Framed by Reconciliation:
Reading Cross-Cultural Space in Early Twenty-First-Century Australian Literature

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis analyses literary works by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian writers, focussing on the production and function of space in scenes of constructive cross-cultural interaction. All of the novels examined can be read as pedagogies of reconciliation due to their engagement with – and subversion of – the goals, processes, issues, and outcomes of the 1990s reconciliation movement. Yet, while these texts are all broadly framed by reconciliation, this thesis argues that it is their commitment to reimagining spaces of home which marks them as particularly productive reconciliatory pedagogies.

One of the primary assertions of this thesis is that for reconciliatory discourses to become useful pedagogies – to educate and inspire and connect people, rather than just inform and unsettle – they need to create spaces of hope. Home became a contested site during the reconciliation years, with processes of historical revisioning and reports such as *Bringing Them Home* forcing a reconsideration of what it might actually mean to be at home. By moving away from traditional domestic spaces and staid conceptions of dwelling, these narratives attempt to heterogeneously reconfigure notions of home and nation.

This thesis is organised around specific spaces and spatial metaphors, and the critical paradigms informing them. Chapter 2, for example, examines ways in which the metaphor of 'the Gap' structures ideas of intercultural exchange in reconciliatory discourse and postcolonial criticism. Chapter 3 – which analyses Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and Vivienne Cleven's *Her Sister's Eye* – focusses on the space of the colonial homestead and how it is used to frame notions of impasse, or unbelonging. Chapter 4 examines a series of "interspaces" and how "dwelling-in-motion" frames cross-cultural transformation in Alex Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country*, Gail Jones's *Sorry* and Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*. Moving away from traditional conceptions of home, Chapter 5 analyses how heterotopic spaces are deployed to frame scenes of exile in Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, Tim Winton's *Dirt Music* and Richard Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish*. Chapter 6 explores how conceptions of being in country frame notions of belonging and well-being in Alex Miller's *Landscape of Farewell* and Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance.* Finally, in conclusion, Chapter 7 suggests that spaces of hope can emerge in reconciliatory discourses when home, like nation, is recognised as a site of entanglement.

Statement of Authorship

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgment in the main text and bibliography of the thesis.

Signed:

Date: 4/12/2014

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Reading Reconciliatory Space

> It was a mystery, but there was so much song wafting off the watery land,
> singing the country afresh as they walked hand in hand out of town, down
> the road, Westside, to home.
>
> - Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria* (519)

Alexis Wright, in her essay for the Sydney Pen entitled "A Question of Fear," foregrounds the pedagogical power of story by claiming that "it will increasingly become the role of literature to explain what is happening in the home of humanity, by speaking honestly to the world where those who represent us politically do not" (169). Since the passing of the official end date of reconciliation – December 2000[1] – a number of literary works have been published which engage with the processes, problems and potential for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Focussing upon specific spaces, spatial metaphors and concepts of dwelling, this dissertation analyses the ways in which early twenty-first century Australian novels – such as Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* (2005), Vivienne Cleven's *Her Sister's Eye* (2002), Gail Jones's *Sorry* (2007), Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006), Alex Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002) and *Landscape of Farewell* (2007), Tim Winton's *Dirt Music* (2001), Richard Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish: A Story in Twelve Fish* (2001) and Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance* (2010) – are framed by the pedagogical goals, issues, themes and outcomes of the reconciliation movement.

In the year 2000, Kim Scott and Thea Astley co-won the prestigious Miles Franklin Award[2] for their respective novels *Benang from the Heart* and *Drylands: A Book*

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[1] In 1991 the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act "instituted a formal ten-year process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This process aimed to reconcile Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by the end of 2000, in time for the centenary of the Commonwealth of Australia in 2001" (Gunstone, "Reconciliation" 2).

[2] The Miles Franklin Award is Australia's largest literary prize awarded each year to a novel by an Australian writer which "is of the highest literary merit and presents Australian life in any of its phases" For more information, see the "Home Page" on *Miles Franklin Literary Award* website (http://www.milesfranklin.com.au/).

for the World's Last Reader. Exploring scenes of cross-cultural interaction in claustrophobic regional Australian settings, both *Benang* and *Drylands* are distinctly marked by the legacy of colonial violence. In each text, characters grapple with the impact of unresolved trauma – two centuries worth of accumulative violence and racist government policies – and search (hopelessly at times) for somewhere to belong; for a *meaningful* connection to people, place and cultural heritage. At a narrative level, the possibility for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is problematised in both *Benang* and *Drylands*. In Scott's *Benang*, for instance, the need for Noongar people to try and recover their own culture and history – to consolidate a sense of Noongar identity based upon a specific connection with place – is given priority over the nation's desire to officially bridge the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Oost 118-119). Like Scott, Astley is a writer who refuses to "offer her readers […] any easy answers" (Kossew, "Review" 2). Despite the fact that *Drylands* does not centre on interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as *Benang* does, the contemporary legacy of colonial trauma creates a fault line in the text; revealing how relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are still entangled in systems of colonial violence. As these brief examples suggest, both *Benang* and *Drylands* are intent on unsettling, rather than promoting reconciliation. Yet, while the potential for reconciliation is creatively destabilised in these novels – and treated as a concept which is innately uneven in expectation and, in light of historical revisioning and contemporary racism, too soon to be seriously contemplated let alone achieved – both *Benang* and *Drylands* remain explicitly and implicitly embedded within multiple "frames" of reconciliation.

This dissertation argues that one of the most significant ways in which *Benang* and *Drylands* – as well as *The Secret River*, *Her Sister's Eye*, *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Sorry*, *Carpentaria*, *Dirt Music*, *Gould's Book of Fish*, *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance* – show that they are framed by the reconciliation movement is through their representation/creation of new kinds of spaces for cross-cultural interaction. In all of these texts notions of being at home are unsettled by the primary objectives of the reconciliation movement, such as the desire to "heal wounds" and "lay foundations" for meaningful future co-existence (Dodson vii). Reconciliation processes require a reconsideration of who has the right to 'call Australia home'. In the novels analysed throughout this study, this question inspires Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters

to dismantle Western topographies of home; to try and incorporate the movement of cross-cultural exchange into their systems of dwelling; to re-imagine how to dwell while in exile; and develop more meaningful intercultural relationships with land and country. By claiming that Scott, Astley, Grenville, Cleven, Jones, Miller, Wright, Flanagan and Winton's narratives are framed by reconciliation, this study argues, therefore, that the multifarious goals, issues and outcomes of the movement towards reconciliation are *encoded* within the texts.

This dissertation is principally concerned with the various ways in which representations of cross-cultural space are framed by, and frame, the key issues and outcomes of the reconciliation movement. Reconciliation discourses and rhetoric forms a meta-narrative in many of the novels mentioned above, an obvious lens through which to read scenes of cross-cultural encounter. In other literary works, however, dynamics of reconciliation are more specifically evoked via the marketing and critical response the narrative receives, the way in which the novel is endorsed or positioned in the field. The connections within and between these novels – and the issues of reconciliation that they evoke simply by existing – may be described through the use of "framing theory."

Framing theory, when applied to literature, draws broadly from a number of different disciplines, including – but by no means limited to – the visual arts, linguistics, narratology (notably Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophies of dialogism), theories of the body, as well as spatial notions of the liminal (Frow 26; Berlatsky 162). In his essay "The Literary Frame," John Frow states that while the "most intensive frame for the narrative is that constituted by the beginning, and especially the end of the narration" an abundance of other frames also influence the reading of a text (2). For Frow, elements such as: the cover art of the text, the name of the author, generic specifications, dedications, appraisals, editorial comments and introductions, the date or year that the text was published and even, potentially, the publishing house all help to produce the narrative (26). By primarily examining Australian novels which were nominated for awards from 2000 until 2010, this study, for example, tentatively proposes that these works are framed by the successes and failures of the previous decade; the decade of reconciliation. The idea that all texts are cultural products, invariably framed by a specific time and place is examined in greater detail in French literary theorist Gerard Genette's book, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. According to Genette, elements of textual framing – or what he prefers to call, "paratexts" (2) – can be organised into

two distinct categories: categories he has called "peritexts" and "epitexts" (5). Peritexts, refer to the framing devices used within the text itself, such as "the title or the preface," while epitexts, on the other hand, are those "distanced elements" which are ostensibly external to the text, such as media commentary and author interviews (Genette 5).

Frames of reconciliation are diverse and embody numerous peritexual and epitextual elements. For example, despite the short-term possibility for reconciliation being essentially disavowed in *Drylands* and *Benang*, Astley and Scott's timely co-win of the Miles Franklin Award joins their literary works and creates an entangled reconciliatory epitext. The joint awarding of these texts by the Miles Franklin judges potentially reflects the broader social desire for a more positive take on reconciliation, reinforcing Lydia Wevers's apt observation that while literary "prizes seldom get literary history right […] their contemporary politics" often reveal more about what "the 'geopolitical aesthetic' of a nation might be" rather than the works themselves (3). Reporting on the event, Angela Bennie – in her short article for *The Sydney Morning Herald* entitled "Miles apart as authors, they bathe in the limelight as one," – begins by emphasising the dissimilarities between Astley and Scott:

> She is a grande dame of Australian letters, the winner of many of the country's leading literary prizes. He, by comparison, is a relative unknown, writing poetry and a couple of novels in his spare time from teaching in a secondary school in suburban Perth. Last night, in a surprise outcome, the two writers shared the country's top literary prize, the 2000 Miles Franklin Literary Award, valued at $28,000 (3).

By highlighting difference, Bennie's article creates a space of reconciliatory potential beyond the texts; a space where different stories are shared. While I would suggest that these two works – and perhaps by extension, these two authors – are not actually "miles apart" (Astley and Scott are both, for instance, acutely interested in creatively exploring the repercussions of Australia's violent colonial history), the rest of Bennie's report concentrates on the way in which this event frames an exchange between the writers (namely Astley's endorsement of Scott's text), rather than the specificities of the novels themselves (4). Werner Wolf suggests that processes of framing create salient "codes" of meaning which influence how a text is approached and received (6). By framing Scott and Astley's co-win in terms of reconciliation, what is coded is a desire to formally recognise the creative approach both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers bring to discussions of race relations and, in doing so, reconfigure Australia's national narrative.

The key proposition informing this study – that early twenty-first-century Australian literary works are framed by reconciliation – calls for the examination of narrative frames (the stories themselves) as well as narrative paratexts (the other factors which influence the reception of the texts). Reconciliation operates as a frame through which contemporary Australian literary works can be approached as well as a framing device which is deployed at the level of narrative, particularly through the production of spaces for intercultural experience and exchange. Yet while the novels analysed in this thesis are all influenced by the reconciliation movement, the ways in which these texts work within *and* against reconciliatory frames (or frameworks) varies.

In some of the novels examined, such as Kate Grenville's *The Secret River*, Gail Jones's *Sorry*, Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country* and Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance*, frames of reconciliation are overt and signify a clear engagement with the protocols, outcomes, issues and ongoing goals of the movement. As Marc Delrez observes, these kinds of literary works are so embroiled in the reconciliation movement that they appear to be motivated by a desire to create "a blueprint for a post-Reconciliation future" (3). For the most part, the above mentioned literary works creatively engage with the problems that plague and undermine the official movement, such as the issues that have arisen from processes of historical revisioning, the Howard Government's failure to apologise, and the primary need to reconnect Indigenous communities that have been damaged by colonisation.[3] Yet while these texts rarely represent a sustained position of reconciliation, the ways in which they frame the potential for intimate moments/spaces of cross-cultural exchange has seen them become benchmarks of the reconciliation movement.

The literary staging of reconciliation, particularly in works by settler Australian writers (writers of Anglo-Celtic heritage) has received both popular and critical attention. In one of the many fragments of review that are presented on the first page of *Journey to the Stone Country*, Meg Sorenson (writing for the *Courier Mail*) states that with this book Miller has:

> [...] hit on something imperative. Not only is it a love story to defy the most cynical, in a world at a loss as to how it should live; it has the urgency of relevance, offering a plausible hint that in spite of apparent chaos, an order is there to be deciphered (par. 6).

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[3] John Howard, of the then Liberal-National Party, was the Prime Minster of Australia from 1996-2007.

 The reviews presented on the first page of *Journey to the Stone Country* do not elaborate on how Miller's narrative offers a social critique of race relations, or potentially functions as a reconciliation text. In spite of this, however, the idea that Miller is making an important contribution to the reconciliation movement is enigmatically framed via comments such as Sorensen's; comments which draw attention to the way in which the text finds "order" (the potential for meaningful exchange, or even a way forward) in "chaos" (the mixed emotions caused by revelations of colonial trauma)."[4] Leaving aside the possible reasons as to why reconciliation, which is an overt frame in *Journey to the Stone Country*, is not explicitly mentioned in the novel's framing reviews; comments such as Sorensen's reveal some of the ways in which Miller's text is coded as a reconciliatory discourse.

The proliferation of works creatively examining the history of race relations in Australia contributes to a "peculiarly postcolonial fictional genre," which Sue Kossew has termed the "Sorry Novel" ("Saying Sorry" 172). Drawing, principally, upon the creative and critical writings of Jones and Grenville (which I will discuss at length in the proceeding chapters), Kossew argues that the Sorry Novel's "main feature is to rework, rewrite or just reimagine history in order to make a political point about the present" ("Saying Sorry "172). Grenville's *The Secret River* and Jones's *Sorry*, which were both reportedly inspired by the Sydney 2000 Bridge Walk,[5] are texts which engage with processes of reconciliation by seeking to acknowledge the history of frontier violence and atone for two centuries of mistreatment of Indigenous peoples.[6] In her examination

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[4]Most of the reviews which are presented at the start of *Journey to the Stone Country* use similar language, evoking the reconciliation movement without explicitly referring to exchanges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Katherine England, for instance, claims that Miller "eschew[s] both sentimentality and easy answers" and praises the way in which his "conclusions remain realistically, challengingly open." The notion that *Journey to the Stone Country* can potentially contribute to social change is also foregrounded by Christopher Bantick, who suggests in his comments that "this is a novel not so much to buy [as] to invest in."

[5] On May 2000, approximately 300,000 people took part in the Corroboree 2000 Bridge Walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge. Officially organised by Reconciliation Australia, the symbolic event aimed to promote greater understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Grenville and Jones's both discuss the ways in which the event inspired them to write their novels and their respective critical texts: *Searching for the Secret River* and "Sorry-in-the-sky."

[6] Grenville dedicates *The Secret River* to "the Aboriginal people of Australia: past, present, future." she elaborates on this acknowledgement in her interview with Harriet Jones for *BBC World Book Club* (which Kossew has transcribed from a podcast and cites in full in "Saying Sorry"). In response to Jones's question whether the book serves as an apology on behalf of her ancestor, Grenville states that: "the book was written, not so much in a spirit of apology, but a spirit of perhaps acknowledgement is perhaps a better word [...] let us be absolutely frank about what happened because, until we non-Indigenous Australians are prepared to look that in the face, no conversation is possible, no progress is possible, nothing will

of these texts, Kossew argues that acts of atonement create "a shared space of ethical understanding" and mark the establishment of a meaningful "cross-cultural conversation;" a position from which to continue the "walk towards reconciliation" ("Saying Sorry" 180-181). The concept of saying sorry – an act which was officially withheld until Prime Minster Kevin Rudd's formal apology to the Stolen Generation in 2008 – is a defining feature of Sorry Novels by settler authors. It is not, however, the only means through which the fraught dynamics of the reconciliation movement are articulated in Australian narratives.

Works of literature by Indigenous authors are just as enmeshed in issues pertaining to reconciliation; as are texts which have contemporary rather than historical settings. Kossew, in her recent essay "Recovering the Past: Entangled Histories in Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance*," finds parallels between the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers broach the topic of reconciliation. For instance, Kossew argues that, like Grenville and Jones, Scott is also clearly interested in examining the "entangled strands of history and cross-cultural encounters" (173). However, rather than just inspiring conversation – or focussing on apology/acknowledgement – texts such as *That Deadman Dance* call for a specific kind of listening, and establish what Kossew calls a "space of sharing, where telling stories and listening to them co-exist in a changed power relationship" ("Recovering the Past" 173). Spaces of sharing are integral to the means through which reconciliation is conceptualised in both official and creative discourses. In documents such as *Bringing Them Home, The Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1997), which I discuss at length in the following chapter, the dynamics of listening to Indigenous perspectives/histories – and, subsequently, making room for reverie and contemplation – are crucial to affective reconciliation processes.

This idea of sharing space, or making room, is not limited to Sorry Novels or historical narratives. In contemporary non-historical fiction such as Wright's *Carpentaria*, Winton's *Dirt Music*, as well as Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country* and *Landscape of Farewell*, spaces of listening where Indigenous and non-Indigenous

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happen and there will continue to be a gulf of silence and denial between black and white in Australia" (cited in Kossew, "Saying Sorry" 181).

peoples not only share stories but also, through shared experiences, imagine new ways of being-in-the-world are also foregrounded.

While meaningful co-existence is not always (or even often) the outcome in these narratives, this study argues that one of the key ways in which the shifting dynamics of cross-cultural exchange are foregrounded is via a focus upon intercultural space. For example, Sara Upstone, in her book *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel*, suggests that in postcolonial literature "a chaotic sense of the spatial on all scales becomes a resource towards the re-visioning of the postcolonial position in society and consequent issues of identity" (15). The Australian literary works analysed in this study (which are generically classified as postcolonial) all *actively* contribute to reconciliation processes by chaotically reconfiguring spaces of home. In many of the narratives, this destabilising process allows not only a politicised reconsideration of ways of being-in-the-world but also the potential to imagine spaces of hope.

Space has been increasingly recognised as "both a *production*, shaped through a diverse range of social processes and human interventions" as well as "a *force* that in turn influences, directs and delimits possibilities of action and ways of human being in the world" (Wegner 181; original emphasis). *The Secret River*, *Her Sister's Eye*, *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Sorry*, *Carpentaria*, *Dirt Music*, *Gould's Book of Fish*, *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance* are all concerned with spaces of home: the different ways in which people make themselves at home in the world. This thesis contends that such a focus creates a socio-spatial arena for cross-cultural exchange. By honing in on – and frequently unsettling – the domestic sphere, these literary works ambivalently reconfigure spaces of home and scenes of dwelling. In a number of the texts analysed here, this process literally paves the way for the representation of common ground, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to come together in meaningful ways. Yet while the dismantling of home is presented as a catalyst for potential future reconciliation in some texts, other works problematize this process and reveal the ways in which this kind of cultural bridging can cover-over, or supress, cultural difference.

There are, of course, problems with viewing postcolonial issues and discourses through the lens of intercultural space. Matthias Fielder argues, for instance, that "the term intercultural space carries a somewhat utopian and benign vision of evenly balanced cultural encounters and therefore the risk of ignoring questions of power, domination and superiority" (276). Like the criticism directed towards the policy of

reconciliation (which I will discuss at length in the following chapters) this idea of 'meeting in the middle' can fail to acknowledge the greater need for reparation and change to be made on the 'side' of settler Australians. To combat this, Fielder suggests that "an approach that views the postcolonial discourse as an intellectual intercultural space has to emphasise the 'inter'" and recognise that "in this inter-sphere questions of power and domination are not excluded but raised and openly discussed" (276). For Fielder, intercultural space "should not be perceived as a place of encounter but of negotiation and discussion," a dialogical zone of shifts and exchange (276). In keeping with this valuable ethic, this thesis analyses the ways in which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers are approaching intercultural space – and the different means through which dynamics of co-existence are played out – so as to valorise the co-existence of various ways of being-in-the-world.

Lyn Jacobs provides a useful rationale for the way fiction can be a performative agent of cross-cultural exchange:

> Overdue recognition of Indigenous people's relationships to place, with attendant propriety and custodial rights, has created the space for different cross-cultural dialogues. Situated between such polarised realities, fictions (narratives advertised as such) are useful media wherein social, political and ontological parameters can be interrogated and re-negotiated. They offer alternative directions which, like screens, may shape and project the hopes and desires of a nation ("Mapping Shared Space" 86).

It is this "space for different cross-cultural dialogues" which this thesis is engaging with and, hopefully, contributing to. Whilst this dissertation explores scenes of intercultural communication, my analysis of the literary works comes, invariably, from my position as a white reader. Willa McDonald, in her article "Tricky Business: Whites on Black Territory," outlines some of the problems facing non-Indigenous scholars researching/representing Indigenous subject matter. Drawing on the work of Christine Morris – who claims that "non-Indigenous writers should stay away from anything that comes under customary law or depicts our basic world-view and values" (cited in McDonald 12) – McDonald's article supports the suggestion that non-Indigenous writers can write about "issues involving interactions between blacks and whites" (12). By specifically analysing spaces/instances of racial interaction, this study aims to be respectful of cultural "gaps"; or what Alison Ravenscroft refers to in *The Postcolonial*

Eye: *White Australian Desire and the Visual Field of Race* as "the silence into which things must fall, the places of unknowability" (18). However, I am primarily concerned with analysing the various kinds of "bridging," or reconciliatory spaces Australian writers deploy in their representations of race relations and will, therefore, take a "middle-road" approach to reading race; an approach which allows for gaps whilst, at the same time, listens for new dialogues of intersubjectivity.

The remainder of this chapter examines the multiple ways in which reconciliation frameworks intersect with works of contemporary Australian writers: exploring the 'national condition' in different types of narrative; the concept of 'imaginal pedagogies' (as a way of connecting the various ways in which reconciliation is framed); and finally, the distinctly spatial means through which the reconciliation movement is positioned by conflicting narratives of home.

1.1. Writing Australia's National Condition

> Without an indigenous literature people can remain alien in their own soil. An unsung country does not fully exist or enjoy adequate international exchange with the inner life.
> -Miles Franklin, *Laughter, Not for a Cage* (3)

The Secret River, *Her Sister's Eye*, *Sorry*, *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Carpentaria*, *Dirt Music*, *Gould's Book of Fish*, *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance* are stories composed by, and written about, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and are explicitly concerned with reimagining country and race from regional perspectives. Yet, while these texts, in many ways, constitute a cognizant canon of Australian literature – that is, a canon which is deeply concerned with ethical issues (evidenced through their engagement with processes of historical revisioning and 'writing back') – some of these works also problematize the category of national literature.

Since colonisation, Australian literature has tended to be produced predominantly by, and for the interests of, Anglo-Australians. As Catriona Elder notes in *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity*, "for most of the twentieth century, the rights and privileges granted to white people—British subjects or Australian citizens— were not extended to Indigenous peoples, just as they were not extended to residents of

Australia who had come from Asia"[7] this has meant that "Indigenous peoples' views were mostly missing from the stories of Australian-ness" (13). To give a sense of meaning to the new place they found themselves in, early British settlers/invaders wrote themselves-in to being Australian, a process which over-wrote existent Indigenous conceptions of country and being-in-the-world (Rutherford 32). This process of writing over, however, failed to remove the millennia of Indigenous occupation of the land (a relationship which is also expressed and sustained via narrative). Furthermore, while Indigenous perspectives and connections to country have been repressed and controlled by non-Indigenous Australians, they have remained central to the ways in which non-Indigenous Australians imagine themselves. Elder claims, for instance, that in many settler Australian narratives an underlying "understanding that Australia is someone else's land" disturbs the creation of a coherent national identity (14).

For example, the Anglo-Australian bias of Australian fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – as well as the ways in which Aboriginal connections to country disturb settler narratives – can be illustrated by looking at Miles Franklin's account of Australian literature in her posthumous book of lectures *Laughter, Not for a Cage* (1956). In the book's opening essay, "The Invasion of Aboriginal Australia. The Convict Brand," Franklin examines the history of the Australian novel to assess whether Australia, "in the century and a half" since colonisation has "produced anything […] to add to the thousand years of legends and writings of the British Isles?" (3). To the contemporary reader, Franklin's question can be immediately answered by invoking the vast store of oral literature that belongs to Australia's First Nation Peoples; ancient stories and songlines which continue to inform the means through which people tend to country and experience belonging. However, while Franklin acknowledges the history of Aboriginal storytelling – and recognises that, for a nation trying to invent itself, the failure to include such stories in national literature is a "squandered opportunity" – she ultimately argues that attempts to "grasp the tatters of aboriginal myth and legend to inject into Australian poetry, art, music" is pointless "because in all but a few portions of the continent the aborigines have wraithed away into oblivion [sic]" (9). While

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[7]Non-British migrants have made major contributions in the writing of Australia, this thesis, however, focusses primarily upon the relationships between British migrants, or Anglo-Celtic settlers, and Indigenous peoples.

Franklin's comments about Aboriginal people were based upon beliefs held at the time,[8] her conception of wraith-like Indigeneity is suggestive of the modes through which the trauma of colonisation and the unacknowledged history of Aboriginal dispossession haunts non-Indigenous writing and home-making processes.

Although the oral literary traditions of Aboriginal Australians are ostensibly overlooked in the traditions described by Franklin, the stories and experiences of Indigenous Australians are latently embedded in her fears of remaining "alien" and of never having the connections to place (3). Franklin's ideas about having an "unsung country" (3) – which are, seemingly, directed towards settler Australians producing "Indigenous literature" – echoes how Aboriginal people use particular stories to tend 'country'; and (I would argue, unconsciously) gestures towards the impact dispossession has had on this ontological relationship. While Franklin and most of her early-to-mid-twentieth century contemporaries were unable to see how existing Indigenous literary traditions had been singing this country for millennia – to recognise that, in Australia, there has, in fact, always been (to paraphrase A.A. Phillips) a "long-established or interestingly different cultural tradition to give security and distinction to its interpreters" (28)[9] – *contemporary* writers and critics of Australian literature have been unable to ignore contributions Aboriginal writers make towards the national imaginary.

In his "Forward" to the recent book *A Companion to Australian Aboriginal Literature*, Nicholas Jose states that "at the start of the twenty-first century, Indigenous Australian writers are prominent practitioners in the major literary genres of fiction and non-fiction, poetry, drama, and writing for young people" (10). This is not, however, a sudden flourishing. Indigenous writers have been contributing to the canon of Australian literature (written in English) for nearly two centuries. The *Macquarie Pen Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* begins, for example, with the letter orally composed by Bennelong to Lord Sydney's Steward, Mr Philips in 1796. According to the

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[8] Franklin's essay was published in the late 1950s and represents the persistence of certain beliefs about Indigenous peoples. As Anne Le Guellec acknowledges at the start of her essay on Scott's *Benang*:

> At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, social Darwinism in Australia gave scientific legitimacy to the colonial representation of the Aborigines as the "dying race." The "half-caste" himself was described as a mere "passing phase" in the history of white conquest (35).

[9] Australian writers and especially critics/reviewers tended to look to England for validation and the oral traditions of Indigenous culture did not really assimilate to the written literary tradition, this idea was examined in A.A Phillips famous essay on the "cultural cringe."

anthology's editors, Anita Heiss and Peter Minter, by speaking of "one man's experience at the cusp of a sudden transformation in the human condition of all Aboriginal peoples," Bennelong's letter (like all the texts in the collection) makes a "significant contribution to the literature of the world" (1). For the most part, Bennelong's letter is used as an example of the innately political nature of Indigenous literature. "For Aboriginal people," as Heiss and Minter point out, "the use of English became a necessity within the broader struggle to survive colonisation" and "from the early days, writing became a tool of negotiation in which Aboriginal voices could be heard in a form recognisable to British authority" (2). Yet while Bennelong's letter – with its many requests for European articles such as "stockings" and "handkerchiefs" – reveals, on the one hand, the impact of British invasion on the Eora peoples, it also displays the early cusping of Indigenous and non-Indigenous forms of cross-cultural communication and exchange.

The literary contributions Indigenous writers make to the national literature tend to be discussed in terms of writing-in to a canon; the ways in which these authors are forced to adapt to, and adopt, European literary traditions. It also needs to be acknowledged, however, that Indigenous texts in English do not just stem from Indigenous people's exposure to the conventions of communicating in the language of the invader. Indigenous texts that are composed in English also draw upon oral storytelling traditions, shifting networks of social communication and a vibrant (ancient) cultural heritage which centralises the significance of story and storytelling techniques (Heiss and Minter 1; Jose 11; Scott "From Drill to Dance" 4). In her analysis of Bennelong's letter, Penny Van Toorn argues, for example, that the document is "an entangled object," shaped by European discursive models, "Indigenous customs and social values" and a shared understanding of the importance of narrative in "bringing news" (54-58). The centuries since Bennelong's letter have, of course, seen a further hybridisation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous literary traditions. For instance, Alexis Wright, in her examination of the poetry of the late Oodgeroo Noonuccal – whose poetry and political activism were central to the 1967 referendum in Australia, which recognised Indigenous people as citizens – claims: "I feel very strongly that Oodgeroo was continuing an ancient message about the value of respect, a message at the heart of the epical stories of Aboriginal law in our long civilisation" ("A Weapon of Poetry" 20).

The coupling of the cultural and political which is so marked in the poetry of Oodgeroo, is also present in contemporary Indigenous literature.

In the last two decades, Aboriginal writers have moved into the forefront of Australian literature and the arts, changing how Australia is perceived by its own citizens as well as the denizens of the world (Wheeler 37). Amalgamating traditional storytelling practices and ancient themes with modern and unique literary styles, contemporary narratives by Indigenous writers such as Cleven, Scott and Wright engage with regenerative processes of "singing the country afresh." For example, Wright's modern sprawling epic of the top-end, *Carpentaria*, examines the inextricable and enduring links which exist – between people, ancestral beings, land and story – alongside the everyday realities of race relations in Australia. The intricate and sophisticated fusion of everyday experience with "maban reality" – the "magic" Indigenous peoples traditionally experienced as "implicit in the world" (Mudrooroo, "Maban Reality" 1)[10] – in novels such as *Carpentaria*, reveal a shift in the ways in which Australia is represented in works of "serious literature."

"Serious" literature is a broad term which is often applied to works of fiction that explore the ethics central to the condition of being human. For example, drawing on the work of György Lukács,[11] Alex Miller – in his recent public lecture for the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, entitled "It is Not Over Yet" – uses the term "the serious novel" to describe Australian literary works such as *Carpentaria* and *That Deadman Dance* which are set within "an authentic" historical or cultural moment and are "central to a civilised perception of the human project." Whether it is through re-visioning the frontier, journeying away from the familiar, inhabiting what Michel Foucault calls "Other spaces," or reconceptualising what it might mean to authentically dwell, all of the literary works examined in this dissertation are intrinsically concerned with the human – and by extension the national – condition. In Australia, this kind of "serious" literary narrative has tended to be associated with the realist mode. As Kim Wilkins, in her essay "Popular Genres and the Australian Literary Community: The Case

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[10]While this study is aware of the controversy surrounding the identity of Mudrooroo, it follows the lead of Adam Shoemaker who suggests that, despite the uncertainties pertaining to the author's cultural "authenticity," his literary and critical work remains pertinent ("Mudrooroo and the Curse of Authenticity" 8).

[11]In *Theory of the Novel*, György Lukács equates the emergence of the novel as "the major modern genre" with "a change in the structure of human consciousness" essentially claiming that "the development of the novel reflects modifications in man's way of defining himself in relation to all categories of existence" (De Man 529).

of Fantasy Fiction," asserts "the Australian literary community" appears to offer a "central place" to narratives that are "literary, set in Australia, and rel[y] on realism" as these are the sort of texts which are most commonly taught in universities, that win major awards and receive the most media coverage (269). Yet, can the realist mode be applied to literary works that incorporate realities beyond the Western tradition, such as Wright's *Carpentaria*?

Like Wilkins, Paul Salzman's analysis of "Literary Fiction" – in the text he co-authored with Ken Gelder *After the Celebration*: *Australian Fiction 1989-2007* (which follows on from their previous work *The New Diversity: Australian Fiction from 1970-1988*) – recognises how realism tends to function as the marker of what is "literary" in Australia (136). Emphasising the means through which notions of morality are ethically staged in these works, Salzman applies the term "moral realism" to Australian texts that provide a "critique" of nation via the exploration of the "relationship between the individual, the family and society" (136). Moral realist works of Australian literature have typically been associated with "Left-leaning" writers who are concerned with social issues (such as race-relations and equality) and are, therefore, underpinned by the idea that certain moral facts exist in the world (Salzman 136). As most Australian literary works are invariably interested in "work[ing] through issues of identity and place" (Gelder and Salzman 10) – issues such as those raised by Elder and Franklin above – it is not surprising that moral realist narratives typically focus on the ways in which geography, culture, and identity are linked in Australia. Regional settings, particularly the bush, have always figured highly in the imagining of Australia as nation. In *Dreams and Nightmares of a White Australia*, Elder claims that "key Australian national fictions" typically assume "the primacy of the space of the outback and the bush," sites where a level of 'real' Australian-ness is apparently evidenced (33).[12] Contemporary writers of Australian moral realist literature regularly draw upon and unsettle fictions of the bush by reconfiguring dominant rural paradigms. By focussing specifically upon race-relations, all of the literary works analysed in this dissertation disturb, for example, the romanticised ideals embedded in the pioneer ethic and the notions of uncontested settlement. Yet, while *all* of the literary works discussed in this

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[12] This idea was made prominent by Russel Ward in his book *The Australian Legend* (1958), which examined the ways in which settler Australian identity was related to an ethos of the bush

study contribute to moral realist traditions, it tends to be only non-Indigenous writers who are included in Australia's most celebrated literary genre.

It is interesting to note that although Salzman recognises that Aboriginal writers are making major contributions to Australian literature, he does not include texts such as *Carpentaria* or *Benang* – narratives which arguably fit his criteria of moral realism – in his list of moral realist works (137). Focusing on how novels such as *Benang* and *Carpentaria* offer something distinctively new, Salzman instead classifies both texts as works of "experimental fiction" (137).[13] Experimental fiction is a term which is most often applied to works that do not strictly adhere to the conventionally realist mode. I do not, on the surface, contest Salzman's categorisation of Scott and Wright's texts. Experimental, or avant-garde, literature is a productive genre which highlights cultural shifts and "raises fundamental questions about the nature and being of verbal art itself" (Bray, Gibbons and McHale 1) and both *Benang* and *Carpentaria* are novels that are innovative and distinct, particularly in their use of language. I do, however, wish to query the grounds for this reading and worry about the potential such a categorisation has for marginalising the social critique embedded within these texts. Salzman does not elaborate on what he believes to specifically mark Wright and Scott's texts as experimental but, through the selection of texts he includes in his list of award-winning experimental fiction, the assumption can be made that the these works are grouped together due to their evocation of the fantastic.

It is important to recognise that Salzman does not only group literary works by Aboriginal writers in the category of experimental fiction but also includes narratives by settler novelists – such as Tom Flood's *Oceana Fine* and Murray Bail's *Eucalyptus* – in his shortlist of award-winning experimental Australian texts (137). Bail and Flood's texts have both been discussed in terms of their engagement with the fantastic. The fantastic is a label which is applied to texts that "contradict" the "ground rules" of expectation through their inclusion of the "unexpected" (Rabkin 5, 8); or elements that are usually associated with notions of the supernatural, magic, or make-believe. Beginning with the line "Once upon a time" – a phrase Rebecca McNeer claims marks the text, from the outset, as a distinctly non-realist work (171) – Bail's novel, for example, aligns itself with

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[13] It is interesting to note that *Carpentaria* is actually discussed in the history section of this book, although it is a text which is set in contemporary times, and Alexis Wright repeatedly distances herself from the genre of historical fiction in her interview with Kerry O'Brien (216).

the fairy tale genre. The realist mode is also unsettled in Flood's work through a number of distinctly fantastic incursions and an overwhelming sense of disorientation (Heald 93). However, while Wright and Scott's narratives also appear to deploy elements of the fantastic – *Benang* begins, for example, with the image of a character that hovers above the ground and *Carpentaria* opens with the Rainbow Serpent creating the land – these elements can, perhaps, be more accurately read as manifestations of an Indigenous reality rather than indicators of make-believe or fantasy.

Realism, like reality, is a constructed notion and does not pertain to just one dominant (Western) mode of thinking/knowing. As Mudrooroo states,

> I believe that the so-called natural reality, which achieved an unacceptable dominance of world-shaping, [...] displaced the [...] maban from the world and the magic implicit in the world. It is this scientific natural reality which changed the consciousness of others as it shape-changed the world [...] based on the so-called natural sciences, over the various indigenous realities (1).

Contemporary Aboriginal literary works connect multiple realities. Yet, instead of reading these multiple realities as part of a single experience, or approach, much criticism of Aboriginal literature seeks to breakdown this innately heterogeneous engagement with the world into divergent realities. In her examination of the criticism directed towards Wright's *Carpentaria*, Ravenscroft claims, for example, that many readings of this text commandeer the term "magic realism" to draw attention to the ways in which magic (or the maban) sits adjacent to other (Western) realities (62). Foregrounding Franz Roh's use of the term – which he coined in his essay "Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism" to draw attention to the *everyday* ways in which magic impacted being-in-the-world (17) – Ravenscroft argues that magic realism:

> [...] tends now not to be taken in Roh's sense of art that represents the magic of so-called reality [...] instead, 'magic' and 'realism' are taken to be two distinct, even oppositional, representational codes at work in a text and referring to two distinct worlds or cultures. These worlds are now keenly associated with the world of the coloniser on one hand and the colonised on the other. Unsurprisingly, the so-called magic falls on the side of Indigenous colonised subjects and so-called reality remains on the side of the colonisers (62).

The magic associated with Indigenous subjects is linked to the Dreaming. As Aileen Moreton Robinson states, in her essay "I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in White Postcolonizing Society," the Dreaming provides Indigenous peoples

with "the precedents for what is believed to have occurred in the beginning in the original form of social living created by ancestral beings" but also functions as a fluid template for how to live in the world (31). The miss-use of the term magic realism that Ravenscroft objects to, fails to acknowledge how "magic" and "realism" are meant to be inseparable; and magic realism is meant to describe a sense of reality being enhanced (rather than undermined or contradicted) by the existence of magic. This mis-application of the term aligns Aboriginal spiritualism with the fantastical; a move which fails to adequately describe how the Dreaming is an implicit and ongoing reality in some people's experiences of being-in-the-world. Intricately detailing a profound moral code, the Dreaming is not a clever trope of experimental fiction, but forms an expansive philosophy, or guide, on how to live an informed, connected and meaningful life.

While it is indeed arguable that Salzman is referring to *Carpentaria* and *Benang* as experimental because they mark a shift in Australian literature, it may be that experimental literature is a term which fails, in this context, to account for the distinct contribution these texts make to narrating Australia's national condition because it sets them against the category of moral realist works (which are identified as addressing social and cultural identity). In their "Introduction" to *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, Bray, Gibbons and McHale state that:

> In the last third of the twentieth century, avant-garde writers began to express certain reservations about the category "experimental," which they viewed as dismissive, a way of segregating or ghettoizing innovative literature and preventing it from or infiltrating the mainstream (Bray, Gibbons and McHale 2).

By specifically tagging works such as *Benang* and *Carpentaria* as examples of experimental fiction, *After the Celebration* risks marginalising these important stories; hiding them away in the category of minority – rather than national – literature. While this study recognises that Aboriginal writers are indeed bringing something new and unique to the field of Australian literature, I believe it is more useful to think of texts such as *Benang* and *Carpentaria* as examples of moral realism (rather than experimental fiction or magic realism), because this label encompasses the creative, ethical and essentially political ways in which these literary works are reconfiguring Australia's national condition.

The elements of experimentalism that are undoubtedly present in Wright and Scott's novels can, on the one hand, be seen to correspond with political and

social/progress reforms; marking a new receptiveness to hearing other Australian stories. *Benang* and *Carpentaria* (as well as *Her Sister's Eye* and *That Deadman Dance*) also, however, provide evidence for the persistence of Indigenous cultural and literary traditions. All of the innovative works of fiction analysed in this study are demonstrative of the major shifts in Australian literary culture; changes to the forms through which not only race relations are perceived and articulated, but also how country (or nation) is broadly conceptualised. In light of the cultural work these texts perform – the ways in which they are all agents of social transformation – this thesis proposes that each of these novels ought to be recognised for its pedagogical potential.

1.2. "Imaginal Pedagogies of Reconciliation"

In Australia, the re-imagining of nation – along with Western systems of knowledge – is an anti-colonial process integral to the reconciliation movement. As reconciliation requires "a restructuring of the nation's knowledge of itself," Jane M Jacobs argues that "it is not surprising that one of the primary responsibilities of the Council for Reconciliation is to educate wider Australia about Aboriginal culture" and "to remould the story of Australian 'settlement'" ("Resisting Reconciliation" 209). Narrating the powerful stories through which Aboriginal realities sing the country – and work with/against processes of historical revisioning by instigating new cross-cultural dialogues – are just some of the ways in which the often popular texts examined in this study contribute to processes of educating "wider Australia." Novels are not usually thought of as pedagogical tools. However, while this thesis recognises that literary works are not required to adhere to the same kinds of notions as official reconciliatory discourse (or restricted by conventions of truth like a historical or political text may be), it argues that it is impossible not to view narratives such as *The Secret River*, *Her Sister's Eye*, *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Sorry*, *Carpentaria*, *Dirt Music*, *Gould's Book of Fish*, *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance* as instruments of pedagogy.

Most of the novels examined in this study are composed by critically acclaimed and/or popular Australian writers. Tim Winton's books, for example, regularly feature in "Top Ten Reading" lists, are widely taught at secondary level and enjoy an extremely large fan base. "The Tim Winton phenomenon" (Dixon, "Tim Winton" 242), has meant that narratives such as *Dirt Music* have become influential platforms which imaginatively showcase specific issues. While Winton, however, is not widely recognised

for contributions his narratives make towards reconciliation,[14] Aboriginal writers such as Scott and Wright are public intellectuals and their work is often explicitly treated as a form of reconciliatory advocacy. Scott openly uses his profile as a critically acclaimed Noongar Australian novelist as a cultural platform, a position from which to draw attention to other issues that are important to both him and his community. For example, in his "2012 Miles Franklin Literary Award Oration" lecture held at Curtin University (following the announcement of his second Miles Franklin Award for *That Deadman Dance*), Scott openly expresses the hope that his work will raise community awareness:

> I thought if I could manage to win prizes, like I did with the last novel [*Benang*], I could try and use that to shine a light on the other sort of work I was doing [community work around the regeneration of Noongar language, and reconnection with cultural heritage], which involves a lot more people and is not just a solitary act of writing (3:37).

Literature, as the above comments suggest, does not exist in a vacuum but is informed by – and acts as a vehicle for – other projects; in this case the regeneration of Noongar language. Literary prizes such as the Miles Franklin, are powerful because, as Grenville has said, they "give writers headlines in a society where writing doesn't usually make headlines" (cited in Dixon, "The Tim Winton" 242). In this way, widely-publicised texts such as *That Deadman Dance* can be seen to have explicitly pedagogical functions; educating readers not only at the level of narrative but through the cultural work they do beyond the text.

Due to their imaginative engagement with concepts pertaining to co-existence and their often overt commitment to the aims and processes of reconciliation, this study proposes that literary works such as Scott's *That Deadman Dance* can be read as what Peter Bishop terms "imaginal pedagogies of reconciliation." In his essay "The Shadow of Hope: Reconciliation and Imaginal Pedagogies," Bishop examines what he calls "the extreme demands that a reconciliation agenda places upon the imagination" (31). Drawing upon the notion of the "mythopoesis" – which, stemming from the Greek word for myth making, emphasises the important role story plays in perceiving and conceptualising the world (Leonard and Willis 2) – Bishop analyses the ways in which

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[14] Dixon notes that although Winton "has had surprisingly few academic articles written about his books […] he has been very widely set on undergraduate and secondary school curricula, he maintains a constant presence in the mass media, and he is a favourite with reading groups and the educated general reader" and his novels are recognised for having a persuasive national 'voice' ("Tim Winton" 242).

postcolonial narratives pedagogically engage with contexts of reconciliation. Discourses of reconciliation call upon people to imaginatively participate in complex and empathetic processes. As Bishop aptly claims:

> A reconciliation imagination concerns itself with issues such as: the difficult challenges faced in a double process of acknowledgment and forgiveness, of grief and trauma alongside hope and healing; the complexities of acknowledging different ways of knowing, valuing, and experiencing in an inter- or trans-cultural dialogue; the struggle to re-imagine memory, responsibility, shame, grief, land, identity, and place; how to heal the imagination in the face of tragedy; how to imagine hope and transformation; plus how imagining itself functions in the struggles for such things (33).

Imaginal discourses, such as the postcolonial literary works analysed in this dissertation, are helpful to reconciliation processes because they can potentially enable a shared imaginary, an accommodative cross-cultural vision of the future.

Bishop's essay forms part of a larger body of work which aims to reconfigure education by instilling the importance of the mythopoetic, or imaginal, in pedagogical practice. Pedagogy – the method or practice of teaching – is intrinsic to processes of reconciliation. For example, as I discuss in the following chapter, The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has repeatedly emphasised "the importance of addressing the remarkable lack of public historical knowledge of Australia's colonial past" (Attwood 255). Reconciliation processes which seek to address this key goal through historical revisioning are, however, brimming with contestations and objections; counter-arguments which have undermined, rather than facilitated, official moves towards reconciliation. Bishop's essay suggests that a departure from formal methodologies – such as revisionist works that seek to tally frontier casualties (which I will discuss further in Chapter 2) – in favour of the imaginal, is crucial to reconciliation pedagogy. The aim of imaginal pedagogies of reconciliation is *not* to "establish a new and totalising discourse" (Bishop, 43) but, instead, to frame meaningful cross-cultural dialogue. Unlike other more formal or fact-driven reconciliation discourses, literary works which creatively engage with race relations are able to empathetically imagine new forms of interaction. The scenes of cross-cultural exchange imagined in these texts have the potential to be sensitive to cultural difference and the ongoing impact of trauma *as well as* recognise the significance of instilling a sense of hope for the future.

Emphasising cross-cultural contact, communication, and exchange, all of the novels analysed in this thesis actively engage with, as well as produce, reconciliation pedagogy. That is not to suggest, however, that these texts are all doing the same kind of cultural work. Grenville, Cleven, Miller, Jones, Wright, Winton, Flanagan and Scott each contribute to process of reconciliation differently. The forms through which race relations are represented vary significantly across texts. While some of the narratives participate in processes of historical re-visioning, others maintain a contemporary focus and prefer to concentrate on how race relations are being perceived/experienced now. This study argues that an effective pedagogy of reconciliation requires narratives by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to be read alongside, or across, each other. Bishop claims that:

> Destitute times need collaborations; communities of imaginal players, workers, practitioners, theorists. Conversations are required between diverse perspectives on the imaginal that sustain difference, debate, and disagreement (43).

According to Bishop, imaginal pedagogies of reconciliation can be read as "*ars memoria*, as particular theatres of imaginal play" (45). Following this ethic, this study specifically focusses on scenes of interaction in the texts; imaginal encounters between indigenous and non-Indigenous people in which different ways of being-in-the-world are trialled. By positioning characters in various intercultural zones, narratives such as *The Secret River*, *Her Sister's Eye*, *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Sorry*, *Carpentaria*, *Dirt Music*, *Gould's Book of Fish*, *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance* creatively test (and contest) reconciliation processes.

Cross-cultural interaction is shown to significantly alter many of the characters in these texts, instilling them (as well as the readers) with not only the knowledge which is required for reconciliation to be contemplated, but also a capacity for empathy. An empathetic response requires imagination. As I will discuss at length in the following chapters, many of the literary works examined in this study are attuned to the dynamics of empathy and the ways in which trying to imagine the perspectives/experiences of others can benefit processes of reconciliation. Yet, while this study is attentive in the empathetic cross-cultural dialogues that emerge in and between texts, it is specifically interested in the spaces – the scenes or settings – Australian writers deploy to frame

these communications, and what they may tell us about shifting conceptions of home and belonging.

