less clearly visible than Porter's in The Tilted Cross. His characters are not, as some of Porter's are, clearly representative of good or evil, and their moral values are confused rather than inverted. It is the actual events in Bring Larks and Heroes, rather than ideas and values, which could be described as perverse. What actually happens in the novel is the opposite of what the reader feels ought to happen - which of course is also true of The Tilted Cross - and Keneally uses the anomalies of the landscape as a visible parallel to the perversity of events in the same way that Porter uses them to reflect also the perversity of values and ideas.

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[1] Adrian Mitchell, Introd., The Tilted Cross (1961); by Hal Porter (rpt. Adelaide: Seal Books (Rigby), 1971), pp. 4-5.

Michael Wilding examines the use of this antipodean principle of inversion in an essay on the best-known of Australian convict fictions, For the Term of His Natural Life:

> The reverse of conditions in Europe, this unknown continent of the Antipodes could be imagined free from corruptions and persecutions. The realities of the settlement shattered this image ... A potential Eden had become an evil penitentiary ... It is by the use of such myths as basic images for his novel, that Clarke is able to offer so much more than an historical account ... The Antipodes traditionally represented the other side of the social coin: and that is Clarke's material. His novel deals literally with the underworld; the world beneath Europe, the other side of the globe ... The Antipodes here represent not the ideal state that man, freed from European society, might aspire to, but its reverse, the brutality that, implicit in European society, he will quickly sink to if allowed.[2]

This principle of inversion, based on the idea of place, is certainly part of the imaginative structure of Clarke's novel; but it is something which remains implicit in the text itself. Clarke makes little, if any, specific allusion to or particular use of the Antipodean myth, and this is one of the reasons why For the Term of His Natural Life has not been included as one of the major subjects of this discussion. In Bring Larks and Heroes and, especially, The Tilted Cross, the idea of the Antipodes as the reverse of conditions in Europe is fundamental not only to the structure but also to the texture of both novels. They abound in metaphors and images connected with the geographical situation, atmosphere and appearance of place which keep the idea of inversion, of reversal, constantly in the reader's mind.

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[2] Michael Wilding, "Marcus Clarke: His Natural Life," in The Australian Experience, ed. W.S. Ramson (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), pp. 19-21.

Porter establishes this idea at the very beginning of The Tilted Cross, where the description of Hobart Town with which the novel opens is dominated by Porter's vision of the place as a parody of London:

> ... it was, indeed, a miniature and foundling London, a Johnny-come-lately London ... Since it had been planted in perversity it had taken root and grown, a weed town, perverse and obverse.
>
> There, therefore, in that place, West End, was southerly. (p. 10)

Porter continues to make this comparison between Hobart Town and London throughout the novel; it is used as a kind of starting-point, the central image round which the novel's patterns of inversion revolve. The perverse nature of the place, reflected in its 'starveling resemblance' (p. 137) to London, is apparent in its every aspect; in its seasons, its origins, and its atmosphere:

> In that island, where the months that brought summer to England were vehicles that nightmarishly brought winter, in that town founded on and demoralised by mistrust, East End was north. (p. 23)

Keneally makes less use than Porter of this aspect of the penal colonies; he makes direct comparisons between the colony and England only in passing, as in the sardonically comic episode in which the felons are sent out to scour the beaches for shells to make lime mortar, in order that Government House may be built to look 'like something from Bath' (p. 34). But at one point Keneally, too, represents the colony as a parody of northern civilisation, and for the same reason as Porter: to illustrate the link between landscape and events. In a place whose appearance is a parody of scenes more familiar to its inhabitants, familiar codes of morality and justice are likewise parodied; just before the monstrously unfair affair of Ewers's conviction and hanging for rape, Keneally represents the brief and bogus companionship between Ewers and Mrs. Daker as a kind of mock idyll:

> Her faded yellow whispered as he let her down into the chair ... So positioned, they must have seemed a caricature of the Pastoral landscape. The sky was so enamel, so hard, so high, so bald ... There was no deep, moist shade, and the leaves on the evergreens flapped rather than rustled, flapped brown side, grey side, brown side, grey, fruitlessness showing both its faces. (p. 69)

In both novels the heavens, too, are depicted as a travesty of the familiar; Porter's novel takes its name from his description of the unfamiliar and anonymous stars:

> Above were the constellations that did not know their names ... The Cup, the empty cup, The Crown that fitted no head, The Cross tilted to fall. (p. 92)

The star-crossed events of this novel seem almost decreed by such a chaotic sky; the empty cup and the tilted cross are emblems of the actively malignant fate that is in operation in the novel.

The sinister constellations in The Tilted Cross are dismissed with sardonic flippancy by Judas Vaneleigh:

> ''Tis not,' said Mr. Vaneleigh, 'a walk-inviting night. The stars here have no names I remember as fashionable.' (p. 40)

This is a peculiarly effective comment; Vaneleigh is, in a broad sense, a tragic figure - and a major one - in the novel; and the ironic lightness with which he mentions the alien stars emphasises by contrast the wealth of implication behind his observation. In Bring Larks and Heroes, Halloran is moved by no such spirit of elegant sarcasm at the sight of the night sky; his reaction is one of pure fearfulness and a sense of imminent disaster:

> 'This is a fearful lonely place ... Here we are, lost in the dark on the scruff of the world. On the very scruff of the world.'
>
> 'Yes,' said Halloran. He looked at the darkness between the stars. Since you looked up to the darkness in the northern world, here you were in fact looking down into a pit of stars, and sometimes you saw yourself as poised over their lance-points ready to plummet; yet behold, you would remain.
>
> He shuddered. (p. 121)

Porter and Keneally use the upside-down heavens to emphasise two different aspects of the same inverted world.

Porter uses the unfamiliar antipodean sky as a symbol of the travesties of justice and morality which dictate events in his novel, and as an indication - given the association between the stars and the fates of men - of the tragic outcome of the novel; the tilted cross is the link between the general pattern of inversion and the specific parody of Christianity which is a part of it. In *Bring Larks and Heroes*, Halloran's terrifying vision of a 'pit of stars' is one of the many images which suggest that the colony is comparable to the infernal regions; early in the novel Mrs. Blythe refers to it as 'this small parish of hell' (p. 12). Halloran's image of himself 'poised over their lance-points ready to plummet' is a graphic representation of his own sense of insecurity, alienation and lack of direction or guidance in the place and the society in which he finds himself; it illustrates the fear of oblivion and the obsessive awareness of mortality which the place has bred in him; and, like the tilted cross in Porter's novel, it is an indirect forewarning of the novel's final outcome.

The Tilted Cross is full of images which directly suggest inversion, whether it be of geography, morality or justice. *Bring Larks and Heroes* contains few such images; the most direct connection that Keneally makes between the antipodean landscape and the flawed workings of justice by which Halloran is to be condemned appears in the account of Halloran's surrealistic 'court of conscience' dream (p. 183). This is a scenario thick with symbols and allusions to the issues of conscience, justice and mortality which are fundamental to the novel; halfway through the dream Halloran walks out of the courtroom and into an insane, but somehow entirely fitting, landscape:

> He ... ran outside into the dusk.
> Here Ewers waited for him. The two of them fell into step beside each other. They strode away through the stuff of which the dusk was made, an overcast of charred orange out of which the forest grew downwards, as if leaf preceded root. (p. 183)

But for the most part in this novel, the idea of inversion is established more obliquely, by way of sharp contrasts and paradoxes. Halloran's chief dilemma is the web of conflicting loyalties and obligations in which he finds himself enmeshed; his life is lived according to rigid systems of both human and divine authority, and he struggles to fit both the pattern of conduct laid down by the military and the pattern of faith laid down by the church. But despite these strict external codes he moves in a fog of unreason; the place itself threatens to overwhelm logic and authority and calmly engulf the pitiful colony in its vast nullity:

> ... in this region were woods and hills and water, yet ... they were somehow far too open to a bland, immense and oriental sky. Those who lived here felt that they lived in a desert. In civilized parts, people formed unions for subtle reasons; but in a desert, they united to ward off oblivion. (p. 16)

Halloran's social environment is a strictly, sometimes brutally regulated one, but his geographical surroundings are the reverse of this; to Halloran the country seems to defy laws, codes, patterns, human endeavour, even sanity itself:

> He was a victor; he could foretell it. He would have his own house and wife on a sane coast. One day or night he would drop in front of his fire the story ... of how he took convicts and an artist up a river beyond China, beyond anything. (p. 36)

Another paradoxical situation, one which is never explicitly discussed in either Bring Larks and Heroes or The Tilted Cross but which underlies the imaginative structure of both, arises from the fact that the penal colonies have been established for the purpose of administering justice - for the punishment of crime - yet both societies breed injustices of an extreme and brutal kind. Certainly it is the characters, not the country, who inflict on each other the kind of injustice which is a major element in both novels; but both Porter and Keneally imply repeatedly that it is the setting, the conditions of place, which allow the human capacity for injustice, brutality, evil itself, to rise to the surface and prevail in each society. In both novels the country seems to have the power not only to frustrate human endeavour, but also to take human purpose and turn it inside out, making it the reverse of whatever the original intention may have been.

Bring Larks and Heroes, in particular, contains several passages in which the landscape itself appears to be silently but ironically mocking human purpose, showing up the frailties and absurdities of plans and intentions. In the account of the excursion headed by Captain Allen into the inland, there is a chilling little illustration of the way that the place can transform the effect of a human action into the opposite of the effect intended:

> At the men's fire, there was a tendency to speak low and stifle laughter, for the inland exacted a mild awe. But Allen, feeling equal to any pagan waste, chuckled whenever he wanted to. In such an open space, beside the little straggles of flame, his laughter sounded like a revelation of weakness. (p. 121)

During the episode in which Halloran rows up the river to the Crescent with Ewers and some others, he learns of the Governor's plan to 'ship two fully genteel natives home to England' (p. 43) from Surgeon Partridge; Partridge has found, somewhere along the river, two seriously ill Aboriginals whom he intends to cure, domesticate, and send 'home' in triumph and buttons. Halloran's lethargic reaction to this plan reflects his own growing awareness of the silliness to which such energetic bureaucracy is reduced when it manifests itself in the middle of a wilderness:

> The smell of mud affected Halloran with indifference to Partridge's schemes. Mangroves faced him with their lizard-skin front feet in the water. It was all millenia away from the printing presses and polite journals and medals struck by the Royal Society. In the zenith heat, on his way home to the town, Partridge might understand this and, in his lassitude, hurl the two poor blacks overboard. (p. 45)

The same kind of absurdity manifests itself in the letter of the law, the kind of organised legal judgements which human beings impose on each other. In the account of the trial, the colonial court appears to be playing games with the notion of death itself, in Keneally's ironic representation of judicial exactitude taken to extremes:

> The court declares Halloran and Ann dead twice over, the other three dead once only, although

> Miles is declared more gravely dead than McHugh and Barrett. (p. 199)

Both novelists deal with the nature of justice, and the contrariness of the countryside is represented not only as a parallel, but also as a contributor, to the perversions of justice with which each novel deals. In The Tilted Cross the whole notion of justice is completely reversed; Queely Sheill is punished for something he has not done, and the Cindermead household, wholly responsible for Queely's fate, goes not only unpunished but rewarded - Sir Sydney with advancement, Rose with a new lover, Asnetha with a husband and Teapot with a horse for Christmas. L.T. Hergenhan sees in this reversal an explanation of what Porter means by 'the duties of innocence' (p. 239):

> Queely ... sees what it has been one of the main aims of the novel to enact and reveal: 'the duties of innocence' demand that it be sacrificed in order to confirm the corrupt as irredeemable. Unlike Vaneleigh, Queely accepts this revelation - part of the climax of the novel's reversal of Revelation - not with bitterness but with the pleased, naive recognition of a new fundamental truth ...[3]

Rose Knight's general dissatisfaction with the place to which her husband has brought her intensifies all of her uncontrolled feelings; her loathing for Asnetha Sleep, her greed for Queely and her distaste for her husband are all heightened by her boredom and disenchantment with the cold, ugly, provincial place to which she has been brought, and this mess of irritated emotion in a woman to whom he has never even spoken is largely responsible for Queely's fate. But Queely's innocence is such that he has no notion of the concept of injustice; unlike Marcus Clarke's Rufus Dawes, for example, he feels in no way wronged. Porter takes the reversal of justice a stage further by representing Queely's state of mind as one of penitence and regret; he feels, not guilty, but responsible for the sequence of events which has led to his imprisonment:

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[3] L.T. Hergenhan, "The Tilted Cross: The 'Duties of Innocence'," Southerly, 34 (1974), 162.

> To have been gaoled for others' lies had not startled him - he had always known that others told lies. He was a good boy. Punishment could not make him bad ... He felt a responsibility in that his angerlessness, mercy, and animal purity had stirred up opposite emotions ... Imagining their evil to have a different taste, he felt justly enough punished for insolent misconception, for his undervaluation. He could not forgive them more. Their lies were merely their lies. He was sorry about the colour of his pea-jacket, about his voice and his cold, cruel eyes. He wished they would visit so that he could ask pardon for these offences. (p. 239)

In Bring Larks and Heroes the issue of justice is much less clear-cut. Halloran is technically guilty of treason, and the penalty for treason is hanging; on the surface, justice is seen to be done. But unlike Porter, Keneally is not chiefly concerned with the power of the corrupt over the innocent, or of those in high society over the social underworld; Keneally's main subject is the conflict between the individual conscience and a dehumanised, institutionalised system of justice, which, in the remote half-starved colony, is at its most arbitrary and least flexible. Halloran is guilty of the crime for which he is executed; but the picture of him which is built up in the course of the novel as a gentle and scrupulous man with a finely tuned, if overworked, conscience is one which emphasises the injustice, if not the absurdity, of hanging a man for a single act.

The sense of unfairness aroused in the reader by the fate of Halloran and Ann is heightened not only by the general unpleasantness of the people in authority over them - Rowley, Captain Allen, the Blythes - but also by the instances of injustice for which the same authorities are responsible. Ewers is hanged for a crime he is incapable of committing, to save the good name of a woman whose true character is already common knowledge in the colony; Quinn is made to stay on in the colony for an indefinite amount of time after the completion of his sentence, for want of records to prove that he is telling the truth.

These instances of sheer injustice provide a sombre background for Keneally's examination of the limitations of the kind of justice imposed by the law. Although they are technically guilty of the crime for which they are executed, Halloran and Ann are sympathetically portrayed by Keneally not only as fundamentally innocent human beings but also, as Brian Kiernan points out,[4] as representing the colony's only hope of a fruitful, positive future. The colonial landscape appears not only perverse, but deathly, and the society of the colony is likewise a death-bound one; and in imposing the judicial strictures of the law on Halloran and Ann, the colony is destroying the only element of its society which holds the promise of an untainted, liberated future. This recalls the death of Queely Sheill in The Tilted Cross; both colonies, already containing what has been judged the worst of England's society - Porter calls Hobart Town 'the privy of London' (p. 10) - destroy precisely what is best in their own societies, and the irony of this is another variation on the theme of inversion which underlies the structure of both novels.

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[4] Kiernan, pp. 157-58.

The moral atmosphere in each novel is imbued with the same kind of irony. Mary Lord observes of The Tilted Cross that

> At the level of social commentary it reveals the incongruity which can exist between the values society pretends to uphold and those values it will commit murder to preserve ... The Knights and Asnetha Sleep are the representatives of civilized, educated England. In them the Christian morality which theoretically underpins law, love and social behaviour, has been enshrined in customs and manners and can be ignored for all practical purposes ... the Antipodean background is made singularly appropriate to the basic preoccupations of the novel. The colonists, born on one side of the world and transplanted or transported to the other, create a society of extremes, of inverted values and morality ...[5]

The 'inverted values and morality' of the novel are established in layer upon layer of irony. Queely Sheill is the living embodiment of the Christian virtues and values which ostensibly provide the framework of the kind of society represented by Cindermead; but Queely sits in gaol and listens while the bells summon the Cindermead family to church, an ironic pilgrimage for a household which is in fact held together by a web of greed and dishonesty and cruelty:

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[5] Mary Lord, Hal Porter (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 28-29.

> Queely Sheill listened to the cathedral bells across the street calling successfully the population to prayer, among them Sir Sydney Knight who had received news of his advancement, his stately and gracious Lady Knight, Miss Asnetha Sleep and the attentive Dr. Wake, and a number of other persons equally Christian. (p. 240)

At Queely's trial, it is the human flotsam of Campbell Street - pot-boys, prostitutes and rat-catchers - which recognises and testifies to Queely's goodness and innocence; while the polished, mannered Cindermead household submits as evidence a tissue of coolly concocted fabrications, this being the only purpose for which the household is capable of uniting and co-operating with any sincerity. This episode also recalls the way in which Vaneleigh has been betrayed by a number of equally respectable and civilized beings: his wife, the ironically named Fidelia, and his fashionable literary friends.

But the chief irony in this novel, in terms of [illegible] morality, is the unquestioned triumph of corruption over innocence. The plot hatched at Cindermead to convict Queely is wholly successful; but the Campbell Street counter-plot orchestrated by Polidorio Smith to get Queely out of gaol is a failure, partly because of Queely's own generosity in sending an anonymous fellow-prisoner up the rope first. And at the end of the novel, Cindermead is last seen celebrating its various new acquisitions while Queely dies in agony in a prison hospital.

Bring Larks and Heroes sounds the same note of perverse celebration when Mrs. Blythe, exhilarated for a number of obscure reasons at Ann's death, totters to her feet and, almost literally, dances on Ann's grave. This is one of the most lyrically expressed passages in the book, and the harmony of the music in the leaves and the joy it inspires in Mrs. Blythe stand in stark and disturbing contrast to the deathly descriptions of the colony's plants and trees in the earlier part of the novel. It is almost as if Mrs. Blythe and the landscape which surrounds her are in agreement, if not collusion, over the fate of Halloran and Ann:

> Through her window, she could see the glossy side of wet leaves spangled with sunlight; she could hear them tinkling with chandelier music, and she wanted to dance to it. Perhaps her leg could stand it, because perhaps her leg was dry ... Yes, it was dry. She had never seen it better ... 'Thank God,' she said, and shards of music dropped from the leaves ... The tempo was gentle with her, and did not push her off balance once. She was slow and club-footed at first, but before long, danced with increasing movement and joy. (p. 225)

Mrs. Blythe, one of the most destructive characters in the book in spite - or, it is suggested, because - of her excessive and misdirected piety, is last seen by the reader in a state of utter gratification. The unspeakable Mrs. Daker goes unpunished for directly causing the death of

Ewers, in much the same way, and because of the same kind of ungratified greed, as Queely Sheill's death is caused by Rose Knight and Asnetha Sleep. Hearn, the only person to profit from the stolen stores - and the ringleader of the plot - also escapes unpunished. The most culpable or simply the most evil characters in both novels are precisely the ones who emerge at least unscathed, and sometimes exultant and rewarded, at the end.

So, in these two novels, the abstract notions of justice and morality are turned inside out and counterpointed by the tangible perversities of landscape to form a larger pattern of ironic reversal which illustrates Michael Wilding's analysis of the Antipodean myth:[6]

> For those who wrote about her before she was known to exist, Australia was in image a Utopia, a sort of Paradise ... The realities of the settlement shattered this image; but it continued to survive as a bitter parody of what might have been.

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[6] Wilding, p. 19.

CHAPTER THREE: PLACE AS MYTH

The point at which The Tilted Cross and Bring Larks and Heroes differ most substantially from earlier convict fiction is in the manner of their telling. Both Porter and Keneally attempt, as Noela Cameron observes, 'to formulate ... myth and moral fable from the ignominious birth of the Australian nation';[1] and to this end they both impart a very particular vision of the Australian landscape, selecting and emphasising its most negative aspects in order to portray it as a kind of hell on earth, a godless landscape through which the respective heroes, each a variation on the Christ-figure, move to their doom. This image is reinforced not only by the repeated allusions in both novels to the Biblical Hell; but also, in The Tilted Cross, by occasional references to the Underworld of classical mythology, and, in Bring Larks and Heroes, by several suggestions that the setting is an ironic reversal of the Garden of Eden.

Earlier convict fiction does not display this kind of selective representation of the landscape, which is unnecessary for the various purposes of earlier authors.

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[1] Cameron, p. 48.

James Tucker's Ralph Rashleigh[2] is a picaresque piece in which attention is concentrated wholly on the convict hero and his reactions to the speed and violence of events. In Caroline Leakey's The Broad Arrow (1859), the author's protest against the harshness of the convict system is embedded in a conventional sentimental romance, resulting in, as John Barnes puts it, 'the defeat of intelligence by a sentimental notion of fiction'.[3]

In Clarke's For the Term of His Natural Life, what Brian Elliott calls the 'moral allegory' implicit in the novel[4] - the demonstration of how the degradation and brutalisation of the 'natural man' can be redeemed by human love - is largely overshadowed, especially in the shorter version of the novel, by Clarke's emphasis on the brutality and injustice inherent in the penal system. Nor does Clarke make any significant use of his setting in either of these two aspects of his novel. His purpose in writing the novel was as much social as artistic, and the result is a peculiar hybrid of journalistic realism, historical melodrama, and moral allegory. Finally, William Hay's

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[2] This novel was written in or about 1844 and published in an edited and partly rewritten version in 1929, but the original text was not printed in full until 1952.

[3] John Barnes, "Australian Fiction to 1920," in The Literature of Australia, ed. Geoffrey Dutton, revised ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 161.

[4] Brian Elliott, Introd., For the Term of His Natural Life (1874); by Marcus Clarke (rpt. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1975), p. xxvi.

The Escape of the Notorious Sir William Heans is a piece of historical romanticising in which the setting is used chiefly to heighten the book's atmosphere of melancholy and mystery.

Each of these novelists uses a different fictional mode; they are writing for different purposes and with different kinds of vision. But, of these four novelists, only Clarke attempts to make his novel a kind of parable; and though all of them dwell on the landscape to some extent, not one of these novelists uses the notion of place itself as part of his or her design.

Porter and Keneally, writing over a hundred years after transportation to Australia ceased, have a different kind of perspective on their subject matter. Both are sufficiently distanced by time from the events and attitudes of the convict period to take the country's history - and its geography - and turn them into a kind of legend. The assumption that there is a fundamental connection between place and events is the underlying idea of both novels; each novelist has been highly selective in his representation of landscape, character and events in order to create the unity of vision that belongs to myth rather than to reality; and both novelists have used ancient and almost universally established myths of place in order to help create a new kind of national legend through their fiction.

Michael Wilding's image of Australia as 'a bitter parody of what it might have been' is the imaginative viewpoint from which the worlds of both The Tilted Cross and Bring Larks and Heroes are projected; in both novels the country is presented as part of a myth. Both colonies are somehow dream-places, vividly realised, but not real, because both Porter and Keneally create settings which are bitter distortions of an ideal rather than places in their own isolated right.

The sense that one is reading not an historical novel but a legend or folk-tale of some kind is heightened in both these novels in a variety of ways. In his Preface to Bring Larks and Heroes, Keneally makes an overt gesture away from realism and towards myth by disassociating his fictional colony from any actual one:

> ... the members of the administration are all - for better or worse - imaginary.
>
> The geography of the colony suggests that of Sydney, but is not meant to be identified with it.
>
> An example of the liberties I have taken is the use of the word 'felon' in preference to 'convict' ... 'Convict' is a word which possesses pungent tones and colours, a word loaded with distracting evocations, especially for Australian readers. Whereas 'felon' was free to take on the colour of whatever happened in these pages ... But it is hoped that the reader who accepts the claim that the world of this novel is a world of its own will also accept the claim that it is allowed to have an idiom of its own. (p. 6)

Unlike Porter, Keneally puts little emphasis on his characters' habits of speech or dress or social behaviour, in so far as they reflect on the society of the period; and this heightens the novel's peculiar effect of timelessness. So too does Halloran's own sense that he is not so much a reluctant Marine in a grim penal colony as a character out of legend:

> ... he felt reborn. This was partly because he had no doubt that he was living in a legend, because he underwent all the fervours set down in legends and poetry. It was as if he actually felt, above himself and Ann, the mercy of a story-teller. (p. 22)

This feeling is intensified in Halloran - perhaps even partly produced - by the nature of the countryside; in its lack of civilization and cultivation there is a faint ironic echo of the Garden of Eden:

> Four hundred yards from the town, on untouched earth, they seemed as much fated, each to each, as two people in a fable. (p. 24)

In _The Tilted Cross_, Porter's rococo language and elaborate violence of vision give this novel also a claim to 'a world of its own'. The theatrical flamboyance of some of the characters, the heightened atmosphere of simultaneous richness and rottenness which the book evokes, and the straightforwardness of the plot when read at the level of moral fable, all combine to give the book an air of some perverse and sophisticated fairy-tale. The unlikely combination of this Brothers Grimm element with the general parody of Christian morality and myth is superimposed over the complex pattern of inversion set by the contrast between the realities of the penal colonies and the Antipodean myth of a Utopia.

Adrian Mitchell offers a different interpretation of _The Tilted Cross_:

> If there is an underlying myth woven into the

> story, it is not so much Christian as the descent of Orpheus into the underworld, and if this is accepted the patterning of the novel emerges much more clearly. Orpheus is not the dominant interest, though, but the underworld itself, Hades and its 'perverse, obverse' values.[5]

Mitchell bases his argument on the names of characters, the events of the novel, and the identification of England with the upper world. There is one more thing, however, which contributes to the idea of Van Diemen's Land as the underworld of the Orpheus myth; namely, the condition of its inhabitants. They are, like the shades of the underworld, the living dead, and they are exemplified in the character of Judas Griffin Vaneleigh. Homeless, penniless, disillusioned and dying, Vaneleigh is forced to go on living in a place which offers him nothing, and in the certainty that he has no future.

If Porter's Hobart Town is a kind of underworld, then it might be said that Keneally's penal colony is an antipodean Eden, a garden of guilt and corruption and a grim parody of fruitfulness. The Fall is initiated by Adam, not by Eve; and the love between Halloran and Ann, in all its aspects, is presented not as the downfall of humanity but as the highest ideal that life can offer.

Of course the danger of this kind of interpretation is that it can be taken much too far. Mary Lord finds Adrian Mitchell's interpretation of The Tilted Cross somewhere beyond the bounds of probability:

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[5] Mitchell, p. 4.

> The Tilted Cross, because of its provocative symbolism, offers tempting bait to those who feel compelled to find extractable meanings in works of literature. One such attempt [in Mitchell's Introduction to The Tilted Cross] goes to quite absurd lengths ...[6]

Noela Cameron, in "The Convict in the Australian Novel", is even dubious about the appropriateness of the Christian myth in The Tilted Cross and Bring Larks and Heroes:

> The last two additions to the convict novel have used this period of history for the analysis of Christian myth and morality, but with questionable success. Future convict novels ... may find it necessary to look elsewhere for a satisfactory parallel. The Christ figure presents the dual connotation of innocence and redemption, and these are not compatible with the convict theme. (p. 51)

But it is not necessary, surely, for a novelist to draw exact parallels if he wishes to use myth in fiction at all. Porter and Keneally are not so much concerned with the 'analysis' of Christianity as with the use of certain aspects of it to heighten and clarify the themes and events of their novels. The same is true of the suggestions of the underworld in The Tilted Cross, or the ironic parallel with Eden in Bring Larks and Heroes. In The Tilted Cross there are only occasional hints of the underworld; the underground tap-room in Campbell Street is called 'The Shades', and its doors are compared to the mouth of Hell; one pattern of imagery in the novel emerges with the frequent references to the shadows - shades - which dominate the urban landscape of Hobart Town.

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[6] Lord, p. 29.

Similarly, in Bring Larks and Heroes, the references to the Book of Genesis are few and sparsely scattered. Ewers, contemplating the landscape, refers ironically to Eden. Mrs. Blythe, having discovered the secret of Ann's St. Megan's cord, thinks of the situation in Biblical terms:

> And then, to her further dismay, she did not even warn Halloran away from the house. She waited ... and knew that she was wrong to wait, that Halloran had involved her in the Fall. (p. 119)

Terry Byrne's assertion that 'that Hearn was Satan' (p. 222) recalls the temptation of Eve:

> Byrne had decided overnight that Hearn was Satan. He had now come to bring it to the court's notice, that Hearn's presence drove out reason.
>
> 'We had no chance of seeing things as they are. He had us dazed. A girl like Ann Rush wouldn't have a ghost's chance with him.' (p. 198)

However, such fleeting and often indirect references are not chiefly intended to set the reader sprinting off on an arduous paper-chase for clues and parallels. Thelma Herring makes an observation about the use of The Odyssey in Patrick White's The Aunt's Story which could also be applied generally to the use of myth in fiction:

> It is a means of indirectly defining character and theme and ... a kind of short-cut to emotional intensity.[7]

It is a short-cut not only to emotional intensity, but also to a widening of the reader's vision. References to the underworld of classical mythology in The Tilted Cross and to the Biblical Eden in *Bring Larks and Heroes* are few but recognisable, and touch a well-spring in the reader's mind to recall each myth in its entirety. The point is not to re-interpret the novels in the light of the myths to which they refer, but rather to add a new dimension to the novels as they stand. Hobart Town is not *merely* the underworld, nor the settlement in *Bring Larks and Heroes* merely an inverted Eden; and to read the novels with the myths in mind sheds a brighter light, not a different one, on the possible implications for theme and characterisation revealed by the association between the novels' settings and the old places of myth.

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[7] Thelma Herring, "Odyssey of a Spinster: A Study of The Aunt's Story" (1965); rpt. in Ten Essays on Patrick White, ed. G.A. Wilkes (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970), p. 14.

The myth of the Antipodes as a place of opposites and a potential Utopia is common - and fundamental - to both novels; and the contrast between the idyllic expectations and the brutal realities of the Antipodes is itself a further variation on the theme of inversion. In *The Tilted Cross*, the association of Van Diemen's Land with the underworld, which is in turn associated with the Biblical Hell, suggests a place of punishment; a place where inversion becomes the norm; and a place where the kind of death-in-life personified by Judas Vaneleigh is the only kind of life for those who must remain there. Finally, it suggests a place which is no more than a distorted reflection of life in the upper world, life in England, and so is an appropriate setting for the confusion between illusion and reality which underlies Vaneleigh's private meditations and is voiced most clearly in his last thoughts:

> Or is matter nothing but an idea? This life a swoon of the spirit and the grave a waking? (p. 266)

In Bring Larks and Heroes, the suggestions that the colony is a parody of Eden make it, too, a kind of Hell, and a fit place of punishment. If we see Halloran and Ann as an antipodean variation of Adam and Eve, it heightens our awareness of the novel as a kind of parable, and helps to explain the lovers' own sense of being 'two people in a fable'. In both novels the brief but potent suggestions of the mythic places of punishment and reward lend an air of remoteness to both stories; they seem not so much historical novels as a kind of mixture of moral fable and legend.

The representation of the colonies as a kind of hell on earth is made more vivid by the extensive use in both novels of Christian symbolism and Biblical allusions and parallels. Noela Cameron, in "The Convict in the Australian Novel", says of these two novels:

> [They] mark a significant development in the genre. In these novels the convict is depicted as a type of Christ-figure, a lamb of God, a scapegoat. Both novelists are attempting to formulate, within the convict setting, myth and moral fable from the ignominious birth of the Australian nation. (p. 48)

Such mythic figures need a mythic setting, and to this end both Porter and Keneally are highly selective in their re-creation of landscape and society. Both novelists emphasise the remoteness of the continent, and the negative aspects of such remoteness; Van Diemen's Land is 'the world's discredited rump', Keneally's settlement 'the very scruff of the earth'. Both novels are novels of extremes, in all kinds of ways; each colony alternately freezes in the winter and suffocates in the summer; and the unnatural societies bred by the penal colonies are as polarised as the weather. The considered evil of Mrs. Daker or Rose Knight is set over against the integrity and innocence of Halloran or Queely Sheill; Mrs. Blythe's deadly piety and Sir Sydney's church-going hypocrisy stand in contrast to Halloran's honest confusion of conscience and Queely's instinctive goodness.

Like so much else in these novels, it is ironic that each of their heroes should emerge as 'a type of Christ-figure' out of societies in which the practice of Christianity, far from being a force for good, has become almost a ritual of insincerity. Noela Cameron observes of convict fiction generally that

> The sanctimonious attitude of the administration is in grim contrast with the viciousness and cruelty of their actions. Their pious attendance at Church is set in ironic juxtaposition to their attitude at floggings and hangings. Church music and bells reverberate through a colony, whose ears are familiar with the clanging of convict chains and screams of agony. Allegiance to God and country is in ironic contrast to the non-love of one's fellow man.[8]

This reversal of the Christian ideal echoes the reversal of the Antipodean myth. The potential Paradise, where mankind could have been perfected, has only succeeded in brutalising humanity; it has been made a hell, not a heaven. In the same way, the colonial societies distort and reduce the Christian ideal to a mere disguise for corruption. Mrs. Blythe in Bring Larks and Heroes punishes and keeps on punishing her errant husband, and tyrannises Halloran and Ann, in the name of the Lord; and she thinks of her ulcerated leg as the cross she must bear, not - as it is in fact - as a reflection of the state of her soul. Sir Sydney Knight's hypocrisy in The Tilted Cross takes a much purer form; he is under no delusion about his own goodness or lack of it, and his 'We all tell lies, dear cousin. Tomorrow we must all go to church' (p. 214) is a heavily and intentionally ironic remark. In each novel, it is precisely the character who most nearly embodies the Christian ideals of behaviour and belief who emerges as the scapegoat figure, and who is ultimately destroyed by the respectable churchgoing society whose frustration, bitterness and vengefulness is hidden, sometimes not altogether successfully, under an outward show of faith.

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[8] Cameron, p. 49.

Mary Lord's comment on this aspect of The Tilted Cross is equally applicable to Bring Larks and Heroes:

> The use of Christian symbolism in The Tilted Cross allows Porter to explore a number of themes at a level which lifts it above its formal setting in time and place ... [The] Christians-in-name negate all human values in their lives and the working of the Christian myth through the novel allows a series of ironic reversals which point and counterpoint the themes relating to love and pity, goodness and faith, their viability in society and their tragic influence on the individual life.[9]

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[9] Lord, pp. 28-29.

Keneally uses direct Biblical references and Christian terminology rather than the elaborate mosaic of Christian symbolism with which The Tilted Cross is inlaid, but the end result is the same in keeping Christian ideals, or the distortion of them, constantly and consciously in the reader's mind.

Lord's assertion that Porter explores 'a number of themes at a level which lifts [the novel] above its formal setting in time and place' is also true of Bring Larks and Heroes. Paradoxically, the setting of both these novels at a very particular time and in a very particular kind of place is precisely what allows such exploration of universal themes, as well as such a clear delineation of good and evil and of the consequences for human behaviour and human destiny which radiate from this central pair of opposites. In these novels the penal system produces unnatural, polarised societies in remote, hostile places at the end of the earth; such extremes produce extremes of behaviour and events, from which some figures emerge not as ordinary human beings, but as symbolic representatives of life and death, fruitfulness and sterility, good and evil. Porter and especially Keneally are telling a tale of the individual in society, any society, at any time; but their use of such extreme and particular settings allows them to develop plots in which both the best and the worst of humanity is revealed. In both these novels the ethical and symbolic codes of Christianity, and in particular the story of the crucifixion, are used either to pick out and point up, or to define by ironic contrast, the nature of good and evil as embodied in the characters themselves.

In the light of this Christian framework, the settings of both novels are represented as literally God-forsaken places. Oddly enough, in this particular respect both novelists ascribe this quality of their settings not to the geography or atmosphere of the landscape itself, but to the kind of humanity which has invaded it. In The Tilted Cross, the seeming absence of any protective and benevolent Providence to watch over Van Diemen's Land is attributed to the population, not the place:

> Ladders and gallows and crucifixes of snow slanted up the precipices of Organ-pipe and the steeps of Knocklofty to the skylights of a firmament lacking angels to cosset anything or manna to sustain anyone. Land and sky alike seemed repelled by the English and the half-cultured urbanity they had securely established on a solid foundation of political brutality, crime, unemployment and colonial corruption. (p. 9)

The ominous imagery in the opening sentence of this passage seems to indicate that it is the landscape itself which is deathly and pitiless; but the following sentence suggests that the phantom shapes of snow are only a kind of reflection of the trappings and trademarks of the penal settlement.

Keneally, too, in describing the godlessness of the colonial landscape, is condemning not the country itself, but the misguided attitudes of its new inhabitants. This passage is part of the account of the Reverend Mr. Calverley's doomed son:

> Over twenty-five degrees of unredeemed latitude and thirty degrees of longitude that had not bent the knee, his father was parish priest; and lured by this grand and meaningless concept, the boy had been enjoying an empire-building holiday with his parents. (p. 25)

In this novel the country is not godless as such, merely unsubdued as yet by the God of Christian civilization; elsewhere in the novel Keneally refers to 'the whole pantheon of gods of this, the world's wrong end'. The country is looked after by pagan spirits of its own; and the implication is that Mr. Calverley's God is something of an unwelcome and inadequate invader. The ironic note in this passage recalls Keneally's tone in the account of the sentences passed by the court on Halloran, Ann and the others, or of Surgeon Partridge's scheme for the two diseased Aboriginals; organised religion is seen to be as absurdly inadequate, in the face of an enormous, indifferent and near-empty wilderness, as the dehumanised and arbitrarily imposed system of justice or the ambition of officials for recognition by the Royal Society.

The character of the Reverend Mr. Calverley himself is an effective illustration of the limitations of the Church in the face of the penal settlements. Calverley, confronted by three condemned and understandably abusive men, can do no more than resort to a sanctimonious tirade:

> 'Do you think the All-Highest will listen to you? Do you think God will avenge your harlot on me, his minister?' He cast his eyes up. 'I am wasted on you. I am wasted on this town,' he lamented.
>
> 'Yah!' Miles called at him.
>
> He turned to the hut in general.
>
> 'I carry the Cross to you, the Saviour's

> Cross to the four of you. And the single man who will speak to me does not speak of justification but of a - of a randy girl.'
>
> 'Yah!' Miles told him again.
>
> 'I leave you to the worm of death. I leave you all to the worm of death. He will bite deep on you while I still laugh.' (p. 207)

Calverley, in his inadequacy for the part of God's representative, recalls the ministers Meekin and North in For the Term of His Natural Life. Christianity as practised in the penal colonies, whether by its ministers or by its supposed adherents within ordinary society, makes a mockery of the idea of an omnipotent God, or of a merciful one. Porter and especially Keneally develop further in their novels a theme which appears in For the Term of His Natural Life:

> 'God is love, my brethren,' said the chaplain on Sundays, and all the week the thongs of the overseer cracked, and the cat hissed and swung. Of what practical value was a piety that preached but did not practise? It was admirable for the 'religious instructor' to tell a prisoner that he must not give way to evil passions, but must bear his punishment with meekness. It was only right that he should advise him to 'put his trust in God'. But as a hardened prisoner, convicted of getting drunk in an unlicensed house of entertainment, had said, 'God's terrible far from Port Arthur.'[10]

In Bring Larks and Heroes and The Tilted Cross, the use of motifs and symbols and fragments of narrative from other myths, classical or Christian, gives the reader a much wider frame of reference in which to read them than is provided by the more solidly historically based fiction of the genre. Porter and Keneally are not merely borrowing old myths, however; they are also creating new ones out of the material of history, and to this end history has been somewhat readjusted. Noela Cameron, in "The Convict in the Australian Novel", points out that

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[10] Clarke, p. 288.

> Novelists living outside the period of the convict system have turned to records, journals and biographies as the basis for their work. Despite this historical basis, and the industriousness of their research, the novels are a distortion of certain aspects of the convict period. This decision and bias has been deliberate, the material being selected, not for historical accuracy, but to suit artistic aims. (p. 48)

Cameron is here referring mainly to the choice of convict hero, and to the frequent occurrence in convict fiction of secondary confinement, flogging, and other extreme and brutal punitive measures - which, she claims, were rarely used, although L.L. Robson's account in The Convict Settlers of Australia seems to indicate otherwise:

> The most profound factor preventing reformation, and perhaps driving men to persistent offences, was the lash ... It would be difficult to find a more effective means of hardening the heart of the convict than by flogging him. Degrading to all concerned, the cat-o'-nine-tails was feared until its first use, after which a marked deterioration of the convict's character set in. A similar effect followed the placing of men into the brutalizing chain gangs, as indeed did sentences to penal settlements such as Port Arthur ... (pp. 111-12)

It is also possible that accounts of brutality seem to dominate the pages of Australian convict fiction simply because they wreak such havoc on the imagination, and stay clear in the reader's mind long after the overall images of the novels have blurred and faded. But it is certainly true that most convict novelists are extremely selective in their choice of hero. Richard Devine, Sir William Heans, Judas Griffin Vaneleigh, Queely Sheill, Phelim Halloran - all are sensitive and intelligent, most are gentlemen, some are artists. Whereas according to Robson, the vast majority of transported convicts were of working-class origins, and the two most common offences for which they were transported were larceny and housebreaking.

Thus, despite the thoroughness of some of these novelists' research, it is clear that in almost all convict fiction some of the aspects of the penal system have been heavily emphasised and some almost ignored. Marcus Clarke took pains to compile an appendix to For the Term of His Natural Life in order to prove the authenticity of his sources; Hal Porter spent months in Hobart and in London researching even the smallest details in order to produce 'a facsimile of reality'.[11] But even when one is dealing with facts, it is possible - and, in the writing of fiction, necessary - to magnify some and minimise others, in order, as Noela Cameron points out, 'to suit artistic aims'.

Porter and Keneally, however, take this kind of selection a stage further in their treatment of landscape. Cameron observes in the same article that

> In varying degree, all the novelists use the strangeness of the landscape to echo the plight of the convict, to emphasise the alien quality of

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[11] See Mitchell, p. 1.

> the convict settlement, or to add atmosphere to a world where evil appears to work with greater potency than good. (pp. 48-49)

This suggests that the landscape is only a subordinate element in the novels, used merely to decorate or echo the real substance of the fiction. Certainly this is true of For the Term of His Natural Life, in which Clarke's account of the landscape is separated out into two short chapters - "The Topography of Van Diemen's Land" and "'A Natural Penitentiary'" - describing the geography of Tasmania in general and Port Arthur in particular. It is also true of The Escape of the Notorious Sir William Heans, in which Hay has

> ... imbued the landscape and surroundings of the colonies with a Gothic aura of mystery, terror and perversion.[12]

This eerie atmosphere decorates Hay's novel like lace on a handkerchief. But in The Tilted Cross and Bring Larks and Heroes, the landscape is an absolutely fundamental part of the structure of each novel; and Porter and Keneally have selected certain aspects of it, in the same way that atypical heroes and the more sensationally violent aspects of convict life have been selected for portrayal in most convict fiction, for their own artistic purposes.

For, in both these novels, the landscape is the visible embodiment of the plight of the convict; it is shown in all of its worst aspects. The settlements are places of punishment already, but the landscape inflicts punishment of its own; it destroys crops, offends the eye, and alternately freezes and fries its new inhabitants. Yet any reader familiar with these two novels but not with the landscapes which their authors purport to describe would be astonished to discover in Henry Savery's Quintus Servinton the assertion that its transported hero is 'in one of the finest climates upon the surface of the globe';[13] or, in For the Term of His Natural Life, the sentence 'The climate of Van Diemen's Land is one of the loveliest in the world' (p. 95). In The Tilted Cross, the human eye makes out the shapes of gallows and crucifixes in the packed snow on the mountains; in the same way, the characters in Porter's and Keneally's novels see the state of their own society reflected back at them from the landscape. Hostility, clearly, is in the eye of the beholder.

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[12] Cameron, p. 49.

By applying this vision of the landscape to Australia's convict history, both Porter and Keneally have given their novels a unity far beyond the bounds of realism, a kind of unity which earlier convict fiction lacks; they represent the country itself as a reflection of the purpose for which it was used. The punitive aspects of the landscape suggest that it is a kind of hell, the archetypal place of punishment; this suggestion is reinforced by the way in which Biblical allusion and Christian symbolism are used in both novels. The ironic reversals of Christian ideals and morality are reflected in the reversals of the landscape, in the Looking-Glass Land stars and seasons of the southern hemisphere, and in the mockery which the colonies make of the Antipodean myth of a Utopia. By selecting some aspects and rejecting others of Australia's landscape, and of a particular period in its history, Porter and Keneally have both assembled a fable out of the assembled facts.

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[13] Henry Savery, Quintus Servinton (1831; rpt. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1962), p. 315.

In an interview on the subject of research for historical novels,[14] Keneally justifies this kind of myth-making in terms which, unintentionally, define both _The Tilted Cross_ and _Bring Larks and Heroes_, and which help to explain the peculiar and paradoxical quality, which both these novels display, of timelessness:

> If you're writing fiction you have one of two attitudes to history. You wish either to point out the quaintness or exotic quality of a time past ... or else you want to find evidence in earlier events for the kind of society we have now, wishing to tell a parable about the present by using the past ... Specifically because you are a novelist, you are permitted to project full-scale pictures of what you think about a particular age without going to the same trouble as an historian. An historian must prove his reliability to other scholars and to his readers. The only warrant a novelist needs for his ideas about the past is that they reek of human, poetic, dramatic, symbolic veracity and resound in his imagination.

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[14] Thomas Keneally, "Doing Research (2) For Historical Novels," _Australian Author_, 7, No. 1 (1975), 27.

Section Two:

The Expatriate Novel

CHAPTER FOUR:

EXPATRIATE WRITING AND ATTITUDES TO PLACE

This section deals with a group of novels by Australian expatriate writers: Henry Handel Richardson's The Fortunes of Richard Mahony; Christina Stead's For Love Alone; Martin Boyd's four Langton novels; and George Johnston's My Brother Jack trilogy. All of these works come into the category of the 'expatriate novel', a form in which, by definition, the idea of place - or displacement - is a central element. The four novelists concerned take different views of the phenomenon of expatriation, views which are reflected in their novels as well as explicitly stated in articles and interviews.

However, in the novels to be discussed, several common preoccupations recur. Australia is seen from an international perspective; Richardson, Stead, Boyd and Johnston, albeit in different ways and with different aims, all make use of the contrast, or the tension, or the balance between Australia and Europe as a structural basis for these novels. In each of the works to be discussed, the perambulations of the central character emerge as the focal point; the relation between the development of the major characters and their changing places in the world, literally speaking, is a major theme; and the form of each work is organised around a dual geographical perspective.

There is often a tendency and always a temptation, in writing critically about the work of any artist, to use facts about his life in order to support a critical view of his work. This tendency emerges frequently in the body of critical work dealing with Australian literary expatriates, no doubt because much of their fiction has a strong autobiographical flavour. Certain assumptions - that *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* is a faithful account of the life of Richardson's father, that Teresa Hawkins is Christina Stead's *alter ego*, that Guy Langton is no more than a *nom de plume*, so to speak, of Martin Boyd's, or that the figure of David Meredith is a not even thinly disguised self-portrait of George Johnston - are implicit, if not stated, in much of the critical writing dealing with these novelists.

This often leads to critical interpretations of their novels which is based as much on their biographies as on their fiction, and this kind of imprecise and wrongly stressed connection between fact and fiction can result in the making of assumptions about the novels for which there is often no basis at all in the texts themselves. There are, of course, obvious parallels to be drawn between the lives of these authors and the experiences of their main characters, but this is true to some extent of all fiction. The purpose of this section is not to examine the relation of the novelists' lives to their work, but to examine the ways in which the expatriate experience, imaginatively transformed into fiction, is used in these novels to expound and illuminate the ideas of voyage, of homelessness, and of home.

Before focusing on the work of Australian expatriate novelists, however, some discussion of the general phenomenon of literary expatriation may shed some light on the motives and values of these novelists, and on the patterns of attitudes to place which emerge in their work. Malcolm Bradbury, in his article "Second Countries: The Expatriate Tradition in American Writing", prefaces his more specific comments on the American writer abroad with some general observations about the apparent connections between wanderlust and literature:

> Almost every country and culture in which the arts have been seriously pursued has produced its literary exiles; its voyagers, expatriates and émigrés ... Certainly foreign residence does seem a recurrent condition of writerliness. The troubador, the sentimental traveller, the taker of the educative _wanderjahr_, the travelling scholar, the artist-voyager journeying to some mythic destiny, the political exile, the provincial hungry for the capitals of art; these are old and familiar figures in literary history.[1]

Ernest Earnest, in the Introduction to his _Expatriates and Patriots_ - also a study of American expatriates, which takes in the life and work of several painters and scholars as well as writers - makes the same point in citing a list of non-American writers who, for various reasons, found themselves living and working abroad:

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[1] Malcolm Bradbury, "Second Countries: The Expatriate Tradition in American Writing," _The Yearbook of English Studies_, 8 (1978), 15-16.

> Over sixty years ago William Dean Howells found it necessary to answer a charge by a visiting English lecturer to the effect that 'the Americans who are most prominent in cultivated European opinion in art or literature live habitually out of America and draw their inspiration from England, France or Italy.' As Howells pointed out, expatriation is by no means an exclusively American phenomenon. He cited Byron, Shelley, Hunt, the Brownings, and Landor, all of whom preferred to live in Italy; Kipling, who lived for a time in Vermont; Björnson and Ibsen, who spent many years in France and Italy; Heine, who preferred Paris to Düsseldorf; and Voltaire who went to Prussia for a number of years.[2]

Harry Levin, in his essay "Literature and Exile", goes back as far as Ovid's banishment from Rome in his wide-ranging discussion of the phenomenon of the writer in exile.[3]

The reasons for this widespread literary migration are far too numerous to list, and many of them are highly idiosyncratic and personal. But, generally speaking, two main patterns can be traced: political exile on the one hand, and, on the other, a desire to escape from what is seen as a cultural desert to a more fertile hunting ground for the imagination, account between them for the displacement of a large number of writers, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The word 'displacement' may seem an odd choice, but the expatriate is always a displaced person. Although he may have felt himself misplaced on his native ground, when he changes countries and adopts another as his home he acquires a sort of dual sensibility, a shifting sense of himself in relation not to one nation - one combination of landscape and society - but two, and sometimes more than two. As Harry Levin points out, the implications of this, particularly for the writer, are by no means entirely negative:

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[2] Ernest Earnest, Expatriates and Patriots (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1968), p. vii.

[3] Levin, p. 63.

> The irony of the expatriate's lot is that he dearly pays for his _Wanderlust_ with his _Heimweh_. His psalm of Babylon is dedicated to his remembrance of Zion ... But the long view need not be the nostalgic one; it can provide a vantage point for perspective.[4]

Heimweh , which Levin defines as 'nostalgia' but is perhaps more accurately translated simply as 'homesickness', was and is most acutely felt by those writers who find themselves political exiles. Boris Pasternak, threatened with deportation from the Soviet Union after the publication of _Doctor Zhivago_, wrote 'A departure beyond the borders of my country is for me equivalent to death'.[5] Pasternak was allowed to remain (_Doctor Zhivago_, however, was not); but Vladimir Nabokov, whose aristocratic family fled from Russia in 1919, was an exile from his homeland for most of his life. George Steiner, in his _Extraterritorial_, observes of Nabokov that

> As he points out with tireless, aggreived insistence, the political barbarism of the century made him an exile, a wanderer, a _Hotelmensch_, not only from his Russian homeland but from the matchless Russian tongue in which

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[4] Levin, p. 73.

[5] See Levin, p. 63.

his genius would have found its unforced idiom.[6] Georg Brandes, in the first volume of his Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature, makes a point in reference to the French literary émigrés at the end of the eighteenth century which could be equally well applied to their Russian counterparts of the twentieth century:

> ... with but brief interval between, two destroying tyrannies, the dictatorships of the Convention and of the Empire, passed over France, annihilating all personal freedom as they went ... during both these great despotisms it was only far from Paris ... or beyond the frontier, in Switzerland, Germany, England, or North America, that the French man of letters pursued his calling. Only in such places could the independent intellects of France exist, and it is by independent intellects alone that a literature can be founded or developed.[7]

The writer in enforced political exile, with no choice but to pay the exorbitant price of his national identity in order to retain his intellectual and artistic integrity, his freedom, or perhaps even his life, might be said to be the only true literary expatriate; unlike Henry James, James Joyce, or any of the American or Australian expatriates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the political exile does not have the option of returning home, of rediscovering his nationality and reclaiming his rights of citizenship. Nor, as Harry Levin points out, can he enact through his work the 'vicarious homecoming' which Joyce's Ulysses represents:

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[6] George Steiner, "Extraterritorial" (1968); rpt. in his Extraterritorial (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 7.

[7] Georg Brandes, The Emigrant Literature, Vol. I of Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature (1901; rpt. London: Heinemann, 1923), pp. 1-2. For reasons best known to the publishers, Brandes's Christian name has been Anglicised in this edition to 'George'.

> Joyce's career was beset with misunderstandings on all sides and at every level. Yet through his books it culminated in a vicarious homecoming, a monumental act of understanding. He was more fortunate, in this respect, than many of his contemporaries, for whom alienation was not a voluntary artistic gesture but a compulsory political sacrifice. For them there could be no deliberate choice between being nonpolitical and becoming engagé.[8]

The question of what motivates the literary expatriate is only an easy one to answer in the case of the writer in political exile. He is what Malcolm Bradbury calls 'the writer pushed' from one place to another, displaced by force. But the motivations of the voluntarily expatriated writer are far more various, complex and difficult to discern; this discussion of them will be limited to an account of the more prominent American expatriate writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, partly because it is possible to trace some common patterns in their motivations and their movements, and partly because the American literary expatriates have certain affinities with their Australian counterparts.

Malcolm Bradbury, in drawing a distinction between the expatriate and the exile, offers some suggestions regarding the motivations of the writer who chooses to remove himself from his native ground. Of literary expatriation generally, he observes that

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[8] Levin, p. 77.

> ... we may find two reasons for the tendency. One, the easier to understand, is that of the writer dislodged or displaced by factors within his own society, the writer pushed (by political censorship, the threat of trial, the consequence of revolution, or, more subtly, by the sense of irrelevance) to leave his country in disquiet or disgust and find freedom of expression elsewhere ... But there is another form which is based on the romantic act of choice. This is the case of the writer pulled, drawn by factors in another society, some sensibility, opportunity, or stimulus which makes him believe he can write better there, find art or fame or publication.[9]

Generally speaking, the American - or Australian - literary expatriate is the writer pulled, drawn from a post-colonial society back to the cultural heart of things in Europe. But this attraction is the more deeply felt because of a corresponding lack of 'sensibility, opportunity or stimulus' in the writer's own country. Often the expatriate writer in search of a richer cultural atmosphere is as much pushed by his sense of the cultural barrenness of his native land as pulled by the promises of Europe. Alan Holder, in his Three Voyagers in Search of Europe, defines this double impulse in pointing out that the writer's very act of transplanting himself can be a gesture of rejection as well as a quest for fulfilment:

> In choosing to live abroad, James, Pound and Eliot registered in the most acute way possible both the pull they felt toward Europe and the distaste induced in them by America. The attraction and repulsion were, of course, complementary - Europe seemed to promise them what America lacked and offered refuge from what

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[9] Bradbury, p. 16.

they found undesirable in American life.[10]

This negative aspect of the expatriate writer's decision seems most noticeable in American writing in the nineteenth century. Washington Irving, in a letter to his niece in Paris in 1841, expressed a sentiment which was to be echoed over a hundred years later by Patrick White in his article "The Prodigal Son", in which he sees 'the exaltation of the "average"' in Australian society as partly responsible for its own superficiality and colourlessness.[11] Irving wrote:

> I have been ... to a commonplace little church of white boards, and seen a congregation of commonplace people and heard a commonplace sermon, and now cannot muster up anything but commonplace ideas ... Good Lord ... deliver me from the all pervading commonplace which is the curse of our country.[12]

Henry James, writing of Hawthorne in 1879, is somewhat more specific about the deficiencies of American life for the pursuit of literature; he compares what he calls the 'blankness' of American life with the 'denser, richer, warmer European spectacle'. The 'all pervading commonplace' of which Irving complains is seen by James as a matter of lack, of absence; he enumerates the elements, absent from American society and the American landscape, which go to provide the complexity and variety of European life:

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[10] Alan Holder, Three Voyagers in Search of Europe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), p. 19.

[11] Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son" (1958); rpt. in The Vital Decade, ed. G. Dutton and M. Harris (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1968), p. 157.

[12] See Stanley T. Williams, "Cosmopolitanism in American Literature Before 1880," in The American Writer and the European Tradition, ed. Margaret Denny and William H. Gilman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1950), p. 45.

> ... it takes such an accumulation of history and custom, such a complexity of manners and types, to form a fund of suggestion for a novelist ... one might enumerate the items of high civilization as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left ... No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses ... no great Universities nor public schools ... no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class ... Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life - especially the American life of forty years ago ...[13]

To James it seemed that, as far as the novelist or the poet was concerned, the main thing wrong with America was that it was not Europe; but if this was a problem for American writers in the nineteenth century it was a far greater one for their Australian contemporaries, as Frederick Sinnett points out in a very early article entitled "The Fiction Fields of Australia". Sinnett's comment bears such a similarity of substance, if not of tone, to James's observations that one might be excused for suspecting a little plagiarism - especially considering Sinnett's indirect reference to Hawthorne - were it not for the fact that Sinnett was writing in 1856, over twenty years before James's *Hawthorne* was published:

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[13] Henry James, Hawthorne (1879); rpt. in The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson, revised ed. (London: W.H. Allen, 1956), pp. 459-60.

> ... it is alleged against Australia that it is a new country, and, as Pitt said, when charged with juvenility, 'this is an accusation which I can neither palliate nor deny'. ... It must be granted, then, that we are quite debarred from all the interest to be extracted from any kind of archaeological accessories. No storied windows, richly dight, cast a dim, religious light over any Australian premises. There are no ruins for that rare old plant, the ivy green, to creep over and make his dainty meal of ... The antiquity of the United States quite puts us to shame; and it is darkly hinted that there is not so much as a 'house with seven gables' between Portland and Cape Howe.[14]

At this stage Australian literature was barely in existence; any writer who left Australia for Europe could fairly be said to be *going* home rather than *leaving* home. Australian literature was to go through a nationalist phase and progress well into the twentieth century before the expatriate novel began to assume the importance it has for us now. The legend of the nineties had been forged and established before the last volume of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, perhaps still the definitive Australian expatriate novel, was published in 1929; this pattern of development is discussed more fully later in this chapter.

In Hawthorne's time it was not only the writers in America who suffered from the country's lack of cultural resources. Cushing Strout, in *The American Image of the Old World*, points out that for American painters and sculptors during most of the nineteenth century, expatriation was a

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[14] Frederick Sinnett, "The Fiction Fields of Australia" (1856); rpt. in *The Writer in Australia*, ed. Barnes, p. 9.

'technical and practical necessity'.[15] Here, too, there was a double impulse in operation; the lack of facilities and opportunities for the painter or sculptor in America stood in direct contrast to the attractions of Italy.

For America's early writers, similar practical difficulties had to be faced, as well as the more abstract problems arising from the absence of any cultural tradition or coherently assessed history. Malcolm Bradbury observes, of 'the emergent literary class, following the Revolution', that they were almost literally a new breed; there was no prepared space for them in American society, no social or cultural context in which to place themselves or their work:

> Without a defined cultural role for the writer, without a developed literary profession, without even copyright protection for authors, such people had to make the role of writer, and found no significant support. In fact, ceasing to be a colony, the United States had become a province. Writers, needing reputation, criticism, artistic innovation and stimulus, needed the city.[16]

By the time that Henry James was writing, difficulties of this kind had been overcome to some extent, but the subtler problems remained. James is perhaps a special case, since he had been more directly exposed than most Americans to the influences of European culture all his life. In his American boyhood he was 'surrounded by English books and

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[15] Cushing Strout, The American Image of the Old World (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 68.

[16] Bradbury, p. 26.

Italian paintings', and he later observed, apropos of his childhood, 'I was somehow in Europe, since everything about me had been "brought over"'[17] - a statement which recalls the Australian childhood of Guy Langton in Boyd's A Difficult Young Man.

The vision of life reflected in James's novels, a mesh of delicate nuances of speech, gesture and reaction, was European in essence, and could not have been sustained had he written from within American society. The life created in his novels depends for its survival on the dense and complex accumulations of the European past, accumulations of code and custom and association, and has little to do with the raw prosperity and progress, damped by a pervasive puritanism, of American life at the time. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in The Europeans, where the Wentworth household, which has all the colour and animation of a faded sepia photograph, is galvanized into action and reaction by the arrival of the Baroness Münster and her brother. Stanley T. Williams observes that

> ... James was not to care how men blow up a steamboat, as in Mark Twain; nor how they perspire, as in Walt Whitman ... but how civilized men and women think. In his pages is to be found ... a society in which any man and woman grown in sensitivity beyond the stage of the American polyp can find life itself ... the reader lives on those levels of the mind and spirit which arise from conversation and silence, from unspoken friendships and unuttered hostilities, from faint ironies and remote adorations, from communions ... with music, painting and sculpture ... Find the materials or moods for the creation of this world in America?

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[17] See Williams, p. 60.

Preposterous! He faced toward Europe.[18]

After the turn of the century America continued to produce a steady stream of expatriate writers, notably T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, but so far as the attractions of Europe were concerned, a subtle shift in emphasis had taken place. For Washington Irving and Fenimore Cooper in the first half of the nineteenth century, and for Henry James in the second, the lure of Europe resided in its past, in its dense and varied accumulations of history and art; the American expatriates of the early twentieth century were more concerned with the present and the future.

Paris, in particular, was becoming the focal point of contemporary art and thought; and, as Cushing Strout observes, it attracted not only American writers but 'the artistically adventurous of every country' - Picasso, Modigliani, Diaghilev and Klee, to name a few. Gertrude Stein's characteristically expressed view of the matter was that 'Paris was where the twentieth century was'.[19] Malcolm Bradbury, referring to the embryonic cultural awareness of America in the first half of the nineteenth century, observes in "Second Countries: The Expatriate Tradition in American Writing" that 'the tendency was indeed to mythologize Europe as art' (p. 28), and Gertrude Stein's statement seems to indicate that this was still true a century later, albeit for somewhat different reasons. Bradbury sees this shift in emphasis as an important development in the art and literature of the twentieth century, resulting as it did in the transmission of Modernist ideas back to England and America. Paradoxically, it was the very attraction of Paris for foreign artists and writers which began to result in a decentralisation of cultural power.

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[18] Williams, pp. 60-61.

[19] Strout, p. 185.

After World War I, however, the emphasis began to shift again. Europe was still a star attraction for the writer, but Bradbury argues that the immediately post-war wave of American expatriates - of whom Hemingway and Fitzgerald are probably the best-known representatives - had as a result of the war suffered a 'disillusionment with the idea of Europe as the essential focus of civilization'. In place of this idea, however, came an awareness that the state of Europe most accurately reflected the state of the world and the condition of twentieth-century humanity. The war, Bradbury argues,

> ... had expanded their provincial American horizons ... giving them a sense of the intensities of experience lacking in the States, made them doubtful of Puritanism and social pieties, but also exposed the paradox of cultivated Europe. This Europe was therefore not the place of high cultural resources but of emotional and artistic opportunities; and, since their predominant vision was one of a world disintegrating in values and losing moral security and superiority, they recognized in the decadences and disorders of Europe a metaphysical state of affairs truer to their experience than

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[20] Bradbury, p. 33.

> that revealed in the booming economic Babbitry of the United States.[21]

These, in summary, were some of the things which attracted American writers to Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: a richer cultural background, artistic heritage, and social fabric; the Modernist movement, in which the American artist could take an active, innovative part instead of merely drawing on the resources of civilization and tradition, as in the past; a sense of contemporary spiritual and social relevance in shattered post-war Europe; and a corresponding absence of all these things in their native America.

There was another factor, mentioned in passing by Bradbury in the above quotation, which seems to have disturbed not only the writers who left America but also the ones who stayed at home. The values of American society in general, especially in the nineteenth century, were not particularly conducive to the pursuit of art. This question has been the subject of some critical debate; Ernest Earnest's Expatriates and Patriots consists largely of a refutation of what he calls

> ... [a] theory ... that because of puritanism and commercialism the United States has been actively hostile to the artist and the intellectual. (p. vii)

It seems, however, to have been not so much a matter of active hostility as of, firstly, blank indifference on the part of a society which was undoubtedly motivated to a considerable extent by the forces of 'puritanism and commercialism'; and, secondly, of the disillusion and disenchantment of the artist with a society whose values he saw as false and sterile. Harry Levin, in "Literature and Exile", uses the work of another critic to define the two choices open to the American writer in the second half of the nineteenth century:

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[21] Bradbury, p. 35.

> The problem for the American author in relation to his environment has been studied ... by Van Wyck Brooks, in a pair of companion biographies, _The Pilgrimage of Henry James_ and _The Ordeal of Mark Twain_. To stay at home was by implication an ordeal, a trial by unequal combat against the massed forces of philistinism, commercialism, and _embourgeoisement_. As for pilgrimage, it was merely the other horn of the writer's inevitable dilemma. (pp. 74-75)

The values of Europe were anathema to a country which had fought and won its war of independence; but, to the American artist, the new values were sometimes more deeply distasteful than the old. Malcolm Bradbury, referring to W.D. Howells and Mark Twain in "Second Countries: The Expatriate Tradition in American Writing", concurs with Levin regarding the effect of America's national ethos on the sensibilities of its writers:

> ... when ... both Howells and Twain felt an increasing disillusion with American life in the 1890's, both renewed their attention to Europe, seeing American democracy rushing into a brutal, demoralised, naturalistic void. Though they did not expatriate, they felt the sense of cultural displacement that could push American writers across the Atlantic, and it is over these years that the American literary population in Europe becomes large and striking. (p. 30)

There was a particular and peculiar kind of tension between America and Europe; the former, having decisively established its national independence, was nevertheless what Stanley T. Williams calls 'a completely *transplanted* culture',[22] and although its political values and aspirations were in opposition to those of Europe, Europe was yet where its cultural heritage lay. The American artist, therefore, often found himself the unwilling victim of deeply divided loyalties, drawn to Europe by its cultural resources and the high value it placed on art and at the same time committed to the political ideals of his homeland - even when he saw, as did Howells and Twain, the directions in which American society was being led by 'American democracy'. In *The American Image of the Old World*, Cushing Strout outlines some of the reasons for the dilemma in which the American writer often found himself:

> [Europe] was ... a social order of fascinating complexity and sophistication which subtly posed a dangerous temptation to the representatives of a society blest or cursed (it was often hard to say which) with a more rugged natural setting, a simpler social system, a more democratic code of manners, and a narrower standard of morality ... the Old World was both an inspiration and lure to Americans, even while it remained in political terms the incarnation of the enemy. (pp. 62-63)

Although it produced no political exiles like the literary refugees from the French and Russian revolutions, the American revolution and the national attitudes which both engendered and succeeded it may well have been an indirect factor in the production of such a large number of literary expatriates over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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[22] Williams, p. 48.

Before turning to examine the place of expatriate Australian writers in this scheme of things, it seems necessary to give some consideration to two other aspects of the phenomenon of literary expatriation which seem to recur regularly in recent critical discussions of the subject. The first, while apparently a peculiarly American phenomenon, has wider implications for the Australian literary expatriate and for the expatriate generally. Several critics argue that, for the American writer, it was only by leaving the country and looking back at it from an international perspective that he could come to an understanding of his own national identity. This theory is the basis of Harold T. McCarthy's The Expatriate Perspective, as he explains near the beginning of the book:

> The works discussed are part of a process by which these American writers came to a realization of the nature of their Americanism. In the process of self-discovery, they had to acknowledge the differences, sometimes amounting to direct opposition, between the actualities of life in America and the shaping idea of America that had kept alive for successive generations of Americans the belief in their country as a Promised Land.[23]

The 'process of self-discovery' is a major element in the work of Australian expatriate writers; but for Australian expatriates in general and for Martin Boyd and George

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[23] Harold T. McCarthy, The Expatriate Perspective (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1974), p. 11

Johnston in particular, this process, undertaken through their work, is as much an examination of their identity as artists and human beings as of their Australian nationality.

Critics of American expatriate literature, however, seem agreed that the question of national identity is central to their subject, and numerous writers from several different periods are cited as examples of this. Alan Holder, in Three Voyagers in Search of Europe, argues that

> With each of the three men [James, Pound and Eliot] , the decision to leave America and settle in Europe .... did not simply effect a neat break in their careers. On the contrary, it came to operate as a large and constant presence in those careers, the life and work of each showing as a steady and consummate dramatization of that decision ... Made particularly conscious of 'nationality' by their transplantation, they all repeatedly concerned themselves with the artist's relation to his native heritage and, more generally, with the place of nationality in civilization. (p. 14)

Harry Levin elaborates on this theme in "Literature and Exile" by pointing out that, in the case of slightly later writers, the tendency was towards temporary rather than permanent expatriation; writers who came to terms with their American identity through their European experience began to act out the logical conclusion of such a process by returning home:

> ... temporary expatriation has played a major part in the experience and training of American writers ... Though the international theme has strategically shifted since the death of James, its permutations have gathered reflections in fiction from Thomas Wolfe, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and Katherine Anne Porter ... Members of the so-called "lost generation" ... they found themselves; and most of them found their way home. (pp. 78-79)

But the most recent development in critical observation of expatriate literature, far from dealing with the discovery and assertion of the writer's national identity through expatriation, traces the beginnings of a decline in literary nationalism. Two main currents of thought can be traced here; the first concerns the increasing internationalisation of cultural developments and trends in twentieth-century literature; the second, primarily a matter of language, is to do with what George Steiner calls 'the emergence of linguistic pluralism or "unhousedness" in certain great writers'.[24]

Malcolm Bradbury provides, in "Second Countries: The Expatriate Tradition in American Writing", a lucid and concise analysis of the directions in which literature and cultural development generally have been heading in the latter part of the twentieth century:

> By the time the expatriate pattern resumed again, after the Second World War, it was two-directional, a product, too, of the era of the jetflight and the Fulbright, of an evolving international Bohemian culture that attracted a whole youth generation, and of a phase in which literary nationalism came to mean less and less under the transformations of the modern global village, the internationalization of media and cultural distribution, the convergence of culture. (pp. 37-38)

The twentieth-century combination of massive technological advancement and equally massive political turmoil - the Russian revolution and the two world wars resulting in the upheaval and displacement of countless Europeans - has resulted in an unprecedentedly and increasingly cosmopolitan viewpoint on the part of the twentieth-century artist. Bradbury argues in the same article that the literary expatriates of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the pioneers of this cosmopolitan sensibility, indicating through their actions and their work that it was a desirable condition for the artist long before the events of the twentieth century made it an almost unavoidable one:

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[24] Steiner, p. viii.

> ... the expatriate is instructive ... because he does demonstrate, in a dramatic way, the tensions about location and nationality, obligation and independence, which mark modern art ... the migrational tendency has been a central feature of the evolution of the kind of arts we now have; throughout the nineteenth century the mode of exile had great power, and the founding sensibility of Modernist art is surely that of the internationalist and traveller ... it calls on the critic to set aside his nationalist perceptions and master the cosmopolitan sensibility, as well as the sociological pressures on art which have produced it. (pp. 38-39)

Several critics see connections between this new emergence of an internationalist cultural sensibility and the old idea of a Republic of Letters. Bradbury, in the same article, merely observes in this connection that 'the celebration of literary internationalism' (p. 23) is anything but new; Harry Levin, paraphrasing Proust in "Literature and Exile", takes this line of thought a stage further in using the idea of an actual country, a homeland, as a metaphor for the kind of cultural unity which transcends national boundaries; he also touches incidentally on an interesting variation on the theme of exile, namely, the idea that the artist often appears an alien even to his own race:

> ... Proust ... offered the explanation that artists and saints, discoverers and prophets, seem like foreigners when they appear in our midst because they observe the higher laws of une patrie perdue. To some extent, the old Republic of Letters may still survive in this concept of a lost fatherland. (pp. 80-81)

But the idea of a Republic of Letters was based on a single unifying element; the countries of mediaeval and Renaissance Europe were culturally unified by the use of Latin as the language of the scholar and the man of letters. George Steiner, in Extraterritorial, sees a different pattern emerging in the literary internationalism of the twentieth century. As Harry Levin had done seven years earlier in his "Literature and Exile", Steiner uses Vladimir Nabokov and Samuel Beckett, adding the name of Jorge Luis Borges, as the exemplars of what he calls 'the idea of a writer linguistically "unhoused"' (p. viii). Steiner argues that not only geographical but also linguistic displacement is an increasingly common feature in modern literature, and reflects the state of the contemporary cultural sensibility in the face of 'a civilization of quasi-barbarism'. In the Foreword to Extraterritorial he refers to

> ... the emergence of linguistic pluralism or 'unhousedness' in certain great writers. These writers stand in a relation of dialectical hesitance not only toward one native tongue - as Hölderlin or Rimbaud did before them - but toward several languages. This is almost unprecedented. It speaks of the more general problem of a lost center. It makes of Nabokov, Borges and Beckett the three representative

> figures in the literature of exile - which is, perhaps, the main impulse of current literature. (p. viii)

Steiner's idea of a 'lost center' is one which is indirectly suggested in Harry Levin's earlier "Literature and Exile". Citing as examples the Americanised Russian Nabokov and the Gallicised Irishman Beckett, Levin observes that 'Deracination has become so common that it has its professional spokesmen' (p. 64). For Levin, the condition of the modern author and of modern humanity generally is summarised in the words of two European poets: Iwan Goll 'has rechristened the modern author with the generic name of _Jean Sans Terre_, John Landless' (p. 65); St.-John Perse, a wandering French American, asks in the aptly titled poem _Exil_ '_Qui sait la place de sa naissance?_' (p. 80)

This long tradition of literary expatriation, with its shifting motives, attitudes and perspectives, only began to make itself felt in Australian literature after the nationalist phase of the nineties had begun to establish for Australians a coherent national image, a sense of place - and, more importantly, of home - which encompassed the society as well as the landscape of the country. There had been literary expatriates from Australia before this time; Diana Brydon devotes two chapters of her thesis on the subject to the work of Mrs. Campbell Praed.[25] But the nationalism of the nineties provided the first real focus, and the first real point of departure, for Australian literature. Prior to the 'arrival' of Lawson, Furphy and their like-minded contemporaries, what there was of Australian literature had been produced by essentially British minds. 'Home' was still England; Australia, not Europe, was the foreign land, populated by British citizens. Frederick Sinnett, writing in 1856, observes that 'The few Australian novels which have been written are too apt to be books of travel in disguise';[26] the zealous attention paid to the 'manners and customs' of the time and place is, Sinnett argues, the attention of a foreigner paid to a country not his own.

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[25] Diana Brydon, "Themes and Preoccupations in the Novels of Some Australian Expatriates," PhD. thesis, Australian National University, 1976.

The rise of Australian literary nationalism in the nineties saw a shift in perspective; Lawson and Furphy wrote from inside Australian society, unselfconsciously taking manners and customs, as well as landscape, for granted as an integral part of their characters' lives rather than as exotic oddities to be recorded in fictional form with one eye firmly fixed on a curious British audience. Richardson, Stead, Boyd and Johnston are all twentieth-century novelists, writing after the time when Australia's sense of unified nationhood had begun to be reflected in its literature, and had been officially reinforced by the passing of the Federation bill in 1900; when each of them left Australia they were not 'going Home', but leaving home.

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[26] Sinnett, p. 17.

Nevertheless, as Judith Wright argues in "The Upside-down Hut" and again in "Australia's Double Aspect",[27] a sense of exile has been and still remains an important element in the Australian national imagination. As has been discussed in the first section of this thesis, the country was colonised in an aura of exile, banishment and punishment; the geographical oddities of the Southern Hemisphere further alienated the early Australians in a way that their American counterparts, for example, never experienced. This early sense of banishment and alienation, although no longer consciously felt, has become as much a part of the country's mythology as the nationalist movement which repudiated it. In the light of this, it could be said that in a way the Australian expatriates are doubly exiled; and one reason why The Fortunes of Richard Mahony has become such a landmark in Australian literature is that it was the first major work of art in which what has come to be referred to as 'the Anglo-Australian dilemma' was fully explored; the writing of Richardson's trilogy was - like that of Joyce's Ulysses - a 'monumental act of understanding' of the forces which helped to shape the national imagination.

Of the various aspects of literary expatriation mentioned in the preceding general discussion, there are two which need not concern us further. Multilinguality, in the sense in which George Steiner uses the word, is not a feature of Australian - or American - expatriate writing. Neither country has produced as a major writer any of the 'wanderers across language' who exemplify, for Steiner, the real nature of the literature of exile and the condition of contemporary humanity. Harry Levin observes of Henry James that

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[27] Judith Wright, "Australia's Double Aspect," The Literary Criterion (Mysore), 6, No. 3 (1964), 1-11.

> James could conceive of his Anglo-American world as a single totality because he had the advantage of crossing and recrossing a frontier where no language barriers existed.[28]

This is generally true of both the Australian and the American expatriate experience. The four novelists with whom this section deals all spent a considerable amount of their time abroad in countries other than England, but English remained unquestionably their native tongue, and English was the language in which they continued to write. Again, neither America nor Australia has produced political exiles, in the sense that the French, and later the Russian, literary émigrés were political exiles. However, for the rest - the questions of cultural 'starvation'; of the increasing predominance of the cosmopolitan sensibility in twentieth-century culture; of the expatriate experience as a quest for national and personal identity - several pertinent comparisons can be made.

The four Australian novelists under discussion were

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[28] Levin, p. 76.

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never in the position of the American expatriate writers of the nineteenth century. Even by the time that Richardson was writing, the world had, as it were, begun to shrink; Australia, though still separated by distance from the cultural capitals of the world, was no longer culturally isolated in the way that America had been a century earlier. However, it became and has remained commonplace to observe that Australia is a 'cultural desert'; Russel Ward, writing as recently as 1971, observes that

> ... Australian painters, actors, writers and intellectuals are grossly over-represented in London. Sidney Nolan, Zoe Caldwell, Germaine Greer, and a host of others, only somewhat less distinguished, are not seen primarily as Australian artists or intellectuals but rather as refugees from the cultural desert where they were born. A fair enough view, since some tend to see themselves in this way.[29]

Jack Lindsay, describing the mass exodus of Australian artists and intellectuals in the fifties and sixties to an England which really had very little to offer them, seems to be arguing that the idea of Australia as a cultural desert is a peculiarly self-perpetuating one. Lindsay contends that the celebrated national inferiority complex - A.A. Phillips's by now legendary 'cultural cringe' - was what kept Australian eyes on England as the cultural focus and in turn hindered Australia from attaining to a cultural independence and identity of its own:

> What is of interest is that this exodus should

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[29] Russel Ward, "Home Thoughts From Abroad: Australia's Racist Image," Meanjin Quarterly, 30 (1971), 152.

> come about just as it is becoming possible for the previous Australian weaknesses to be overcome and as the situation in England is worsening all along the line.
>
> Thus there is no comparison with the movement of the American exiles in the 1920's; for those intellectuals clustered in Paris, which was then a centre of important intellectual advance and artistic experiment ... England in the 1950's and 1960's ... has had no outstanding new talents, no vanguard movements of any wide significance ... We see ... a survival of the old inferiority-complex, which once had understandable roots in the comparative backwardness of many national fields [and] the lingering tradition of cultural dependence ...[30]

The expatriate Australian artist can hardly be blamed for this; the 'lingering tradition of cultural dependence' has continued to make itself felt in Australian critical reaction (or lack of reaction) as well as in Australian art and literature. Lindsay himself, in the same article, acknowledges the truth of a comment made to him by an Australian girl in London who said '... it's impossible yet to get a real reputation in Australia. Look at Nolan. He's achieved fame of a serious and stable kind only by coming here' (p. 56). The hostile reaction of many Australian critics to the earlier work of Patrick White, in contrast to favourable critical reaction overseas, is well known. It must have seemed to Australian artists in the fifties and sixties that the words of Henry Lawson in 1899 were still applicable over half a century later; Lawson, in a somewhat touchy article written for The Bulletin, complained of its being impossible to earn anything like a living as a writer in Australia, claiming that 'our best Australian artists and writers are being driven to England and America - where the leaders are making their mark, and a decent living'. Whether or not this article, "'Pursuing Literature' in Australia", was fair as a personal complaint is here beside the point; the paragraph with which it concludes has a certain amount of relevance even now:

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[30] Jack Lindsay, "The Alienated Australian Intellectual," Meanjin Quarterly, 22 (1963), 55-56.

> My advice to any young Australian writer whose talents have been recognized, would be to go steerage, stow away, swim, and seek London, Yankeeland, or Timbuctoo - rather than stay in Australia till his genius turned to gall, or beer. Or, failing this - and still in the interests of human nature and literature - to study elementary anatomy, especially as applies to the cranium, and then shoot himself carefully with the aid of a looking-glass.[31]

That such a memorable piece of advice should come from a man who continues to be regarded as a leading light in the literary nationalism of the nineties is an indication of the extent to which some Australian writers felt themselves handicapped as long as they remained at home. Perhaps the most striking thing about Lawson's statement is that people are still making it; Germaine Greer, in an ABC interview in 1979 - eighty years after "'Pursuing Literature' in Australia" was published - observed that for the writer in Australia the two biggest problems were lack of renumeration and lack of interest.[32]

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[31] Henry Lawson, "'Pursuing Literature' in Australia" (1899); rpt. in The Writer in Australia, ed. Barnes, pp. 77-78.

[32] Four Corners, Australian Broadcasting Commission (Adelaide), 1st. September 1979.

It would, however, be rash if not downright wrong to generalise too widely on the basis of such statements; the precise converse of Lawson's and Greer's complaint is bitterly dramatised in George Johnston's A Cartload of Clay:

> ... he, David Meredith, had come a good long way in those fifty bloody years - all the way from being a scared, stupid, snotty-nosed, pathologically shy, ignorant kid ... in a dreary Melbourne suburb to being the successful, distinguished, noted, leading, prize-winning and even famous Australian - underline that qualification - the famous Australian author, a real figure in Southern Hemisphere culture if you ruled out the bloody wogs like Argentinians and Cubans, and Mexicans and Bolivians and Colombians, although some of them were Northern Hemisphereans, come to think of it, but they were wogs anyway ... (ACC p. 149)

The lionising of Meredith as a 'famous Australian author', with its attendant and magnificently illogical dismissal of the 'bloody wogs', springs from exactly the same source as the complaints of Lawson and Greer: the immature and imbalanced cultural attitudes of a country which, if not looking to England for its cultural cue and producing barely read and underpaid Australian writers, produces instead the phenomenon of the writer acclaimed in his own country not necessarily because he is good, but because he is Australian. Jack Lindsay, in "The Alienated Australian Intellectual", sees these somewhat schizoid attitudes as complementary when he observes that 'the old inferiority-complex ... has as its complement an aggressive affirmation of bumptious superiority that still persists' (p. 56). Australia was and to some extent remains a cultural desert not so much because of its isolation and lack of history -

in an age in which the artistic and the literary sensibilities have become essentially cosmopolitan - but because of the immaturity of its cultural attitudes.

The four novelists under discussion have contributed a great deal to the internationalisation of Australian cultural awareness, either by placing the problems of working out a national and personal identity in an international framework, as George Johnston does in his work, or by transcending the idea of national identity altogether, as Christina Stead does in hers. Malcolm Bradbury's previously quoted observation that 'it calls on the critic to set aside his nationalist perceptions and master the cosmopolitan sensibility' is particularly appropriate in the case of these novelists, as they have forced critics in Australia to reorganise and re-evaluate their notions of an 'Australian tradition'. Until recently, critics like A.A. Phillips and T. Inglis Moore showed a tendency to consider the work of expatriate writers, especially Richardson and Boyd, as somehow apart from the main body of Australian literature; Moore claims that Richardson, Boyd and Patrick White 'are exceptional as expatriates with European attitudes',[33] and Phillips laments what he considers to be the loss of a number of expatriate writers, including Richardson and Stead:

> Our literature of the last forty years might

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[33] T. Inglis Moore, Social Patterns in Australian Literature (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1971), p. 258.