1.3. Home: Frameworks of Reconciliatory Space

One of the primary contentions of this thesis is that for texts to be productive sites of reconciliation, they need to not only address the legacy of trauma which undermines contemporary race-relations but also create hope in the interstices of grief and blame, regret and guilt. All the literary works analysed here stage encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to re-envision the past and create cross-cultural spaces of potential future transformation. Furthermore, many of these texts not only deconstruct the processes through which individual homemaking echoes large scale projects/conceptions of nation building but also tentatively construct new ways to dwell.

Formed through human intervention – practices of building, cultivation, or tending – home is a physical and imaginary product of identity. At the same time, however, home also produces identity in that it encourages certain behaviours and associations. Alison Blunt claims that "images of home form part of a wider spatial lexicon that has become important in theorizing identity, and are often closely tied to ideas about the politics of location and an attempt to situate both knowledge and identity" (*Domicile and Diaspora* 6). Home and identity are reciprocal concepts that reflect both cultural and national understandings of place, space and self. Spaces of home are not, therefore, spaces which are contained, instead – like miniature worlds – they are linked to, and constitutive of, wider social policies and cultural practices. While home spaces are, ideally, sites that shelter and encourage self-expression and imaginative reverie they are also spaces which reflect and produce particular forms of social interaction.

Interpersonal relationships and an engagement with place are integral components of homemaking. In this way, home and homemaking processes are implicitly related to ontological conceptions of "being," the everyday ways in which people experience themselves in-the-world. It is impossible to talk about home and its relation to being-in-the-world without evoking Martin Heidegger's classic elucidation on the subject, foregrounded in his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking." For Heidegger, being-in-the-world is premised upon the concept of dwelling, how people make

themselves at home through "means of building" or cultivating (145). Tracing the etymology of the contemporary German word for building, *Bauen*, Heidegger demonstrates how conceptions of building, dwelling and being are inseparable from each other. Heidegger claims:

> [...] if we listen to what language says in the word *bauen* we hear three things:
> 1. Building is really dwelling.
> 2. Dwelling is the manner in which all mortals are on earth.
> 3. Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings (148).

By also arguing that "the Old English and High German word for building, *buan*, means to dwell," Heidegger draws attention to the notion that "man *is* insofar as he *dwells*" (146-147; original emphasis). Yet while Heidegger recognises that dwelling precedes building – "we do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*" (148; original emphasis) – his philosophy's focus on ideas of "cultivation" (148) and "preservation" (150) means it is problematised in postcolonial contexts that aim to unsettle possessive settler visions of the land/landscape.

Val Plumwood claims, for example, that conceptions of dwelling can be awkward when applied in postcolonial settings as such sites have the tendency to "legitimate projects of [...] purifying home at the expense of [...] indigenous others who do not 'dwell', whose ties to the land do not take the form of cultivation labour " ("Shadow Places" par. 14). Plumwood's suggestion that Indigenous peoples do not dwell is not implying that they do not make themselves at home in the world – a suggestion which would seem to echo the British coloniser's view of indigenous people, and enable doctrines such as *terra nullius* – but instead means that they do not *necessarily* dwell. Stephen Muecke also makes this point in his short ficto-critical essay, "Can You Argue with the Honeysuckle?" Unsettling the language of dwelling, Muecke asks, for example, whether "an Indigenous philosophy of place" has, in fact, "anything to do with ontology, with the nature of the being of things" (39).

In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger emphasises what he sees as the different elements that come together through dwelling – the earth, the sky, mortals, and divinities – which he labels the "fourfold" (150). "Dwelling," according to Heidegger, "preserves the fourfold by bringing the presencing of the fourfold into things" (151). On

the surface, the concept of the fourfold (and how it pertains to dwelling) does not seem all that different from Indigenous philosophies, which claim that the land, people and ancestral creatures are all connected through caring for country. It is the foregrounding of the idea of preservation, however, that is problematic here; the notion that there is potential for separability between different forces. While Muecke is not responding specifically to Heideggarian thought, his claims that in Indigenous "philosophical stories" we "don't find the verb 'to be' [...] the ancestor does not emerge from the chaos of the beginning of the world announcing portentously, 'I Am'," questions the universalising tendency of Western philosophical thought (39). Ontologies of being, Muecke argues, are not foregrounded in Indigenous philosophy because "there is no radical separation of realms (Heaven/Earth) where God is always 'in place' up there" and "humans have to then explain their existence 'down here';" the world is not "bifurcated" but "only one" (39). Muecke's and Plumwood's comments draw attention to the ways in which ontological conceptions of dwelling may not be adequate to encompass cultural differences because, as they demonstrate, there are fundamental variances between how some Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians make themselves at home in the world.

In the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013 discussion paper entitled "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Perspectives on Homelessness," a number of Indigenous peoples perceptions of home were collected and assessed. While some of the findings were not dissimilar to the perceptions of non-Indigenous peoples – such as the idea that while home as a place is important, it is "more than just a shelter" – there emerged some key differences. In the section entitled "Concepts of Home," for instance, "home" was often described as a "community," which extended beyond familial lines associated with Western patterns of kinship and could encompass multiple spaces (sub sec. 3). The most marked area of difference, however, was the way in which conceptions of being at home were linked with a connection to country. The discussion paper states:

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often reported that home is considered to be more than just a dwelling. Home was understood through the connection an individual or group has to country and their ties to the spirituality of the land through the connection a person has with their ancestry. This was reported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia, but particularly in the NT (sub sec. 4).

While the discussion paper suggests that "generally, younger people were less likely to report connection to country as a key characteristic of the concept of home" (sub sec. 4), overall, the results of this report reveal Aboriginal conceptions of home differ from the spatial lexicon of the European tradition, which are typically based upon ideas of permanent dwelling, cultivation and ownership.

The concept of home – and how it relates to questions of identity and belonging – has been deeply troubled in Australia due to the initial and ongoing failure of non-Indigenous peoples (notably British migrants) to recognise and accommodate the home-making practices of Indigenous peoples. "In the Australian context," states Moreton-Robinson, "the sense of belonging, home and place enjoyed by the non-Indigenous subject – colonizer/migrant – is based on the dispossession of the original owners of the land" and is "derived from ownership as understood within the logic of capital" (23). This mode of homemaking is, as Moreton-Robinson notes, "incommensurable" with the ways in which Indigenous peoples experience themselves in the world (23). The sense of home and belonging experienced by many Indigenous peoples is not just premised on ownership – although, that said, the expectation of caring for 'country' has many parallels with the cultivation upon which non-Indigenous home spaces are premised – but "is derived from an ontological relationship to country derived from the Dreaming" (Moreton-Robinson 31). This study argues that the varying socio-spatial aspects which are embedded in the concept of home make it a salient metaphor for cross-cultural belonging in works of official reconciliation discourse, historical re-visioning and imaginal pedagogies.

Discussions of race relations in Australia regularly deploy spatial metaphors pertaining to home. Resistance to Aboriginal Land Rights in the 1990s, for example, specifically framed home as an embattled space, with repeated references to people's 'own back yards' being under threat.[15] Calling upon the emotive connection people have with home, Prime Minister Paul Keating subtly deployed metaphors pertaining to dwelling during his famous "Redfern Park Speech" (1992). By using phrases such as, "if we open one door another will follow" and "we need these practical building blocks of change," Keating's speech draws on notions of a common humanity (21). Like Keating,

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[15] Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett fuelled widespread racism in 1992 when he declared in Parliament that suburban backyards could be at risk from claims flowing on from the Mabo decision (for more on this see Fiona Allon, *Renovation Nation: Our Obsession with Home*).

Jacobs aligns the reconciliation movement in Australia with ideas about being at home. By framing her discussion with the work of Hegel – specifically the importance he placed on reconciling both "the positive *and negatives*" of the social world[16] – Jacobs suggests that home spaces need to be reconfigured in reconciliation discourses ("Resisting Reconciliation" 206; original emphasis).

In the novels analysed in this study, space (particularly sites which pertain to home) becomes a non-verbal medium through which positive and negative ideas and expectations pertaining to reconciliation – and wider conceptions of meaningful being-in-the-world – can be *figuratively* articulated and questioned. In his interview with fellow Australian novelist, Charlotte Wood, Scott claims, for example, that "through the many meaning-making devices that literature makes available" you "can start to shape what's nonverbal, and you can discover new intellectual territory" ("The Writer's Room" 75). It is this "shaping" or moulding of "new territory" in the form of social space that this dissertation is specifically interested in analysing; the literary production of reconciliatory space.

Henri Lefebvre – who famously examines the multiple (and often conflicting) means through which social space is created and maintained in *The Production of Space* – proposes that "every society – and hence every mode of production with its subvariants – produces a space, its own space" (31). Lefebvre is not suggesting here that social space is homogenous or unaffected by notions of difference; on the contrary, he is deeply aware of the ways in which difference and power impact the production and impact of social space (32). What Lefebvre means by this is that there are certain defining (specifically regional) variants, or "spatial practices," which inform the production of social space, such as history or politics (31). In Australia, the collective but not always coherently driven movement toward reconciliation marks a major social/cultural reconfiguration of the means through which social space is articulated and produced. For example, W.E.H Stanner – in his famous 1968 Boyer Lecture series

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[16]For Hegel, reconciliation (or versöhnung) refers to "both a process and a state," the process of "overcoming alienation from the social world" which, then, results in the state of "being at home in the social world" (Hardimon, 95). While Hegel's philosophy did not specifically seek to enable reconciliation between different racial groups – but, instead, sought to help "the people of the nineteenth century to overcome their alienation from central institutions" such as "the family, civil society and the state" (Hardimon 1) – his ideas resonate with some aspects of contemporary reconciliation processes in Australia.

"After the Dreaming" – emphasises the ways in which Aboriginal Australians were routinely ignored in the production of Australian space through this famous analogy:

> A partial survey is enough to let me make the point that inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absent-mindedness. It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned into habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale (188-189).

The novels analysed throughout this study are all involved in the production of new Australian spaces, spaces which are sensitive to the fraught dynamics and shifts in power that reconciliation demands. This is, however, an ongoing process, which – not unlike the reconciliation movement itself – can have no definitive end date or fully settled outcome.

Literary critics often draw attention to the ways in which moral realist narratives fail to offer any resolutions to the problems/issues they examine. In their co-written "Introduction" to *After the Celebration*, Gelder and Salzman claim, for instance, that while many contemporary Australian literary works seem to ask "what have we become?" few "gesture towards possible futures" (12). This study argues, however, that the multiple ways in which Australian novelists produce and use social space does, in fact, create a template for the future. All of the literary works examined in the ensuing chapters explore modes through which a sense of being *meaningfully* at home in the world can be developed. In each of these texts, homemaking, like reconciliation, is depicted as an entangled process of grappling: of learning how to deal with the impact of trauma while at the same time maintaining the potential for spaces of hope to evolve, sites which enable people to come together and share their differences. According to Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, home is a distinctly "spatial imaginary: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places"(2). By applying this definition to the multifarious conceptions of home imagined in contemporary Australian texts, this thesis hopes to draw attention to the ways in which spaces and systems of dwelling demarcate the potential cross-cultural exchange.

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The role of space in literature can be approached from a number of different angles. Being mindful of the diverse ideas, themes, and issues informing the production and experience of space, each chapter of this thesis, compares the various ways in which certain spaces – and critical paradigms – are evoked across a range of texts by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers. In keeping with this approach, this dissertation surveys scenes of cross-cultural exchange in contemporary Australian narratives from a number different spaces/spatial perspectives. The following chapter, for example, analyses the purely conceptual space of 'the gap' – the zone of difference purported to exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – and explores the various theoretical approaches, or positions in the field, this distinctly spatial metaphor has framed.

While this thesis finds diversity in the depiction of home spaces in contemporary Australian literature, it is also necessary to recognise the ongoing impact traditional, Western sites of home and home-making practices still have upon cultural/national identity in Australia. Considering the obsession with concepts pertaining to home and belonging in reconciliatory discourse and rhetoric it is not, perhaps, surprising that imaginal pedagogies of reconciliation are frequently framed via traditional domestic topographies, such as colonial homesteads. The third chapter, entitled "The Colonial Homestead: Framing Impasse," for example, explores the ways in which colonial 'power bases' are both literally and metaphorically dismantled in contemporary narratives – such as Grenville's *The Secret River* and Cleven's *Her Sister's Eye* – so as to excavate buried trauma. In Grenville and Cleven's narratives, homesteads are treated as Gothic spaces that are "marked" by the frontier violence upon which they were founded and frame scenes of personal impasse for the characters (the sense of paralysis which accompanies unbelonging). However, while Grenville is unable to move beyond the repressive structure of the homestead, Cleven uses its architecture to foreground scenes of reconciliatory reckoning.

Dreams of movement, however, interrupt the stagnancy of homestead dwelling. The fourth chapter of this thesis, "Interspaces: Framing Transformation through Dwelling-in-Motion," seeks to explore the ways in which the stasis of traditional home spaces (and forms of communication) can be animated via a focus upon sites of

movement; "interspaces" such as bodies, cars and boats. In novels such as Jones's *Sorry*, Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country* and Wright's *Carpentaria*, journeying – or, more specifically, experiences of "dwelling-in-motion" – enable cross-cultural encounters and frequently inspire a reconfiguration of normative dwelling practices. Focussing on tropes of movement in literary works by settler Australians, David Crouch suggests that processes such as dwelling-in-motion – finding reverie in movement – opens up the land and enables an appreciation of other systems of homemaking, such as those practiced by Indigenous Australians ("Writing of Australian Dwelling" 45). The benefits of journeying, however, are not just for non-Indigenous people who wish to incorporate an appreciation of difference into their own home making practices. This chapter also argues that the transformative potential of travel is also foregrounded in *Carpentaria*, where time away from domestic environs ultimately enables a reconnection with family and, by extension, a strengthening of cultural heritage; paving the way for future processes of reconciliation (as Kim Scott has argued) by first consolidating.

While Chapter 4 explores the ways in which journeys between spaces of home and away can potentially transform how people make themselves at home in the world, Chapter 5, entitled "Island Exile: Framing Heterotopia," examines the means through which people dwell when they are unable to return to their spaces of residence. Islands (and island imagery) have been widely deployed in Australian national narratives, framing Australia's carceral heritage as well as its more marketable image as a tourist destination, or paradise. As spaces which simultaneously gesture towards insularity and exteriority, islands have, however, been increasingly deployed as sites of cross-cultural exchange in contemporary Australia texts, where different forms of co-existence are trialled and distinctly monadic connections are highlighted. This chapter argues that in novels such as Wright's *Carpentaria*, Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish* and Winton's *Dirt Music*, scenes of island exile facilitate potentially meaningful forms of cross-cultural interaction by inspiring a heterotopic revisioning of postcolonial space. In these texts, islands frame a reconsideration of normative dwelling practices and, in doing so, instigate new forms of homemaking which are more receptive to other ways of being-in-the-world.

Indigenous ontologies of country are foregrounded in many of the texts analysed throughout this dissertation, revealing the multiple ways in which conceptions of home are framed in Australia. The sixth chapter in this thesis, "Country: Framing Well-being,"

examines the modes through which Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers are using country to frame a sense of well-being which is not derived from ownership, or belonging, but a mutual recognition of cultural difference and a common respect for the environment. In Alex Miller's *Landscape of Farewell* and Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance*, Indigenous and non-Indigenous conceptions of being in country are paralleled; forming a potential blueprint for future reconciliation which acknowledges the specificities of regional engagement with the land.

Themes pertaining to water – specifically rivers, oceans, and fish – run through this study; foregrounding processes of cultural bridging and the benefits of reimaging home as spaces of entangled fluidity. Chapter 7, in conclusion, will examine the way in which meaningful cross-cultural exchange – exchange that creates dynamic spaces of future hope – can benefit from being framed via notions of intercultural entanglement.

2

'The Gap'

Framing Bridging

Reconciliation is about being able to stand on the other side of the river. It
is also about being able to assist with the bridge building needed so that
others can move more readily from one side of the river to the other.
-Frank Brennan, "Reconciling our Differences" (28).

Frames of reconciliation, as the previous chapter demonstrated, are not just informed through the official goals, issues and rhetoric of the reconciliation movement. As multifaceted – and innately entangled – structural devices, reconciliatory frames are also underpinned by debates such as those which continue to take place among historians and postcolonial critics. All of the literary works examined in this thesis demonstrate an awareness of how various disciplines approach reconciliation. Forming the theoretical framework of this thesis, this chapter will, therefore, examine the different ways reconciliation is framed in official reconciliation discourse, works of historical revisioning and postcolonial criticism

In the above epigraph, Frank Brennan's allegory of reconciliation presents interracial exchange via the notion of cultural bridging; Indigenous and non-Indigenous people symbolically meeting 'half-way'. Providing useful imagery – and much of the spatial 'scaffolding' for this study – 'the bridge' has often been positioned as a neutral space in discourses of reconciliation; a site where people can meet irrespective of their cultural differences. Bridging has been deployed as a metaphor of 'coming together' in much official reconciliation discourse. And, its power to function as a symbolic space which unites people has been exemplified by events such as the Sydney 2000 Bridge Walk for Reconciliation, which I discussed in the previous chapter (6). However, as postcolonial critics such as Angela Pratt, Catriona Elder and Cath Ellis demonstrate, cultural bridging can also contribute to processes of assimilation – of covering over cultural differences – and signify the uneven expectations reconciliation places on Indigenous Australians (136). Whether it is via reimagining the conditions of the colonial

frontier, journeying into new territories, or finding similarities in disparate home-making practices, all of the novels (or imaginal pedagogies) analysed in the ensuing chapters demonstrate an awareness of the multiple ways in which conceptions of cultural bridging are played out across diverse discourses of reconciliation.

While works of historical revisioning and postcolonial criticism undoubtedly engage with (and regularly subvert) official processes of reconciliation, there are some difficulties in reading these disciplines/schools of thought alongside each other (or as discourses of reconciliation). For instance, although works of historical revisioning are often discussed through the lens of reconciliation – specifically in terms of the movement's imperative of "sharing history" – such texts are not required to perform the same cultural work as official reconciliatory reports/discussions; they are not endowed with the same socio-political imperatives as the movement itself. Similarly, while postcolonial criticism is innately concerned with the various ways in which power relationships between the colonised and the coloniser are played-out, a *reconciled* approach to the intersubjective is rarely foregrounded. That said, contemporary works of historical revisioning and postcolonial criticism are often critically motivated by the reconciliation movement; by the need to thoughtfully contribute to discussions about how people may 'come together' as a nation.

This chapter has three sections, each of which is loosely organised around a particular approach/response to reconciliation in Australia and the different means through which cultural bridging is framed. In the following section, for example, "The Rhetoric of Reconciliation," I will unpack the cluster of metaphors associated with the reconciliatory catch phrase 'the gap' and analyse the influence reports such as *Bringing Them Home* have had on the national consciousness. The second section provides a brief historical overview of reconciliation policy and processes through the lens of historical revisioning. Processes of historical revisioning have been extremely influential in how the reconciliation movement has been presented and received. Hence, in this section I will explore the ways in which contemporary historians are reinvigorating reconciliation processes by foregrounding ideas pertaining to reconnection. The third section of this chapter focuses on postcolonial theory (particularly in terms of literature) and how 'the gap', as a metaphor for race relations, is currently being reframed.

2.1. The Rhetoric of Reconciliation

This thesis argues that the systemic reliance on particular clusters of metaphors in reconciliatory discourse affects approaches to race relations in Australian literature and postcolonial criticism. Hence, whilst this dissertation is by no means a study in linguistics, this section will briefly explore the power of rhetorical devices and, more specifically, the ways in which the reiterative utterance of specific metaphors affectively structures the method – and potentially impacts the outcomes – of reconciliatory processes.

A stratagem of rhetoric, metaphor – "a device for seeing something in terms of something else" (Burke 503) – underpins all social discourse. In light of its ubiquitous presence, it is important, as David Punter notes, that metaphor is examined "in terms of operations of power" (87). Certain metaphors are suggestive of certain opinions, or world views. In terms of reconciliation discourse, which tends to be framed from the perspective of non-Indigenous Australians, broad and optimistic journeying or quest metaphors are often used to re-vision contemporary race relations in ways which present reconciliation as achievable. For example, people are frequently asked to 'walk together', find 'new pathways', 'build bridges' or 'move on' so that processes of national healing can begin. Lynne Cameron suggests in her examination of metaphor use, that the proliferation of particular patterns of metaphor in reconciliatory discourse – such as those which frame reconciliation as a "journey" – is often due to the "emotionally difficult" nature of the topics explored (200). In her analysis of a "face-to-face reconciliation conversation," Cameron hypothesised that "metaphor would play a significant role in the discourse" because 'the task of explaining oneself to the Other was likely to require both indirectness and multiple analogies (200). Yet, while metaphor and analogies are useful tools – particularly at the beginning of a conversation – couching and veiling traumatic topics are not their only functions.

As Cameron's study reveals, metaphors which are relied upon in reconciliatory dialogues can in fact assist in the development of new spaces for interaction and exchange. For example, Cameron argues that although reconciliatory conversations tend to "begin from a position of extreme Other-ness […] the discourse acts as a semiotic space in which the opposing and dialogic voices can interact, as well as transfer information" (199). By gently re-visioning traumatic issues in ways that are palatable to traumatised parties, then, metaphors can give participants 'room' to express themselves

and help to create a bridging space for conversation to grow. Whilst Cameron's critical discourse analysis specifically focuses on the role of the individual, her findings resonate with larger reconciliatory frameworks, such as the ones which have been officially implemented in Australia since the early 1990s.

The semiotic space evoked through politically sanctioned reconciliatory discourse in Australia is often articulated via the metaphor of 'the gap', which can be loosely defined as a space of difference purported to exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Since formal reconciliation began in 1991 – following specific recommendations from the Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody[17] – the metaphor 'closing the gap' has been increasingly deployed to signify a attempts to address the space of inequality purported to exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. For example, drawing on this rhetoric, Kevin Rudd in his 2008 "Federal Government Apology" to Australia's Indigenous peoples famously made a pledge to "keep trying to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity" (14). Since Rudd's apology, successive Australian governments have issued six *Closing the Gap* reports, each of which comments on the progress and set-backs of Rudd's pledge. 'Close the Gap', as Kerryn Pholi, Dan Black and Kevin Richards recognise, "is now an ubiquitous term in Indigenous policy statements, health and community service providers' strategic planning and performance reporting, and in media commentary on Indigenous affairs" (2). The widespread appeal of the catch-phrase is linked to its perceived "clarity and simplicity, political neutrality and promise of measurable progress" (Pholi, Black and Richards 3). Deployed unreflectively, however, this study argues that the use of this handy euphuism/feel good catch-cry can be indicative of an unrealistic approach to reconciliation processes.

Closing the gap is regularly presented as a step forward for reconciliation. Pratt, Elder and Ellis problematise this kind of rhetoric, however, by arguing that non-Indigenous Australians are often searching for an all-too-easy fix to the deep and ongoing issues impacting race-relations in Australia, and "slip quickly and

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[17] The final recommendation of the report is that: [...] all political leaders and their parties recognise that reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Australia must be achieved if community division, discord and injustice to Aboriginal people are to be avoided. To this end the Commission recommends that political leaders use their best endeavours to ensure bi-partisan public support for the process of reconciliation and that the urgency and necessity of the process be acknowledged (recommendation #339).

unproblematically from solutions articulated by different Indigenous communities and representatives to actions that often fail to adequately address them" (135). Kate Grenville exemplifies this process in her exegesis *Searching for the Secret River*. Subverting reconciliatory rhetoric, Grenville begins *Searching for the Secret River* by problematising the idea of "walking towards" reconciliation, which was endorsed through the 2000 Bridge Walk. In the text's opening scene, Grenville is forced to confront her settler ambivalence when she meets the gaze of an Aboriginal woman on the "southern end of the Bridge" who, rather than walking, is "leaning" and "watching" as if "to memorise each face" in the passing crowd (12). This encounter marks an empathetic shift for Grenville and inspires the realisation that it is not enough to simply "stroll" towards reconciliation (13). The previously "benign" symbolism of the bridge walk – of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians simply walking together with a common goal – is, in this moment, unsettled for Grenville (13). While not disavowing the importance of cultural bridging, Grenville realises that – to be effective – acts of "crossing" cannot be so easy. As the narrative progresses, therefore, Grenville becomes increasingly aware of the ways in which bridging, as a means to close the gap, can actually coving over, or fill in, important cultural differences.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that closing the gap is more than just a practical exercise but an ongoing process that requires creative acts of crossing (rather than just closing) as well as recognition of the cultural/historical differences that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. As I will discuss further in the following sections of this chapter, to move beyond a binary approach to history is not a shift which is designed to collapse multiple perspectives into one 'true' history but instead acknowledge, as Bernadette Brennan suggests, that "there is and must be an Indigenous history of Australia and a non-Indigenous history of Australia" and although "these histories [...] sometimes intersect and overlap" they also "remain distinct and separate" (29). Rather than framing Australian's past via "competing narratives," therefore, it is helpful (in terms of reconciliation) to regard these different histories "as narratives that speak to each other" (Brennan "*Bringing Them Home*" 29). Before Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories can be read as a dialogue, however, stories of Australian-ness need to be re-configured, so that Indigenous perspectives are no longer sidelined.

The reconciliation movement's emphasis on sharing history has highlighted gaps in understanding. In her response to the *Bringing Them Home* report, Brennan claims, for example, that "unless non-Indigenous Australians can attempt to imagine the pain and suffering of the stolen children [...] we cannot progress very far along the path of healing and reconciliation that all Australians need" (27). The importance of empathy – broadly defined by Martin Hoffman as an "affective response more appropriate to another's situation than one's own" (4) – is emphasised in processes of reconciliation. *Bringing Them Home* has not only exposed the largely unheard history of the "Stolen Generations," it has also foregrounded the importance of listening and the way it can promote more empathetic 'crossings'. The stories from members of the Stolen Generation which are published in *Bringing Them Home*, for instance, create what has been recognised as a space of listening (Olubas and Greenwell 3; Kossew, "Recovering the Past" 173; Bernadette Brennan 27). Spaces of listening can empathetically span cultural divides. As Olubas and Greenwell emotively suggest, in their essay "Re-membering and taking up an ethics of listening: a response to loss and the maternal in 'the stolen children'," listening:

> [...] might be understood as an activity which maintains the difference between 'us' and 'them' whilst simultaneously opening up between these a space for the movement of sound waves washing across and up onto the shores of the receiver's ear [...] These waves, touching and soaking into the nerve endings in the process pass the reverberations through into the intricacies of the interstitial connections and onto the larger organising system of the recipient's body (3).

The gap, as this reverie infers, is not just a metaphor of inequality but, instead, has the capacity to function (through reciprocal acts of listening and hearing) as a space of movement and cross-cultural exchange. By inspiring "interstitial connections," processes of listening enable empathetic crossings; crossings which can have significant reverberations, not just for the individual, but the nation as a whole. Rather than attempting to close cultural gaps – an act which can be read as a form of assimilation – Olubas and Greenwell deploy the metaphoric notion of the divide to demonstrate empathetic movement that is sensitive to "maintain[ing] difference between 'us' and 'them'" while also making connections (3).

Words can transgress spaces of violence and/or difference and build conceptual bridges. The stories of the "stolen generations" that comprise *Bringing Them Home* gave Indigenous Australians a voice and means to effectively unsettle the official rhetoric of

reconciliation. For example, many of the stories presented in the report and reproduced in Carmel Bird's edited collection *The Stolen Children: Their Stories*[18] distinctly unsettle the journeying metaphors (such as 'moving forward') deployed in official reconciliation discourse. In many stolen generation narratives, journeys are represented as surreptitious events, designed to obscure acts of taking away, rather than facilitators of potentially meaningful future exchange. In the opening testimony of *Bringing Them Home* – "confidential submission 318, Tasmania: removal from Cape Barren Island. Tasmania. Of 8 siblings in the 1960s" – the victim, for instance, claims: "on the third or fourth day they piled us in the car and I said, 'Where are we going?' And they said, 'We are going to see your mother'. But then we turned left to go to the airport and I got a bit panicky about where we were going" (sec. 1). Similarly, Donna Meehan's lyrical account of her removal, re-printed in Bird's collection of the stories, reveals the way in which her anticipatory excitement of a train journey is exploited by authorities to make a clean break with family:

> It was a rare treat for us kids at camp to climb into one of the uncle's cars [...] so when it was time to take our seat on the train we climbed on jubilantly anticipating the joy ride. It took a few minutes to decide who would have the window seat or sit near the aisle. When an old white woman in a red hat sat next to me, I changed seats with Barry, as she terrified me. Suddenly, I felt scared and asked: 'Where's Mum?' (99).

Symbolic reconciliatory 'journeys' are re-framed in the stories of the stolen generation through instances of taking away, or being 'moved on'. By inverting Western conceptions of "journey" – as a means of progression – the accounts of profound personal suffering and familial dislocation (as well as racist benevolence) presented in *Bringing Them Home* and *The Stolen Children* force a reconsideration of reconciliatory rhetoric.

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[18] The space of listening is interrupted in Carmel Bird's edited collection due to the way in which she pre-empts each account of removal with a preamble that outlines the ensuing narrative's key events. For example, Bird frames Confidential submission number 82, "Tony's Story," by stating:

> In this story of a life which seems to have been almost completely shattered, the focus is on the colour of Tony's skin. Because he is so dark he is seen by his foster mother as a 'disappointment'. He is constantly being robbed of affection and care, and the lack of love in his life can be seen to be directly related to the crimes he has committed. The story also contains a remarkable and tragic twist of fate (67).

The accounts of child removal presented in *Bringing Them Home* have been recognised for their power, while Bird is seeking to offer the reader some kind of context in her edited collection of the stories, her framing comments generally pre-empt, rather than thoughtfully extend, what is presented in each narrative; effectively talking into, and over, the space for listening.

Rather than framing homecoming, *Bringing Them Home* is a literal response to the systemic 'taking away from home' which was forcefully enacted upon Indigenous Australians. Hence, despite its hopeful title, the report reveals the ongoing problems which continue to prevent many people from ever finding or returning home. *Bringing Them Home* begins, for example, by claiming "We remember and lament all the children who will never come home" (Dedication). The difficulty of homecoming is also acknowledged in the recommendations of the report. In Part 4 Chapter 14, entitled "Land, culture and language restitution," it highlights the importance for victims of forced removal to return to their ancestral country but recognises that:

> Communities sometimes found it difficult to accept people who had spent so long away from country back into their social networks on a basis of equality with those who had not been removed. People who had suffered the trauma of removal often encountered the double jeopardy of suspicion, mistrust or even blame upon their return (par. 6).

As numerous stories in the report reveal, the profound emotional damage of removal has rendered home – specifically in terms of belonging – an ideal which is categorically unobtainable for many Indigenous Australians. Drawing on the power of testimonial, however, *Bringing Them Home*, gestures towards metaphoric (or rhetorical), homecomings; homecomings which are enacted through cathartic acts of telling as well as empathetic acts of listening.

"Catharsis," states Juliet Rogers, "is the bringing of a heightened affect to the confusions and losses of the past" which "promotes identification as an affinity or even affiliation with the pain of another" (254). Just as non-Indigenous listening is shown by critics such as Olubas and Greenwell to create a potentially meaningful space of co-existence, Indigenous telling is presented as having the potential to reconnect people and heal individual, as well as community, wounds. In Part 1 Chapter 1 of *Bringing Them Home*, entitled "The Inquiry," it asserts, for example, that

> In no sense has the Inquiry been 'raking over the past' for its own sake. The truth is that the past is very much with us today in the continuing devastation of the lives of Indigenous Australians. That devastation cannot be addressed unless the whole community listens with an open heart and mind to the stories of what has happened in the past, and having listened and understood, commits itself to reconciliation (par. 5).

Although the report is framed through processes of listening, cathartic acts of telling are also aligned with reconciliatory ideas of moving forward, both for the individual victim

and the nation. The fact that testimonies are being meaningfully witnessed, however, does not necessarily mean that any kind of actual healing has occurred, or that trauma has been dealt with. Rogers claims that trauma can be understood as "the loss of the story of oneself, either in time or place, to the extent that the fragments can find no easy place to return" (265). Without affirmative action and re-identification, catharsis cannot heal an individual or, for that matter, a nation; it cannot bring people home.

Non-Indigenous responses to the stories contained in *Bringing Them Home* have been well publicised. Drusilla Modjeska's speech at the NSW Premier Literary Awards in 1997 provides a strong example. Modjeska claims "it seemed to me that I could not speak publically on the subject of writers and writing without reference to the painful events that were unfolding in the wake of the report" without discussing "how, as writers, we might make sense of a shared and painful history, for which we are not responsible but in which we are nevertheless implicated" (159). While the struggles of non-Indigenous Australians to listen and make sense of the revelations presented in *Bringing Them Home* have been regularly discussed, the impact catharsis, or telling, has had upon Indigenous communities has been less widely articulated. In his essay for Michelle Grattan's edited collection *Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, Boori Monty Pryor – discussing the "cycles" of pain Indigenous people continue to live with as a result of colonisation (specifically the breaking up of families) – claims that: "We are all walking around in pain. Aboriginal people because they are living with the truth and white people because they find it hard to deal with that truth" (120). While listening may, for non-Indigenous people, open up new spaces for sharing, acts of telling can instigate a return to a scene of pain or suffering; especially for Indigenous peoples who have been the primary victims of colonisation.

Like the Sydney Bridge Walk, the *Bringing Them Home* report functions as a catalyst for Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) writing. For example, in Larissa Behrendt's fictional work *Home*, the experiences of forced removal – and the intergenerational repercussions of familial/cultural disconnection – unfold over various decades of the twentieth century. The consequences of revelation are also uncovered in this text, including the problems associated with reconnecting with family and country. *Home* starts and ends with Candice – a contemporary decedent of a family decimated through decades of racist government policy – visiting her ancestral country; "the place where the rivers meet" and her Grandmother, Garibooli, was abducted nearly one hundred

years before. Although this process is not framed as a seamless transition, it is figured as a cathartic act. Once Candice connects with her family and country, she feels her personal problems and sense of shame diminishing, claiming: "I feel as though the worst parts of me, the weakest, most confused and insecure parts of me, have been shed on the soil, on a spot where grief had begun to bleed generations ago" (316). Although *Home* examines the devastating side-effects of forced removal, as well as the problems which can stem from acts of telling, it concludes on an affirmative note for Indigenous healing and gestures towards the benefits this may have for future cross-cultural dialogue, with Candice deciding to commit to her relationship with her non-Indigenous boyfriend (317).

For processes of reconciliation to be both effective and meaningful, the imaginative and empathetic aspects of its primary catchcry – 'closing the gap' – need to be examined. In their response to Kevin Rudd's 2010 "Closing the Gap Report," Richard Frankland and Peter Lewis declare that "to close the health and wellbeing gap we first need to 'close the gap' in our imagination:"

> We need to imagine an Australia that embraces the First Peoples of the land and respects their rights and celebrates their cultures and communities [...] As Victorian Aboriginal leader, Muriel Bamblett, said at last year's Human Rights Oration, the gap in health and wellbeing will only start to close if the gap in our relationships and our understanding of our national story is also narrowed. [...] And until we resolve the issue of our foundation as a polity imposed upon, rather than negotiated with, the First Peoples, we will remain a nation with little vision (par. 4-5).

Although Frankland and Lewis's quote from Bamblett seems to imply Australia's national story needs to be more "narrow," what this means is that the violence and trauma colonisation has wrought on Indigenous people and culture needs to become more widely recognised. As these critics imply, Australians need to dispense with polarised black or white armband perspectives, and recognise that decolonisation requires acknowledgement of the trauma wrought via processes of colonisation as well as an imaginative vision for meaningful co-existence.

2.2. Revisioning Conciliation

Stemming from the verb to "conciliate" – "to gain (goodwill, esteem, etc.) by acts which soothe, pacify, or induce friendly feeling" (*OED* online) –"reconciliation" is

associated with "restoring" relations between "estranged people or parties" (*OED* online). With its etymological roots embedded in the Christian Church, "reconciliation" is a term that encompasses social, spiritual and spatial notions of reconnection. For example, whilst "reconciliation" most commonly signifies "the action of restoring estranged people or parties," it also describes "the purification or reconsecration of a desecrated church or holy place" (*OED* online). Reconfiguring race relations – while attempting to officially cultivate meaningful connections with the land for non-Indigenous Australians – reconciliation processes in Australia draw multifariously upon the social, spatial and spiritual aspects of these definitions. As this section will demonstrate, however, realigning relationships that have been reduced by centuries of violence is a slow and complicated process, requiring deft acts of revisioning the past and creating spaces of hope for the future.

In his "Redfern Park Speech," Keating acknowledged the deep emotional wounds colonisation has inflicted upon Indigenous peoples. Re-telling the narrative of settlement from the perspective of Aboriginal Australians, Keating suggested that efforts of reconciliation might be advanced, and a "richer" sense of national identity/belonging forged:

> [...] if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of the land we had lived on for fifty thousand years – and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours [...] Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then we were told in history books that we had given up without a fight (21-22).

Even though Keating's inspirational words have been frequently evoked – and, for a time, stood in for the official apology the later Howard government refused to give to Indigenous Australians – the kind of historical revisioning he urges for has in fact become a stumbling block in processes of reconciliation. Re-imagining Australia's colonial past so as to include the often omitted experiences and perspective of Indigenous Australians is one of the key processes of reconciliation. As Bain Attwood, in his essay "The Burden of the Present in the Past," outlines:

> The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has similarly placed stress on the importance of addressing the remarkable lack of public historical knowledge of Australia's colonial past, making 'sharing history' one of the eight 'key issues' in reconciliation, and 'understanding and accepting the history of our shared experience' the first of the five steps towards reconciliation (255).

However, despite the obvious social justice of these endeavours, revisiting the overarching sense of dissonance which has informed relations between Aboriginals and settlers since 1788 has complicated contemporary processes of reconciliation.

One initial problem with the term "reconciliation" is that it is primarily about reconnection; about *returning* people to a formerly friendly, or conciliated, position. In terms of Australia's history of race relations, to suggest that Aboriginal and Settler Australians have ever enjoyed a sustained position of conciliation contradicts many of the findings of revisionist historians. For example, the notion of peaceful "settlement" – based upon official British efforts at conciliation – which proliferated during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been contested, and destabilised, since Stanner's Boyer Lectures. Rather than providing an historical platform for re-conciliation, Stanner's seminal revisioning of race relations during the early colonial period reveals the pitfalls of conciliatory processes; with Governor Philip's brief and inept attempts to develop mutual "friendship and trust" with the Eora people in 1788 in fact setting the tone for two centuries of violent and paternalistic government policy (172). While official processes of conciliation were enacted during the early years of British invasion, no *formal*, or sustained, position of conciliation existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Like reconciliation, acts of conciliation tend to be broadly affiliated with positive outcomes, such as peace making. Yet, it is important to recognise that processes of conciliation/reconciliation can also be associated with acts of coercion, mollification and suppression, and often hinge upon uneven power relations. As Stanner notes, Governor Phillip's attempts at conciliation were, first and foremost, based on the desire to pacify, to "coax the Aborigines into close relations with the settlement" (172) and, as Phillip himself claims, cause them to form "a high opinion of their new guests" (cited in Stanner 172). Irrespective of the use of words such as "guests," we know that there was no question that the land intended for the new colony would not be taken, it was just initially hoped it could be done so peacefully.

Stanner's history of Australia set the tone for a number of decades, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s when historical revisioning was at its peak. By revisioning colonial conciliation to reveal the uneven power structures that were/are at play, historians have, arguably, engaged in processes of reconciliation; reconnecting with the past to restore goodwill and bring the nation together. Yet whilst this kind of historical revisioning has emphasised the often disregarded experiences of Indigenous Australians

(as well as British culpability and ineptitude), 'sharing history' has profoundly unsettled, rather than stabilised, national identity. In Australia, as I discussed in the preceding chapter (15), national identity – or what Elder refers to as "Australian-ness" – has been framed, predominantly, by narratives that are for the benefit of non-Indigenous Australians. However, works of historical revisioning – such as the "new histories" that emerged from historians such as Henry Reynolds, Lyndall Ryan, Bain Attwood and Stuart Macintyre during the 1990s – "dismayed many conservatives" (Attwood 257) and had the paradoxical effect of destabilising formal reconciliation processes. A strident backlash against what came to be perceived as "black armband" historical approaches – now known as the "History Wars" – resulted.

Fuelled by conservative politicians, media commentators and right-wing historians, the history wars actively sought to discredit "new histories," and re-instate a celebratory view of Australian history. For example, Keith Windshuttle, in his opening criticisms of black armband histories in *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, aligns historical research/ representation with notions of Australian-ness, claiming: "In short, the debate over Aboriginal history goes far beyond its ostensible subject: it is about the character of the nation and ultimately, the calibre of civilisation Britain brought to these shores in1788" (3). A nostalgic desire to endorse a coherent national identity – based upon a glorified pioneer heritage – is at the heart of the Windshuttle's historical narrative. Contributing to processes of reconciliation (rather than perpetuating the systemic history of 'whitewashing'), however, revisionist histories seek to dismantle romantic versions of British settlement in Australia and, in doing so, destabilise the cultural heritage many Australians use as a basis for their belonging.

Belonging – an overarching feeling of identification or membership to a certain people and place (Trudeau 423) – is a concept which is central to discussions of reconciliation. However, although belonging is a projected outcome of the reconciliation movement (Gooder and Jacobs 204), it has been contradicted and destabilised by the movement's other key goals, specifically the "sharing of history." The traumatic revelations that accompany processes of historical revisioning has deeply unsettled both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In their essay "Belonging and Non-Belonging: The Apology in a Reconciling Nation," Haydie Gooder and Jane M Jacobs claim, for example, that the reconciliation movement – which has come to be characterised by testimonial and revisionist narratives – has inspired widespread

feelings of "estrangement" amongst both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and, in some cases, "new racism" which targets Indigenous Australians (204). This study proposes, however, that a sense of estrangement (or unbelonging) – and potentially even the racist backlash – is part of coming to terms with a violent national history.

Formal reconciliation has failed to account for the unspecified period of mediation/meditation required following traumatic revelation. Instead, as Pratt, Elder and Ellis recognise, "dominant representations of the reconciliation movement are that the task at hand is about 'moving on' (building that bridge), rather than undoing particular legacies of colonisation" (141-142). As reconciliatory processes such as sharing history invariably entail the representation/revelation of extreme violence, time needs to be allowed for people to reconsolidate. In her essay "Belonging to Country—A Philosophical Anthropology," Linn Miller draws parallels between belonging and processes of coming to terms with history, claiming "a minimum conception of belonging might be understood as standing in "correct relation" to one's community, one's history and one's locality" (218). To stand in correct relation to one's history (let alone community or locality) requires time for acknowledgement, healing and acceptance.

The sharing of history, while cathartic and important to reconciliation, cannot alone restore or build communities. As Rogers notes, the "political and legal efforts to reconcile" within a short time period can fail to account for the fact that "the traumatised individual is often not ready to move on from the pains of the past" (254). Since the British invasion in 1788, Australia's Indigenous people have been continually dispossessed from their homelands; eroding the deep-rooted sense of social and ontological connection to country experienced for millennia (Moreton-Robinson 24). The profound physical and emotion dislocation experienced by many Indigenous people – which is depicted in literature via characters becoming both literally and metaphorically stuck – needs to be addressed through acknowledgement, treaty or native title grants before reconciliation processes can progress. Processes of reconciliation not only fail to account for the impact of trauma, they also tend not to make room for the various manifestations of shame. As Raimond Gaita argues:

> Mabo and *Bring Them Home* […] are supported by historical evidence that is a cause for deep shame for many Australians. For some it has been a source of guilt. Such responses […] often express acknowledgement of a collective responsibility […] Others have responded differently. They have mocked a historically deep sense of shame, calling it a 'black armband view of history ("Guilt" 275).

While shame ideally results in acknowledgment, this is not, as Gaita demonstrates, always forthcoming. Peter Read claims that the violent history of Indigenous dispossession has left non-Indigenous Australians at a "painful intellectual and emotional impasse," a position of acute cultural/social "paralysis" (3). This study argues, however, that the history wars – the vehement denying of past wrongs – suggest that non-Indigenous, as well as Indigenous, Australian's have been traumatised by processes of sharing history.

The traumatised responses which have met revelations of colonial violence have impacted the way in which contemporary works of historical revisioning are now framed. Dominick LaCapra states that "trauma and its symptomatic aftermath pose particularly acute problems for historical representation and understanding" (*Writing History* ix). Representations of trauma need, for example, to be mindful of the ways in which they represent their subject matter so that they inspire what LaCapra calls "empathic unsettlement" rather than stage an unproductive return to scenes of "impasse" ("Trauma" 699). Drawing on the geographical imagery of blocked (or impassable) space, "impasse" is a French term which is commonly used in psychoanalytic discourse to articulate the point where a person becomes emotionally 'stuck'.[19] In Australia, as I will discuss at length in the following chapter, impasse has become a metaphor to describe the failure to belong, or, more specifically, the sense of unbelonging which has followed in the wake of traumatic revelations. The continual historical and literary return to the period when conciliation between Indigenous people and British invaders catastrophically failed can, for example, be read as a return to a repressed scene of impasse; the moment when meaningful co-existence, based on a potentially joint sense of belonging, became blocked. It is due to repercussions such as these, that LaCapra stresses the importance of representing trauma via means which elicit a *useful* empathetic response; through means which refuse to "give way to vicarious victimhood" or "foreclose attempts to *work through* the past" ("Trauma"" 699. *my emphasis*). Rather than just sharing history, recent works of historical revisioning are mindful of the ways in which they frame colonial trauma; or work through the past.

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[19]In his definition of "impasse" for *The Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Theory*, R. Horacio Etchegoyen claims that:

> The French word is, of itself, clear and universal. It means a *blocked road*, and is used when something that has been developing normally is suddenly blocked and delayed. We often see it in newspapers to indicate an initiative that has been stalled, and it is used in the same sense in psychoanalysis (792).

Since 2000, a new process of historical revisioning has begun to emerge which has the potential to re-invigorate stalled reconciliation processes. In texts such as Grace Karskens's *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney* (2009), for example, the historical trauma associated with British invasion is reconfigured through attention to region, specifically the city of Sydney. Attentive to the debilitating dynamics of white guilt that have undermined reconciliation processes, Karskens makes room for other stories of invasion/settlement in *The Colony*; stories beyond those which focus singularly on frontier clashes between the British and Eora peoples. By revisioning the violence of colonial encounter to include some scenes of cross-cultural exchange –experiences of people who "hoped the narratives they were living and writing would have the happy ending of peaceful co-existence" (Karskens 49) – she creates a space for future hope. For instance, in her discussion of the British movement into the Hawkesbury region (same region that Grenville examines in *The Secret River*), Karskens demonstrates that alongside the "long war" which was fought between settlers and Aborigines (spanning 1799-1806) there were interstices of cross-cultural harmony, evidenced through the co-attendance of "black and white" people at "festivals" during which different cultural practices were performed and showcased (127-128). While the loss of Aboriginal life and dispossession from country is not in any way overlooked in this text, Karskens draws attention to interstices of colonial conciliation; providing a tentative template for future co-existence

Indigenous writers and historians are also contributing to the reconfiguration of colonial history through processes of revisioning. Kim Scott and Hazel Brown's *Kayang and Me* (2005),[20] for example, like *The Colony*, focuses on a single region, the south west coast of Western Australia. Through auto-ethnography, Scott and Brown revision the history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous encounter and reveal the ongoing everyday impact of British invasion on the Noongar people. Yet while, like Karskens, Scott and Brown's approach to history also reconfigures scenes of cross-cultural contact, *Kayang and Me* is less concerned with presenting meaningful co-existence as it is with showing the healing benefits of Indigenous reconnection.

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[20] Unlike *The Colony*, the history presented by Scott and Brown in *Kayang and Me* combines elements of memoir and auto-ethnography; an engagement with archival records, oral history and Noongar storytelling traditions.