> look very different if there were added to it the books these writers might have produced in Australia ...[34]

The narrowness of the country's attitude to its expatriate writers is reflected in the incident, during the late sixties, of the Britannica Australia award, a lucrative prize for contributions to Australian literature for which Christina Stead was considered and then rejected on the grounds that she was not really an Australian writer. In George Johnston's Clean Straw For Nothing there is an extremely funny episode illustrating the same kind of attitude. David Meredith, about to return to Australia from Greece, is handed a vial of earth - Greek earth - by his friend Kiernan, a compatriot, fellow artist, and fellow expatriate. Kiernan tells him:

> '... When you get off the plane at Sydney the press will be there to interview you. So what you do is make this ritual gesture. You just take the vial out of your pocket - make sure they're watching - and empty out the dirt. Do it very solemnly. They'll want to know what you're up to. Then you tell 'em you've been carrying this little scrap of Australian soil with you as a kind of talisman for all the fourteen years you've been away, but now you've come back to God's own country again, so you don't need it any more. That's the sort of thing they love ... out there you've got to do this sort of thing or they'll kick you to pieces ... They don't like us going away, you see. They can never understand why we had to go away, why we stay away. So when we do go back we've got to go back repentant, and singing there's no place like home.' (CSN p. 183)

More recently, however, critics have begun to view expatriate writers in a somewhat different light. Their work has come to be seen less as a faintly reprehensible deviation from the norm and more as a vital stage in the country's growth toward cultural maturity, moving away from self-conscious 'Australian-ness' and toward the sort of international perspective which produces literature of a universal significance more immediately apparent than its national origins. Russel Ward, in an article in which he argues that the work of Patrick White demonstrates such universality, traces a chronological pattern of progression toward this point in which the work of Richardson and Boyd is seen as central to the development of Australian literature:

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[34] A.A. Phillips, "The Family Relationship" (1958); rpt. in his The Australian Tradition, revised ed. (Melbourne: Cheshire-Lansdowne, 1966), p. 105.

> It seems to me that the novels of Furphy, Richardson and Boyd exemplify three stages in the approach to some sort of cultural maturity: first the violent reaction which, to allay its own inner doubts, asserts too stridently the existence of an Australian identity and its infinite superiority to all things English; second the frank, even anguished recognition of the problem; third its treatment by means of a deft but light-hearted irony and humour - a long step towards unforced acceptance of Australian identity and of its difference from that of England.[35]

Michael Wilding, writing six years later, sees the absence of any substantial reference to expatriate writers as a serious defect of John Barnes's The Writer in Australia; he sees Barnes's selection as unbalanced, representative of an outworn nationalism in the Australian critical habit of mind, and essentially retrogressive in its emphasis on 'the existing concept of an Australian tradition'. Wilding states:

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[35] Russel Ward, "Colonialism and Culture," Overland, No. 31 (1965), pp. 16-17.

> It is hard to conceive of a serious survey of American writing that did not take account of the American expatriate experience, and the Australian case is analogous. It is also hard to conceive of a serious survey of American writing that failed to take account of the major American writers. Yet the subjects covered by Mr. Barnes's selection ignore Manning, Lindsay, Stead, Richardson, White ... the total impression is of a collection of literary documents that omits the major creative writers of the country it claims to be documenting.[36]

Wilding's observations indicate the need for a general re-evaluation of the work of expatriate writers; and an awareness that their work calls for a radical redefinition of whatever literary tradition we have is reflected in both Ward's and Wilding's comments.

The expatriate writers exemplify in their novels not only the cosmopolitan viewpoint increasingly common in twentieth-century literature, but also the possibility of enriching one's understanding of Australian society by moving outside it. The work especially of Richardson and Johnston demonstrates the truth of Malcolm Bradbury's statement that 'the long view need not be the nostalgic one; it can provide a vantage point for perspective'.

The idea of the expatriate experience as a quest for personal as well as national identity is one which recurs in Australian, as in American, writing. Henry Handel Richardson's unfinished autobiography Myself When Young, carefully read, reveals the extent to which Richardson's personal development and increasing intellectual confidence was fostered by her European surroundings and by the people she met in Europe; Dorothy Green makes a detailed study of this stage of Richardson's life in the second chapter of Ulysses Bound, an informative and sensitive examination of Richardson's life and work. Green, quoting from Myself When Young, observes of Richardson's life as a student in Germany that

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[36] Michael Wilding, "Write Australian," The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 6, No. 1 (1971), 22.

> During the early Leipzig days, it is clear, she seems to have felt mainly a sense of liberation as 'a person in my own right'.[37]

Christina Stead, like Teresa in For Love Alone, seems to have seen expatriation as a personal necessity; as a quest for the possibility of living as a free and fully functioning human being rather than as a flight from the restrictions of family and suburban Australian life. Stead says 'It wasn't shedding the family, it was a natural process. I just had to go'.[38] In For Love Alone, Teresa finds and defines herself only after her quest for love and for freedom in love has begun to be fulfilled; and her voyage to England is presented as being the only possible way to such fulfilment.

For Martin Boyd, who remained an expatriate until his death in Rome in 1972, the voyage of self-discovery is a metaphorical one, a journey into the past. The reasons that Boyd gives for remaining an expatriate are remarkably consistent with his literary preoccupations. In the Langton novels Guy seeks to understand his brother Dominic, and, through Dominic, himself, by way of an exploration of the Langton family history; in these novels the 'treasures and calamities' of the past are revealed in order to unravel the mysteries of the present. This sense of the past, which is perhaps Boyd's chief literary strength, was nourished by his European surroundings, and this is the main reason he offers for remaining an expatriate:

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[37] Dorothy Green, Ulysses Bound (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), p. 41.

[38] John B. Beston, "An Interview With Christina Stead," World Literature Written in English, 15 (1976), 87.

> Arabs, when they make coffee, leave the old grounds in the pot, so that the aroma of past brews enriches the new one. I think it is this aroma of the past which catches Australians who come to Europe and stay longer than a few months, especially as it is that of the countries where the basic apprehensions of their race have grown through the centuries.[39]

Boyd's own personal 'Anglo-Australian dilemma', the question of his national identity, is ultimately resolved in terms not of place, but of time; he, and Guy Langton with him, could perhaps most fairly be called citizens in the country of the past.

It is George Johnston who, of the four novelists in question, illustrates most clearly and poignantly in his work the theme of the search for identity. My Brother Jack, the first novel of the trilogy, provides the basis for *Clean Straw For Nothing* and *A Cartload of Clay*; like Guy Langton, David Meredith is first identified and defined by contrast with his brother. In the second novel, the question of what it means to Meredith to be an Australian is considered from the vantage point of a Greek island; in the third, Meredith comes finally to consider the simple question of what it means to be David Meredith, as John Douglas Pringle points out in his Preface to *A Cartload of Clay*:

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[39] Martin Boyd, "Why I Am an Expatriate," The Bulletin, 10th. May 1961, p. 13.

> ... David Meredith - or George Johnston if you wish - is constantly looking backwards. There is no longer a future. He is preoccupied with trying to find some meaning in life, some answers to the problems which have bothered him. It is more reflective and philosophical than either *My Brother Jack* or *Clean Straw For Nothing*. It is also much less concerned with the particular problem of being Australian. Against the imminent shadow of death which has already engulfed his wife, David Meredith is no longer an Australian or an expatriate but simply a man. (ACC p. 7)

One of the most striking things about the Australian expatriate writers is the way in which they look back, the terms in which they see and describe the country from outside. There is a marked contrast here with their American counterparts. It was the Revolution which established America as an independent nation, and departed Americans tended to consider their country as an abstraction, as a collection of the ideas and values which set it apart from Europe. In Australia, political independence was attained without recourse to the open conflict of revolution; the rejection of European values in Australia found its expression in the growing sense of national identity which was becoming apparent toward the end of the nineteenth century.

This new national identity focused on what was most unique to Australia; the bush, the bushman, and the bush values - mateship, democracy, a certain voiceless but all-encompassing irony of attitude - were seen as central to an understanding of Australian life. Australian writers saw and for some time continued to see the country largely in pictorial terms, in terms of landscape and of values associated with landscape.

In the work of the expatriate writers - as in The Tilted Cross and Bring Larks and Heroes - the same direct association between landscape and ideas is still in evidence, but here it takes a different form. Certain human qualities are not merely associated with the landscape but actually attributed to it; the country is anthropomorphised, yet still recalled in the terms of vivid visual imagery. The end of Richardson's Proem to Australia Felix, the first volume of the Richard Mahony trilogy, is an example of this; a terrifying vision, seen from a distance, of her homeland:

> Such were the fates of those who succumbed to the 'unholy hunger'. It was like a form of revenge taken on them, for their loveless schemes of robbing and fleeing; a revenge contrived by the ancient, barbaric country they had so lightly invaded. Now, she held them captive - without chains; ensorcelled - without witchcraft; and, lying stretched like some primeval monster in the sun, her breasts freely bared, she watched, with a malignant eye, the efforts made by these puny

> mortals to tear their lips away. (AF p. 8)

A similar, semi-visionary evocation of the continent appears in Christina Stead's Seven Poor Men of Sydney:

> '... A ghost land, a continent of mystery ... a horrid destiny in the Abrolhos, in the Phillippines, in the Tasman Seas, in the Southern Ocean, all protected the malign and bitter genius of this waste land. Its heart is made of salt: it suddenly oozes from its burning pores, gold which will destroy men in greed, but not water to give them drink. Jealous land! Ravishers overbold! Bitter dilemma! And lost legion! Our land should never have been won.'[40]

George Johnston in Clean Straw For Nothing and Alister Kershaw in his article "The Last Expatriate" both give the same peculiar aeroplane's-eye view of the country as Richardson and Stead, and both display the same clarity of visual imagery and the same attribution of human qualities to the landscape; Johnston and Kershaw, however, are concerned with the dilemma of the individual in confrontation with this fabulous monster which is also, whether he likes it or not, his home. In Clean Straw For Nothing, David Meredith is actually in an aeroplane, looking down on the country after an absence of fourteen years:

> ... Meredith ... looked down on the Australian continent. Even in the darkness it had a murky, brownish look. Brownish and dry and wrinkled, like old leather. It lay six miles below, lonely, featureless, enormous, without sign of light or life. Or landmark. Or purpose ... He had a sharp spasm of panic that now this huge blind heedless thing would have to be confronted. (CSN p. 317)

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[40] Christina Stead, Seven Poor Men of Sydney (1934; rpt. Sydney: Pacific Books, 1971), p. 309.

Alister Kershaw, in his defence of the expatriate who goes away and stays away, is less anxious than Johnston and more terse in the image he evokes of the country, but the suggestions of the individual in conflict with an entire continent are the same:

> ... France feels as though it were meant to be lived in. Whereas in Australia it was somehow as if one were hanging precariously to a cliff edge, with the Genius Loci stamping on one's finger tips.[41]

These are some of the attitudes to place that one sees emerging from the expatriate experience. In general discussions of American and Australian literary expatriation the emphasis is almost always on nationality, on the questions of nationhood and national identity; on the individual's reactions and attitudes to expatriation; on the reasons why people become, and remain, expatriates. But when one progresses from discussing the novelists to discussing their novels, a certain shift in emphasis is necessary, as is pointed out at the beginning of this chapter. In the works to be discussed in the following two chapters, the individual experiences of Richardson, Stead, Boyd and Johnston have been imaginatively transformed into broader fictional statements about the very nature of place, distance, and the act of voyage; and it is in these terms, rather than with reference to the autobiographical elements in the novels, that their works are to be considered.

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[41] Alister Kershaw, "The Last Expatriate" (1958); rpt. in The Vital Decade, ed. Dutton and Harris, p. 154.

CHAPTER FIVE: A SENSE OF DISPLACEMENT

Of all the novels under discussion, Christina Stead's _For Love Alone_ is the only one in which the central character is not portrayed as being in some way a displaced person. Teresa Hawkins certainly feels herself isolated and trapped by the restrictions of family and suburban life in her native Sydney; but she is never a victim of the geographical and spiritual _unheimlichkeit_ that haunts Richard Mahony, Dominic Langton and David Meredith at various stages of their fictional careers. At the other end of the scale from _For Love Alone_ is Johnston's _Clean Straw For Nothing_; entirely constructed of a series of diary-like entries headed only by a place-name and a year, and covering two hemispheres and twenty-three years in what appears at first to be an indiscriminate chronological and geographical jumble, this novel reflects in its very structure a sense of both geographical and personal disorientation and alienation.

In the works under consideration of Richardson, Boyd and Johnston, the theme of displacement recurs most frequently in connection with certain motifs or ideas. The question of family or ancestral ties on both sides of the equator, and consequent divided affinities, is considered in Boyd's novels; Johnston examines the individual's severance of family ties through the process of expatriation. A preoccupation with particular houses or households, particularly at the point at which they are deserted or disbanded, is common to all three novelists; the more general idea of perpetual homelessness, expressed in a variety of ways, is central to each of the three works. Finally, in Boyd's *When Blackbirds Sing* and Johnston's *My Brother Jack* and *Clean Straw For Nothing*, these two authors examine the disorienting effects of two world wars on the individual and society.

Family and ancestral ties in both Australia and England produce, in Boyd's Langton sequence, that 'geographical schizophrenia' (DYM p. 95) which is apparent throughout his work. The opening pages of *The Cardboard Crown*, the first novel of the sequence, perform the same function as the first movement of a symphony; in them is stated a fundamental theme which recurs constantly, in various forms, throughout this and the remaining three novels. The first scene of *The Cardboard Crown* reveals not only Guy Langton's attempts to reconcile his family's European past with his own Australian present, but also his lightly ironic acknowledgement that such wholesale transplantation has not, in his own case, been wholly successful. Of his newly redecorated room at Westhill, in which his conversation with his nephew Julian results in the unearthing of his grandmother's diaries and the consequent unravelling of the past which constitutes the rest of the novel, Guy says

> There was nothing here later than 1780, and in the soft light from the chandelier its beauty was a little deathly, the grey walls only relieved by the velvet and satin in bewigged portraits ... Julian looked about him, at the smug faces on the wall, whose blood was mingled with his own, at the stylized decorations, and he smiled faintly, a little amused, a little mystified at the almost surrealist incongruity of this room, set down in the midst of a derelict garden in the Australian bush. (TCC p. 12)

The note struck here is echoed and elaborated on in When Blackbirds Sing, where the family's 'geographical schizophrenia', illustrated by the incongruity of Westhill and its setting, finds in Dominic its most vulnerable victim. For Dominic, eternally divided against himself in other ways as well, the farm in New South Wales that he has built up and developed with Helena is the focus of his whole life, the first place in which he has ever felt completely at home or at ease; yet, when he arrives in England, the effect that Waterpark has on him is overwhelming. Not only is he heir to Waterpark, but his actual presence in the place gives him an acute sense of home and history; Helena's letters, in which she strives desperately to keep alive Dominic's vision of his home in New South Wales and of the relationship to wife and child which that home represents, go completely astray in his mind. All he wants, for the moment, is that the entire family should uproot itself and come home to Waterpark to live; and the two things, like so many of Dominic's double impulses and desires, are completely irreconcilable.

The passage from The Cardboard Crown quoted above contains two vital clues to the real meaning of Boyd's tetralogy. The gallery of ancestors staring down at Guy and Julian from the walls of Westhill provides a literally pictorial representation of the importance of family history in Boyd's novels; the past constantly invades and informs the present. Secondly, the fact that these lustrous and illustrious forbears have been unceremoniously and incongruously set down in the middle of the Australian bush produces in the reader a vivid realisation of the differences between the two worlds contained in one family and its history. A few pages after this passage, however, Boyd creates a third image which seems to me absolutely fundamental to an understanding of the tetralogy; in another room at Westhill, Dominic has created through a very different kind of painting a monument to his family's history and to the tragedy of his own life:

> I looked first at the huge crucifixion painted by Dominic, the tortured body, the face hidden by hanging hair, the conspicuous genitals ... Dominic must have been a kind of throwback to that Spanish forbear of whom I had not yet told Julian. With his anima naturaliter Catholica, but brought up in colourless low-church Anglicanism, he had painted as it were on the cross formed by his inner desire and his habit of mind, this terrible figure. (TCC p. 15)

The 'stoppages in his brain' (WBS p. 14) from which Dominic suffers all his life are a product of the same kind of collision of double impulses. Dominic's painting of the crucifixion is the key to his whole nature, that of a man wholly vulnerable to conflicting ideas and impulses but passionately desiring unity:

> Dominic ... had more the nature of the Catholic prostitute. He did not divide life into separate compartments, where the inconsistencies were accepted but kept in isolation. He wanted it all related and unified. (WBS p. 61)

For Dominic, such unity can only be achieved - bought - through the agony of crucifixion; he repeatedly finds himself nailed to the cross of his own divided nature.

This image is the clue to the real unity of the tetralogy, the structure of which appears at first to be somewhat random. The first and third novels, The Cardboard Crown and Outbreak of Love, are family chronicles; the second and fourth, A Difficult Young Man and When Blackbirds Sing, concentrate on the single figure of Dominic. What Boyd is doing is using each to explain the other, alternating a wider focus with a narrower one. Dominic is the embodiment of his whole family's history and his whole family's dilemma. He is the Langton heir and the family's link with its most distinguished if also most gruesome ancestor, 'that Spanish forbear' the duque de Teba; and his fractured nature reflects in darker colours the 'geographical schizophrenia' of a family whose simultaneous misfortune and privilege it is to have deep roots and a distinguished history in both Australia and England. Boyd's more general treatment of this 'Anglo-Australian dilemma' is on the whole lighthearted, except for the revealing if ephemeral sadness of a comment like 'In the Northern or the Southern Hemisphere there was no abiding city' (TCC p. 165). But in Dominic's whole experience of Europe and his consequent estrangement from his one real achievement of spiritual wholeness, in which his love for Helena and his abiding sense of communion with the natural world are combined in the Australian setting, the Langton family's apparently hereditary sense of dépaysement begins to assume tragic proportions.

Dorothy Green, in her determination to emphasise what many of Boyd's critics have neglected - the deep religious sense which is at the heart of the human values underlying Boyd's fiction - is overstating the case when she says

> ... it is emphatically not geographical disorientation that interests him, not the temporary nostalgias of travelling Anglo-Australians, but the fundamental disorientation of man from his true path, the eternal nostalgia for 'reconciliation with God', or to use psychological terms, for inner harmony and wholeness.[1]

The 'fundamental disorientation of man from his true path' is examined most fully through the character of Dominic. But 'geographical disorientation' does interest Boyd; two of these four novels are largely devoted to it, and to its effects on several generations of a family. The Langton family's divided sense of home functions as a kind of secular parallel to Dominic's spiritual dilemma, which is in turn symbolised by his painting of the crucifixion.

Finally, at the end of this first scene in The Cardboard Crown, we are given a glimpse of Guy's own intermittent sense of displacement when it becomes apparent that his artistic and religious sensibilities are essentially European; that despite his Australian childhood he has failed - where Julian, to judge by his own murals on the Westhill walls, has succeeded - to reconcile them with his Australian surroundings. He plays a record of the Palestrina "Improperia", of which he says

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[1] Dorothy Green, "Martin Boyd," in The Literature of Australia, ed. Dutton, p. 515.

> I had brought these records out ... to console myself in those moments, when, although this house was my home, I might feel myself in a country that was less my home, not only than England, but than France or Italy. The inevitable click of the gramophone stopping itself brought us all back from Rome to Westhill. (TCC p. 19)

Boyd, in the short first chapter of The Cardboard Crown, has thus established the framework for the entire tetralogy. The first novel recounts the family's history and concentrates on its perambulations back and forth across the equator, with the focal points of Westhill and Waterpark; although Boyd treats the family's nomadic impulses lightly, they are not merely 'the temporary nostalgias of travelling Anglo-Australians', but the results of a fundamental, deeply felt, and abiding division of affinities. The second novel, A Difficult Young Man, focuses on the figure of Dominic, tracing through his childhood and youth the early indications of his divided nature and the influences of heredity. Outbreak of Love, projected, as it were, back onto a wider screen, continues the Anglo-Australian debate through the relationship of Russell and Diana, and prefigures, with its abrupt curtailment of what seems a promising relationship through the outbreak of war, the more tragic disruption of Dominic's marriage with Helena in When Blackbirds Sing.

In this last novel, Dominic's desire that the whole family should return to Waterpark, and the effect that this has on Helena, foreshadows what actually happens at the end of the book; again, Boyd is using the idea of geographical displacement as a parallel to social and spiritual alienation. Dominic, having always been the outsider to his parents and brothers as well as to society at large, now puts himself in the same relation to his wife and child through his repudiation of the war. Helena knows instinctively that the farm and herself and her child are all inextricably bound up into one entity which forms Dominic's spiritual centre of gravity, giving him peace and a sense of unity and 'the fellowship of ordinary men' (DYM p. 187); although he abandons the plan of taking them all back to Waterpark, his later repudiation of the war and the implications of the gesture of flinging his war medals into the pond are even more disruptive of his home and family life, it is implied, than if he had gone ahead with his plan of transplanting them all back to England.

George Johnston's David Meredith, like Dominic, is an outsider from his family, using his brother Jack as a yardstick by which to measure his own difference from them and from Australian society generally. Unlike Dominic, however, David cultivates his alienation from them, and his awareness of it at various stages is expressed in geographical terms. Near the beginning of My Brother Jack, David, troubled by the domestic turmoil going on around him as well as by his own encroaching adolescence, embarks on his own private literary apprenticeship partly as a form of escape; and, of the bad imitations of Viking sagas of which his secret scribblings consist, he says

> I could not have realised then that I was beginning to fabricate a pattern which I would continue to work on for years to come, a pattern of evasion, where I could establish my own sense of belief and security only in some area of the imagination that was as remote in time and place as the Norse longships, and as dissociated from the troubling present that existed all around me. (MBJ p. 59)

It is in equally fantastic surroundings, as 'remote in time and place' as the Viking longships, that David comes to a full and conscious realisation of his separation from family and country. Quartered for a night during the war in a gelid marble room in what was once the palace of the old Kings of Naples at Caserta, David, resentfully reflecting on the peculiarities of non-Australian army dress, arrives from this burst of nostalgia at a paradoxical conclusion:

> ... I believe this is the precise moment - in this quick, unreasonable, ridiculous little flare of prejudiced nationalism - when I began to expatriate myself ... Gradually I began to sense that already, and deliberately, I had begun proceedings of divorcement from my country and my people, and it was at this point that I got up and walked down the room to the huge baroque mirror at the far end ... and I stared very intently at the indistinct reflection that looked back at me ... and then I looked closer and I realised that it was not at all the same face as those other faces under the broad-brimmed hats ... not the same, for instance, as my brother Jack's face. A difference had grown into it, or developed out of it ... and I knew then that I was not quite one of them, that I never had been, and that I never would be. (MBJ p. 319)

In The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, the Langton novels, and the My Brother Jack trilogy, the significance of particular houses and of what they symbolise recalls the preoccupation with houses which runs all through the work of Patrick White. But in the work of Richardson, Boyd and Johnston the emphasis in this regard is on change and upheaval in the lives of the characters; close attention is directed to houses mainly when they are about to be sold, remodelled, or shut up and abandoned. Richard Mahony's endless succession of houses, David Meredith's Avalon, Guy Langton's Westhill and Waterpark, bear only a distant relation in their function within the novels to the almost sentient, quasi-mystical abodes scattered through the pages of White's work - although Helen and David Meredith's antiseptic monstrosity in Beverly Grove approximates White's 'brick homes' closely enough. In White's work, as Peter Beatson observes, certain houses bear the same relation to the occupants as the body to the soul; and it is possible to trace the spiritual progress of the characters through the changing aspects of the places where they live.[2] In the novels of Richardson, Boyd and Johnston, houses and their fates reflect more the earthly progress of their inhabitants, as households changed, abandoned and broken up record the ephemerality of human experience and the transience of imagined security; the wider sense of displacement, geographical and spiritual, which haunts these novels is pinpointed in the disbanding and upheaval of household after household.

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[2] Peter Beatson, The Eye in the Mandala (Sydney: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1977), pp. 154-56.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, where Mahony's warring impulses toward both anchorage and flight lead him to buy or build, and then to abandon, a succession of houses. The acidity of his observations on the instability and impermanence of life on the diggings, near the beginning of Australia Felix, becomes pointedly ironic in the light of subsequent events:

> The life one led out here was not calculated to tone down any innate restlessness of temperament: on the contrary, it directly hindered one from becoming fixed and settled. It was on a par with the houses you lived in - these flimsy tents and draught-riddled cabins you put up with, 'for the time being' - was just as much of a makeshift affair as they. Its keynote was change ... (AF p. 23)

Mahony, when he can afford to - and, sometimes, when he cannot - buys or builds big solid houses for the privacy and protection they provide; but they have no more power to hold him in one place than the 'flimsy tents and draught-riddled cabins' of the diggings. He is constantly at war not only with his surroundings, with both society and landscape, but also with himself; and this unending internal conflict is reflected in the long series of domestic and geographical upheavals to which he subjects himself and his family. Dorothy Green observes that

> The craving for permanence, the craving for change; the wish to obliterate the self, the wish to affirm it; the longing for death at war with the longing for life; [this] sums up the central preoccupation of the novel clearly and simply

> enough.[3]

What Mahony seeks is a kind of wholeness of spirit, a resolution of all these conflicts, which cannot be attained through earthly means; but he is barely conscious of this himself. His continuous moves from place to place are his only means of expressing this quest through action, but it is inevitable that no house, no society, and no landscape will satisfy him for long.

Thus his life, and his family's, becomes a cycle of displacement and re-orientation, which continues to operate throughout all three novels; the Mahony family inhabits no less than twelve houses, on both sides of the equator, in the course of the trilogy. As Brian Kiernan points out, Mahony never comes to realise the fruitlessness of this constant upheaval:

> By the beginning of the last volume the pattern of the Mahonys' lives has become more than familiar to the reader. After settling in each new place, Mary establishes a home and a circle of acquaintances. Richard soon becomes dissatisfied, tired and irritable, then depressed, and with depression comes lethargy, guilt for involving Mary in this situation, and finally despair ... it is clear ... that Richard's searches for stability have little to do with the reality of any society.[4]

The relationship between Mary and Richard, one of the cornerstones of the novel, is reflected in and traced through their differing attitudes to this constant flux. It has become commonplace among Richardson's critics to observe that Richard's element is the sea, Mary's the earth; Richard is happiest when on the move, Mary happiest when fixed. When, at the end of Australia Felix, they leave Ballarat to sail for England, Richard's regret at the breaking up of his home, unlike Mary's active disappointment and dismay, is vague, philosophical and temporary:

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[3] Green, Ulysses Bound, p. 307.

[4] Brian Kiernan, "The Fortunes of Richard Mahony," Southerly, 29 (1969), 206-07.

> Voices echoed in hollow fashion through the naked rooms; men shouted and spat as they tugged heavy articles along the hall, or bumped them down the stairs. It was pandemonium. The death of a loved human being could not, he thought, have been more painful to witness. Thus a home went to pieces; thus was a page of one's life turned. (AF p. 368)

Although he pityingly sees himself as 'a very slave to associations' (AF p. 366), and regrets the loss of each object in the house and the memories it embodies, his regrets are effaced by the exhilaration of the sea-voyage and by what he sees as his new freedom, whereas Mary has no such consolation; her counterparts to Richard's sense of joy and freedom are nausea in the short term and anxiety in the long.

With the proposed sale of "Ultima Thule", in The Way Home, there is a significant development in their relationship. Before this new shift is mooted, Mary's loyalty and blinkered optimism sustain her belief that they have settled down at last; they have children, money, position, congenial society and a beautiful house within walking distance of Richard's beloved sea, and she feels secure in her happiness with her home:

> ... Mary's eyes wandered lovingly round walls and furniture ... she loved every inch of the place. What a happy ending to all their ups and downs!

After "Ultima Thule" is sold, however, Mary comes to realise at last that Richard's restlessness really has little to do with his external surroundings; her knowledge of him is increased by this latest move, and her loyalty, though unshaken, is shot through with scepticism from this point onwards:

> ... the price paid for "Ultima Thule" should be faithfully laid by for the purpose of building, when they came back, the house that would form their permanent home. 'For by then my travelling days will be over. We'll plan it together, love, every inch of it; and it will be more our own than any house we've lived in.'
>
> 'Yes, I dare say.' But Mary's tone lacked warmth, was rich in incredulity. (WH p. 242)

Many critics have observed the dominance of the image of burial, with which the trilogy begins and ends, and which recurs in certain phrases and passages throughout it. F.H. Mares uses this image as a starting point for a chain of association linking some of the major ideas and events of the trilogy:

> Burial alive = incarceration in a lunatic asylum; = the hedge of pride and indifference that Mahony builds around itself [sic]; = life itself, which is a trap, a struggle which in the end we are bound to lose ...[5]

This theme and its variations are themselves echoes of Mahony's own fear of death. But there is a vast difference between the frightening account in the Proem to Australia

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[5] F.H. Mares, "The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: A Reconsideration," Meanjin Quarterly, 21 (1962), 69.

Felix of the young miner's burial alive and the tranquil tone of the passage with which the trilogy closes; the account of Mahony's own burial is like a quiet resolution at the end of a particularly harrowing piece of music. It is the idea of burial *alive*, of sudden and untimely death by confinement and suffocation, which is horrifying. Dorothy Green makes a comment which is illuminating in this context:

> ... what Mahony fears is not, as has been alleged, the fact of death itself, *but of a death for which he is not ready*. What he longs for, in theological terms, is to be in a state of grace, to bring body and soul into a unity. Fear of Mary's grief and displeasure is the body's knowledge that the search for grace will involve it once more in discomfort.[6]

For Mahony, to stay long in one house *is* to bury himself alive, to turn his back on the object of his quest and to deny his spirit the freedom it demands. His 'pilgrim soul'[7] cannot be comfortable for long in a domesticated body.

But it is Mary who, so to speak, packs his bags and pays his fare. The stages of Richard's earthly journey are marked by vivid images of Mary standing forlornly amid the débris, emotional or actual, of yet another disintegrating household, packing in the old house or unpacking in the new with ever-increasing anxiety and proportionately decreasing hope. There is a weary similarity between an early scene of this kind, in the first volume of the trilogy, and a much later one, in the third. Mary's view even of the Mahonys' first removal to England contains more regret than anticipation:

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[6] Green, *Ulysses Bound*, p. 307.

[7] See Dorothy Green, "The Pilgrim Soul: The Philosophical Structure of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*," *Meanjin Quarterly*, 28 (1969), 328-37.

> Her home! In fancy she made a round of the house, viewing each cosy room ... Now, everything she loved and valued ... would fall under the auctioneer's hammer, go to deck out the houses of other people ... (AF p. 359)

This tone is echoed and intensified in a picture of a much older Mary making preparations for her family's departure from the house at Barambogie:

> On one of the numerous packing-cases that strewed the rooms - now just so much soiled whitewash and bare boards - Mary sat and waited for the dray that was to transport boxes and baggage to the railway station. Her heart was heavy: no matter how unhappy you had been in it, the dismantling of a home was a sorry business, and one to which she never grew accustomed. (UT p. 179)

In Boyd's Langton novels, the shifts from house to house, and the degeneration with time of Waterpark and Westhill, represent and reflect not merely the fluctuating fortunes and final disintegration of one man, or even of one family, but of a whole way of life. Guy's desolate question to his dead grandmother, in The Cardboard Crown, gives a new dimension to his comment elsewhere that 'in the Northern or the Southern Hemisphere there was no abiding city'; not only are the Langton family's affinities divided between England and Australia - or, more precisely, between Waterpark and Westhill - but both of these houses have degenerated with time and change to a point where it is painful to call either of them 'home':

> ... my dear Grandmamma ... Should we hope that you linger near Westhill with its broken trees, or hear the train rattle behind Waterpark and smell in the garden stream the seepage from the tanneries, which has killed Charlie the trout and all his descendants? (TCC p. 141)

The extent to which the character as well as the appearance of Westhill has changed even in the comparatively short space of Guy's lifetime is shown in the contrast between the opening scene of The Cardboard Crown, with its faintly eerie and disquieting picture of Guy and Julian alone on a rainy night in an Australian country house full of ghosts and memories and pre-1780 décor, and, on the other hand, Guy's account of the house as it was in his childhood:

> The cooks were always leaving as the hordes of grandchildren invaded the kitchen. My father had built a forge where he did wrought iron work. According to Arthur anyone standing on the lawn would hear, in addition to the crying of babies, the noise of hammering from the forge, of bassoons from Austin's music-room, of Wolfie at the drawing-room piano, and more distantly an irate cook raging at the children in the kitchen. (TCC p. 162)

However, the most significant event in the gradual dispersal of the Langton family and the way of life it represents is the death of Alice Langton and the consequent sale of the Melbourne family house Beaumanoir, in A Difficult Young Man. These two events deprive the family of its centre, the focus of its communal life; they are also a sort of milestone in the dwindling of the family fortunes. The sale of Beaumanoir intensifies the general family feeling of homelessness, the congenital and hereditary

Langton family disease of 'geographical schizophrenia', as Guy points out himself:

> Hitherto Alice's grandchildren had been like one family ... Where she was we collected like bees, or flies, round a honeypot. Now, in a last swarm we buzzed round the emptying pot, not realizing that when it was gone there would be little to keep us together ... I have called Beaumanoir a galleon, a castle, and a honeypot, which shows how deep an impression its dismantling must have made on me ... On Alice's death we were like the Jews after the dispersion, and anyhow we were always a little like this through our homelessness on either side of the world. (DYM p. 78)

The significance of this event for the family is emphasised by contrast with the bleak little paragraph full of trivia in which Guy records the family's last day at the house. The Beaumanoir epoch of matriarchal family communism fizzles out 'in dreariness and slight discord'; and 'after a nasty picnic lunch of tinned food' (DYM p. 87), Laura sends Guy back at the last minute to see whether the pantry window is locked. Leonie Kramer observes of this episode that

> This occasion marks the disintegration of a way of life, yet Boyd chooses to regard it as an anti-climax ... here, as elsewhere, Boyd rejects the histrionic gesture in favour of the truth.[8]

In fact, the histrionic gesture - the 'moving expression of farewell' which the family does not make - would be totally out of place. Disintegration and dissolution are rarely marked by dramatic gestures or spectacular events; they happen slowly, and their progress is barely noticeable. The Beaumanoir episode is like a picture in miniature of the wider dispersal of the Langton family and the gradual erosion of its traditional way of life traced through all four novels; in each case the process is both gradual and mundane, and is only given dignity and significance in the narrator's hindsight as he looks back and sees from a distance in time what has happened to his family over three generations.

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[8] Leonie Kramer, "The Seriousness of Martin Boyd," Southerly, 28 (1968), 92.

There is a similar sort of casualness in the family's departure from Waterpark, some years later, to return home to Australia. Again, they are unaware of the significance of this move in the wider pattern of the family history; they have no way of knowing that war will complete the process of dissolution already begun:

> Of course we did not know that we would never return, and that the secure civilization, at least secure to our kind, which we had known all our lives, was due to end in three years. Because of this ignorance ... [we] were more full of anticipation than of regret that we were ending a bond of seven centuries between our blood and this house and soil. (DYM p. 177)

With characteristic Langton irreverence, Guy makes his most poignant and most direct statement about houses and the lacerating effect of leaving them in the middle of the anticlimactic episode of Diana's planned elopement with Russell, in Outbreak of Love. The disintegration of the Beaumanoir and Waterpark households are passed over lightly, despite their immense significance for the entire family; yet, in the most light-hearted novel of the tetralogy, Diana's feelings about leaving the house which is in fact destined to remain her home are examined in detail and with a great deal of emotion:

> The house was full of ghosts, but ghosts of the living, and of the living who were most dear to her. They poured on her, as on myself at Westhill forty years later, their treasures and their calamities. It was not, as it has been claimed a house should be, a machine to live in. It was a material substance that absorbed life from the lives and feelings of those who had lived in it, and which gave out again to console them for vanished time, the life that it had absorbed. When she left it, she would cut her life in half ... (OL p. 175)

This statement of a single character's feelings reflects some light back onto the Beaumanoir and Waterpark episodes. Guy's comment here about Westhill is a hint that the significance of this passage is wider than it appears at first to be; Diana's thoughts illustrate the extent of the loss involved in the breaking up of any family household.

When Blackbirds Sing traces the process of the family's final separation from Waterpark. Dominic's enthusiasm about the place in the early stages of the novel begins to change to disillusion after Lord Dilton explains to him what effect the war will really have on the Waterparks and the Diltons of England. His change of heart about the place is a gradual process, but his realisation of it marks the last stage of the dissolution of his family's way of life and ties with England:

> ... he no longer had any feeling about this place ... The tie which bound his blood to this land had broken. It had not snapped suddenly, but the cord had slowly perished, and now fallen soundlessly apart. (WBS pp. 153-54)

This change of heart is as much, or more, a matter of the war's effect on Dominic himself as of its more gradual and insidious effect on institutions like Waterpark. John McLaren observes that

> By the end of the novel ... Dominic has encountered the collapse of the order which makes this harmony possible, and has renounced England for himself and his successors for ever.[9]

This implies that it is something outside Dominic's own being which dictates his actions, and that he makes a conscious, rational decision to turn his back on the collapsed European civilization and return home to the comparative innocence and peace of his life in Australia. But his instinctive, only semi-articulate rejection of his entire European experience really comes about through the change in his own attitude to the war; and he rejects Waterpark partly because he realises that war and violent death are an integral part of the way of life it represents. In his gesture of renunciation, when he flings his medals into the pond, he estranges himself even from Helena and thus not only from Waterpark and what it represents, but from 'the fellowship of ordinary men' everywhere; his renunciation of his ancient home prefigures his renewed estrangement from all of human society.

In Johnston's My Brother Jack, David Meredith makes two attempts to cut himself adrift from the unhappy memories of his childhood and from the values embodied in his family's household. The first is to renovate Avalon as radically as he can; the second is to move out of it altogether and into a brand-new house with his slightly less than brand-new wife. The renovations to Avalon are necessary, and seem harmless and ordinary enough, but as David works he suddenly becomes aware of what he is really doing:

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[9] John McLaren, "Gentlefolk Errant - The Family Writings of Martin Boyd," Australian Literary Studies, 5 (1972), 342.

> I was trying to hammer out all the past, trying to seal it off forever behind a skin of polished veneer ... All through the afternoon I worked, silent and intent, hammering on the cedar sheets and the panel strips, battering away at childhood and boyhood and youth, desperately driving nail after nail after nail through the treacherous emotions of a tiny suburban history. (MBJ p. 165)

In this attempted erasure of his childhood and all that remains of it, David is removing himself in spirit if not in body, as he realises himself, from his family and everything they represent:

> Although I still lived at home, Jack's return and the panelling up of the front hall had dislodged me finally from that house in the suburbs called Avalon. I had moved out at last - or had I, perhaps, been moved out? - into a world which for years I had been doing my utmost to evade. (MBJ pp. 166-67)

His move with Helen to the house in Beverly Grove, 'so new that it seemed ... still damp from the plasterer's trowel' (MBJ p. 255), is a more radical step in the process of detaching himself from his people and their tastes and values. But his increasing disillusionment with Helen and her pasteurised household trinkets and habits is accelerated by the dinner-party at the Turleys', which, among other things, has the effect of taking him straight back to Avalon in imagination. He begins to re-evaluate his old home and his whole childhood in a kindlier light;

the rich disorder of the Turley household, despite the privileged and cultivated background of its inhabitants, has much more in common with David's childhood home than with the spotless house in Beverly Grove which ostensibly marks his rise in the world:

> And then he cut down into the pie and the steam came and the rich baking smell, and it went inside my head like an ecstatic drug, and for a magical instant I was back in the old kitchen, with Mother and Jean and Marj all baking away on a Sunday morning and Dad with his violin out fiddling away at Irish jigs in a stink of flying resin. (MBJ p. 242)[10]

From this disquieting visit it is only a short step to the logical, if radical, conclusion to which Meredith comes two weeks later, while he is involuntarily facing a large number of unpalatable truths from the vantage point of his own roof-top:

> ... and I knew that there had been more things of true value in the shabby house called Avalon, from which I had fled, than there ever would be, or could be, in this villa in Beverly Grove. This was where my meditations began to turn in and maul me. (MBJ p. 259)

The suddenness and significance of this revelation prefigure the moment in Italy, years later during the war, when David realises that he has begun, for good or ill, to expatriate himself. It begins to seem by the end of the novel as though David's rejection of his family and Avalon, and later of Helen and Beverly Grove, have been only the early stages of a more radical and complete process of detachment which culminates in his sudden awareness of himself as an outsider not only to his family, but to his country, and which finds its expression in fourteen years of voluntary exile in England and Greece.

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[10] There is a detailed critical analysis of this episode and its implications in Geoffrey Thurley's "My Brother Jack: An Australian Masterpiece?" Ariel, 5, No. 3 (1974), 68-73.

In Clean Straw For Nothing, David's conversation with Gavin Turley, now a widower and living in a small dilapidated flat, illustrates the dislocating effect of the war on the population at large:

> 'Everybody here seems to be giving up their houses and taking little flats,' I said.
> 'That's right. The new nomadism. There's much restlessness in the air. Movement. Everything chopping and changing. Worming into little flats is a way of breaking us in. So we'll be used to it when we have to live in yurts. Or gunyahs.' (CSN pp. 25-26)

The bleak undertones in this conversation are echoed and intensified in A Cartload of Clay by an early incident during Meredith's voyage down a suburban street, over twenty years later, when he sees some workmen demolishing a house:

> Meredith walked slowly on towards the church, thinking of houses. He supposed the time would come when all the houses would have to go and people would live ant-like in those great soaring fingers of glass and metal and cement, living in the imprisonment of the cell rather than the privacy of the room. (ACC p. 30)

Johnston, like Boyd, finally uses the disintegration - the literal disintegration, this time - of a particular house as a symbol for the dissolution of a whole way of life.