In *Kayang and Me*, Scott claims that "after a shared history overwhelmingly characterised by the damage done to Indigenous people and the land, I don't think its right to suddenly talk sharing and caring" (263). Instead, he suggests that:

> In order to help strengthen Indigenous communities — and that's the only means by which an Australian nation-state will have any chance of grafting onto Indigenous roots — we need some sort of 'gap' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies, a moratorium, a time of exclusion to allow communities to consolidate their heritages. After that, exchange and interaction from relatively equal positions should be possible, because that's how cultural forms are tested and grow (263).

So, while *Kayang and Me* presents moments of meaningful Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-existence – in discussing her experiences Brown often notes, for example, that "Some white people been really good" (179) – it is primarily a text which is concerned with consolidating and affirming cultural differences, in the destructive wake of colonial trauma, rather the potential for reconciliation. In a later essay, "Covered Up with Sand," Scott suggests that people can over time develop a sense of community by focussing on the cultural heritage and history of a specific region; through engaging with narratives that "tell of the struggle to *reconnect* individuals and small groups of people to one another, and to a sense of history and heritage derived from a specific place (122; my emphasis).

The gap's movement from a metaphor which principally frames Indigenous disadvantage to one which poetically underscores complex ideals of cross-cultural exchange is largely propelled by the failure of the reconciliation movement to adequately acknowledge the demands and implications that were/are being placed upon Indigenous peoples to get 'on-board'. For reconnection to happen at a community level cultural differences need to be maintained coupled with the realisation that not every aspect of a culture can be translated, or indeed bridged.

2.3. Theorising 'the Gap' in Postcolonial Criticism

The foregrounding of cross-cultural intersubjectivity in reconciliation discourse is problematic. While it is important to be able to project the potential for meaningful future co-existence, intersubjective approaches, as Marcia Langton stresses, often label, categorise and represent Aboriginal peoples in particular – and usually unrealistic – ways (31). However, although Langton is critical of the means through which cross-cultural dialogues commonly represent Indigenous peoples, she maintains that

intersubjective exchanges can potentially break-down negative stereotyping and invigorate intersubjective representation. "In any social interaction," Langton claims, dialogic "exchanges" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people "test imagined models of the other, repeatedly adjusting the models as responses are processed, to find some satisfactory way of comprehending the other" (35). In keeping with Langton's idiom, this section examines some of the dialogue and debates which have been unfolding over recent years amongst postcolonial critics who analyse the intersubjective, and posits the idea that the recognition of cultural differences need not polarise discussions of co-existence.

The contemporary field of postcolonial studies in Australia is preoccupied with shifting ways of framing and deconstructing narratives of racial intersubjectivity. Alison Ravenscroft, for example, positions her recent text *The Postcolonial Eye* against what she sees to be "current moves to erase the divides between settler and Indigenous peoples and to cover over our differences" (1). While *The Postcolonial Eye* does not directly engage with reconciliation, the movement's rhetoric and, by extension, its issues, are evoked through Ravenscroft's examination of trauma and reliance upon terms such as "divide," "scene," "field" or, most pertinent to his study, "gap." For instance, Ravenscroft proposes that the gap which exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians needs to be re-inscribed as a space of cultural difference. Drawing, like Olubas and Greenwell, on the senses, she suggests that:

> Non-Indigenous Australians and international audiences often assume to understand [Indigenous subjects] when, at best, we see only traces, fragments from which we cannot assemble a whole. There are gaps in all vision; there are things we cannot see or signify […] where an other's strangeness cannot be tamed and assimilated (*The Postcolonial Eye* 1).

Unlike Olubas and Greenwell's essay, however, *The Postcolonial Eye* ultimately destabilises acts of cultural crossing by pointing to what cannot be translated when examining "scenes of race" (1). Foregrounding her own whiteness, Ravenscroft argues cultural gaps exist because of "radical difference," or Indigenous "sovereignty" (*The Postcolonial Eye* 2). Directly echoing the work of Moreton-Robinson – who, as I stated previously, claims that Indigenous people's "ontological relationship to land marks a radical, indeed incommensurable, difference between us and the non-Indigenous" (31) – Ravenscroft suggests that there will always be gaps that a white reader/critic will simply never understand about Indigenous culture no matter how "closely" or "cannily" they

research (8). *The Postcolonial Eye* seeks to expose "the stitches that non-Indigenous Australian readers of Indigenous textuality tend to make to cover over these gaps" (8-9).

Ravenscroft's decision to base her reading of what she labels "Indigenous-signed texts" on conceptions of radical difference, accompanies a desire to expose the assimilationist reading practices of her contemporaries. *The Postcolonial Eye*, states Ravenscroft, foregrounds examples where "radical differences between white and Indigenous cultures have been disavowed by my white compatriots, closed over in efforts to make strangeness in a scene or story intelligible within our own epistemologies" (20). This controversial approach has impacted the reception of the work. In 2012 the *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature* published an argument between Ravenscroft and two of her staunchest critics, Anne Maxwell and Odette Kelada. In their review of *The Postcolonial Eye*, Kelada and Maxwell critique (among other things) Ravenscroft's inability to answer questions such as:

> [...] if 'othering' Indigeneity is taken to the extent of 'radical difference' how can this open possibilities beyond a paralysis in a problematic discourse founded on a colonial paradigm? If two cultures (as presented in this text) are incommensurate, are readers likely to take the view that there is no point in reading given the inherent imposition of wrong (and, according to the analysis here, often perverted) interpretations? (7).

For these critics, *The Postcolonial Eye* poses a form of (un)reading that could potentially stall the study and promotion of Indigenous literature; due to a failure to understand the radical differences presented. Kelada and Maxwell criticism of Ravenscroft's use of radical difference draws on the ways in which racial differences have been used to justify racist attitudes, and perpetuate stereotypical paradigms of 'the Other'.

Kelada's analysis of Grenville's *The Secret River*, entitled "The Stolen River: Possession and Race Representation in Grenville's Colonial Narrative," reveals some of the ways in which a discourse of radical difference can be used to justify a lack of meaningful engagement between cultures. Examining Grenville's relative failure to imagine Indigenous characters – an issue I will discuss at some length in the following chapter – Kelada exposes how assumptions of unknowability and a "limited engagement" between cultures can foreclose or delimit meaningful interracial exchange (4). For example, Grenville's descriptions of the Indigenous people she encounters while visiting the Kimberly for research emphasises cultural difference and notions of unknowability. Describing an instance of cross-cultural contact, Grenville states: "their

skin was as black as the shadows. Their faces–I glanced quickly and turned away–folded in on themselves, unreadable" (*Searching* 194). Analysing this scene, Kelada, I believe rightly, charges Grenville with "evok[ing] romantic, mythic imagery with essentialist connotations" (5). Further, and perhaps more relevant to this study, is the way in which Kelada then links this kind of essentialist discourse to reconciliation, claiming:

> This reflects I would argue, some of the tensions evident in reconciliation politics where open spaces for genuine enquiry are still battling with the embedded heritage of orientalist and colonial discourses. Narratives born in the reconciliatory moment(s) can exemplify key stakes intrinsic to contemporary perspectives on past violent formations of a nation – for instance, how is sameness and difference represented and navigated? (5).

Whereas Grenville's navigation of race relations appears to use conceptions of radical difference to justify and sustain her uninterrupted monologue of white subjectivity in *The Secret River*, this study argues that Ravenscroft deploys radical difference in *The Postcolonial Eye* to draw attention to these kinds of essentialist discourses, and theorise the space where the familiar and unfamiliar intersect.

Launched (and endorsed) by Alexis Wright and Phillip Morrissey,[21] *The Postcolonial Eye* offers a new approach to reading new stories; stories such as *Carpentaria*, which have been widely acknowledged for their originality (Sharrad 54). In her response to Kelada and Maxwell's review, Ravenscroft emotively emphasises the "experimental" nature of her text; claiming that it was designed as a response to the unique ways in which "Indigenous literature, visual arts and performance are remaking the arts in Australia" ("Another way of Reading" 1). *The Postcolonial Eye* is primarily concerned with formulating new ways of approaching cultural difference and examining what appears when old certainties "fall from view" (46). While radical difference is an unfashionable concept, which is regularly called upon to support Anglo-ethnocentrism, this study argues that Ravenscroft's foregrounding of scenes of racial incommensurability need not be read as polemical or somehow stalling reconciliatory processes of cross-cultural communication. A respectful acknowledgement of cultural diversity can, in fact, inspire connections between peoples, rather than support racial inequality. Sara Ahmed and Anne-Marie Fortier claim, for instance, that "subjects may come together" and, potentially, form a community "without presumptions of 'being in

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[21] The launch for *The Postcolonial Eye* was held at the University of Melbourne on 4 August 2012.

common' or 'being uncommon'" (254). While Ravenscroft takes the idea of unknowability further than most critics (by premising her entire book upon the concept of radical difference) she is far from the first postcolonial critic to stress the need for maintaining cultural difference.

For example, Elleke Boehmer argues, in her broad analysis of contemporary postcolonial literature and criticism entitled *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*: *Migrant Metaphors*, that there must be some recognition of "the *partial* opacity" between cultures, because Indigenous communities are "never […] fully pervaded by colonisation" (239). While Boehmer, unlike Ravenscroft, suggests that it is important to "try and clear up that opacity to some degree with diligent research and applied understanding," her approach to reading postcolonial texts maintains the possibility for intercultural interaction to occur alongside cultural difference (239). Boehmer claims that "for a critic to look more deeply into the differences and subterfuges of a text from another culture does not necessarily mean abandoning the assumption that discrepant cultures and texts can to some extent interact and mix" (244). This middle-ground approach to cross-cultural analysis has been influential in Australian postcolonial criticism. Drawing on Boehmer, Eleonore Wildburger proposes, for example, that the reiterative foregrounding of an "intercultural agenda" in postcolonial text analysis has led to a need to "step beyond the 'common experience' of colonialism and take into account the significance of difference when analysing social shared narratives" (57). Following the lead of critics such as Langton, Wildburger's research model emphasises the means through which cross-cultural difference is both mediated and maintained through dialogic exchange, the recognition of both difference and commonality.

Embracing unknowing and exploring the intersections between the familiar and unfamiliar are integral to productive pedagogies of reconciliation. To be unable to "know" everything about a cultural text does not foreclose the possibility for an imaginative or empathetic response or further entrench the notions of 'us' and 'them' which have characterised much official reconciliatory discourse.[22] Conceptual bridges

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[22] Tom Clarke draws attention to the ways in which notions of 'us' and 'them' have become entrenched in reconciliatory discourses. In his analysis of Keating's "RedFern Park Speech," for example, Clarke argues that Keating's language "named the parties to Aboriginal reconciliation in a way that has characterised the grammar of non-Indigenous discussions of the topic" foregrounding the use of "a 'we' or 'us' incorporating all non-Indigenous citizens" and "a 'they' or 'them' incorporating all Indigenous Australians" (12). While Clarke recognises that this paradigm is problematic, he also suggests that the 'us' and 'them' "divide" is "a

are built via the creative ways in which people approach these gaps in vision/knowledge. When discourses – which are invariably enmeshed in systems of power – become too focussed on cultures 'coming together', it can often be forgotten that room must be left for cultural differences; for things which will always resist processes of cross-cultural amalgamation. By "making a space for the enigmatic," for what is "unknowable, unspeakable, invisible" (18), *The Postcolonial Eye* acknowledges – but, importantly, does not try to know – the recesses of the gap; the spaces which, due to their opaqueness or untranslatability, have remained inadequately accounted for by non-Indigenous readers.

Following centuries of invasive anthropological studies and corrupt or distorted representations of Indigenous culture, the reconciliation movement (and its related discourses) need to be mindful of perpetuating stereotypical attitudes through constantly foregrounding the importance of cultural bridging. The recognition that the onus is on settler Australians to do things differently – to respectfully re-imagine cross-cultural exchange without foregrounding assimilation – is prevalent in a number of the literary works analysed throughout the ensuing chapters. In novels such as Miller's *Landscape of Farewell*, for instance, scenes of bridging are tempered by the acknowledgement of cultural difference. While *Landscape of Farewell*, which I examine at length in Chapter 6, is primarily structured around notions of sharing – specifically how the power of friendship can bridge divides – the Western epistemologies of being at home on the land which accompany this vision are destabilised by the presence of other ways of being-in-the-world. Visiting Australia from Germany, Professor Max Otto forms a close friendship with Jangga elder, Dougald Gnapan who functions as his emotional guide throughout the text. While the two men come from distinctly different cultural backgrounds, the text regularly foregrounds their synchronicity, such as the way in which the two men can communicate without words (85; 244). Yet, this position of easy cross-cultural knowing is destabilised when Max journeys into the heart of Dougald's ancestral country. Deep in the bush, Max becomes completely disorientated and Dougald, although his guide, becomes someone who is unknowable:

> I watched him weaving around on his way to the edge of the terrace, pausing to look about, then going on a few steps. To me he had the appearance of a man who was lost. But was he lost? […] At that moment

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model that assumes 'we' have something to work through with 'them'" and, therefore, highlights the role non-Indigenous Australians must play in reconciliatory processes (12).

> I accepted what seemed to be the unthinkable fact, but a fact nevertheless, that Dougald was lost in the heart of his own country. And it was on this belief that I based my subsequent behaviour. But had I really seen what I thought I'd seen? A lost man?
> Or had I seen a man in a trance? A man in a condition that I had never before witnessed, and which I could not therefore understand or recognise? (291).

While in many ways this text can be read as a work which is intent on probing dark recesses – getting to the source of trauma and cultural difference – the lasting image of the narrative is of a white man who is content to just be immersed in an unfamiliar environment; being merely a "follower" in what is, for him, a "confusing" – rather than coherent – journey (287).

Instead of reading postcolonial approaches to unknowing as polemical – as works that are somehow in opposition to the reconciliation movement – this study argues that a respectful engagement with cultural divergence ought to be at the crux of reconciliatory exchange. Unknowing creates spaces, or potential starting points, for intersubjective narratives. It is ultimately, however, the ways in which people approach these gaps that is telling.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Reconciliatory spaces are not spaces of reconciliation, which implies a process that has been finalised. Instead, they are sites which engage with systems of "working-through" and sharing; of coming together in meaningful ways to exchange stories and ontologies of ways of being-in-the-world. I have used the term "meaningful" recursively throughout this study with little more than scant explanation. Embedded in this term, however, are a number of different concepts and ideologies. For example, throughout this thesis I argue that empathy, acknowledgement, reparation, acceptance of difference and the potential for future belonging (or hope) are required if people of a reconciling nation are to 'come together' in ways that are meaningful. In light of the scope and emotional complexity of this list it is not surprisingly that a sustained position of meaningful co-existence is not something which Australia has yet (or will potentially ever) achieve. This study argues, however, that the elusiveness of meaningful co-existence – while possibly presenting a set-back to the reconciliation movement – can in fact be activating because it inspires the continual re-assessment of the modes through

which people approach and represent scenes of interculturality as well as spaces of difference.

The novels analysed in the ensuing chapters are framed by reconciliation in a variety of ways. Mirroring the complicated and ongoing process of reconciliation itself, the bridging spaces put forward in these texts are often sites which have been negatively compromised by processes of colonisation or spaces that only provide temporary shelter; pit stops on the road to reconciliation rather than destinations. The approach this thesis takes to reading early twenty-first century national narratives seeks to highlight not only the potential the socio-spatial rhetoric of reconciliation has to inspire different dialogues, but also how new approaches to race relations can be imagined through the *subversion* of key reconciliatory metaphors. The following chapter, "The Colonial Homestead: Framing Impasse," therefore, picks up many of the threads instigated in this discussion, such as the ways in which unbelonging is represented via conceptions of traumatic impasse, the power of empathy and the impact entanglement has upon a reconciling nation.

3

The Colonial Homestead
Framing Impasse

> If the foundations of a European poetics of place are premised on built space, a well-used, intimately known landscape in the European tradition, in which houses provide rooms furnished with substance and sharing meaning, we might anticipate antithetical tropes of house and dwelling in an Australian poetics of space.
>
> -Jennifer Rutherford, *Halfway House* (65).

Unlike many of the other spaces examined in this thesis, colonial homesteads, stations, or pastoral estates are traditional western domestic topographies and readily associated with acts of dwelling. Replicating the British manor house, colonial homesteads are renowned for their extravagant architecture and are designed to signify the elevated social status of its owner. Yet whereas the manor house is typically associated with the values of the British class system, homesteads situated on the Australian pastoral frontier are colonial power-bases and implicitly tied to an ability to work the land and defend one's holding. The homestead has been widely deployed as an organising framework in both colonial and postcolonial narratives; used either to espouse or challenge ideas of peaceful settlement/belonging. In recent decades, the space has been increasingly used to self-consciously frame scenes of race relations and, by extension, contribute to discussions of reconciliation. In Australian literary works, such as *The Secret River* and *Her Sister's Eye*, the colonial homestead is depicted as a space which codifies and conflates settler conceptions of ownership/cultivation with Indigenous experiences of genocide/dispossession and exploitation. Ultimately framed as receptacles of colonial trauma, homestead spaces are subjected to rigorous (and presumably cathartic) processes of undoing in these contemporary texts, so that past violence can be uncovered and present-day unbelonging addressed.

This chapter examines the ways in which Australian texts use what has become the innate unhomeliness of the colonial homestead to frame processes of historical revisioning and re-tabulate contemporary race relations. The two homesteads

specifically analysed in this chapter – "Cobham Hall" in *The Secret River* and the "Drysdale mansion" in *Her Sister's Eye* – are treated as Gothic sites; irrevocably marked, or haunted, by the violence and exploitation upon which they were founded and maintained. By rendering the colonial homestead a Gothic space, Grenville and Cleven attempt to unsettle the pioneer ethic (or the settler desire for uncontested possession) and frame the ongoing impact this destructive legacy has upon contemporary race relations. In *Uncanny Australia*, Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs suggest that the "unsettlement" characteristic to (post)colonial Gothic narratives (and Australian society) can be "activating" – and work with ongoing processes of reconciliation – because it "incites discourses and counter-discourse" and "produces alignments and re-alignments" (xvi). Yet while unsettlement via the uncanny can be productive in postcolonial narratives – in that it highlights, among other things, repressed histories/stories – it also has the tendency to mirror the same set of insider/outsider binaries and gratuitously reproduce scenes of colonial violence. Hence, just as the preceding chapter argues that to be productive agents of reconciliation works of historical revisioning need to be mindful of the ways in which they represent colonial violence, this chapter contends that literary works which revisit the frontier race relations through the lens of the colonial homestead need to be mindful of fetishizing trauma and becoming fixated on scenes of impasse.

In recent decades, the frontier wars between First Nation Australians and British settlers have emerged as a key area of focus, in both Australian history and literature. Eleanor Collins, commenting upon the frequent return to frontier spaces in Australian literary works, suggests that there seems to be "a sense that the moment of origin holds an explanatory key to all that has come afterwards" and that a "return to origin might clarify the present, resolving its guilts and conflicts" (40). For writers and historians who wish to revise Australia's colonial past and get to the root of Australia's national condition, early scenes of colonial encounter have become not just seminal but also sensational sites; zones where the gristly trauma of frontier violence can be both exposed and creatively drawn upon. As Richard Davis notes, however, revisionist histories which fixate on scenes of frontier violence – rather than the myriad of ways in which frontier encounter also exemplifies "features of exchange, perpetuation, transformation, reclamation" – often fail to "embrace a greater set of relationships than appropriation" or "deal with more diverse circumstances than violence" (8-9). Like

Mary Louise Pratt – who famously coined the term "contact zone" to re-inscribe the frontier as a "social space where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths" (2) – Davis claims that although the frontier is, inherently, a site of "asymmetrical" power relations, these power relations impacted *both* Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in a variety of different ways (9).

By specifically revisioning the colonial frontier as a contact zone, contemporary narratives are attempting to reposition what Stanner referred to as "the view from the window" (188); to frame both 'sides' of the frontier. Yet, in spite of such well-meaning attempts, fiction that revisions the frontier often fails to account for the innate heterogeneity of the space (the multiple ways in which people interact) and, instead, falls back upon over-used racial/spatial oppositions and the fetishisation of scenes of impasse.

Kossew claims that "the idea of an obsessive return to the traumatic wound in order to facilitate healing has become a familiar trope in reconciliation discourses" ("Recovering the Past" 172). Like works of historical revisioning, novels such as *The Secret River* and *Her Sister's Eye* contribute to reconciliation pedagogy by engaging in processes of sharing history. For example, both Grenville and Cleven's novels examine scenes when conciliation processes break down, when settlers use violence to prevent the presence of Indigenous peoples 'disturbing' their sense of belonging. Although *The Secret River* and *Her Sister's Eye* are imaginal discourses of reconciliation and not, therefore, required to present just the 'facts', they are – due to their engagement with historical violence – still implicated in discussions which concern the ethical representation of trauma as a means to inspire empathy and healing. As the previous chapter demonstrated (46), the obsessive return to scenes of trauma has led to a contemporary impasse; a stalling of reconciliation processes. The remainder of this chapter, examines the ways in which impasse, as a result of trauma, is evoked through the space of the colonial homestead.

3.1. Undoing the Colonial Homestead

> **Loom:** To appear as a large shape that is not clear, especially in a frightening or
> threatening way (*A dark shape loomed up ahead of us*).
> *-Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (online)

Like houses – which have "primarily" been deployed as metaphors that "uphold" traditional notions of dwelling and thereby "serve the ideal[s]" of colonial ideology in Western literature (Upstone 120) – colonial homesteads are predominantly associated with celebratory pioneer narratives; stories which maintain notions of peaceful settlement and, by extension, what Stanner has labelled the "cult of forgetfulness" (189). However, despite the resolute homeliness inferred through the memorialisation of its distinguished architecture, homesteads tend to be represented as failed dwellings in contemporary Australian literary works; beacons of colonial trauma that are unable to deliver the sense of grounded domesticity implied by their name.

Upstone claims that, in contrast to traditional colonial narratives, postcolonial texts typically foreground the subversion of imperial systems and structures through the "dismantling" of domestic spaces (121). Processes of dismantling, or undoing, are invariably linked with what have become the Gothicised notions of the unhomely or uncanny. In recent decades, the colonial homestead has been subjected to reinvigorated processes of undoing in postcolonial Australian literature; processes which render the space unhomely by revisiting evidence of colonial trauma. Nevertheless, it is important to note that even in colonial literary works, the homestead, like the house, is rarely a space which is categorically homely, or unmarked by frontier violence. As Homi Bhabha claims:

> Although the "unhomely" is a paradigmatic post-colonial experience, it
> has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions
> that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical
> conditions and social contradictions (367).

This study argues that it is possible to hear the unhomely in all manner of Australian literary works – even those which are aligned with notions of settlement – because domestic topographies are complicit in frontier violence.

The pastoral frontier was never a monolithic or uncontested space and the colonial homestead, despite being an image of national identity, has always been depicted as unsettled. In Jeannie Gunn's fictionalised autobiography *We of the Never-*

Never (1908), for example, the remote Elsey cattle station on the Roper River (a space which has become part of Australia's national imagination through its supposed embodiment of the pioneer ethic) is described as:

> An orderly little array of one-roomed buildings, mostly built of sawn slabs, and ranged round a broad oblong space with a precision that suggested the idea of a section of a street cut from some neat compact village (56).

Gunn's depiction of her year at Elsey has been widely touted for upholding the ideals of settlement (Davis 8). And, whilst intercultural interaction is explored in the text, the space of the Elsey homestead explicitly represents the settlers' desire to cultivate what they see to be "wilderness" into an orderly pastoral "landscape" comprising European-style dwellings and a compliant workforce. As Stanner reminds us, however, we need to be mindful of what these representations are concealing and remember that in Australia the "view" from the window has been "carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape" (188).

Gunn's memoir, coming before the period attributed to "the great Australian silence," was not always so sanguine. Scenes and chapters explicitly engaging with issues of frontier violence are generally cut from Gunn's text. Katherine Ellinghaus claims, for example, that *We of the Never-Never* represents a "site at which the realities of Australia's colonial past are blatantly obscured" (78), with chapters such as "A Nigger Hunt" where the author discusses the impact frontier violence has had upon Indigenous peoples being regularly removed. Yet, irrespective of censorship, the homestead remains a fault-line throughout the narrative; a space which implicitly reveals traces of the trauma its benign domesticity obscures. For example, in chapter seven, shots are fired at a tree full of roosting birds so that more feathers could be gathered to stuff pillows and replace the ones the 'station Aboriginals' had left "to the mercy of the winds" (63). While this passage is benignly presented, the homestead frame implicitly aligns the action with other acts of violent 'dispersal':

> A deep fringe of birds was constantly moving in and about and around the billabong; and the perpetual clatter of the plovers and waders formed an undercurrent to the life at the homestead [...] At sundown Sam fired into a colony of martins that Mac considered the luck of the homestead. Right into their midst he fired, as they slept in long, graceful garlands one beside the other along the branches of a gum-tree, each with its head snugly tucked away out of sight (63-64).

Colonial (and, as the following section reveals, postcolonial) literary works regularly align Indigeneity with the natural world, mimicking the racist government policy which denied Indigenous people citizenship by classifying them as "flora and fauna." Sam's shooting at the sleeping birds – which, like the Indigenous people of the region, "formed the undercurrent to life at the homestead" – echoes the well-documented massacres of Indigenous peoples which were common in the top half of the Northern territory at the time, where entire tribes were ambushed and killed as they slept (Tony Roberts, par. 18). Colonial homemaking, as this passage infers, relies upon the control of the Indigenous people who occupied the homestead's fringe. It is also implicitly associated with unrestrained violence.

While flagrant violence has been censored or supressed in some colonial narratives, in nineteenth-century Australian Gothic fiction and the popular Lemurian texts,[23] frontier domiciles commonly frame horrific instances of cross-cultural contact and, as a result, tend to function as spaces of settler guilt. In her analysis of "forgotten" colonial fiction, Rachel Weaver highlights the methods through which "colonial violence is continually brought in and out of focus in ways that seem to point to broader, culturally habitual patterns relating to the suppression and revelation of colonial bloodshed" (40). According to Weaver:

> Such fictions […] expose a habitual drive to bring colonial violence to visibility in ways that explicitly engage notions of the return of the repressed, almost self-consciously anticipating this Freudian notion of the reappearance of previously suppressed trauma of affect in exaggerated and sometimes monstrous or horrific form (35).

Although popular colonial narratives which centre upon frontier encounters and structures "sometimes offer little complexity in their rendering of colonial social relations," they still suggestively dismantle colonisation by not only restaging colonial violence but also focussing on the decimating effects of white guilt (Weaver 38). Unlike postcolonial narratives – which *critically* restage scenes of frontier encounter – many popular colonial stories appear, on the surface, to be solely reproducing colonial

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[23] Lemurian stories are texts which, in the imperial tradition of the American Wild West genre, ennobled the battles for waterholes between settlers and Aborigines. For further discussion about these kinds of works see Chapter 13 of Michael Cathcart's book *Water Dreamers: The Remarkable History of Our Dry Continent* (2009).

*Also note that while Lemurian texts do not belong to the Gothic genre *per se*, Rachel Weaver suggests that the "quality of embracing and broadcasting a supposedly secret or unstated sense of violence and destruction is enough to make many stories of colonial frontier conflict subversive, even Gothic" (36).

paradigms; paradigms which 'unofficially' accommodate extreme violence in the name of settlement. The frequent return to these violent contact zones in colonial settler narratives is, however, indicative of a subconscious imperialist critique as well as a troubled national conscience.

For example, while Indigenous peoples are rarely represented as fully fledged characters in colonial Australian Gothic fiction – Aboriginality is often only evoked via metaphors of flora and fauna (as I mentioned above), or through base caricature – a prevailing sense of Indigenous absence/presence is palpable throughout most works of Australian Gothic fiction. In Hume Nisbet's short story "The Haunted Station" (1894) for example, the "artfully" constructed "romantic domain" of an abandoned homestead simultaneously evokes and conceals scenes of colonial trauma (111). All around this property a "lifeless silence brood[s]" and the homestead seems like "a place which has fallen under a curse" (111). When coupled with the brooding emptiness of the Australian bush, the homestead is rendered an empty domestic façade whose architecture unsettles the notion of *terra nullius* and marks acts of 'clearing' the land. In stories such as Nisbet's, the pleasures of secure ownership and idealistic pastoral dwelling are poisoned by trauma of colonial contact; for, in these texts, 'cultivating' the land is onerously linked with 'clearing' it.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth-century foregrounding of frontier violence via the unsettlement of homestead spaces has influenced postcolonial literature, particularly Gothic texts. Drawing on Andrew Ng's analysis of Australian literary culture and the Gothic – which examines the ways in which Gothic tropes continue to unsettle colonial paradigms in Australian texts (149) – Weaver claims that the "violent history of settler colonisation is etched into a hostile and haunted Australia that now forms part of the nation's psychic landscape" (36). Whilst depictions of the colonial contact zone in contemporary postcolonial narratives are undoubtedly influenced by, and in many ways indebted to, what has become known as the haunted landscape of the Australian frontier, this chapter contends that the dismantling of the cultural framework of the colonial homestead has become specifically entangled with processes of reconciliation.

As Bishop acknowledges, imaginal pedagogies of reconciliation have been marked by a demand that "the dark and disturbing side of colonization must be fully acknowledged" (42). This demand has not only been addressed by non-Indigenous

Australian writers who are attempting to atone. Katrin Althans, for example, has coined the term "Aboriginal Gothic" to describe the proliferation texts by Indigenous Australian writers that subversively deploy European Gothic tropes to unpack the legacy of colonisation (28). In Melissa Lucashenko's short fictocritical text "Country: Being and Belonging on Aboriginal Lands," for example, a Gothic re-framing of homestead space both aligns and conflates Indigenous ways of being-in-the-world and destructive settler homemaking practices. In the first part of the narrative, Lucashenko critically examines political nature of Australian space, claiming:

> I wavered politically. First to one edge—this is our country, not yours in your historical murders and current shame—and then to another—we all share country, we all must live here, Aboriginal and Other alike and the only question is how to do that honourably (9-10).

Living "honourably," as Lucashenko demonstrates in the second part of her essay/story, is, however, no easy matter. The "sustaining" fable which comprises the latter part of Lucashenko's text not only demonstrates the meaning of country for Indigenous peoples but also allegorises some of the key socio-spatial problems associated with contemporary reconciliation policies.

Framed as an act of sharing, Lucashenko's Gothic reimagining of first contact in "Country: Being and Belonging on Aboriginal Lands" aims, on the one hand, to "open" settler eyes and ears to the ongoing pain of Indigenous dispossession by deploying Western structures of home. The inseparability between conceptions of home and country are made explicit in the narrative by the distinctly domestic rendering of Indigenous space. The fictional part of Lucashenko's essay, for example, begins thus:

> Once upon a time, to coin a phrase, a family lived in the forest in a house they had built themselves [...] It had high ceilings that the woman covered with cunningly conceived objects—treasures to capture the favours of the Gods. Above her kitchen sink she nailed a fertility cradle, with a baby's shirt in it. Her ochred sculptures were on the walls of the living room, beautifully, majestically. The verandah's wooden boards were smooth and aged with the wear of many feet over many years [...]The woman made excellent healing teas; the man would enter the house at night and know that together they had made a home fit for children (10).

This familiar domestic idyll, however, is violently interrupted by the arrival of the "strangers" – a group of "ignorant people" who knew only "their own ways, and their own needs" – who murder the family, burn down the house and rebuild their own

profane dwelling in its place (11). When the son of the original occupants – a successful doctor – returns one day to visit his family he is horrified by the strangers' inability to comprehend the Gothicism of the scene:

> He knocked on the new door, and it was opened by strangers who smiled uncomprehendingly at him. The doctor looked into the new house. The body of his mother lay dusty and unmourned in a corner of the main room. He shrieked with rage and sorrow, asking them why his mother was a corpse, where were his brothers and sister, what on earth had happened in this wretched place?
> 'What corpse?' the strangers said in puzzlement. The doctor ran to his mother's remains, and kneeled by them, sobbing. But no matter how hard the doctor tried, he couldn't make them see his mother's body lying in their new house (11-12).

By Lucashenko's parodic Gothic rendering, homestead spaces cannot be sites of co-existence – "where," as one of the strangers implores, "together" Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians "can make a new home" (12) – because they are inextricably, and blindly, embedded in systems of white power.[24] While, like many postcolonial narratives, "Country: Being and Belonging on Aboriginal Lands" uses the Gothicisation of the homestead to frame the violence of Indigenous dispossession, it also draws attention to the ways in which the Gothic genre fails to adequately account for this horror. In the end, the strangers remain unable to really see. In this way, Lucashenko's short fable reveals it is not only the profound and ongoing trauma of colonisation but also the ways in which reconciliation processes continue to ignore Aboriginal sovereignty.

Imaginal pedagogies of reconciliation, as I argued in Chapter 1, are works which actively seek to educate the reader through creative representations of scenes of intercultural contact and exchange. The Gothic is a genre which is commonly defined by the effect it has upon the reader. The undoing of Gothic spaces, for instance, is typically associated with the unearthing of hidden desires and facilitating a sublime response to simulated terror. However, while the Gothic is a genre which is intrinsically associated with eliciting an intense reader-response, I am not certain it is the most effective way in which to stimulate reconciliatory processes.

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[24] Lucashenko's text exemplifies Sheila Collingwood-Whittick's observation that Australian settlers, "driven by a neurotic determination to make the country more like home" failed to "see what was there" as "they went on to cause irreversible damage to the country's unique and fragile ecosystem" (xvii).

Echoing the "activating" sentiment of Gelder and Jacob's theory of unsettlement, Jan Wellington, in her article "Learning to Transgress: Embedded Pedagogies of the Gothic," suggests that Gothic narratives have a pedagogy of "disorientation" built into them – a revelry of confusion – which inspires counter dialogues and a "transgressive" questioning of systems of order (172). Like Wellington, Gina Wisker also romanticises the potential works of Gothic literature have to transform readers, by claiming that postcolonial Gothic texts can "focus readers and writers on issues of ideological influences through the text and highlight cultural and other difference as inflected in discourse, image, narrative structure, characterization, and event" (403). Both Wellington and Wisker focus on the transgressive potential of Gothic literature, the ways in which it crosses thresholds between past and present and interconnects diegetic and non-diegetic worlds. While this idea appears, at first glance, to make the Gothic genre an appropriate one with which to frame reconciliation pedagogy – a pedagogy which is innately concerned with crossing over – in Australian Gothic texts, Gothic tropes tend to impede meaningful cross-cultural exchange, rather than enable it, and maroon both characters and readers at sites of traumatic impasse.

Colonial homestead spaces, with all of their associated violence, trauma and suffering, may be read as what Ross Gibson calls Australian "Badlands," as "disturbing place[s] that you feel compelled to revisit despite all your wishes for comfort or complacency" (*Seven Versions* 15). Although, by re-visiting these spaces, writers foreground the ongoing reverberations of colonial violence, as Gibson himself notes, badlands are also "a convenient construct" and function as "dumping ground for those voices, thoughts, memories, grim realities that contemporary, 'civilised' Australia would prefer to forget as it seeks accommodation, a sense of belonging" ("Badlands").

Whilst the intense focus on past encounters and structures of colonisation in contemporary Australian narratives may indeed help to "clarify" cultural unbelonging and unsettlement, I am suspicious of the power such narratives have to actually "resolve" current conditions. Gail Jones claims, for instance, that "if we are to avoid […] the seductive allure of 'terminological Gothicism'—the simple pleasure of invoking the decorative vocabulary of spectres and phantoms—then the metaphor of haunting needs to be considered a strategic discourse" ("A Dreaming" 16). This study argues that discourses of reconciliation need to be careful not to fetishise the transformative, or

cathartic, qualities associated with re-visiting spaces of violence/scenes trauma; spaces/scenes which haunt Australia's national conscious.

3.2. *The Secret River*

> That was how it was on the Hawkesbury. Everything was hidden away and
> those everlasting cliffs and ridges blocking us into the narrow valley. Would
> have liked to push them back, get a clear look at all the things people knew
> but wouldn't say.
>
>   -Grenville, *Sarah Thornhill* (17).

In his analysis of *The Secret River*, Adam Gall suggests that "as a continuous process that underwrites settler-colonial cultural texts," the frontier in fact "imposes real limits on the strategies" narratives such as Grenville's can actually "mobilise" (99). For Gall, settler texts which revisit the colonial frontier are limited by their inability to recognise that the frontier – rather than being "*fait acccompli*" – is still being "enacted" (99). Grenville's failure to imagine the frontier from the perspective of the Darug people in *The Secret River*, for example, has been widely criticised and seen as perpetuating dichotomised versions of frontier history. Yet whilst the focus on settler experiences prevents *The Secret River* from creating a *productive* space of tension on the frontier – a site where the trauma of colonisation (and thereby processes of reconciliation) can be effectively reckoned with – this study contends that, contrary to much criticism, the narrative does reveal an awareness of the ongoing impact of colonial contact zones; most notably through its self-conscious evocation of scenes of settler impasse.

Sympathetically narrating the experiences of English convict William Thornhill – who, after being transported to Sydney for the term of his natural life receives a pardon and "takes up" land upon the Hawkesbury River, an act which ultimately sees him become involved in the violent dispossesses of the Darug people –*The Secret River* has been widely criticised for its failure to actually engage with the processes of reconciliation it so adamantly associates itself with. Like Gall, critics such as Kossew, Kelada and, most recently, Martin Staniforth, have all commented on Grenville's attempts to create a "space of recognition" on the colonial frontier (a site where in which colonial trauma is revealed to contemporary readers). However, while Grenville's narrative may not *actively* help reconciliation come about – in that it does not, among other things, make room for meaningful intercultural exchange by having Thornhill

atone – this chapter proposes that the text does imaginatively reflect upon the side-effects which have resulted from reconciliatory action (such as the paralysing sense of unbelonging commonly referred to as impasse) and, therefore, contributes to long term processes of 'working through'.

For example, Maggie Nolan, in her presentation entitled "Reading Reconciliation,"[25] suggests that *The Secret River*, rather than "enabling white Australians to feel better about themselves" (as the majority of criticism suggests), actually "enable[s] [...] ongoing process of self-reflection" and inspires white readers to self-consciously consider their own "implication" in issues such as frontier violence (par. 14). If novels such as Grenville's are to be read as pedagogies of reconciliation they need to be closely examined and discussed. Kelada claims that for books like *The Secret River* to do more than merely "perform" reconciliation – in ways Kelada compares to the Sydney Bridge Walk for Reconciliation in 2000 – and become "performative" agents of change, depictions of intersubjectivity need to be studied (13).

The Secret River is a text that is primarily concerned with the representation of white subjects or, more specifically, "the white settler response to the fact that the Aboriginal people were on the land they wanted to settle on" (Grenville, "Books and Writing" par. 36). In frontier narratives, however, subjectivity is always reciprocal and innately intermediate. While Grenville might shy away from formalising intersubjectivy – by refusing to "step into the minds of her Aboriginal characters" (Grenville, "Books and Writing" par. 34) – every aspect of the text points to potential cross-cultural contact or exchange. Although, on the surface, it would seem that the central space and metaphor of the novel – the settler dwelling – adheres to Grenville's own comments about the subjective focus of the text; in actuality the space (in all its different guises) is invariably encoded with the often fraught, or obscured, potential for intercultural interaction. While this section argues that the homestead is a zone of impasse, it is important to remember that impasse is a response to the foregrounding of intersubjectivity via the unsettlement of history, heritage, home and belonging.

Tents, huts, houses and homesteads physically and imaginatively litter *The Secret River*, revealing the ways in which the settler longing for home (Britain) and desire for uncontested possession inflects (or infects) every form of interaction. Staniforth argues

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[25] "Reading Reconciliation" is part of a larger project Nolan is conducting with Robert Clarke into the impact novels and book groups have upon reconciliation pedagogy.

that it is this "representation of the domestic" which specifically "undermines" the reconciliation processes Grenville is trying to engage with (1). For Staniforth, this "failure of engagement" is largely due to Grenville's insistence on depicting the Thornhill family's various frontier domiciles as "container[s] of typical pioneer values," spaces which "must remain pure and uncontaminated" (6). While Grenville's narrative certainly uses domestic topographies to sympathetically frame the pioneer ethic – with the Thornbill family's taming of the land being marked by the progressive upgrading of domiciles – it is important to note that the Thornhill family's dwellings also frame scenes of settler unbelonging and draw on Australian literary traditions which have sought to expose the innate unsettlement of pioneer life.[26]

A sublime juxtaposition between stone and home, or rock and dwelling, is repeated throughout *The Secret River*, foregrounding not only binary conceptions of permanence/impermanence but also (and more specific to this discussion) the notion of settler impasse. When Thornhill first sails down the Hawkesbury with Thomas Blackwood he is fascinated by the imposing cliffs which bestride the river, and observes that "the rock had been laid down flat, layer after layer piled high, like flitches of timber" and "as it had been worn away, great slabs the size of a house had fallen off and tumbled all skewiff at the foot of the cliffs" (101). Thornhill's image of rocks the size of houses lying at the base of the cliffs, implicitly connotes the ways in which frontier settlement represents a distorted – or skewed – vision of the land and its original inhabitants. While, at this point of the narrative, Thornhill is still relatively unaware of the destructive processes of dispossession central to settler homemaking, this metaphor gestures towards the ways in which Western conceptions of cultivation can potentially impede the passage towards meaningful being in-the-world, or authentic belonging. Aligned with the Darug, the cliffs of the Hawkesbury represent an indecipherable divide for Thornhill, a wall he cannot ultimately penetrate. However, while Thornhill initially recognises that his reading of the land is confused – claiming that "this was the place out of a dream, a fierce landscape of chasms and glowering cliffs and vast unpredictable sky"

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[26] The depiction of the Thornhill family's hut echoes (and even intensifies) the disillusionment of pioneer life represented in narratives such as Henry Lawson's "The Driver's Wife." For example, the Thornhill family awake one morning to find a black snake has been in bed with them: "They all watched, a family turned to marble, as the length of dull black progressed without haste across the dirt floor" (161). Unlike Lawson's vigilant heroine, who is accustomed to this kind of hardship and knows how to act, the newly-arrived Thornhill family turn to stone when they realise their new home can be invaded so easily; a response which renders their hut a flimsy sphere of unbelonging, rather than a "container" of settlement.

where "everywhere was the same but everywhere was different (101) – he is unable to temper his desire to possess the place, to turn it into something he *thinks* he understands.

Collins suggests that one way of approaching *The Secret River* is to read Thornhill as a character who is "fatally flawed;" someone who "tragically" unable to comprehend his situation (38). For example, when Thornbill first sees the land which he will later name "Thornhill Point," he is drawn to the sense of refined order it seems to imply:

> The long spit of land […] rose from the water; a sweet place with scattered trees and grass, as green and tender as a gentleman's park even in this summer season. Thornhill found himself looking for the manor house in among the trees with its windows winking, but there was only a kangaroo watching them pass, its forepaws held up to its chest and its ears twitching toward them (106).

Thornhill's romantic longing for a distinguished home is, in many ways, a response to the harsh British class system of which he was a victim. As a child in London, Thornhill (who grew up in a large and impoverished family) felt most at home when he and Sal "slipped off together" to a "patch of wasteland" on the city's outskirts, a place by the river that had a "clean windy feel" and there were "no houses, no alleyways" (18). Aside from Sal's recounting of her experiences as a child when staying with her mother who worked as a servant at Cobham Hall (38), he has had virtually no experience of gentility. The land he envisions along the Hawkesbury River, however, adheres to both the sense of home he created with Sal on London's wasteland as well as his imagined notions of domestic refinement. Yet, while Thornhill's overwhelming desire for comfort and respectability is understandable in light of his upbringing, his choice to reiteratively ignore the obvious signs of Darug occupation is not.

Flora and fauna are inextricably (and problematically) aligned with indigeneity in *The Secret River*.[27] Hence, the presence of the kangaroo in this "sweet place" mentioned above invariably signifies the presence of the Darug people and marks Thornhill's failure to acknowledge that this land is essentially already "taken." Collins claims that "Once we know of the Darug, the Thornhills cannot build a home and gain the material comforts their pioneer story demands without also building narrative tension and a sense of impending violence" (39). Throughout *The Secret River*

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[27] As Kelada states: "to conflate Aboriginal bodies and presence with landscape without 'understanding' is to risk textually harking back to legislation under which Indigenous peoples were categorised as flora and fauna" (8).

Thornhill's genteel imaginings are consistently tempered by existences that his reverie cannot accommodate (rather than seeing a manor house "among the trees" he sees a kangaroo). Yet, although these presences linger in Thornhill's fantasies of ownership (108), he refuses (or is unable) to reconfigure his possessive domestic overlay.

Thornhill's denial of Indigenous occupation deepens once he is granted his pardon and becomes free to own property. Kossew claims that "moments of cross-cultural understanding are rare," in *The Secret River* because the "teleological movement towards naming and possession overwrites and displaces the story of Indigenous dispossession ("Voicing" 11-12). Out exploring one day, Thornhill decides to climb the ridge which forms the backbone of his newly acquired "thumb" of land. Thornhill becomes despondent, however, when he discovers that he cannot navigate the cliffs: "the way up was blocked at every turn by a great bulge or overhang of mouse-grey stone" and "in the end he had to turn back and settle for the platform of flat rock that ran around the base of the ridge like a step (153). Literally 'stuck between a rock and a hard place', Thornhill's experience of physical/emotional impasse is further intensified once he becomes aware of a rock drawing which inscribes his presence in the region alongside a large totemic image of a fish (154).[28] The fish (a symbol which is evoked in many of the literary works analysed in this study), is not generally considered to be a totemic figure of the Darug people – who were an inland tribe[29] – it significance here, however, seems to imply an intersubjective recognition; a shared connection to the river and changing life patterns.

The rock drawing forces Thornhill to recognise, not only, that the land is already occupied but that, for the Darug, stone and rock do not constitute impasse but are instead part of the fluid fabric of home:

> It came to him that this might look an empty place, but a man who had walked the length of that fish, seen the tiller and sail of the *Hope* laid down in stone, had to recognise otherwise. This place was no more

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[28] This drawing recalls the early scene from Eleanor Dark's *The Timeless Land*, where young Bennelong accompanies his father to a "flat sandstone" rock so he can draw the image of a British boat alongside "a huge fish, an emu, very fine and tall, many shields and boomerangs" and "the whole story of a hunt" (19). For Bennelong – unlike his father – the presence of this image signifies the potential for cross-cultural mobility: "His thought was that if these beings, these Bereewolgal, could make such a boat, could not he, Bennelong, when he was older, do the same and so journey across the water out of sight of his own land" (20).

[29] As Heiss and Gibson state, "it is generally acknowledged that the Eora are the coastal people of the Sydney area, with the Dharug [Darug] people occupying the inland area from Parramatta to the Blue Mountains" (par. 5).

> empty than a parlour in London, from which the master of the house
> had stepped into the bedroom (155).

While Thornhill's domestic analogy – which, again, conflates Indigenous occupation of the land with gentrified Western dwelling practices – marks his recognition that the land he has been granted is already inhabited, it is also the moment he resigns himself to supressing this information, claiming "when you had set your foot along the path it was easier to go on than go back" (155). What Thornhill fails to comprehend here, however, is that while he may think he is 'moving on' – building first a hut and then eventually a grand home at Thornhill's Point – he will always remain emotionally fixed at this moment of impasse; the moment when he negated the possibility of sharing.