In each of the three works under discussion, the central figure becomes increasingly aware of his own alienation from his fellows; Richard Mahony and Dominic Langton are also the victims of a kind of psychic division, a personal failure to 'grow to that complete whole which each mortal aspires to be' (AF p. 351). In all three works, this awareness of alienation, and of personal fragmentation, finds its external expression in the sense of homelessness which haunts all three characters; place becomes a metaphor for a state of mind, or, more accurately perhaps, for a state of spirit. A sense of belonging, and, for Richard Mahony and Dominic Langton, a sense of unified being - what Dorothy Green calls 'a state of grace' - both become more closely equated with the idea of home as each work progresses.

Richard Mahony believes that the wholeness of being to which he aspires is attainable through a change of earthly habitation: 'That a change of environment would work this miracle he did not doubt' (AF p. 351). For Dominic Langton, his home in New South Wales represents his only experience of inner peace and outer harmony with society; and this is temporary, as becomes apparent in the final pages of When Blackbirds Sing. David Meredith's knowledge that he is 'an alien everywhere, because alienation is something you carry inside yourself' (CSN p. 318) is only attained when, about to land in Sydney after fourteen years away, he looks down at the country from the plane and realises that he can no longer think of it as home.

Richard Mahony only becomes aware of the fact that he is a truly homeless mortal after his failure, in the ironically titled The Way Home, to transplant himself back in England. Until this point he has seen himself as a temporary, voluntary exile from his native land; his sojourn in Australia has thus far seemed to him an adventure and an aberration, and he blames his increasing feeling of alienation and separateness, as well as his fear that his life is being wasted, on the country itself: 'Here in this country, he had remained as utterly alien as any Jew of old who wept by the rivers of Babylon' (AF p. 351). At this point, near the end of Australia Felix, he begins to feel that his time on earth is running out; his desire for 'Life with a capital L' (AF p. 346) has remained unfulfilled, and this too he blames on his environment, believing that such a life can only be lived 'in the thick of it' in his home in England.

During these meditations he recalls the Horatian tag which Tangye once quoted to him, although he conveniently forgets its source; his subconscious desire to dissociate his own case from that of a miserable specimen like Tangye is an extraordinarily subtle clue as to the extent of the wilful self-delusion in which he is indulging even at this comparatively early stage:

> ... there came floating into his mind words he had lit on somewhere, or learnt on the school-bench - Horace, he thought, but, whatever their source, words that fitted his case to a nicety. Coelum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt. 'Non animum'? Ah! could he but have foreseen this - foreknown it. (AF p. 351)

The words do fit his own case to a nicety, but not in the way that he imagines here; his soul is not that of the homesick Anglo-Irishman but that of the perennial, universal exile, and no matter how many times he changes his skies, his soul will remain a vagrant. His experience in Britain brings this home to him; he remains an alien not only in London, Leicester and Buddlecombe, but even in the places where he might have been expected to feel most at home. His return to his native Dublin gives him 'the sensation of a dream in which he who was alive, went down among those who had ceased to live' (WH p. 47); his visit to his beloved Edinburgh has the opposite effect but the same final result, making him feel yet again like an outsider:

> ... his return to Edinburgh and its well-known scenes had exactly the opposite effect: made *him* feel like a shade permitted to revisit the haunts of men. (WH p. 47)

After his failure and Mary's to either conform to, or breathe new life into, the hidebound provincialism of Buddlecombe, he admits to himself that his journey 'home' has been, as such, an illusion from the beginning:

> No sooner ashore ... than he had felt himself outsider and alien. England had no welcome for her homing sons, nor any need of them ... His attempt at transplanting himself had been a sad and sorry failure. (WH p. 82)

Mahony realises at this point that the idea of 'home' can no longer be, for him, anything more than an idea; his return to Australia is no positive gesture, not the homecoming that it is for Mary, but merely an admission of defeat and a mortification of his pride. For him, the return to Australia is a condemnation to perennial exile:

> 'Only do not call it home,' was his unspoken request. Short of a miracle that name would never, he believed, cross his lips again. No place could now be 'home' to him as long as he lived. (WH p. 84)

Richardson traces both the prelude to and the aftermath of this realisation through the three stages of the trilogy. Australia Felix ends on a note of hope, almost of exultation, as Mahony frees himself from 'this Australia, so-called Felix' (AF p. 349) and anticipates what he believes to be his homecoming. The Way Home, as Leonie Kramer observes, is

> ... a way of disillusionment. Home, whether it be the Ireland of his birth, the Scotland of his university days, or the England of his green memories, offers him no welcome and affords him no comfort.[11]

Ironically enough, it is immediately after this realisation that Mahony finds himself in a position to establish for himself and his family a place which becomes, for a while, more truly his home than any other. During his years in Melbourne, 'Townshend-Mahony of "Ultima Thule"' (WH p. 124) is subjected to neither physical hardship nor, generally speaking, uncongenial company, and this relative ease of mind and body allays his restlessness for a few years.

A. Norman Jeffares argues that

> His view - the exile's - is that when he has done with a place he has done with it: he never really wishes to remain anywhere. But the illusory

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[11] Leonie Kramer, "Henry Handel Richardson," in The Literature of Australia, ed. Dutton, p. 370.

> dream of creating a home remains and so he buys Ultima Thule ...[12]

But it is not 'the illusory dream of creating a home' that makes him buy "Ultima Thule"; he has abandoned the idea of calling any place home. He has to live somewhere, and at this stage in his career he has the means to live somewhere as congenial as possible, but his disillusionment with the whole idea of calling any place home is reflected in the wryness with which he names his house - a wryness which is echoed by his twentieth-century fictional counterpart David Meredith in A Cartload of Clay, when, having returned from Europe dispirited and demoralised, Meredith considers calling his own house "Merde Alors". For Mahony, the protection and comfort of his Melbourne house is not enough to prevent a relapse into restlessness, and when, at the beginning of Ultima Thule, he returns from his Continental journey a ruined man, he realises anew that Australia has never been his home: 'He returned to the colony at heart the stranger he had always been' (UT p. 1).

Deprived even of the material security of his easy Melbourne years, convinced that his former acquaintances will have no more to do with him and thus feeling more of an alien than ever, Mahony gradually succumbs in this last volume to the physical and mental illness that, previously hinted at, now becomes increasingly apparent. Dorothy Green outlines the connection between Mahony's states of spiritual homelessness and of psychological collapse:

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[12] A. Norman Jeffares, "Richard Mahony, Exile," The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, No. 6 (1969), p. 113. Volume numbering of this journal begins Vol. 6 (1971).

> Ultima Thule completes the transition from the pre-morbid to the morbid state, yet though it is an accurate account of a progress to dementia and of the dementia itself, it never loses touch with humanity ... The answer to the migrant's question, 'Where is my home?', is that he has none; the finding of the answer follows the path from the pre-morbid to the morbid. Migration to Australia was the ideal image in the mid-nineteenth century for psychic division, for alienation.[13]

Mahony's sense of homelessness throughout the trilogy is aggravated by the genuine hostility, to a man of his temperament, of landscape and society in, especially, Ballarat and Buddlecombe; these two names evoke the essence of his experience in Australia and England. Richardson sustains the reader's sympathy for Mahony largely by means of that mass of naturalistic detail for which which she has often been condemned; it is through such accumulation of detail that the damp greyness and smug insularity of Buddlecombe, or the hot monotony and coarse materialism of Ballarat, are conveyed. Vincent Buckley argues that Mahony's degeneration and eventual death are

> ... quite explicitly associated not only with his own instability but with the destructive fact of Australia. The coarseness of Australian society is forced on us as a basic datum, and there is also the destructiveness of the physical environment, expressed or symbolized by images of heat. Heat, sun, dust are the medium first for failure and then for tragedy.[14]

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[13] Green, Ulysses Bound, pp. 248-49.

[14] Vincent Buckley, Henry Handel Richardson, revised ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp 38-39.

But if, as Mahony repeatedly tries to convince himself, the series of uncongenial environments in which he finds himself were the only reason for his restlessness, he would be content at "Ultima Thule"; and it is his compulsive flight from this comparatively idyllic setting which ultimately results in his financial ruin and its consequences. The conditions of his life at "Ultima Thule" are, as Weston Bate points out in his historically based comparison of Ballarat and Brighton,[15] ideal for a man of his temperament; and his flight from here makes it clear that the hostile environments elsewhere have only been an aggravation, not the true cause, of his restlessness.

One of the most revealing ways in which Richardson explores and to some extent explains Mahony's innate nomadism is through the eyes of Mary. Mary's reaction to some of the places to which she follows Richard, and the terms in which it is expressed, suggest that he rejects the whole idea of being attached to any particular place, anything defined by boundaries and place-names and inhabitants. There is a hint of this very early in the trilogy, when Richard and Mary are making their highly symbolic wedding-journey to Ballarat:

> ... it began to seem to Polly ... as if they were driving away from all the rest of mankind, right into the very heart of nowhere. (AF p. 83)

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[15] Weston Bate, "From Gravel Pits to Green Point," in Henry Handel Richardson 1870-1946, Papers Presented at a Centenary Seminar, November 1970. (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1972), pp. 38-47.

This observation turns out to be a prophecy of the course of their whole married life; and it is echoed in Mary's arrival at Barambogie, in Ultima Thule:

> It was pitch dark; not a single homely light shone out, to tell of a human settlement; not the faintest sound broke the silence. To Mary it seemed as if they had been dumped down in the very heart of nowhere. (UT p. 52)

This repetition of the phrase 'the very heart of nowhere', apart from its obvious recollections of Conrad, hints at Richard's desire to transcend the notion of 'place' altogether - an idea which in turn suggests both the freedom he craves and the death he fears.

His nomadism, like his illness, is incurable; the wholeness of being that he seeks is not attainable through any earthly quest and the death that he fears is not avoidable through any earthly flight. Dorothy Green observes in Ulysses Bound that, for Mahony, 'To look for a home in the world, to strive to be "conformed" to the world is to identify oneself with the transient and perishable' (p. 298); the earthly 'home' becomes a metaphor for death. This idea has its counterpart in spiritual terms, as Green points out elsewhere:

> At the centre of Richardson's novels, particularly The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, and of Brennan's Poems 1913, is the Pythagorean notion of man as a seeker, a wanderer, a 'pilgrim soul', who leaves his heavenly home to perfect himself through many revolutions of existence before he returns, richer by experience, to his true home. The lost Eden of Brennan's Wanderer, and Richard Mahony's halting explanation of his restlessness as a struggle to recapture a half-forgotten dream, have ultimately the same

source.[16]

In Mahony's case, the quest for immortality is indistinguishable from the flight from death; that which he most desires is also that which he most fears.

The sense of homelessness in Boyd's Langton sequence is underlined by the structure, as well as intrinsic to the content, of each novel. Like the last two novels in the My Brother Jack trilogy, the Langton novels have a fragmented time structure which emphasises the way that the narrator's memories are scattered about the world. The sequence of events in each of the Langton novels is roughly chronological, after the first leap from 1949 back into the nineteenth century at the beginning of The Cardboard Crown; but within this general framework the narrative method follows the pattern that Guy prescribes for himself in his proposed account of Dominic:

> ... I can only proceed like the painter Sisley, who, when he wished to convey an effect of green, put a dot of blue on his canvas, and then a dot of yellow beside it. From a little way off the green thus appears more lively and luminous. So I must put these dots of contradictory colour next to each other in the hope that Dominic may ultimately appear alive. (DYM p. 20)

In the time-scale of the tetralogy, such 'dots of contradictory colour' appear in the form of anecdotes and scraps of information which interrupt the main thread of the narrative, and which deal with ancestors, aunts, cousins and other members of the family in different times and places on both sides of the equator. The reader is thus made aware of the nature and frequency of the family's perambulations about the world; Guy's repeated insistence on his family's 'inherent homelessness' (DYM p. 177) is unnecessary, because the fact of it is built in, so to speak, to the structure of the narrative itself.

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[16] Green, "The Pilgrim Soul," p. 329.

The family dilemma is exemplified most clearly in two of its individual members; Alice, and, more centrally, her grandson Dominic. In The Cardboard Crown, Alice, shattered by her discovery of Austin's long-term infidelity, turns to Europe - or, more specifically, Rome and Aubrey Tunstall - as an alternative home. She realises, however, that whichever alternative she chooses can never be wholly considered her home; her affinities are divided between her family and home in Australia, the whole fabric of her past life, and what she sees as the promise of a new life in Rome - 'the home of my spirit' (TCC p. 96) - with Aubrey Tunstall. Contemplating the desertion of one for the other, she writes in her diary '*Je dois être deux femmes, pouvante habiter deux mondes*' (TCC p. 93); and we are given Guy's translation of a similar, later entry: 'I have to deny a whole side of my nature and my life, to end some of my closest friendships if I stay in Europe, but I have to deny my life itself if I leave Rome' (TCC p. 96). There is an echo of this dilemma in Outbreak of Love, where incidents follow the same pattern; Diana, having discovered Wolfie's infidelity, contemplates leaving her family in Australia and departing with Russell for Italy. In both cases the dream of a new life is illusory; both women closely equate their prospective lovers with the idea of Europe, and their families with Australia; and the difference is that between the ideal and the real. Neither Aubrey nor Russell is a particularly promising individual, but the Langton women love them for that other world which they represent as much as for themselves.

Dominic is not simply torn between two worlds; he is an outsider from all worlds, and in him the family's 'inherent homelessness' finds its most extreme form of expression. In A Difficult Young Man, Dominic's refusal to return to the agricultural college after Alice's funeral because of the brutalities to which he has been subjected, and Laura's reaction to this, give an early indication of what his whole life will be like:

> ... she began to feel that there really must be a curse on Dominic, as though he brought many of his troubles on himself, others came upon him from outside. He could have done nothing to provoke this brutality except to be himself, different from the herd. (DYM p. 61)

His alienation from other people, even from his own family, is aggravated by his own divided nature. His craving for personal integrity, in a literal sense, is as intense as his craving to belong, to fit in with the human community at large:

> What made Dominic so difficult was that he wanted all his worlds to be reconciled, his life integrated ... in his mind, if frequently smothered by his actions, was that streak of logic, of legal perception, which made his irrational divisions intolerable. (WBS pp. 85-86)

Dominic's tragedy is that the desire to belong and the desire for personal integrity are themselves ultimately irreconcilable; in order to achieve the former he has to sacrifice the latter, as is made clear in the last few pages of When Blackbirds Sing. However, for Dominic the idea of 'home' becomes a symbol for both of these things: 'The values which Dominic seeks are symbolized by the word "home"'.[17] The inconsistencies of his own nature and of the world's reaction to it - he is invariably punished for acting on his best impulses and, in the end, rewarded for acting on his worst, as Brenda Niall points out[18] - deprive him of a stable sense of self; he has no single, secure personal basis of operations, no 'home' even in his own mind. This, together with his passionate desire to belong in the company of his family and his fellows, is what makes the ritual of a welcome home so important to him: 'From childhood, to be welcomed home had seemed to him one of the most important happinesses of life' (WBS p. 84).

For a while, during the early years of his marriage to Helena, it seems as though all his desires have been fulfilled; Helena's understanding of and healing influence on his nature, and his instinctive affinity with the natural world by which he is surrounded, give him the sense of being truly at home for the first and, it is hinted, the only time in his life. As is more fully discussed later in this chapter, even this brief period of peace is shattered by Dominic's experience of the war, and he becomes an outcast once more.

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[17] McLaren, p. 350.

[18] Brenda Niall, Martin Boyd (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 37.

For the family in general, homelessness is a less tortured and complex but no less real affair. Kathleen Fitzpatrick argues that the family's divided affinities between England and Australia and the effect of this division on them is the central theme of the Langton sequence;[19] it is certainly central in the sense that it forms a link between Boyd's two other major preoccupations in the tetralogy. It provides a background to and to some extent an explanation of the character of Dominic, who, in turn, embodies the entire family's dilemma; and it illustrates the process of family and social dissolution, the disappearance of a whole way of life.

The family's situation is most clearly explained by the rather awkwardly introduced but nevertheless effective story of the captive seagull, in The Cardboard Crown:

> A Cornishman once told me that when he was a boy he caught a seagull, and clipped its wings so that it could not fly away. After a while the feathers grew and he forgot to clip them again. It flew back to its companions who killed it. In its captivity it had acquired some human taint which they sensed was hostile. My family were captive seagulls, both at Waterpark, and even more, as time went on, in Australia. (TCC p. 158)

The family is not merely torn between two homes; it is never quite at home in either one. There is not much evidence in the text to support this assertion of Guy's, beyond occasional passing references to the unsettling effect of the Langtons' volatile eccentricities on the 'heavy Sunday luncheon atmosphere' (TCC p. 109) of Melbourne society, and to the simple bad luck which seems to dog the family when it is at Waterpark. These things, however, are enough to produce a kind of undercurrent of unease of which Boyd himself seems only half aware, as Geoffrey Dutton points out in the explanation of it which he offers; Dutton, too, is here using Dominic as an example of the whole family's situation:

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[19] Kathleen Fitzpatrick, "Martin Boyd and the Complex Fate of the Australian Novelist" (Canberra: Commonwealth Literary Fund Lecture, 1953).

> Boyd [in A Difficult Young Man] has hit on something profoundly true, perhaps more by intuition than design. This is that civilized values come to Australia in the care of the English gentleman, but in spite of the reverence with which many English institutions are held in Australia, England and Australia remain hopelessly incompatible in geography, climate, history and manners. The more English a gentleman was, the more he affronted the spirit of place of the new country.[20]

The split in the collective family consciousness, however, goes deeper than this. John McLaren sees Dominic's condemnation to psychic division and spiritual solitude at the end of When Blackbirds Sing as a final, explicit statement of the whole family's dilemma:

> The resolution of the four Langton novels is ... not a conclusion ... The object of the quest which has driven the Langtons around the world has, however, been finally defined as a kind of human wholeness which eventually is achieved only in the world of the spirit and of the art which Boyd sees as so closely related

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[20] Geoffrey Dutton, "Gentlemen vs. Lairs," Quadrant, 9, No. 1 (1965), 18.

> to it.[21]

Boyd, as Susan McKernan observes, 'was convinced that culture is a source of spiritual nourishment';[22] and the family's attempts through three generations to recapture in Europe a sense of the cultural traditions of the past are aimed, largely unconsciously, at attaining a kind of wholeness of spirit which will transcend time and place; as McKernan points out, 'they are seeking heaven on earth'.

Finally, the Langtons become homeless in time as well as space. They are relics of a disappearing way of life; the war deals the death-blow to the social order which has previously defined their place in the human scheme of things. At the beginning of The Cardboard Crown, Guy knows how much of an anachronism his family and its values have become, and the incongruous if impressive image of Westhill with its eighteenth-century décor and its isolated bush setting is presented as a monument to a bygone way of life. The Langton novels represent an attempt to recapture a lost past and to regain a lost sense of home, to reconcile if only in imagination the past with the present and the old home with the new; and, in the portrait of Dominic perhaps, to create one perfect image in which all of these things can somehow be reconciled:

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[21] McLaren, p. 349.

[22] Susan McKernan, "Much Else in Boyd: The Relationship Between Martin Boyd's Non-Fiction Work and his Later Novels," Southerly, 38 (1978), 316.

> That is really what I am searching for throughout this book, the Memlinc in the cellar, the beautiful portrait of the human face, lost in the dissolution of our family and our religion. (DYM p. 361)

George Johnston's My Brother Jack trilogy is pervaded by the same sense of loss. On the first page of My Brother Jack, Johnston evokes an image of a place irretrievably lost:

> Childhood ... although it is a memory made up of many parts ... is fixed now into a final and exact if distant image of a place once lived in and never to be returned to, like the city seen by the wife of Lot in that last yearning moment before she became the pillar of salt. (MBJ p. 7)

David Meredith is here referring specifically to Avalon; but in the third volume of the trilogy, A Cartload of Clay, he confronts this sense of loss on a wider scale. After his fourteen years in Europe, time and change have destroyed his sense of belonging not only to his childhood home, but to his entire native land. On his excursion into the inland, he realises that what he is trying to do is

> ... to overcome a sense of loss, a deprivation, trying to assemble from the unchanging face of nature the faded memories of a lost homeland, trying to balk the onset of change by confrontation with the changeless. (ACC p. 78)

He has, in My Brother Jack, rejected two homes in Australia and finally Australia itself, not on any real initiative of his own but through a sort of passive opportunism. When, in Clean Straw For Nothing, he leaves Australia for England during the war, it is not because he has actively decided to leave but because he has been offered a job in London; when he returns to Australia from

Greece, it is simply because he feels that there is nowhere else to go, and the full realisation of the sense of homelessness which this passive nomadism has bred in him only comes after he has returned to Australia and discovered that he feels, if anything, more alien than he did in Greece:

> When he got back to Sydney ... his feeling of insecurity was intensified. In all his years on the island he had become very accustomed to insecurity, and he wondered what it was that created the deeper sense of insecurity in coming back. (ACC pp. 78-79)

The 'deeper sense of insecurity in coming back' really lies in the knowledge that Australia is the end of the line. The insecurity of earthquakes and riots and domestic warfare in Greece has been offset by the possibility of returning home to Australia; but when he finally does come back the place seems foreign and faintly hostile, and there is, he feels, nowhere else to go. The 'suspicion of a quality of permanence in his state of exile' (ACC p. 53) which he feels on arriving in Sydney is confirmed in the course of his subsequent experience.

The narrative structure of Clean Straw For Nothing reflects the instability not only of Meredith's expatriate years, but of the time in Australia immediately preceding and following them. Johnston uses the image of the kaleidescope to describe the structure of this novel in the same way that Boyd compares his own narrative technique in A Difficult Young Man to the paintings of Sisley. The narrative of Clean Straw For Nothing, with its abrupt shifts in time and place, represents an attempt to find some order and meaning in a life that seems, if viewed chronologically, to be a chaotic and meaningless series of chances and accidents; but it also, like Boyd's, conveys a vivid sense of the geographical instability of the characters.

In one of these episodic fragments, the Merediths' friend Stephanos summarises what threatens to become their own dilemma when he recounts a passage from Hawthorne's memoirs:

> '... He was wise enough to see that by staying on in a foreign place he would have to exchange reality for emptiness. The realities of living would always be deferred, pending the return to one's native air. A future moment. But gradually there would be no future moments, because of the fear that the native air would no longer be sufficiently satisfying. So a substitute reality would have to be transferred to the temporary alien shore. And one would end up by having not a choice between two countries but no country at all ...' (CSN p. 121)

The truth of this is demonstrated for Meredith when he sees his friend Archie Calverton in London and realises that Calverton is in 'the classic dilemma of the dislodged: he could not belong' (CSN p. 247). Meredith's arrival home in Australia confirms his suspicion that Stephanos's comment applies not only to Calverton, but to himself as well:

> Ever since he had come off the plane he had had this uneasy feeling of no longer being able to fit in, as if the years abroad had chipped him into a peculiar sort of lopsided shape that couldn't quite slot in ... (ACC p. 52)

This feeling, however, is not solely due to his expatriate experience; he has never been quite able to fit in. From childhood onwards he has been, like Richard Mahony and Dominic Langton, the perennial outsider; each of them is 'an alien everywhere', homeless not only in the physical world but in the universal pattern of human society. Meredith's years of expatriation in England and Greece are a logical extension of his 'expatriation' from society at large. The episode in My Brother Jack in which he realises that he has begun to expatriate himself, in his quarters in the palace at Caserta, is the beginning of his realisation of lifelong alienation even from his own countrymen.

The implications of this moment of recognition are confirmed when he returns to Melbourne after the war and realises that no matter where he goes he is carrying his separateness about with him like a piece of luggage, that it is not a matter of geographical location but simply a state of being:

> ... I had the oddest sensation of being nowhere at all, or anywhere, because I had flown all the way from the province of Szechwan in West China and I had brought myself and my loneliness and my solitude all that way with me ... (MBJ p. 327)

This idea is recalled in Clean Straw For Nothing, when Morgan, the alcoholic American nomad whose eventual 'sad and sordid' end (CSN p. 206) represents for Meredith the ultimate fate of the permanent expatriate, says 'I don't have a country or a people. I just have a bag with me inside it' (CSN p. 119). Meredith eventually begins to see his own long-standing sense of alienation reflected not only in his fellow expatriates but even in the Australian society to which he returns:

> ... I am beginning to think that everyone of us in this rushing crowded nervous society which has finally trapped us is alienated these days, even in surroundings innately familiar. (CSN p. 175)

The sense of homelessness generated by his journeyings is paralleled not only by his own innate feeling of alienation from society but also, finally, by what he sees as the condition of modern society itself.

Boyd, as well as Johnston, sees the condition of modern society as a direct result of the two world wars, although this is more apparent in his non-fictional writings than in the Langton novels. Where the disorienting effect of world war on a whole society is one of Johnston's major themes, this aspect of war is examined in When Blackbirds Sing through the experience of a single character, as Boyd explains elsewhere:

> When Blackbirds Sing was condemned by some Australian critics, or rather reviewers, as failing to convey the horrors of the 1914 war. I did not set out to do this, but to show the conflict in the mind of one young man.[23]

Dominic's experience of the war has a destructive effect on his sense of affinity not only with his two actual homes, Waterpark and his own farm, but also with the natural world which is, as Guy asserts, his spiritual home. Lord Dilton's statement that the war will mean the end of places like Dilton and Waterpark makes Dominic realise that he is not, as he had believed, fighting to defend his home but rather helping to destroy it; after he has realised that he cannot bring himself to fight again, he offers Lord Dilton's own argument back to him as a justification for this. However, when he revisits Waterpark just before he is admitted to the hospital in Cornwall, he comes to the conclusion that Waterpark itself embodies a social system, a whole way of life, of which war and violent death are an integral part:

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[23] Martin Boyd, "Dubious Cartography," Meanjin Quarterly, 23 (1964), 11.

> It seemed to him that all the beauty of the English countryside contained within itself a single evil, the obsession with killing. All the life he had enjoyed, all his amusements were centred on killing. The chapel of the most gracious country house, of Waterpark itself ... was really the gun-room. (WBS pp. 155-56)

It is this realisation which makes him turn his back finally on the place, and on any idea of returning there to live.

His rejection of Waterpark is directly connected with the incident in France which is really a turning point in his life, his murder of the young German soldier. This is the real reason for his decision - it is not so much a decision as a sort of instinctive conclusion - to refuse to fight any longer. Recalling the incident, he sees it as a denial of all that is best and an affirmation of all that is worst in his nature; a denial of humanity and a violation of the natural world in which his own spirit finds its greatest solace:

> What made it impossible for him to fight again was the brief exchange of human recognition as he shot the German boy.
>
> He believed that then he had violated every good thing he knew, all his passion for the

> beauty of the created world, which he had felt when he watched the Spanish divers, when he had held the chestnut bud in his hand on the steps of the village church. (WBS p. 137)

This new awareness of what it really menas to kill makes him look at Waterpark with new eyes; the memorial window 'blazing with escutcheons' in the chapel seems no longer something to be proud of, but simply 'part of the panoply of battle and murder and sudden death' (WBS p. 155). His experience of war, and the conclusions to which it has forced him, lead him to reject Waterpark outright; the place no longer holds any meaning for him.

His final dispossession, however, comes about when he returns to Australia and Helena. He has violated his spiritual home and renounced his ancestral home; but Helena is, as Dorothy Green puts it, 'his heart's home',[24] and Australia, as it is for Richard Mahony and David Meredith after their experiences of Europe, is his last resort. But when he does return to his farm, nothing can make the place seem real to him; it has been a dream for too long, and his memories of Europe still seem more tangible than his actual surroundings:

> ... he forgot the horse, grazing in the paddock a few yards from him; he forgot his home and his child, and his wife waiting for him on the verandah. All the things he had longed for vanished from his consciousness and he saw only the places where he had most sharply longed for them. (WBS p. 187)

The war and what it has made of him separate him even from Helena, and thus once more from 'the fellowship of ordinary men'. Her reaction when he tells her that he has thrown his medals into the pond is one of blank dismay; Helena, who has always understood him, has reached the limits of her understanding. The last line of *When Blackbirds Sing*, her uncomprehending 'You're not serious?', is perhaps one of the most tragic statements in Australian literature; it is, as more than one critic has pointed out, the edge of an abyss. Dorothy Green makes a lucid and concise summary of the implications of this final statement for Dominic:

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[24] Green, "Martin Boyd," p. 510.

> Before returning to Australia, he had stood in his family's chapel in his English home and had rejected his past and the country of his ancestors. Still not without hope, he comes back to his heart's home in Australia and finds that if he is not to deny the truth of himself, he must also reject the future. He is in fact a dead man from this point on, cut off from all his kind.[25]

George Johnston's trilogy deals in some detail with the disruptive effects of World War II on both the individual and society; so it is fitting that David Meredith's earliest memories are of sharing his childhood home with numberless wounded and homeless soldiers returned from World War I. David and Jack, at the end of the war, are turned out of their room and relegated to a makeshift bed on the sleep-out floor; looking back on this, David realises that it must have been part of a world-wide post-war domestic upheaval. This war, even for those who had a home to return to and who returned to it comparatively whole, also had a disorienting effect on the imagination; in "Keeping It In The Family", a brief comparative analysis of My Brother Jack and the autobiographies of Hal Porter, Graham McInnes and Donald Horne, Patrick Morgan argues that

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[25] Green, "Martin Boyd," p. 510.

> ... the first world war ... seemed to restore that sense of the heroic in life which had been lost since the 1890's ... As the soldiers returned, the memory of its valour contrasted sharply with the mundanity and predictability of daily life ... And as the image of the Great War lost its power over everyday life, no alternative system of belief or interpretation of the world took its place.[26]

A quarter of a century after his banishment to the sleep-out floor, David Meredith finds himself one of the next displaced generation; he, too, sees in the soldiers returning from this war a kind of disorientation of the imagination, brought about not so much by 'the memory of its valour' as by the sudden loss of the sense of order and purpose which the army has hitherto afforded them. This sense of loss is complicated further by the changes in their own home city; and Meredith's tirade in the face of Helen's obtuse pleas that he 'settle down' is as much a description of himself as of the thousands of soldiers who have returned to a city they can hardly recognise as their own:

> '... This whole bloody city's a caravanserai. People passing through ... There are a hundred thousand blokes in this town who don't want to settle down ... Blokes who've come back to

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[26] Patrick Morgan, "Keeping It In The Family," Quadrant, 18, No. 3 (1974), 17.

> something that wasn't here when they went away ... I bet you they wish now the war had just gone on and on. Do you know why? Because they had a place there. A place, do you understand? And now they're scared because they haven't got one ...' (CSN pp. 18-19)

Meredith has returned to Melbourne to find 'values ... being melted away in the climate of victory ... things splintering and breaking and falling to the ground' (MBJ p. 325). The stability of family groups and the solidity of common values which hold a community together are both breaking down; Johnston's account of post-war Melbourne is a picture of a disintegrating society. Returned soldiers are faced, not with the comparatively simple task of readjusting to an old way of life, but of adjusting to the extensive and unexpected changes in their home city. They are doubly displaced; they have lost their 'place' not only in the wartime scheme of things, but in the pre-war pattern of the lives to which they had expected to return.

Meredith and Cressida find themselves running 'a sort of home for the bewildered' (CSN p. 76) in Sydney after the war; their house becomes a meeting-place for a group of people dissatisfied with the uncertainties and suffocated by the 'soggy heavy blanket of timid conformity and dullness' (CSN p. 80) which, for them, characterise post-war Australian society. Meredith hints that their dissatisfaction really stems from themselves, from the changes the war has wrought in their own lives as well as in the character of Australian society; but they blame the country and spend their time plotting to escape:

> If there is one thing in common to the people who come it is a sense of displacement ... they have all been involved in some capacity or other in the war and have not found subsequently any satisfying substitute for that involvement ... It is this country that they blame. It is something they see as rotten in the fabric of Australia that has soured them ... So there is múch talk of striking off overseas. (CSN pp. 79-80)

For Boyd and especially for Johnston, the experience of war produces another kind of 'geographical schizophrenia', in which the idea of a nation becomes a metaphor for war, demobilisation a kind of expatriation, and returned soldiers another class of 'displaced persons'. Randolph Stow's *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, published the year after *My Brother Jack* and comparable with it in a number of ways, contains a vivid and memorable illustration of this idea. The experience of Dominic Langton and David Meredith and all the contemporaries of both is summarised by a written entry in the bloodstained sketchbook brought back by Rick Maplestead from Malaya:

> War is a different country, Rick had written. It doesn't matter which side you were on ... if you fought a war you became a citizen of another, extra nation, not on the map ... When you have belonged to that country you do not really go back to the known nations. You never lose your citizenship.[27]

In *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, the Langton novels, and the *My Brother Jack* trilogy, the psychological sense of displacement - from the profoundly personal feeling of alienation to the mass sense of separate citizenship in the country of war - is an inner reality given outward expression, and intensified, by the experience of actual geographical displacement. The following chapter deals with the more positive aspect of the expatriate experience, the notion of search and progress toward a goal; and here the connection between inner experience and its outward expression in movement from place to place is again apparent. The psychological or spiritual quests undertaken by the characters are outwardly expressed in their travels; the impression of movement and search given by their journeys about the world intensifies the reader's awareness of their inner quests.

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[27] Randolph Stow, *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* (1965; rpt. Harmondsworth: Pengui, 1968), p. 165.

CHAPTER SIX: LOOKING FOR ITHACA

In two of the works under discussion, Stead's *For Love Alone* and Johnston's *My Brother Jack* trilogy, reference to the Ulysses myth recurs throughout; Boyd and Richardson, too, make explicit if passing reference to the Homeric hero. As in Patrick White's *The Aunt's Story*, the myth is not intended to provide any direct analogue; the brief discussion in the first section of this thesis about the use of myth in fiction applies to these works as well. The elaborate and deliberate parallels with the myth in Joyce's *Ulysses* are not apparent here; Johnston and Stead use the figure of Ulysses as a potent symbol, but not as a pattern. In giving this chapter its title I have used the idea of Ithaca in the same kind of way; like the figure of Ulysses himself, the word 'Ithaca' conjures up a host of associations. It is a focal point in the formlessness and boundlessness of the ocean; the object of a quest, and, more specifically, of a search for home; and the goal at the end of a long voyage.

Each of these three ideas emerges as a dominant symbol or a major theme in at least two of the four works in question. All but the Langton novels are rich in sea imagery; here the sea is a symbol of liberty, but it is connected, too, with the potential for chaos and destruction which is implicit in the notion of unqualified freedom. In For Love Alone and Johnston's trilogy, the sea also symbolises aspects of love. The theme of the quest is common to all four works; and the idea of the voyage is used by Stead and Johnston as a parallel to the process of human development and growth toward maturity.

Stead and Johnston make use of different aspects of the Ulysses figure. Teresa Hawkins is a wanderer, a seafaring adventurer in quest of new horizons and new experiences; David Meredith is, or at least becomes, a man in search of a home, a place to rest and hide in. But there is an ironic edge to both Stead's and Johnston's use of the myth. In For Love Alone, Teresa's is a 'buffoon Odyssey' (FLA p. 348); her quest is quixotic rather than heroic, and her spirit's home is not Ithaca but Cythera,[1] the island of love, sacred to Aphrodite. Stead specifically equates Australia with Ithaca - 'It is a fruitful island of the sea-world, a great Ithaca' (FLA p. 2) - and, far from being Teresa's goal, it is precisely the place from which she is attempting to escape. Johnston's trilogy has the same kind of twist; Australia is Meredith's Ithaca, the home from which he sets out and to which, after much journeying, he returns. But his return is no triumphant homecoming, only an act of compromise and, in a sense, defeat; he returns to find himself still an alien in his own country, and there are moments when he finds it hostile and horrifying. His tone, when he thinks of himself as a Ulysses figure, is wry and weary: '... he sometimes had the mordant feeling of being the tired Odysseus coming back to rocky Ithaca' (ACC p. 53). Far from being reunited with Cressida, his Penelope, he becomes gradually more alienated from her and finally loses her altogether. Diana Brydon makes the significant observation that

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[1] Although Teresa talks of the 'voyage to Cytherea', the island is actually called Cythera. 'Cytherea' and 'the Cyprian' are common names for Aphrodite, to whom the islands of Cythera and Cyprus are sacred.

> In Clean Straw For Nothing ... [the] three times that explicit reference is made to the Odysseus analogue it is always immediately followed and qualified by a further allusion to Kafka, as if in tacit recognition of the irony lurking beneath the application of the Greek myth to modern times.[2]

In spite of these ironic variations and inversions of the myth, it is possible to trace the structure of The Odyssey through that of For Love Alone and the last two novels of Johnston's trilogy. The story of Ulysses is episodic, within the larger unifying framework provided by the idea of a voyage and its goal. For Love Alone charts Teresa's encounters with the different faces and phases of love in the process of her own quest for love and freedom, as R.G. Geering points out:

> The whole novel is organized to reveal the different aspects and paradoxes of love as the heroine passes through the stages of her journey ...[3]

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[2] Brydon, p. 284.

[3] R.G. Geering, Christina Stead (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 24.

In the first half of the novel, "The Island Continent", Teresa's experience of love is confined to a series of only half-understood incidents and observations - her own hothouse fantasies, the atmosphere of prurience and desperation at Malfi's wedding, the endless talk with the girls on the boat, the defection of the besotted Kitty, the sad and shoddy evening at the Carlins' and the inexplicable, to her, episode of the old man on the road in the Narara Valley, and Jonathan Crow's suburban free-love cult. This sequence of bewildering encounters with the nymphs and monsters of love culminates in her carefully concocted passion for Jonathan and prepares the ground for the more personal experience of the nature of love awaiting her. In the second half of the novel, after her actual journey has brought her to London, her sentimental education continues to proceed by stages; her belated enlightenment about Jonathan, her union with James Quick, and her liberating escapade with Harry Girton bring her finally to her twin goals of love and freedom.

The episodic nature of David Meredith's experience in *Clean Straw For Nothing* and *A Cartload of Clay* is emphasised by the fragmented chronology of both these novels. In *Clean Straw For Nothing*, Meredith's memory of countless Chinese exiles setting out on the long trek home from Szechwan gains significance in his mind as the novel progresses; the 'long journey out from Szechwan' (CSN p. 27) becomes for him a symbol of any man's journey through life, of the progress of all humanity toward some ultimate goal. Here the unifying image of the voyage is superimposed over the disconnected fragments of Meredith's experience; in A Cartload of Clay this pattern is reversed and Meredith's improbably epic voyage down a suburban Sydney street provides a framework for the series of flashback episodes which punctuate the main thread of the narrative. Of this bifocal narrative approach, so to speak, A.E. Goodwin observes in his thorough and methodical examination of the structure of the trilogy that

> The Odyssean voyager is an image used for imposing order and meaning on the events in the novels. The kaleidescope of associated images is employed to characterize the method used to narrate the events of the voyage ... Johnston presents the theme of a journey through life by means of the Odysseus figure. The fluctuating structural approach emphasizes this notion of movement and search.[4]

Stead and Johnston both use the structure and the clear symbols of the Ulysses myth to illuminate character and theme. But where the voyage of Ulysses is a long and tortuous physical journey in search of a specific place, the voyages of Teresa Hawkins and David Meredith are the physical means to a more abstract end. Teresa's quest is for love and liberty, wherever they might be found; the vague desire for freedom and adventure which has helped to propel Meredith about the world resolves itself first into a search for some haven where he and Cressida might find peace as well as freedom, and finally into a quest for meaning, for some pattern of continuity in the voyages already undertaken. For Meredith and for Teresa, their goals are ultimately to be reached within themselves; their Ithacas are not to be found on any map, but in the oceans of the mind.

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[4] A.E. Goodwin, "Voyage and Kaleidescope in George Johnston's Trilogy," Australian Literary Studies, 6 (1973), 148.

In The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, as well as in the works of Stead and Johnston, the sea is presented as a symbol of unlimited freedom and promise, and as a means of escape. Richard Mahony, Teresa Hawkins and David Meredith are all adventurers by nature, and for all three the sea represents release from the restrictions of 'the dull shore' (FLA p. 224), from the conventions and constrictions of the city, the 'sad suburban rectitudes' (CSN p. 45), or the numbing nullity of the inland. Of the three, however, Richard Mahony is most closely identified with the sea; unlike Teresa and Meredith, Mahony desires constant movement, constant change, simply for its own sake, and to him the sea is not a means to an end but an end in itself. His life is one long and continuous attempt to fight free of the fact that any human being's experience is largely determined, as well as limited, by the place or places in which he happens to find himself; the sea is Mahony's element because the shore is the last frontier, and beyond it, where the concept of 'place' has no meaning, there are none of the restrictions of landscape and society against which he continues to rebel all his life.

Richardson uses the contrast between land and sea, the two elements of earth and water, to help define both form and theme in the trilogy. The Proem to *Australia Felix* is a statement about the nature of the earth, dominated by images of burial and confinement; the Proem to *The Way Home* is a similar kind of statement about the sea, dominated this time by images suggesting freedom and adventure. *Australia Felix* traces the effects on Mahony of the things associated with the earth; he is stultified by stability and disgusted by the materialism of the society which surrounds him, but at the same time he expresses his contradictory desire for permanence and peace by marrying Mary, who embodies the qualities and values represented by this fixed element. In *The Way Home*, the things associated with the sea - restlessness, change, the desire for adventure - are explored in Mahony's character and actions. The sea represents the kind of freedom that he seeks; yet the high point in his fortunes, which occurs in this second volume, is the prosperous period he spends at "Ultima Thule", a time characterised by stability and made possible by the effects of the very materialism he despises.