The westernised homestead framework Grenville deploys in her elucidation of frontier race relations both physically and imaginatively blocks the emergence of other spaces in the novel; spaces that are possibly more helpful to furthering contemporary reconciliation processes. The property of Tom Blackwood – the uncontested King of the settlers whose voice, unlike Thornhill's, is "enormous through the cliffs" (103) – is, for example, treated as an oasis of intercultrality in the text; a dialectic space which goes by Blackwood's mantra of "*give a little, take a little*" (208; original emphasis). While Grenville offers few details on the nature of Blackwood's dwelling – aside from the fact that the land is uncleared (206) and he lives with a Darug woman and a "pale" skinned child (209) – what seems apparent is that this domicile is based upon values of sharing and sparing the land, as well as an appreciation of difference. Blackwood's place has the potential to function as a site of hopeful entanglement in *The Secret River*; a space which shows settlers a way to live more meaningfully with the land and its original inhabitants. Despite this potential, however, Blackwood's intercultural dwelling remains distinctly under-realised throughout the narrative; first hidden and then destroyed. While the homestead dominates the narrative, the existence of this alternative dwelling suggests that other spaces could have been present in white experience, without ever as becoming as fully realised as the homestead.

Unsurprisingly, the violence that occurs at Blackwood's in the name of uncontested settlement is shown to have an uncanny side-effect. The massacre which destroys the scene of cross-cultural utopia at Blackwood's is pivotal the text and tied to Thornhill's recognition that a "stranger" lives within his "heart" (291). The horrific violence of settlers shatters the early morning peace of the Darug camp by Blackwood's

lagoon, horrifically severing the cross-cultural bonds Blackwood and his partner have built together:

> Black bodies lay among the ruins of their humpies. He saw the big body of Black Dick, laid out full length with the flesh of his chest torn open by a ball [...] A woman lay in a pool of sunlight, sleeping with her sleeping baby beside her, except for the way her head was twisted, attached to her body by only a strip of ragged flesh. The back of the baby's head was crushed purple (308).

After the massacre, the stillness which hangs over Blackwood's place – like the brooding silence of Darkey Creek where a group of Darug people are killed after eating poisoned flour (275) – is in stark juxtaposition with the hubbub of settlement presented in the last section of the book, entitled "Thornhill's Place."

In the novel's final pages, the ambition to establish a homestead which has underpinned much of the interaction throughout the novel is finally realised through the construction of a simulacra of British respectability, named "Cobham Hall." The abundant comforts of the Thornhill "villa" are, however, distinctly skewed by the silences/absences it has left in its destructive wake. A large stone "fortress" (315) which shines "bright with its mortar and whitewash in the sunlight, so bright it was painful to the eyes" (330), the homestead is an uncanny embodiment of impasse; a space which highlights settler blindness and unbelonging. Cobham Hall architecturally mirrors the buildings and gardens Thornhill and his wife Sal admired back "Home" in London. The steps leading up to the verandah, for example, are modelled on "the ones [Thornhill] remembered from St Mary Magdalene in long-ago Bermondsey" (315) and Sal attempts to grow an English garden of roses and daffodils shaded by poplar trees (318). Yet although Thornhill tells himself that "a person was entitled to draw any picture they fancied upon the blank slate of this new place" (319), the family's efforts to simulate the places they left behind are ultimately unsatisfying. Regardless of its fancy name, Cobham Hall does not fit together properly, the stairs looked "dwarfish" (315) and Sal's poplar trees became twigs which, "when the wind blew [...] swivelled loose in the ground in a parody of life" (319). Whilst the homestead provides the family with every domestic comfort, it leaves Thornhill with a "hollow feeling" of unbelonging and an uncanny sense of loss (333).

The frontier violence which secured Cobham Hall for the Thornhill family has been absorbed into the house's structure, rendering it a space of Gothic unsettlement; a

'whited sepulchre'. For example, Thornhill cannot walk on the floors of the house without, reminding himself of the thriving culture he and his fellow settlers dispossessed because Cobham Hall is built directly over the rock painting of the fish (and the *Hope*) that so unsettled him when he first "took up" his piece of land. Although the fish is covered up, it still swims in Thornhill's imagination:

> It was dark under the floor boards: the fish would never feel the sun again [...] It would remain as bright as the day the boards had been nailed down, but no longer alive, cut off from the trees and light that it had swam in. Sometimes, sitting in the parlour in the red velvet armchair, Thornhill thought of it underneath him, clear and sharp on the rock (316).

The fluidity of this picture painted on stone, and the futile act of covering it up, testifies to a perpetual life force; a force which continues despite the building of fortified settler dwellings and the entrenching of counter-narratives.

In keeping with Gelder and Jacob's concept of "unsettlement," the irrepressibility of indigeneity compels Thornhill to act. Through the giving of alms, he attempts, for example, to make amends to one of the only survivors of the massacre, Long Jack. Physically disfigured/branded by the massacre which almost killed him, Long Jack, however, refuses to accept Thornhill's offers and instead, sits "like stone" on the patch of ground near the homestead which he calls "my place" (329); becoming yet another symbol of impasse and a reminder of Thornhill's own unbelonging. Unable to atone, Thornhill remains caught in limbo, spending his days sitting on the verandah[30] of his "immovable" fortress scanning the cliffs; searching for the people he has dispossessed, and the sense of self he lost in the process:

> Through the glass, the trees were flaked and cracked. The rocks were what seemed alive, something old and solemn out of the sea, their grey skins speckled with white lichen, creased furrowed and ridged [...] He had never seen part of the cliff fall away, although he sometimes held his breath, staring through the glass, to be watching the moment it happened [...] he had never caught a rock in the private act of falling (332).

While, in some ways, this passage implies that Thornhill is a victim of colonisation, who unable to fully comprehend his actions – or to recognise the moment he himself "fell" –

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[30] Note Fiona Giles, in her "Introduction" to the edited collection *From the Verandah: Stories of love and landscape by nineteenth century Australian women*, claims that: "the verandah extends the domestic into social life; it is marginal to both [...] mediating between public and private worlds, and breaking down the division between them" (I).

it also parallels the scene of contemporary unbelonging felt by settler Australians. Thornhill is trying to comprehend the moment when he became "blocked" from belonging, when, to cite Ravenscroft, things "fell from view." This moment can be traced, of course, to the instant he chose to ignore the significance of the rock drawing on the cliffs surrounding his property; when, rather than embracing cultural reciprocity, he opted for an ethnocentric way of being-in-the-world.

By simultaneously framing scenes of suppression as well as revelation, the colonial homestead becomes a symbolic embodiment of impasse in *The Secret River*; exemplifying both the root cause, and protraction, of settler unbelonging. However, while this Gothic rendering of the colonial homestead gestures towards an awareness of the ongoing impact of frontier race relations it does little more than re-present colonial trauma. Hence, this study argues that, in the end, Grenville's unproductive (and reiterative) return to scenes of impasse ultimately reinforces positions of contemporary unbelonging, and obscures the potential for meaningful cross-cultural exchange.

3.3. *Her Sister's Eye*

> "So does the postcolonial home reveal only a space for trauma?"
> -Sara Upstone, *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel* (131).

The colonial homestead in *Her Sister's Eye* – just as in *The Secret River* – has a Gothic presence which reaches far beyond its official boundaries. Presiding over the small and segregated fictional Queensland town of Mundra, the "Drysdale mansion" seems, at first glance, to be the primary symbol of colonial trauma in Cleven's narrative. Evocatively framing the decline of the squattocracy, the Drysdale family's crumbling mansion struggles to maintain the façade of respectability which once marked it as a colonial power base. Unlike Cobham Hall, which is freshly 'whitewashed', this is a space which is unravelling and no longer able to cover-over the history of frontier violence upon which it was founded and maintained. While the pervasiveness of the homestead frame – and its role in repressing trauma – eclipses other social spaces in Grenville's text, the postcolonial undoing of the homestead in Cleven's narrative re-positions white (Gothic) frameworks so as to include, rather than exclude, Aboriginal spaces, stories and ways of being (Ferrier 37; Althans 122; Armellino 260). In *Her Sister's Eye*, ex-centric sites of frontier trauma – like the fringes of settlement where Indigenous peoples were

forced to reside and the Stewart River – ambivalently battle with the homestead for Gothic prominence. This chapter argues that by oscillating between these spaces, Cleven's novel denies the fetishisation of colonial homestead (as the pivotal site of frontier trauma) and, in doing so, instigates processes of reconciliatory reckoning.

Like many Indigenous writers, Cleven examines the modes through which postcolonial frameworks "emerge within, against and out of a past history of colonialist and paternalist intervention" (Ferrier 37). Unlike the profound sense of impasse which dominates Grenville's engagement with colonial history, Cleven subverts the stasis which has come to define postcolonial frontier narratives and – through processes of reckoning – enables some of the characters in *Her Sister's Eye* to emerge from the ruins of the past with dignity and hope for the future. Reckoning, as a means of coming to terms with an issue, or balancing something out, is often (and quite rightly) regarded as problematic in reconciliation discourses. Ravenscroft, for example, suggests that a focus on reckoning can de-rail reconciliation by placing too much emphasis on what is presumed to be measurable – such as totalling the exact numbers of casualties which resulted from frontier conflict – as opposed to the imaginal (*The Postcolonial Eye* 15). However, drawing on the work of Michelle Stewart – who claims that processes of reckoning can, in fact, create "space[s] of productive tension," which "disrupt" the movement towards "closure" in reconciliation processes (44) – this chapter contends that *Her Sister's Eye* works through colonial trauma by transforming the homestead from a colonial power-base to a space of reckoning, where female characters (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) have agency.

In Cleven's text, the homestead productively accommodates cross-cultural tensions, incorporating them into a broader intersubjective dialogue. In contrast with *The Secret River*, *Her Sister's Eye* is a distinctly multi-faceted work which explores the intersecting perspectives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters/storylines. As Althans recognises in her analysis of the text in *Aboriginal Gothic*, the:

> [...] seemingly segregated worlds of blacks and whites constantly intersect in a play of hide and seek of memories, a feature narratively echoed in the novel's non-linear storyline: mosaic-like, its bits and pieces only fall into place at the end, only then revealing the gruesome truth silenced for more than a generation (122).

For Althans, *Her Sister's Eye* represents a "clash of European and Aboriginal understandings of the Gothic" (122). While she does not specifically discuss the ways in

which this clash intersects with broader reconciliatory dialogues, she does demonstrate how the text links different versions of history and stories of trauma through the transgressive space of the colonial homestead. "The central place in which both strands of the narration meet," claims Althans, "is the Drysdale mansion, a picture-perfect example of a Gothic powerhouse of Australian colouring" (127). Functioning as a nexus between the past and present (or memory and forgetting), the Drysdale homestead is a space where a number of the narrative's characters/storylines converge. Through this intermingling, the homestead is reimagined, and eventually reconstructed, from the perspective of the Indigenous characters who work there, Archie Corella and Murilla Salte.

On the surface the Drysdale mansion is a dwelling which endorses traditional forms of racial segregation. Owned by rich settlers and maintained by an Indigenous workforce, it is invariably implicated in systems of colonial violence and exploitation. For instance, for Archie Corella – the amnesiac drifter who briefly works at the homestead and whose lost history organises the novel – the Drysdale mansion is a space which inspires a sense of abject fear. Unaware of his true identity as Raymond Gee, Archie has spent his life physically and emotionally disconnected from his home and cultural heritage, drifting from town to town until he unwittingly returns to Mundra and starts working as gardener at the Drysdale homestead; the home of his sister's murderer and the man who beat him as a child causing him to lose his memory, the deceased Edward Drysdale. It is through Archie's eyes that the Drysdale mansion is rendered a Gothic site of uncanny revelation. Prior to his arrival in Mundra, Archie claims that "no amount of thinking or searching seemed to dig up" any information pertaining to his identity (12). By falling back on the well-worn drifter's mantra that "after a while all towns" look the same, Archie initially dismisses the uncanny sensation he feels when he ambles down the "oddly familiar main street" of Mundra (3). His composure falters, however, when he comes face to face with figures from his forgotten past such as Donald Drysdale, Edward's grandson. Although Archie experiences a profound sense of terror when he encounters Drysdale – feeling "for a buckjumping minute" that "his legs might tear off out of the shop" – "fear and curiosity," however, keep him "rooted to the spot" and compel him to journey with Drysdale to the homestead (8).

In *The Contested Castle*: *Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*, Kate Ferguson Ellis claims that "the Gothic novel of the eighteenth century foregrounded the home as fortress, while at the same time exposing its contradictions" (xi). Like the castle in the European Gothic tradition, the homestead in *Her Sister's Eye* is foregrounded as a fortress of white privilege and an embodiment of settlement. At the same time, however, it is also presented as a space which uncannily exposes colonial violence (postcolonial unsettlement) and frames scenes of Indigenous and/or female agency. These ambivalent tensions are evoked through the architecture of the house:

> Archie looked across at the run-down Queenslander. It crouched forward out of the undergrowth as though it was exhausted from weathering too many storms. Moss green shutters hung carelessly from large fly-screened windows. Embracing the house like a protective arm was a white rust-speckled, wrought-iron verandah. The iron was fashioned like a delicate lace petticoat […] the once cream-coloured walls, the timber exposed. Up near the roof, the gutters hung precariously, water dripping steadily from their rusty mouths. And the door looked down from this sad vista, glaring back at him (10).

While this vision of dilapidation signifies the passing of the age of the grand estate – and the out-dated adherence to traditions which tended to cast both women and Indigenous people in subservient roles – the general decay of the structure is off-set by the protective embrace of the "wrought-iron verandah," which is suggestively "fashioned like a delicate lace petticoat."

Drawing, once again, on European Gothic traditions – which typically render the Gothic dwelling an imprisoning container of femininity (Ellis ix) – Cleven, on the one hand, presents Drysdale house as a space where the patriarchal/colonial tyranny over women is enacted. Forced into marriage with Reginald Drysdale, the lady of the house, Caroline, has spent most of her life within the homestead's precincts; abused and terrorised by her husband and her son (109). Deliberately constructed as mad (113), Caroline is an embodiment of the house's Gothicism. For instance, Archie, during his first interview with Caroline for the position of gardener, is racked by a feeling of "dread coursing through his body" and succumbs to a sense of paralysis, stopping "dead in his tracks" (13). However, while Caroline is initially framed as a sinister and enigmatic character – screeching "'You … you … !'" into "dark" corners – she is not what she seems (13). Furthermore, the presence of Murilla Salte, who works as the housekeeper and

Caroline's carer, tempers the Gothicism of scene and gives Archie the confidence to proceed:

> Murilla motioned for him to step forward and smiled kindly as though she knew how nervous he felt. Archie hesitated for a second: the woman's voice rattled him […] He knew she'd see how dirty she was. A hobo, that's what she'd see. White women hate dirty blackfellas. He wondered how much she'd hate him. There was always some measure to hate. Big or small (14).

Archie's perception of Caroline, as a white woman who hates "blackfellas," is incorrect. Caroline's family, particularly her mother, were close friends with Archie's (Raymond's) family (145). Although Caroline does not recognise Archie, when he removes his hat and shows his face she suddenly "grab[s] a gilt frame photograph" of her husband, Reginald Drysdale (who was also involved in violently enforcing the segregation of Mundra) and "hurl[s] it across the room, straight into a wall mirror" screaming "'You … you …!'" (15). This early mirror scene marks the Drysdale mansion as not only a space which is implicated in colonial trauma but also as a scene of reckoning; exposing it as a site where women (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) battle sexist and racist paradigms.

Despite being a space of protracted domestic violence, the Drysdale homestead is not a site of passive femininity. Murilla, for example, although an Indigenous woman working in-service (a role which has been traditionally forced upon Indigenous people), ultimately refuses to occupy a subservient position at the homestead. Like the abuse Caroline suffers at the hands of her husband and son, Murilla has been regularly subjected to racialised/gendered forms of humiliation by her employer:

> Reginald was a thorough man. Nothing happened by mistake, ever, He was obsessive about anything and everything. Even the floor rugs had to be positioned just right and the bed linen starched until stiff. All the while Murilla worked he watched her with his close crafty eyes. Looking out of the window on wash days, hanging around the lounge room when she tidied up, appearing behind her in the kitchen unexpectedly (186).

Murilla, however, subverts the history of abuse by standing up to the Drysdale men's sense of entitlement. Stumbling across Reginald's son, Donald, in the dark hallways of the homestead, Murilla refuses to be victimised:

> Suddenly, from a corner room, Drysdale stepped out, hitching his trousers up around his chunky hips as he strode towards them […] He flung her a question. 'My mother, is she alright?'
> Murilla turned her head in the other direction. 'Yeah, just fine n dandy'.

> 'Well, Murilla, you just be careful with my mother. If I ever catch you
> doing anything you shouldn't, then I'll get rid of you myself. My mother
> won't have a say in that, I can tell you.' Drysdale offered her a greasy
> smile, running his tongue across his lips.
> [...] She smirked, putting her hand to her forehead, a mock salute. 'Yes,
> sir, yes, boss' (18-19).

In spite of the traditionally subservient position she occupies at the homestead, the drudgery of her job and the menacing presence of the Drysdale men, Murilla's strength and efficient mobility establish her as a person of authority; as someone who is not afraid to act and can potentially nullify the homestead's Gothicism.

While Murilla is recognised for her strength in *Her Sister's Eye*, she is not a character who is caught up in the emotional trauma of remembering. Murilla's ability to effectively navigate the space of the Drysdale mansion is linked with the ways in which she imagines it as a space which is separate to her own family, or cultural heritage. Archie, however, struggles to comprehend the space of the homestead, with its many "dark rooms" and looming presences (18) because he subconsciously recognises that the house and its inhabitants are somehow entangled with the "thing" that obstructs his memory:

> At times, he really thinks he is going mad, especially when the images
> come to him like a flickering film, fuzzy and distorted at the edges [...]
> He can remember things that happened a minute ago, even a year ago,
> but any further than that and he runs into trouble. Although, there's
> something about this place that kindles his memory. Maybe it's tied
> with Sofie, Caroline or Donald. He just cannot remember (88).

The Drysdale homestead is, for Archie, "a place full of shying" where he cannot "be" (101). Shying – a response to fear which is usually used to described the flighty-ness of horses – typifies a backward movement away from a source of terror. By describing the homestead as "a place full of shying," Archie reveals the multiple ways in which the homestead functions as a cross-cultural badland. For example, while he initially relates the homestead's shying to its settler inhabitants, claiming that a "clear understanding told him" that Donald was a "shyer," someone who "shied himself away, like a snake when he feels the vibration of a man's footsteps approaching — hiding away, curling up in a hollow log, all the while watching with cunning eyes, ready to strike" (12), Archie is quickly forced to broaden the scope of his assertion. Although Donald is indeed a 'snake' – spending his evenings abusing young girls in his work shed – the guarded terrors of

the homestead are also linked with maban reality (which I defined in Chapter 1, 14) and are, therefore, bigger than the violent legacy of the "Drysdale Men" (224).

In *Her Sister's Eye*, the maban, or Aboriginal, reality evoked through the lived-experiences of the Indigenous characters disrupts European Gothic tropes (Althans 130). For instance, Murilla's sister, Sofie Dove – who is thought to be not "the full billy can of tea" (5) – is deeply connected to the region's river spirits, speaking to them like they are her friends (122). This powerful relationship forms an undercurrent to Sofie's interactions, and contributes to the shying of the Drysdale homestead, where Sofie moves freely due to her own friendship with Caroline. During his first evening on the property, Archie becomes frightened when he sees Sofie standing in the garden:

> Swaying from one foot to the other, Sofie was wavering like a ghost, her mouth moving wordlessly as she watched the shed door with odd concentration. Wriggling and jumping about in her hands was a yellowbelly fish. It was then Archie realised the place he had come to was a place with its own shying (21-22).

While Archie is unable to interpret this event, Sofie's presence outside Donald's shed – the place where she has been sexually abused – is a powerful act of resistance which highlights Donald's cowardice. It also reveals, however, the ways in which the shying of the homestead is generated through processes of intercultural contact which connect the space with other locations and forms of cross-cultural reckoning.

It is predominantly through the actions and memories of Archie and Sofie that the homestead is shown to be inextricably linked to other sites of trauma in *Her Sister's Eye*. The river, for instance, looms as large as the homestead in this text; associated with trauma, revelation and revenge. For example, it is here that Sofie (and the fish) settle the score with Donald for his crimes against her and, presumably, numerous, other girls. Sofie retells the experience from her unique perspective:

> Mister peekaboo comed down to the river that awful scat cat day. Not even knows, as mad as he were that it were his big time.
> Sofie say: swimming.
> Boo say: Yeah, with no clothes on.
> Laugh he do […] He swims right in the middle and a thing happened. The secret thing.
> 'Help me! Let me go! Let me go you, little bitch! I'll fucking kill you! You bitttch!'
> That Sofie knew that no person can help when the river say that gonna happen […] Dancin on water won't do good a tiny bit.
> Face blue like the hands reachin at Sofie he go bubblin under there to the fish house. That ol house a mud (58).

Sofie's powerful relationship with this other "house" enables her to enact vengeance upon Donald. As Armellino recognises, the river in *Her Sister's Eye* (more than the homestead) "remains an encumbering void" in the Mundra community "because it is there that the past is buried" (258). However, while the river functions as a space of encounter in the text and is a space of (post)colonial retribution, it is not just a force that can be harnessed.

In the end, the river, rather than the Gothic space of the homestead, frames the scene of both Archie and Sofie's demise. Although, the threat of violence has been removed through the death of the Drysdale men, the cathartic resurfacing of supressed colonial trauma that occurs after their deaths is not enough to 'even the balance sheet' or 'wipe the slate clean'. For Archie, for instance, the trauma of revelation – and the knowledge of his true identity –is unbearable:

> 'I'm Raymond Gee.' He closes his eyes. His body feels so tired, his bones ache. 'Left when I was twelve. Roamed about for years ...' [...] Archie doesn't hear her, though he's done what he has to. He throws his head back and looks up into the ever-darkening sky. The low sound of thunder reaches him. His knees catch and the side of his face burns (218-219).

For Archie/Raymond, the chance to alleviate his old guilt (and 'wash away' the hot pain of his trauma) becomes overwhelming. Reliving his sister's death in a final blurring of the past and present, Archie mistakes Sofie (who is swimming in the river) for Belle, and inadvertently pulls her under while trying to rescue her, causing them to both drown (220).

In other Australian Gothic narratives, such as Andrew McGahan's *The White Earth*, physical revelations of colonial trauma ensure the condemnation of the homestead. By demonstrating that there are numerous places (and peoples) which continue to bear the traces of frontier violence – even seemingly benign spaces such as the suburban home, or the local pub – Cleven, however, effectively liberates the homestead from its burden. By literally spreading the blame, Cleven allows the homestead to become a space of productive tension and reconciliatory reckoning instead of postcolonial repudiation. For example, the final chapter of *Her Sister's Eye*, entitled "corella's roses," depicts Murilla and Caroline metaphorically contemplating the future of Australia while planting Archie's beloved roses, which he could not grow on his own property, in the homestead's barren garden. While the threat of violence has been

removed, Murilla has been unable to protect Sofie or Archie from the impact of traumatic revelation and they have both been sacrificed to the 'turning tides of history'. Murilla's sadness tempers the optimism of these final scenes. She is, for example, pessimistic about the rose's future growth, claiming that the "'plants won't grow if there is no life in the ground'" and that "the soil were always bad here, Caroline. You live at the end of the line'" (231).

Caroline, however, refuses to allow such a line to be drawn, and replies that "'only people can give it [the soil] life'" and that "'nothing ends [...] the ground, the soil improves. Quite simply it must give again" (231). According to Ferrier, "a note of hope" is educed in Indigenous women's writing through "acts of resistance" which typically involve symbols of "nemesis and renewal" such as "water and fire" (49). In *Her Sister's Eye*, this possibility of renewal works towards breaking down feelings of hopelessness that impasse inspires. The final image of the text is one of intercultural shelter and contemplation as the land is washed clean by the storm:

> The garden soil scrubbed from their fingernails, waiting for the kettle to boil, the two women sit before the window and watch as lightening dances across the sky. The wind picks up and tears across the paddocks, scattering leaves and rattling the window pane. With a deafening clap of thunder the sky opens and the landscape blurs into silvery sheet of water (232-233).

By allowing these women and the space of the homestead to survive the dramatic onslaught of historical re-visioning, Cleven tentatively balances the importance of storytelling/memory with the possibility of hope.

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In her critique of dwelling, Plumwood, as I mentioned in Chapter 1 (24), draws attention to the ways in which the Heideggarian ideals of "sparing" and "protecting" one true place can stifle other spaces and places. To substantiate her argument, Plumwood uses the example of the colonial homestead, claiming:

> The Heideggerian singularity of focus legitimates a narrowing of place relationship to a special place, in a way that supports a concept of the home property of a (national) self that is strongly set apart from and above other places, in terms of care and priority. Centric place ideals of military empire and colonial privilege, as expressed [...] in the image of the moated or hill-placed castle or the defensively hedged or fenced

colonial 'big-house', rest on the subordination or instrumentalisation of
other places (par. 14).

Built by convicts, maintained by an unpaid Indigenous workforce and occupied by far-flung settlers wishing to emulate a British tradition, the colonial homestead in *The Secret River* is a deeply segregated space and ultimately remains a site which obstructs, rather than clarifies, dynamics of social change; specifically, the impact frontier race relations continues to have on Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-existence. In Cleven's *Her Sister's Eye*, however, the paralysis associated with frontier trauma is, in terms of reconciliation, more productively framed by the structure of the homestead. By revealing the way in which the Drysdale mansion is connected to other sites of trauma, for instance, Cleven positions the house as a space of reckoning, where, through ongoing intersubjective exchange, the violence of the past is weighed up.

As immediately recognisable structures, colonial homesteads have become sites through which the once unspeakable horrors of colonisation have re-entered the public domain. Yet whilst the homestead is a space which is central to discussions of reconciliation it also seems to be a site which people cannot 'get around', or needs to be 'got through' before reconciliation processes can become productive. Deborah Bird Rose, in her essay "The Redemptive Frontier," claims that while "the purpose in analysing violence is to understand where it is located and how it is embedded in our cultural work," the "end goal is to uncover paths that may lead towards reparative action in the world (49). By focusing on journeys which take Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters away from the homestead's Gothic confines, the following chapter examines alternative pathways.

4

Interspaces

Framing Transformation through 'Dwelling-in-Motion'

> We need to re-imagine the architecture of our dwelling spaces themselves, to incorporate the idea of movement and dialogue inside, to settle with less certainty [...] we need to write Australian spaces that are not firmly possessed.
>
> -David Crouch, "National Hauntings" (103).

In postcolonial literary works, mobile encounters with alternative spaces, bodies and ways of being-in-the-world are regularly deployed as means to facilitate new communications and connections. In contrast to the stasis of the homestead discussed in the preceding chapter, this chapter focusses on literary representations of journeying, specifically the spaces, or modes, of travel which are used to frame scenes of cross-cultural transformation. In his book *Mobilities*, John Urry applies the term "interspace" to the sites of "intermittent movement" that are facilitated by various modes of travel and embody new social routines (12). Urry primarily uses the concept of interspace to gauge how the "space and time between two or more 'events'" (*Mobilities* 8) – such as the car journey between work and home – is becoming increasingly concerned with the extension of "network capital," a form of social capital which emphasises the links between people (*Mobilities* 251). By focussing specifically upon journeys between 'home and away', this chapter analyses the ways in which a number of Australian literary works deploy the concept of interspace to frame shifts in intercultural awareness and examine emergent networks of cross-cultural exchange. In Jones's *Sorry*, Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country* and Wright's *Carpentaria*, for example, the cross-cultural inhabitation of interspaces, unlike the homestead, frames dynamic processes of social transformation. In these texts, journeying away from domestic space is treated as educational (for both characters and readers); a process which – namely through cross-culture encounter – inspires an emotive and imaginative reconsideration of the modes through which people make themselves at home in the world.

While the homestead still remains an organising presence in some of the narratives analysed in this chapter – a space that serves as an historical marker in journeys of reconnection or reconciliation – it is progressively moved away from. In *Sorry*, *Journey to the Stone Country* and *Carpentaria*, this shift prompts the recognition of other ways of being. Heidegger's theory of dwelling, as I have discussed in the preceding chapters, is often charged with reinforcing sedentary homemaking practices due to its call to "spare" and "preserve" a singular dwelling above all others (Plumwood "Shadow Places" par. 14). Yet although Heidegger's philosophy seems to advocate static dwelling practices, his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" actually begins with the acknowledgement that buildings beyond traditional domestic topographies remain "in the domain" of dwelling; a comment which suggests that dwelling is not fixed (145). For example, Heidegger claims that "the truck driver" is still "at home on the highway" although "he does not have his shelter there" (145). Whilst it may not be the crux of his poetics, Heidegger does recognise that dwelling is "inhered" by movement between other "locations and spaces" (157). Rather than focus upon the preservation of houses – what Plumwood refers to as Heidegger's "One True Place" ("Shadow" par. 14) – this chapter instead concentrates upon the social interactions that occur in transitional spaces and locations, when dwelling is enacted through movement, and the ways in which such processes can reconfigure conceptions of being at home.

David Crouch, in his essay "Writing of Australian Dwelling: Animate Houses and Anxious Ground," states that while dwelling "might imply firmness or fixity" it can also "suggest successive changes of place, walking, travelling, exploring" (43). Crouch claims that ideas and representations of dwelling spaces and practices in Australian literary works tend, somewhat paradoxically, to be characterised by a "dialectic interchange" between binary notions such as "sanctuary and travel," a sense of being grounded but yet still mobile ("Writing of Australian Dwelling" 43). While Crouch calls upon the work of seminal spatial philosophers such as Heidegger and Gaston Bachelard in his discussion of Australian dwelling, it is the Australian cultural critic, Paul Carter, whose ideas specifically underpin his analysis of "dwelling-in-motion." Carter's poetic philosophy of dwelling – which, according to Crouch, "transplant[s] Heidegger's ideas into a postcolonial environment" and "provoke[s] anxieties over a fixed or static sort of 'rootedness'" ("Writing of Australian Dwelling" 44) – hinges upon the notion that the earth needs to be released "for movement" so that human beings can begin to "[engage]

with in-between spaces" (*The Lay of the Land* 5). Carter's approach to dwelling-in-motion is pertinent to this discussion because, as Crouch claims, it "continually returns to the *experience* of a *provisional* form of settlement" and emphasises, particularly for non-Indigenous Australians, ways of dwelling that "converse with the environment and its original inhabitants" ("Writing of Australian Dwelling" 45, original emphasis). In all of the literary works analysed here, for example, the characters not only dwell while on the move – while spending time in interspaces – but also make themselves at home in provisional sites, such as pit stops, where they enact scenes of intercultrality.

In her examination of automobility in Aboriginal art, Ursula Frederick asserts that while people "generally associate a connection to place with fixity […] the sense of stability that comes with belonging is actively created rather than static," developed through sensory journeys (2). In contemporary Australian texts, dwelling-in-motion is literally represented as a rite of passage which – through its contemplative movement away from spaces and sites commonly associated with home – inspires new connections, with people and place, and the potential for belonging. That is not to say, however, that fixed notions of home and dwelling are not relevant to this discussions of race relations or that journeying is also always figured as a positive transformation. For example, despite the fact that many instances of dwelling-in-motion occur because subjects wish to escape domestic confines, home and traditional associations with domestic space often remain what Catherine Simpson calls "a structuring absence" in travel narratives ("Imagined Geographies"163). The instances of dwelling-in-motion explored in Miller, Jones's and Wright's novels are in constant dialogue with both past and future dwelling systems and spaces. The sense of movement associated with the motion of the car, the rocking of the boat and the pattern of footsteps, routinely inspires domestic meditation and, in many cases, a desire to reconnect with the people, places and spaces intrinsically associated with the characters' primary sense of home. Yet while these journeys are generally shown to be progressive (in that they contribute to processes of reconciliation), the above mentioned narratives are also attuned to the numerous problems associated with the movement – such as the issues signalled by the all too common catch cries: we are 'closing the gap' and 'moving on' – which I discussed throughout in Chapter 2.

Frankland and Lewis, in their article for *The Sydney Morning Herald* entitled "We're Not There Yet on Aboriginal Reconciliation," deploy an extended parody of the journeying metaphors used in reconciliation discourse:

> The road to 'closing the gap' has many potholes and detours. Our vehicle, designed by government bureaucracy rather than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, is running out of petrol because it is not fuel efficient. We are having difficulties reading the roadmap and are beginning to suspect it is either only half-completed or for a different part of the country. We have lost direction. The car has broken down (par. 3).

Conflating road narrative tropes with the ideas of reconciliatory progression, Franklin and Lewis demonstrate the reconciliation movement's failure to grasp what is actually required for meaningful co-existence; such as its apparent inability to broach ideas pertaining to Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. Like the above passage, the narratives analysed in this chapter are invested in exposing the ways in which journeying metaphors expose the issues which undermine reconciliation processes. For example, in *Sorry*, *Journey to the Stone Country* and *Carpentaria*, the ongoing impact of colonial trauma – the fact that, for many Indigenous people, the extreme violence of colonisation is still in living memory – significantly counteracts the progressive motion of journeying, and stalls symbolic acts of moving forward. Furthermore, while in Miller and Wright's texts, journeying is framed, for the most part, as an act which produces positive change in the characters – enabling them to make meaningful connections with their history, community, and home – in Jones's *Sorry*, travel is also presented as a source of profound (and tragic) cultural dislocation.

When examining journeying as a transformative act it is important to consider what is being transformed and who, if anyone, it benefits. Although the novels examined in this chapter deploy modes of travel – and the notion of dwelling-in-motion – to stimulate contemplative cross-cultural exchange, each of the texts also acknowledges the pitfalls associated with using metaphors of journeying to work-through issues affecting reconciliation. The following section, entitled "Patterns of Movement: Interspaces and Connectivity," examines some of the characteristics associated with specific travel modes and the interspaces that facilitate them. This section will discuss three frequently used interspaces – cars, bodies and boats – and the specific forms of mobility they are associated with. Instances of dwelling-in-motion can be seen to reflect shifting cultural perceptions of home, dwelling and identity in Australia. The second

section, which analyses Jones's *Sorry*, examines embodied representations of dwelling and the haptic connections/disconnections which are inspired through journeys that are undertaken on foot. This section argues that dwelling-in-motion is both a physical and emotional system of orientation, a way in which bodies can respond to specific spatial relations by incorporating or rejecting different ontologies and/or modes of communication.

The third section of this chapter, "*Journey to the Stone Country*," examines the interactions which occur during time spent in the interspace of the automobile. By specifically focussing upon the final, and emotionally fraught, journey taken by car in Miller's text, this section argues that the car is a volatile space that mediates past and present systems of dwelling. The fourth section (the first of two which analyse *Carpentaria*) is concerned with the ways in which the boat functions as an interspace of cross-cultural exchange, a "sphere of honesty" (93) in Wright's text; a space where, through sea voyage, Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters learn to incorporate sites of rupture into their systems of homemaking.

4.1. Patterns of Movement: Interspaces and Connectivity

This chapter is organised around the representation of three distinct interspaces/modes of mobility – bodies and walking; cars and driving; boats and voyaging. As a form of social practice, motifs of mobility constitute a pervasive undercurrent in all of the texts analysed throughout this study. Simultaneously unsettling and soothing scenes of cross-cultural interaction, interspaces throw people together in unpredictable but often potentially transformative ways. In his analysis of the "mobility paradigm," Urry claims that "walking, rail travel and car travel are not just means of getting from A to B," but are also "distinct social practices involving different kinds of experience, performance and communications" ("Travelling Times" 368). The sociability associated with interspace (spaces/instances of travel) is commonly discussed in terms of a decline in meaningful interpersonal contact; a failure to communicate with people or the environment. Melissa Lucashenko states, for instance, that people are becoming increasingly "separated from landscape by […] lack of time, our cars, our electronica" ("Not Quite White in the Head" 7). Addressing this commonly held conception, Urry highlights, however, that not all aspects of being in transit are associated with "dead time" ("Travelling Times" 364); time which is without social

significance. Urry proposes, for example, that although public transit tends to be associated with a decline in face-to-face contact, acts such as walking –"those rhythms of the body, treading and retreading footsteps" – are "part of and engender many social practices" ("Travelling Times" 361). Furthermore, he suggests that the car, rather than being a site of social dislocation, is a space which is implicitly linked to dwelling, "a home away from home" which is increasingly becoming "a place to perform business, romance, family, friendship, crime, fantasy" ("Travelling Times" 367). In the contemporary Australian texts analysed here, interspaces and mobility not only foreground and foster intersubjective dialogues but also reveal much about systems of dwelling and cultural identity.

Not unlike the quest narrative – which typically centres upon the physical and emotional search for identity – Australian novels deploy scenes of journeying to frame the search for national identity. Unsurprisingly, tropes pertaining to travel are frequently used to unsettle white control in Australian texts, drawing attention to pre-existing Indigenous stories of nation. For example, in Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) – a novel that is deeply concerned with bodies and movement – the expedition, while initially presented as a means to make the country "exist" for British migrants (29), ultimately reinforces the fragility of European hegemony, and the strength of Indigenous connections with the land. While travel abysmally fails to enable non-Indigenous belonging (or reinforce a consolidated sense of national identity) in the text, Voss's expedition does gesture toward the existence of *universal* paths of human experience, journeys which can link seemingly disparate peoples. For example, during his expedition Voss forms a connection with his young Aboriginal guide, Jackie. Although, in the end, Jackie is compelled to physically sever his connection with Voss (in a ragged act of beheading), the men remain linked in the final chapters of the novel, through their physical and metaphysical movement through the land. Abandoning the tribe after Voss's death, Jackie tries to lose himself in "the comfort of motion" (419). Yet, despite "always travelling" (419), he is unable to extricate himself from his fateful collaboration, for "it was not possible to communicate lucidly with men after the communion with souls, and the fur of the white souls had brushed the moist skin of the aboriginal boy as he shuddered in the brigalows scrub" (420). Similar to Voss, Jackie becomes a figure who is both avoided and revered for his spiritual connectivity, his ability to move through, and speak for, country; being both in and of the land (421).

While this final reconciliation is not unproblematic it has, arguably, paved the way for contemporary literature's more realist focus on travel as a culturally transformative act.

In postcolonial Australian literature, the journey remains a symbol of the quest for white national identity. However, rather than deploying modes of travel to reveal the ongoing ambivalence of Australia's national heritage, contemporary Australian novelists are increasingly utilising the spatial/social tropes of mobility to frame processes of reconciliation and reconnection. As Robert Clarke claims, in the last few decades a growing number of:

> [...] domestic white Australian travel narratives have mobilised encounters with Aboriginality as contexts for political and ethical critiques of white Australian hegemony that in turn reflect manifestations of sympathetic white liberal discourses of reconciliation ("Reconciling Strangers" 167).

Drawing on the modes of encounter which are prevalent in contemporary travel narratives – narratives which can be loosely defined as non-fiction works that are associated with the author's own travel experiences – both Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country* and Jones's *Sorry* present movement as a form of symbolic progression. Using various modes of travel to facilitate ethical journeys into contact zones, these texts contribute to processes of reconciliation by mobilising what Clarke calls a "semiotics of empathy," a "system of signs through which a group or individual represents an emotional responsivity towards others" ("Reconciling Strangers"170). However, while empathy is indeed a viable means through which reconciliation can be broached, there are problems with relying on journey (or touring) to trigger empathetic reconciliatory processes. As noted previously in Chapter 2 (37), the emphasis upon movement, or more specifically moving on, can prevent people from taking enough time to work through the impact of trauma. Furthermore, the connections made through travel are often partial and fleeting. This lack of sustained engagement with the places of other people can lead to a surface level understanding.

Travel, as Clarke acknowledges, is often conceptualised as a means to uncover or know and can, therefore, lead to the appropriation of Indigenous heritage ("Reconciling Strangers" 172). For example, indigenous characters are cast as guides in both *Journey to the Stone Country* and *Sorry*, revealing a different version of land and history to non-Indigenous residents. This positioning is, however, not unproblematic. As Fiona Probyn notes, the presence of the tracker – a figure which can be aligned with that of the guide –

in Australian narratives typically highlights "the usefulness" of Indigenous knowledge and "relationship to land" to "processes of colonisation" (1). While the contemporary depiction of Aboriginal characters as guides in Jones and Miller's texts contributes to these traditions, rather than furthering processes of colonisation the guide is treated as a figure who has the potential to inspire processes of reconciliation. Clarke argues that by deploying "different tropes and themes," narratives which explicitly engage with processes of reconciliation frequently echo the movement's key shifts ("Reconciling Strangers" 170). Like prominent works of postcolonial criticism (such as those discussed in Chapter 2), the narratives examined in this chapter try to ensure that cultural differences are not assimilated and show that reconciliatory journeys are not just premised upon idealised notions of cultural bridging.

In Jones's *Sorry*, for instance, Perdita's longing to be the same as Mary – a member of the stolen generation who is forced to work for the Keene family – is denied rather than enabled. While their shared journeys bond them as "sisters," Perdita can never embody Mary's spiritual and ideological connection to the land:

> In blackfella stories, Mary said, things changed all the time: a tree into a woman, a woman into a tree. There were rocks that had been children and stars that talked. Spirit was everywhere, she insisted, not just in church. Perdita, who felt spiritless, wished she believed something. Behind her thinking there existed a perishing twilight, a sense of outer space, of nothing really there [...] A nothing eyes-closed took you into (65).

Although Mary acts as a guide for non-Indigenous characters, there remain gaps in knowledge; spaces that Perdita cannot know. *Sorry*, like *Journey to the Stone Country*, uses modalities of travel to inspire instances of cross-cultural exchange. Cultural transformation, however, does not occur through appropriation in these texts – through the acquisition of knowledge stemming from encounter – but is, instead, suggested through the process of dwelling-in-motion which occurs during the cross-cultural inhabitation of interspaces.

In some contemporary Australian narratives, interspaces transform approaches to race relations and reconfigure conceptions of the domestic by collapsing the dichotomy between home and away. In literary works by settler Australians, for example, interspaces productively unsettle Western homemaking practices; causing the characters to reconsider the ways in which they dwell and/or move beyond non-

inclusive domestic frameworks. In both *Sorry* and *Journey to the Stone Country*, settler characters experience moments of epiphany after spending time with Indigenous people in country and develop a sense of cross-cultural awareness which significantly alters their perceptions of home. However, while a defamiliarisation of home is presented as essential in many non-Indigenous narratives, in Indigenous-signed texts interspaces regularly facilitate a reconnection with cultural heritage. In novels by Indigenous Australian authors, travel (specifically in the journey to country narrative) often facilitates a "working through of grief" (Clarke, "Journeys to Country" conference paper). For example, in narratives such as Sally Morgan's *My Place*, journeys undertaken to country are a form of homecoming; reconnecting people with family and their lost cultural heritage. However, echoing the problems with homecoming outlined in *Bringing Them Home* (which I discussed in Chapter 2, 39), numerous critics have argued that the return to country performed in Morgan's text simplifies Indigenous identity, making it seem too easily accessible (Clarke, "Journeys to County"). In contemporary narratives such as Kim Scott's short story "A Refreshing Sleep," however, journeys which return disconnected Indigenous characters to their ancestral country are complicated and reveal, not only the work, but also the setbacks involved when reconnecting with cultural heritage.

For example, set in and around a remote colonial massacre site, "A Refreshing Sleep," follows the physical and emotional journey of two cousins, Warren and Leanne, who travel from the city to learn how to communicate and connect with their ancestral homeland. During their travels, Warren and Leanne uncover an ongoing Indigenous presence within the imposed boundaries of frontier "settlement." The "solid stone" edifice of the homestead is the officially touted marker of cross-cultural contact and settler inhabitation in the region; a massacre site still bearing the "chips" from "native spears" (38). Yet while the "interlocking stone of the homestead" is a symbol of entanglement in the text – a presence Warren is initially unable to separate from his search to express himself in Noongar – it is not endowed with the potential for renewal. For Warren and Leanne, the space of the homestead merely embodies the physical trappings of a Western dwelling: "A doorway. Curtains, more doors" (38). Instead of being culturally illuminating, it is presented as a structuring presence/absence in the text, a location by which to track the physical and emotional progress of their journey. Once these characters move away from the homestead's immediate precincts and

traverse paths less trodden, they begin to experience not only a sense of reconnection with country, but also realise that meaningful dwelling is "patterned by different [...] rhythms" (40); by the various and varying movements and the countless intersections which exist between the categories of home and away and Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity.

Through travel, contemporary texts by Indigenous writers unsettle conceptions of nomadism and walkabout – which are often used to describe journeys undertaken by First Nation peoples –[31] and foreground notions of entanglement. Like the journeys embarked upon by non-Indigenous peoples, Indigenous modes of travel are innately patterned by ideas of return – of coming home – as well as an engagement with cultural difference. For example, Normal Phantom, *Carpentaria*'s protagonist, regularly journeys away from his familial home with his friend Elias Smith, a white man who wandered in from the sea with no memory or specific cultural heritage. The interspace of the boat facilitates an ongoing connection with the outreaches of Norm's country, or ancestral homeland. At the same time, however, it represents the physical and emotional distance Norm has cultivated with his family. The joint sea voyages of the two old men, therefore, inspires a reconsideration of the home/displacement dichotomy in Wright's text and evokes the "rhizomatic" threads which exist between various home loci.[32]

According to Upstone, one of the key reasons journeys are so important in postcolonial literature is "because they relieve the many of the tensions of fixed locations" (57) and presumably, by extension, fixed or ethnocentric ways of thinking/being. Unlike colonial literature – which, Upstone claims, tends to reproduce the coloniser's claiming of territory by "utilising chaos, only to ultimately bring order and control" (58) – many postcolonial texts present a "new kind of journey: one with no final arrival or departure, without the constant desire for settlement but instead filled with the potential of constant, chaotic movement" (Upstone 59). In all three literary works examined in the ensuing sections, movement and chaos are evoked and sustained throughout the narrative. Yet although these sensations are intrinsic to the

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[31] Heiss, in her discussion paper "Writing About Indigenous Australia–Some Issues to Consider and Protocols to Follow," cites Pat Mamajun's suggestion that "writers stay away" from terms such as "walkabout" because they "do nothing to present a positive and sensitive portrayal of Indigenous Australians" (203).

[32] According to Eugene B. Young, Garry Genosko and Janell Watson, the term "rhizome" is used by Deleuze and Guattari to foreground the multifarious connections which can exist in a given assemblage (or process) and can refer to a non-linear style of narrative, or site with many exits (262-263)

ways in which interculturality is presented across these texts, movement and chaos are not sensations that are only framed via interspace. The home spaces which the characters travel back and forth between in these texts are also characterised by trauma, motion and disorder; dismantled by storm, cyclone and destructive human endeavour. It is interesting to note, however, that while these dwellings become affected by the chaos of motion, the vehicles which facilitate movement in the texts are, for the most part, characterised by a sense of reverie; a system of dwelling which is based upon emotive cross-cultural exchange and a sensitive engagement with legacies of colonial violence.

Vehicles that facilitate conceptions of interspace symbolically contain tensions of reconciliation, particularly the unresolvabilty of colonial trauma. For example, while in some texts the car functions as a site where conflicts can be resolved (due to the forced proximity of the passengers), in other works this very proximity renders resolution impossible. According to Urry, "mobility systems" which facilitate travel not only "bring into being modes of communication" but can also initiate "new forms of organization" (*Mobilities* 157). In all the texts examined in this chapter, vehicles (such as cars, boats and bodies) are used to travel away from rural centres and domestic enclaves, to get closer to nature and experience different ways of being at home in Australia. It is also, however, important to note that transit spaces are often sites of rupture. In *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Carpentaria* and *Sorry*, the characters frequently embark on journeys away from home because they need, for one reason or another, to escape the confines of a primary dwelling and experience what it means to be elsewhere. These journeys, therefore, signify both dislocation and liberation, and provide a point of departure for the development of shared conceptions of home and dwelling in the future.