As Diana Brydon observes, this kind of conflict of interests and desires, represented by the contrast between land and sea, is a vital element in the trilogy:

> The sea ... is as much a part of the Australian landscape as the land itself. Richardson uses the landscape of earth and sea as an image of the conflict in Mahony's soul between his desire for stasis and his equally strong desire for motion. This conflict of irreconcilable opposites, which Richardson perceives to be both the basis and the destruction of life, is the true theme of

> the Richard Mahony novels.[5]

Sea and land represent a number of 'irreconcilable opposites', including the unresolvable conflicts in the relationship between Richard and Mary. The sea, Richard's element, is associated with freedom, movement, change and adventure; the earth is associated with Mary, and with restriction, stasis, permanence and security. Richardson demonstrates the nature of these larger, abstract conflicts in terms of the Richard-Mary relationship, with varying degrees of solemnity; the fact, for example, that the sea makes Richard sing and Mary sick is observed with heavy irony:

> And thereafter, between convulsive fits of retching, she heard from the cabin opposite ... the voices of father and son raised in unison:
>
> Rocked in the cradle of the deep
> I lay me down...in peace to sleep.
>
> (WH p. 253)

This fundamental division is expressed with far greater gravity of tone in Ultima Thule; Richard, his illness now at an advanced stage, lapses into a semi-delirium which clarifies to his vision the nature and depth of this conflict of opposites:

> And escape he must - from the prison cell that was his room; from the laming surveillance to which she subjected him. Only out of doors, with the wind sweeping through him, the wild expanse of sea tossing in the sunlight, could he for a little forget what threatened; forget her dogging and hounding, enjoy a fictitious peace ... (UT p. 204)

Mahony is identified with the sea throughout the trilogy. To bathe, to sail, or merely to be near the sea has a healing, restorative effect on him; he refers to himself as a sea-vessel when trying to explain his restlessness to Grace Marriner (whose very name, incidentally, probably accounts at least in part for his attraction to her, and perhaps it is also significant that Grace's virtues are largely illusory; like the sea, she is clearly capable of destruction): 'Still there's no denying it: I do sometimes feel like an old hulk which lies stranded ...' (WH p. 193). His comment when trying to persuade Mary to bathe - 'There's nothing to equal it, Mary, this side Heaven!' (AF p. 261) - is, for him, no more than a statement of fact; in the sea he is, literally, in his element. Even at an advanced stage of his illness - the nature and prognosis of which, Richardson hints, he is aware - he is convinced that the sea might yet heal him:

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[5] Brydon, p. 39.

> ... one night, turning his poor old face to her Richard said: 'It's the sea I need, Mary. If I could just get to the sea, I should grow strong and well again.' (UT pp. 180-81)

His identification with the sea recurs even in details like the apparently gratuitous piece of information that, of all the cities visited on the Mahonys' tour of Europe, 'Venice suited him best' (WH p. 263); it is tacitly suggested that Mary's explanation of this - that it is because of the ostensible quietness and peacefulness of the place - is not the right one. In Venice the dividing line between sea and city is indistinguishable; the security of the city, an identifiable, recognisable place, is combined with the freedom and boundlessness of the ocean. Venice is a geographical manifestation of that reconciliation of opposites which Mahony seeks to achieve within himself.

Although Richardson does not explicitly link Mahony's encroaching madness with the sea imagery which dominates much of the trilogy, some parallels can be drawn. Mahony's state of consciousness by the end of his life is beyond reason and logic and the mental constrictions of ordinary life, just as the sea is beyond boundaries, roads, cities, and, ultimately, the shoreline. After Mary has retrieved her husband from the asylum, he finds in his debilitated mental state the peace and freedom which he has always associated with the sea; finds it, ironically, within the confines of a small room:

> He was now the least troubled of men. Content and happiness had come to him at last, in full measure ... He desired to be nowhere but here: had, at long last, found rest and peace, within the four walls of a room measuring but a few feet square ... (UT p. 268)

In his study Madness and Civilization, Michel Foucault makes an observation which could serve admirably as an epigraph for the Richard Mahony trilogy. Foucault examines the mediaeval European custom of driving madmen out of towns and cities and, often, handing them over to sailors; the image of the Narrenschiff, the Ship of Fools, which recurs in Renaissance literature and art has its basis in fact. Of this custom and its imaginative and symbolic ramifications, Foucault observes:

> Confined on the ship, from which there is no

> escape, the madman is delivered ... to that great uncertainty external to everything. He is a prisoner in the midst of what is the freest, the openest of routes ... He is the Passenger *par excellence*, that is, the prisoner of the passage. And the land he will come to is unknown - as is, once he disembarks, the land from which he comes. He has his truth and his homeland only in that fruitless expanse between two countries that cannot belong to him.[6]

Here almost all the major themes of the Richard Mahony trilogy are brought together in a single observation. Foucault's statement illuminates the metaphorical link, provided by the sea imagery in the novels, between Mahony's state of perennial exile and his eventual degeneration into madness; this passage also illustrates, through its statement of a paradox - the seaborne madman's simultaneous freedom and confinement - the kind of unity and reconciliation of opposites which Mahony seeks all his life and only finds, finally, in his own madness. For the exile and for the madman, banishment and freedom are interchangeable terms; for each, the sea is 'his truth and his homeland'.

The use of the sea as a symbol of freedom also plays a vital part in Stead's *For Love Alone*. The prologue, "Sea People", establishes the novel's heroine as the descendant of a race of sea-going adventurers, and hints at the direction Teresa is to take in the course of the novel: 'There is nothing in the interior; so people look towards the water ...' (FLA p. 1). The sea provides Teresa's passage to freedom and fulfilment; her imagination is dominated by images connected with the sea, and she associates it with love and adventure as well as with the freedom to pursue them.

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[6] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (1965; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 11.

Teresa, like Richard Mahony, is personally identified with the sea, and shares Mahony's love of it: 'She loved the sea with a first and last love, had no fear of it, would have liked to sail it for two years without seeing land; she had the heart of a sailor' (FLA p. 224). Like Mahony, too, she thinks of herself as a sea-vessel; the reasons for her rejection of Erskine are expressed in a characteristic simile:

> If she loved him, she might stay here - for ever, anchored in the little harbour where she was born, like a rowboat whose owner had died and which had never been taken off the slips. (FLA pp. 284-85)

Elsewhere she is referred to as a sea-creature; she and Harry Girton are 'stormy petrels, each looking for adventure' (FLA p. 489).

Teresa associates the sea with love, her chief obsession; her goddess is the sea-born Aphrodite. As Diana Brydon points out,[7] sea imagery begins to disappear from the narrative as Teresa's experience of love becomes more extensive, but in the first half of the novel the two things are closely linked; love, like the sea, holds an unfathomable mystery and fascination for her. Brian Kiernan observes that

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[7] Brydon, p. 115.

> To her, love ... is one of the ultimate mysteries. As in Seven Poor Men of Sydney, the sea ambiguously promises freedom; it is to its edge that the lovers come to escape the restrictions of society, and come also, in a sense, to the edge of life itself.[8]

Like the world beyond Australia, and knowledge of the world, love is for Teresa an unexplored and uncharted expanse, beyond the boundaries and restrictions of a city and a society already known to her; although the ostensible goal of her journey is to follow the depressing Jonathan to England, her determination to leave Australia is really part of a general desire to proceed from the known to the unknown, from the island continent to the world at large and from her own ignorance to a knowledge of love.

The connection between the sea and the idea of love, in all its forms, is established in a variety of ways; Teresa's envy of the fishermen's women, the endless love-and-marriage conversations on the boat to the city, the ceaseless and mysterious activity of lovers on the dark shore, all serve to strengthen the link between the two ideas, as does the incident of the pregnant woman's suicide by drowning. This episode, sad and sordid if related in bald journalistic fashion, is transformed by Stead's rich and ritualistic imagery into an extraordinarily powerful poetic statement:

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[8] Brian Kiernan, "Christina Stead: Seven Poor Men of Sydney and For Love Alone," in his Images of Society and Nature, p. 68.

> The moon shone fiercely on the full-bellied sea. A woman who had known everything, men's love and been deserted, who had the vision of a life of endless work and who felt seedy, despairing, felt a bud growing on its stalk in her body, was thirsty; in her great thirst she drank up the ocean and was drowned. She floated on it now in a wooden shell, over her a clean white cloth and over all the blazing funeral of the sky, the moon turning its back ... (FLA p. 74)

Here the sea is associated not only with love and with destruction but also, in a way, with freedom; the dead woman has found release from the restrictions of an inevitably miserable future. Teresa herself associates the sea with absolute freedom, with the same kind of complete release:

> She floated in the water and thought she would not be afraid to go down at sea ... People had floated for thirty-six hours on a smooth ocean. You just let yourself go ... (FLA p. 67)

The episode of the pregnant woman is echoed faintly in the chapter "A Deserted Sawmill", in which Teresa contemplates drowning herself in the sawmill pond simply to break her perverse and destructive emotional ties with Jonathan; she is tempted, briefly, by the freedom of oblivion. She is no Richard Mahony, however; she has a place in the world, and is capable of achieving the liberty she desires within the limitations of human society. As she gains experience, she reaches a balance between the wild unbounded dreams of her youth and the less attractive realities of life, represented respectively by images of the sea and of the city, as Brian Kiernan points out:

> City and sea are the extreme poles of Christina

> Stead's imagery ... and represent the tensions between a dehumanized socio-economic system and the ambiguous liberation, promised by the expansive sea, which the characters seek to resolve.[9]

Kiernan argues that, in choosing to assert her freedom through her encounter with Harry Girton, Teresa 'makes her choice between sea and city, the flow of experience and the chosen way of life, and in experiencing this choice she finds her true freedom'.[10] What she does with this 'true freedom', however, is to take it straight back to the city and James. He too is associated with the sea, but not with its wildness and mystery; with, rather, those aspects of it which relate to human society, to communication and civilization:

> She thought of her future with James - immense, rich, busy, in half the cities of the world ... docks, wharves, watersides full of shipping, cities of canal-mouths, and masts, pilots and stevedores, all the Hanseatic world and the Baltic outpourings, that business that James was in, the loading and unloading in harbours ... that was her world. (FLA p. 492)

In choosing to return to James she takes her place in the pattern of human society. Diana Brydon observes of this passage that

> In this final image, the wild individualism of the sea is harnessed in a social context. It plays its part in human intercourse; it does not stand alone. Teresa's integration with society, on her own terms and not at the expense of her individual self, is thus obliquely suggested.[11]

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[9] Kiernan, "Christina Stead," p. 79.

[10] Kiernan, "Christina Stead," p. 78.

[11] Brydon, p. 116.

Girton is a wild loner, Quick a civilized and sociable being; in loving both, Teresa resolves the conflict between sea and city and what they represent. She renounces both the peril of absolute freedom and the deathly constrictions of absolute security, and finds her place in the world by achieving a combination of both; the image of the harbour associated with James suggests both safety and the unlimited potential for adventure still to come.

In _My Brother Jack_, Johnston uses the same kind of image for a somewhat similar purpose; here, too, the image of the harbour suggests the opening up of endless possibilities. David Meredith, during his apprenticeship at Klebendorf and Hardt, is introduced to the world of Melbourne's river wharves by a fellow-worker and gradually comes to be aware of what this new and unfamiliar sphere might mean to him:

> I could go wandering round the waking wharves, and for the first time in my life I came to be aware of the existence of true beauty, of an opalescent world of infinite promise that had nothing whatever to do with the shabby suburbs that had engulfed me since my birth ... I did not see it then as a way out of the wilderness ... but I was quite sure that something important had happened to me. (MBJ p. 70)

Here again, as in _The Fortunes of Richard Mahony_ and _For Love Alone_, the sea is equated with the extremes of human experience; not, this time, with madness or death, but with beauty and freedom and, later in the novel, with love. The sea offers to David, as to Teresa, the possibility of liberation from the 'shabby suburbs'; unlike Teresa, however, David does not use it directly as a means of escape until almost twenty years later when he sails for London with Cressida. Instead, it fires his imagination to write, an activity which eventually propels him into a different way of life from that of his childhood, and which becomes his life's work.

His life's love, too, is directly associated with the sea. At a chance meeting with Cressida Morley and Gavin Turley in a Melbourne restaurant, near the end of *My Brother Jack*, he is eager to connect his already established love of the sea with his rapidly developing attraction to Cressida:

> '... Consider her beginnings. She is born on a barren mile of Pacific beach. Not a soul goes there. Nothing but sand-dunes and sharks and kelp. Oh, a log or two of driftwood perhaps. And our Cress ...'
>
> It was perfectly and absolutely *right*, of course! It had to be - that was where her eyes came from, out of the ocean, out of the endless Pacific depths. (MBJ p. 335)

Cressida continues to be associated with the sea throughout the trilogy, and with the beauty, the freedom, and the potential for excitement and adventure - and for possible destruction - that it represents:

> ... already she had that invincibly calm quality of a woman sure of her beauty, and with it - one saw this most clearly when she was away on the cliff rocks or the swept dunes of her mile-long beach - another quality that was wild and wanton and free. A kind of pagan quality, it was, and anything but calm. (CSN p. 58)

Generally speaking, the sea represents in the trilogy a certain set of attitudes to life, which can perhaps best be summed up by the word 'fearlessness'. What appears at first to be an incidental anecdote near the end of Clean Straw For Nothing is in fact an important statement about the whole meaning of the trilogy:

> Sailing in those waters we were once wise in what had to be done in a night of storm, should a beautiful woman rise on the tempestuous waves lashing at the boat and cry her aching question: 'Where is Alexander the Great?' Quick as a flash one had to be ready with the reply: 'Alexander the Great lives and reigns!' ... To neglect that response, that cry of affirmation, was to be doomed. (CSN p. 310)

In its wider sense, 'that cry of affirmation' is the courage, in the face of the perils and uncertainties of life, to pursue the best things - freedom and love and adventure - that it has to offer. Although this way of life holds its own sorrows, it is still seen as infinitely preferable to, and as the antithesis of, the lives of the 'doomed', who are chiefly represented in the trilogy by Helen. The values associated with the sea stand in direct contrast to Helen's suburban values, all of which are generated by fear; fear of being unmarried, unfashionable, unsuccessful, or alone. In choosing to marry the pagan Cressida, in choosing to go to Greece and face financial, political, even geographical instability in order to pursue his real vocation and seek the way of life he wants, Meredith is in effect shouting 'Alexander the Great lives and reigns!'

In the work of all four novelists, the theme of the quest is central, and echoes from the Ulysses myth are used to emphasise this. Ulysses' search for Ithaca, his home, becomes in some of these novels a search for the lost

Eden, mankind's true home - which is in turn a metaphor for a state of being, within the self. For Richard Mahony, Teresa Hawkins, the Langton family and David Meredith, the quest is not for any particular place but for a state of mind or a way of life, an Ithaca of the spirit or the imagination.

In The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, the theme of the quest is developed, again, in terms of the contrast between land and sea and the conflicting values which they represent. The nature of the quest for gold, which provides the background to Mahony's story, is established in the Proem to Australia Felix and embodies the values associated with the earth; in the Proem to The Way Home, the dominant sea imagery is associated with the quest for adventure and excitement, with 'voyages of adventure and discovery' (WH p. 1). Against this is set Mahony's personal quest both for earthly security and peace and for freedom and adventure - and, most importantly, for the elusive and delicate equilibrium of the spirit which would, if its achievement were possible, enable him to reconcile the two.

In the light of this, the symbolic significance of the goldfields setting is succinctly observed by Dorothy Green:

> Jung assembles an enormous amount of evidence reminding us ... of the once commonly-held belief that gold was a symbol of perfection, of totality, of the constant interchange or marriage of opposites, both in Eastern and Western civilizations.[12]

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[12] Dorothy Green, "'The Nostalgia of Permanence and the Fiend of Motion'," in Centenary Seminar Papers, p. 55.

The miners' search for gold becomes not merely a parallel but a potent symbol of Mahony's quest for less tangible treasure. Of his moment of vision during the attempted-suicide episode in Ultima Thule - the closest he ever comes to the spiritual state to which he aspires all his life - Green observes elsewhere that

> The vision is the culmination of the quest for wholeness formulated in the first book, the brief experience of the right relationship of the total self (body-soul-spirit) to what is outside the self, the harmonising of the inner and the outer. Such a unity is the rarest of treasures; that the search for it should be embedded in a 'miner's story', a search for gold, is only strange to a world which has lost the power of thinking in symbols.[13]

The mistake that Mahony continues to make is to confuse this spiritual goal with the goals of actual journeys, places on the map. These are the terms of reference in his own semi-coherent definition of his quest, to which he refers as

> '... that ceaseless hankering for - why, happiness, of course ... the fixed idea that it must be waiting for one somewhere ... remains but to go in search of it ...' (WH p. 91)

Even in his rather more rational conversation with Grace Marriner about the causes of his restlessness, in which he comes a little closer to defining his goal, he still - at Grace's prompting - equates his spiritual discontent with his geographical whereabouts:

> 'I think it is with you as the German poet sings: "There, where thou art not, there alone is bliss!"'
>
> 'Indeed and that hits my nail squarely on

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[13] Green, Ulysses Bound, p. 316.

> the head. For I can assure you it's no mere spirit of discontent ... It's more a kind of... well, it's like reaching out after - say, a dream that one has had and half forgotten, and struggles to recapture ...' (WH p. 193)

Dorothy Green argues in Ulysses Bound that Mahony is by nature a 'seeker', not with a single goal, but with several:

> On the surface ... he seemed to be seeking ... what all men seek, the means of subsistence, wealth and comfort. He was also seeking a place to feel at home in ... He was, on a deeper level, seeking a reconciliation of the divisions in his nature ... On the deepest level of all, he was seeking, 'not to deny God, but to find him anew' ... (p. 250)

The stages of this many-sided quest are traced through the three volumes of the trilogy. Australia Felix recounts the aftermath of his original decision to travel to Australia, in search of the fortunes of the goldfields. Disillusioned by the wide gap between the dream and the reality, and alienated by both the landscape and the society of Australia in general and Ballarat in particular, he returns with Mary to England in search of 'a place to feel at home in'; in search, too, of that 'tourney of spiritual adventuring, of intellectual excitement, in which the prize striven for was not money or anything to do with money' (AF p. 346) which he feels has been denied him in Australia.

The Way Home traces the collapse of both these aspirations; in this second novel the 'divisions in his nature', the warring desires for flight and for security, are intensified rather than reconciled. It is ironic that Mahony should come closest to the goal of his most significant quest at the lowest ebb of his earthly life, in the later chapters of Ultima Thule; ironic, too, that after all his fruitless questing about the world he should be granted his brief, transcendent vision of unity and peace in a swamp at Barambogie and find permanent contentment and rest, in the form of complete mental collapse, in a hot little room in Gymgurra.

After this, his death is almost an anticlimax; but the final scene of the trilogy, the burial he has always feared within sound of the sea he has always loved, brings the symbolic weight of land and sea into a delicate equilibrium and, through this final balance of irreconcilable opposites, marks the real end of his quest.

The quest of Teresa Hawkins in For Love Alone is a far more straightforward affair. There are no divisions in Teresa's nature; she is, if anything, frighteningly single-minded, as is demonstrated by the bizarre ordeal through which she propels herself in order to save her boat fare. She knows exactly what it is that she seeks; her twin goals are love and freedom, in her earthly life within human society. Stead's father, like Richardson's, left his mark on her outlook on life as well as on her work; where Walter Lindesay Richardson's spiritualist daughter produces a hero whose quest at its profoundest level is conducted in the realms of the mystical, the atheist daughter of David Stead creates a heroine whose preoccupations are exclusively secular. While it may be extravagantly optimistic of a woman in Australia in the 1930's to seek love and freedom in this world, it is in this world and no other that Teresa conducts her quest. The astringently comic image of her search for love as a sort of fox-hunting meet is one which recurs in various forms in the novel; she refers to 'the chase I am on' (FLA p. 159), and Jonathan Crow's disparaging remarks about 'the hunt' (FLA p. 417), with their implications that womankind is by nature predatory, are a distorted echo of Teresa's own analysis of the archetypal womanly dilemma:

> A woman is a hunter without a forest. There is a short open season and a long closed season, then she must have a gun-licence, signed and sealed by the state. There are game laws, she is a poacher, and in the closed season she must poach to live ... Yes, we're pressed for time. We haven't time to get educated, have a career, for the crop must be produced before it's autumn. (FLA p. 75)

Her quest is linked in her own mind with sea-voyages of exploration and discovery, and in taking ship for London she uses these symbols as literal models. Her idea of 'a kind of Darwin's voyage of discovery ... as the voyage to Cytherea' (FLA p. 193) links the symbolic and the real in her subsequent career; her actual voyage to London brings her within reach of the discoveries she longs to make about the real nature of love. She feels, rightly, that the timid and respectable suburban compromises she sees all about her - honourable engagement, loveless marriage, smutty gossip, hope chests - are obscuring from her sight the truth about love, just as 'the iron circle of home and work' (FLA p. 85) is preventing her from attaining any real freedom. The shallows of life in suburban Sydney are familiar to her, so she assumes that the unfamiliar depths of passion and experience are only to be found elsewhere. She succeeds in her escape by using Jonathan 'as an aim so as not to fail' (FLA p. 265), but she is determined to leave Australia before she ever thinks of following Jonathan; and, even while thinking of it as an escape, she associates her planned bid for freedom with the voyages of explorers:

> ... she did not think logically, all other things were secondary to the need to leave the lonely state that galled and humiliated her as woman and freeman. It was an accident ...that made her think she could escape by sea. It was perhaps the first visions printed on her mind as a child of the sailors who, from de Quiros to Cook, had sailed all the seas and discovered Australia ... (FLA p. 224)

The sheer scope of her imagination and the intensity of her commitment to her ideals give even her most extreme statements and actions a kind of ridiculous dignity, as when she calmly threatens to kill her father with her bare hands, or when she very nearly kills herself in her efforts to get away: 'She thought of death, indeed, but only as an obstacle that might prevent her sailing and must be circumvented' (FLA p. 278). Thus when she gives Erskine her melodramatic explanation of her reasons for going away, the reader, like Erskine, feels obliged to take her seriously despite her verbal heroics:

> 'I have some kind of great destiny, I know. All this can't be for nothing. Glory and catastrophe are not the fate of the common man... I have to go, it isn't my fault. I am forced to. If I stay here, I will be nobody ... (FLA p. 285)

Her desire to be 'somebody' is inextricably bound up in her mind with her desire for love. Her home offers only obscurity and compromise; like Richard Mahony, she is convinced that the remoteness of the 'island continent' is cutting her off from the sources of real life, 'Life with a capital L'. What Susan Higgins calls 'The intuitive association of passion with true knowledge'[14] is the real force behind her quest; both, as she explains to Erskine, will be denied her unless she goes in search of them. Although the specific nature of her 'great destiny' is never really made clear, R.G. Geering assumes it to be connected with her potential career as a writer. Referring, presumably, to the fragments of 'The Seven Houses' which Teresa shows to James Quick, Geering observes that

> ... her sense of 'a great destiny' (granting that it could have been given more emphasis) is not to be separated from her desire for the fulfillment [sic] of her whole nature. The artist in Teresa can find release only through the experience of love. Indeed, as the book ends there are possibilities for both her private life and a career ... The whole book is, demonstrably, a study of a search for love ...[15]

In the first half of the novel, her desire to 'know life' (FLA p. 265) is linked in her mind with the Gothic fantasies and Greek myths which represent for her the adventure and experience she seeks. Her private preoccupations are European in essence, but the more traditional desire of the provincial expatriate to experience life in the cultural centres of the world is here combined with the desire for other kinds of experience and growth; she wants to go to Europe not for its own sake, but because she sees it as a way of achieving the richness of personal life which, in Australia, can only be provided by her own fantasies:

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[14] Susan Higgins, "Christina Stead's For Love Alone: A Female Odyssey?" Southerly, 38 (1978), 441.

[15] R.G. Geering, Christina Stead (New York: Twayne, 1969), p. 112.

> In a reasonable way, the trip overseas, the halls of learning, were part of this grand life that she lived without restraint in the caves, taverns, woods, colonnades, and eel pools of antiquity and the night. (FLA p. 85)

Although she sees her actual voyage from Sydney to London as essential to her quest, she does not - as Richard Mahony does - confuse England itself with her true goal. She thinks of the world of her early fantasies as 'a country from which she, a born citizen, was exiled' (FLA p. 85), and of her quest for love as 'the voyage to Cytherea'; but these places are part of the geography of her imagination, and she is aware that her arrival in London is by no means the end of her quest.

Similarly, the theme of search is developed on two levels in Martin Boyd's Langton novels. The Langton family wanders about the world looking for something which, in the final analysis, has little to do with place in its literal sense; but, as in both The Fortunes of Richard Mahony and For Love Alone, the characters' journeyings about the world are presented as the outward expression of an inner quest for a particular state of being or way of life. John McLaren argues that

> The object of the quest which has driven the Langtons around the world has ... been finally defined as a kind of human wholeness which eventually is achieved only in the world of the spirit ... The central characters of Boyd's family novels are the passionate seekers after the grail of wholeness.[16]

At its deepest level, this integrity of being is defined simply as a sense of being at one with God, of achieving, however momentarily, the harmony and innocence of the lost Eden. This idea is demonstrated in A Difficult Young Man, where Dominic's impulse to walk naked through the moonlit bush at Rathain is seen as a part of this quest for unity: '... in the utter stillness of the bush at night, he felt there was nothing between himself and God' (DYM p. 53). This episode is recalled in When Blackbirds Sing, where Dominic again seeks a kind of spiritual security through communion with the natural world in which he has always felt at home:

> Two or three times in his life he had had this impulse to strip himself and walk naked under the stars in some remote sylvan place ... He did not know why he obeyed this impulse ... At the time it gave him a feeling of security, that with his clothes all evil had been shed away. (WBS p. 166)

However, the idea of the spiritual quest, expressed most fully through the character of Dominic, is firmly integrated with the Anglo-Australian theme. Dominic's desire to be at one with his surroundings and with God is paralleled by the whole family's desire to find somewhere on earth to feel at home in; Boyd expresses the idea of the divided self in terms of the secular as well as the spiritual. This is illustrated most clearly by a conversation between Diana and Russell in Outbreak of Love:

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[16] McLaren, pp. 349-50.

> '... Only our bodies were born in Australia. Our minds were born in Europe. Our bodies are always trying to return to our minds.'
>
> 'Well, then, suppose we go to Europe. Our minds want to return to our bodies in Australia ...' (OL p. 128)

The search for what Dorothy Green calls 'man's uncontaminated self',[17] for the integrity of being represented by Boyd's 'Memlinc in the cellar' or by the image of the 'Perfect Drawing' in Much Else in Italy, is reflected not only in Dominic's spiritual struggles but in the choices that Diana, like Alice in The Cardboard Crown, makes about her own conduct toward her fellow human beings, and about her own place in the world. She realises that to run away with Russell would be to betray her own real nature; in fulfilling her responsibilities to the chastened and increasingly vulnerable Wolfie, she answers the demands of her own integrity and is rewarded with the realisation that Australia, where she has already chosen to remain, is her real home. In a letter to Russell she writes

> '... Our little house ... is something like the farmhouse in the picture "Winter Sunlight", which you said one day might be my spiritual home. I think you were right ...' (OL p. 254)

The search for inner integrity is here directly aligned with the search for a true home in the world. Of the Walter Withers painting to which Diana refers, Dorothy Green observes that

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[17] Dorothy Green, "From Yarra Glen to Rome: Martin Boyd 1893-1972," Meanjin Quarterly, 31 (1972), 250.

> Its simplicity and innocence strike the sophisticated Lockwood as the 'pure Australia' ... At the end of the novel, the traditional chivalric values of responsibility to the weak are merged with these simplicities, after Diana has recognized her essential self ...[18]

In both the Langton sequence and Johnston's My Brother Jack trilogy, the theme of the quest becomes part of the narrative method itself; both narrators, Guy Langton and David Meredith, are themselves searching for some pattern of continuity and meaning in their own and their families' wanderings about the world. The quest becomes itself a creative act, which, in the Langton novels, has its counterpart in Guy's restoration of Westhill, as John McLaren points out:

> ... it is here [at Westhill] that Guy, the narrator, eventually discovers Alice's diaries and reconstructs the family history. His historical reconstruction is of a part with his physical restoration of the home of his childhood - a restoration of both harmony and continuity. The retelling is itself a part of the quest.[19]

The latter part of this observation is equally true of Johnston's trilogy, especially the third volume, A Cartload of Clay. It is in this last, unfinished novel that Meredith is most preoccupied with the problem of finding patterns of meaning, some unbroken thread of continuity that might redeem or at least explain the mistakes and sorrows of the past and the apparent pointlessness of past journeys:

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[18] Green, "From Yarra Glen," p. 257.

[19] McLaren, p. 341.

> It was difficult to connect any longer. That was the big problem. Not only with this new generation ... but with his own context in a pattern of generations. The tendency was to hang things on separate pegs of sentiment or nostalgia or memory, a series of makeshift racks ... (ACC p. 15)

Like Richard Mahony, Meredith is by nature a seeker; like Mahony, too, he seeks both security and safety on the one hand, and adventure and excitement - 'what is unorthodox and unstable' (CSN p. 14) - on the other. His desire for the latter is what causes him to find himself on a Greek island, surrounded by unbelievable beauty and caught up in the throes of political upheaval, marital discord and earthquakes; his need for the former eventually propels him back to Australia; and in the last volume of the trilogy his quest becomes a voyage back into the past, a search for understanding of what these conflicting desires and their consequences have made of his life.

The image of Meredith as a seeker is established in My Brother Jack by Gavin Turley, whose sardonically sympathetic observations are subsequently shown to be prophetic:

> '... In a way, David, you are like some queer, strange savage who has journeyed a long way from his own tangled wilderness, and you look down on the palisades of the little settlement, and you wonder how you will pillage it and what trophies you will find ... you will have to go on and on in your own strange solitary way, too far from your own wilderness to ever go back to it, beating and bashing and cheating and striving towards some goal, which up to now, I swear, you have never yet glimpsed!' (MBJ pp. 248-49)

Turley is right; Meredith is never quite sure what it is that he is looking for, as he tells Archie Calverton: 'I wouldn't know ... I've never been able to find out what it is all about' (CSN p. 190). Generally speaking, he is searching, with Cressida, for some paradoxical and unobtainable combination of freedom and safety; but this goal reveals itself to be beyond his reach, and as the trilogy progresses his quest becomes a search for the way back, for, as Diana Brydon puts it, 'those indefinable values he feels he has lost'.[20] His return to Australia is as much symbolic as practical:

> ... the years of the long journey had tired him and he saw Australia as rest and sanctuary, even as a kind of return to the womb. He saw it, too, as a grail for the others, for Cressida and their two children. (ACC p. 74)

But his apprehensiveness about what he might find in Australia proves to be justified; the place frightens him, and the journey back to his native land develops into a journey back into the past as he establishes a home whose chief virtue in his eyes is its resemblance to the home of his childhood:

> The house with all it contained was gradually being screened off, that was the main thing ... It was growing into the kind of place he remembered from his childhood ... a secretive left-alone world filled with unnumberable heedless and mysterious activities. (ACC p. 13)

As this last novel progresses, however, Meredith begins to see his quest less in personal terms and more as a part of the quest of all humanity; A.E. Goodwin sees the philosophical preoccupations of the trilogy as progressing from 'the search for self-understanding' in My Brother Jack to 'the quest for ultimate truth and the meaning of life'[21] in A Cartload of Clay. Similarly, Meredith's own return journeys, first to his native land and then to the values of his childhood, are finally pictured as a part of the collective journey of the human spirit, back in search of the lost Eden:

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[20] Brydon, p. 281.

> The eternal will-o'-the-wisp, thought Meredith ... the unending dream of men ... of finding the way back, or to, a good compassionate world that lay beyond the reach of greed and violence and tyranny and ambition. (ACC p. 34)

The image of the journey dominates both For Love Alone and the My Brother Jack trilogy; in both works, the progress toward maturity and enlightenment is represented as a journey through life. Place becomes a metaphor for time; and the experience of expatriation, with the journey as its focal point, becomes an image of life as a whole. These are the terms in which Teresa Hawkins visualises her own life, near the end of For Love Alone:

> ... it came to her, that she had reached the gates of the world of Girton and Quick, and that it was towards them that she was only now journeying, and in a direction unguessed by them; and it was towards them and in this undreamed direction that she had been travelling all her life, and would travel, farther, without them ... (FLA p. 494)

David Meredith, with his own travels fresh in his imagination, sees life in the same kind of way:

> Life, after all, was no more than a journey,

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[21] Goodwin, p. 144.

> just a journey, a movement from point A to point B, or X or Z, whatever was worked out, no more than a walk along a street ... Or a voyage. (ACC p. 65)

In For Love Alone, Teresa first uses this metaphor in an early conversation with Jonathan:

> 'If you think my life is real to me - it's only a passage,' she cried rudely.
> 'To?' ...
> 'To our secret desires,' she said huskily. 'To Cytherea, perhaps ...' (FLA p. 192)

The 'voyage to Cytherea', Teresa's search for love, encompasses all of her experiences in the novel; her patchwork theorising and overripe fantasies about love, her singleminded dedication to the pursuit of Jonathan, her actual journey and her subsequent enlightening experiences in England are all part of her progress toward her goal. Joan Lidoff, in her discussion of this novel, links the universal ritual of 'adolescent awakening' with the idea of a journey through life of which The Odyssey is the archetype, a combination which suggests a quite valid if somewhat disconcerting image of Teresa as a kind of cross between Ulysses and Huckleberry Finn:

> This novel of adolescent awakening is in many ways a typical hero journey (though this hero is atypically a woman), in which the adolescent seeker rejects all constraints of tradition to undertake a literal and psychological odyssey of independence.[22]

This metaphorical journey, however, is mirrored in several separate account of actual journeys in the novel;

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[22] Joan Lidoff, "Home is Where the Heart Is: The Fiction of Christina Stead," Southerly, 38 (1978), 369.

her abortive trip to Harper's Ferry, the account of the exhausting trek between home and work while she is saving, her trip to the deserted sawmill in England with Jonathan, her railway journey with Girton, all mark various stages of her larger quest. When she boards the train for Narara on her way to Harper's Ferry, where she has never been before, she is incoherent about both her motives and her plans; but she sees her action as a desperate bid for freedom, a cutting of the ties that threaten to bind her to old-maidenhood, obscurity and isolation. This journey has great significance for her, as it is the first decisive action in her quest for freedom; she is exhilarated by the fact that it actually makes her feel free:

> ... chains evaporate as soon as you try to throw them off ... Chains do not exist, they are illusions ... She did not know where she was going; she was outward bound. This first train journey was only the first stride on a grand perilous journey. All the other people in the train now seemed to her buried in strange debris, not really alive as she was, as her excitement increased. (FLA p. 137)[23]

While she is saving, the route between home and work which she covers twice a day becomes for her another part of her larger journey: '... in some way the endless walking, walking, meant England. She was walking her way to England' (FLA p. 278). Michael Wilding is critical of the passage which describes this trek, with its details and landmarks of Sydney; but in claiming that this 'boring' passage serves no purpose but to display 'a provincial lack of proportion',[24] Wilding seems to be missing the point. Stead's enumeration of the stages of Teresa's walk to work not only serves to emphasise her sheer exhaustion - only tired walkers set up a series of intermediate goals along the way - but also evokes this walk as a gruelling journey in itself, and shows up by comparison the sheer magnitude of her larger journey and the task she has set herself.

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[23] Harper's Ferry - which, significantly, Teresa does not reach on this first short journey - is a name associated with freedom. It is actually a town in West Virginia, the site of the federal arsenal which American abolitionist John Brown attacked and seized with eighteen followers in 1859 in a glorious but misguided attempt to free the slaves by violence. He failed.

Her trip to the deserted sawmill beyond Rickmansworth with Jonathan marks another stage in her quest. In pursuing Jonathan she is seeking love but thwarting her own desire for freedom; she has made herself his slave, and it is only on this expedition, where Jonathan's behaviour is even more appalling than usual, that she comes to see him clearly and to feel that they are finally free of each other:

> Teresa, looking at him, released him from her will; it happened suddenly. The harness of years dropped off, eaten through; she dropped her eyes, thought: 'How stupid he is! How dull!' (FLA p. 408)

This episode is in marked contrast to her railway journey to Oxford with Harry Girton near the end of the novel. Like the Jonathan expedition, this later journey is a passage to freedom; this time, however, Teresa's freedom is gained not through a denial, but through an affirmation, of love. It is, too, another 'voyage of discovery'; James Quick, left behind, pictures the actual train journey as a progression toward a new stage in Teresa's life:

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[24] Michael Wilding, "Christina Stead's Australian Novels," Southerly, 27 (1967), 21.

> Thus he imagined the train rushing out of London into the clear, spring countryside ... the wide, undulating fields, knotted together by copses and the whole silent countryside of England spread out beneath them, while these two, fated, marked out for each other, sped on and found out the truth about each other ... (FLA pp. 484-85)

Her final journey, the trip back from Oxford to London and James, brings her to the threshold of the world towards which she has been striving, the shores of her Cytherea. In going to Oxford, and then in returning, she has both affirmed her freedom and confirmed her love for James; she now knows that it is possible to live on her own terms in the world, and this for her is paradise. The claim made by the painter Tom Kiernan in Clean Straw For Nothing - '... we haven't lost Paradise, it's still the terms on which we live and work on this earth' (CSN p. 63) - is perhaps more applicable to Teresa than to anyone in Johnston's trilogy; for her, this new discovery is tantamount to a rebirth:

> She suddenly understood that there was something beyond misery, and that at present she had merely fought through that bristling black and sterile plain of misery and that beyond was the real world, red, gold, green, white ... it was from the womb of time that she was fighting her way and the first day lay before her ... All on this fabulous railway journey seemed divine, easy and clear, as if she had a passport to paradise. (FLA p. 494)

With the exception of the trek back and forth between home and work in the first half of the novel, each of these short journeys becomes a rite of passage; each marks a new stage in her psychological development. It is as if she must get to a new, different place - the Narara Valley, Rickmansworth, Oxford - in order to make new discoveries about herself, to shift her perspective and effect changes in the pattern of her thinking. This constant change is seen as an ongoing process; as the book ends, Teresa's real life is only just beginning. Perhaps the most important symbol in the book is the white flower which Teresa sees floating down the river from the window of the room she shares with Girton in Oxford; this flower, its 'genius of life' (FLA p. 489), its movement and its unknown destination, all symbolise for Teresa the pattern of her own life to come; her life will continue to be a voyage, going with, as Brian Kiernan puts it, 'the flow of experience'.

In comparing Teresa with Richard Mahony and with Richardson's other tragic hero, Maurice Guest, Diana Brydon observes that

> Her odyssey is the comic counterpart of their tragic wanderings. Where they seek peace, she seeks growth. Where they seek a home, she is always seeking new territory and greater freedoms.[25]

The novel is open-ended; there is no doubt that Teresa will continue to seek 'new territory and greater freedoms'. The ambiguity of the novel's ending - 'What's there to stop it?' - reinforces this idea of Teresa's future life as a continuation of her past voyagings; her visions of the future are consistent with her dreams in the past, as R.G. Geering points out:

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[25] Brydon, p. 129.

> Christina Stead's concern is with the truth, not to fob the reader off with a romantic, happy-ever-after ending. Teresa's restlessness, her sense of awakened powers, emotional and intellectual, and her desire for freedom are much more in keeping with the rebellious, idealizing young woman of the early chapters than a passive and contented wife would be.[26]

For Love Alone ends, significantly, in the middle of yet another journey, this time merely a walk along a street; even on this particular evening, Teresa and Quick are outward bound, 'on the razzle-dazzle' (FLA p. 500), their destination unknown. Both here and in the last volume of the My Brother Jack trilogy, the simple walk along a street becomes the encapsulation of all experience, an image encompassing not only larger, grander voyages from country to country, but the progress of the mind and spirit through the whole of life. For David Meredith, aging, very sick and very sad, the 'practice walk' down Inkerman Street in A Cartload of Clay is as much of an ordeal as even the worst periods of his life have been; as he progresses down the street this last journey becomes a spiritual ordeal as well as a bodily one as he tries to weave all the threads of his past life into some finished fabric of understanding.

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[26] Geering (Twayne), p. 118.

The image of the journey dominates not only A Cartload of Clay, where the symbolic walk down Inkerman Street determines the entire structure of the novel, and Clean Straw For Nothing which covers the years of the Merediths' travels back and forth between Australia, England and Greece, but also, more subtly, My Brother Jack. As they are for Teresa Hawkins, the stages of Meredith's quest in this first novel are marked by actual journeys, most importantly the chaotic world tour as a war correspondent which brings him to the realisation that he is and always has been different from his family and his countrymen and that he is, despite the fact that Beverly Grove is still his nominal home, becoming a true expatriate. A.E. Goodwin observes that in this novel there are two other 'apparently aimless journeys', mere walks around Melbourne, which culminate in moments of illumination:

> On his return from overseas, he is walking aimlessly through the streets of Melbourne. This journey ... is not unlike his wanderings among the wharves. It was there that he first apprehended beauty, and now, on his third voyage, he encounters Cressida Morley again.[27]

The idea of life itself as a journey emerges at the beginning of Clean Straw For Nothing and occurs with increasing frequency throughout the rest of the trilogy. Meredith is haunted by his memory of the Chinese exiles setting out from Szechwan:

> ... an immense and hardly believable spreading and scattering and trickling of Chinese moving on dubious destinies across a parched brown map. A

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[27] Goodwin, p. 145.