4.2. *Sorry*

Like Jones's previous literary works *Black Mirror* and *Sixty Lights*, *Sorry* explores the ways in which characters respond to experiences of trauma. Written from the perspective of Perdita – a young white girl born to unhappy parents, who eventually kills her father when she finds him sexually abusing her friend and carer, Mary (a member of the stolen generation) – *Sorry* is a non-linear narrative that maps the various ways in which colonising and colonised subjects attempt to orientate themselves, or make themselves at home. *Sorry* can be read as both a continuation and a departure

from Jones's other literary works. For example, *Sorry*, like *Black Mirror* and *Sixty Lights*, examines the intimate repercussions of death and the processes of grief and mourning. However, whereas Jones's earlier narratives are often discussed in terms of their cosmopolitanism, *Sorry* is a novel that is intensely regional and specifically situates its examination of trauma within the context of Australian reconciliation pedagogy.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1 (6), *Sorry* (like Grenville's *The Secret River*) has been formative in the creation of a new genre of Australian fiction, the "Sorry Novel;" a literary work "whose main feature is to rework, rewrite, or reimagine history in order to make a political point about the present" (Kossew, "Saying Sorry" 172). The key characteristics of this genre not only relate to the ways in which writers creatively engage with key issues of reconciliation, they are also premised on the authors' critical engagement with current debates and national issues. As an academic as well as a novelist, Jones writes widely about her creative process as well as issues in cultural studies. There is a degree of inseparability between Jones's creative and critical work. In his discussion of Jones's latest novel *Five Bells*, Dixon goes so far as to claim that "Gail Jones's novels cannot be understood fully without making connections between them and the essays she publishes as an academic" ("Invitation to the Voyage"1). I would argue that this is especially the case with *Sorry*, a work which seeks to actively engage with processes of reconciliation. For example, Jones pre-empts the cultural work of *Sorry* in her essay "Sorry-in the-sky," in which she examines the ways that representations of trauma and mourning can open up a space of listening (164). This essay, like the novel, has been used to reinforce the power of the imaginal in pedagogies of reconciliation. Kossew, for instance, uses the last part of "Sorry-in-the-sky" – when Jones's discusses the photograph of the word "sorry" she took at the end of the Sydney Bridge Walk in 2000 (168) – to frame her own essay "Saying Sorry." According to Kossew, the space Jones conjures through this allegorical retelling is "performative of both an apology and a mourning," as well as "a marking of loss and trauma" and, thereby, evokes the idea of "shared space" which she sees as integral to works of Sorry fiction ("Saying Sorry" 175).

In her essay "Speaking shadows: Justice and the Poetic," Jones discusses the role of literature and the job of the writer when their work functions as a poetic vehicle for social change. Emphasising the power poetic language has to inspire (or, in this case, reinvigorate) social justice, Jones claims that:

> In writing such a narrative [as *Sorry*] I rehearsed my own concern that the reconciliation process not be forgotten – since it had already faded from the political agenda since the bridge walk of 2000 – and also that the role of language, of what is said and unsaid, must be understood as contributing to the ethical life of individuals and nations ("Speaking shadows" 84).

Through her intimate revisioning of Australian history, Jones's *Sorry* examines issues such as the psychological impact of trauma and social justice as well as the counter-narratives the reconciliation movement both inspires and silences. For example, as Dolores Herrero recognises, the "bitter irony" centralised in this text is that it is only the trauma experienced by Jones's non-Indigenous characters, Perdita and Stella, that "the novel testifies" not the "true victim of the story," the Aboriginal girl who is taken from her family, Mary (285). Herrero claims. however, that while this can be read, as another Australian writer's "desperate attempt to heal the anxieties of (un)belonging that haunt settler culture," it can also be viewed in terms of the contentious debates which surround the adoption of Indigenous voices in literature and Jones's decision to use silence as a form of national allegory, rather than a mechanism for appropriation (286-287). Narratives of trauma, writes Herrero, urge people "to get involved in each other's stories" (292). This study, is specifically interested in the way in which *Sorry* uses the notion of "walking together" – a phrase which, as I stated in Chapter 2, is regularly called upon in reconciliation discourse – to frame the potential for the sharing of stories to trigger physical and emotional journeys.

There are numerous journeys undertaken in Jones's *Sorry* – including the exilic sea journey enacted by Stella and Nicholas at the start of the book, the un-narrated journey away from country enforced upon Mary, Perdita and Stella's voyage to Perth, and later, Perdita and Billy's bus trips to visit Mary in prison – this study, however, is primarily interested in the walking journeys which Mary, Perdita and Billy undertake on-foot, while living within the precincts of the Keene's shack. Amidst the trauma and turmoil of cultural dislocation and racial discrimination conveyed in Jones's text, the journeys into country by Mary, Perdita and Billy constitute the possibility for characters to experience the pleasures associated with being connected and 'in place'; offering another dimension to being at home. Bodies – as primary interspaces/mechanisms for human movement – are aligned with ideas pertaining to the "haptic" in *Sorry*. Facilitated by motion, the haptic – an emotional connection which, according to Guilina Bruno, is

produced via the "reciprocal contact" between human beings and the environment –
plays a "tactical role" in not only the development of a "communicative 'sense' of
spatiality and motility" but also in the ways in which human beings shape "the texture of
habitable space" (Bruno 6). By linking human movement with acts of homemaking such
as dwelling, haptic journeys enable a physical and emotional orientation with space and
are intricately linked with broader notions of wayfinding. In *Sorry*, the brief, but deeply
contemplative, journeys that Mary, Perdita and Billy (the youngest son of the station
owners who is both deaf and mute) embark upon offer an important counterpoint in the
narrative, and emphasise the profound disorientation experienced by many of the other
characters in the text.

The primary home space depicted in *Sorry*, the Keene's shack, is pervaded by an
overwhelming sense of physical and emotional dislocation. Rather than reflecting
cultural familiarity, or a sense of being at home, the shack externalises "the integument
of exile" and the characters' longing for elsewhere (65). In response to the sense of
unhomeliness they associate with the shack, Jones's characters seek out other spaces in
which to dwell; spaces that move them (either literally or metaphorically) beyond the
four walls of the family home. For example, plagued by "migrant sadness" (65), Perdita's
parents Stella and Nicholas struggle to establish a haptic connection with their adopted
homeland, and instead view it as an "alien and indecipherable" place (11):

> The wind in the scrubland was sear and soprano. It burned and sang.
> When it was high, it hoisted eddies of umber dirt, so that the air was
> filled with grit and was choking and dry. There were swollen forms of
> spirals and belly shapes moving across the land; Stella found them eerie
> and preternatural. She learned to bring in the washing so that it would
> not be coated in dirt, and to close the doors and shutters until the dust
> storms departed. She learned, most of all, to seal herself in, to find what
> solace might lie in self-erasure (18).

Instead of attempting to orientate themselves within their new environment, Stella and
Nicholas – who are each "accustomed to self-enclosure" and "habituated to types of
loneliness" (4) – maintain static positions; reinforcing the outwardly vacant way of
being-in-the-world their bodies seem to physically endorse. Yet while, on the surface,
Perdita's parents appear indistinct – barren as the land around them and stuck out of
place – their sense of stagnant passivity conceals a frenetic inner life that is constantly
reeling from their inability to form haptic connections.

Employed by the Western Australian Chief Protector of Aborigines to study Indigenous cultural practices, Perdita's father Nicholas is required to observe, interact and report on the Aboriginal people who live at the station. His feelings towards his "subjects, or rather objects" (19), are intensely ambivalent. Whilst, on the one hand, he finds he is "engaged" by many of the cultural practices he observes "in the field" – such as the easy ways in which his subjects "were at home sitting on the earth" – he also experiences discomfort and struggles to recognise a common humanity:

> He found the shiny black bodies altogether strange. Many of the men had cicatrixes inscribed on their chests and upper arms, raised welts that signified initiation or high degree; many of the women had pendulous breasts, exposed, that he could not fail to stare at (23).

Nicholas is unable to reconcile the different ways of being that are accommodated within the precincts of his new home space. He is "disturbed," for example, by the physical ways in which the Aboriginal community who live on the land surrounding his house interact, the amount of "bodily correspondence [...] touch and exchange" he witnesses (19). However, in spite of Nicholas' outward shunning of people and place – a result, potentially, of the trauma he experienced while fighting in World War One and a deep-seated shyness – his unconscious thoughts reveal a strong desire for physical and emotional acceptance. In his dreams, Nicholas attempts to join in what he perceives to be the embodied dwelling practices of his Indigenous subjects. He finds, however, that his own attempts at "communalism" are "mocked" and "dismissed" after he "reduces" himself by gagging on a meal and publically defecating (19).

Unlike her husband – who strives to present a demeanour of someone who is in-place and in control (18) – Stella actively cultivates the appearance of someone who is "resigned" to a life which is "immobile and tyrannically fixed" (28). The stasis of Stella's outward state belies a motion-filled interiority which is always threatening to overflow its physical boundaries. Stella cannot contain her frenetic inner being. Through compulsively reading and reciting Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, she imaginatively transcends the corporeal shackles of her mundane existence and moves in other worlds. The works of Shakespeare provide Stella (and later Perdita) with a communicative rhythm, a way in which to metaphorically move beyond the spaces and conditions she is compelled to embody. During periods of emotional distress – brought on by all manner of things, including change of location, domestic violence, childbirth or natural disaster –

Stella finds solace by dwelling in the motion of Shakespeare's prose. On their voyage to Australia, for example, Stella obsessively reads *The Tempest* and flings passages at Nicholas as insults (12); after Nicholas hits her for the first time she evokes her physical and emotional pain (and her travel-worn weariness) by reciting Sonnet 50 "How heavy I do journey on the way" (16); and while hiding under a mattress in the midst of a cyclone she "encourage[s] the storm" by invoking King Lear's famous speech from Act III Scene II "Blow winds, and crack your cheeks" (85). Although these instances of self-expression help Stella deal with hardship, they eventually become a symptom of her dementia; of her becoming – if we are to follow the etymology of the Latin term "demency"– increasingly "out of" her "mind" ("Dementia" *OED* online).

As the 'universal' Bard, Shakespeare provides Stella with a linguistic filter through which to comprehend the strange or distressing aspects of life she encounters. Stella not only projects Shakespearean rhetoric onto situations she finds distressing, she also imagines it to be present when confronted with forms of communication she cannot comprehend. For example, when she first hears Perdita's carers and wet nurse – Sal, Duff and Jukuna "a Walmajarri woman from the desert" – speaking in their native tongue she fights her feelings of exclusion by imaging she can decipher the "connections and collusions" of their speech and discern "evocation" and "rhyme:"

> Sometimes, in a haze of delirium, she thought it sounded Shakespearean, so full was it of convolution, evocation and rhyme [...] In words – she knew it – there were these revealed affiliations, these sensible families. In words, body-forgetting, there could be intelligent experience, not this crude engulfment and drowsy clouds of unknowing (26).

Stella's passion for language is driven by her desire for body-forgetting; for being beyond the demands and confines of her own body and skin. It is important to note here that Stella's recantations of Shakespeare are not driven by an interest in establishing any kind communicative exchange or dialogue with others, she is not striving for an interpersonal communion. In fact, unlike Nicholas, she is not interested in forming connections with others. And, although the works of Shakespeare do eventually create a tenuous bond between Stella and Perdita, in the end language remains Stella's own personal mode of transportation; a way to escape the unbearable physicality of her being.

Words and physical actions are conflated throughout *Sorry*. Framed via notions of the unutterable, it is what fails to be articulated – namely white culpability – that drives this narrative. Yet while the power of words are emphasised throughout Jones's text they do not replace the importance of physicality, or action. Words, for example, cannot replace haptic connections; connections facilitated by communicative movement between bodies and place. Born into the land her parents find so alien, Perdita – who is named after Leontes and Hermione's long-lost daughter from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* – is, by her father's ironic reckoning, the member of the Keene family who seems the most "unlost" (40). Unlike her parents, who have internalised their sense of disorientation by sealing themselves in against the world, Perdita is fascinated by other ways of being and in a sense dwells haptically beyond her "abnormal" domestic confines (68). Due to Stella's post-natal depression, Perdita spends her formative years being nurtured by the Aboriginal women who work at the "big station homestead," Sal, Daff and Jukuna. By being "passed […] from body to body" and "cradled in capacious laps," she is "nourished and cared for" in a manner her parents are "incapable of understanding" (32). This early physical contact not only helps orientate Perdita but also gives her means to develop the sense of kinship her immediate family physically and emotionally withhold. While Perdita tenuously develops an alternative family for herself through her connections with the Aboriginal women who work at the station, it is through her relationship with her "sister" Mary that she comes to feel, albeit briefly, that she may actually belong.

Mary's arrival into Perdita's world coincides with movement and domestic re-adjustment. After Stella begins to complain of hearing a "huge, deafening uproar sounding in her ears, like crowds jostling for a carriage in St Pancras Station" (41), Nicholas organises for her to spend time in a mental institution in Broome. The journey to have Stella committed (and collect Mary), is the first trip Perdita takes away from her family home and her first physical experience of dwelling-in-motion. Like the jolting gears of the truck they travel in, this journey signifies an abrupt shift in the way that Perdita sees the world. Her parents, particularly her mother, become diminished through the journey, emptied out like automatons; mere "dolls" (42). The landscape she is "hurtling" through is also defamiliarised. Unlike the landscape she usually finds comfort in (38), her view from the car is distorted. Boab trees appear tortured – "their bellies distended, their stick limbs dead stiff, scratching at the sky" – and the animals she

discerns in the distance are insubstantial and "fleeting" (43). Yet despite the journey's traumatic associations, the trip reveals to Perdita that there is much she does not know about her parents, and the land she calls her home.

Perdita's first trip to another place – somewhere distinctly other than the precincts surrounding the Keene's shack – forces her to reconsider the certainties she once held. The narrator claims:

> The visions on that journey were those that will return all her life. It is not that anything Perdita saw was unfamiliar; it is that they were trailed out, spool-like and consecutive, for future memory [...] all this mobile world seemed impressed with the solemnity and purpose of their journey (42-43).

Away from home without her mother, Perdita learns that she cannot rely on her father and is overwhelmed by a sensation of being alone in the world (45). The feeling of disconnection Perdita experiences while visiting Broome is counteracted, however, by the arrival of Mary, an Aboriginal girl her father collects from the convent on their way home to fill the role left empty by Stella's departure (47). During the return journey, with Mary in the truck instead of her mother, Perdita feels not only a sense of loss but also the potential of "her small, unnoticed life, reconfiguring around her" (49). Arriving home, the shack appears less familiar, it "looms up" (49) and Mary reaches for Perdita's hand, needing "the comfort of touch" (50). Yet, even though Mary's presence brings an element of homeliness to the Keene's shack, Perdita's recognises that her being there is wrong:

> What return was it, that night with no mother, with Mary? I have thought of it, over the years, not as a substitution – since one person can never, after all, replace another – but as the portentous sign of things made dangerously misaligned (49).

In this new order Perdita learns that parents cannot be relied upon as moral guides but are enmeshed in the perpetuation of cultural dislocation and physical violence.

A member of the stolen generation, Mary has been forcefully displaced from her ancestral country, first to a number of missions, then an orphanage "down south" (57), before being placed 'in-service' at the Keene's place. However, while Mary lives with a constant grief – mourning the tragic death of her mother, Dootharra, who "rolled into a campfire one night and was too tired, or too sad [...] to roll out again" and missing her country, the Walmajarri region (56-57) – she, unlike Perdita's parents, does not allow

her exile to prevent her from making meaningful connections with others. Instead, Mary quickly becomes the moral compass of the station, offering Perdita not only nurture, guidance and love but also important "forms of knowledge of the land and the body" (58). For example, Mary's grief teaches Perdita the power of touch:

> Mary slumped to the ground, as if unbuckled, and began to cry [...] Billy was shocked by this sadness, come so suddenly, that he did not understand [...] Perdita reached her arms around Mary and Billy and gathered them in; and their little group, like another family, inclined lovingly together, couched in the comfort of hot bodies in a clumsy child's embrace (56).

Bodies create physical and emotional impressions in *Sorry*, on the landscape and on others, leaving multiple traces of contact. Avoiding the stifling conditions of the shack – because, according to Mary, "sitting inside for too long was like a kind of sleep" (59) – Perdita, Mary and Billy roam the vast station property "trad[ing} stories and stored up secrets" (59). Moving through the country, their bodies create new patterns of dwelling. Although she is not specifically 'in country', Mary demonstrates an inherent sense of knowing that allows her to "be in place but away from [her] home country" (Moreton-Robinson 33). She teaches Perdita and Billy, for example, how to be "aware" of "the traces and suggestions of other live presences" (59), that "if you put your ear to the dirt you can hear footsteps miles away, and buried life going on," and to recognise the significance of gestures such as touch (60). By developing their haptic awareness, Mary reveals to Perdita and Billy that the scrub around the homestead, which "had previously seemed so empty," is full of "liveliness and activity" (55).

With Mary, Perdita experiences an awakening. She learns that physical and emotional orientation can occur by developing meaningful connections with people and place. Yet while, through journeying with Mary, Perdita learns to appreciate other systems of knowledge, their necessitated return to the fixed location of the Keene's shack, causes a hiatus in their utopian wanderings around the expansive station property. Just as we see in Nicholas Roeg's film *Walkabout* (1971), the dwelling-in-motion that occurs through journeying in *Sorry* creates a fragile system of cross-cultural exchange; a system which cannot be sustained in fixed space. In *Walkabout,* an Aboriginal boy rescues two white children who are lost in the desert by providing them with water, food and shelter. Just as in *Sorry*, the harsh and unhospitable desert landscape is rendered beautiful once the Indigenous and non-indigenous characters

come together in Roeg's film. While they are walking (or dwelling-in-motion), the cultural differences that exist between the characters in *Walkabout* fall away, becoming a source of interest and inspiration rather than a 'stumbling block'. The tenuous haptic connections the characters of *Walkabout* forge during their journey are shattered, however, once they reach the dubious "civilisation" of the deserted farmhouse. Like Roeg, Jones treats the house as a space which disrupts intercultural idyll, forcing recognition of the ongoing trauma of colonial legacy.

The special haptic connection Perdita enjoys with Mary is juxtaposed by a violent and unreciprocated form of physical contact in the text, the sexual abuse enacted by Nicholas. While Perdita is keen to ponder what Mary reveals to her about the universe beyond her home during the day, she struggles to "contemplate" the physical horror of what she witnesses between Nicholas and Mary in her home at night (61). Nicholas's invasion of Mary's bodily space – his violent attempt to leave some kind of impression, or mark – also has a physical impact on Perdita who does not know how to incorporate this witnessing into her way of being:

> She saw the humped form of her father's back and heard him grunting and pounding, and she could hear from the shadow beneath him the sound of Mary softly weeping [...] She retreated to her bed. She did not want to know. She turned to face the wall and shut her eyes tight. What witness was this, that Perdita could not bear to contemplate? What palpitation of the heart, what sense of panicked strangulation, was she supressing behind her tightly closed eyes? Perdita was frightened. The night was dark. With her eyes closed there was an extra darkness she could sink her witnessing into (60-61).

Mary's bodily presence is obliterated in this passage; as she is rendered a mere weeping shadow. Perdita's visceral response to Nicholas's rape is, in contrast, however, overwhelming physical. Despite the fact that Perdita's response is one of suppression, it reveals the deep sisterly connection which exists between the girls; and links acts of violence with the trauma of witnessing. The scenes of nightly abuse do not initially interrupt the rhythms of Mary and Perdita's dwelling, their walks beyond the house and the sense of togetherness they enjoy through a mutual love of reading (67). The influence of Mary's strength and maturity – the way in which she is recognised as someone who is "skilled and admired" in the Aboriginal community (70) – as well as the growing resentment Perdita feels for Nicholas (88), however, eventually inspires her to act; murdering her father when she arrives home to find him raping Mary (191).

The haptic relationships the characters briefly enjoy are severed by the death of Nicholas and the second half of the book is primarily devoted to Perdita's solitary journey. While Nicholas's murder renders Perdita mute and sees Mary wrongly incarcerated, the isolation it forces upon the characters is not total. Through walking, Mary has not only shown Perdita ways of reading the rhythms of the land but also introduced her into "a wider pattern" of kinship, beyond the formal familial bonds to which she is tied (72). This recognition sustains Perdita during the lonely years that follow, causing her to "walk out her grief" and seek comfort in the land:

> She found one of the old boabs that had a hollow bottle belly and squeezed herself inside, pleased to be enclosed, imagining for a moment that she might stay there, never to be found, never-ever, never-ever (111).

Later, when she and her mother move to Perth – in the wake of the attack upon Pearl Harbour – her continuing sense of kinship propels her to connect with the Nyoongar community. Inhabiting "a thin margin of wasteland between the power station and the river" (148), the Nyoongar people welcome Perdita and not only help her discover where Mary is being held but also assist her in making a tenuous haptic connection with the new region in which she dwells:

> For the first time, too, she truly saw the river [...] As she listened to the family speak, she watched its slow unregulated, confluent passing [...] There were movements below, small sparky transmissions, and something bountiful, unseen, When she returned to her home she was newly self-possessed (148).

This new cross-cultural relationship endows Perdita with both the knowledge and the confidence to persist in finding Mary and eventually journey with Billy to the reformatory where she is incarcerated.

The haptic journeys enacted in the first half of the novel are in stark contrast with the stilted communication – wracked by trauma – performed by Perdita, Mary and Billy at the end. However, while the characters' movements and speech are physically and emotionally curtailed and repressed, a new way of communicating opens up for them when they discover the demonstrative language of signing. "Repudiating the clumsy instrument of human speech," the friends become a "community" once again, within the prison walls:

> The secrecy of their meanings was troubling to the institution, but there were no rules, apparently, against speechless meetings. No lopsided knowing, no fraught mistranslation; this was a language rich with hidden density, such as the body itself carries, and soulful as each distinctive, utterly distinctive, signer (205).

Although Mary is the character who has had the least trouble with speech – it is due to the deafness of Billy's fiancé, Pearl, that they begin to communicate in this way in the first place – it is Mary whose sign language is described as the most "enlivened" (205). Despite her position of incarceration, therefore, Mary continues to act as a guide to the other characters.

The final tragic irony of *Sorry* is, of course, that Perdita is never able to atone for her crime and Mary's sacrifice; the apology foregrounded in the title of the text remains unspoken. In the Introduction to the "Teacher's Reading Guide" to *Sorry*, it states that:

> In an interview in London in June, 2007, Gail Jones answered a question about the role of literature in being a guide to ethical behaviour. She said: "I'm old-fashioned enough to believe that literature can play a part in moral discourse." The novel was published before the apology to indigenous Australians was delivered by the Federal Government in February, 2008. This is not to claim that the themes and issues it presents are no longer relevant but, instead, the historic speech delivered by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd adds yet another dimension to the reading of the text (1).

The idea that the Federal Government's official apology to the Stolen Generations could render Jones's text somehow irrelevant – or the idea that Jones's novel previously stood in for an apology – reveals some of the ways in which *Sorry* is inextricably implicated in processes of reconciliation. The potential for new collective or social approaches to race relations, however, are evoked through the haptic connections the text depicts; the ways in which cross-cultural interaction is played out through the movement of bodies.

4.3. *Journey to the Stone Country*

On the surface, cars tend to conjure up images of the open road as well as symbolise the potential for freedom and escape from domestic confines. In Sorry, for instance, the car journey is suggestive of domestic shifts and heralds a new order. There is, however, a darker side to Australian representations of automobility. Delia Falconer, in her introduction to the *Penguin Book of the Road*, claims that Australian road narratives "reflect" on the different "ways that we live in this country" (xiv) and, in

doing so, "stir up" feelings that white settlers "are not quite at home" (xxvi). In *Journey to the Stone Country*, the central characters' differing conceptions of home are progressively examined and unsettled through visits to a series of domestic sites. Yet, while the interspace of the car facilitates movement between domiciles, it remains – despite its mobility – a constant and reliable zone throughout the text; a sanctuary which is seemingly beyond the heated debates around issues of colonial violence that emerge through processes of sharing history in the text.

Juxtaposing the homecoming of the settler character Annabelle Beck with Jangga character Bo Rennie,[33] *Journey to the Stone Country* examines the different ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters relate to the land and its history. Miller's novel, like Jones's, is explicitly driven by the reconciliatory goal of "sharing history." *Journey to the Stone Country* and its sequel *Landscape of Farewell* (which I examine in Chapter 6) are part of a *projected* "Reconciliation Trilogy," three books – all (presumably) central Queensland novels – which examine the ongoing impact of colonial violence on race relations (Dixon, *Alex Miller* 96). According to Dixon, the reconciliation movement is deeply absorbed into the "fabric and processes of self-reflection" represented in Miller's two central Queensland novels (100). Despite this overt engagement with the movement, however, Dixon argues that Miller tempers his "wish for reconciliation" by including "barriers and recuperations" in his texts, issues which "deny easy harmonisation, closure or atonement" (Dixon, *Alex Miller* 100). Dixon's apt assertion that Miller's central Queensland texts resist making processes of reconciliation too easily attainable is in contrast with some of the criticism directed toward these works.

Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, in their essay "Settler Post-Colonialism and Australian Literary Culture," propose, for instance, that texts such as Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country* stage the cultural crisis of identity at the heart of settler unbelonging by having settler characters – who are "reacting to" a sense of "incompleteness" – "mimic" and "appropriate" the "authority of the indigene" they desire (37). This study argues, however, that while the potential for reconciliation is indeed foregrounded throughout the text via the 'coming together' of Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters, the novel, in the end, evokes an entangled form of co-existence, rather than

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[33] The experiences of the protagonists of *Journey to the Stone Country*, Annabelle and Bo, as well as Dougald Gnapan from *Landscape of Farewell*, are based upon the lives of Miller's friends: Liz Hatte, Col McLennan and Frank Budby (Dixon, *Alex Miller* 96).

one which is based upon appropriation and assimilation. Examining the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of being-in-the-world, or "Dreamings," Miller argues, however, that in texts such as *Journey to the Stone Country* it "is not a question simply of reconciliation, important as that is" but also "the far more difficult question of the acknowledgement of difference" ("Sweet Water" 104). Hence, rather than appropriating, or attempting to close cultural gaps, Miller ultimately chooses to retain a level of unknowing; creatively acknowledging that some sites of cultural difference cannot be mobilised into a 'progressive' reconciliatory discourse.

In *Journey to the Stone Country*, the car facilitates the characters' physical and emotional journey, bringing them into contact with their conjoined histories. Accompanying this historical enabling, this study argues that the car inspires a contemplative sense of dwelling-in-motion. In Australian road narratives, Simpson suggests that cars can be read as "threshold" zones, where "binary opposites undo themselves and [...] meaning becomes fluid and dynamic" ("Imagined Geographies" 159). The confines and motion of the car can also render it an emotionally unstable space. As Simpson notes, car passengers cannot "retreat to other rooms as they would in a house" ("Imagined Geographies" 155). By forcing characters to 'ride out' conflict, car travel assists in processes of moving on. However, while dwelling in this potentially volatile interspace encourages the characters to renegotiate and rebuild (rather than elide or ignore areas of potential conflict) it also enforces the recognition that some things cannot be absorbed into a progressive cross-cultural narrative.

The borrowed Pajero functions as a cross-cultural conduit in *Journey to the Stone Country*, a space which enables the characters to traverse country and come into contact with different ways of being. Yet while I argue that journeying encourages new connections in this text, I am wary of romanticising the effect mobility and travel have upon intersubjective dialogues. Fleeing her failed marriage and academic job in Melbourne, Annabelle Beck returns to central Queensland, the region of her childhood, and finds unexpended solace helping her friend Susan conduct cultural surveys. These early wanderings – which are mapped by the terrain the Burranbah coal mine wants to make use of – are idyllic. Also reunited with her childhood acquaintance, Bo Rennie (and his teenager niece and nephew, Trace and Arner), Annabelle immerses herself in the escapism of the experience:

> She rolled the map and turned and put it on the seat behind them. They drove out of the compound, the sun's bright semaphore winking at them through the net of scrubtrees. The young man and the girl coming on in the truck fifty metres back, the fairy dust of sleep and dreams gilding the morning air behind their wheels. Annabelle was experiencing the enjoyable guilt of avoiding her reality, setting out on this youthful adventure with Bo Rennie. Melbourne and Steven and the university unreachable (33-34).

Considering Annabelle's delight in the novelty of being taken around the bush by Bo – taking a break from her "reality" – it is not difficult to see why Johnston and Lawson accuse Miller of projecting "new age wish-fulfilment" onto his Indigenous characters (38). Bo, however, is not simply an acquiescent tour guide. Both he and Annabelle are at work, surveying a proposed mining-region for sites of Indigenous cultural significance, and, thereby, engaged in a deeper political/historical debate.

Searching for markers of Indigenous inhabitation – evidence, which presumably signals a sustained presence in country – rouses pertinent questions; questions about home, family and systems of dwelling which, essentially, form the backbone of the narrative journey in this text. During their reading/tracking of the first survey site, for example, Annabelle asks Bo to talk more about his experiences out bush with his deceased grandmother, Jangga elder Grandma Rennie, the woman who brought him up and was a legend in the Sutton area:

> 'Why did your grandmother hit you if you asked her where she was taking you?'
> Bo paused a step ahead of her on a steep cattle pad. He coughed and drew breath. 'If we was wondering about where we was going then we wouldn't be taking a lot of notice of where we was. You'll know where you're going, she'd tell us, when you get there' (46).

Although Bo is in many ways associated with the motion of the text – he is, for example, the Pajero's primary driver – he tries, like his grandmother, to prevent journey from always revolving around the prospect of arrival. Underscored by his reflective impetuous – the importance Bo attributes to taking time and enjoying the journey (267) – the narrative meanders between a series of different domestic topographies, and accumulatively forces a reconsideration of home and dwelling.

Like all the texts analysed in this study so far, homestead spaces in *Journey to the Stone Country* are represented as catechistic locations for the unearthing of the colonial

violence. Dixon, emphasising the ways in which domestic spaces act as pit stops or historical markers on Bo and Annabelle's reconciliatory journey, states that:

> Miller's understanding of history as the ruin of time is spatialized as a journey through a number of 'stations', each of which encapsulates a particular era in the histories of either settler or indigenous culture, or often the lethal intersection between the two (105).

The movement of the road trip at the heart of this novel is continually broken by stop-overs at domestic sites. Rather than view these sites as destinations, however, the narrative increasingly treats them as provisional spaces; spaces which, despite their fixity and stasis, are implicitly associated with rhizomatic movement.

The subtle conflicts which arise between the characters during Annabelle's early and tentative accompaniment on Bo's travels become cross-cultural collisions once the characters immerse themselves in their journey. After staying for a few nights alone in the Townsville home of her deceased parents (Zamia Street), Annabelle decides to travel with Bo to a large abandoned homestead, deep in a Suttor country-vale where both she and Bo grew up. A scene of contemporary cross-cultural conflict, the valley is a proposed dam site where traditional owners (rather than a mining corporation) are set to make a large profit if the proposal is approved. While Bo and Annabelle are in the area to assess its Indigenous cultural significance, the homestead becomes a contested site where ideas pertaining to cultural heritage are provoked. Not unlike Caddagat in Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* – which is initially conceived by Sybylla Melvyn as an oasis of natural beauty and social refinement – Ranna (although abandoned by the Bigges family twenty years ago) retains the romance of a pioneer idyll:

> After the meal Annabelle went and stood in the night outside the open door. The sky was luminous with stars above the black silhouettes of the giant trees, the air was still and cold. The smell of the river. The murmur of water over the rocks like voices, hushed and conspiratorial (184).

Like Caddagat – where beauty is tempered by "shadows" which "creep and curl! oh, so softly and caressingly" (Franklin 163) – Annabelle's sense of home at Ranna is subtly interfused, by a "hushed" sense of the conspiratorial, or unacknowledged. Whereas the Bigges's abandoned house leaves the other characters feeling "cold" (181), for Annabelle it is a link to her family and the cultural history of settler Australians: "she just knew it

would trouble her to turn her back on this house without doing something to help preserve it" (180).

At Ranna, Bo and Annabelle both experience the sensation of being both in and out of place. Annabelle feels connected to the Bigges's homestead, although she has never previously been there, due the stories she has heard and the similarity it bears to her own family's old estate, Haddon Hill (172). The trip to Ranna is also a homecoming for Bo in that it marks a return to his ancestral country as well as the site of his grandmother's childhood dwelling. However, whereas Bo, unlike Annabelle, has visited the estate before, he still has a sense of being out of place because he was never allowed to enter the homestead itself (153). Bo is not impressed by the homestead, and argues, in response to Annabelle's comparison between the homestead and the Jangga people's (sacred) playgrounds, that:

> 'This place is all dead and dried up […] Being a bit sad looking don't mean it's worth keeping. Them white ants are doing the job here now. This is finished. Its days are over. The Bigges aren't coming back for their stuff […] them playgrounds is different to this stuff, and I'm telling you they're different, and if you don't believe me then I'm sorry but that don't change the way I know it to be' (177).

Ranna functions as contact zone in *Journey to the Stone Country*. While for Annabelle the space signifies her settler origins and piques her fear that if you "lost too many of them [your origins], surely you lost your sense of who you were. You lost your culture" (179). For Bo, however, this stasis and the deep sense of failed occupancy, marks the site as a dead space. While Ranna's decaying gentility conjures up a romantic pastoral history that Annabelle is unable to entirely dismiss, there is another side to the quiet history of settlement evoked by the deserted homestead. Like Cobham Hall in *The Secret River*, the domestic trappings of the Bigges's Ranna estate both conceals and reveals a history of colonial violence.

Like most colonial homesteads, Ranna is depicted as a zone which cannot be extricated from its involvement in frontier contact. For example, when Annabelle first enters the homestead she blindly encounters a number of everyday objects:

> Feeling like a thief, and a little that her entry into the house might in some subtle manner betray her allegiance with Bo, she stepped over the threshold. She was in a small vestibule. Men's battered hats and stiff wet-weather gear hanging from pegs like blackened skins of carcasses, old boots and a broken whip coiled to one side of the floor. A set of spurs. The floor was stone flags split from the river (170).

It is only in hindsight, once the characters have physically moved on, that Annabelle realises that these trappings of pastoral work and dwelling are also associated with massacre. Conflating the boundaries between the outside zone of work and the inside zone of the domestic – or the public and private spheres – the work gear scattered in the vestibule, which is elliptically indicated by the simile "like blackened skins of carcasses," exposes the ways in which the romanticised space of colonial dwelling is implicated in acts of 'dispersal'. Later, once she privy to this information, Annabelle adjusts her opinion of the idyllic ruins of the Bigges's old homestead and realises "how impossible it would be to ever resurrect the grand days of Ranna" (357), that these spaces, with their dark and hidden secrets are not the way forward, only the way back.

Once the characters leave Ranna behind and Bo and Annabelle become lovers, the journey at the heart of the text becomes increasingly 'driven' and focusses on Bo's desire to reclaim his grandmother's property Verbena (249). However, while Bo' "drives fast with an edge of impatience in him, chewing the dead butt of his cigarette" (264) the space of the car still accommodates the blossoming of Bo and Annabelle's relationship, particularly the sharing of stories, and their early pit stops in Bo's country remain imbued with a sense of idealism:

> They stayed there for another hour or more [...] almost as if they would never leave this day but might remain at this place indefinitely, until the sighing trees and the tinkling of the river had become the familiar sounds of home to them, and the white eyed crow a customary guest at the table (267).

The car, up until this point, has functioned as a utopian space; a site where Bo and Annabelle's are free to form an intimate relationship and cultivate a mutual sense of belonging. As they get closer to Verbena, however, the space of the car becomes increasingly volatile and a site of potential cross-cultural collision. Simpson claims that car crashes in Australian films act as "moment[s] of rupture in unspoken settler/indigenous violence" ("Antipodean Automobility" 1). As the characters speed closer towards their destination, and are forced to come into contact with the past they thought they had left behind, the car – like the empty stations they pass through – is rendered a space of dislocation, rupture and potential abandonment.

Whilst Miller's road story refrains from literally deploying car chase, or crash, tropes, this chapter suggests that the first-hand testimony of genocide the characters witness at Bo's Aunt Panya's house creates a similar effect. Both Bo and Annabelle

experience a sense of traumatic fracture, or shell shock, during Panya's terrible revelations of the massacre she and Bo's grandmother witnessed as children:

> 'Your grandmother's old lady hid us two kids with her in the hollow carcass of an old scrubber bull that was layin out in the open of a natural clearing. Me and your Grandma was all curled up inside that carcass looking out through the old bull's skullholes watching those men murderin our people in the moonlight [...] I seen Louis Beck ride down my little brother across that clearing and bust his skull wide open with his stirrup iron (338-340).

Like an on-coming vehicle, Panya becomes a frightening figure during her testimony, with "her eyes large" and "pupils gleaming yellow in the halflight" and Bo, in response, becomes her prey, or "quarry," caught in the glare of her headlights (343). The profound violence of Panya's recollection creates a gap of both difference and silence between Bo and Annabelle. Bustled out of the house by Bo, Annabelle retreats to the cabin of the Pajero where, without the comfort of motion, she is haunted by what she has seen and heard.

Whereas previously the space of the car signalled to Annabelle that she and Bo were moving forward, towards something meaningful and special (263), it now becomes a stagnant space that epitomises the new "stillness between them" (349). When Bo returns to the car he refrains from starting the engine, allowing the magnitude of Panya's revelations to settle uncomfortably around them. Despite the sense of stasis they experience, however, (and the suggestion that the journey is over) the potential for movement remains apparent. According to Simpson, the car can act as "a symbol of mobility and escape" even when "stationary" ("Imagined Geographies" 160). The cabin of the immobile Pajero retains the sensation of motion through being "rock[ed]" by a "gusting wind" outside (350). The action "rock" can be taken in two ways here. One the hand, it refers to the horrific revelations that have "rocked" Bo and Annabelle's world. Panya's claims reveal that a member of Annabelle's family, her grandfather Louis Beck, murdered Bo's ancestors to secure their tenure of the land. The fact that Panya is a living witness to the atrocity not only demonstrates the currency of these acts but also their ability to interfere and disrupt utopian visions of uncontested reconciliation. On the other hand, however, the wind rocking the parked Pajero also suggests that comfort, and meaningful haptic relationships are still possible in the wake of traumatic revelation.

In the end, the rocking of the car belies the stasis, or "stillness" that Annabelle fears will signal the end of her and Bo's journey together. After waiting at Panya's for a silent hour, Bo and Annabelle (with Arner in convoy) resume their journey. Although, upon leaving Panya's "derelict weatherboard shack" (334), Bo becomes out of control and drives fast "as if they were pursued" (351), he eventually tempers his speed and – after Annabelle breaks the silence, suggestively demonstrating the responsibility of non-Indigenous Australians to keep discussions of reconciliation going – he begins, once more, to consider his connections with the land they are travelling through (352). Rather than being left "stranded for ever on the wrong side of his own history" (352) – where people such as Panya become consumed by the trauma they have experienced – Bo chooses to keep moving forward; on the road towards future reconciliation. The "freedom of the road," as Falconer claims, however, is only ever "temporary" (xxii). While the car functions as a means of escape in Miller's novel – in that it enables Bo and Annabelle to move physically beyond Panya's pain and anger – the freedom it signifies is fleeting. Bo and Annabelle cannot meaningfully co-exist in the utopian vacuum the car provides, they must actively rebuild.

To build a home space where they can settle, or meaningfully dwell, the ongoing effects of colonial trauma must be acknowledged. The final leg of the journey to Verbena Station is a further homecoming for both Bo and Annabelle as Annabelle's childhood home, Haddon Hill, must be passed on the way. The feeling of nostalgia which Annabelle previously held about Haddon Hill has been changed by what she has learned at Panya's. Throughout the narrative, Haddon Hill had featured as Annabelle's primary home space, the place of her childhood, location of her dreams and her own version of country (262). Having now been educated in the violent way in which her family secured the property, however, Annabelle chooses to forgo realising her nostalgic fantasies, claiming that "the old road of her memory was somewhere else. It possessed no reality. The return had already erased it" (354). While this refusal implies that Annabelle has become displaced, it in fact reveals her willingness to re-negotiate the ways in which she dwells and build a future. In the wake of Panya's revelations, Annabelle recognises that although this place is "not her country after all" the area remains "the nearest to any place she might lay claim to" and thereby the right location for a new beginning (354).

Rather than conclude *Journey to the Stone Country* with the passing of an era, and the affirmation of settler unbelonging, Miller ends his narrative with an attempt at re-

building. According to Julie Mullaney, it is the "traumatic and pitiful history of Verbena rather than the misplaced Edenic vision of Ranna Station that sets the terms under which future engagements can be meaningfully conducted" in Miller's text (17). Although the house at Verbena has been destroyed it is has not become a dusty relic. Instead, the property remains current; a place in which to make a new beginning. Unlike Ranna, Verbena "could be rebuilt and station life resumed […] without too much difficulty" (358). While, all that remains standing and in working order at Verbena is Grandma Rennie's tamarind tree "fat, dark and as big as a three-storey house" (355) and woodstove (356), Bo is relieved to find the space retains these "trace[s]" of its former self and his own history (356).

By driving together along the overgrown road towards their childhood homes, these characters are able to remake what it is they have in common and face the future in an informed and sensitive way. In *Journey to the Stone Country*, Miller endeavours to navigate a way out of the cultural impasse impeding belonging in Australia. He is trying, in short to make it possible for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to feel at home, together, as a nation. While, at the heart of Miller's road narrative/love story/reconciliation novel, is the potentially irreconcilable trauma of colonial violence, the motion of travel is shown to sooth the shock of revelation.

4.4. *Carpentaria* (1)

'We are the flesh and blood of the sea and we are what the sea brings the land.'
-Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria* (33).

Set in the fictional coastal town of Desperance – a town which was "intended to serve as a port for the shipping trade for the hinterland of Northern Australia" until "one moment, during a Wet season early in the last century" it "lost its harbour waters when the river simply decided to change course" (3) – *Carpentaria* is a novel which explores contemporary Indigeneity and the ongoing impact colonisation has on race relations. Novels by well-intentioned non-Indigenous writers such as Miller and Jones are primarily framed by the prospect of a productive-turn in future race relations. In Wright's *Carpentaria*, however, cross-cultural contact remains fraught and reconciliation efforts are undermined by the persistence of widespread racism, violence and exploitation. For instance, the township of Desperance is a divided place; split along

racial as well as tribal lines. While the white community preside over the town centre (known as Uptown) conflicting Indigenous tribal groups dwell on the town's fringe in separate camps known as Westside (or Pricklebush) and Eastside. All of these groups are depicted as communities that are deeply fractured; with competing stories and cultural histories that intersect and unsettle each other. Despite this schism, however, this study argues that Wright inserts room for hope in her text – hope for cross-cultural transformation – by articulating a shared passion for voyaging, fishing and stories of the sea.

Francis Devlin-Glass argues that although Wright is, as a person, "ideologically committed to a viable future [or reconciliation]" the future she imagines in *Carpentaria* "is bleak and separatist" (84). As she is a spokesperson for Indigenous rights, Wright's work is regularly affiliated with her personal stance on issues of race relations. Adam Shoemaker, for instance, examines the ways in which *Carpentaria* is linked (paratextually) with the Howard Government's Northern Territory "Intervention"[34] which was announced on the same day as Wright's winning of the Miles Franklin Award:

> Imagine the confluence of these two events then: one - the Miles Franklin Award - celebrating the coming-of-age of Indigenous literature in an unprecedented way; the other lamenting the abuse of Indigenous children as never before. One firmly establishing the artistic and creative talents of Alexis Wright as an Indigenous author; the other throwing into relief the manner in which so' many indigenous children could not author their own future in safety. And imagine even more: the fact that Wright's entire book lives and breathes its sprawling canvas in Australia's Northern Territory – the very same location in which the Federal government's intervention was to be directed. One could not imagine more opposite narratives of the same land ("Hard Dreams" 57).

Wright – in an interview with Kerry O'Brien which followed the announcement of *Carpentaria's* 2007 Miles Franklin win – addresses questions about the potential for reconciliation (in light of the Intervention) and claims that although her text is primarily about Indigenous peoples, she "hope[s] the book is of one heartbeat" a story that is "for everybody in Australia as we move towards the future and try to understand better" (218). Instead of examining the ways in which *people* can reconcile, however, Wright suggests in this interview that it's "time to start talking about reconciliation from that

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[34] The Intervention, or what was officially known as the "Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act," was a legislative response to a report into child abuse in Indigenous communities (called *Little Children are Sacred*) which enforced changes to Indigenous peoples welfare provisions, extended the power of law enforcement officers, and changed land tenure agreements.

level of where our spirits connect," from the land and the different ontologies which sustain it (219). In *Carpentaria* Indigenous and non-Indigenous people's spirits connect via stories and experiences of being at sea. Paralleling ancient Indigenous narratives of Saltwater Country with seminal Western tales of the sea voyaging, Wright demonstrates the longstanding and intricate ways water facilitates connections not only between people and place but also animals and spirits.

Nonie Sharp claims that for many First Nation Australians who are coastal dwellers – such as the saltwater peoples of the north – the sea is a familiar space which is "at the heart of" belonging (Sharp 11). The sea, in oral traditions, is as much a part of country as the land, and the "creator spirit beings […] whose sea journeys mark out marine territories […] remain ongoing presences" (Sharp 33). For *Carpentaria*'s protagonist, Normal Phantom – one of the true traditional owners of the region – time spent at sea (voyaging, fishing or drifting) is part of tending to his ancestral country; appeasing the spirits and keeping the ancient pathways of the ocean alive:

> Normal was like ebbing water, he came and went on the flowing waters of the river right out to the sea. He stayed away on the water as long as he pleased. He knew fish, and was on friendly terms with gropers, the giant codfish of the Gulf sea […] When he talked about the stars, they said he knew as much about the sky as he did the water. The prickly bush mob said he had always chased the constellations […] They were certain he knew the secret of getting there. They thought he must go right up to the stars in the company of groper fish when it stormed at sea, when the sea and sky became one, because, otherwise, how could he have come back? (6-7).

By Wright's rendering, the sea (or sea country) is not just a destination – or something to navigate – it is also a constitutive part of Norm's very being. Norm's patterns of movement embody the tidal movement of the river and the Gulf Sea. Furthermore, he is connected to the ocean creatures, specifically the gropers.[35] For Norm, fish and fishing are not just related to notions of sustenance.[36] Echoing the findings of the 2010 study

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[35] As a type of codfish, the groper is a recurring totem in stories from Indigenous tribal groups and are typically renowned for their human qualities, such as its intelligence and long life see. For more information see texts such as *Caring for Country* by Trish Albert from *The First Australians Plenty Stories* series.

[36] Fish and fishing are symbolically deployed in many of the texts examined in this thesis. In *The Secret River*, for instance, Thornhill's moment of realisation is triggered by the discovery of a rock painting of an enormous fish; in *Her Sister's Eye* Sofie Dove communicates directly with fish; in *Journey to the Stone Country* fishing is linked to processes of cross-cultural homemaking; and in the following chapters on island space, the symbolism is further extended, with Billy Gould, the protagonist of Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish*.

Aboriginal Women's Fishing in New South Wales: A Thematic History – in which fishing is recognised as a cultural practice that inspires a distinctive form of social interaction, specifically the sharing of knowledge (Roberts 8) – *Carpentaria* explores the ways in which time spent at sea serves a pedagogical function and is distinctly related to both social and spiritual well-being.

The pivotal role fishing and sea faring play in Indigenous culture finds parallels in Western traditions and numerous stories of the sea. In narratives such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Melville's *Moby Dick* or Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, oceanic spaces – and, by extension, ships and fishing boats – are motifs deployed to exemplify aspects of the human condition, such as the search for identity or the importance of social interaction. *Moby Dick*, for instance, begins with Ishmael describing the powerful tonic effect the sea has on his sense of being, and posing a set of rhetorical questions which chart the profound impact the sea has had on the human psyche in Western traditions:

> Why did the Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, and own brother of Jove? […] And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all (2-3).

Yet while sea voyaging often symbolises a search for identity it is also related to concepts of human interaction. In Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, for instance, Santiago's isolation is emphasised through the conversational tone of the old man's monologues, which he speaks out loud when longing for the company of his former fishing companion, "the boy" (55).

Inspiring cross-cultural exchange, sea voyaging constitutes an act of cultural transformation in *Carpentaria*; a transformation that converges and conflates the various ontologies people draw upon when making themselves at home in the world. For Norm, journeying is based upon the sharing of knowledge – "trading stories for other stories" – so that he is able to "live like a proper human being, alongside spirits for neighbours in dreams" (246). While he regularly swaps stories with the Pricklebush elders (246), he also builds a cross-cultural "library" of information through taking long voyages with his friend, Elias Smith, a white man with no-memory who, one morning,

walks in to Desperance from the sea (43-75). As Brewster acknowledges, Elias's "close friendship with Norm is deeply significant to the novel's theme of cross-racial entanglement" particularly as he is "the only major white character who is portrayed in a sustained intimate relationship with indigenous characters" ("Indigenous Sovereignty" 96). When fishing with Norm out at sea Elias's memory returns a little and he and Norm are able to share their knowledge of the stars, sea and fish. Highlighting both the differences and similarities between Western and Indigenous belief systems, Elias, for example, describes the morning star to be Venus "who is also the beautiful Aphrodite born of the sea" while Norm, dismissing Western mythology, describes her as a "harlot" (9) and prefers to rely on his own ancestral beings.

Unlike the novels composed by white Australians previously discussed, Wright situates any potential for interracial exchange in *Carpentaria* with a white *outsider*, a seemingly non-Australian who, as Brewster acknowledges, embodies the "migrant/settler condition" ("Indigenous Sovereignty" 97). Elias troubles categories of whiteness. With no memory, his identity is created by the people he comes into contact with. The white folk of Desperance who gather at the shore to watch him walk in from the sea, for example, claim that:

> On this long fine morning, they recognised the mariner's harsh golden skin as their own. *Ah! Ah!* And *Ole la la!* exclaimed one, two and three female voices, possibly more, when sighting that shiny skin glowing like torchlight whenever a spot of sunlight escaped through the clouds to beam on him. A fine looking skin [...] Others said the lost mariner resembled a perfect human pearl amidst his tangles of ornaments. He was like Jonah with cockle-shells, green seaweed and starfish enmeshed together in a crown of snow (49).

The people of Uptown choose (initially) to overlook Elias's outsider status (or possible position as an illegal immigrant) due to their need to find a deity; a figure in which they can see an elevated or mythical version of themselves. The Pricklebush mob, however, take a different position. Rather than endowing Elias with a biblical identity, they see him as an embodiment of the Dreaming, arguing that:

> You could tell this man might be equated with the Dreamtime world because when his memory was stolen, the mighty ancestral body of black clouds and gale-force winds had spun away, over and done with, in a matter of a flash. The old people said they knew the time this happened to Elias Smith because they had been awake all night watching the sea, and seen the whole catastrophe of clouds, waves and wind rolling away, off in another direction (50).

Despite the controversy surrounding Elias's origins, it is generally accepted that – like Norm – he has an "other-worldly" quality about him (92). The close friendship between the men signifies an alliance which is based upon both difference and similarity; and reveals the potential for the sea – as a symbol of strength and renewal – to inspire a cross-cultural dialogue on the differing ontologies of the human condition.

The space of the boat is one of sanctuary for the central characters of *Carpentaria*, where they can escape the small-mindedness of the town and the often disturbing presence of family. Norm's house – a "never-ending rattling corrugated-iron shanty fortress, built from the sprinklings of holy water, charms, spirits, lures acquired from packets of hair dye, and discarded materials pinched from the rubbish dump across the road," called "the Number One House" (12) – is a space which he feels relieved to leave but compelled to return to. While this relief is due, in part, to the tempestuous relationship Norm has with his wife Angel Day – who, like the house, is described as "a hornet's nest" (13) – Norm also attributes this feeling of ambivalence to the location of the property. Norm claims, for instance, that "the house had been inadvertently built on top of the nest of a snake spirit" and regularly complains that he can feel "something coming from under the ground into his bones" (13). As an extension of his wife and the region's serpent dreaming, the Number One House exerts a palpable power over Norm; a gravitational pull, which makes it hard for him to leave, but also inspires a deep sense of "unshackling" after each departure (13). The only place where he experiences a sense of "tranquillity" – the reverie which is ideally associated with spaces of home – is in the bay with his boat (18).

While the reader is told that Norm's voyages regularly occur with Elias, it is, for the most part, in retrospect – once Elias is dead – that they actually unfold at the level of narrative. Hence, as the main action of the novel occurs after Elias's death, the reader is given only snippets of information about the times Norm and Elias spent together at sea and the close bond Elias shared with the Phantom family. Through the memories of Norm and his estranged son Will (whose experiences I will discuss in the following chapter), the reader is able to ascertain the almost familial nature of the relationship and the important (and often guiding) role Elias played in the lives of the Phantom family.

While both Norm and Elias feel most at home when they are at sea, Elias has no memory of any other home space to interrupt his oceanic dwelling, or 'call him back'; the sea is Elias's primary home space. It is the subject of home, however, that the two men discuss on their epic journey together to the spirit world, to Elias's final dwelling space, where "the congregations of the great gropers journeying from sky to sea were gathered" (252). Despite Elias's seemingly inanimate state, Norm (and, before him, Will) continues to communicate with him; using the voyage as a time to reflect on issues of family life and potentially frame the parameters of a new cross-cultural dialogue:

> In the darkness, he felt Elias's presence, sitting at the end of the boat, looking at him as he usually did on their way out fishing in the good old days. Before the kids grew up, before the madam of the house caused her trouble, and the Fishman came and went as he pleased 'Do you remember that, Elias?' He said, speaking softly as the dead man had been listening to his thought (238).

It is usually Indigenous characters who are ghosted in postcolonial narratives, rendered haunting presences/absences that disturb settler homemaking. In *Carpentaria*, however, Elias's death – and Norm's treatment of him – reframes these tropes and instigates a new and more productive form of ghosting, in which the deceased *actively* participate in meaningful (and welcomed) cross-cultural dialogues.

Just as they had done when Elias was alive, the two men argue over domestic details while sitting back to back in the fishing boat, specifically the details surrounding the departure of Norm's wife, Angel Day, with his friend Mozzie Fishman. Elias has always had a different perspective on events to Norm. Rather than viewing Angel as a trouble maker, for instance, Elias sees her as an "angel" or a "spirit" with innocent child-like qualities (241). This perspective causes Norm to recognise the way in which he has been perceiving his wife; to remember the time he watched her from "behind the long grass" and saw a unfamiliar expression on her face "a face from her childhood transcending through the travesties of their life together" (243). Cloistered in this "sphere of honesty," Norm is able to see, for a moment, how things might have been different and the power of his misconceptions. While *Carpentaria*, presents sea faring as intrinsic to being in country, Wright is also interested in examining the repercussions of this; the effect of over-indulging a love for the sea as a form of familial escape.

Belonging to the broader genre of travel writing, ocean narratives commonly exemplify ideas pertaining to home and away through the binary opposition of land and

sea. Although Wright's text conflates these binaries – by revealing, for example, the ways in which the interspace of the boat connects Indigenous travellers to their sea country – it still makes distinctions between the types of dwelling that occurs on the sea, as opposed to on the land. Robert Foulke states that while dwelling on the land people easily have the means to evade each other, to refrain from interacting, but when they are confined to the space of a boat "contact with others is unavoidable" (Foulke 8). "Once committed to the open sea," Foulke claims, "human beings are enclosed irrevocably by the minute world of the vessel in a vast surround," a situation that "reverses many physical and social practices" associated with land dwelling (8). In *Carpentaria*, the world at sea, where Norm can live for months on end, is vastly different to the world on land. Yet although Wright's characters express a sense of freedom while being at sea – a sense of being unencumbered by the constraints of family and community associated with land-based dwelling – the nautical dwelling-in-motion typically inspires self-reflection and other metaphysical journeys.

As "the big man of the sea," Norm spends little time at home with his family, only ever returning briefly to check on them "before leaving the very next dawn" (95). His absence has led to a sense of disconnection. His adult children, for example, are uncertain in his company and do not seem to really know him (222). While returning Elias "to his own country, the place he would call home" (258), Norm, in turn, begins to consider the importance of his own family and home space. After Elias's sea burial, Norm embarks upon his travels which – like Odysseus's journey to Circe's island – take him to "forbidden" spaces where no human is allowed to enter:

> Trespass had been a big word in his life. It protected black men's Law and it protected white men. It breathed life for fighters; it sequestered people. The word was weightless, but had caused enough jealousies, fights, injuries, killings, the cost could never be weighed. It maintained untold wars over untold centuries – *trespass*. Trespassing was the word which best described his present situation, and it occurred to him that he was wrong to have taken this journey with Elias in the first place […] He knew at once that he was entering a spiritual country forbidden to all men and their wives and their children's children (269-270).

Although trespass is designed to keep people segregated, this instance of trespass facilitates Norm's reunion with his family. After surviving the violence of a giant storm, Norm arrives on the shores of a strange, and seemingly deserted, island. The island functions, both literarily and metaphorically, as a space of "Hope;" the space where

Norms is able to reimagine a future. Norm spends a long period here in limbo, caught between the ideals of land and sea, home and away, hope and despondency – scenes which are paralleled by his son Will who, as I will discuss in the following chapter, also becomes marooned on a strange island in the Gulf. While dwelling sullenly on the beach – dangerously close to the treacherous shore but far enough away from the dangers he imagines in the bush – Norm is visited by a young boy who closely resembles his estranged son.

Not only has Norm been physically absent from his family home he has also been emotionally distant; refusing to have anything to do with Will after he fell in love with the daughter of Joseph Midnight (Norm's nemesis from the Eastside camp), who is aptly named Hope. The little boy, Bala – who turns out to be Norm's own grandson (the child of Will and Hope) – becomes his saviour, inspiring him to make the difficult physical and emotional journey back home. Norm realises that while there is "no easy path" back to "the home he [has] left" (279), it is a journey he must make for the sake of Bala and the rest of family. As he commences his return voyage, Norm releases that "this was the solace of Elias: how he used his death to help an ignorant old man find his grandson, to rekindle hope in his own, joyless soul" (307).

Carpentaria, concludes with Norm and Bala's arrival back in Desperance after the town, including the Number One House he once professed to hate, has been obliterated by a cyclone:

> All dreams come true somehow, Norm murmured, sizing up the flattened landscape, already planning the home he would rebuild on the same piece of land where his old home had been, among the spirits in the remains of the ghost town, where the snake slept underneath (519).

The past and the present, and land and sea, come together during Norm and Elias's metaphysical journey, creating a map of the past and a blueprint for future. In her review of *Carpentaria*, Michele Grossman asserts that it is the "oceanic space where key characters are most truly at home, deeply themselves and meaningfully linked with their world" (*The Australian Literary Review* 10). However, by conflating the experiences of the novel's two 'old men of the sea', Wright reveals the power intersubjective dialogues have to reconnect people with spaces of former rupture.

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While dwelling-in-motion often frames respite from home (and reveals many of the benefits associated with transient or nomadic ways of being) it is, I would argue, ultimately treated by Australian novelists such as Jones, Miller and Wright as a temporary process that cannot replace grounded systems of dwelling. All three of the novels analysed in this chapter end, for example, with a return to scenes of settlement. Both *Carpentaria* and *Journey to the Stone Country*, conclude with scenes of rebuilding. It is only in *Sorry* – which ends with a return to the Keene's shack on the night of Nicholas's murder (after the body and Mary have been removed) – that houses remain problematic; associated with a failure to transform and the tendency to cover up. Unlike Stella who seems happy to be staying in the house "where the violence had happened," Perdita goes outside with her dog for physical comfort and imagines herself into exile at the end of Jones's text:

> Beneath the gleaming night sky I lay on the earth with Horatio. I buried my face in his belly and listened to the rhythm of his sleeping. Afraid of slumber agitation, of ghostly visits, I willed myself to think of Stella's snow dream: a field of flakes descending, the slow transformation of the shapes of the world [...] I saw a distant place, all forgetful white, reversing its presences (214).

This ending, rather than revealing the potential the house has in narratives of future belonging, shows the ways in which trauma can obliterate domestic comfort.

According to Sara Ahmed, in a "narrative journey" between home and away "the space which is most like home, which is most comfortable and familiar, is not the space of inhabitance [...] but the very space in which one finds the self as almost, but not quite, at home" (Home and Away" 331). Rather than focussing on "the past which binds the self to a given place," Ahmed's approach reveals the ways in which home remains elusive, "the impossibility and necessity of the subject's future" ("Home and Away" 331). While Ahmed's essay focusses specifically upon migration, her recognition of the ways in which provisional spaces that are premised on mobility – such as airports – engage with and, in some cases, become sites of home resonates with this study (331). Home spaces in *Sorry*, *Journey to the Stone Country* and *Carpentaria* are intrinsically affected by the experiences characters have in-between spaces that are classified neither sites of home nor away, such as boats, abandoned houses, hotels and prisons.

Tropes of movement continue to inform dwelling in the ensuing chapter. Yet whereas this chapter focussed on journeys between home and away, the following looks at what happens when, due to exile, return is indefinitely suspended.

5

Island Exile

Framing Heterotopia

> The mistake, I think, has been to believe too much in the static notion of culture
> [...] So I am quick to identify what drags like seaweed on the moving keel of
> culture. What stops transition?
>
> -Brian Castro "Heterotopias: Writing and Location" (1)

Whereas the last chapter analysed journeys between spaces of home and away which explicitly evoked reconciliatory dialogues and processes of Indigenous reconnection, this chapter examines journeys which terminate in exile and are less obviously framed by processes of reconciliation. Spaces of displacement, particularly islands and archipelagos, frame a heterotopic reconfiguration of home and dwelling in Wright's *Carpentaria*, Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish* and Winton's *Dirt Music*. Foucault's theory of heterotopia – which, generally speaking, proposes that certain spaces are marked by their ability to disrupt, or "desanctify," normalised conceptions of social space (Foucault 23) – reveals the constructedness and mutability of sites pertaining to home. This chapter argues that the heterotopic desanctification of home triggered by island exile in *Carpentaria*, *Gould's Book of Fish* and *Dirt Music* inspires Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters to reassess their homemaking practices and take into account other ways of being-in-the-world. Accompanying this recognition is the realisation that spaces of home, like all scenes of sociality, are innately entangled; reflecting the differences and similarities that exist between cultures.

Sketchily outlined by Foucault in his lecture on architecture, "Of Other Spaces," heterotopias are "counter-sites" which, through mimicry and subversion, destabilise seemingly normative social spaces/practices (24).[37] Like mirrors, Foucault proposes that heterotopias render a subject's position – the space that one occupies – "at once absolutely real" and "connected with all the space that surrounds it" and "absolutely

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[37] Prior to his lecture, "Of Other Spaces," Foucault first discusses heterotopia in the preface to *The Order of Things* (1966) and in a radio broadcast. The lecture, however, is where he makes his most sustained engagement with the topic.

unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" (240). By essentially displacing the subject, heterotopias – "like the standpoint of the mirror," from which the subject is compelled to "discover" their "absence from the place" where they perceived their self to actually be (24) – enforce a reconsideration of the spatialised self; the location of the body in the world. While the term "heterotopia" is somewhat enigmatic, it has inspired readings in a number of different disciplines.[38] The wide-spread application of the term is largely due to the six evocative examples, or "principles," of heterotopic sites that Foucault outlines in "Of Other Spaces."

Foucault's six principles of heterotopia – which I will examine at length in my analysis of the floating island of rubbish in Wright's *Carpentaria* in Section 5.2 (138-140) – draw attention to the ways in which heterotopias, while conceived to be sites of displacement, remain connected to all other social spaces. By the end of the eighteenth century, for example, cemeteries – spaces that Foucault recognises as "strange" heterotopia due to the way in which they are distinctly unordinary – began to be moved from "the heart of the city" to outer-lying zones to prevent disorderly decomposing bodies from contaminating the urban environment (25). The distance placed between these spaces, however, failed to sever the living citizens' memory of the dead. Cemeteries, claims Foucault, remain "connected with all the sites of the city state, society or village [...] since each individual, each family has relatives" there (25). The difference is, however, that rather than being the "sacred and immortal heart of the city," cemeteries became "the other city" or the "dark resting place" of the town's inhabitants (25). As this example demonstrates, heterotopias can be read as spaces that both connect and subvert different conceptions of social space and states of being. In "Of Other Spaces," Foucault argues that:

> The space which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time our history occurs, the space that claws and knaws at us, is also, in itself a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside which we could place individuals and things [...] we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites

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[38] Peter Johnson showcases the diversity of heterotopia research on his website *Heterotopian Studies: Michel Foucault's Ideas on Heterotopia*. The broad appeal and widespread application of heterotopic theory is demonstrated through the variety of sub-categories Johnson uses to organise his extensive bibliography, which includes sections on: Art and Architecture, Communication, Film and Media Studies, Death Studies, Digital and Cyberspace Studies, Gender, Sexuality and Queer Studies, Education Studies, Literary, Science Fiction and Theatre Studies, Marketing and Tourism, Museum and Library Studies, Political Studies and Urban, Community and Religious spaces and places.

which are irreducible to one another and not superimposable on one another (23).

Heterotopias do not collapse spaces into each other but, instead, expose the connections between sites, particularly sites where those whom society deems to be too different are placed.

In the novels analysed in this chapter, instances of displacement – when disorderly Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters are, for one reason or another, exiled to the fringes of settlement – inspire a broader reconfiguration of social, or even national, space. Indigenous spatial ontologies have long been recognised for the ways in which they interrupt or unsettle Western conceptions of dwelling. Penelope Edmonds argues, for example, that "Aboriginal camps were powerful heterotopias or other spaces that transgressed and undermined the imaginary coherence of the British settler-colony city" (143). In contemporary narratives such as Wright's, Flanagan's and Winton's the power heterotopic spaces have to disrupt conceptions of settlement – and the way in which they are implicit to many conceptions of home and country – are utilised pedagogically, to inspire new, or more informed, ontologies. Peter Johnson, in his essay "Unravelling Foucault's 'different spaces'," argues that heterotopia physically and imaginatively unsettle normative spaces by "illuminating a passage for our imagination" (Johnson 87). In narratives that are concerned with productively contributing to national discussions of race relations in Australia, heterotopic imaginings can help facilitate new conception of being-in-the-world; conceptions that are sensitive to cultural difference, or new pathways towards reconciliation. As Johnson claims, "by drawing us out of ourselves in peculiar ways" heterotopias "display and inaugurate a difference and challenge the space in which we may feel at home" (84).

In *Carpentaria*, *Gould's Book of Fish* and *Dirt Music*, exile to islands inspires not only a distinctly heterotopic reconfiguration of domestic space but also an allegorical revisioning of nation. For non-Indigenous peoples, this imaginative re-ordering is a process that both reflects upon (and contrasts) the ideals which commonly accompany notions of emplacement, such as mainstream systems of Western dwelling, and the reliance upon an often unobtainable sense of belonging. However, for Indigenous people – who are often relegated to the periphery in stories of Australian-ness – scenes of heterotopic revisioning regularly foreground acts of cultural reclamation, and inspire a reconnection with cultural heritage. For example, as the ensuing analysis of Will

Phantom's sojourn on the floating island of rubbish in *Carpentaria* demonstrates, exile from the immediate precincts of a family home do not necessarily constitute an exile from 'country'. Hence, while the time Will spends on the floating island of rubbish inspires a reconfiguration of the intimacies of his family dwelling it also draws attention to the ways in which country constitutes home and how contemporary Indigenous homemaking is invariably entangled with Western systems of dwelling.

A number of Australian writers and critics have drawn on Foucault's concept of heterotopia in their discussions of nation and Australian national identity. For example, Gail Jones, in her article "A Dreaming, A Sauntering: Re-Imaging Critical Paradigms," suggests that the "heterotopic model" is useful because it is inspires a critique of the "falsifying totalities" that erase the "locations of Culture" which "deserve our regard not because they contribute to a national narrative, but because they enjoin us to recognise the beautiful complexity of difference."(20). Jones states that Foucault's notion of heterotopia enables a "focus on the interstitial, the flows of power between spaces" and, in doing so, recognises that the "conditions of being" upon which "everyday life" depends are "essentially disunified" (14). Like Jones, Brian Castro – in his manifesto on writing and identity entitled "Heterotopias: Writing and Location" – recognises the ways in which heterotopic spatial models emphasise connections that are premised on difference. Castro suggests that:

> In heterotopias [...] things are cast adrift. Old hierarchical models are discarded for lateral provocations in which the imagination is allowed to roam. It is the valuation of this disparity that is common. This has become the common value: a kind of lateral thinking which is [...] a catalyst for regional and international connectiveness. Not a prescription for dislocation but a location for the unfamiliar (2).

Both Jones and Castro's evocations of heterotopia focus on the concept's potential to shelter exchange and bring together (but not collapse) different ways of being-in-the-world. In the Australian context, this recognition can reinvigorate reconciliation processes by dispensing with notions of sameness – or coming together – and instead, make room for connections that allow the distance between different cultural ontologies to remain unbridged.

Difference and sameness sit alongside each other in heterotopic conceptions of social space; reflecting/mimicking, but remaining separate. As Foucault notes:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of

society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within a culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted (24).

Whether self-induced, or officially enforced, time spent in exile is invariably tied to conceptions of homeland and the prospect of return. In the novels analysed in this chapter, exilic characters become enmeshed in processes of representing, contesting and, ultimately, inverting their prior conceptions of home; a process which highlights the systems of performativity informing home and dwelling. In *Carpentaria*, *Gould's Book of Fish* and *Dirt Music*, the heterotopic recognition of the constructed-ness of 'normal' home environments – coupled with a potential foreclosure on the prospect of return – enables a reconfiguration of dwelling. Roger Bromley suggests, for instance, that exilic narratives regularly seek to "renew severed links between the conflicted, diasporic 'self' and the collective" so as to "shape a critically imagined solidarity" or inspire "healing, out of discursive rupture" (2). New, and possibly healing, ontologies pertaining to being at home can emerge from the fringe and reshape communities.

The following section examines the ways in which sites of island exile relate to notions of identity in Australian narratives. The second section, returns to Wright's *Carpentaria* and looks at the exile of Norm's son Will, who is on a parallel journey to his father's, drifting around the Gulf on a floating island of rubbish. The third section of this chapter examines the ways in which islands, as "heterotopias of deviance," enable unusual couplings through acts of transgression in Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish*. The final section focuses on archipelagic space in Winton's *Dirt Music* and the way in which Lu Fox's self-driven exile explicitly forces a reconsideration of what is often perceived to be the healing power of exile.

5.1. Islands of Possibility: Reading Exilic Space

Exile – be it "voluntary or involuntary, internal or external" – is the "painful and punitive banishment from one's homeland" that results when one's home is (usually for political reasons) no longer "habitable" (Peters 17). Originally linked with international movements and migrations, the trauma associated with exile and diaspora has, in recent years, been deployed by Australian writers and critics wishing to dissect and/or construct Australian identity. In novels such as *Carpentaria*, *Gould's Book of Fish* and *Dirt*

Music, the sense of physical and emotional estrangement associated with exilic sites – notably islands, and the subsidiary spaces associated with them such as life-rafts, prisons and beaches – are used not only as a means of examining cultural dislocation or unbelonging but also to frame distinctly heterotopic scenes of cross-cultural recognition and exchange. Edward Said, in his seminal essay "Reflections on Exile," draws attention to the multiple, and seemingly conflicting, ways in which the condition of exile is imagined by modern society, asking "if true exile is a condition of terminal loss, why has it been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture" (173). Exemplifying this conundrum, Wright, Flanagan and Winton's texts deploy scenes of exile to work-through issues beyond the comfort/confines of home. In *Dirt Music*, for instance, Lu Fox emotionally 'unpacks' his ambivalence towards home while in exile; a process which is inspired not only by the isolation he experiences but also through learning to appreciate the different ways in which people make themselves at home on the land. In all three texts, the pain of being away from home reinforces the importance of community and meaningful human contact. Although this estrangement is shown to have some debilitating side-effects, it is ultimately treated by these novels as a situation that can inspire productive counter dialogues.

.   In his lyrical response to two performances of "My Island Home" – one by the Warumpi Band who wrote the song in 1986, and another by Christine Anu, who made it part of the national consciousness – Phillip Mar states that "in the Australian context the figure of the island works powerfully as an alternative home space because of its implicit distance from and echoing of the mainland nation" (147). This chapter argues that it is these acts of "distancing" and "echoing" that renders island spaces heterotopic in Australian texts. Island metaphors regularly give spatial form to the concept of home in Australian narratives and island imagery is not unusual in official elucidations of Australian national identity. As Mar recognises:

> The assertion of autonomy and freedom in the official national anthem is tied to Australia's island nature— 'our land is girt by sea'. Geographers refer to Australia as the 'island-continent', a category which has assisted Australians in imagining themselves separately from both the 'continent' of Asia and the 'islands' of the South pacific (147).

In these kinds of national discourses, a sense of islandness provides Australia with both a liberating and exclusive sense of national identity. At the same time, however, this

islandness also imbues these narratives with a sense of insularity, regionalism, or ex-centricity.

Island depictions tend to be intensely dichotomised, oscillating between binaries such as utopia/dystopia, inside/outside, paradise/prison. Elizabeth McMahon claims that national discourses typically rely on only one version of island imagery, that of the island utopia ("The Gilded Cage" 191). According to McMahon, narratives of Australian national identity – such as the one "projected" during Christine Anu's performance of "My Island Home" at the closing ceremony of the Sydney Olympics – deploy the "trope [...] of the island utopia" because it "appears to overcome internal divisions" ("The Gilded Cage" 191). In her discussion of Anu's performance, McMahon draws attention to the ways in which the island progresses "from its reference to the Torres Strait and Anu's own island home, Mabuaig, to continental Australia and then to the planetary globe," symbolically placing Australia on the "world stage" (191). Due to their obvious borders, the island spaces depicted in the Closing Ceremony of the Sydney Olympics exemplify a sense of secure "containment" whilst, at the same time, being "all inclusive" (McMahon, "The Gilded Cage" 191). As "miniature worlds," however, McMahon suggests that these island representations also insist on being read as "monadic" sites because, although they are interconnected, each remains "a world unto itself" ("The Gilded Cage" 192). In Australia, islands have always been conceived as spaces which are simultaneously connected to, and separate from, the national imaginary. As McMahon notes:

> [...] only nineteen months after the Olympic Games, the Australian government once again sought to sever the Torres Strait Islands from the national map and place them outside the borders of the nation for the purpose of limiting the access of refuges to Australia. This proposal which was made without any consultation with the people of the islands also sought to exclude islands off the west coast of the continent, as well as the whole state of Tasmania to the south ("The Gilded Cage"193).

In this counter narrative, islands – as spaces which are tenuously linked with the mainland nation – are presented as a danger to the coherence of Australia's national identity and articulated as sites of disorder and displacement.

Owing to their geographical detachment and perceived insularity, islands have been perceived in Australian history as the material sites of prisons, asylums and detention centres; spaces in which disorderly bodies can be physically displaced and

disciplined so as not to affect the community at large. As a former British penal colony (or island-prison), Australia occupies a complicated position in island studies. Prior to British colonisation (and the concise mappings of borders), the Southern landmass which came to be known as Australia was constructed by Western philosophers as both an unearthly paradise and dystopic hell. In *The Fatal Shore*, Robert Hughes states, for example, that for Europeans, Australia – "with its inscrutable otherness" – was a space wherein "every fantasy could be contained; it was the geographical unconsciousness" (44). With British settlement, however, Australia became the "continent of sin," a space where the British could literally dump their refuse (Hughes 44).

Drawing on Lefebvre's concept of the "obscene" – the idea that alongside normalised spaces (or scenes) that showcase what a society deems permissible there exist other sites "to which everything that cannot or may not happen on the scene is relegated" (Lefebvre 36) – Armellino suggests that "the antipodes became the imaginative obscene space of the European scene," a place which was considered essentially "off-set" (11). Like heterotopic theory, the ways in which obscene space functions becomes particularly apparent in elucidations on island space. In settler Australian discourses, claims Armellino, "Island/Institutions" not only represent a complex "network of power relations […] between England, the Australian mainland and Van Diemen's Land" but also a horrific and "wide-reaching archipelago" (Armellino 35). While the whole continent of Australia was originally conceived by the British to be "uniformly ob-scene," with the arrival of free settlers from 1793 it was deemed necessary for prisoners to be further "displaced" so that the burgeoning colonial society was not tainted by the "convict stain"(Armellino 27).[39] To meet this social/spatial 'need', penal institutions were constructed on the margins of the settlements and isolated places such as Sarah Island, Maria Island, Macquarie Harbour and Norfolk Island; spaces which came to occupy a dark and fearful recess, or obscene sites, of the collective unconscious.

For example, in *For the Term of His Natural Life*, Marcus Clarke's evocation of Norfolk Island – the smallest and most fearful island/institution of Australia's carceral archipelago – reveals a place of punishment so severe that the prisoners are rendered

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[39] Armellino alternates between "ob-scene" and "obscene," claiming that he uses the first version of the word when he is emphasising its spatial application (9)

docile and unfit for any society. As Reverend James North, the pastor on the island, writes:

> [...] the island is in a condition of abject submission. There is not much chance of mutiny. Then men go about their work without a murmur, and slink to their dormitories liked whipped hounds to kennel. The gaols and solitary (!) cells are crowded with prisoners, and each day sees fresh sentences for fresh crimes. It is a crime here to do anything but live (372).

By Clarke's rendering, islands – as spaces of deep despair – reveal a schism at the heart of Australia's national identity and the impossibility of belonging in the wake of such trauma. On Clarke's Norfolk Island, the possibility for being at home is thwarted even for those who are not officially incarcerated. For Sylvia, the wife of Maurice Frere (the island's sadistic Commandant) the suffering of the convicts negates the homely trappings of her dwelling space:

> Though the house of the Commandant of Norfolk Island was comfortable and well furnished, and though, of necessity, all that was most hideous in the 'discipline' of the place was hidden [...] The sight and sounds of pain and punishment surrounded her. She could not even look out her window without a shudder (379).

Like looking in the mirror, the view from the window forces Sylvia to confront her subject position; her location in the field. In Clarke's text this heterotopic recognition disavows meaningful dwelling, for Sylvia cannot physically and emotionally overcome the melancholy of the space (383).

One cannot speak of the trauma of exile without acknowledging the internal (but no less debilitating) exile many Indigenous people continue to live in today; physically and emotionally displaced from their ancestral country via ongoing processes of colonisation. As Lucashenko states:

> [...] for Indigenous people steeped in meaningful tradition, to live outside one's country is to be constantly in peril, spiritually, emotionally and physically. Exile is a peculiar form of illness, and of blindness, since the stories that give life meaning – the pedagogies of the generations – are contained not in books or language alone, but in language expressed within and by landscape ("Not Quite White in the Head" 6).

The systemic exile of Indigenous peoples from their lands constitutes an Australian diaspora; a culture's widespread dispersion from its homeland(s) (Pulitano 40). Yet while it is indisputable that separation from country and/or homeland can have

enormously debilitating effects, this chapter suggests that many contemporary representations of living in exile commandeer the pain of displacement and incorporate it into narratives of reconnection. As Elvira Pulitano recognises, Indigenous texts regularly transform "the imagery of trauma, separation, and dislocation […] embedded in diaspora discourse into potentially creative sites of resistance and survival" (41).

Spaces of exile have, in some cases, been incorporated into broader Indigenous conceptions of country and are now recognised as sites resistance. Flinders Island, or Wybalenna ('Black Man's House'), for example, became a site of exile in 1834 when hundreds Tasmanian Aborigines (thought, at the time, to be the last of their race), were sent there from the main island of Tasmania. As the surviving letters from Indigenous peoples who were interred on the island attest, Wybalenna was a place from which people wanted to escape, a site which was decimated by disease and emphasised a dislocation from homeland. In 1837, Thomas Brune articulates the debilitated state of his people in *The Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle* – a journal that was to be written by the Aboriginal people to "promote christianity civilisation and Learning amongst the Aboriginal Inhabitants at Flinders Island" (Brune, "Under the Sanction" 10) – stating:

> Let us hope it will be good news and that something may be done for us poor people they are dying away the Bible says some of all shall be saved but I am much afraid none of us will be alive by and by as then as nothing but sickness among us. Why don't the black fellows pray to the king to get us away from this place ("17th November 1837,"11).

Brune's fears of cultural genocide were very nearly realised. By 1847 less than fifty of the Aboriginal people placed at Wybalenna remained living and were removed to Oyster Cove where they then 'died out' (Shaw par.2). The widespread notion that the death of the remaining Indigenous people who had been removed to Flinders Island represented the death of an entire race remained largely uncontested until the mid to late twentieth century, when Tasmania Aborigines "re-emerged to proclaim their Tasmanian Aboriginal identity, demand land rights and revive traditional cultural practices" (Marks par.2). This emergence has led to sites of exile such as Flinders Island being repositioned as symbols of Indigenous "survival", rather than just extermination (Vicky Matson-Green cited in Marks par. 27) and seen them incorporated into broader narratives of country by writers such as Jim Everett.

In contemporary Australian narratives that engage with processes of reconciliation, islands continue to be spaces of exile that represent a dislocation

between the individual and society. Yet, as the ensuing analysis of Wright, Flanagan and Winton's novels demonstrates, although islands remain spaces of social fracture in Australian literature, they have also become sites where in which cultural identities are re-aligned and re-formed. Lyn Jacobs, in her analyses of "tropical zones" in recent Australian literature, argues that while these kinds of spaces are commonly represented as either "paradisiacal retreats, mosquito-infested war zones, touristic destinations or sites-of-last-resort on terminal pathways north," they are now also depicted as "homelands" or "cross-cultural spaces where the nexus between Indigenous and non-indigenous people, as well as the environment, climate and geography, is distinctive" (167).

5.2. *Carpentaria* (2)[40]

> 'And I'm holding that long turtle spear, and I feel I'm close now to where it must be.'
>
> -Neil Murray, "My Island Home"

In her series of digitally manipulated photographs "Sulu Stories" (2005), Sabahan artist Yee I-Lann explores cultural intersections and issues pertaining to identity within the "watery" and contested borders of the Filipino archipelago (Fairly Interview par. 11). For I-Lann, the archipelago signifies the zone of the not quite where identity endlessly re-forms against a backdrop of shifting ideologies, myth and the sea. Islands are rendered spaces of cultural memory in I-Lann's work, where dynamics of difference are played out against an uncertain horizon. Like "Sulu Stories" – to which Wright refers in her essay "On Writing *Carpentaria*" – *Carpentaria* manipulates archipelagic sites to explore "what becomes of the islands we have created, of communities, our places and ourselves" (94). Wright claims that when she looks at *Carpentaria* "it is like seeing a myriad of ideas that have created the same thing: islands" ("On Writing *Carpentaria*" 93). This analogy, which extends beyond the geography of the narrative to the "self-sufficiency" of the characters themselves, culminates in the subversive vision of "the floating island of rubbish."

The conflicting ancestral and social forces that Wright links to the dawn of "Armageddon" in the opening pages of *Carpentaria* (1) brew throughout the narrative – disrupting every day dwelling processes as well as national agendas – until, finally,

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[40] This section was published in *Southerly* 72.3 (2012).

cyclonic forces obliterate/instigate a "new reality" in the form of a peripatetic island of junk (491). Crowning the end of Wright's text, the floating island of rubbish is an interstitial space that is literally "born" from the nation's post-apocalyptic waste. Unanchored and drifting around Queensland's Gulf – much like its sole inhabitant, the perennially exiled Will Phantom – the island functions as an uncertain bridging space in the text; a site where the past, present and future jostle alongside each other. The spatial and temporal multiplicity of the floating island of rubbish aligns it with Foucault's notion of heterotopic space. By simultaneously conflating and destabilising domestic, national and spiritual ways of being, Wright's floating isle of refuse motivates processes of Indigenous reconnection and reflection; processes which, in turn, prompt a reconsideration of the various ways in that we (both the characters and readers of the text) make ourselves at home in the world. In light of the pervasive sense of un-belonging touted to be undermining reconciliation processes and national identity in Australia, the importance of developing a space from which to reimagine not only the parameters of nation but also the more intimate topography of home cannot be understated.

As a hybrid zone that refuses neat categorisation, the floating island of rubbish that forms in the wake of the novel's final and most devastating cyclone is a space which is simultaneously intrinsic to, and separate from, many of the other spaces and stories explored throughout the narrative. For instance, the architecture of the floating island of rubbish recalls the supposedly haunted "moving islands" of "the world's jetsam" Will Phantom saw "roaming" the Gulf as a young child on a fishing trip with his father Norm whose parallel journey I discussed in the previous chapter (386). Like these detrital and seemingly foreign "flotillas" which troubled the people of the Gulf years before, the floating island of rubbish is a space that collapses the boundaries between world and region. Representing a union between town and country, indigenous and non-indigenous architectures and infrastructures, and both modern and ancient ways of being, the floating island of rubbish is an intensely ambivalent space which fractures dreams of home and nation. In light of the island's ability not only to echo but also unsettle normative conceptions of space, this section suggests that the isle of refuse benefits from being read as a form of heterotopic space.

Whilst the floating island of rubbish has not been widely read as a heterotopia, a number of other critics have acknowledged its potential to function as an emblem of

social transformation. Laura Joseph claims, for example, that *Carpentaria* "contests the continence of 'one Australia' on the level of spatiality through a shift from the singularity and coherence of the continent form towards the multiplicity and dispersal of islands" (7). Although Wright's floating island of rubbish is only one of many literary examples Joseph explores in "Dreaming of Golems: Elements of the Place Beyond Nation in *Carpentaria* and *Dreamhunter*," its chaotic presence is palpable throughout her essay because it is a space that distinctly "refuses the terms of nation" (1). In keeping with Bachelard's idea that "the imagination must take too much for thought to have enough" (253), Joseph argues that the "imaginative excess" of *Carpentaria* – which the outlandish archipelagic space of the floating island epitomises – allows for the nation's future to be "realised" beyond the confines of its "violent" history (9). Joseph's comments resonate with what Wright herself says about the text. Wright claims that whilst *Carpentaria* is a "contemporary continuation of the Dreaming story," it is also a text which – in response to the ongoing trauma of colonisation – attempts to "understand how to re-imagine a larger space than the ones we [in Australia] have been forced to enclose within the imagined borders that have been forced upon us" ("On Writing *Carpentaria*" 82). The journey Will takes on the floating island of rubbish is a journey of self-awareness; towards reconnecting with community but *also* re-imagining the parameters of home, nation and identity.

Devlin-Glass also explores the floating island of rubbish in her review of *Carpentaria*, describing the space as "an island of Western debris" that "challenges European hubris and ecological ignorance" (83). Whilst the island can, on the one hand, be said to symbolise a moral, as well as ecological, comeuppance – the island's strange architecture brings to mind, for example, the tangled mass of sea life and rubbish caught in the enormous "ghost nets" left behind by fishermen in the Gulf of Carpentaria (Townsend) – it is also important to recognise that it is a space which intersects with ideas pertaining to the concept of home. "Waste," as Brook Collins-Gearing notes in her analysis of Warwick Thornton's 2009 film *Sampson and Delilah*, "is a subjective notion" (1). During his island sojourn, Will is cocooned within the detrital trappings of his former family dwelling; a space which, prior to the cyclone, sat squarely within the realm of "wasteland." Unlike Robinson Crusoe, the seminal Western figure of the castaway, Will Phantom remains within the fold of his tribal country (which embodies

both land and sea)[41] whilst marooned on the flotsam of Desperance, his "home" town. Coming after two years of effective exile – spent following traditional songlines in a car-convoy pilgrimage – Will's arrival on the floating island is treated as an almost utopic homecoming in the text; a reclaiming of home/wasteland which upsets the dynamics of displacement typically associated with 'being elsewhere', and reconstitutes the ways in which heterotopic spaces tend to be conceived.

As a profoundly complex and multi-layered space, the floating island of rubbish resonates with a number of the six heterotopic "principles" Foucault outlines in "Of Other Spaces." The island can be read, for example, as a "heterotopia of crisis;" a space where Will's "coming of age" occurs beyond the prying confines of society. Foucault states that "crisis heterotopias" are "privileged or sacred or forbidden spaces" that are "reserved for individuals who are, in relation to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis," spaces such as the "honeymoon suite," or hotel (24). The floating island of rubbish both physically and imaginatively evokes the social/spatial dynamics of the hotel. For example, its foundational "bulwark" is formed from the "monstrous" debris of the "Fishman Hotel," a space where Will takes refuge during the cyclone (492). As Yvette Blackwood recognises, hotel spaces "point towards the idea of individual monads, individual worlds that sit together, and are sometimes forced to connect, like guests dwelling in hotel rooms" (279). The isle of refuse, like the Fishman Hotel, is represented as a parallel space in the text – a world apart – where Will becomes acutely aware of the haunting presence/absence of other beings, such as family, the folk of Desperance, and his "old people."

The island, however, is not only what Blackwood would call a "hotelized" space (280). Wright's floating island of rubbish is an *über* heterotopia, inspiring a plethora of spatial readings. For example, due to the island's imprisoning dynamics, and Will's belief that he is "doomed to a hermit's life" (500), it is possible for the "life raft" to be read as a "heterotopia of deviation" – a zone set aside for "individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm" – the kind of space Foucault saw to be "replacing" the heterotopia of crisis (25). Furthermore, the "malingering" presence of

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[41] According to the 2004 Government consultation report "Living on Saltwater Country: Southern Gulf of Carpentaria Sea Country Management, Needs and Issues" prepared by Paul Memmott and Graeme Channells in association with the "Aboriginal Environments research centre" at the University of Queensland, "sea country extends inland to the furthest limit of saltwater influence – includes beaches, salt pans, mud flats, beach ridges (which become islands in very high tides, additional wet season effects) etc. land and sea is inseparably connected" (8).

other beings on the island also flags it as a site of burial and, therefore, aligns it with the shifting space Foucault uses to demonstrate his second principle of heterotopia, that of the cemetery. In keeping with Foucault's third principle, the island "juxtaposes" spaces that are usually "incompatible" (24). Like the space of the "Oriental Garden" (22) – which Foucault offers as an example of the third principle – the floating island nurtures "many species" of vegetation (496) and it also brings together, in one space, the usually segregated elements of the Aboriginal fringe with the more "socially acceptable" architecture of the town. One of the key heterotopic interpolations the floating island of rubbish makes, however, is its ability to inspire "a break with traditional time," an attribute Foucault associates with his fourth principle which deals with "heterochronies" (24). On the island, Will's sense of time fluctuates. For example, although he claims to be "able to recall each day [...] from the time he began living on the island" (496), he seems to be unable to conceive the passing of time elsewhere. It is only with the realisation that, on this strange vessel, the passage of time does not actually lead anywhere that Will returns to what Foucault calls "traditional time" and begins to re-evaluate his situation and his role in society (497). Like the "temporal heterotopia" of the fairground," a space that Foucault claims "is not oriented toward the eternal" (26) the island also becomes, for Will, a temporary – or outskirt – space, surrounded by a perverse and frightening "travelling sideshow" (501). Additionally, with his fifth principle, Foucault states that "heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable" (26); a system which can also be inferred on the floating island through Will's futile obsession with guarding the vessel's entry points (498).

The time Will spends on the floating island of rubbish is underscored, for example, by his acute sense of ambivalence; his inability to reconcile his desire to remain isolated with his wish to be rescued or liberated. The argument put forward here – in light of the ambivalence the space inspires – is that the floating island of rubbish specifically benefits from being read in line with Foucault's sixth and final principle; as a heterotopia of "illusion" and "compensation." According to Foucault, these forms of heterotopia are sites which have, by "trait," a "function in relation to all other space that remains" in that their role is to either "create a space of illusion that exposes every real space [...] as still more illusionary," or, conversely, "create a space that is other, another real space that is as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is messy, ill

constructed and jumbled," the heterotopia of "compensation" (27).   The floating island of rubbish echoes both of these enigmatic heterotopias. Initially, it appears to be a space of compensation, where Will is able to build a simulacrum of home out of the debris of his former life. However, as an innately fluid space, the island – like the world – will not sustain one settled mode of being; as soon as Will becomes comfortable with his new form of existence it is exposed as illusionary. Foucault provides two quite different example of these "extreme" types of heterotopias – suggesting, for example, "those famous brothels" can be seen to function in the role of heterotopia of illusion, whilst colonies such as the "Puritan societies the English had founded in America" during the seventeenth century could function as heterotopia of compensation – but, in the end, he links these apparently "polar" heterotopias via the "connecting" space of the boat, or ship (27). Foucault claims that the boat is "a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea" (27). Like Foucault's boat, Will's floating island is a heterotopic space that is insular, contained and separate to the world; a seemingly private sanctuary. Yet, at the same time the island is also a detached vessel; essentially governed by the 'will of the sea' and, thereby, open to boundless interactions and other ways of being and subsequently linked to the notions of return and home.

The floating island of rubbish reconstitutes the purpose of heterotopic space by revealing the connections such sites may have to spaces of home and processes of dwelling. Hetherington claims, for example, that "heterotopia have an ambivalence within them that allows us to focus on the idea of process rather than structure" and consider alternative and ever-vacillating modes of "social ordering" (139). Foucault is generally considered to have deemed heterotopias to be unlike "ordinary" home spaces, disassociating them with acts of dwelling (Rossetto 446). Wright's re-imagining of heterotopic space, however, subverts these distinctions on a number of levels. For example, as the ensuing analysis reveals, the floating island of rubbish is *both* a heterotopia "par excellence" (a boat) and an integral manifestation of "country," unsettling the ideal of displacement upon which heterotopic habitation is usually premised. While the floating island is, on the one hand, an alien terrain – adrift on the world's seas – it is also, for Will, a space constructed from elements that are familiar to him, the detrital topography of his childhood home, and can therefore be read as a space which celebrates fringe dwelling.

Rather than just juxtaposing multiple spaces, the floating island embodies them; inspiring a new Dreaming where the Aboriginal sacred and home making practices combine with elements of Western culture to force a 'coming of age' and contemplation of the world beyond the nation's shores. During the cyclone, "the bounty of everything man had ever done in this part of the world" is broken down by the wind, rain and tidal floodwaters and "crushed into a rolling mountainous wall" of debris (491). Forming the foundation of the floating island, this wall of rubbish is an amalgamation of old and new worlds; a realm enigmatically belonging to "the ancient spirits of the creation period" as well as Will Phantom's "thoughts of the future" (492). By reimagining nation from the perspective of the Indigenous fringe, Will's island sojourn initiates a new system of dwelling; a system which reflects an emerging world vision and recognises the need for ongoing and specified reconnections with community and country.

Like all of the spaces and places Wright conjures in *Carpentaria*, the isle of refuse is framed by the creational story of the rainbow serpent. An ancestral being common to numerous Aboriginal tribes (including the Waanyi people to whom Wright herself belongs), the rainbow serpent's movements create and influence the ever-changing topography of the land and conditions of the sea in Queensland's Gulf country:

> Picture the creative serpent, scouring deep into- scouring down through – the slippery underground mudflats, leaving in its wake the thunder of tunnels collapsing to form deep sunken valleys. The sea water following in the serpent's wake, swarming in a frenzy of tidal waves, soon changed colour from ocean blue to the yellow of mud [...] When it had finished creating the many rivers in its wake, it created one last river, no larger or smaller than the others, a river which offers no apologies for its discontent with people who do not know it. This is where the giant serpent continues to live deep down under the ground in a vast network of limestone aquifers. They say its being is porous; it permeates everything. It is all around in the atmosphere and is attached to the lives of the river people like skin (1-2).