> million exiles setting out after nearly nine years of war to walk back to homes in distant provinces across a devastated land bigger again than my own country. (CSN p. 22)

This for Meredith becomes a symbol not only of his own life, but of everyone's; he says of Helen 'She has her journey in front of her now, out beyond the time of bravery and banners. As I have, too. All of us' (CSN p. 21). Later, married to Cressida and agonising over her infidelity, he defines the extent of his commitment to her in terms of the same metaphor; their life together is, for him, a single journey, a joint progression through time:

> ... why then had he not been able to forgive? To forgive and forget and go on with the journey? Because, as he saw very clearly tonight, if he could not forgive then they would be united by nothing much more than time and things shared, they would become components in a journey rather than the validity of the journey, less people than points between spaces. (CSN p. 286)

Meredith finally comes to the bleak realisation that the voyage has no end; that not only is there no going back, but there is no goal, no final resting-place short of death. Unlike Richard Mahony, Meredith clearly has no hopes of anything beyond death; life is 'The walk through the sunlight before the darkness of abandoned beaches' (ACC p. 73). If Paradise is to be found it is to be found in this life; he believes, indeed, that he and Cressida have found it once, briefly, on the beach at Lebanon Bay. The point of the voyage, he concludes, is not to arrive somewhere but simply to keep going; A.E. Goodwin observes of the structure of the trilogy that

> The pattern that emerges ... is simply the continuity of the fragments that constitute life

> regardless of the substantive nature of those fragments. The presentation of Meredith as an Odysseus, and the emphasis on kaleidescopic fragments in Clean Straw For Nothing and A Cartload of Clay provide evidence for the interpretation that the trilogy is a search for a pattern. But the final paradox remains - the search itself is the only pattern there is.[28]

Meredith's similarly paradoxical conclusion is that the voyage itself is the only goal there is. Years earlier, Cressida has tried to tell him this; when he is about to fly home to Australia from Greece, she gives him a volume of C.P. Cavafy's poetry with lines from Cavafy's "Ithaca" transcribed on the fly-leaf:

> Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.
> Without her you would never have taken the road.
> But she has nothing more to give you.
> (CSN p. 312)

What Johnston's trilogy has most clearly in common with the work of Richardson, Stead and Boyd is its underlying theme of movement and search. Their main characters are not simply expatriates, but, like Ulysses, adventurers, wanderers and pilgrims by nature. They are initially propelled out into the world by the fact that the geographical remoteness and social and cultural insularity of Australia fail to provide either the freedom promised by the surrounding sea, the richness of experience they desire, or the peace and security of a true home; but the psychological maturity and spiritual harmony they seek are not to be found on any map. Their physical travels reflect quests of the spirit and the imagination; the things they seek can only be gained through experience of life, as the final lines of Cavafy's "Ithaca", transcribed by Johnston's Cressida, reveal:

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[28] Goodwin, p. 151.

> And if you find her poor,
> Ithaca has not defrauded you.
> With all the great wisdom you have gained,
> With so much experience,
> You must surely have understood by then what
> Ithacas mean.

Section Three:

The Novels of Patrick White

CHAPTER SEVEN: PLACE AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

In all the novels of Patrick White, it is possible to trace the connections between narrative structure and locality, and between locality and theme. White uses place both as a determinant of action and as a mirror of human experience; the clearest example of this is The Aunt's Story, whose tripartite structure is basically, and clearly, a matter of location. Theodora's whereabouts at various stages of the book not only reflect, but to some extent determine, her states of mind at each stage of her journey; the same pattern emerges in The Twyborn Affair, in which Eddie Twyborn's three different identities are assumed according to locality and circumstance in three different countries. Like Theodora, the main characters in Voss and A Fringe of Leaves are travellers at the mercy of their surroundings, which therefore shape and dictate their experience. There are also structural similarities, based on locality, between The Tree of Man and The Solid Mandala - in which the central relationships are contained and defined by the house in which each set of characters lives - and between Riders in the Chariot and The Eye of the Storm, in which the convergence of the central characters in one place is the point at which the action of each novel begins to move toward its climax.

The first of White's eleven novels, Happy Valley, is the one in which the connection between place and structure is, or ought to be, most simple and direct. The novel is about the complications and suffering involved in human relationships, and human relationships are perhaps at their most complicated and painful in the Australian country towns of which Happy Valley is an example. Happy Valley is an isolated prison in which there is no escaping the rest of the population, and the increasingly complex relationships between various members of it which constitute the novel's plot are circumscribed and enclosed within the confines of the town itself. White's intentions in this novel are clear; it is meant to convey the 'unhealthy subterranean intensity' (p. 91) of human emotions in a small isolated community. Unfortunately almost none of the important relationships portrayed in the novel are deeply felt, fully realised or wholly convincing, with the exception of the seamy liaison between Clem Hagan and Vic Moriarty; in his account of this doomed dalliance White manages to be simultaneously cruel, comic and moving. But for the most part, White's failure to evoke the intensity he claims for his characters, or to connect convincingly what genuine intensity of feeling there is in the novel with the tight solitude of the community, makes the novel seem mechanical and artificial; the dependence of structure on place, more deliberate and overt in this novel than in any of his later work, nevertheless remains more theoretical than actual.

The Living and the Dead also deals with relationships within a confined space, this time more successfully. Most of the events in the novel take place inside the house at 89 Ebury Street, in more than one sense; the bulk of the narrative is contained within the confines of a single episode, the last chapter a reiteration and continuation of the first.

On Elyot Standish's return to the empty house from Victoria Station, the objects in the house begin to be equated with the furniture of his own mind and memory. The events related between the first and last chapters are not all within reach of his memory - White, not Elyot, is the narrator here - but it is as though Elyot's presence in the house on this particular rainy night has the effect of bringing the past to life. The whole history of the Standish family is contained within the house; and it is Elyot's recognition of his own relation to it, and to the past, which heralds the chronological transition at the end of the first chapter: 'Alone, he was yet not alone, uniting as he did the themes of so many other lives' (p. 18).

Elyot is the 'dead' of the title, as the subsequent narrative reveals; he has grown up into the embodiment of intellectual sterility, characterised chiefly by expressions, facial and verbal, of detachment and distaste. But his return to Ebury Street from the station has a cathartic effect of regeneration; the absence of Julia Fallon, the death of his mother and the departure of his sister Eden leave the house empty of all but the ghosts of the living, and it falls to him to revive and sustain the life-affirming spirit which these three women have shared:

> Even that emotional life he had not experienced himself, but sensed, seemed somehow to have grown explicit. It was as if this emanated from the walls to find interpretation and shelter in his mind. (p. 17)

In thus absorbing 'that emotional life' into his own consciousness, in sustaining it beyond the death of his mother and the departure of his sister, Elyot is in turn regenerated; himself a shelter, he no longer needs the shelter of the house, the protective wall between himself and the rest of humanity. His recognition of this at the end of the novel pushes him out of the house and down into the street, to take whatever unknown direction life might offer him.

The house, the focal point in the narrative, is the medium through which this mutual regeneration occurs. It has absorbed the lives of Catherine and Eden and Julia; its atmosphere and contents prompt Elyot to recall and interpret those events and their meaning. All that is implicit in the house when Elyot first re-enters it is recounted in the following chapters; in the final chapter it is this past life that he draws into himself. When he goes down into the street he takes with him the life of the house, its intangible but most important contents; it has served its purpose and at the end of the novel is left, as are so many of White's houses, like a husk from which the kernel of life has been removed.

The three sections of The Aunt's Story, set in Australia, Europe and America respectively, define the three stages of Theodora Goodman's self-discovery. In order to achieve victory over 'the great monster Self' (p. 134) she must first discover what it is, and this process is broken up by her travels into three phases.

Part I is an account of the life which has shaped the odd, but still quite sane, 'woman of fifty, or not yet ... this thing a spinster which, at best, becomes that institution an aunt' (p. 12), to whom the reader is introduced in the opening pages of the novel. Theodora's life in Australia has been one in which the ties of love and duty have kept her bound to place and family; her self is defined by its relation to something else, first Meroë, afterwards to her mother and the rest of her family. She is a sister, a daughter, a spinster and an aunt, all titles which define her relation to family and society rather than her separate self; she has been locked into this conception of a self which exists chiefly in relation to other people for so long that her sense of identity is temporarily shattered by her mother's death, and only restored by contact with Fanny's children:

> Since her mother's death, she could not say with conviction: I am I. But the touch of hands restores the lost identity. The children would ratify her freedom. (p. 13)

The death of her mother, with which the novel opens, frees her from the kind of life she has led for fifty years; although her life to date has been one of loneliness and isolation, because she both rejects and is rejected by the values which surround her, it is only after the death of her mother that she gains physical as well as psychological solitude and freedom.

She exercises this new-found freedom by leaving Australia and journeying to the South of France, where the disintegrating, lunatic Europe of the late 1930's, embodied in the innocuous-looking Hôtel du Midi, both reinforces and reflects her increasingly fragmented sense of reality. No longer able to distinguish clearly the dividing line between 'self' and 'otherness', she projects her own identity into the the minds and lives of the hotel's other guests, a rag-bag collection of unofficial refugees from all over hectic pre-war Europe:

> Throughout the gothic shell of Europe, in which there had never been such a buying and selling, of semi-precious aspirations, bulls' blood, and stuffed doves, the stone arches cracked, the aching wilderness, in which the ghosts of Homer and St. Paul and Tolstoy waited for the crash. (pp. 145-46)

Theodora's own crash comes in Part III, in America, where the total collapse of her sanity leaves her in a state of pure being - an apparent paradox which is illuminated by the epigraph, from Olive Schreiner, to this section: 'When your life is most real, to me you are mad'. It is a state in which things, people and places no longer matter:

> In her hand she still held, she realised, the practical handbag, that last link with the external Theodora Goodman ... There were ... the strips and sheaves of tickets, railroad and

> steamship, which Theodora Goodman had bought in New York for the purpose of prolonging herself through many fresh phases of what was accepted as Theodora Goodman. Now she took these and tore them into small pieces which fell frivolously at the side of the road. (p. 274)

In this last section she reaches a stage of existence which Mary Hare, in Riders in the Chariot, anticipates when she supposes that 'Eventually I shall discover what is at the centre, if enough of me is peeled away' (p. 52). William Walsh observes that

> Theodora, disordered and insane, is utterly herself, and that self, from which all the elements of conventional identity have been abolished ... is in immediate touch with the world of being itself.[1]

While still on the train, Theodora sees herself as a dark mistake in the pattern of landscape:

> In the bland corn song, in the theme of days, Theodora Goodman was a discord. Those mouths which attempted her black note rejected it wryly. (p. 270)

This, however, is while she is still travelling, still making her illusory progress towards 'home'; by the time the Johnsons and the doctor come to take her away to an institution, she has abandoned all connections with the external world. Now, just as the hysteria of Europe is reflected in the 'myriad fragments' (p. 139) of Theodora's disintegrating perceptions in Part II, so the practical, straightforward, luminous landscape of Part III is in harmony with the simple lucidity of this third and final stage of her self-realisation. The inevitable impersonality and anonymity of the place for which she is bound make it an ideal destination for the person she has become, her 'great monster Self' effectively destroyed.

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[1] William Walsh, Patrick White's Fiction (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1977), p. 29.

The scene in the garden near the end of The Tree of Man, in which Stan Parker is represented as the centre of a series of ever-widening concentric circles, summarises the whole pattern of the novel. In the opening scene, it is his presence which first gives form and focus to the shapeless bush; he becomes the centre of it, inside the circle of firelight:

> All around, the bush was disappearing. In that light of late evening, under the white sky, the black limbs of trees, the black and brooding scrub, were being folded into one. Only the fire held out. And inside the circle of its light the man's face was unconcerned ... (p. 10)

He creates a place, a particular place, merely by being there, and by establishing a rhythm of the elementary human routines of working, eating and sleeping; his fire is the very beginning of the circle of settlement and community which steadily widens around him in the course of the novel. As William Walsh points out,

> The land, by the intervention of man, becomes a place; the place supports the family; the family encourages a community.[2]

Stan builds a house and brings a wife home to it, neighbours arrive, children are born, the district acquires a name and a post office, and eventually the 'brick homes' which crop up like some insidious fungal growth in so many of White's landscapes begin to take possession of the district.

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[2] Walsh, p. 32.

Through all of this, Stan's life is firmly fixed on the place he has created, and his whole experience revolves around it; he willingly undergoes the ordeals of flood, fire and drought in order to protect and preserve it, because it is the core of permanence, and for it to be abandoned or destroyed would be unthinkable. In the course of the novel he is disappointed by his children and betrayed by his wife; it is his place, not his family, to which he turns and returns for reassurance, and with which he becomes more and more closely identified:

> He was inseparable from the district, he had become a place name ... Stan Parker went about the place on which he had led his life, by which he was consumed really. This is my life, he would have said ... (p. 295)

The world of the novel radiates outward from the central, single entity which Stan Parker and his home have become, and the scene in the garden just before his death is a confirmation of this; the whole of the visible landscape is 'circumference to the centre' (p. 474), and the centre is Stan himself.

Voss involves two different, simultaneous locations; throughout the account of Voss's expedition into the interior, the scene repeatedly shifts back to the Bonners' house on the outskirts of Sydney. The reader is kept in touch with two worlds at once; Voss and Laura, civilization and wilderness, the ordinary and the extraordinary are explored alternately throughout the novel in a way which not only invites comparison and contrast, but which suggests the possibility of eventual reconciliation. Voss and Laura are united in hallucination and dream if not in fact; Laura, during Rose Portion's funeral, realises for the first time that even those who live in colonial domesticity on the settled fringes of the continent might eventually come to belong truly to the landscape.

Duality, then, is the underlying structural principle of the novel, and one which is most clearly illustrated by place. The contrasts not only between the genteel, civilized town life exemplified by the Bonners' house and the uncompromising, unaccommodating wildness of the interior, but also between paradisal Rhine Towers and infernal Jildra, are echoes of the divided natures both of the country itself and of the man who wishes to know it by heart.

But it is the theme of reconciliation and union which both defines this duality and encompasses it within a larger unity; the union of Voss and Laura, of civilization and wilderness, of man and landscape, of man and God, are all important considerations in the novel. The idea of such reconciliation is repeatedly suggested in terms of place, even in such incidental passages as the description of the Bonners' garden:

> As a house it was not so much magnificent as eminently suitable, and sometimes, by pure chance, even appeared imaginative, in spite of the plethora of formal, shiny shrubs, the laurels,

> for instance, and the camellias that Uncle had planted in the beginning. The science of horticulture had failed to exorcise the spirit of the place. The wands and fronds of native things intruded still, paperbarks and various gums, of mysterious hot scents, and attentive silences: shadowy trees that, paradoxically, enticed the eyes away from an excess of substance. (pp. 155-56)

At one point the shift in setting between the Bonners' house and the desert is effected by means of combining the two places to become one landscape in Laura's heightened, hallucinatory vision, while simultaneously re-establishing her telepathic companionship with Voss:

> Once in the night, Laura Trevelyan, who was struggling to control the sheets, pulled herself up and forward, leaning over too far, with the natural result that she was struck in the face when the horse threw up his head. She did not think she could bear the pain ... So the party rode down the terrible basalt stairs of the Bonners' deserted house, and onward. Sometimes the horses' hooves would strike sparks from the outcrops of jagged rock. (p. 358)

Even the connections between the physical world and the incorporeal are established in terms of place; while the expeditionary party is camped in a spot recently enriched by heavy rain, the appearance of innumerable butterflies transforms the surroundings into what Voss and Palfreyman subsequently refer to as paradise:

> Over all this scene, which was more a shimmer than the architecture of landscape, palpitated extraordinary butterflies. Nothing had been seen yet to compare with their colours, opening and closing, opening and closing. Indeed, by the addition of this pair of hinges, the world of semblance communicated with the world of dream. (p. 259)

Laura, too, uses the imagery of place to connect the physical and the metaphysical when, near the end of the novel, her indirect reference to Voss's experience provides a metaphor for her own:

> '... Knowledge was never a matter of geography. Quite the reverse, it overflows all maps that exist. Perhaps true knowledge only comes of death by torture in the country of the mind.' (p. 446)

This multi-faceted pattern of duality and reconciliation is established and sustained throughout the novel by the structure of the narrative itself. William Walsh observes that

> In the second phase of the novel two lines of narrative are sustained. In one, the expedition is conducted through more and more difficult, and finally brutal, country towards its disastrous end; in the other the relationship of Voss and Laura is developed in a series of meditations and (unreceived) letters. The two worlds of actuality and possibility are kept in touch and the latter, it is suggested, offers in the end a possibility of salvation to the former.[3]

Not only are 'the two worlds of actuality and possibility' kept in touch, but also the two physical world of settled, urban Sydney and the unexplored, unknown desert. The shifts in setting back and forth between the Bonners' cushioned house and the bare, crystalline interior through which the expedition is travelling serve not only to trace the progress of Voss's relationship with Laura, but to establish the contrast between two places which are, as much as anything else, the physical manifestations of two different states of being. Sydney embodies the visible, outer life of humanity, defined by and devoted to social codes, the forms of organised religion, and the development of material prosperity; the interior, as James McAuley points out, is

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[3] Walsh, p. 45.

> ... a symbolic region, a way of picturing an inner world that urban man, too, enters if he has the courage and metaphysical depth to explore his selfhood and his relation to God.[4]

The two worlds are united in Laura. She 'huddles', as Voss so uncompromisingly points out, on the settled fringe of the continent, and never penetrates its interior except in the telepathic visions she shares with Voss. But she is saved from the domestic mediocrity of the society in which she moves - and of which she is a part; for all their lack of spiritual awareness, the Bonners at least are her protectors and benefactors - by her ability and desire to explore this inner world, represented by the desert through which Voss moves in fact. In the light of what they represent, city and desert stand in the same relation to each other as Walsh's 'two worlds of actuality and possibility'; again, the latter offers a possibility of salvation to the former, and perhaps this is why the urban society which is incapable of understanding or accepting Voss as a man at the beginning of the novel is eager to celebrate him as a myth by the end.

'Sydney or the Bush', if considered as a pair of purely geographical alternatives, is therefore a 'too-simple contrast' on which to base an interpretation of

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[4] James McAuley, "The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White's Voss" (1965); rpt. in Ten Essays on Patrick White, ed. Wilkes, p. 36.

Voss, as McAuley, in the same essay, justly points out (p. 36). But considered in the light of their symbolic function - the representation of the inner and outer lives of humanity - as well as in the light of their actual physical characteristics and contrasts, the two places provide the foundations for the architecture of the novel. As landscapes, they are antithetical; but as symbols they are reconcilable, and the possibility of their co-existence is personified in Laura. Thus the novel's two settings, and the significance with which they are invested, establish the framework for the pattern of duality and subsequent resolution around which *Voss* is organised.

In *Riders in the Chariot*, the narrative is structured around the convergence of the four main characters on the suburb of Sarsaparilla. The life histories of Miss Hare, Himmelfarb, Mrs. Godbold and Alf Dubbo are told in turn, and appear as a series of digressions which then move steadily back towards the mainstream of the narrative. This deals with current events in Sarsaparilla, and traces, in between the biographical interventions, the gradual development of the gentle, intuitive, sometimes wordless relationships between various members of the quaternity in the course of the novel.

In *Patrick White's Fiction*, William Walsh claims that White brings these four characters together in order to establish

> ... the central theme of the novel - the existence of a party of goodness and being, and

> the singular and profound and secret unity which binds its members together. (p. 61)

It is less easy to understand why they should be brought together in so unlikely a place as Sarsaparilla. The readiest answer is of course that the place provides a background, not so much of evil as of a kind of vacuous non-goodness - although some of its residents, notably Mrs. Flack, are actively destructive - against which the absolute goodness of the four main characters might be measured. This is borne out in the climactic scene of the novel where the conflict between the 'party of goodness' and the novel's more destructive characters culminates in the mock-crucifixion of Himmelfarb.

On the other hand, although no-one would deny that Australian suburbia has its infernal aspects, or that White seems to be more aware of them than most, it seems to me that Sarsaparilla is not so much a suburban manifestation of evil as a kind of Everyplace, noted for absolutely nothing except its remarkable resemblance to any other small community. Certainly the more unpleasant characters seem to represent the local consciousness, and White's insistence on the repellent appearance and demeanour of, for instance, the staff of Rosetree's factory is sometimes over-indulgent to the point of tediousness. But both Mrs. Godbold and Mary Hare are long-standing residents of Sarsaparilla, as much a part of the place as any of its less attractive inhabitants; and there is nothing evil or destructive about the postmistress Mrs. Sugden, or the local constable, or Bob Tanner, or even the superannuated whore Mollie Khalil, whose cats are at least fed. It might be argued that Sarsaparilla is an appropriate arena for the conflict which takes place there because of its very ordinariness; it has no character, no history and no associations, which certainly makes it unpleasant enough in its own right. But perhaps White is saying that the empty sterility of the place, although it can easily degenerate into actively destructive evil, might also be redeemed by goodness; Himmelfarb is crucified, after all. And in the end, Mrs. Jolley and Mrs. Flack only destroy each other; the novel ends not with them but with Mrs. Godbold, on a serene note of continuity and hope.

Either way, the nature of Sarsaparilla is an essential factor in the events which take place there; and the narrative is organised in such a way that the place is the focal point of the novel's form as well as of its content.

The Solid Mandala is divided into four parts; the two central sections, which constitute almost all the novel, deal with the family history of the Browns, told first from Waldo's viewpoint, then from Arthur's. Parts I and IV, both brief, enclose the central sections within a contemporary social context; the disintegrating Brown residence is seen from the outside, in its half-rural half-suburban setting, where the 'clotted paddocks of Terminus Road' (p. 30) are beginning to make way for the likes of the Speedex Service Station. Parts II and III reveal the lives which have been led inside the Browns' weatherboard walls, where Arthur and Waldo's relationship as both twins and opposites has been knotting them more tightly and painfully together for decades.

This 'weatherboard home built with a veranda sort of rising to a peak' (p. 15) is the box which contains the simultaneously fragile and inescapable relationship between Arthur and Waldo from their early childhood until Waldo's death from old age and spite. There are repeated suggestions in the novel that the brothers are fated to the house as well as to each other; even before it is built, Arthur senses that the Brown family is about to become, irrevocably, a part of the landscape:

> Mr. Allwright, who didn't say much, drove them in the buggy, and pointed out to Mother the convenience of their road. It was already theirs. It was already called Terminus, because of being close to the station, practically planned, in fact, for Dad. (p. 222)

By the time the Brown parents have died and the brothers themselves have reached middle age, both of them have realised that it is the house itself which defines and maintains their relationship; Arthur thinks of Waldo in the context of the house they share:

> ... there were days, whole weeks, Arthur couldn't help feeling, when he remained congealed, possessed by Terminus Road, and Waldo ... Their life was led down Terminus Road. Of course they went to their jobs, they had been so regulated they couldn't have helped going. But their actual life was the one which continued knotting itself behind the classical weatherboard facade. (p. 282)

Waldo, too, feels that his home and his brother are both inextricable and inescapable:

> So he returned to the house in which they lived, and Arthur was standing, beyond avoiding, in the doorway, waiting for him. (p. 208)

Not only does the house bind Arthur and Waldo together; it also separates the outer world of Sarsaparilla from the home-life in which the twins are as helplessly bound together as they were in the womb. Their outer lives are led separately, except on the memorable day when Waldo discovers Arthur in the Public Library; Waldo's betrayal and rejection of the relationship on that occasion force Arthur to realise that he has failed to enlighten and save his brother, and that Waldo is permanently trapped and blinkered by his own negativity and sterility.

This episode emphasises and reinforces the division between the brothers; only when they are both enclosed by the walls of their house do they become the two halves of a unit, and lead a life in common. Admittedly they both fall in love, after a fashion, with the same woman; but they do it so differently that Dulcie might be two different people. Waldo's 'love' is no more than a kind of literary conceit, and an inadequate, misguided one at that; he spends the rest of his life resenting Dulcie for the involuntary damage she does to his pride. The twins' feelings for Dulcie are so different in kind that they are set further apart rather than brought closer together by her; the love-triangle to which Arthur dedicates the second corner of his mandala dance for Mrs. Poulter does not include Waldo.

Their relationships with other people in the outside world reflect the way they deal with each other in their private life down Terminus Road. Waldo's dealings with almost everybody are blighted by negativity and the kind of scorn which has its basis in fear; the egocentricity and the talent for hatred which manifest themselves most strongly in his treatment of Arthur prevent him from attaining any real sympathy with anyone. He avoids any kind of intimacy with his colleagues in the Library; he is inwardly disdainful about his friend Walter Pugh; his attempt to make a friend of Bill Poulter is a hopelessly misguided failure from the outset. Arthur, on the other hand, is loving and life-affirming; he loves the Saporta family for its faith and fecundity, and Mrs. Poulter for her simple, ordinary goodness; and he never stops trying to love and help Waldo, even in the face of his brother's abuse, rejection and betrayal.

But as Arthur and Waldo age, particularly after they retire, they become more remote from the outer world, and the simultaneously protective and imprisoning circle of the house begins to tighten around them, squashing their thoughts and memories into an increasingly smaller space; it takes the death of Waldo to release them both from the house and from each other:

> Then Arthur went stampeding through the house in which their lives, or life, had been lived until the end. It was a wonder the cries torn out of him didn't bring the structure down. Before he

> slammed a door on the shocked faces of dogs. (p. 294)

In reference to the climactic point not only of _The Solid Mandala_ but of most of White's novels, Peter Beatson, in _The Eye in the Mandala_, uses an analogy which illustrates the extent to which Arthur and Waldo's natures, both complementary and antithetical, are bound together by the house in which they live:

> The soul, it emerges at the end, has only been 'wearing' the body; it is not completely identified with it. The same is true of the house and its owner ... And in the end the house must split open like a shell to release its occupant into the realm of Being which has already been glimpsed through the cracks in the walls ... Waldo, the lower soul, dies in the house, but Arthur, the higher soul, does not die the death of the body but flies from the house. (p. 156)

So the dilapidated walls of the house down Terminus Road form the dividing line between the two worlds of the novel, setting Arthur and Waldo's twin life apart from the everyday concerns of the community in which they live. For Arthur at least, it is the protective circle superimposing order, of a kind, on psychic chaos; as Arthur says of the world, it is another mandala.

Unlike that of most of White's novels, the chronological structure of _The Vivisector_ is simple; it is a straightforward linear narrative. _The Vivisector_ recounts the development of an artist's mind and vision; and, whereas White often uses fragmented chronology to illuminate character and events through the juxtaposition of past and present, the reader is presented in _The Vivisector_ with the spectacle of the artist's mind developing through a steady accumulation of knowledge and experience. The stages of Hurtle Duffield's growth are most clearly delineated by place; until he reaches his maturity as an artist he moves through a number of alarmingly dissimilar environments which initiate new phases of his own growth.

He is 'the product of a dirty deal between Cox Street and Sunningdale' (p. 351), an arrangement which both isolates and frees him from the affiliations and obligations of family and class, and furnishes him with the emotional detachment which later becomes an essential part of his artistic equipment. This aspect of his childhood - 'his early dislocation, when the Duffields sold and Mr. and Mrs. Courtney bought him' (p. 186) - equips him, too, with a knowledge of the extremes of life, which even as a child he translates into visual terms. During his transformation from Duffield to Courtney he is chiefly obsessed with two private visions: the blazing beauty of the chandelier at Sunningdale, and the horror of the suicide scene which he paints on his wall, a legacy from his defeated tutor Shewcroft and from Pa Duffield's friend the coalheaver who cut his own throat in Foveaux Street. The realisation of the co-existence of beauty and horror in human life is one of his earliest lessons as an artist.

After the war he spends a directionless year in Europe, but he discovers that Paris and its teachers hold no inspiration for him - 'It should have been very new and exciting, but he found that it wasn't what he wanted to do'

(p. 184) - and concludes that he needs 'to go home, to renew himself' (p. 184). Back in Australia, the squalor of city rooms and then the primitiveness of the house he builds at Ironstone are reflected in his explorations on canvas of the textures of flesh and rock; but the final sacrifice of Nance Lightfoot in the name of art marks the end of Ironstone and the last days of his apprenticeship.

After this, he buys the house in Flint Street to provide himself not so much with a place to live as with a breeding ground for his work; place ceases to be a source of inspiration - except for Chubb's Lane and its inhabitants - and becomes instead a means of protection and privacy for his own inner visions and their execution in paint. He realises the extent to which he has come to depend on his house only after Hero Pavloussi - another of his subjects, or victims - has persuaded him to accompany her on her pilgrimage to Perialos:

> In the air he huddled in his overcoat and longed for his abandoned house; nobody would coax him out of it again. In any case, after childhood, or at most, youth, experience breeds more fruitfully in a room. None of the forms which rose up to meet him as they glided down, none of the colours which should have drenched his senses, were as subtly convincing as those created out of himself. (p. 390)

His house becomes, and remains, an extension of himself, although not in the way that Mr. Bonner's house in Voss, or Norbert Hare's Xanadu, or Elizabeth Hunter's house in The Eye of the Storm, are self-extensions. The house as such is not important to him; the wiring and plumbing are faulty and the furniture dates from the previous owners. But it is his sphere of action, the scene of his creative life; when, near the end of the novel, he escapes from the ritual of the retrospective exhibition which he calls his 'funeral' (p. 624), his return to the house is an affirmation of his own life and of the life of his art:

> He succeeded in hailing a taxi somewhere near the cathedral, and was whirled home, into that silence where he had spent half a lifetime begetting, and giving birth. (p. 622)

The intricate structure of The Eye of the Storm is based on the image suggested by the title itself. Elizabeth Hunter's room in her house at Moreton Drive is the place around which the action of the novel revolves, and she herself, bedridden in the centre of her room, is the focal point of the novel. She is 'a flaw at the centre of this jewel of light' (p. 381) while resting with the birds in the eye of the storm on Brumby Island, the most crucial experience of her life and the most significant episode in the novel; she occupies a similarly central and solitary position within the narrative itself. Her room is the place on which the other characters converge, and from which her memories radiate; it contains not only her withering body but also her pervasive spirit, suggested by the recurrent image of the windblown curtain:

> When they went in, the room was practically filled with the billowing curtain ... The solicitor thought her body had shrunk since he was last with her; on the other hand her spirit seemed to billow around them more forcibly. (pp. 405-06)

There is a vital connection between the two levels of narrative not only sustained, but intricately interwoven, throughout the novel. The first, the comparatively objective and factual account of Elizabeth Hunter's final illness and death and the circumstances surrounding it, is interspersed with the more subjective and often only semi-coherent flashes of dream and memory which illuminate the minds of several of the characters, and which constitute a kind of substratum of narrative. The most coherent, possibly the longest, and certainly the most significant of these flashes is the reconstruction in Mrs. Hunter's mind of the events on Brumby Island some fifteen years earlier, and it becomes clear by degrees that the actual physical shape of her situation during the brief interlude when she finds herself in the eye of the storm sets the pattern around which the entire novel is constructed:

> ... she was no longer a body, least of all a woman: the myth of her womanhood had been exploded by the storm. She was instead a being, or more likely a flaw at the centre of this jewel of light; the jewel itself, blinding and tremulous at the same time, existed, flaw and all, only by grace; for the storm was still visibly spinning and boiling at a distance, in columns of cloud, its walls hung with vaporous balconies, continually shifting and distorted. (p. 381)

Bedridden in her room throughout the actual time-span of the novel, she is at the still centre of the storm of past memories and current events going on around her. Most of the recollections which constitute the second level of narrative are generated by incidents and conversations in her room, as are the plots and counter-plots hatched by

Basil, Dorothy, Mary de Santis, Flora Manhood and the unwilling Arnold Wyburd; past and present are interdependent not only in the sense that present events trigger past memories and associations, but also because these memories and associations shed a great deal of light on the way the characters deal with each other in the present. Dorothy, for instance, has her own recollections of the episode on Brumby Island, brought to the surface of her mind by a comment of her mother's; and she uses her memories of the past to justify her own behaviour in the present:

> Out of a haze of sentiment and tuberoses, she had conjured for you this solid land mass, or island of hate: its stinging sand, twisted tree-roots, and the brumbies snapping at one another with yellow teeth, lashing out with broken hooves as they stampeded along their invaded beach.
>
> Dorothy de Lascabanes did not have to remind herself she had never hated anyone so bitterly as she had hated their mother on their brief visit to Brumby Island. She should remember Elizabeth Hunter's treachery on that occasion could only make the most brutally reasonable plan her children might now conceive for her seem morally defensible. (p. 332)

In the course of the novel it becomes increasingly clear that the storm of greed and resentment and secret intention which Basil and Dorothy come home to create around their mother's deathbed has been gathering for fifty years, and that it is, if less immediately visible and threatening, potentially more destructive than the actual typhoon on Brumby Island.

In the struggle of wills which ensues when Basil and Dorothy arrive at their mother's bedside, those who might be considered Elizabeth Hunter's allies - Lotte Lippmann, Arnold Wyburd, Sisters Manhood and de Santis - are instinctively rather than consciously aware of the nature and extent of the losses that would be sustained by Mrs. Hunter if she were removed from her room and installed in the Thorogood Village; their humane and considerate objections do not wholly account for the violence of their feelings on the matter. Mary de Santis and Flora Manhood especially seem to sense that to take Mrs. Hunter away from her house would be not only to disrupt her familiar routine and distance her from the associations and memories which the house evokes, but also to disrupt and dislodge something more significant.

For, in a way, she is still in the eye of the storm; her position in the house provides a sanctuary of sorts and maintains her status as the centre and mainspring of the action, and as such is a kind of confirmation of the deepest experience of her life. Her personality, her house, and the illuminated, transcendent spirit into which she was momentarily transformed on Brumby Island have fused into a single entity; and to move her from her house to a crowded and impersonal institution, however fashionable and respectable, would be to rob her of this confirmation, to reduce her to a negligible being in her own eyes as well as those of others, and to wreck the pattern of her life.

If her experience of the eye of the storm is understood as an illuminating, if momentary, conferral of grace, the almost formally spiritual nature of the event is echoed by the imagery White uses to evoke the atmosphere surrounding her in the months before her death; the activities of the nurses round her bed are described in a way which repeatedly suggests a kind of ritual worship. The nurses are referred to as 'acolytes' (p. 137) and 'members of the order' (p. 109); Mary de Santis is 'the archpriestess' (p. 19), and Mrs. Hunter 'this fright of an idol [become] the goddess hidden inside' (p. 110). It becomes clear that the house is, accordingly, a shrine when even Basil is prompted to think of it as such by his own faithless irruption into the inner sanctum of his mother's room. In this episode, the combination of the language of worship with the imagery of shell and cloud, and mention of the actual storm outside, suggest by association rather than direct reference that the sanctity of Elizabeth Hunter's room is a legacy from the typhoon on Brumby Island, and the room itself a memorial to a state of grace:

> The storm had moved away, he realised. These were his footsteps thundering on the soft stairs; no other sound, not even the racket of traffic, to profane a perfect silence.
>
> In the sanctuary the acolytes had created round the object of their apparent devotions, Sister de Santis sat writing ... Of course nothing of this would ever become acceptable. Whatever he might have longed for, against his rational judgement, he stifled under repugnance in this house become shrine ... By now the image on the bed was stripped of its vestments and jewels, the festive paint removed from its face ... eyelids, otherwise like speckled seashells cast up on a beach by a storm, persisted in tremulous activity; and the light spun a nimbus out of the threads of dead-coloured hair ... The shaded light, the scent of ruffled cypresses ... all invited him to share with the elect their myth of sanctity; when he had come here for his

> own and different purpose ... (pp. 137-38)

To remove Mrs. Hunter from her shrine would be, as her allies sense, an act not only of heartlessness, but of profanity and desecration.

Place, then, is of central importance to the structure of The Eye of the Storm. Basil and Dorothy's descent on their mother's house initiates a chaotic flurry of both action and memory; and power over the fate of the house itself becomes the central issue and the prize in the struggle of subsequent events. At Mrs. Hunter's death the house is promptly drained of its significance; it becomes a mere commodity to be disposed of, to help provide for the materially comfortable, spiritually shabby futures of Basil and Dorothy. At the moment of her death Elizabeth Hunter re-enters the eye of the storm, her spirit absorbed and dissolved into its stillness and given permanent refuge from chaos - 'myself is this endlessness' (p. 492) - and the house is abruptly transformed into an empty shell, no longer necessary either as sanctuary or memorial.

Like The Eye of the Storm, A Fringe of Leaves is constructed on a time-scale which could be described as kaleidescopic; but in A Fringe of Leaves there is no central place to draw together the threads of time. Each stage of Ellen Roxburgh's life is marked by movement; her voyage of self-discovery, begun much earlier than her actual voyage to Australia, proceeds by a series of jerks from place to place. The wreck of 'Bristol Maid' off the coast of Queensland is the pivotal point in the structure of the narrative; it is the point at which Ellen's travels cease to have any apparent purpose or logic and become no more than a nomadic drift; she is thrown on the mercy first of the sea, then of the natives, then of Jack Chance, and finally of the society to which she returns, and must go wherever they take or send her. The event of the wreck also marks a change in the time-scale of the narrative, which becomes straightforward and linear; and it is the point at which the order of Ellen's life begins to break down. The wreck heralds the beginning of a series of losses - of possessions, of other human beings, finally of values, perspectives, and the wedding ring which symbolises the whole of her past life - which ends by reducing Ellen almost to the essence of being, a kind of geometry of humanity.[5]

As A Fringe of Leaves is an account of a journey, or of several journeys, it is apparent at once that the notion of place is an important element in the structure of the novel. Ellen's movements about the world, and the points at which she comes to rest, provide the surface-structure of the novel - the when and where of events - but this is by no means their only function. They do not merely provide a background for the acquisition of Ellen's spiritual education; they are an essential part of it, not only because of what she learns from the layers of events and relationships which accumulate whenever she stays in one place, but also because of the nature of movement and stasis in themselves, irrespective of particular destination.

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[5] Some of the comments on A Fringe of Leaves in this chapter and in Chapter Nine have been appropriated and adapted for inclusion in an article on the novel which appeared in The Advertiser (Adelaide), 11th. March 1980, p. 14.

Ellen's increasing knowledge of good and evil, and of herself, progresses parallel to her physical journeyings; both proceed by clear stages, which indicates that the series of displacements and the resulting circumstances to which Ellen is exposed are the means of her acquisition of knowledge and experience. The novel reconciles the notions of progress through the world and progress of the spirit; Ellen's spiritual knowledge is gained not through innocence of or withdrawal from the world, but through the experience, the assimilation, and the transcendence of the most extreme forms of human behaviour, and the most extreme human states.

The first major upheaval in her life is her marriage with Austin Roxburgh and the consequent move from Zennor to Cheltenham. After she has, as she says, 'crossed the river' (p. 249), the pause at Birdlip House is long enough to make her a lady; the physical stasis gives her a chance to catch up, in reality, with the change in place and status which has made her formally, and instantly, a different person. Only then is she ready for the next stage of movement, when the combination of her innate strenth and instinctive response to the whole and the wholesome with the finesse and courtesy of Cheltenham has made her flexible enough to deal with the unknown beyond England.

Then, when the Roxburghs arrive in Van Diemen's Land to visit Garnet, Ellen comes to rest again - and is soon forced to come to terms with her own sensuality. This discovery distresses her not for its own sake, but because it forces her to realise that sensuality can exist quite independently of love and regard; she has disliked Garnet from the beginning, and eventually goes so far as to refer to his behaviour as 'the considered evil of a calculating mind' (p. 138). It also weighs her down with an oppressive sense of guilt; she is shocked to find herself capable of 'deceit, and lust, and faithlessness' (p. 307). The proximity and the constant reminders of the nearby convict settlement emphasise her new awareness of the nature of evil; she comes to realise that the kinds of crimes not punishable by law might prove more evil and destructive than those dealt with by institutionalised legal justice.

These three major stages of Ellen's experience, defined by place, are recounted in the first half of the novel in a form of narrative which shifts back and forth in time, creating the literary equivalent of a partly abstracted portrait of her; all the features are recognisable, but not ordered in the way one might expect. The constant shifts in time and place are neither confusing nor disjointed, however, because they are engineered in such a way that they provide a steady and ordered accumulation of detail about Ellen's nature and history. Events, places and states of mind in her present surroundings lead her to contemplate similar or somehow connected events, places and states of mind in her past; and our knowledge of her by the time we see her wrecked at sea is the result of a series of juxtapositions, in the first half of the book, of the long-ago-and-far-away with the here-and-now; Ellen, and what she knows of the world, are products of all the times and places she has known.