The frenzied tidal-conditions which create the monstrous island are an incarnation of the ancient creative forces used to describe the Gulf County early in the narrative. Will claims, for example, that "the macabre construction resemble[s] a long-held dream of the water world below ground where the ancient spirits of the creation period rested, while Aboriginal man was supposed to care for the land" (492). Evoking the manifold links between ancient and modern worlds, the floating island represents not only the power of the "Great Earth Mother" – or "female Rainbow Serpent" – to continually

destroy, rescue and renew, but also functions as a contemporary unearthing of "deep knowledge" (Wright, "Deep Weather" 72). According to Wright, "deep knowledge" is way of describing the wealth of Aboriginal stories, or "ancient treasures," buried in this continent and intrinsic to its proper care ("Deep Weather" 72). The Rainbow Serpent not only "permeates," but embodies, the new hybrid space of the floating island, forcing a primary recognition of the Aboriginal sacred.

An innately revelatory space, the floating island forces all manner of cultural and personal excavations. For Will, the island's sole inhabitant – with whom its "destiny" is "intertwined" (494) – the space rouses a moving return of the repressed. Arriving on the "serpentine flotation" during the early stages development – as "its parts rubbed, grated and clanked together" until they became tightly enmeshed into a solid mass" (493) – Will briefly feels like an "intruder […] clinging to a foetus inside the birth canal, listening to it, witnessing the journey of creation in the throes of a watery birth" (494). His initial feelings of being-out-of-place, however, are mixed with an uncanny sense of the "familiarity" as he realises that the "embryonic structure's strange whines" are in fact familiar to him (494). The oscillation between feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity, or strangeness, may also be understood as heterotopic effects. As Danielle Manning notes, for example, heterotopias are inked to Freud's concept of "the uncanny" because they "reflect a curious slippage between the familiar and unfamiliar" (1). "Heterotopic sites," she claims, "seem familiar, as they are subsumed within a society's conventional ordering system that links them to other sites, yet they are unfamiliar in that they simultaneously contradict the premises by which the relationships are sustained" (1). Due to its unusual architecture, the unanchored island simultaneously distances Will from the spaces and people he has left behind whilst constantly echoing them in endless and uncanny ways.

The floating island of rubbish – or "birthing wreck" (497) – is intimately associated with Will's mother, Angel Day; and by extension his family's home, the "Number One House." As Carole Ferrier recognises, "the huge pile of floating rubbish" that is born from the cyclone can, in fact, be read as a "strange displacement of the material of which Angel's [and Will's] home was made" (49). Will grew up in a "a rattling corrugated-iron shanty fortress," built by his mother "from sprinklings of holy water, charms, spirits, lures […] and discarded materials pinched from the rubbish dump across the road" on the town's fringe (12). Like the floating island, the Number One

House is an embodiment of the rainbow serpent; a space that is disturbed by "haunting spirits residing in the smelly residue" from whence the structure came, the "slime-dripping serpentine caverns of the dump" (16). It is also an "excessive" space which, like the island, is prone to intrusion and filled with overflowing and often conflicting energies (41).

The process of dwelling Will enacts whilst marooned on the floating island of rubbish is largely informed by the homemaking practices he learns from both his parents whilst growing up in the Number One House. Like his mother fossicking at the dump and seemingly using "magic to erect the house from scraps" (14), Will creatively salvages what he can from the wreckage "tunnelling down into the depths of the pontoon island itself" to find "boxes of precious hooks [and] nails" to build himself home and shelter (496). Like his father, Norm Phantom, whose process of dwelling incorporates tending to country, Will is instinctively aware of how the floating island of detritus is a part of the serpent dreaming and linked with the ancestral spirits of the sea. To survive in this new world, Will quickly realises that he needs to reconnect with his sea country and the seafaring lessons he was taught as a child; a challenge he welcomes:

> Come hither fish, come sea spirits, demons, marine monsters. He would have to learn all about them if he were to survive. He would have to chart nautical routes in his mind. He would have to start remembering the journey of the heavens, all of the stars, breezes, just like his father, Norm Phantom. (494).

By self-consciously modelling Norm's distinctive dwelling practice, Will's "life raft" is rendered an environ of home. As I stated in the previous chapter, Grossman claims that it is the "oceanic space where key characters" of *Carpentaria* "are most truly at home, deeply themselves and meaningfully linked with their world" (10). Out of the flotsam, Will creates what he thinks to be a predictable and intensely ordered, miniature world; becoming "a practical man in a practical man's paradise" (496). However, the floating island of rubbish motivates a concentric process of (re)connection that progresses outwards, from the private and familiar to the public and unfamiliar. And the orderly realm of compensation Will creates is revealed to be unsustainable, and essentially based upon fantasy.

As a veritable heterotopia of illusion, the floating island of rubbish appears, at first, to fulfil Will's every wish. For example, "if he went looking for driftwood, his hand only had to reach down into the shallow water and as though a magical spell had been

cast, the treasure would be his to hold" (497). However, what Will refuses to acknowledge during the early months of his castaway – the island's "golden days" – is that on the island it is not just wishes that are granted as "any fear had a reality too" (497). Having immersed himself in the innate escapism of his survivor narrative, Will struggles to face up to the fears he has supressed since being washed up on the island's strange shore: the possibility that no-one is steering the island and he is "caught in a sphere of oscillating winds and currents" on a sinking ship of ghosts (497). Once Will realises that his fantastical "island home" is not actually going anywhere, "other places" quickly begin to grow "more fabulous" in his mind (499), revealing the ways in which heterotopic space can highlight the "illusionary" perceptions governing imaginative constructions of even the most normative environments.

In her essay "A Question of Fear," Wright claims that "one of the great lessons" she has learned from "important Aboriginal thinkers" is that "fear comes with our dreams, and if you learn how to conquer your fear, you will learn how to become a fearless dreamer and an instrument of possibility" (149). However, despite his growing awareness Will refrains from taking self-determined action. Rather than working through his fears and taking charge of his own destiny with the courage he has shown throughout the narrative, Will begins to while away his time on the island first ignoring, and then – after killing the turtle – indulging his fears and suspicions. The death of the turtle functions as an important nexus in the novel.[42] As the song lines from "My Island Home" evoked in this essay's epithet suggest, turtle hunting is a ceremonial activity integral to Indigenous practices of being-in country. By killing the "huge green turtle" – as it pulls "its heavy body onto his island" (498) – Will is demonstrating his connection with the traditional ways of the saltwater people to whom he belongs.[43] However, as soon as Will eats from the turtle's flesh, the illusion of his wish-fuelled, pre-colonial utopia collapses. Whilst Will's island continues to shine "brightly with happiness" he starts to feel "stranded and claustrophobic […] like a prisoner grown old with incarceration" (498) whose nightmares become all encompassing. Although Will has the

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[42] In her essay "Rethinking emplacement, displacement and indigeneity: *Radiance*, *Auntie Rita* and *Don't Take Your Love to Town*," Ceridwen Spark suggests that the space of the island in Rachel Perkin's film *Radiance* is treated as a "contested rather than an ideal of authentic place" and can be read as "heterotopic" because it "connote[s] an Aboriginal past as well as a more brutal postcolonial history" (99).
[43] Note that Spark also claims that Nona's inability to kill the turtle in *Radiance* demonstrates that "disconnection [as well as reconnection] comprises Aboriginal people's relationship to past rituals and ways of being-in-the-world" (98).

skills and perseverance to survive on the island, he lacks the motivation (or self-determination) to actively take control of his destiny and, therefore, remains trapped in a viscous cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy.

The killing of the turtle is Will's "albatross" and symbolises the burden of *authentic* being-in-the-world. Authentic being-in-the-world – being based upon and/or inspiring a sense of belonging – stems from processes of self-actualisation. Linn Miller – whose conception of belonging I discussed in Chapter Two (44) – explores self-actualised approaches to being-in-the-world, and claims that authentic" belonging is only possible when people know every aspect of themselves ("Belonging" 220). Although Will's knowing performance of being a castaway is one of genuine reconnection with country and traditional ways of being, his illusion of returning to a time of pre-settlement is not sustainable. According to Grossman, one of the results of reading *Carpentaria* is that the "doppelganger effect of indigenous and settler ways of being and knowing is fully, furiously, sustained as tandem stories and lives variously intersect and diverge, yet remain haunted by the shadows of the others' truths and lies" (10). Like his mother – who on the fateful day she found the statue of the Virgin Mary at the town dump, is startled when other people begin to emerge from their "ensconced positions […] under cardboard boxes, pieces of corrugated iron, inside forty-four gallon tar barrels" (23) – Will becomes precipitously aware of the other bodies, both the entangled mass of familiar and unfamiliar beings whose rotting core fertilise his island heterotopia (501). He also begins to acknowledge the tortured faces of the nameless masses who, like him are "jettisoned" offshore and cast adrift (501). This realisation – that recognition that he is not alone, but caught up in the plight of common humanity – creates a shift in perspective, causing Will to increasingly rely "on the idea of being saved" (501). Will shifts from his position of insularity and moves his gaze outwards, to the uncertain horizon (501). From his virtual vantage point, however, Will struggles to make any kind of connection with either the inner or the outer world and feels "asphyxiated," as though "there was not enough air in the atmosphere for them all to share" (501).

The journey Will takes on the isle of refuse is a journey of self-awareness. "Surrounded by the mirrors of a travelling sideshow" (501), the "floating island of junk" (502) is a heterotopic space designed for meditation and reflection upon the collective plight of humanity as well as self. McMahon claims that island spaces represent "a

condensation of the tension between land and water, centre and margin, and, relative to national perspective, between reflective insularity and an externalising globalisation" ("Encapsulated Space" 21). Through its ability to embody other spaces and oscillate between different locations, the floating island of rubbish allows Will to not only reconnect with his ancestral heritage, knowledge and skills but also to bear witness to the plight of other displaced people in the world seeking shelter on Australia's shores and, thereby, enhance his capacity to make global, as well as regional, connections. Throughout *Carpentaria*, Will Phantom is represented as a man who is not afraid to act, regardless of the consequences. Yet whilst he is repeatedly shown to possess the skills required to be a hero, or leader, wisdom is not a quality that is attributed to him (494).

Unlike his father Norm, who, as Devlin-Glass recognises, eventually "reclaim[s] his family and cultural heritage" (84), Will seems to spend little time considering the plight of his wife Hope and son Bala (who are on a parallel journey in the same oceanic space) and the narrative leaves him fastidiously scanning the horizon; apathetically waiting to be rescued. Yet whilst this parting vision seems to be one of "hopelessness," perhaps what Will is seeking cannot be *actively* found. Hetherington claims that the horizon, as the ultimate heterotopia, is "a boundless space of connections […] into which social relations are extended beyond their own limits" (140). Although he recognises that the horizon is "impossible" to ever actually locate, Hetherington also suggests that it is an "obligatory point of passage" (140). While Will's life raft is indeed a space which exemplifies John Donne's famous claim that "no man is an island,"[44] in the end it only *gestures* towards the need for a "collective" approach to being-in-the world via the unreachable space of the horizon, and Will's desire to hear the sound of a "stranger's voice" (502).

In the introduction to "Of Other Spaces," Foucault suggests that the human "experience of the world" has shifted from the linear perspective of "a long life developing through time" to a distinctly spatial comprehension; "a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (22). Like Foucault, Wright shifts the ways in which we think about being-in-the-world. By successfully re-imagining the debilitating borders – or "broken line" (Wright cited in Ferrier, 44) – of colonisation, *Carpentaria* reveals some of the ways in which "ancient beliefs sit in the modern world" and exposes "the fragility of the boundaries of Indigenous home places of the mind;"

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[44] See Donne's sermon *Meditation XVII*.

places that Wright claims are "often forced into becoming schizoid illusions of our originality" ("On Writing *Carpentaria*" 81-82). The floating island of rubbish, therefore, like I-Lann's archipelagos, never quite conforms to either a utopian or dystopian model but instead functions as a cathartic in-between space where ideas about home, nation and identity can be boundlessly reconstituted.

5.3. *Gould's Book of Fish: A Novel in Twelve Fish*

> "Of a utopia desecrated."
> - Flanagan, *Gould's Book of Fish* (?).

Like *Carpentaria*, Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish* is a tale that is littered with weird architectures, fluid spaces and shifting identities. By fantastically re-imagining colonial experiences and spaces at the outer edges of exile, Flanagan, like Wright, unsettles perceptions of historical certainty, the borders of nation and notions of belonging. However, whereas the floating island of rubbish depicted in *Carpentaria* is a new hybrid space which symbolises an emerging sense of national identity, the heterotopic space of Sarah Island depicted in *Gould's Book of Fish* is a penal colony, and revisited in the context of historical (and fantastical) exposé.

Gould's Book of Fish moves back and forth through the past and present, re-creating (as well as creating) the cultural conditions which have arisen in response to British colonisation. Commonly described as a "faux historical novel," Flanagan's text explores the experiences of convicted forger William Buelow Gould who "after a series of abscondments and insubordinations […] winds up on Sarah Island, a showcase for penal brutality" and "antipodean hell on earth" (Heawood par.1-2). Yet whilst the narrative is widely recognised for its nightmarish rendition of Tasmania's convict heritage (and dismal depiction of its present), it has also been discussed in terms of the ways in which it creates space for hope. Jesse Shipway claims, for example, that Flanagan "summon[s] up hope for the future" in *Gould's Book of Fish* by "radically fictionalis[ing]"Tasmania's past (43). While Shipway tries to "distance himself from spatialising metaphors" in his examination of Flanagan's novel (43), he ultimately locates the text's sense of optimism in not only the ways it explores the "malleability of the truth and the reliability of writing" but also its innate interest in "what can happen when imagination and desire *slip into the gaps* between de jure and de facto

interpretations of history" (44; my emphasis). This discussion, unlike Shipway's, is specifically interested in analysing the kinds of spaces and cross-cultural dwelling practices that Flanagan evokes through writing-in to these historical "gaps," and the impact they have on contemporary discussions of race-relations.

Flanagan's novel reveals (and revels in) the debilitating impact colonial displacement has had upon Indigenous and non-Indigenous conceptions of belonging. However, as Shipway's analysis infers, *Gould's Book of Fish* also posits interstices of exile as sites of potential; scenes of positive, cultural transformation. For instance, although the spatial dynamics of the island prison re-presented in *Gould's Book of Fish* are far from homely and do not *overtly* encourage meaningful dwelling/interracial exchange, this section argues that Flanagan makes use of heterotopic space to present the experiences of those who have been written out of history and, in doing so, initiates new intersubjective dialogues.

The island penal colonies re-imagined in *Gould's Book of Fish*, particularly the one based on Sarah Island, are – like Wright's floating island of rubbish – intrinsically heterotopic sites. As Tanja Shwalm claims in her discussion of animal/circus spaces in Australian and Latin American literature that "Flanagan's penal colony" functions as "an example, of order and disorder occupying one and the same place" as it is a site where "incongruity, abnormality, eccentricity [and] extraordinariness are inextricably linked with the ordinary and hybridity" (90-91). For Shwalm, the inherently heterotopic nature of the island is evidenced in the way in which scientific method and classification dwell alongside "circensian" spectacle and performance (91). The heterotopic nature of Sarah Island allows for a reconfiguration of not only Australia's penal history but also contemporary conceptions of home and nation, which often seek to foreground a sense of cultural coherence. Within the interstices of Flanagan's intensely heterotopic re-imaging of the penal colony, lie a number of sites which are (even in this peripheral space) ostensibly off-set, such as the small patch of land hidden between the pig-pen and the garden hedge, the dark space beneath the Commandant's bed, the ceiling/floor between a prison cell and a library, or the fetid carapace of an abandoned hut. Inside these heterotopic spaces, Flanagan readdresses the stories which fed the "great Australian silence."

In *Gould's Book of Fish*, Flanagan fantastically re-imagines the architecture and conditions of the remote penal colony on Tasmania's North West Coast. This space, as I

mentioned earlier, has been visited before in Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life*. However, while Sarah Island is a site of convict torture in Clarke's text, in Flanagan's novel it is also rendered an "Isle of Wonders," a space where British migrants attempt to simulate the architecture of their lost Home. For the multi-faceted narrator of Flanagan's novel, who occupies as many dwellings as identities, home is a transient notion which has always been innately heterotopic. Born and orphaned in a poorhouse inhabited by madwomen and presided over by a perverted priest, Gould's sense of home, in terms of comfort or connection, is cultivated by stories: "that was all they had in that dark, dank poorhouse," Gould claims, "lice & stories … I grew up with these tales … & little else to sustain me" (64). The primary narrative, which informs all others in the text, is that of Gould's morbid conception and birth. Following the post-coital demise of his father, Gould's mother inadvertently attends a hanging where she believes herself to be possessed by the soul of the condemned man:

> At that very moment she heard the quick creak of the trap door open & saw a skinny man in a long dirty smock with a noose around his neck & a cod in his hands fall from the sky in front of her […] Afterwards she dreamt the skinny man opened his mouth as he fell, & what came forth was not a cry but a shimmering shaft of blue light. She watched the blue light fly across the field & leap into her mouth, open in astonishment" (63-64).

Gould's unfortunate mother dies shortly after she gives birth to a blue baby who, due to its unusual colour, she deems to "be the very embodiment of that evil spirit" (64). Gould's story of origin is a story of other people's endings and his own identity is, from conception, revealed to be something which can be usurped by others and altered by his surroundings.

Gould toys with a number of identities "in the morning" of his life, claiming: "I was greedy for all, but only because the capture of any might prove I lived & was not a nameless man born of a nameless woman in a nameless town whose only sustenance was itchy stories … & scabby songs" (67). Eventually, however, his lack of identity leads him to be cajoled into becoming a deckhand and travelling to the New Land. Although Gould's first experience in the antipodes is short-lived – he is forced to escape after being arrested for "theft of personal property," "insubordination" and "mockery of the crown" (47) – it is because of this journey that he learns the trade he seems most at home with, that of an "Artist." The island colony of Van Diemen's Land is, for Gould, a place of depravity. While living in Hobart Town, for example, he describes his life as "a

pattern of drink, debt, imprisonment & incarceration in cellars and barrel sheds where I had to paint in exchange for my liberty, a clean slate" (85-86). However, while Flanagan represents Van Diemen's Land as an absurdist space built on delusions of grandeur,[45] it is the penal outpost of Sarah Island, where Gould is eventually transported, that the real 'folly' of colonisation is situated in the text.

Framed via the deranged vision of the Commandant – another of Gould's alleged aliases (161) – Sarah Island is a space of excess, where the lust for empire, and the migrant longing for Home, culminates. The Commandant (if the rumours circulated by the convicts are to be believed), was, in fact, a convict prior to taking control of Sarah Island. According to the legend, he managed to reinvent himself after the boat transporting him from Norfolk Island to Van Diemen's Land was shipwrecked on an island in Bass Strait (165). Like the floating island of rubbish in *Carpentaria*, this island is framed as a site of rebirth. Although the island, apart from the "hundreds of thousands of moonbirds" that live there it is a desolate space that makes "strangers" of "trees, shelter and comfort" (166), it is for the Commandant a place of becoming. Inspired by the flotsam that washes ashore following the shipwreck, the then would-be-Commandant decides to make himself anew. Rather than remain a convict castaway, therefore, he commandeers the identity of the deceased Lieutenant Horace, whose decomposing body "had washed up alongside him on the beach" (165). To compliment his new identity, he also makes use of the one book which also washes into this threshold space, *The History of the Napoleonic Wars*. After spending a number of solitary months reading the text, the new Lieutenant Horace adds an ostentatious and despotic persona to his name so that "by the time the two Quakers rowed their small whale boat into the rocky, wind-swept crag that had been his home for so long," he had "succeeded in metamorphosing into something else" (165). After being deposited at the nearest

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[45] It is through the subject matter of Gould's various commissions, that Flanagan reveals the "spirit of the island" (89) – most notably, the colonist's innate desire to re-form and "civilise" – and secures his ultimate exile. In his most notorious commission piece, a sign for Capois Death's newly legal pub *Labour in Vane*, Gould subverts the colonist's attempt to reform and uplift the island's Indigenous people. Made from Huon pine, the sign depicts "an exasperated white woman (model: Mrs Arthur, wife of the Governor of the island colony, Lieutenant George Arthur) scrubbing as hard as she could a black baby in a wooden tub who smiles back at her" above the establishment's name (87-88). Like one of his previous pub commissions, which parodied the idea that "there is always something new out of Australia" by depicting a naked woman being dragged by an eagle into the fires of hell (87), the sign for the *Labour In Vain* represents more than just a jovial, and seemingly well received, attempt at philanthropy. The sign suggests that all of the attempts at civility performed by the island's settlers are empty, or in vain. It also recognises the inadequacy and impermanence of colonial whitewashing.

colonial outpost, Sarah Island, he quickly seizes power and begins augmenting his sense of exile by rendering the island a global centre, rather than a forgotten heterotopia.

By making themselves anew, the characters in *Gould's Book of Fish* appear, on the surface, to have adapted to their new surroundings. Rather than being 'fish out of water' they use any means necessary to survive, becoming other people or even animals. Despite being seemingly accustomed to exile, however, the Commandant of Sarah Island is profoundly "afflicted by the pathos of distance" (177). Just as Will Phantom begins to embellish the comforts of home while dwelling in exile on the floating island of rubbish, the Commandant "exaggerates the marvellous, the sublime, the astounding" of Europe, "that distant world half a year's voyage away" (178). In attempt to alleviate his sense of displacement, and fortify his new position, the Commandant tries to open an official line of communication with "his distant supervisors" (169). His attempts to forge an epistolary connection with Europe, however, are rebuffed: "No replies ever came. No word of praise, of encouragement, or even, for that matter, of approbation or admonishment" (169), he, and the island, are ostensibly written-out. To compensate for the reinforced sense of exile this imperial 'blanking' inspires, the Commandant discards the alias of Lieutenant Horace, begins wearing a perpetually smiling gold mask (171), and decides to "remake" Europe "as a stunted island of misconceptions beneath the southern heavens" (see 177).

One of the key trajectories in Flanagan's narrative is the physical and imaginary creation of spaces of potential belonging, spaces where the characters can identify themselves both with and within the land of their exile. In the absence of recognisable structures of civilisation, the exiled settler characters create fantastical architectures. Yet rather than construct dwellings such as those familiar to them, the settler characters are driven to build spaces that were unachievable 'back home'. Through mimicry and simulacrum of the 'mother country', the protagonists manage to construct elaborate dream dwellings, to substantiate their new identities. The Commandant of Sarah Island, for example, responds to the British authority's refusal to officially recognise, or provide for, the penal colony, by creating his own version of what Lefebvre calls "monumental space." According to Lefebvre, it is the concept of monumental space that endows everyday spaces and objects with meaning and "banish[es] the obscene," claiming:

> Any object – a vase, a chair a garment – may be extracted from everyday
> practice and suffer displacement which will transform it by transferring

it into monumental space: the vase will become holy, the garment ceremonial, the chair a seat of authority (224-226).

The Commandant parodies the Eurocentric notion of monumental space by building extraordinary structures on his obscene island outpost. Yet ultimately, these sites of domestic pastiche prove to be unsuccessful in simulating any sense of meaningful belonging. Rather than fulfilling the settler characters' desire for a utopia, Sarah Island becomes a space which fantastically frames heterotopia; a site where their personal identities and experiences of home are endlessly unhinged and warped.

Like Cobham Hall, the homestead constructed by William Thornhill in Grenville's *The Secret River*, the Commandant's twisted vision culminates in the creation of the Great Mah Jong Hall, a structure: "combining the wonder of Versailles with the cruder pleasures afforded by the Five Courts bear-baiting pit" (183-84). Like all of the monumental spaces he attempts to construct and endow with meaning, however, this ambitious structure is a failure. No one comes to admire the astounding architecture on this far-flung "Isle of Wonders" and the structures are quickly visited by decay before being claimed by the land:

> A chill wind blew through its reception halls, stately rooms & ornate gaming rooms with ceilings so high that clouds gathered there [...] The Great Mah-Jong Hall sat empty [...] many walls [...] covered with the refuse of rainbow-hued rosellas & harsh crying yellow-tailed black cockatoos that took to flying in flocks through the vast emptiness (218-219).

Like attempts to create a coherent national Australian identity, the imperialist home/nation-making plans of the Commandant are continually frustrated. Although he is able to imagine and construct the dwellings he desires, the place is never his home, he never feels safe or entirely assured of his position. "Of a night," for example, the Commandant is "unable to sleep for want of the sound of a nation" and "no matter how many fine new stone buildings he put between him & his night-time visions, no matter how much of Europe he erected between him & the silence" he is haunted by "the same nightmare of the sea rising & rising and rising" (232). In the end, the Commandant finds himself imprisoned by the ruins of his failed attempts to consecrate his identity. The fantastical architectures he commissions fail to ever become spaces of actual dwelling, or even, interest. Instead, the structures stand as ordered sites of disorder, 'enlightened' ruins of exile, and parodic examples of monumental space. While this marks a failure for

the Commandant, the ruins of exile enable other characters to transgress the spaces he has erected, and find/create interstices of cross-culture exchange.

While the Commandant is eventually imprisoned by his crumbling vestiges of power, his alter-ego, Billy Gould, manages to create a vestige of home within the interstices of exile. Dwelling is a rhizomatic process for Gould which spans multifarious sites of exile. He has access to all spaces and moves both back and forth, and up and down, between them, claiming "my life had settled into a routine that was […] tolerably comfy" with the freedom "between the morning & evening to do whatever took my fancy & go where I liked on the island" (180). Jo Jones argues that "in the Australian settler context […] represented in *Gould's Book of Fish*, the action of history moves back and forward while remaining at the edges of history and […] does not always fully swing back to the centre," or normative sites of Western 'settlement' (121). While the Commandant tries to turn Sarah Island into a global centre (a place of definitive emplacement), Gould thrives in displacement, on being decentred. It is only, in fact, during his most far-flung experience of exile on Sarah Island that he learns the questions that may need to be asked – and the new stories that may need to be told – if any kind of future belonging is to develop for non-Indigenous Australians.

Flanagan's narrative represents the decentred experiences of diasporic characters and communities. Gould is, however, distinctly 'at home' in illicit spaces (and with illicit interactions) that emerge in the gaps between official records and heresy. His uncanny ability to transgress all spaces (from monumental to intimate), not only affords him the privilege of freedom and the ability to cultivate his own small patch of earth on the island, but enables him to form a relationship with a woman, which "in a colony full of men, was no small matter" (180). Although, like most of the Australian texts discussed throughout this dissertation, Flanagan refrains from imagining an idealistic space where Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are actually reconciled, in *Gould's Book of Fish* some 'room' is made for meaningful intercultural exchange. In the "small piece of bush" (or tea-tree) between Castlereagh's pig-pen and a "steep bank" where "no-one else ventured" (181), Gould conducts a relationship with the only woman on the island – the Commandant's mistress – who, in lieu of her actual name, is referred to as Two Penny Sal.

According to Flanagan, *Gould's Book of Fish* is, "at its heart" a "love story about a poor white convict and a black woman, and as such it is a novel that speaks to the heart

of contemporary Australia" ("A Letter From Richard Flanagan" ii). As enigmatic as the novel's protagonist, Two Penny Sal or, as the Commandant prefers to call her, "the mulatto" (167), occupies a counter position in the text. Arriving on the island at the same time as the Commandant, Two Penny Sal is, like Gould, a survivor. Whilst she and Gould do not form a typically romantic relationship – sex, according to Gould, is about the exchange of goods and a desire for abandon (306) – they do manage to fleetingly create an intimate space of comfort and communication where they can briefly, but meaningfully, dwell. As Gould writes:

> Hidden from the world, here we passed day after day. It was early winter. While over us brutal Westerly winds cut across the island, in the tea-tree we had us our snug warm & protected, close & holy as night. Here we traded words […]Two Penny Sal thrilled to hear stories of London, was at once terrified and excited by descriptions of crowds larger than the largest mob of kangaroos & buildings so tall and densely arrayed they made their own valleys & gorges & ravines without a tree in sight. She would in turn tell tales of how Van Diemen's Land was made, by the god Moinee striking the land & creating rivers, by puffin away & blowing the earth up into mountains (181).

Like the lessons Thornhill learns from his wife Sal while dwelling in the London wasteland, the education Gould receives from Two Penny Sal in this slice of 'no-man's land' awakens in him an acute awareness of other stories and ways of being-in-the-world. While they have a sexual relationship, the real connection these characters experience is through the sharing of narrative. By transgressing the spatial dynamics which govern their island heterotopia and performing their stories to one another, Two Penny Sal and Gould reinforce their existence amidst the ruins of exile and subvert the dominance of colonial record.

With each act of transgression, Gould undermines the deranged colonial power structure governing the island, and the space itself begins to crumble. Like the floating island of rubbish in *Carpentaria*, the buildings and stories Sarah Island supports are shown to be built upon shifting foundations. Following their final scene of lovemaking – during which Two Penny Sal and Gould write and draw on each other's bodies (302-304) – Gould is again incarcerated. But, once again, his imprisonment and impeding execution are interrupted. While wallowing in a flooded cell with a bloated corpse, the ceiling of his subterranean prison falls in and Gould is, again, reborn:

> With an excitement animating my body I would not a minute before have felt capable of, I groped around as a blind man, small pieces of

> sandstone scattering over my face as I did so [...] As if in a fever I pushed & shoved so much that the water-softened skin of my hands began to slough off [...] I had no plan, no clear thoughts as to what I might do. I didn't even know what the dim void above me was, whether it was open air or just another cell. I raised my arms into that unknown dark, finally found a hold, & taking a firm grip, began to pull (311).

The space Gould hauls himself up into is the "settlement's mysterious Registry [...] the repository of all the island's records" (313). Moving between the library and his "underworld" cell, Gould learns – over seven nights – how the monumental making of the colony is, in fact, a process of writing/whiting-out. The "project of reimaging the penal colony" Gould uncovers in the library is represented as an attempt to render barbarity bearable (318). This literary sanitisation, however, not only covers up the violence of colonisation, it also disavows the existence of intercultural exchange or connection. In the version of history Gould discovers in the Registry, for example, "no collusion between living and dreaming was admitted to" (319), disavowing the invention of the Australian nation and the intersection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ontologies.

According to Julian Murphet, the "withering away of the authority and certainty of our historical sense has another side [...] namely the reaffirmation of our spatial imagination" (116). Eschewing dominant viewpoints in favour of ex-centric outlooks that resist simplistic understandings of (post)colonial space, *Gould's Book of Fish* transgresses the monumental spaces of colonial history to reveal the small intimacies that can occur in the historical gaps, or chinks, where stories are shared and other ways of being celebrated.

5.4. *Dirt Music*

> There's nothing left of him now but shimmering presence. This pressing in of things. He knows he lives and that the world lives in him. And for him and beside him. Because and despite and regardless of him. A breeze shivers the fig. The rock swallows the quoll. He sings. He's sung.
>
> -Winton, *Dirt Music* (451)

In *Dirt Music*, all Australian spaces, even those which are effectively 'off the map', are shown to be sites of entanglement. Like the floating island of rubbish in *Carpentaria* and Sarah Island in *Gould's Book of Fish*, the archipelago that Winton's characters escape

to at the end of *Dirt Music* – in northern Western Australia's (fictional) "Coronation Gulf – is an exilic space which inspires a cross-cultural reconfiguration of home and nation. In Winton's novel, the trauma of unbelonging – rather than enforced exile – and the wish to re-imagine a new space for oneself in the world, drives characters away from familiar topographies of home. Rather than reinforcing romanticised conceptions of island space (or an idyll of castaway), this section argues that self-induced exile ultimately gestures to the importance of community, of the need for sustained and meaningful contact between people and place.

In her discussion of wilderness in contemporary Australian literature, Kylie Crane suggests that the island space the characters journey to at the end of *Dirt Music* is distinctly heterotopic because it "refracts" conceptions of society (60). While Crane's analysis of Winton's novel does not specifically focus on how island exile is used to frame race relations, her reading of island space – particularly the ways in which it disrupts readings of nation – resonates with this study. Crane argues, for instance, that "the island is not only a liminal space placed at the edge of the continent [...] but it is also a site that has various meanings for various people, and a site that reflects back like a mirror on the rest of the continent" (72). Drawing on Foucault's heterotopic example of the mirror, which I discussed at the start of this chapter (125), Crane's analysis of *Dirt Music* posits the island as a place of semi-wilderness where Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters can find temporary refuge (76). In this way, displacement is shown, on the one hand, to be inspiring in this text; enabling characters to pause, take stock, and reimagine home. However, this episode also reveals the ways in which, particularly for settler characters, dwelling can be problematic without the trappings and rhythms associated with spaces of home.

The instance of island dwelling depicted towards the end of Winton's *Dirt Music* seems, on the surface, to occur quite suddenly and represent a schism in the narrative. However, this episode is, in fact, the climatic coda of the novel, something which the characters have been both consciously and unconsciously working towards since the beginning of the narrative. Unable to cope with the trauma of his past, the growing threat of a small town vendetta, and the dangerous emotional attachment he is forming with his 'married' lover Georgie Jutland, Lu Fox abandons his house on the fringe of White Point and journeys north to enact his own version of island-exile. Fox, after claiming to want "a place where [he] can stand alone, completely alone" with "no roads,

towns, farms – no bloody civilians," decides to make his way to the seemingly uncharted area which Georgie once visited, Coronation Gulf (294). Made up of fractured bays and islands, Coronation Gulf is constructed as an uncanny heterotopia in the text, a space that is both familiar and unfamiliar; somewhere and nowhere. For Georgie (who was once marooned there), the gulf is a place that has a "sense of de ja vu about it," as though it is somewhere that "she has always known" (102).

Like the other islands I have discussed in this chapter, Coronation Gulf seems, from the outset, to adapt itself to the whims of its transient inhabitants. For example, Georgie, who does not consider herself to be "a real citizen" (88), felt instantly at home is this remote heterotopia, effectively beyond the borders of civilisation. While Fox, for whom Coronation Gulf is a "country he can barely imagine," it seems to be a fitting place to lose himself in; to be alone and "disremember." Like many characters before him, Fox constructs his decision to travel to the Gulf as somehow predestined. Once he makes the decision to disappear the land appears "quite suddenly […] on a map beneath his fingers" (294). But, in fact, Fox – who has a penchant for island narratives, particularly Conrad's sea-faring tales (73) – has been chasing exile since the start of the story.

Like his animal namesake, Fox's first impulse when his way of being-in-the-world is threatened is to run. After the tragic death of his family, Fox began to fantasize about heading north, to just "leave everythin and bolt" (98). But instead of leaving, he built himself a restrained space in which to shelter, where – as if in a "tent" (87) – he held onto a ghostly semblance of protection from the outside world. After his chance encounter with Georgie, Fox begins to feel emotionally "exposed," as though his "tent [has] blown open" and his flimsy sense of self-protection is threatened (87). This sense of vulnerability is exacerbated by the fact that Georgie is already in a relationship with the 'big man' in town, Jim Buckridge, whose livelihood Fox poaches through illegal fishing. Before meeting Georgie, Fox had attempted to live in isolation at home; to "disappear without leavin" (99). But, despite his strong connection to his family property, and his resolve that he's "not goin anywhere" (102), as the threat Fox faces in White Point intensifies so does his longing for physical exile; to inhabit a space beyond the "compound" of his relationship with Georgie (90). He begins to fixate on taking off to the place where Georgie once got "stuck," an island paradise with "mangroves, boab trees [and] birds;" a space which seems to only exist within the unopened pages of his atlas (102).

Winton has become something of an expert at "mapping the heart" of settler
Australia. In his review *Dirt Music*, Michael Fitzgerald notes, for instance, that:

> More than any other writer of his generation, Winton […] has carried
> the promise of hooking the Big One, the great Australian novel. The
> build-up began with 1991's *Cloudstreet*, which explored with
> tenderness and humor "this great continent of a house," where the
> Pickle and Lamb families reside in the decades after the war. It
> continued with 1994's Booker Prize nominated *The Riders*, which,
> through the story of a husband grappling with betrayal in Europe, fired
> an arrow with devastating aim at the heart of Australian manhood. Both
> novels ached for a sense of family and place lost forever, delivering
> pearls of wisdom from the depths of spiritual struggle (par. 3).

The emotional mapping Winton performs in *Dirt Music* – his "Big One" – is intensified by
the characters repeated reliance on actual maps. However, while these maps act as
physical and emotional props for settler characters in this text, they ultimately reveal
the sense cultural/personal disconnection which is at the heart of much settler dwelling.
Used by settler characters as means to grapple with the vastness of Australian space and
their own place in it, mapping is shown in the text to be a symptom of 'whitewashing'
and unbelonging.

According to Bill Ashcroft, the "knowledge on which maps" have been
"predicated" render them "powerful simulacra and signs of cultural control" which
imply that "the colonizer's view" is the way that "the world was" and is (29). Throughout
Fox's journey to Coronation Gulf, the coloniser's perception of the land is simultaneously
highlighted and underscored by conceptions of mapping. Arriving at an airstrip in hope
of chartering a plane to Coronation Gulf, for instance, Fox is confronted with an extreme
example of the Eurocentric ways in which settler Australians conceive the land:

> While he's waiting for someone to appear at the desk he takes in the
> massive wall chart of the region. Beside it some wag has pinned a map
> of Ireland which has a similar land mass. Next to this, the same
> character has laboured to produce a montage wherein the state of
> Western Australia is made up of multiples of France (295).

Although Fox is nowhere near as "tickled" by this cartographical revision as the pilot
who enters the room, his mild tone and use of words such as "wag" and "character"
suggests that he views it as a harmless, albeit contrived, act of re-presentation. Fox's
benign response to this example of geographical appropriation signifies his failure to
consider the ways in which Australia is defined by Western overlays. While Fox's

journey to Coronation Gulf is motivated by a desire to escape the trappings of settlement – the parameters of the map/Western systems of knowing – once he embarks on the last leg of his journey to the tropics, he is increasingly forced to reconsider his perceptions of the 'lay of the land'.

With the benefit of a bird's eye view, Fox initially thinks that the scenes of settlement which he has been so keen to escape from are absent in the Gulf region. When seen from above, Fox believes that "all rigid geometry falls away" there are "no roads, no fences, just a confusion of colour" (299); a place which has been untouched by Western civilisation, a virtual paradise lost. Fox's failure to perceive that this site, like the rest of the Australian continent, has already been inhabited by Indigenous peoples is subconsciously implied through Chugger's racist comments:

> Get a better view, says Chugger through the intercom, if Squeaky cleaned the bloody windows. Coon grease.
> Sorry? Fox says, holding the headphone tight to his ears.
> The indigenous flier sweats it out like mutton fat, says the pilot. Have to scrub it off the perspex. Abos are the bulk of our trade. We bus em in and out of the settlements. They love to fly on the taxpayer's shilling. Orright for some, eh? (299).

Chugger's bigotry interrupts Fox's vista, forcing a reconsideration of the view of the Gulf through a lens of indigeneity. The racism which informs Chugger's construction of the landscape below marks him, like Fox's maps, as an inadequate guide. Yet despite the fact that Chugger has no real understanding of what it means to dwell in region, he is one of the characters that gestures towards the heterotopic qualities of the space, referring to it as "the dark bit at the back of the cupboard" (300).

The archipelago – as a space which is effectively off the map – initially appears to be a location which is uninhabited, surrounded by a thick "wall of trees" (300). Fox, however, is quickly forced to adjust his expectations of solitude; he is not as Chugger suggested "on his own" (300). Making his way down off the plateau (the gateway to the archipelago) Fox can scarcely contain his sense of rising panic as familiar markings of civilisation disappear and he becomes physically immersed in the space:

> Within five minutes he's half blind with sweat and the vehicle track he's following disappears beneath head-high canegrass. He's forced to gauge direction by feeling for ruts with his boots as he plunges through the vegetation, grasshoppers, butterflies and beetles blunder in to him, snagging in his teeth and hair, filling his shirt, coating his pack and swag (300-301).

Despite the initial, and almost overwhelming, sense of physical disorientation Fox experiences during his first hour on the plateau, his dawning sense of isolation is short-lived. He barely has time to relish (or wallow) in his new-found solitude before he makes contact with others who, like him, have come to the Gulf to escape the expectations associated with sites of settlement, or communal living, and find a place where they can re-imagine themselves beyond social confines.

Menzies appears as an apparition to the "nearly buggered" Fox who has been trying to reach a point of elevation to survey his new and confusing surroundings (301). Standing on top of "a sandstone spur" which Fox hoped would offer him "a view," Menzies is, initially, framed as a 'noble savage' watching over the landscape; "dark-skinned and barefoot" (301). Like Fox, however, Menzies is a character who resists neat categorisation. For example, just as Fox is not a "science fella" or a "mine boy" (301), Menzies – who strikes the pose and possesses the accent of an Aboriginal but has an "oriental cast" to his "features" (302) – is not easy to place. Back at Menzies's, and his companion Axle's, camp site, Fox awkwardly attempts to frame a question about place and belonging but fails to find the words; muttering "Is this –?" (303). Menzies finishes the question for him: "Our country? […]. Dunno. Orphan, I was. Well that what the nuns said" (303). Unlike Menzies, Axle, on the other hand, is quick to claim the region as his own country claiming: "Dis *my* country" (303). Axle's sense of belonging is, however, self-motivated and not linked to a connection with a specific community. Menzies casts doubt upon Axle assertion (and, later, Axle's mental state), stating that:

> All this language he talks, you know, little bit Wunumbal, little bit Ngarinyin, he learned it off some whitefella. Makes it up. But he's not a proper Aborigine man.
> Proper? Says Fox.
> Never has been through the Law, see.
> Initiated.
> Thassit. No people. No country (304-305).

Like the archipelago in *Carpentaria* – which is occupied by international mining companies, criminals, Indigenous fringe dwellers, and ancestral spirits – Coronation Gulf is, at its heart, a contested space, national park and "blackfulla land too" (308), that offers temporary shelter for those who are displaced.

As a "lost man" on a quest, Fox encounters a number of possible guides during his island sojourn; characters who offer him advice about how to survive and establish a

form of dwelling that is suitable to his new environment. As Lyn Jacobs recognises in her essay "Homelands vs 'The Tropics': Crossing the Line," however, it is Axle who gives Fox "the key to the territory" (169). According to Jacobs, Axle – the ambiguous character "on whom 'the world turns'" – functions as "the indigenous gate-keeper" in *Dirt Music* and sets Fox "on the right path by burning his western-made maps" (169). By suggesting that Fox takes a boat to find the old people on the archipelago, Axle essentially tries to encourage Fox to build meaningful connections with the world; to stop trying to move beyond Fortune's Wheel. Although Fox finds Axle's "hot conviction […] that he is central to something" inspiring, he maintains his need for total solitude, claiming that "when all you can feel is the wheel rolling *over* you time and again" you attempt to "get out from under it for good" (309 original emphasis). The wheel, for Fox, primarily functions as a symbol of trauma and fate; directly linked to the tragic death of his family in a car accident, as well as his own survival. In a postcolonial text, it is impossible to talk about Fortune's Wheel without also evoking the 'wheel of colonisation'.

In *The Colony*, Karskens – drawing on the work Deborah Bird Rose, which I will discuss throughout the following chapter – states that frontier violence can be considered in terms of "the great wheel of colonisation […] rolling relentlessly into 'new' country" (456). While the wheel of colonisation "rolling" into country has clearly impacted First Nation Australians, in recent decades the impact this relentless movement has had on settler Australians (as I discussed in Chapter 2) has also been examined. In her "Introduction" to *The Pain of Unbelonging: Alienation and Identity in Australian Literature*, Sheila Collingwood-Whittick suggests that there are "bedrock condition[s] of colonisation," or "common experiences," which occur among people who have been "caught up" in processes of colonisation, irrespective of "chronology, geography, or the national/ethnic identities" (xiii). In *Dirt Music*, the exchanges between Fox, Menzies and Axle have been aligned with the formulation of an intersubjective approach to trauma. Barbara Arizti argues in her analysis of the novel, however, that "Winton fails to acknowledge […] the huge gap separating the traumatic experience of the Aborigine from that of the white settler" (186).

Fox's traumatic past is very different to the histories of Menzies and Axle, which are marked by a profound dislocation from people as well as place (304-305). While Fox has lost his family he still has a strong affiliation with the home space he has grown up in. Both Menzies and Axle, on the other hand, have not been able to develop a strong

connection to place and have, instead, spent their lives being moved on. Although the cross-cultural inhabitation of the Gulf enables the traumatic back-stories of these characters to be paralleled, this study argues that Winton ultimately acknowledges the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous experiences of trauma spatially; by revealing that, despite bonding over their mutual unbelonging, there are sites on the archipelago where Fox remains unwelcome.

Axle's eagerness to share the space of the Gulf (and inspire Fox to live again) is tempered by Menzies, who cautions Fox to respect cultural boundaries. Rather than encouraging Fox to "fly out […] on the sea" to the islands – "Durugu" – where Axle claims "the spirit people go," Menzies says:

> But listen here. See this country? He says pointing out the western
> shore of the gulf. Doan go here, orright?
> What's there?
> Business places. Hidden from you. Not for you.
> Secret, you mean? asks Fox. Sacred?
> Menzies looks away.
> What about you? Fox asks. You and Axle. You go there?
> Menzies shakes his head. We's *wundjat* fullas. Lost people. We doan go
> there. From respec. You unnerstan respec?
> I understand. I won't go there (311).

While Menzies and Axle facilitate Fox's physical and emotional journey – by sharing their camp and giving him a boat – they also caution him not to make himself too comfortable, to feel that he has the right to be there and ignore the protocols of the traditional owners. Like them, Fox is not at home here.

Drawing on Kim Mahood's *Craft for a Dry Lake*,[46] Ashcroft claims that "once place has been released from the certainties of modernity encapsulated in maps, it offers horizons, both physical and spiritual, that open themselves up to further discovery" (29). Soon after Menzies delivers his warning, Axle furiously burns Fox's maps telling him to "go on the country" (313). Fox, unable to interpret this act or its meaning turns to Menzies, once again, for clarification: "What the fuck does that mean? //Menzies shrugs. Then he smiles. Means, be careful you don't get lost" (312). Disorientation is conflated with isolation in *Dirt Music*, a failure to make haptic connections. Yet although Fox is without a map and, as a result, seems to be "moving to an area of isolation" (Crane 67),

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[46] *Craft for a Dry Lake* (2000), is a memoir which charts Mahood's unsettling return to her childhood home in the Tanami desert after the station she grew up on has been successfully reclaimed by the Indigenous peoples of the region following her father's death.

he is not moving into unclaimed territory. This discovery is marked not only by Menzies's warning-off but also the difficulty Fox has in losing the sense that he is trespassing. Without his map, he is forced to look for other markers to guide his way through the land. But rather than finding himself immersed in Indigenous patterns of inhabitation (which his early encounter with Axle and Menzies may suggest to be the case), the first human presence Fox comes into contact with reveals that this is a place which is well-traversed by settlers.

While Fox is unperturbed by the knowledge that some spaces in the archipelago belong to Indigenous peoples, he finds a settler presence disturbing as it fails to fit in to the image of castaway he has imagined for himself. Arriving at the plateau's threshold, Fox instantly "stumbles on six fuel drums hidden in a clump of spinifex [...] all of them full" and a cave stuffed full of provisions; gear which is used by fishing tour operators (314). As a poacher in White Point, Fox was accustomed to crossing-over into zones where he was not supposed to go and enjoyed ignoring boundaries of settler ownership (92). Here in the uncharted tropics, however, he does not expect to be performing the same acts of transgression and responds to this cache of 'civilisation' by wearily remarking "*even here*" (314). That said, Fox incorporates some of what he finds in the cave into his voyage of self-obliteration/discovery; stealing a fishing rod and some mosquito net (315). Journeying deeper into 'the heart of darkness', Fox inhabits a series of islands; exhausting an area of food before moving on. Like Will in *Carpentaria*, Fox experiences a period of complete satisfaction and contentment while adjusting to his new way of life:

> In the daylight he feels safe in a way he hasn't felt since early childhood. There are perils of course. He climbs rocks and wades through the mud with ponderous slow-mo caution for fear of cuts and falls, and he never swims, never even takes his morning and evening douches on the same piece of beach for fear of crocodiles [...] Yes, there are simple dangers but he has nothing personal to protect himself from. On the island there are so many unexpected pleasures, like the hot warm boles of the young boab trees he brushes with his fingertips in passing. The shapes of those trees delight him. Leaners, swooners, flashers, fat and thin (353).