In the second half of the book the concepts of place and distance become almost meaningless to Ellen. Thus far her life has been shaped by and in places with names and boundaries; but while she is adrift at sea, and afterwards when moving from camp to camp with the natives, such indications of permanence and certainty cease to have any meaning for her. It is only when Jack Chance comes to her aid and begins to guide her back to the settlement at Moreton Bay that her old notions of ordered time and place begin to re-establish themselves in her mind; and only at this point does she begin to wonder whether a return to the tyranny of time and place which shaped and dictated her life before the wreck of 'Bristol Maid' might be less desirable than to remain permanently lost with Jack Chance:

> Seduced by the mystery of timelessness, she might have chosen to prolong the journey rather than face those who would quiz them upon their unorthodox arrival.
>
> That, she preferred not to think about, since the settlement at Moreton Bay had begun to exist for her in brick and stone, in dust and glare, in iron and torment, as though she too, had escaped from it only yesterday ... She hoped that if they could prolong their journey to

> Moreton Bay, if not lose themselves in it for ever, she might, for all her shortcomings, persuade him to believe in true love. (pp. 306-07)

Her relationship with Jack is the culmination and the consummation of all her previous experience; she brings to it something vital from each of the three major stages of her life. The strength of body and spirit acquired during her valiant Cornish girlhood, the knowledge of the nature of love gained during her quiet years at Cheltenham with her husband Austin, and the depths of sensuality and new understanding of good and evil revealed by her encounter with Garnet in Van Diemen's Land, all contribute to the love she offers Jack. He is more completely her lover than either Austin or Garnet; she neither needs nor wants to hide or withold any aspect or expression of her nature from him. In the face of the fact that she has found such fulfilment while lost in the timeless, boundless bush, her solitary return to civilization seems at worst a kind of voluntary imprisonment, and at best an exercise in pointlessness. At one stage during her stay at the Commandant's house in Moreton Bay, she seriously considers running away:

> She looked about her, instinctively and furtively. At such an hour she might have succeeded in making her escape had it not been for the numerous innocent kindnesses she had experienced at Moreton Bay.
>
> Instead she stood awhile enjoying the moist, palpitating air before returning voluntarily to the prison to which she had been sentenced, a lifer from birth. (p. 359)

This passage is one of many indications of what is perhaps the most extraordinary thing about all of Ellen's travels; her fate has almost always been in someone else's hands. Other characters in the novel repeatedly assume, without consulting her, that they know what she ought to do and where she ought to go. Austin Roxburgh assumes from the outset that she will marry him and come to England; she travels to Van Diemen's Land to accompany him on his visit to Garnet, not for any purpose of her own; in her wanderings with the natives, and on her trek back to the settlement with Jack, she is at the mercy of their knowledge of the place and must go where they take her for want of an alternative. Even after she arrives at the Oakes' farm, other people continue to make plans for her future travels; she is sent from the farm to the Commandant's house in Moreton Bay, and from there to Sydney, and it is assumed by everyone concerned that from Sydney she will travel home to England. While she is still on the island with the natives, the prospect of crossing to the mainland prompts her to realise the extent to which the pattern of her life has been decided by others:

> She was both fired and fearful. If canoes implied a voyage to the mainland, she would be faced with coming to a decision more positive than any she had hitherto made in a life largely determined by other human beings or God: she must resolve whether to set out on the arduous, and what could be fatal, journey to the settlement at Moreton Bay. (p. 275)

It seems, then, as if not only her life with the natives, but her whole life, has been and will continue to be a kind of nomadic drift, her actions determined by other people, or by a lack of alternatives, rather than by her own will or by any sense of purpose. It is clear by the end of the novel that she is fully aware of this herself, as her comment to her fellow-traveller Mr. Jevons indicates:

> ... Mr. Jevons remarked in a general way, 'You can't be sorry, after your ordeal, to be quit of the colony, and start the long voyage home.'
> 'What else?' she replied evenly enough. 'Though I cannot say there is anything which takes me there.' (p. 395)

She is still as physically passive and directionless as she was while wandering in the bush with the natives, perhaps because she has learned that a nomadic existence can be more productive of knowledge and experience, and more conducive to a state approaching pure being, than one whose pattern is determined by individual will and purpose. It might even be said that, like Elizabeth Hunter's encounter with the eye of the storm, Ellen Roxburgh's confrontation with the mazy fringe of an unknown continent is a kind of biography in miniature, a summarising statement of the whole pattern of her life.

White's most recent novel, The Twyborn Affair, has some intriguing similarities to The Aunt's Story. Both have the same tripartite structure; both are 'international' novels, set only partly in Australia; both trace the breakdown of the barrier between illusion and reality in the process of self-discovery. But White's differing treatment of the central characters reveals that these similarities serve different, even opposing, purposes in each novel. The clearly delineated sections of The Aunt's Story, with their contrasting physical and social landscapes, throw into sharp relief the isolated figure of

Theodora, progressing through the stages of her life. Whether at Meroë, in Sydney, at the Hôtel du Midi or in the American countryside, Theodora remains unmistakably Theodora; she becomes more and more completely herself as her journey progresses. The Theodora whom the Johnsons and the doctor overtake at the end of the novel is immediately recognisable as the Theodora who has buried her mother at the beginning.

But in The Twyborn Affair, Eddie Twyborn of Sydney is also Eudoxia Vatatzes of St. Mayeul and Eadith Trist of Chelsea; where Theodora's life is a series of stages, Eddie's is a series of transformations. The creation of a character like Eddie is a perilous venture, and the reader comes to the brink of incredulity more than once; but the remoteness of each locality from the previous one, and the dissimilarities between the social and physical environments of Eddie's various selves, help to extend the reader's capacity for suspended disbelief.

Eddie's life is a series of attempts to transcend the limitations which a clearly defined sexual identity imposes on any human being. The nature of any human relationship is largely determined by sex; for Eddie, whose unquestionably female psyche is housed within a male body of an obvious beauty which attracts both men and women, any relationship is doomed to confusion, some kind of dishonesty, and at least partial failure. To function as a woman he is forced to disguise his body, which is one kind of dishonesty; to function as a man he must disguise his psyche, which is perhaps more dishonest, and certainly more difficult. It is not surprising, then, that the least deceptive and possibly most rewarding relationship that he establishes in the novel is not with any human being, but with a landscape, where his sexual identity or lack of it ceases to matter:

> He remained seated inside the palisade of his own thoughts and the surrounding landscape. It may not have been sexual ambivalence after all which prevented him identifying himself with other men; his true self responded more deeply to those natural phenomena which were becoming his greatest source of solace. (p. 250)

Like Theodora, he is seeking the annihilation of the 'great monster Self'; here in the second section of the novel his venture into the inland to work at 'Bogong' is a means to this end: '... it [was] Eddie Twyborn escaping from himself into a landscape' (p. 161).

His affairs, if such they can be called, with Marcia Lushington and Don Prowse end by driving him out of the landscape and back into himself; but it is the land, not the lovers, he remembers:

> The fact that he, too, was more than probably going to leave made him melancholy, sitting on the Lushingtons' veranda with the river flat spread before him, the brown river meandering through bleached tussock, the sensuous forms of naked hills on either side: a landscape which had engaged his feelings in a brief but unlikely love affair he was about to end. (p. 291)

Leaving the landscape, he discards the self which has inhabited it; but at the end of yet another life, as the ambiguously and, for her profession, appropriately named Mrs. Trist, he reassumes the identity imposed on him at birth and prepares to confront his mother:

> She slunk, or rather, he squeaked past, grateful for the support of railings ... he tottered in a fever of fragmented intentions ... trotting up the empty Dilly on a short but painful visit to his mother's womb. (p. 428)

He never reaches it, and Eadie, having accepted her 'daughter Eadith', remains deceived; even in death Eddie has failed to gain, or regain, any consistent identity.

For Eddie, each new place is a different life; his relationships, activities and appearances are all bound up in locality. In contrast to those in The Aunt's Story, the changes of location in The Twyborn Affair emphasise not the consistency and continuity of identity, but its ephemerality; where The Aunt's Story is, finally, an affirmation of the integrity and unity of the self, The Twyborn Affair testifies to its fragmentation and diversity.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE LANDSCAPE

In a speech given in Canberra in 1978, Patrick White referred to Australia as a country 'which in recent years has become increasingly abhorrent to me, as I believe it has to all men of good will engaged in the search for something more than a materialistic solution'.[1] This comment recalls a well-known passage from "The Prodigal Son", published twenty years earlier:

> In all directions stretched the Great Australian Emptiness, in which the mind is the least of possessions, in which the rich man is the important man, in which the schoolmaster and the journalist rule what intellectual roost there is, in which beautiful youths and girls stare at life through blind blue eyes, in which human teeth fall like autumn leaves, the buttocks of cars grow hourly glassier, food means cake and steak, muscles prevail, and the march of material ugliness does not raise a quiver from the average nerves.[2]

In the same speech, however, White also referred to Australia as 'the country of my fate'. It must be remembered that his chief purpose in writing "The Prodigal Son" was not to condemn the country to which he had returned, but to explain and to some extent defend his decision to come home from Europe; it is clear from this article that the materialistic society which he so deplores comprises only half of his dualistic vision of the country. The other half, his attitude towards the landscape itself, is of another order entirely; he states that his memories of it provided a reason, and his reunion with it a justification, for his return to Australia:

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[1] See David Leitch, "Patrick White: A Revealing Profile," The National Times, March 27th.-April 1st. 1978, p. 32.

[2] White, "The Prodigal Son," p. 157.

> The first years I was content ... to soak myself in landscape ... So, amongst the rewards, there is the refreshed landscape, which even in its shabbier, remembered versions has always made a background to my life.[3]

This distinction between society and landscape in White's attitude to the country is reflected in his work, and is one which his more hostile Australian critics, particularly in the fifties and sixties, have missed in their eagerness to accuse White of unequivocal Australia-bashing; Geoffrey Dutton, however, in a discussion of White's first novel Happy Valley, makes a point which is vital to an understanding of White's divided attitude:

> Only an Australian can know how fundamental the ugliness of settlement, not of landscape, is to the development of the Australian personality.[4]

So there are two sides to White's Australia, and the shallow materialistic outlook exemplified by the Rosetrees in Riders in the Chariot, or the relentless suburban ugliness which begins to invade the landscape near the end of The Tree of Man, is balanced by visions of the mineral glitter of the inland in Voss and the richness and silence of the Queensland rain forests in A Fringe of Leaves, or, perhaps most memorably, by the quiet delight in subtler parts of the Australian landscape revealed in White's most recent novel, The Twyborn Affair.

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[3] White, "The Prodigal Son," pp. 156-57.

[4] Geoffrey Dutton, Patrick White, revised ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 8-9.

In The Tree of Man and Voss, one of White's major concerns is with the process of learning to know and come to terms with the country, to the point of becoming virtually a part of the landscape, and with the means by which this might be achieved. More importantly, these two novels concern the process of spiritual enlightenment. In much of White's work, the 'ugliness of settlement' is associated with the materialism he deplores, and the beauty of untouched landscape with spiritual awareness. In The Tree of Man and Voss, the relation of each central character to the landscape is the means by which each arrives at a state of spiritual enlightenment.

Much of White's fiction is what Geoffrey Dutton calls 'a reflection of the failure of such a settlement as Happy Valley to strike deep roots into the Australian soil'.[5] The Australian habit of referring to houses as 'homes' is a target for White's irony in several of his novels and stories, for the brick and fibro constructions which decorate his suburban landscapes are represented as both ugly and ephemeral; they are frail boxes in which the population huddles for want of any truer, more permanent home. Settlement is s superficial encrustation on the surface of the landscape, not an integral part of it:

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[5] Dutton, Patrick White, p. 8.

> ... the town, with its cottages of red and brown weatherboard, reminded you of an ugly scab somewhere on the body of the earth. It was so ephemeral. Some day it would drop off, leaving a pink clean place underneath. (Happy Valley, p. 28)

The irony of White's insistent use of the term 'homes' is increased by his characters' instinctive awareness of the impermanence and frailty of the dwellings which their materialistic outlook prompts them to venerate:

> ... they began to erect the fibro homes. Two or three days, or so it seemed, and there were the combs of homes clinging to the bare earth. The rotary clothes-lines had risen, together with the Iceland poppies, and after them the glads ... Sometimes the rats of anxiety could be heard gnawing already ... So that, in the circumstances, it was not unusual for people to run outside and jump into their cars ... They would drive and look for something to look at. Until motion became an expression of truth, the only true permanence - certainly more convincing than the sugar-cubes of homes. (Riders in the Chariot, pp. 486-87)

It is a lack of any spiritual awareness or allegiance which produces both the suburban dedication to apricot brick or shrubs with tickets on them, and the anxiety which underlies it; but few of White's suburban dwellers are conscious that this is at the root of their restlessness. One of the exceptions is Harry Rosetree in Riders in the Chariot, who, jolted by the death of Mordecai Himmelfarb into an awareness of what he has lost, renounces the material consolations of Paradise East and hangs himself in the bathroom, heedless of his wife's fears that it might be a lapse of taste. But for the most part, the inhabitants and perpetrators of the Great Australian Emptiness in White's fiction remain unaware that in a country with little history and no tradition of faith, it is necessary to do more than merely scuttle about on the surfaces and fringes of the continent in order to create the sense of permanence and peace that human beings ought to be able to feel in a true homeland; unaware, despite their busy construction of countless identical houses and their lip-service to patriotism and progress, that they have merely desecrated the landscape rather than become a part of it.

The conversation around the Bonner family's dinner-table in the opening chapter of Voss throws an interesting light on White's conception of twentieth-century Australian society, for the Bonners are really a kind of nineteenth-century variation on the Rosetrees - materially prosperous, and only very dimly aware that such prosperity might not suffice to protect them from fear and sorrow. Laura's comments express her awareness of the necessity to know and understand the nature of the country before she can feel peacefully at home in it, but Tom Radclyffe's and Mr. Bonner's reactions reveal the attitudes in which the contemporary materialism of the country had its origins:

> 'Everyone is still afraid, or most of us, of this country, and will not say it. We are not yet possessed of understanding.'
>
> The Lieutenant snorted, to whom there was nothing to understand ...
>
> 'I have been afraid,' said Laura Trevelyan. 'And it will be some time, I expect, before I am able to grasp anything so foreign and incomprehensible. It is not my country, although

> I have lived in it.' ...
> 'Here we are talking about our Colony as if it did not exist till now,' Mr. Bonner was forced to remark. 'Or as if it has now begun to exist as something quite different. I do not understand what all this talk is about ... We have only to consider the progress we have made. Look at our homes and public edifices. Look at the devotion of our administrators, and the solid achievement of those men who are settling the land ... I do not see what there is to be afraid of.' (pp. 28-29)

Like Mr. Bonner, the Sunday drivers of Sarsaparilla do not see what there is to be afraid of, but their nameless, subterranean anxiety regularly drives them out of their houses in search of permanence nonetheless. The houses, no matter how newly built or neatly maintained, remain no more than shells, because their owners lack the two things which might make them real homes. One of these things is the sense of being at one with the landscape which Stan Parker in _The Tree of Man_, for instance, achieves by not only living and working on his place but by virtually creating it out of the formless scrub; the other is the kind of faith which furnishes Mrs. Godbold's tin shed and Himmelfarb's weatherboard shack in _Riders in the Chariot_, transforming them into temples of a kind, and recalling the epigraph from Dostoyevsky to _The Solid Mandala_:

> It was an old and rather poor church, many of the ikons were without settings, but such churches are the best for praying in.

Mrs. Godbold and Himmelfarb are clearly exceptional, however; the general level of spiritual awareness in White's Australia is reflected in the memorable comment of Shirl Rosetree's friend Marge:

> 'Arch and me are Methoes, except we don't go; life is too short.' (p. 208)

It is fitting, then, that The Tree of Man and Voss, both written in defiance of that 'exaltation of the "average"' which defines for White the suburban sensibility in Australia, should both trace the simultaneous development of one man's relation to the landscape and his relation to God. In "The Prodigal Son", White says of The Tree of Man:

> It was the exaltation of the 'average' that made me panic most, and in this frame of mind, in spite of myself, I began to conceive another novel. Because the void I had to fill was so immense, I wanted to try to suggest in this book every possible aspect of life, through the lives of an ordinary man and woman. But at the same time I wanted to discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry which alone could make bearable the lives of such people ... (p. 157)

Voss, too, was written in celebration of the extraordinary, this time more directly; in the same article, White says of this novel:

> ... I wanted to give my book the textures of music, the sensuousness of paint, to convey through the theme and characters of Voss what Delacroix and Blake might have seen, what Mahler and Liszt might have heard. Above all I was determined to prove that the Australian novel is not necessarily the dreary, dun-coloured offspring of journalistic realism. (p. 157)

Both novels are reactions against the empty, superficial, materialistic national consciousness by which White felt himself to be surrounded; and the twofold lack of spiritual awareness and of harmony with the landscape which characterises this consciousness is one of the reasons why both Johann Voss and Stan Parker are extraordinary characters in the context of Australian society, for both arrive through their relation to the landscape at an understanding of their relation to God.

The Tree of Man has none of the aura of challenge and conflict which characterises *Voss*. Stan Parker is represented from the outset as a man in total harmony with his surroundings, content to be a part of the landscape rather than to dominate it; nor does he experience anything like the dramatic spiritual about-face which, in *Voss*, is the pivotal point of the novel. The growth of Stan's spiritual knowledge is a gradual process, punctuated by solitary, visionary moments of communion with his surroundings, when his sheer certainty of what he knows is equalled only by his total inability to express it. As far as the actual nature of spiritual awareness is concerned, *The Tree of Man* is a far less explicit novel either than *Voss* or than those of White's novels in which the Dostoyevskyan 'divine fools', especially Arthur Brown in *The Solid Mandala*, can express their knowledge in the transcendently lucid language which the characters who surround them find so distasteful and disturbing. Nor does Stan Parker, unlike Voss, ever consciously think about his relation to God except on two occasions: once when his discovery of Amy's infidelity makes him deny the existence of God altogether, and again at the very end of his life, when he is forced to defend himself against the obtuse and sweaty little evangelist who comes to intrude on his serenity in the last few pages of the novel.

In the course of his spiritual education, however, he does have two things in common with Voss; he experiences revelations both of his own humility and his own divinity. Both come from a realisation of his relation to his surroundings; the first occurs relatively early in the novel, when his solitary watch through a storm in the darkness reveals to him both his own insignificance and frailty, and his joyful acceptance of them; that he should be both dwarfed and illuminated by the elemental forces of nature seems to him to be a part of 'the rightness of the world':

> The man who was watching the storm, and who seemed to be sitting right at the centre of it, was at first exultant ... He folded his wet arms, and this attitude added to his complacency. He was firm and strong, husband, father, and owner of cattle ... But as the storm increased, his flesh had doubts, and he began to experience humility. The lightning ... had, it seemed, the power to open souls ... In his new humility, weakness and acceptance had become virtues ... in his confusion he prayed to God, not in specific petition, wordlessly almost, for the sake of company. Till he began to know every corner of the darkness, as if it were daylight, and he were in love with the heaving world, down to the last blade of wet grass ... Stan Parker ... had been battered by the storm. His hair was plastered to his head, he was exhausted, but he was in love with the rightness of the world. (p. 151)

Stan's realisation that mankind, once humbled, might then discover that God is within itself only comes at the very end of his life, and is again achieved through the contemplation of his surroundings. On this occasion, however, he is not deluded by complacency into imagining himself at their centre; on the contrary, his humility will not allow him to realise that this time he is at the heart of his surroundings, and that his lifetime of communion and harmony with the landscape has finally established him at the centre of it:

> ... the grass ... had formed a circle in the shrubs and trees ... There was little of design in the garden originally, though one had formed out of the wilderness. It was perfectly obvious that the man was seated at the heart of it, and from this heart the trees radiated ... and beyond them the sweep of the vegetable garden ... All was circumference to the centre, and beyond that the worlds of other circles, whether crescent of purple villa or the bare patches of earth ... The last circle but one was the cold and golden bowl of winter, enclosing all that was visible and material, and at which the man would blink from time to time, out of his watery eyes, unequal to the effort of realising he was the centre of it.
>
> The large, triumphal scheme of which he was becoming mysteriously aware made him shift in his seat, and resent the entrance of the young man ... (p. 474)

It takes the intrusion of this crass evangelist to force Stan into a full awareness of his own place in the 'large, triumphal scheme' for the first time in his life; in his unwilling exchange with the obliviously blissful young man, he is obliged to express thoughts and conclusions which might otherwise never have taken shape:

> The old man cleared his throat. 'I'm not sure whether I am intended to be saved,' he said.
>
> The evangelist smiled with youthful incredulity. No subtleties would escape the steam roller of faith. 'You don't understand,' he said smilingly.
>
> If you can understand, at your age, what I have been struggling with all my life, then it is a miracle, thought the old man.
>
> He spat on the ground in front of him ... Then the old man, who had been cornered long enough, saw, through perversity perhaps, but with his own eyes. He was illuminated.
>
> He pointed with his stick at the gob of spittle.

> 'That is God,' he said ... the old man continued to stare at the jewel of spittle. A great tenderness of understanding rose in his chest. Even the most obscure, the most sickening incidents of his life were clear. (pp. 475-76)

The conventional observances of organised religion, embodied in the young evangelist, are shown - as they are in Voss - to be hopelessly unequal to the task of revealing the real nature of divinity. The young man's assurances that 'great glories are everybody's for the asking, just by a putting out of the hand' are almost comic, addressed as they are to a man whose whole life has been a struggle towards understanding; but they do at least have the effect of forcing Stan towards his final attainment of it. A.P. Reimer argues that

> Discovering God in a gob of spittle is man's confirmation of his own divinity ... Now [Stan] is able to perceive that man must find in himself his own divinity, his own and very private grandeur ... Stan's vision is, indeed, not egocentric, though he is at the centre of it, because he is able to establish an empathy and a harmony between himself and his material surroundings.[6]

It seems to me that Reimer's insistence on the 'very private' nature of this vision is somewhat misleading; certainly Stan's realisation is incommunicable, as is shown by the young man's uncomprehending response to it - 'You met all kinds' - and the import of the entire incident is that each man must come to an understanding of the nature of divinity for himself and through his own experience. But if 'Stan's vision is, indeed, not egocentric', it is because he has come to realise that God is within all humanity. 'The most obscure, the most sickening incidents of his life' have all involved other people; if they are now made clear, it is because Stan sees that the divinity he discovers within himself is what unites him with the rest of humanity, not what separates him from it. The 'empathy and ... harmony' between Stan and the landscape of which he has become the centre is something which has always existed, and which is established in the opening scene of the novel. His presence in the piece of bushland where he intends to carve out a permanent home for himself seems both natural and inevitable:

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[6] A.P. Reimer, "Visions of the Mandala in The Tree of Man" (1967); rpt. in Ten Essays on Patrick White, ed. Wilkes, pp. 120-21.

> ... he knew ... there was nothing to be done. He knew that where his cart had stopped, he would stop. There was nothing to be done. He would make the best of this cell in which he had been locked. How much of will, how much of fate, entered into this it was difficult to say. Or perhaps fate is will. (p. 13)

From the time he brings Amy home to the place he has created, however, he begins to lead two separate lives; the life of family and community is superimposed over his unconscious, unexpressed, and essentially solitary harmony and unity with the land on which he depends. Amy's comment on the place to which he has brought her surprises him out of his serene acceptance of things as they are:

> 'I shall like it here.' She smiled, over the crumbs on the table ... He looked at her. It had never really occurred to him, in the deep centre of conviction, that she might not like his place. It would never occur to him that what must be, might not. (p. 29)

The growth of his family and the gradual development of a community in the district oblige him to participate in the lives of others, where the comparatively ephemeral preoccupations with gain and loss, success and failure, joy and disappointment, are of paramount importance; and it becomes increasingly necessary to him to escape sometimes to some remote part of the bush where none of these things matter, to re-establish the sense of permanence and certainty which the landscape has always given him:

> Sometimes Stan would take the car and drive quickly ... before his wife could ask him where he was going ... He drove down sandy side roads ... along which, except for the fact that the road did exist, there seemd no reason why human beings should go. It was too sour in that part of the bush, or too pure, to suggest prospects of gain or possibilities of destruction ... Stan Parker would draw up in those parts ... He would sit with his hands on the still wheel, till their dried-up skin had disintegrated in the light of sand and grey leaf, of which he was a part ... he would long to express himself by some formal act of recognition, give a shape to his knowledge, or express the great simplicities in simple, luminous words for people to see. But of course he could not. (pp. 220-21)

This lack of ability to communicate what he knows emphasises the division between his two lives; he is at his most peaceful and certain at these moments of communion with the landscape, and at his most uneasy and unsure with the human beings he would most like to reassure:

> Stan Parker ... was guiltily eased by the appearance of familiar features of geography. He knew the contours of the landscape more intimately than he did the faces of men, particularly his children ... (p. 277)

Only at the very end of the novel does his fractured life become whole again. A.P. Reimer makes the astute observation that

> ... at the end of the novel Stan recaptures something that he had once possessed and which he must reconquer ...[7]

What he has lost is a sense of wholeness, of a unified life. But his solitary harmony with the landscape in the opening chapters of the novel has been enriched as well as disrupted by a lifetime's experience of humanity, and his rediscovered vision of wholeness, of the 'totality' that gives George Brown so much trouble in The Solid Mandala, reveals that God is within mankind, for all its imperfections. Stan's last conscious thought is a confirmation of his oneness not only with his surroundings, but with the rest of humanity, and with God:

> As he stood waiting for the flesh to be loosened on him, he prayed for greater clarity, and it became obvious as a hand. It was clear that One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums. (p. 477)

In Voss, it is Laura Trevelyan who interprets the real significance of Voss's expedition. At the height of her illness she is illuminated by a piece of knowledge which lies at the heart of the novel's meaning:

> 'How important it is to understand the three stages. Of God into man. Man. And man returning into God ...'
>
> 'Except,' she said ... 'except that man is so shoddy, so contemptible, greedy, jealous, stubborn, ignorant. Who will love him when I am gone? I only pray that God will.
>
> 'O Lord, yes,' she begged. 'Now that he is humble ... When man is truly humbled, when he has learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so. In the end, he may ascend.' (pp. 386-7)

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[7] Reimer, p. 125.

It takes his own destruction at the hands of a tribe of natives to teach Voss that he is not God; the natives are themselves the agents of the desert, for they are represented in the novel as a kind of extension of the landscape, as intrinsic to it as its rocks and sand. Voss's whole purpose in challenging the country's unknown and hostile interior is to assert the supremacy of his own will; because he thinks of the expedition in terms of victory, it follows that he must either win or lose, either conquer the desert or be conquered by it:

> ... for Voss the expedition was a personal wrestling with the continent, the only opponent his pride would acknowledge as adequate ... Deserts have ... a natural hostility to submitting to the will of man and they are, therefore, a proper target for Voss's colossal pride.[8]

If it is pride which allows him to believe in the possibility of victory, then humility can only be gained at the cost of defeat. His desire to cross the continent does not proceed merely from the same kind of rational, confident self-esteem which prompts Colonel Hebden to set out in search of the original party in the closing section of the novel; Colonel Hebden decides that he has failed as soon as he begins to feel that reason and dignity are being threatened, and returns home accordingly:

> Even Colonel Hebden had been made to look ridiculous by that most irrational country; the resistance of his human dignity was being broken down. (pp. 421-22)

Voss's pride is of a different order altogether. In his isolation from society generally, established in the opening scene of the novel when his confrontation with the Bonner household produces unease and discomfiture on both sides, he is supremely indifferent to his own standing in other men's eyes; Colonel Hebden's human dignity is a sadly insignificant affair compared with Voss's superhuman pride.

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[8] Walsh, p. 44.

Part of Voss's determination, and a further expression of his will, is manifested in his wish not only to conquer the country, but to learn its secrets and subtleties in the process. Before he even sets foot in the country, he tells Frank LeMesurier:

> 'I will cross the continent from one end to the other. I have every intention to know it with my heart.' (p. 33)

From the beginning of the novel he is seen to be more at home and more at ease when facing the dangers of landscape than when subjecting himself to the society of other men:

> How much less destructive of the personality are thirst, fever, physical exhaustion, he thought, much less destructive than people ... Deadly rocks, through some perversity, inspired him with fresh life ... But words, even of benevolence and patronage, even when they fell wide, would leave him half-dead. (p. 18)

Even before he leaves the city, his microscopic attention to his surroundings begins to make him more at one with them than the people who have already inhabited the country for years; at this early stage his new knowledge of the landscape, rather than humbling him, only serves to reinforce his pride:

> Unseeing people walked the sandy earth, eating bread, or sat at meat in their houses of frail

> stone foundations, while the lean man, beneath his twisted tree, became familiar with each blade of withered grass at which he stared, even the joints in the body of an ant.
>
> Knowing so much, I shall know everything, he assured himself ... (p. 27)

As the expedition proceeds he becomes still more detached from other men, while becoming more and more closely identified with the landscape. He senses this at Jildra, when he is still convinced that he will dominate the landscape rather than be absorbed into it:

> He ... would have repudiated kinship with other men if it had been offered. In the presence of almost every one of his companions, and particularly in the company of Brendan Boyle, he was drawn closer to the landscape, the seldom motionless sea of grass, the twisted trees in grey and black, the sky ever increasing in its rage of blue; and of that landscape, always, he would become the centre. (p. 169)

His repudiation of human companionship emphasises the solitary nature of his determination; the will of other men, like the will of God, does not enter into his calculations.

The failure of his intentions does not lie merely in his physical destruction. The likelihood that he will suffer physical torture and quite possibly be killed is something of which he is aware from the outset, as he explains to LeMesurier:

> '... in this disturbing country ... it is possible more easily to discard the inessential and to attempt the infinite. You will be burnt up most likely, you will have the flesh torn from your bones, you will be tortured probably in many horrible and primitive ways ...' (p. 35)

In his desire to 'attempt the infinite', what Voss really wants to prove is that man is God; he is prepared for the destruction of the body in order to achieve the ascension of the spirit. James McAuley sees Voss's progress through the hostile interior as a form of ritual sacrifice:

> ... only by ritual sacrifice can an identification with the divine be achieved ... Voss's own poor daily self must suffer in the desert, be mortified, and if necessary die. The more this self-mortification and self-immolation in the desert proceeds, the more nearly he will achieve, he thinks, identification with the Godhead ...[9]

His quiet surrender of these aspirations to divinity in the last few days before his death, and not his death itself, is the point at which it becomes clear that his attempt at self-deification has failed. He tells Frank LeMesurier that he has no plan to escape from or otherwise deal with the natives, 'but will trust to God'; his words to Frank suggest that he has finally given up his fate into someone else's hands:

> 'If you withdraw,' LeMesurier began.
> 'I do not withdraw,' Voss answered. 'I am withdrawn.' (pp. 379-80)

Laura's training in humility has prepared him for this point; he can quietly accept the failure of his own intentions and submit to whatever God has in store for him.

So the tortuous expedition, originally undertaken as a claim to divinity, becomes a gruelling lesson in humility, and Voss finally accepts his subservience to God in the last few days before his death. The supreme irony in this deeply ironic novel is that in Voss's suffering, new-found humility and final destruction, he has in fact achieved the 'identification with the divine' which he had sought to gain through pride and will; not by displacing God, but through submission to and acceptance of the divine will. James McAuley observes that

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[9] McAuley, p. 39.

> ... Laura has won. Voss's ambition is to be fulfilled in the way he had rejected: through love and humility, for, as Laura sees, the Christian way is also a deification of man: God becomes man so that man shall be raised to God.[10]

The words of Judd, the only survivor of the expedition, to Laura in the closing section of the novel reinforce the suggestion that Voss has achieved a kind of immortality through his relation to the landscape; his spirit has become an integral part of the country which has helped to teach him humility:

> '... The blacks talk about him to this day. He is still there - that is the honest opinion of many of them - he is there in the country, and always will be ... if you live and suffer long enough in a place, you do not leave it altogether. Your spirit is still there.' (p. 443)

The landscape is no longer dominated by his body, but permeated by his spirit - an end which is foreseen in Frank LeMesurier's prophetic poem, which echoes Laura's belief that love and humility are the means by which immortality might be gained:

> O God, my God, I pray that you will take my spirit out of this my body's remains, and after you have scattered it, grant that it shall be everywhere, and in the rocks, and in the empty waterholes, and in the true love of all men, and in you, O God, at last. (p. 297)

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[10] McAuley, p. 43.

The words of LeMesurier and Judd confirm both Voss's fate and Laura's anticipation of it. In the letter which contains her account of Rose Portion's funeral (p. 239), Laura shows she has come to realise that human suffering and humility are a means not only to salvation, but also to an understanding of and reconciliation with the place where suffering is undergone and humility attained:

> Finally, I believe I have begun to understand this great country, which we have been presumptuous enough to call _ours_, and with which I shall be content to grow since the day we buried Rose. For part of me has now gone into it. Do you know that a country does not develop through the prosperity of a few landowners and merchants, but out of the suffering of the humble? I could now lay my head on the ugliest rock in the land and feel at rest.

CHAPTER NINE: THE JOURNEY

The theme of self-discovery common to *The Aunt's Story*, *Voss* and *A Fringe of Leaves* is explored, in these three novels, in the same way; each is the story of a journey, and in each the journey becomes a metaphor for the progress of the main character's self-knowledge. Each novel owes something to external sources, either literary or historical, and several critics have investigated the connections between these sources and the novels themselves. Thelma Herring[1] and Patricia Morley[2] have, between them, exhaustively explored the parallels between *The Aunt's Story* and Homer's *The Odyssey*; Manfred MacKenzie has, in several essays, enlarged on his contention that '*Rasselas* ... is *The Aunt's Story*'s myth'.[3] Patricia Morley has drawn extensive comparisons between *Voss* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy*;[4] and Elizabeth Perkins has listed the various interpretations, in painting, novel, film and historical account, of the true story of the shipwrecked Eliza Fraser on which A Fringe of Leaves is based.[5]

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[1] Herring, "Odyssey of a Spinster."

[2] Patricia Morley, *The Mystery of Unity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), Ch. 5.

[3] Manfred MacKenzie, "Patrick White's Later Novels: A Generic Reading," *Southern Review* (Australia), 1, No. 3 (1965), 8. See also "Abyssinia Lost and Regained," *Essays in Criticism*, 13 (1963), 292-300; and "Yes, Let's Return to Abyssinia," *Essays in Criticism*, 14 (1964), 433-35.

[4] Morley, Ch. 8.

What these three novels have in common, however, can be summarised by a statement in Patricia Morley's The Mystery of Unity concerning Voss:

> Real freedom, the narrator subtly suggests, is not obtained by moving about on the face of the earth. The Australian desert to which Voss is drawn, however, is to prove needful to his destiny. (p. 119)

Theodora Goodman, Voss, and Ellen Roxburgh are all travellers; all three eventually arrive at a state of being in which their whereabouts becomes supremely irrelevant. But Voss's discovery that love and humility are the means by which mankind might achieve divinity, Theodora's achievement of a state of pure being in which 'the last link with the external Theodora Goodman' has been cut, and Ellen's reduction to a simplicity of existence in which she discovers that cannibalism might be an act of consecration rather than of savagery, are all states which are only reached after a great deal of 'moving about on the face of the earth' has failed to free them from their former selves. In The Vivisector, Rhoda Courtney comments on her family's imminent return from England:

> 'I don't know why we ever went away. Wherever you go, you've still got to go on being yourself.' (p. 142)

Rhoda has to have had the experience of travelling before she can make this kind of discovery. Similarly, Theodora,

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[5] Elizabeth Perkins, "Escape With A Convict: Patrick White's A Fringe of Leaves," Meanjin, 36 (1977), 265-69.

Voss and Ellen are all made to work through the process of travelling, of seeing themselves in relation to the changing landscape, before they can achieve a state of being which transcends their surroundings.

In The Aunt's Story, several apparently incidental exchanges between Theodora and various other characters hint at the complete detachment of herself from her surroundings which comes in the last few pages of the novel, when even the house of the figmentary Holstius has ceased to be a haven and has become a trap. Even as a child she resists the insistence of other people that her whereabouts is of any particular importance:

> 'Where are you going, Theo?' they asked.
> 'Nowhere,' she said. (p. 22)

This is echoed in her exchange with Mrs. Rapallo in Part II -

> 'It is strange, and why are we here?' said the voice of Theodora Goodman, parting the water.
> 'I guess we have to be somewhere,' replied Mrs. Rapallo. (p. 199)

- and again in Part III, in her conversation of crossed purposes with the small white-haired woman of the town in which she alights from the train:

> Then it occurred to the small woman that she should start to arrange this stranger's life, who had come by train, and did not know much.
> 'Because you gotta go SOMEwhere,' the woman replied, when Theodora said she had not thought.
> 'I do not particularly want to go anywhere,' Theodora said. (p. 272)

Her first conversation with Mrs. Johnson, shortly after this, shows how little meaning her surroundings have come to have for her:

> 'You're miles from anywhere, you know,' the sandy woman said. 'Are you lost?'
>
> 'No,' said Theodora. (pp. 275-76)

By anyone else's standards she is most certainly lost, but to someone for whom place no longer holds any importance, the word 'lost' can have no meaning.

She arrives at this extraordinary independence of her surroundings by way of a series of discoveries and revelations that takes her across three continents; she discovers again and again that places are as frail, illusory and disappointing as other human beings. Even her beloved Meroë, while she is still a child, begins to crumble in her mind under a joint attack from the unlikely combination of Herodotus with the men under the balcony of the Imperial Hotel:

> 'There is another Meroë,' said Father, 'a dead place, in the black country of Ethiopia.' ... In this dead place that Father had described the roses were as brown as paper bags, the curtains were ashy on their rings, the eyes of the house had closed.
>
> 'I shall go outside now,' Theodora said.
>
> Because she wanted to escape from this dead place with the suffocating cinder breath. She looked with caution at the yellow face of the house, at the white shells in its placid, pocked stone. Even in sunlight the hills surrounding Meroë were black ... So that from what she saw and sensed, the legendary landscape became a fact, and she could not break loose from an expanding terror ... Theodora Goodman discovered that Our Place was not beginning and end. She met for the first time the detached eye.
>
> 'Meroë?' said Mr. Parrot. 'Rack-an'-Ruin Hollow.'
>
> Which Theodora heard. (pp. 25-26)

After the death of her father, the sale of Meroë, and, years later, the death of her mother, Theodora leaves the country because there is nothing to keep her in it. Her honesty will not allow her to settle for mere existence, without pattern or meaning, and this is why she rejects both Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson; marriage to either would trap her forever in a soft, insufficient half-life in which her own need for some kind of absolute, whether it be place, person or state of being, would remain permanently unfulfilled. Her decision to leave the country is sealed by her realisation that even her love for Lou, and, by implication, for any human being, is not enough to justify or give shape to her own existence:

> Theodora looked down through the distances that separate, even in love. If I could put out my hand, she said, but I cannot. And already the moment, the moments, the disappearing afternoon, had increased the distance that separates. There is no lifeline to other lives. I shall go, said Theodora, I have already gone. (p. 137)

On her arrival at the Hôtel du Midi, at the beginning of Part II, she discovers anew that physical goals are illusory, and that no mere place can provide a safe home for the spirit - or even the body; in the end the hotel is burned down, and Theodora moves on. But in the meantime she senses the frailty and impermanence of the place long before it is actually destroyed; after her nocturnal promenade through the unlit corridors of the hotel has undermined her already frail sense of her own identity, her return to her own room not only fails to restore it, but increases her uncertainty:

> She walked through the hotel, choosing to lose herself, or not choosing, in the Hôtel du Midi there was no alternative. And especially at night. At night there was the space of darkness, a

> direction of corridors, stairs which neither raised nor lowered the traveller on to a different plane. In this rather circular state, Theodora walked ... 'I think I am lost,' said Theodora. '_Je cherche ma chambre_.' ... There are moments, she admitted, when it is necessary to return to the boxes for which we were made. And now the small room was a box with paper roses pasted on the sides ... she knew that she did not really control her bones, and that the curtain of her flesh must blow, like walls which are no longer walls. She took off one shoe ... Standing with it in her hand, her identity became uncertain. She looked with sadness at the little hitherto safe microcosm of the darning egg and waited for the rose wall to fall. (pp. 201-04)

The _jardin exotique_ itself is the physical, formalised embodiment of Theodora's whole experience of the Hôtel du Midi; its fantastic forms mirror her own weirdly blossoming consciousness as her life begins to merge in both fantasy and fact with the lives of the other guests. But to lose herself in other lives is not the final solution to the dilemma of her existence, because it is such a temporary one; she must always return to her own 'great monster Self', and so in this sense at least the _jardin exotique_ is not the final goal she has hoped it might prove to be:

> Theodora Goodman went on. Holding back the sun with her hands as she stepped out, she hoped that the garden would be the goal of a journey. There had been many goals, all of them deceptive. (p. 145)

It makes sense, perhaps, that America should be the country where she finally discovers that the dilemma of her existence can be solved not by finding the ideal place, but by transcending her surroundings altogether, arriving at a state of lucid lunacy in which the variations of names, people and places no longer have any significance for, or connection with, her own being. She has come to America with no apparent purpose; because she asks nothing of the country, her quest is unhindered by hopefulness or expectations of the place itself.

When she first arrives in America, it is with a view to continuing 'home' from there; she has left Australia because there was nothing to keep her there, but her absence from it has given it a new meaning for her. We think of a place as 'home' chiefly when we are, or have been, away from it; and the idea of 'going home' has an absoluteness, a 'lovely abstraction', about it which seems to promise some kind of fulfilment. Theodora saves herself from final disappointment, however, by realising before she leaves America that 'home' might prove to be as deceptive a goal as the cities of Europe:

> I am going home, she said. It had a lovely abstraction to which she tried to fit the act. She tried the door of a house and went in. There were the stairs, and the cotton quilt on which she threw her jaded hat. She waited for the familiar sounds of furniture. She looked for her own reflection, in mirrors, but more especially in the faces of the people who lived in this house ... Then, in a gust, Theodora knew that her abstraction ... did not fit. She did not fit the houses. Although she had in her practical handbag her destination in writing, she was not sure that paper might not tear. (p. 270)

In the end she tears up the sheaves of tickets herself, which apparently senseless piece of behaviour is really only a rather more extreme manifestation of the same kind of honesty which forces her to reject Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson in the first section of the novel. She has bought the tickets 'for the purpose of prolonging herself through many fresh phases of what was accepted as Theodora Goodman'; she destroys them because the kind of external life dictated by tickets, or husbands, although 'accepted' by others, is not acceptable to Theodora herself. So she never reaches home, and although the reader assumes that her final destination is to be the nearest mental institution, the novel ends with Theodora setting out on yet another journey.

In an essay on The Aunt's Story, Thelma Herring, without stretching the parallels beyond the bounds of probability, traces White's use of The Odyssey 'as a means of indirectly defining character and theme and as a kind of short-cut to emotional intensity'.[6] Herring places this examination of the use of the Ulysses myth in the context of a more general discussion concerning White's use of recurring images - bones, roses, fire, water, wood - 'which, by repetition, juxtaposition and contrast acquire symbolic value' (p. 16), and thus avoids the danger of hanging the whole weight of the novel on a single frail critical hook; she sees White's direct and indirect references to The Odyssey merely as a part of the wider patterns of imagery in The Aunt's Story, rather than as any kind of vital key to an understanding of it.

By contrast, Manfred MacKenzie's somewhat reckless assertion that 'Rasselas, as it turns out, is The Aunt's

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[6] Herring, p. 14.

Story's myth' seems to me to be a distortion of the novel, placing disproportionate emphasis on the importance of Johnson's fable to an understanding of White's novel. Certainly one extremely useful result of the critical framework used by MacKenzie is the neat way in which Theodora's state at the end of the book is linked with her childhood at Meroë:

> 'Abyssinia' itself ... is not simply Australia ... but really a state of being associated with the country property Meroë ... 'Abyssinia' is ... a symbol for a childhood state of being. Moreover, what is gained by White's heroes or saints ... is a superior 'Abyssinia' or state of being, the New Abyssinia.[7]

Of course it is worth pointing out that Theodora's final state is one akin to recovered innocence, with the added dimension of experience assimilated and transcended. But Theodora could just as easily be said to have reached a kind of Ithaca of the spirit, something which Thelma Herring implies but seems to feel it unnecessary to state, let alone belabour. What both critics take pains to point out, however, is that, unlike that of Rasselas or Ulysses, the end of all Theodora's exploring is no geographical goal but solely a spiritual one; Laura Trevelyan's words near the end of Voss recall Theodora's ultimate fate:

> 'Knowledge was never a matter of geography. Quite the contrary, it overflows all maps that exist.'

Patricia Morley, in The Mystery of Unity, bases her comparison of Voss with The Divine Comedy on the general observation that

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[7] MacKenzie, "Yes, Let's Return," pp. 434-35.

> As in Dante's great epic, Voss's literal journey is both an allegory of the progress of the individual soul towards God, and a vision of the absolute towards which it strives. (p. 118)

So Laura's statement about knowledge and geography, although apparently made in reference to her own experience, can also be read as a summary of the real meaning of Voss's expedition. Like Theodora, Voss discovers that 'moving about on the face of the earth', although a necessary part of the process by which the kind of spiritual absolute they both seek is attained, does not suffice to produce the transformation of the self to which both are ultimately subjected. Voss's attempt at self-deification through a contest with the landscape fails, as does Theodora's quest for some particular place which might answer her spiritual needs; it is only when Voss abandons the contest, and Theodora the search, that both are finally and unexpectedly granted what they have been seeking to achieve through their respective journeys.

There is a hint in the first chapter of Voss that the expedition might have different consequences from the ones he desires; when he first arrives in Australia, his lack of certainty about the motives and consequences of his own behaviour suggests that his will - the instrument through which his aspirations to divinity are, supposedly, to be realised - is not the only force in charge of his own fate:

> Then, when he had wrung freedom out of his protesting parents, and the old people were giving him little parcels for the journey, not so much as presents as in reproach, and the green forests of Germany had begun

> to flow, and the yellow plains unroll, he did wonder at the purpose and nature of that freedom. He was wondering still when he stood on the underside of the world, and his boots sank into the same, gritty, sterile sand to which he used to escape across the Heide. But the purpose and nature are never clearly revealed. Human behaviour is a series of lunges, of which, it is sometimes sensed, the direction is inevitable. (p. 14)

He tells Laura during their first conversation that he is 'at home ... It is like the poor parts of Germany. Sandy. It could be the Mark Brandenburg' (p. 11); he has come halfway across the world only to discover that he is still treading the same ground. This apparent lack of progress, despite the physical distance he has covered, is the first suggestion in the novel that the conquest of distance might not after all be a means to any more exalted end than the arrival at a geographical destination. This idea is supported by Palfreyman's reflections during the early stages of the expedition:

> Even Palfreyman realised he had failed that day to pray to God, and must forfeit what progress he had made on the road where progress is perhaps illusory. (p. 128)

The word 'progress' is used in relation to Palfreyman again in the account of his death; though it ostensibly refers to his advance toward the group of natives, it carries a subtle suggestion that in undertaking this test of his faith Palfreyman is making spiritual progress of a kind which Voss fails to achieve until much later, when he finally gains the humility which has characterised Palfreyman from the beginning:

> '... I will go. I will trust to my faith.' ... Palfreyman, who was certainly very small, in what had once been his cabbage-tree hat, had begun to walk towards the cloudful of blacks, but slowly, but deliberately, with rather large strides, as if he had been confirming the length of an important plot of land. As he went forward he became perfectly detached from his surroundings ... Over the dry earth he went, with his springy, exaggerated strides, and in this strange progress was at peace and in love with his fellows. (pp. 341-42)

Palfreyman's last thought is that he has failed, but he has not. The event of his death prevents any further conflict on this occasion between the natives and the expeditionary party, and the manner of it is a confirmation, even a justification, of his faith, as G.A. Wilkes points out:

> He has died, and died convinced of his weakness: but Voss has not been able to prove Palfreyman's faith an illusion ... Although he is in a sense a casualty of the faith he trusts in, the faith itself has endured the test.[8]

This is not the illusory progress of the road, but the real progress of the spirit; Palfreyman, 'perfectly detached from his surroundings' and 'at peace and in love with his fellows', is in a state of grace to which Voss cannot attain until his pride has been purged by the last and most tortuous stretch of the journey. Palfreyman has no pride to purge; he is the embodiment of the love and humility which Voss continues to reject until the last stage of his life, when he tries to invoke the memory of

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[8] G.A. Wilkes, "A Reading of Patrick White's *Voss*" (1967); rpt. in *Ten Essays on Patrick White*, ed. Wilkes, p. 139.

Palfreyman in order to learn the 'gestures of humility':

> Then Jackie, whose position was obviously intolerable, raised his eyes, and said:
> 'No good, Mr. Voss.
> 'These blackfeller say you come along us,' he added, for he was still possessed by the white man's magic.
> Voss bowed his head very low. Because he was not accustomed to the gestures of humility, he tried to think how Palfreyman might have acted in similar circumstances, but in that landscape, in that light, not even memory provided a refuge. (p. 365)

Palfreyman is spared the last and worst of the journey, because there is no need for him to undertake it. But the desert journey is still necessary to Voss; because his attempt at self-deification has taken the form of a contest with the landscape, he is defined by his relation to it. He is in a sense freed from the landscape, because he no longer stands in opposition to it, only after he has abandoned the journey, and with it the 'other journey' towards divinity of which he writes to Laura:

> If I have not described every tree, every bird, every native encountered, it is because all these details are in writing for those who will not see beyond the facts. For you, our other journey, that you are now condemned to share, to its most glorious, or bitterest end. (p. 217)

In the light of his original intentions, the journey has been a failure, but a necessary one; Voss's struggle with the landscape proves to have been an exorcism rather than a justification of the pride which prompted it in the first place, and, as such, is a preparation for the state of grace at which he finally arrives.

Like Voss and Theodora, Ellen Roxburgh undergoes the spiritual crisis of her life when, after much travelling, she has found herself miles from anywhere, utterly lost, with no destination and no bearings except for the knowledge that she is on an island. Wandering from camp to camp with the natives who have captured her, she is reduced to a state of primitive, elementary humanity which is, in its simplicity and its freedom from the trappings of civilization, not unlike Theodora's transcendent state at the end of The Aunt's Story; and in which the extent of her sheer will to survive is measured by her surreptitious participation in the cannibal rites of the tribe.

William Walsh observes of this novel that

> The composition is organised round the idea of a voyage - not a voyage out but a return voyage. The Roxburghs are returning from Australia, the husband returning to the remaining member of his family, his brother Garnet, the wife returning from her adopted to her original nature, the convict returning to the place he escaped from, life itself returns to its sources.[9]

But each voyage within this pattern yields up its own kind of experience. Ellen alone undertakes several different journeys, from Zennor to Cheltenham, thence to Van Diemen's Land, and then back to Sydney, gathering layers of wordly knowledge and experience about her as if they were her own fringed shawl as she goes. But after the wreck of 'Bristol Maid' - from which time until her return to the settlement at Moreton Bay she is virtually lost - the nature of her experience undergoes a curious reversal. In her travels along the mapped and charted routes of civilization, her life is a series of accumulations, of a husband, of money and manners, of the painful knowledge of the depths of her own sensuality. But after 'Bristol Maid' is wrecked, this pattern is reversed; she loses her child, her husband, her clothes, her hair - everything, including finally her wedding ring and fringe of leaves, except her essential humanity and the will to live which confirms it.

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[9] Walsh, pp. 118-19.

That spiritual enlightenment might prove to be one consequence of being physically isolated is stated more explicitly in this novel than in either The Aunt's Story or Voss. After the wreck of 'Bristol Maid', when the long-boat in which Ellen, her husband, and some of the crew have been travelling for days is temporarily beached on a coral reef, Austin Roxburgh is led by the geographical anonymity of his surroundings to a radical and involuntary reconsideration of his own place in the scheme of things:

> At the island's southernmost tip, opposing currents raised their hackles in what was probably a state of permanent collision ... Austin Roxburgh felt drawn to this desolate promontory by something solitary and arid, akin to his own nature ... a white light threatened to expose the more protected corners of human personality. Mr. Roxburgh was fully exposed. In advancing towards this land's end, he felt the trappings of wealth and station, the pride in ethical and intellectual aspirations, stripped from him with a ruthlessness reserved for those who accept their importance or who have remained unaware of their pretentiousness ... the solitary explorer gritted his teeth ... He might have been suffering from a toothache rather than the moment when self-esteem is confronted with what may be pure being - or nothingness. (pp. 207-08)

Later, in Ellen's own isolation and lack of direction, her state recalls this existential moment of her husband's;

lost, both have ceased to focus on any geographical goal and are journeying instead towards enlightenment. Austin's moment of ambiguous disillusion at the land's end is the pale twin of Ellen's later illumination at the cannibal rites in the forest clearing.

The expression 'land's end' - like the many-sided image of the fringe, with which it is connected, and which is discussed in some detail by William Walsh in Patrick White's Fiction - occurs repeatedly in the novel. Ellen tells Captain Purdew that she was born on 'A Cornish heath ... Within reach of the land's end' (p. 46); her girlhood home at Zennor is near the place which is actually named Land's End. The expression suggests not only the line where the land meets the sea, beyond which the concept of 'place' has no meaning, but also the frontiers of human experience. After Austin Roxburgh comes to Zennor as a lodger, Ellen begins to be aware that her own experience is somewhat severely limited:

> 'My mother tends to worry,' he told her; and on another occasion, 'She is fretting over my brother, who left, only recently, for Van Diemen's Land.'
>
> 'Aw?' she replied with simulated interest.
>
> She was unacquainted with Van Diemen's Land. She had heard tell of Ireland, America and France, but had no unwavering conviction that anything existed beyond Land's End, and in the other direction, what was referred to as Across the River.
>
> The void suddenly appalled her ... (p. 53)

She finds herself in the void from the time of the wreck until her escape with Jack Chance, not only physically lost, but spiritually so, somewhere beyond the bounds of ordinary human experience. Caught up in a life of alien physical hardships and inarticulate, semi-hostile relationships, she is utterly alone in a spiritual jungle as well as a social and an actual one:

> As she now realised, rocks had been her altars and spring-waters her sacrament, a realisation that did but increase heartache in a country designed for human torment, where even beauty flaunted a hostile radiance, and the spirits of place were not hers to conjure up. (p. 248)

The climax of this stage of her travels, which occurs shortly before her escape, is perhaps the most significant experience of her life. Her participation in the cannibal rites of the tribe is something which is only made possible by her utterly reduced state, by the combination of hunger with the total absence of any evidence of the civilization which would condemn her action as an 'abomination of human behaviour' (p.272). But her own reaction to it is an odd mixture of disgust and exaltation:

> As she went, she tried to disentangle her emotions, fear from amazement, disgust from a certain pity she felt for these starving and ignorant savages, her masters, when she looked down and caught sight of a thigh-bone which must have fallen ... she found herself stooping, to pick it up ... She had raised the bone, and was tearing at it with her teeth ... She flung the bone away only after it was cleaned, and followed slowly in the wake of her cannibal mentors. She was less disgusted in retrospect by what she had done, than awed by the fact that she had been moved to do it. The exquisite innocence of this forest morning, its quiet broken by a single flute-note endlessly repeated, tempted her to believe that she had partaken of a sacrament ... she could not have explained how tasting flesh from the human thigh-bone in the stillness of a forest morning had nourished not only her animal body but some darker need of the hungry spirit. (pp. 272, 274)

She is right when she suspects that she has 'partaken of a sacrament'. Her action unites her in common humanity with 'these starving and ignorant savages, her masters', and is a confirmation of the sanctity of her own life, now that she has discovered the lengths to which she is prepared to go to preserve it.

Both Voss and Theodora Goodman, having served their term of travelling, arrive at an extraordinary end, madness and violent death not being the fates of the common man. Ellen, however, although the pattern of her experience is essentially the same as theirs, survives her travels with her life and sanity intact, and perhaps it is this which leads William Walsh to observe that

> Her suffering in the wreck and the scrub enrich her but give no final answer. Her rescue seems in the end to be a voluntary return to 'the prison to which she had been sentenced, a lifer from birth.'[10]

But perhaps Ellen's return is her 'final answer'. If she drifts passively from place to place at the hands of settlers and officials after her return from the wilderness, it is because she has learned, like Theodora, that there is really little to choose between one place and another, or between various human societies. But her experience of the cannibalism episode is a deeply life-affirming one; although she is tempted more than once to lie down and die on the arduous journey back to the settlement with Jack, and tempted again to escape back into freedom and solitude once she gets there, her 'return voyage' to civilization is really a confirmation of what she has learned in the forest. To lie down and die, or to escape from society back into solitude, would be to deny the sanctity of her own life and of her unity with the rest of humanity.

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[10] Walsh, pp. 123-24.

CHAPTER TEN: HOUSES AND SHRINES

Only three of White's novels deal in detail with the notion of the journey as a metaphor for spiritual progress. But in almost all the novels, and in some of the short stories and plays as well, he is equally concerned with the lives that are lived in houses, and with the houses themselves. In The Eye in the Mandala, Peter Beatson devotes a brief section of Chapter Nine to a discussion of White's vivid evocation of the appearance and atmosphere of houses; he argues that, in White's fiction, the relation of the characters to the houses in which they live can be as clear a chart of spiritual progress as any actual journey. Beatson sees an 'almost organic link between the house and the emotional life of its occupant',[1] and this observation leads him to base his discussion on the analogy between the relation of the house to its occupant and the body's relation to the soul:

> The function of the house is to give substance and security to the life of its owner as the body does for the soul. But the act of embodiment is also an act of limitation. Behind the image of the house lies the daemonic archetype of the Prison-Fortress ... by fortifying himself, man has also imprisoned himself. The house that man builds to protect himself against formlessness cuts him off from the spiritual release that this formlessness represents ... The Prison-Fortress can be transformed into its apocalyptic opposite. As the

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[1] Beatson, p. 154.

> house is stripped of its pretensions and hypocrisies ... it may be changed into the Temple ... This transformation is brought about by the acts of worship which are performed in the Temple ... in prayer, in art, in love, in sacrifice ... The once intimate link between the house and its occupant falls apart as time passes ... in the end the house must split open like a shell to release its occupant ... At the climactic moment in each novel the house is quitted. (pp. 154-56)

The 'intimate link between the house and its occupant' is established in a variety of ways. The physical appearance, the contents, the shape and aura of houses are dwelt on at length all through White's fiction; they reflect and illuminate the characters of their inhabitants, provide a constant, tangible focal point for action and memory, and are sometimes transformed into myth or shrine - Beatson's 'Temple' - in the lives and memories of those who live or have lived in them.

Several of White's characters express themselves and establish their own natures in the eyes of others - and of the reader - through the creation of their houses, either by actually building them or by establishing an atmosphere and an appearance which makes an adopted house indisputably theirs. This is often true of minor characters, whose elaborations on the themes of décor and architecture are often the result of a desire to protect as well as to express themselves.

Mr. Bonner's house, in Voss, represents both the comfortable prosperity of the merchant and the limitations of his spirit, and as such is a good example of what Beatson means by the term 'Prison-Fortress'. Mr. Bonner and his house, in the background, set in high relief the fearlessness of Voss himself and the formlessness of his surroundings; Voss's aspirations to divinity will allow of no containing walls.

There is a similar situation in The Aunt's Story; Huntly Clarkson's house is another prison-fortress, and it has the same effect on Theodora as the Bonners' house has on Voss: it both arouses her scepticism and emphasises her own comparative freedom. Huntly is both protected and defined by his house, and is as a result almost indistinguishable from it:

> In this way Theodora Goodman went to the house of Huntly Clarkson, which stood in a blaze of laurels, a rich house, full of the glare of mahogany and lustre. The floors shone ... Even the old things inherited from grandfathers and aunts, even these pandered to Huntly Clarkson and the present, as if they began and ended as part of his upholstery. She looked at the rich, shining, well-covered body of Huntly Clarkson and wondered if he would exist without his padding. (p. 106)

The Tree of Man provides a different kind of contrast. Stan Parker's house, too, is an extension of himself, but it is as simple and enduring as its creator. It is a far less solid house than nearby Glastonbury, home of the prosperous Armstrongs; but this elaborate monument of its owner's magnificence is destroyed by fire, and its planned replacement abandoned in mid-construction when Armstrong's son is killed. While the fate of the two Glastonburys is hardly Armstrong's fault, it somehow reflects his ineffectual, vulnerable nature, and emphasises by contrast the simple strength and stubborn consistency of Stan

Parker, and the strength of his ties to the place in which he lives.

Riders in the Chariot and *The Eye of the Storm* feature characters whose house-building is dedicated solely to the creation of beauty. Norbert Hare and Elizabeth Hunter are very far from being either artists or saints, but they share the intuitions of beauty and mysticism inherent in such callings, and they express what they know through the construction of the places in which they intend to spend their lives. For Norbert Hare, otherwise a ranting, pretentious wastrel, the lunatic brilliance of Xanadu is the one memorable achievement of his life:

> *Brilliant* and *elegant* were the epithets applicable to Norbert's aspirations, certainly to his most ambitious, his Pleasure Dome at Xanadu. Although by no means a sincere man, there was one point in his life at which sincerity conferred with taste and individualism. Xanadu was Norbert's contribution to the sum of truth, *brilliant* and *elegant* though the house was, created in the first place for its owner's *pleasure*. (p. 19)

Elizabeth Hunter's house, which becomes in her old age a protective memorial to her experience on Brumby Island, is built for her in her prime as a monument to 'her own originality and taste', an extension of her own beauty, and an aid to fulfilling the desire for power over other human beings which is, for most of her life, her *raison d'être*:

> She was not interested in possessions for the sake of possessions, but could not resist beautiful and often expensive objects ... Her argument was: if I can't take your breath away, if I can't awaken you from the stupor of your ugly houses, I've failed. She did honestly want to make her acquaintances as drunk as she with sensuousness ... *You see*, she said, *you can't say*

> it's extravagant if it's beautiful - now can you? Standing on the stairs. Flinging out her arms to embrace this work of art her house; not forgetting her husband, her children, and a couple of servants she had as audience. (pp. 32-33)

The house that Hurtle Duffield, in *The Vivisector*, builds for himself at Ironstone at the beginning of his career is as much a part of this stage of his life as his rock paintings and his affair with Nance Lightfoot; it has the same rough edges, the same primitiveness, and the same scabs-and-blisters effect as his paintings and his own body. He is the hybrid result of his two childhood homes, 'the product of a dirty deal between Cox Street and Sunningdale', and the house he eventually buys in Flint Street reflects this somewhat schizoid approach to life, as William Walsh points out:

> ... he lives in a house which fits both the gentleman and the peasant in his background: the front has urns and pretensions, the back looks out on an outside dunny and a slum ...[2]

But his shack in the bush is absolutely his own, unhaunted by the ghosts of Mumma, Pa, Father or Maman; it is as if he has to establish himself as a completely separate, self-contained being through building and living in such a house before the two halves of his origin can be reconciled in the compromise of the house in Flint Street.

In *Voss*, the first two resting-places of Voss's journey - Rhine Towers and Jildra - both make visible the characters of their respective owners, and stand in direct contrast to each other. Rhine Towers is a kind of domestic paradise, a quiet, well-ordered oasis of peace and co-operation which is a manifestation of the character of its owner; while at Jildra there is something simultaneously demonic and decaying about both Brendan Boyle and his surroundings. These places are as much of a comment on Voss himself as on their owners; they herald what is yet to come on Voss's journey. Not only is the desert itself represented, at different stages, as both hell and paradise; but Rhine Towers and Jildra are, respectively, predictions of salvation and damnation, and make clear the fact that Voss, despite his own intentions, is at this stage of his journey a potential candidate for either.

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[2] Walsh, p. 105.

In each of three of White's novels - The Living and the Dead, The Solid Mandala and The Eye of the Storm - the house in which the central characters live not only dominates the novel's physical setting, but provides a point of departure for the memories and imaginations of its past and present inhabitants. The Living and the Dead begins and ends with the same scene, that of Elyot Standish's return to his empty house after farewelling his sister at Victoria Station; the house evokes memories in Elyot's mind which prepare the reader for the shift in time and place, at the beginning of Chapter Two, to the scene of Catherine Standish's girlhood over thirty years earlier:

> The house, and particularly this room, had become almost the sole visible purpose of Mrs. Standish's existence. And it continued to live in the inconclusive way of the houses of the dead, defying any of his own personal conclusions that

> he had brought in with him from the station, from the accident in the street. Already he was drifting in a half-resentful, half-reassured lethargy, with the many themes that the house offered ... (p. 14)

The last chapter of the novel is a continuation of this scene, in which anticipation now takes the place of memory; it is the house, what he remembers of it, and the new idea with which it inspires him, which prompt him to leave it again, to go down into the street and take his place among the living:

> The house was a receptacle. They were two receptacles, he felt, the one containing the material possessions of those who had lingered in its rooms, the other the aspirations of those he had come in contact with. Even that emotional life he had not experienced himself, but sensed, seemed somehow to have grown explicit. It was as if this emanated from the walls to find interpretation and shelter in his mind ... Again he walked downstairs. He began again to walk along the street, guided by no intention, taking the direction offered. (pp. 356-57)

The Solid Mandala has the same kind of narrative structure, the last chapter a continuation of the first, as The Living and the Dead. It also carries the same suggestion that it is the house itself, in which Arthur and Waldo have lived all of their lives, which is responsible for the backward drift of memory:

> 'This gate, Waldo,' Arthur was saying gently, 'will fall to bits any day now.'
>
> Sighing.
>
> He was right. Waldo dreaded it. Averted his mind from any signs of rusty iron, or rotted timber. Unsuccessfully, however. His life was mapped in green mould; the most deeply personal details were the most corroded ... Suddenly the smell of rotting wood, of cold fungus, shot up through Waldo's nose. He could hardly bear, while exquisitely needing, the rusty creaking of his memory. (pp. 26-27)

In both The Living and the Dead and The Solid Mandala, the reader's expanded understanding, by the end of the novel, of the link between the house and its inhabitants has been enriched by the knowledge of their common history. 89 Ebury Street, with its collection of Catherine Standish's knick-knacks and its echoes of Catherine Standish's voice, is, to Elyot, like a visible summary of his own life; and Arthur and Waldo Brown see their house down Terminus Raod in the same light:

> The rooms which they had used before, or not, according to their needs, began using them. So much of what they had forgotten, or never seen, rose up before their eyes: the dusty paper-bags still hanging by their necks as Dad had left them, rattling with husks when the wind blew or they hit you in the face; a simple, deal chair suddenly dominating the shadows; the smell of old milk rags, of turps, and rotted quinces ... dates of years ago turned to fly-shit on the calendars, a ball of Mother's hair in the corner of a dressing-table drawer; a dress of Mother's. (p. 286)

In The Eye of the Storm, Elizabeth Hunter's house in Moreton Drive provides, as has been discussed elsewhere, the same kind of focal point for the action, retrospective or otherwise, of the novel. But the house in Moreton Drive is not the only one to evoke memories and provoke events; Basil and Dorothy's peculiar pilgrimage back to 'Kudjeri' sheds new light on their characters and those of their parents, and clarifies each member of the family's relation to the others. Basil's memory of the broken arm of his childhood, conjured up by his presence on the scene of the event forty years later, produces what is perhaps the clearest statement in the whole novel about the emotional vagaries of the Hunter family:

> And Alfred Hunter offering downright love disguised as tentative, sweaty affection. When Mother was the one you were supposed to love: *you are my darling my love don't you love your mummy Basil?* Bribing with kisses, peppermint creams, and more substantially, half crowns. *I don't believe you love me at all perhaps you are your father's monopoly or is it yourself you love?* So the game of ping pong was played between Moreton Drive and 'Kudjeri' between Elizabeth and Alfred Hunter (Dad at a handicap).
>
> You all played. Dorothy was playing it still. (p. 440)

Their return to 'Kudjeri' brings home to them finally, and fully, the extent of their poverty of spirit, despite Dorothy's title and Basil's knighthood. Their unlikely, moving encounter on the night of their mother's death is like an admission of defeat and failure; fifty years on, they are still nothing more than the perverse and disappointing children of Elizabeth Hunter, and their presence in their childhood home makes the realisation acute and the reaction extreme:

> 'Oh, Basil!' She was deafening him ... 'What have we got unless each other? Aren't we, otherwise - bankrupt?' ... She might have fallen if he had not been there behind her to support and comfort her nakedness with his own.
>
> 'You've got to admit it's beautiful.' It was her brother looking over her shoulder at the landscape at 'Kudjeri'.
>
> 'Oh God, yes, we know that!' she had to agree; 'beautiful - but sterile.'
>
> 'That's what it isn't, in other circumstances.'
>
> 'Other circumstances aren't ours.' (pp. 470-71)

To some of White's characters, however, the name of a particular house evokes far more than memories and associations. Some of the places in White's novels take on mythic proportions in the minds of the characters, promising or recalling some kind of absolute, the ultimate in experience or the perfection of peace and goodness. In The Aunt's Story, Theodora writes to her friend Violet Adams:

> At first I thought I could not live anywhere but at Meroë, and that Meroë was my bones and breath ... (p. 91)

Years later, when her niece Lou asks her to talk about her childhood, Theodora reflects that despite her long absence from it, and despite its unsensational history, the house is still the most essential part of her own life:

> She had told the story of Meroë, an old house, in which nothing remarkable had taken place, but where music had been played, and roses had fallen from their stems, and the human body had disguised its actual mission of love and hate. But to tell the story of Meroë was to listen also to her own blood ... (p. 20)

In Voss, the element of Voss's nature which shows itself at first in his love for Laura, and at last in his retreat from his quest for glory, is the part of him which can envisage Rhine Towers as an end in itself rather than a mere landmark of his journey, and which makes him temporarily forgetful of his real purpose in consequence:

> Places yet unvisited can become an obsession, promising final peace, all goodness. So the fallible man in Voss was yearning after Rhine Towers, investing it with those graces which one hopes to find at the heart of every mirage, entering its mythological buildings, kindling a fire in the expectant hearth. Its name glittered for him, as he rode repeating it to himself. (p. 126)

Finally, in several of White's novels, there are the houses which answer to Peter Beatson's description of the Temple; houses which, though for the most part dilapidated or meanly made, are transformed into places of worship of some kind through the intentions and the achievements of the people who inhabit them. Mrs. Godbold, in Riders in the Chariot, has such an effect not only on her own tin shed in Sarsaparilla, but also - temporarily at least - on the richly furnished, shabbily inhabited house of the Chalmers-Robinsons. At her hands the smallest and humblest of tasks are acts of domestic worship, and in her solitary presence the beauty of the house itself becomes a setting, not for glittering lunches, marriage-warfare and the risks of high finance, but for her own inarticulate forms of prayer:

> Alone in the house ... the maid would attempt to express her belief, not in words, nor in the attitudes of orthodox worship, but in the surrender of herself to a state of passive adoration, in which she would allow her substantial body to dissolve into a loveliness of air and light, magnolia scent, and dove psalmody. Or, in the performance of her duties, polishing plate, scrubbing floors, mending the abandoned stockings, gathering the slithery dresses from where they had fallen, searching carpets for siverfish, and furs for moth, she could have been offering up the active essence of her being in unstinted praise. (pp. 244-45)

Her own tin shed, however, is Mrs. Godbold's real Temple, where the meanness of her home itself only serves to emphasise the richness of her spirit. Her faith still expresses itself through action, in 'the performance of her duties'; and in relation to these White uses the language and imagery of religious ritual, as he does in The Eye of The Storm, to emphasise the fact that the house has become a place of worship:

> ... she might sit for sometimes half an hour beside her ironing table, in the shed where it seemed by then she was ordained to live. Obviously, the scored surface of the yellow board, together with the various vessels and utensils of her office, could not have been housed anywhere else with due sacral dignity. So she and they remained enshrined. (p. 478)

Himmelfarb's decaying little house, too, fits the pattern of the Temple; his faith, however, is expressed not through work or 'passive adoration', but through the formal rituals of prayer. Although he only buys his 'weatherboard home' in Sarsaparilla because he has 'so far diverged from his ideals as to hanker after physical seclusion' (p. 199), and although it contains, of necessity, 'several sadly material objects' (p. 198), its most important function is to provide a place for worship:

> ... The Jew was hurrying back to his house ... When he arrived.
>
> When he touched the Mezzuzah on the doorpost.
>
> Then, when the Sh'ma was moving on his lips, he was again admitted. He went in, not only through the worm-eaten doorway of his worldly house, but on through the inner, secret door ... By the time night had fallen, dissolving chair and bed in the fragile box in which they had stood, the man himself was so dispersed by his devotions, only the Word remained as testimony of substance. (pp. 197-98)

Like the houses of Mrs. Godbold and Himmelfarb, the Browns' house in The Solid Mandala is an illustration of Peter Beatson's assertion that

> ... worship will come most easily when the house is at its most rudimentary ... or dilapidated ... Where the trappings of external existence are most eroded, essence can assert itself.[3]

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[3] Beatson, pp. 155-56.

By the time Arthur and Waldo have arrived at their old age, their house is almost literally falling apart; but the original appearance of 'a little, apologetic, not quite proportionate temple' (p. 37) given it by George Brown's classical pediment now seems like a kind of prophecy of what the house was to become. By the end of their lives Waldo and Arthur are living in a real temple, not just the appearance of one; their house is the place in which Arthur carries out his mission of love and forgiveness, which is represented, like work and prayer, as one of the various forms of worship:

> Arthur didn't intend to die. He couldn't afford to. He had his duty towards his brother. If not to perform for Waldo the humblest tasks, to allow him to believe himself superior to anything proposed. It seemed fitting to Arthur that the house which had been built in the shape of a temple should be used as a place of worship, and he took it for granted it should continue to fulfil its purpose, in spite of timber thin as paper, fretting iron, sinking foundations. Like the front gate, it would hold together by rust and lichen, or divine right. (p. 291)

In The Vivisector, Hurtle Duffield's house in Flint Street is dedicated to his art, just as others are to work, or prayer, or love:

> Of course the real reason for his irritation, he had to admit, was not her failure to appreciate his home, which he had stopped seeing as an actual house, but her continued unawareness of its raison d'être - the paintings ... (p. 458)

Duffield's obsession with the nature of God is expressed through his paintings, whether God appears as a vindictive moon, a rich Greek drowning sackfuls of cats, or as the "Old Fool Having Bladder Trouble"; his house exists for the sole purpose of his pursuit of this quest after the nature of divinity, through his work, in the same way that a chapel exists for the purpose of prayer. Like the others, Hurtle's temple is falling to pieces; its antiquated luxuries and decaying comforts make it clear that the house exists, for him, not for the sake of pretensions or protection, but solely to contain and generate his life-work:

> ... the only life he could recognise as practical was the one lived inside his skull, and though he could carry this with him throughout what is called the world, it already contained seeds created by a process of self-fertilisation which germinated more freely in their natural conditions of flaking plaster, rust deposits, balding plush, and pockets of dust enriched with cobwebs. (pp. 407-08)

White is a profoundly religious writer, and the houses which serve as temples in his novels are not the only illustrations of the notion of the holy place in his work. Several of White's characters have moments of sudden illumination, often in actual churches or cathedrals, which seem to be generated by their surroundings, and the memory of which remains with them chiefly as a memory of the place itself. Oliver Halliday in Happy Valley, like Mrs. Godbold in Riders in the Chariot, experiences a moment which transcends his everyday surroundings and his ordinary life when, quite by chance, he finds himself listening to music in a church:

> He had only once felt complete. It was an accident, he felt ... he had gone into a church, he did not know why, it was an ordinary church ... The organ was playing ... he knew he was crying. He did not care if he cried; there was

> nothing wrong with this sort of crying and nobody would see. The music came rushing out of the loft ... You could feel a stillness and a music all at once. You were at once floating and stationary, in time, all time, and space, without barrier, passing with a fresher knowledge of the tangible to a point where this dissolved, became the spiritual. (p. 20)

In The Eye of the Storm, the nature of Elizabeth Hunter's experience on Brumby Island is hinted at in the account of her arrival there, with its suggestion of ritual and mystery:

> The island was uninhabited, except by a permanently stationed gang of foresters, and the Warmings on their infrequent visits.
>
> Now it hushed the strangers it was initiating. (p. 336)

Her memory of 'the great joy she had experienced while released from her body and all the contingencies in the eye of the storm' (p. 384) is inextricably bound up with her memory of the island itself. Unlike Dorothy, whose clearest memories of Brumby Island involve her own embarrassment and humiliation at the hands of her mother and Edvard Pehl, Elizabeth Hunter remembers the island as part of a solitary experience of spiritual freedom and joy:

> 'It was the island I loved, Dorothy. After you left I got to know it. After I had been deserted - and reduced to shreds - not that it mattered: I was prepared for my life to be taken from me. Instead the birds accepted to eat out of my hands. There was no sign of hatred or fear while we were - encircled.' (p. 367)

Ellen Roxburgh, in A Fringe of Leaves, has the kind of spirit which responds more readily to her surroundings than to almost anything else; at 'Dulcet' she writes in her journal:

> Often on such a night at Z., a country to which I belonged (more than I did to parents or family) I wld find myself wishing to be united with my surroundings, not as the dead, but fully alive. Here too ... I begin to feel closer to the country than to any human being. (p. 104)

Her finely tuned sense of place, and of her own relation to it, means that certain places can provide her with some kind of spiritual release. Her pilgrimage to St. Hya's Well in her girlhood has such an effect; and she connects it in her own mind with her participation, years later, in the cannibalistic rites of the aboriginal tribe, when the fact that her surroundings seem almost to epitomise beauty and innocence somehow makes her behaviour appear less extraordinary and reprehensible even to herself:

> Just as she would never have admitted to others how she had immersed herself in the saint's pool, or that its black waters had cleansed her of morbid thoughts and sensual longings, so she could not have explained how tasting flesh from the human thigh-bone in the stillness of a forest morning had nourished not only her animal body but some darker need of the hungry spirit. (pp. 273-74)

This episode is recalled near the end of the novel, when her foray into Pilcher's chapel at Moreton Bay results in the same feeling of release, and the same heightened state of being, produced by her experience of St. Hya's Well and of the forest clearing. Immediately before the cannibalism episode, she suddenly becomes aware of her own name - 'She was the "Ellen" of her youth" (p. 270) - and seems to be surrounded by it; this intensified sense of her own identity, too, recurs in Pilcher's chapel:

> Ellurnnnn, she heard her name tolled, not by one, but several voices. Yet nobody barred her entry

> into the primitive chapel ... Mrs. Roxburgh felt so weak at the knees she plumped down on the uneven bench, so helpless in herself that the tears were running down her cheeks, her own name again mumbled, or rather, tolled, through her numbed ears ... At last she must have cried herself out: she could not have seen more clearly, down to the cracks in the wooden bench, the bird-droppings on the rudimentary altar. She did not attempt to interpret a peace of mind which had descended on her (she would not have been able to attribute it to prayer or reason) but let the silence enclose her like a beatitude. (p. 391)

White's novels, then, abound in unlikely shrines; houses, churches, apparently incidental scraps of landscape, serve to enhance worship or provide moments of enlightenment. White uses place as a kind of spiritual mirror, employing the tangible, visible features of setting and landscape to reflect and clarify the more elusive preoccupation, running all through his novels, with the steady progress or the sudden illumination of the human spirit.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis the emphasis has been on the novels rather than on the novelists; on the aspects of place and human relation to it within the created world of the novel - houses and shrines and islands, city and country, landscape and society, exile, journey and spiritual quest - rather than on the novelist's relation to his native country. In conclusion, however, without reverting entirely to the biographical, it seems important to examine the images of Australia which these novelists create, to compare their literary purposes and achievements as Australians as well as artists.

In the case of the convict novels and the expatriate novels, the writers are removed - Porter and Keneally in time, the expatriates in space - from their respective subjects, allowing themselves the wider perspective of historical hindsight or of distance and memory, giving themselves an outside vantage point in time or space from which to visualise the country; they have, from these vantage points, created sharply defined images of Australia and examined or expressed attitudes to the country which are characterised by antipathy or ambiguity. In White's case the position is somewhat different. White cannot be considered an expatriate novelist in the sense that Richardson, Boyd and Stead were expatriates; White came home early in his career, and has stayed at home, and most of his novels are written, as it were, from inside.

Porter and Keneally do not so much describe Australia as create it. Landscape and atmosphere are invested with heavy and almost entirely negative emotional connotations; the Australian setting in the convict era is transformed, almost mythologised, into a hell on earth barely recognisable to most Australians, and no doubt barely recognisable to Porter and Keneally themselves.

Without actually misrepresenting the physical features of the country, Porter and Keneally present highly stylised landscapes, negative caricatures, in which certain features of history and geography are heightened and fused into moral fable on the universal and timeless theme of justice. Place becomes part of plot, part of theme, almost a character in its own right; it affects the actions and interactions of human characters, determines the direction of events, imposes its own kinds of punishment. In reflecting their negative attitudes, behaviour and expectations, Australia takes on, in these novels, the characteristics of its inhabitants; the face of the country becomes a reflection of the human face, its felt hostility a reflection of human cruelty, its antipodean inversions of stars and seasons a reflection of the perversities of human injustice.

The images of Australia projected by the four expatriate novelists are neither as clearly defined nor as emotionally charged as those created by Porter and Keneally. These four novelists are seeking not to create national myths but simply to comprehend personal realities, and each has a different vision of his homeland. What they do have in common in this context is that each conveys a sense of separateness from the country; each encapsulates his idea of Australia into a single highly visual but curiously ambiguous image, a picture described from an external viewpoint rather than as part of the author's own surroundings.

Richardson's Australia is the primeval matriarchal monster of the Proem to Australia Felix, malignant or 'rich and kindly' according to the deserts of those who seek sustenance from her. Stead's is the 'island continent' so vividly evoked in the prologue to For Love Alone, rich and strange, but remote, isolated, an outpost of civilization. Boyd's Australia is embodied in his account of the Walter Withers painting "Winter Sunlight", with its paradoxical combination of innocence and antiquity; this vision is qualified by the ambiguity of the notion of innocence, with its connotations of emptiness as well as of perfection. For Boyd, Australia is physically ideal but culturally both derivative and primitive; the dream of Italy - the ideal combination - as the unattainable home of the spirit haunts more than one of his characters. Australia for Johnston is what David Meredith sees from the descending aeroplane at the end of Clean Straw For Nothing; a 'huge blind heedless thing' with which he anticipates a confrontation rather than a reunion, a 'lonely, featureless, enormous' phenomenon that accelerates his apprehension into panic. Yet elsewhere in the novel one of his sharpest nostalgias is the memory of 'hot big distances' (p. 189); and in _A Cartload of Clay_ it is the 'parched brown vastness' (p. 75) of the Australian inland which inspires in him after his return an unqualified and hitherto undiscovered love.

The sense of separateness, of some unbridgeable gap between the author's own consciousness and the image it creates in each of these four instances, reinforces both the negative and the positive aspects of the expatriate experience. The external viewpoint intensifies the sense, where it exists, of alienation, of exile and exclusion; but on the other hand the theme of the quest, the impression of movement and search, is intensified by contrast with the fixity of these definitive images. It is as though each of these four novelists has taken a snapshot of the country in what seems to him a characteristic pose, to carry with him on future journeys.

The novels of Patrick White, however, do not evoke any single, definite image of Australia, any more than Hardy's novels define England or Flaubert's define France. White's abhorrence of the materialism of Australia's society and his deep feeling for the beauties of its landscape are fundamental elements in his work; he explores, particularly in the earlier novels, a range of traditionally Australian themes. He has referred to Australia as 'the country of my fate', and, as a novelist, he takes his nationality completely for granted; most of his fiction, and certainly all of his best fiction, grows as naturally and inevitably as a tree from his native earth. He has no final, definitive statement to make about Australia; from The Aunt's Story on, each of his novels illuminates different aspects of the country as a candle placed in front of a globe will light up new continents and oceans as the globe is turned. He does not deal in any detail with Australian landscape and society in comparison with those of Europe; he takes the country on its own terms and examines it under its own harsh light. But in accepting - for better or worse - his nationality as man and artist so completely, he has transcended it; he is an artist first and only then an Australian. His overriding concern is with the nature and meaning of human experience; and yet, in using to explore and illuminate it the materials closest to hand, the country and the people he knows best, he has probably told us more about Australia than any other writer.

The novels considered in this thesis thus reflect a wide range of national images, from a number of different viewpoints. But any contributions they might make to the nation's knowledge of itself can hardly account for their whole value as literature. They are all unmistakably Australian novels; but, although some of them are no doubt better than others and will be read and remembered for longer, they all have in common a fundamental concern with universal themes. Perhaps it is in this combination that their true value lies; in the extent to which ideas, experiences and aspirations common to all humanity are explored, illustrated and illuminated through the medium of locality and the imagery of place. They begin as novels about Hobart Town, Ballarat, Watson's Bay, Sarsaparilla; they ultimately become novels about justice, alienation, quest, redemption. The authors proceed from the local to the universal through pairs of opposing images of place with progressively widening symbolic significance - Australia and Europe; land and sea; heaven and hell - and the reader who digs down through these intervening layers will come finally to what is universal and enduring in human experience.

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As the present study covers a wide field, only those works consulted which contributed directly to ideas and information contained in it have been added to the list of works actually cited in the text or footnotes.