But while Fox achieves the sense of detachment he has been longing for, he also realises that he is an embodiment of the mode of being he has tried to leave behind.

Fox does not attempt to build or cultivate the island spaces that he inhabits. Yet, although he tries to live harmoniously with the land, his island exile ultimately fails to

provide him with a nourishing mode of being-in-the-world. Instead, getting almost completely 'off the grid' increasingly forces Fox to recognise the patterns of dwelling which are integral to his personal sense of belonging, such as having books to read (355), the "bodily presence" of others (356) and music (368). Fox's growing comprehension of the importance of the everyday activities and communication – and the extent to which these acts informed his previous dwelling – is paralleled with his recognition of other patterns of homemaking. As well as evidence of an ongoing settler presence out on the archipelago, Fox also comes into contact with a continuing Indigenous connection to country. On one of the western islands, he finds an array of cave paintings. Whilst he initially "marvels" at the small but "dynamic" images of "tufted headdresses and skirts" it is the larger paintings inside the cave that actually 'move' him:

> On the rear wall a large mouthless face stares at him. Rays stream from its head [...] The ceiling is taken up by a huge ochre figure in red and white. Its head is the size of a turtle shell, the eyes big and dark, and it too is mouthless. Between the splayed legs a strange trunk reaches down [...] He thinks of that kid Axle and wonders if he's seen this (364-365).

Rather than reinforcing his white fantasy of self-induced castaway – in which an Indigenous presence would signify 'getting away from it all' – this instance of cross-cultural contact (which also recalls the death his mother, who was killed when a large tree penetrated her after being struck by lightning) further unsettles Fox's island idyll.

Fox's inability to understand what he saw in the cave causes him to revert back to the roots of his settler identity. Shortly after discovering the cave paintings, he returns to the cache of goods he discovered on the plateau on his second morning in the Gulf; an act which reinforces the sense that, as he murmurs to the cave painting, he is "just visiting" the archipelago (365). After this encounter, Fox begins to succumb to the perils of island hermitage and is forced to admit that being-on-one's own is not necessarily a meaningful way in which to dwell, particularly for someone who is uncomfortable with a nomadic lifestyle and prefers set domestic rhythms. Without any knowledge of the region in which he is occupying, Fox is unable to connect with the land and struggles to meaningfully dwell:

> He's exhausting the food around him; the only way to keep this up is to continue moving up the coast to new reserves of water and fish. Staying only a few days at each place, goaded by hunger. But he just can't see

> himself doing it. He's not a nomad, he can't even imagine such a life. It's not just exhaustion that disqualifies him but his instinct to linger, to repeat, to embellish. A way of living isn't enough. Fox has to stay, to inhabit a place. It's as though his mind can only settle when he's still. He feels he's dragging a life and a whole snarled net of memory across foreign country. None of it lives here; it doesn't spring from here and it will neither settle nor belong (419).

Island dwelling – particularly in the survivalist-style of a castaway – subverts any semblance of stability. Like other misinformed people, Fox wrongly assumes that nomadism involves aimlessly drifting from place to place rather than the cyclical enactment of movement between key locations. Constantly thrown back upon the limitations of dwelling in isolation and having to find new places to sustain him, Fox misses the comforts of communal living, of having other bodies and sources of knowledge/communication around him.

With a sense of loss, Fox is realises that movement and motion – the wheel of life (and colonisation) – are inescapable; that, ultimately, above him even "the stars roll on their wheels" (353). This recognition, however, differs from his previous sensation of being ground down by Fortune's Wheel or "walking in the slipstream of the dead" (360). Fox has experienced a heterotopic awakening within the uncertain rhythms of his island exile; a dawning sense that the trauma he has been grappling cannot be dealt with by imagining himself away, or putting himself "out of reach" (374). In an attempt to reconnect with the past he has tried to disremember – particularly the music he played with his now deceased brother, sister-in-law, niece and nephew – Fox strings "a couple of metres of nylon line […] between two limbs of the fig tree" (368). Obsessively plucking the string, Fox becomes caught-up in the droning "B-flat" sound he creates and discovers that "within that long, narcotic note there are places to go" (369). These imaginary journeys – in which Fox revisits his home and scenes from his past – are cathartic, and, in the end, force him to reconcile both the good and the bad in his life (381).

Unlike Georgie, who felt at home marooned on an island in the archipelago, Coronation Gulf is a place where Fox and his memories cannot be. After succumbing to a fever – during which he cries in desperation for contact with another being (404) – Fox reconsiders the value of human connection and social space, and decides to return home. The fraught physical and emotional journey Fox makes back into the world, causes his mind to turn, once again, to Axle, "out here making himself up as he goes

along" (423). Rather than finding comfort in this image, however, Fox becomes disturbed when he thinks he sees a wild manifestation of him:

> Fox wheels about, peers through the oily haze. Axle. He hears bees or flies. Along the breakaway a solitary tree. He cups his hands to his temples to make out the bundle nested up in the thin foliage […] Something falls from the tree. Fox registers the flash of bared teeth, the figure's mouth open as though catching dark sap from up in the boughs.
> Axle?
> The face turns. It sings the sound of a thousand flies and Fox's ears burn. That face is only a mouth, nothing more. He turns away and walks seaward and doesn't look back until the sound is gone and he can smell the festering mud of the delta (438-439).

Unlike the drone he created with the nylon string, the "sound of a thousand flies" made by Axle is beyond Fox's comprehension and seems to physically echo the image from the cave he disturbed earlier in the narrative. In *Dirt Music*'s final sections, the world of archipelago begins to "shimmer;" reflecting not only these different realities but also alternative ways in which meaning is made in the world, irrespective of settler "incomprehension" (456).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In the contemporary Australian novels analysed in this chapter, island imagery, whether it leans towards the utopian or dystopian, paradoxically emphasises the broad spatial/social links between peoples and places. In all the narratives discussed, island heterotopias are represented as carapaces or recuperative sites which shelter emerging identities. For characters such as Will Phantom, Billy Gould (in all his aliases) and Lu Fox, experiences of being 'castaway' represent a *return* to what are perceived to be traditional (Indigenous) ways of being-in-the-world. However, whilst these characters all adapt to the conditions of their island exile and attempt to adopt castaway identities, they are each forced, eventually, to grapple with their sense of self in the world at large, and acknowledge the significance of connections they have with other people and other spaces.

In *Carpentaria*, for example, the floating island of rubbish inspires a reconnection with country but also the awareness that contemporary dwelling needs to accommodate different ways of being; shifting from personal, familial, regional, national and

international subject positions as Will progressively moves his gaze outwards to the horizon. In *Gould's Book of Fish*, space and time – as categories which influence the subject – are collapsed; making room for the continuing presence of other stories and ways of being beyond the recognisable structure of monumental space. Finally, in *Dirt Music*, the binaries that exist between Western notions of dwelling and 'going native' are conflated by journeying beyond the contours of mapped space, revealing the ways in which incomprehension can help facilitate meaningful exchange.

In his short article "An Island Home," Kim Scott claims that in Noongar "the word for 'island' often translates as 'heart' or even, sometimes, 'knee' […] such words" he argues may "help a young immigrant nation graft itself to the many older nations and older histories above which it shimmers" (155). In the following chapter, 'country' – and the modes through which connections to land and cultural heritage can facilitate cross-cultural well-being – will be explored in order to suggest some ways in which these fictional works can help us to imagine such a grafting and, potentially, future reconciliation.

6

Country

Framing Well-being

> We very rarely get those situations where it's Indigenous people giving
> and sharing, and being valued for doing so [...] All that 'closing the gap'
> rhetoric ... I think if we could work on consolidating a heritage in its
> regions, in its place—a community of descendants sharing that with ever-
> widening circles of people—that would do a lot for Indigenous health and
> wellbeing. Particularly when you use what Aboriginal people offer as
> definitions of health and well-being—not just the physical but social,
> psychological, spiritual ...
>
> > -Kim Scott, "Can You Anchor a Shimmering Nation State via
> > Regional Indigenous Roots?" (240).

Thus far, this study has shown that by reconfiguring conceptions of home so that they are motivated by a sense of the communal, rather than the individual – the recognition, and incorporation, of different systems of dwelling – texts such as Cleven's *Her Sister's Eye*, Jones's *Sorry*, Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country*, Wright's *Carpentaria*, Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish* and Tim Winton's *Dirt Music* productively contribute to reconciliation pedagogy. The two preceding chapters have examined the ways in which contemporary Australian literary works deploy tropes of movement and heterotopic sites – physical and imaginative journeys between spaces, or ideals, of home and away – to create intersubjective dialogues about being-in-the-world. Yet, whereas these chapters are, by and large, inspired by representations of displacement, this chapter concentrates upon experiences of emplacement and examines scenes of cross-cultural exchange in texts which foreground Indigenous ontologies of 'Country'.

In *Country of the Heart*: *An Indigenous Australian Homeland*, Rose suggests that country can be understood as "a series of homes, each one cared for by the Aboriginal people who possessed the rights and duties to care because they belonged there" (12). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, while country is inseparable from many Indigenous people's conceptions of home, the processes of homemaking which facilitates being in country are not necessarily the same as the systems of dwelling that underpin non-

Indigenous ontologies of being-in-the world. To avoid collapsing these quite different ontologies, therefore, this chapter will focus on the ways in which country frames a sense of well-being, rather than belonging.

Brigitta Olubas, in her essay "Country: 'It's Earth'",[47] claims that in Australian discourses 'Country' operates as a multilayered term which – despite "its first layer of reference to location and region through the rubrics of colonialism, cosmopolitanism and migration, through the vagaries and varieties of literary traffic across broad demarcations of the globe" – always bears "the adamant impress of its meaning of Indigenous location and locatedness and the manifold connections to particular sites, bodies and practices that are bound up with this ("Introduction" 2). Country, and its importance to Indigenous Australian's ontologies, has featured in a number of the literary works I have analysed thus far. *Carpentaria*, for example, is infused by the Phantom family's connection to their sea/river country; *Journey to the Stone Country* is haunted by the sacred site of the Jangga people; and *Dirt Music* draws upon the repercussions of exile from country and community for identity. However, whereas my analysis of country in these texts has tended to explore how it operates as a zone of cultural difference (a space through which diverse systems of dwelling are highlighted), this chapter specifically examines literary works which deploy Indigenous philosophies of country to frame the potential for *both* Indigenous and non-Indigenous well-being; the ways in which country constitutes what Rose refers to as a "nourishing terrain" (*Nourishing* 7).

Well-being is a multi-faceted term that describes emotional, physical and ethical aspects of the human condition: having a "happy" or "healthy condition" as well as an awareness of the "moral or physical welfare" of "a person or community" ("Well-being" *OED* online). As a concept which is intrinsic to notions of healing, well-being is an extremely important in long-term processes of reconciliation; specifically when dealing with effects of trauma. Like the concept of belonging, well-being is frequently evoked in social discourses that centre upon ideals of emplacement, such those pertaining to Indigenous philosophies of being in country. For example, Vicki Grieves, in her discussion paper "Aboriginal Spirituality: Aboriginal Philosophy, the Basis of Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing," claims that "Aboriginal Australians recognise that

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[47] This essay forms the Introduction for the *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature* Special Issue on 'Country' (2014).

health is a multi-dimensional concept that embraces all aspects of living" but specifically "the importance of living in harmony with the environment" (33). Well-being does not just stem from being 'in place', it is the result of living "harmoniously;" of actively caring for country. However, while the concept of well-being is (as Grieves demonstrates) inextricable from Indigenous ontologies of country, it is the concept of belonging which tends to be foregrounded in contemporary discussions of Indigenous custodianship.

Emphasising the links between the land and identity, country has become increasingly "synonymous with belonging," particularly in non-Indigenous eco-critical epistemologies (Lucashenko, "Country" 1). In her doctoral thesis, "Being and Belonging," Linn Miller suggests, for example, that "the physical and emotional well-being" associated Aboriginal connections with country, is essentially premised upon a sense of "belonging to and in the landscape" (14). The notion of belonging tends to be premised upon relational components; of identifying with a particular cultural history, group of people and place. Yet, while belonging is indeed "a state of being from which well-being is derived" (Miller, "Belonging" 218), this dissertation suggests – in light of the difficulties and controversy surrounding the concept – that it is important to acknowledge the ways in which well-being can be experienced *without* an accompanying sense of belonging (or notion of claiming), particularly within the context of reconciliation.

In Australia, as the preceding chapters have demonstrated, the concept of belonging is deeply problematic not only for Indigenous people who are still dealing with the trauma and dispossession of colonisation but also non-Indigenous people who are coming to terms with the legacy of a violent history. While belonging – especially when used to frame Indigenous connections to country – is a concept which is important and should not be overlooked, I would argue that an emphasis on the ontology of well-being might be more useful to processes of reconciliation. Unlike belonging – which tends to centre upon the question of "who truly belongs to and in Australia" ("Belonging" Miller, 215) – well-being is not exclusionary. In fact, as the above *OED* definition states, well-being is a physical and emotional state that distinctly relates to a sense of individual as well as the social welfare of others. Well-being can be shared by a community – or, in the case of the literary works analysed in this chapter, by regionally situated Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters – even when the root source of the state differs. For instance, as Miller and Scott's literary works infer, well-being is not

necessarily related to being at home. In both *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance*, non-Indigenous characters, who (unlike the Indigenous characters) are represented as profoundly out of place, are able to experience a sense of well-being during guided instances of being in country. While the well-being experienced by these characters is not informed by a deep ontological connection to the place they are in, it still has the potential to nourish and manifests in similar ways.

The holistic connection between country and well-being – as well as the Indigenous reconnection with lost/stolen cultural heritage – has been recognised as a relationship which can be drawn upon to frame processes of reconciliation. Wendy McCarthy, in her "Forward" to *Nourishing Terrains*: *Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, claims, for example, that "understanding" the "significance of Aboriginal connections with country […] is essential" to the development of "better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people" (v). *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance* each represent the significance of the land in Indigenous ways of being-in-the-world. And, in both works, the well-being of Indigenous characters is explicitly connected to their capacity to be in country. As imaginal pedagogies of reconciliation, however, these texts also examine the ways in which non-Indigenous characters' recognition of this relationship can open-up the potential for meaningful exchange. In *Landscape of Farewell*, for example, Max's sensitivity to the story of Dougald's Jangga ancestor Gnapan – who was responsible for a massacre of a family of settlers who inadvertently desecrated his people's scared land – leads to the men embarking on a journey together into the heart of Dougald's ancestral country. Similarly, in *That Deadman Dance*, Dr Cross's recognition of the special connection the Noongar peoples have with their country, in south west Western Australia, enables him to form meaningful cross-cultural relationships. Yet, although both Miller and Scott deploy country to frame the potential for cross-cultural well-being, *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance* also draw attention to the issues of using Indigenous ontologies to structure scenes of cultural bridging.

The ways in which country has the potential to provide Aboriginal Australians with a sense of well-being is presented in official reconciliation discourse as a means through which non-Indigenous peoples can experience belonging. For example, in the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's *Key Issue Paper No.4: Sharing History*, it states that:

> The reconciliation process seeks to encourage non-indigenous Australians to deepen and enrich their association with this country by identifying with the ancient Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence in Australia (28-29).

By promoting cultural appropriation, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation suggests that non-Indigenous Australians may find a way to experience a sense of belonging akin to that of Indigenous people who are able to maintain connections with their country. In these kinds of narratives, non-Indigenous people are taught that it is possible to indigenise themselves by drawing from the well-spring of Indigenous culture.[48] This idea is, of course, deeply problematic.

While, as Pal Ahluwalia and Peter Bishop claim in their "Afterward" to *Reconciliation and Pedagogy*, "it is almost impossible to disentangle Aboriginal spirituality from the Australian reconciliation process" (198), a degree of cultural separation needs to be maintained. For example, the well-being Indigenous people potentially source from being in country is a result of an "embodied" ontology; it is a state of being which occurs through the "inter-substantiation of ancestral beings, humans and the land" (Moreton-Robinson 32). This ontology, as I stated outlined in Chapter 1, reveals an incommensurable point of difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Moreton-Robinson claims that while "social relationships are important in all cultural domains […] the moral universe, which informs […] relationships in Indigenous cultural domains, is outside the experience of migrants" (34). Like belonging, the sense of well-being experienced by Indigenous people while *caring* for country is very different to the well-being non-Indigenous people may enjoy while *visiting* country (or, perhaps more specifically, enjoying time in nature). I propose, however, that the condition of well-being which can result from developing a meaningful connection with country, region or land can – unlike belonging which is ultimately premised on claiming – potentially reconfigure conceptions of community and unite Indigenous and non-Indigenous people

Community is an important term in reconciliation discourse because, as a broad term for social space, it typically encapsulates ideals pertaining to common interest,

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[48] There are, as Gunstone recognises, many examples of this cultural appropriation. For example, Gunstone reports on an instance when "a number of non-Indigenous people in Alice Springs" asserted that "they had rights to country as they had acquired some basic Indigenous knowledge" ("The Impact of Nationalism" 4).

shared history and 'coming together'. Ahmed and Fortier recognise, however, conceptions of community are not solely premised upon notions of sameness. These theorists argue that, rather than focussing upon ideas of "commonality," community benefits from being discussed as a site of "common ground," a scene of located interaction where in which people might "meet" on "virtual, real and imaginary" levels (Ahmed and Fortier 257). In *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance*, the shared sense of well-being that stems from being in country is based upon a notion of common ground rather than a sense of commonality. While, by and large, cultural differences are allowed to remain authentic and unassimilated in these narratives, country is rendered a recuperative social environment; a space of potential cross-cultural healing which resonates with other systems of being-in-the-world.

Country is not just an embodiment of ancient Indigenous cultural practises; it is ongoing and adaptable, and able to accommodate different stories and beings. Heiss suggests that by engaging with new presences and or disturbances within country "other cultural associations to particular places" become apparent ("Aboriginal Writers" 68). Flinders Island, for instance – as I discussed in the previous chapter (134) – was originally a place renowned for severing Indigenous Tasmanian's connections with country and cultural heritage in recent decades, however, it has become a symbol of survival and has been incorporated into broader conceptions of country. While Heiss is referring to the ways in which notions of being in country have had to be adapted to the situations faced by many Indigenous peoples who do not primarily dwell within the folds of their traditional land (68), her comments also reveal the potential for an ontology of country to unite seemingly disparate places and people. The following section, entitled "Country: An Earthly Home for All?," examines the modes through which country – as socially embodied philosophy of the land – has become synonymous with ideas pertaining to justice and, by extension, the notion of reconciliation. The second half of this chapter will look at the ways in which Indigenous philosophies of country, Western conceptions of dwelling and global environmentalism are conflated, first in Miller's *Landscape of Farewell* and secondly in Scott's *That Deadman Dance*, so as to create a space for cross-cultural interaction.

6.1. Country: An Earthly Home for All?

> Almost a stranger, I push back rushes.
>
> With the heel of my hand, I brush away sand
>
> (There!) and settle in the footprints of country,
>
> with my tongue between my teeth…
>
> <div align="right">-Kim Scott, "Wangelanginy" (excerpt).</div>

In Chapter 1, where the concepts of home and dwelling were explored, I discussed how the concept of country is inextricable from the notion of home for a number of Australian people (125). While country can be conceived as a domicile, it is important to recognise that being in country is quite different to the everyday sense of being in place, which is commonly constructed via processes of dwelling. In *Drylands*, Astley exemplifies the ways in which country, when conflated with Western conceptions of dwelling, can become a space which is warped; framing the (mis)conceptions of non-Indigenous people rather than the experiences of Indigenous Australians. For example, forced to move out of his property in Red Plains, Benny – an old Kanolu man – sets up a house in a cave in a national park:

> When things were finally arranged, the cave took on the quality of a macabre joke. Benny organised a cooking place just beneath the overhang of granite and stacked his skillet and bush kettle on a rough shelf made from a fence paling. At the back of the cave he set up his bunk and stacked his six books alongside the relics from a different world (187).

Rather than revealing the way in which being in country is the same as Western conceptions of being at home, the juxtaposition between the cave and trappings of domesticity is rendered strange in this text, "a macabre joke." Astley, as I mentioned in Chapter 1 (2), is renowned for resisting "easy answers," or parallels which allow for a sense of easy identification (Kossew, "Review" 2). On the one hand, presenting Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters sitting on a "Genoa velvet" couch in the "middle of scrub" with "the sound of cicadas rubbing at the sky, scrubbing the air like sandpaper" (186), *Drylands* seems to frame a potential fusion of Western homemaking practices with an immersion in country. Throughout Benny's section of the text, however, scenes such as this are undercut by an unmitigated sense of cultural and familial impoverishment, the ongoing threat of dispossession and a strong sense that houses and domesticity mean "trouble" (186).

Astley's novel demonstrates that while country can be conceived as a domicile, it is also important to recognise that Indigenous experiences of being in country can be quite different to the non-Indigenous experiences of being-in-the-world, which are commonly constructed via processes of dwelling. Whereas dwelling tends to be understood in conjunction with acts of homemaking, or building, the conception of home facilitated through being in country is haptic, deeply sensory and interconnected; based upon extensive knowledge of, and attentive communication with, a specific and sentient region. In contrast to dwelling, being in country does not entail dominion over landscape but embodies a philosophy which gives agency to non-human as well as human beings, foregrounding the ways in which subjects are entangled in larger ecosystems. As Rose explains, in the world view of Aboriginal peoples "each living thing is a participant in living systems," hence, any "celebration of life is a celebration of the interconnectedness of life in a particular place which also includes the humans who celebrate"' (*Nourishing*, 11).

In *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance*, meaningful cross-cultural relationships not only unfold in country but are also related to connections with the natural environment. Relational ontology – which emphasises the connections that exist between all beings, human and no-human – has increasingly been used to frame discourses of social justice and reconciliation. Plumwood, in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, asserts, for example, that "men and women must challenge the dualised conception of *human* identity and develop an alternative culture which fully recognises human identity as continuous with, not alien from, nature" (36; original emphasis). With its focus on inseparability between all beings, Indigenous philosophy is, unsurprisingly, called upon to help develop this alternative way of being in the world. In her tribute to Plumwood, Rose draws attention to the ways in which Aboriginal culture constitute a model of the "lived experience" of relational ontology, claiming:

> Val understood that Aboriginal Australians always live within a world that is buzzing with multitudes of sentient beings, only a very few of whom are human. She thought that a good way to start up a major cultural rethink would be to talk with people who are now living within the kinds of understandings we are seeking. She was not planning on appropriating anything: her commitment to cultural change was inextricably linked to her commitment to social justice ("Val Plumwood's Philosophical Animism" 95).

Yet while the affiliation between Indigenous conceptions of country and the late twentieth century environmental movement may seem to offer a pathway to unite people, the potential for these kinds of discourses to brush over cultural differences or gaps must be monitored. As Brad Coombes, Jay T. Johnson and Richard Howitt note in their analysis of cross-cultural collaboration, entitled "Indigenous Geographies II: The Aspirational Spaces in Postcolonial Politics – Reconciliation, Belonging and Social Provision," the "contrasting perspectives on settler notions of 'environment' and Indigenous Australians' ideas of 'Country'" must be underpinned by "a delicate and constant negotiation of language, recognition, understanding and respect" so as to be mindful of racism, appropriation or misunderstandings (694).

In recent decades a growing number of non-Indigenous Australians have begun to articulate their sense of being at home through the concept of country. Mitchell Rolls, in his examination of the history of non-Indigenous appropriation of Indigenous culture, claims that "Aboriginal religious beliefs, spirituality, and other associated features of their [Indigenous people's] cultural heritage are now commonly held to offer the restorative means to overcome the spiritual emptiness afflicting the western world" (117). In discourses that espouse these kinds of connections, what tends to be highlighted is the way in which Indigenous philosophies are linked to the natural world. The environment, specifically the ways that Indigenous cultures are perceived to recognise it, are what is focussed on – and shown to be restorative – in the 'getting back to nature' movement. This now common Australian cultural practice was first "rehearsed" by the Jindyworobak writers, who – between 1930-1940 – attempted to rearticulate Australia's national identity by connecting Indigenous and European conceptions of the natural world (Rolls 118).

Intent on reconfiguring Australia's national literature and culture by fixing it onto its Indigenous roots, the Jindyworobaks recognised the power of Indigenous relationships with the natural world. In *Jindyworobak: Towards an Australian Culture* (1944), for example, Kenneth H. Gifford, discusses the ways in which settler Australian writers can find a unique voice (a voice that is separate to England) by drawing on the "earth culture" of Aboriginal Australians:

> The Australian earth culture is a culture alive, a culture that is in all
> respects pre-eminently Australian. In embracing it there is no question
> of becoming aborigines, of eating goannas and huddling naked in
> gunyahs while the cold night-wind blows, or of catching our meal with

> spear or boomerang (sic). In embracing our earth culture we are
> embracing that which is peculiarly ours; we are letting the rugged
> Australian sunlight into our souls, and becoming for the first time truly
> Australian (16).

Throughout Gifford's text, a deep appreciation of the Australian land – specifically the ways in which it is perceived and embodied in Indigenous ontologies – is presented as a mode through which non-Indigenous Australians could become, essentially, more Australian (6, 13-17). As the above passage demonstrates, however, this appreciation often failed to extend beyond appropriation and remained embedded in stereotypical (and often racist) views of indigeneity. Rather than developing a meaningful cross-cultural dialogue – which would presumably follow processes of joining or "annexing" the best of Aboriginal and European cultural traditions as the term "Jindyworobak" implies (Gifford 6) – much writing which can be aligned with this literary movement neglects to account for Indigenous peoples ongoing and "unique metaphysical relationship with place" and the "proprietary rights arising from this relationship" (Rolls 118-119). Writing such as Gifford's reflects distinctly out-dated perspectives on Indigenous peoples – evidenced through statements such as: "today the aborigine is forgetful of all that was best in his own high culture […] he is a degenerate, fly-blown creature begging for charity on the edges of the civilisation that has ruined him" (13-14) – this charge, however, cannot be levelled at all writing which is associated with the Jindyworobak movement.

Something of the Jindyworobak ethos, for example, is present in Ross Gibson's chapter for Jennifer Rutherford and Barbara Holloway's book *Halfway House: The Poetics of Australian Spaces*, entitled "Changescapes." Gibson begins this essay on country – or more specifically, "a poetic tract of space" (17) – by sharing the story of a white man named Muller whom he once encountered in the Pilliga Scrub. Muller is a person/character who is framed by his dwelling space: a "compound" or "devotional site" which is hidden "unusually deep into the forest" (17-18). According to Gibson, the space (which was about "half the size of a cricket field") revealed a sensitivity to the ways in which "nature and culture," as well as "the sacred and the profane," could be framed, claiming:

> All the roofed structures I'd found were like emotional compression
> chambers. Their placement, their volume, their material, their contents,
> the counterpoint between the cool grey light outside; all these features

> rendered each structure into a little zone making a great emotional
> charge inside this larger compound which was already so atmospheric,
> so deliberately rarefied and intensified in comparison to the rest of the
> forest (20).

While Muller is not a First Nation Australian, the way in which he tends to the space of the compound and the surrounding land is, for Gibson, demonstrative of the means through which "country can be understood as a 'changescape'," a space that is "purposely built to intensify" the experience of inhabitants and "to enhance people's appreciation of the complex dynamics that are at play when natural, social and psychological domains commingle" (24). By specifically enabling non-Indigenous people to engage with the dynamism of country, changescapes draw upon Indigenous ontologies (such as those that recognise the land as "live" and a connection between all beings) to inspire cross-cultural recognition and a greater appreciation of the land. Like the Jindyworobak writers, Gibson is not using his idea of changescape to specifically examine intersubjectivity but to explore the ways in which forms of country can inspire aesthetic well-being and frame provisional experiences: "what we [non-Indigenous Australians] might understand once we learn how to be in country" (32).

For country to function as common ground – an earthly home for all beings – it needs to be recognised, primarily, as an eco-philosophical system of knowledge that cannot be separated from Indigenous cultural heritage, notably the stories associated with the Dreaming. The Dreaming is a cosmological paradigm which intricately informs all aspects of Aboriginal life. While the sense of belonging that is attributed to, and arises from, being in country has been constructed as an ontological position which is often, and seemingly quite easy, to appropriate, the Dreaming constitutes a complicated epistemology that is difficult to translate, let alone adopt. In *Nourishing Terrains*, Rose writes extensively of the Dreamings – the ancestral beings whose tracks "criss-crossed" the continent "performing rituals, distributing the plants, making the landforms and water, establishing things in their places, making the relationships between one place and another" – and their ongoing impact upon Indigenous ontologies (35). Without an awareness of a country's specific Dreamings, a visitor is "blind" and has "the potential to damage the country" and, by extension, its people; this why protocols of "asking" are in place (Rose, *Nourishing* 46). To illustrate this point further, Rose includes a story from April Bright about an incident where trespasser caused damage to country:

> On one occasion we discovered that people had driven out to [our] areas and lit fires, burning the cane grass. We began to hunt for turtles and located a large number. But for each one that we located and went to dig up, all we pulled out were rotting pieces of turtle. The hibernating turtles were cooked and had rotted. The burning of the cane grass caused the water temperature to become too hot. The fire was lit by Aboriginal people who did not know the country (*Nourishing*, 46).

It is, of course, impossible to read of the damage a stranger can inadvertently cause to country without considering the impact of colonisation; specifically the destructive (and opportunistic) policy of *terra nullius* which rendered Indigenous space void.

In Lucashenko's fable (which I examined in Chapter 3, 163-164) the violence of Indigenous dispossession is depicted via the arrival of a group of strangers who fail to respect, or even acknowledge, the signs of Indigenous inhabitation. In many ways, this allegorical work aims to draw attention to the audacity of non-Indigenous claims of belonging—claims that are poignantly underscored in the story by "the woman of the strangers' clan" asking the grieving and traumatised son of the dispossessed family, "'Why do you have such hard words when this is our home and we are now the people of this place and we belong here?'" when his mother's corpse lies in the corner (12). However, as Lucashenko is interested in articulating ways in which Australians can "all share country" (9), she also emphasises the importance of non-Indigenous listening, of having "ears to hear" (12). For country to become an earthly home for all a number of different protocols need to be acknowledged, non-Indigenous people must learn to ask and also to listen.

Country, as I stated earlier, can accommodate new presences and new stories, however, to become meaningful parts of a specific ecosystem (or a space of national well-being), these components must recognise – and be incorporated into – Indigenous systems of knowledge (Rose, *Nourishing*, 40). In her essay "Deep Weather," Alexis Wright, for example, discusses the vast storehouse of Indigenous knowledge that is being overlooked in Australia. Wright suggests the acknowledgement of Indigenous philosophies can be of both practical and pedagogical benefit to the nation at large:

> These stories, if understood, may give us the knowledge we need today […] Had there been treaties with the Indigenous peoples of this country, and a proper, respectful relationship between the laws and government of Australia and the laws and religious beliefs of Indigenous nations, we would have found a way to communicate with one another. We could talk about the ancient beliefs of this land in a way that tells Indigenous

people that our knowledge counts for something, that it is valuable and that everyone understands that we believe this knowledge is upheld because of the power that resides in this land. It is about accepting and giving respect to other forms of knowledge, but most importantly healing the wounds of the last two centuries so that we can all learn from the archives of stories that retain the deep knowledge of this country (79-80).

Although Wright gestures towards the positive impact the valuing of Indigenous stories and cultural practices could potentially have on the nation, she is primarily concerned with the ways in which such recognition could heal and empower Indigenous communities. The sharing of knowledge functions as a welcome to country, informing new arrivals of the lay of the land as well as the stories (and ongoing traditions) that both protect and make it. Wright claims that while certain knowledge must always remain "guarded," some philosophies "may be shared" with non-Indigenous Australians "if it is respected, honoured and upheld" (79).

The serious contemplation of Indigenous philosophy can have a regenerative effect, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The notion, however, that Australia can potentially graft a sense of meaningful national identity upon the culture of its First Nation peoples requires a reconsideration of nationalism. In her 2008 essay for the Sydney Pen entitled "Survival," Lucashenko discusses the ways in which connections with country can instil cross-cultural interaction with a sense of empathy and compassion – facilitate "human connection" – and bring back "the Good Life" (90). Country, and its potential to meaningfully ground Australia's national identity, is constructed as an ontology of hope in Lucashenko's essay; a route by which Australians can "learn to honour" their "homes" as well as "each other as *countrymen*" (93; original emphasis). By deploying the rhetoric of nationalism, Lucashenko attempts to highlight the potential for Indigenous philosophy to inspire a more meaningful conception of home. In this essay, she presents Indigenous Law as an accessible means through which Australia can reinvent itself. Furthermore, by framing her essay around stories of survival at sea, she draws attention to the ways in which Australia is not only a country that is 'lost at sea' but also revisits the analogy of everyone being stuck 'on the same boat'. However, while evoking a sense of shared humanity is important – and Lucashenko's idea that country may somehow decide for us, compelling – "Survival"

possibly risks making Indigenous philosophies of place too accessible and fails to account for unbridgeable cultural differences.

The texts analysed in the rest of this chapter, particularly those by Indigenous writers, do not make country an entirely accessible concept, instead they offer it as a zone of percipience, or pathway, which can potentially inspire a mutual source of well-being.

6.2. *Landscape of Farewell*

> To belong is something else. Belonging, home, the meaning of such things is not to be settled through argument and the presentation of evidence or even facts. Such things are enigmas and their truth is not rational but is poetic, their uncertainties not resolvable into facts and proofs.
>
> -Miller, *Landscape of Farewell* (49).

Like Behrendt's *Home*, which I briefly discussed in Chapter 2 (40-41), *Landscape of Farewell* is organised around a return to country refrain which opens up the potential for meaningful intercultural exchange. Unlike *Home*, however, Miller's text situates the 'return' from the perspective of someone who is ostensibly out-of-place, a visitor who – due to a shared sense of humanity and the bond of friendship – derives a sense of spiritual well-being from his *guided* journey through country. As the title of the novel suggests, notions of landscape – land which is marked by Western forms of cultivation – are paralleled with Indigenous conceptions of country in this text. The term "farewell" evokes both a departure as well as a sense of well-being ('fare thee well'); a potential shift in the ways in which the land, and its impact on the human condition, can be perceived.

A sequel to Miller's first Central Queensland novel *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Landscape of Farewell* explores the same themes and, as Shirley Walker notes, follows the same "overarching" pattern as its predecessor, including "the journey to the heart of darkness, the contemplation of mass slaughter in all its blood thirsty horror, and its psychological as well as practical consequences" (159). However, whereas the "heart of darkness" evoked via Panya's horrific revelations in *Journey to the Stone Country* creates an intensely corporeal space – a zone where the trauma of colonial violence is still physically palpable – the dark core of *Landscape of Farewell* belongs more to the metaphysical, or imaginary, realm. Brigid Rooney suggests, for example, that Miller's

sequel "renders disparate landscapes of farewell as simultaneous" by interweaving "the near and the far, past and present, physical and metaphysical" (210). This section argues that the catalyst for the collapse of these key binaries – most notably that of the physical and metaphysical worlds – is triggered by the characters' journey to country.

Being in country is, for the visiting German professor Max Otto and Jangga elder Dougald Gnapun, an act of "becoming" which leads to a (renewed) sense of belonging and more authentic future dwelling. For example, during his time visiting Dougald's country, Max has an epiphany which enables him to reconcile the spaces of silence and trauma in his own life and realise that rather than being displaced – or never fully at home – he is, in fact, "as much at home" in the bush with Dougauld and the remains of Gnapun "as with anyone" (304). Similarly, Dougald after paying tribute to Gnapun – whose bones have been carefully concealed in a dark recess deep in the escarpment of the Expedition Range – is able to die with a clear conscience, knowing that he has attended to his country. This ability to say goodbye to life (or farewell) is explicitly related to the sense of well-being Dougald experiences from being in his homeland and making contact with his ancestors (316). In *Landscape of Farewell*, well-being and/or belonging is intimately related to the characters' ability to not only recognise but also merge sites of "chora" into their everyday experiences of dwelling and, as Rooney suggests, "develop a stance of openness towards the other" (214).[49]

There are many different interpretations of "chora," I am particularly interested, however, in spatial readings of the concept and the ways in which these conceptions intersect with different spatial ontologies. Based upon his reading of Plato's *Timaeus*, Craig San Roque states that chora functions as a "receptacle […] of becoming," an in-between and imaginary space which "we look at […] in a kind of dream" and envision as "a moving shadow of something else" (3). Following this definition, chora can, therefore, be described as "the space which must exist and be held in place [in] order for things to come into being" (San Roque 3). McMahon, in her analysis of Miller's work, calls metaphysical or choric sites "spaces of the beyond" and describes them as zones which take both the characters and readers "beyond the pale of charted ground into the

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[49] In her introduction to *Halfway House,* "*Kairos* for a Wounded Country," Jennifer Rutherford applies the "ancient concept" of *Kairos* to reading practices which rupture conceptions of time and space and result in a "capacity to see clearly and judge well in the greater complexity of both knowledge and the world" (9). The sense of rupture associated with Kairos is also linked with situations of chora, and the propensity for new affiliations to be formed.

domain of territory yet to be negotiated, where terms are not fixed" ("Continental Heartlands" 132). Throughout *Landscape of Farewell*, both Dougald and Max attempt to reconcile choric space with their everyday dwelling processes. Unlike Dougald who is eager to bring the ancestral ghosts (and remains) of the historical/choric realm to light (via the recounting of his great-great grandfather's role in the Cullin-La-Ringo massacre in 1861),[50] Max initially struggles against entering the void of silence to which his unresolved trauma pertaining to his father's actions as a German soldier during WWII has been relegated.

In *Dingo Makes us Human*, Rose claims that Indigenous Australians are "survivors of the Great Australian holocaust known as colonisation" (2). Foregrounding notions of witness, trauma, survival and catharsis, the Holocaust – specifically Holocaust literature/studies – have become the "touchstone" in Australian debates around the representation of the trauma of colonisation (Ravenscroft, *The Postcolonial Eye* 8). Despite its interest in the ongoing effects of the "Great Australian Silence," however, the way in which the unspoken trauma of Australian colonisation continues to manifest in *Landscape of Farewell* creates a different kind of "survivor" narrative by complicating binaries notions of victim and perpetrator. According to Gaita, Miller's "great achievement" in *Landscape of Farewell* is:

> [...] to have brought together in one book a dramatic, fictional meditation on an Aboriginal massacre of whites and aspects of the Holocaust, each illuminating the other, without doing anything that could properly be called comparing them, or weighing the gravity of one against the other ("Trusting the Words" 29).

The text, as a whole, can be read as a meditation upon the nature of massacre, with its launching point stemming from Max's thwarted swan-song; his banal conference paper entitled "The Persistence of the Phenomenon of Massacre in Human Society from the Earliest Times to the Present." At the conference in Germany, Max claims that "he wished for no more than to be permitted to read my paper and then to slip away quietly, to leave unnoticed and unremarked" (13), this wish for clarity, however, is disallowed. Whilst the subject of massacre is one that has "obsessed" Max since "his youth," it is not a topic he has ever been able to make any "headway" with due to his "emotional inhibitions" and "paralysing sense of guilt-by-association" (14). Rather than being

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[50] The Cullin-la-Ringo massacre is commonly described as "the largest recorded massacre of Europeans by Aborigines" ("Journey into the Heart of Massacre" par. 1).

allowed to leave the lectern and go home to commit suicide, as Max has planned, one member of the audience refuses to be complicit in this performance of academic mediocrity and challenges not only Max's "shoddy paper" but also his emotionally distant examination of extreme violence (16). After shredding Max's apparently flimsy argument, Dr Vita McLelland – an Aboriginal academic from the University of Sydney who is based upon Anita Heiss (Dixon, *Alex Miller* 96) – finishes her criticism of his paper by asking the audience how Max can "presume to speak of massacre [...] and not speak of my people?'" (17). Whilst Vita's question is not entirely helpful, it forces Max to reconsider his plan of suicide and confront the demons of his past; and, in doing so, interrupt the complicit silences that follow in the wake of unacknowledged violence.

Vita acts as a catalyst in Max's quest towards self-knowledge and cultural authenticity; a character who enables Max's quest. Back at Max's apartment, for example, she asks him directly about the role his father played during the war prompting him to not only reconsider but also to communicate the impact the space of silence has had upon his ability to dwell. Confiding in Vita, Max discusses his childhood and the impact of silence:

> When he was home with us again after the war [...] I watched my father reading the newspaper by the fireside and I often imagined myself asking him Dad, what did you really do in the war? But I could never say it out loud. In this little play of mine, my father responded to my question without the least sign of tension. Why, my son, I was the captain of a company of infantrymen. They were fine soldiers, a loyal company; and we behaved as good men do even in the terrible circumstances of war. After this reassurance, in my little play, we all breathed freely. That was what I wanted. To breathe freely. That is all. To know that our lives were built on something morally sound and decent and that the touch of a single question would not drop me and my entire family into the void. But it was an impossible dream. I knew, we all knew, that we had forfeited our right to such a dream. That perhaps we had forfeited it forever (53-54; original emphasis).

In *Landscape of Farewell*, simple acts associated with everyday dwelling – acts of comfort such as reading the newspaper by the fire or doing homework at the kitchen table – are rendered *unheimlich* due to the space of silence enveloping them. For Max and his family, dwelling is a complicit performance they each enact not just to maintain an illusion of domestic harmony, but so that they can continue to be.

"When facts about the Holocaust became known," states Gaita, "many people, especially outside Germany, demanded indignantly that German children interrogate

their parents about what they did or failed to do" during the war ("Trusting Words" 229). These demands, however, failed to account for just "how terrible the answer might be" and the moral impact of such revelations (Gaita, "Trusting Words" 229). While Max refrains from directly asking his father about his role in the war, let alone the Holocaust, he has reason to doubt him. Towards the end of the war, Max is sent to stay with his uncle who lives and works on the family farm in rural Germany. It is here that the seeds of doubt are sown about Max's father's actions; and the dark space of silence where Max represses his questions begins to collide with his sense of reality. In one of his manic moments, Max's uncle insinuates to Max that his father is not "at the front, but is engaged in secret work" (117). Although Max is uncertain whether his uncle's accusation is based upon truth or spite, his insinuation reinforces the doubled image Max holds of his father: the honourable soldier and the "dimly seen figure engaged upon unspeakable acts in a place where the light fails to penetrate" (118).

Max's anxieties about his father manifest in his vision of another violent world existing between the walls of the house:

> There was a hole in the wall beside my bed in my room under the roof of my uncle's farmhouse. Within this hole I knew there to be another dark place in which violence and human torment were entombed in silence. That it was not a real place but was a place entirely of my own imagination did not weaken its effect upon me, but intensified it (120).

Max's imagining of this interstitial world is a symbol of his repressed knowledge; a result of his inability to communicate his anxiety and the ways in which unspoken trauma has become imbricated into the family's spaces of dwelling as well as the wider German nation. This "country" in the wall cavity – "where thousands of creatures, half human, half-beast engaged in a silent, bloody and desperate struggle to the death" – is a solitary space which Max feels he is unable to share (120). When he attempts to discuss his uncle's accusation with his mother, for instance, her obvious "distress" inhibits him from delving deeper (118). Despite being described as a tomb, this space of chora is not closed off from life; it collides with spaces beyond the cavity. Each night, Max forces himself to look in the hole and feel the "faint draught, chill and damp, breathed upon" his eyeball (121). These nightly examinations, however, do not help Max come to terms with the grey area – the space between good and evil – that his father's wartime actions arouse. Instead, they just confirm the sense that although he is just a boy Max must battle his demons by himself. Gaita states that although Max is "troubled" by the fact

that he "belongs" to the "generation of Germans" whose identity is defined by the trauma of the second World War, "he speaks […] only for himself" and remains "individuated" throughout the narrative ("Trusting Words" 228). However, whilst Max refrains from speaking for his generation, this study argues that Miller's text promotes a collective approach to dealing with trauma, one that positions the individual as part of a global community.

Max's meeting with Vita in Hamburg triggers a number of other journeys and connections in the text. Upon Vita's advice, for instance, Max travels to Australia and ends up staying with Dougald, who is her uncle. Whilst Max instantly parallels Dougald's home space with his memories of exile at his uncle's place, claiming that "he had no felt so abandoned to strangeness since the day my mother left me at my uncle's farm" (79), he realises that despite the rusting farm equipment and the unfamiliar air of solitary abandon, this landscape is a terrain of well-being. Firstly, the sense of strangeness Max experiences when he first arrives at Dougald's Mount Nebo property is tempered when he discovers the care and consideration that has gone into the making of his bed: "the sheets were freshly laundered and the blanket smelled pleasantly of wool" (81).[51] Furthermore, he feels an innate sense of kinship with Dougald (who is also the grieving the loss of his wife) and recognises that, like him, he inhabits "a deep and private silence" (77). Whilst Dougald's old farm inspires memories of other, less hospitable spaces, it is – in essence – a site of comfort and friendship for Max and thereby functions as a safe space in which to explore the dark interstices of the human heart and the nature of belonging.

The various "heartlands" depicted in *Landscape of Farewell* each have their own pulse or rhythm. Max's uncle's isolated farm, for example, runs to the beat of the tractor tilling the land "the tremendous thud of its powerful pump vibrating the fabric of the house" and "sounding" in Max's "own heart images of a distant enchanted reality" (35). Dougald's fibro-cement house is also personified by a distant throbbing, the sound of the mine which ruined the town and pillages the surrounding land (81). This familiar beat lulls Max into a false sense of knowingness which lead him to make a number of misinterpretations and mistakes. For example, whilst staying at Mount Nebo Max reiteratively recalls his uncle's love/hate relationship with the land. However, while

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[51] Mount Nebo originally referred to the mountain upon which the prophet Moses died in view of the 'Promised Land'.

Landscape of Farewell seems to suggest that "a deep and spiritual connection with the land can exist across all racial divisions" (Walker 167), it also shows the vastly different ways in which this sense of connection is expressed. Whereas Max's uncle's relationship with the land is one of "bondage" – in that he is tied to the soil "with longing and with loathing, tormented by his solitary enslavement to it, and exulting in its power to hold him" (114) – Dougald has a "deep attachment" to his country which is based "upon an ancestral knowing grappled into the roots of his being" (102). Living at Mount Nebo, however, Dougald is (like Max) actually in exile.

Following the tragic death of the nanny goat, Dougald confides in Max, and informs him that the property at Mount Nebo is not actually part of his ancestral country (134). For Max, this confession (coupled with the death of the goat for which he is responsible) alters the way in which he views the property and its surrounds:

> The enormous silence of the landscape was suddenly close and oppressive, the unrelieved solitude of the forlorn township in the ocean of scrub, the abandoned machines rusting into the ground, the mean little fibro house; suddenly it was not a haven but a scene of desolation and failure (135).

Yet whilst Max is deeply troubled by his misapprehension, Dougald is inspired by it and uses the incident as motivation to reconnect with his true heart/homeland. Opening up, Dougald entrusts Max with the story of his ancestor, Gnapun the warrior. Dougald's connection to his country is based upon both his personal and ancestral narratives; stories which he has not, until that evening with Max, previously shared. This act of intercultural communication and friendship – suggestively conceptualised by Max in term of a "great wave" (139) – creates an imaginal space of exchange that enables both men to begin the cathartic process of bringing the dark spaces they hold inside to light.

The journey to Dougald's country is, for the most part, framed from Max's perspective and positioned as a quest. Max initially believes that Dougald needs him to be his companion, during his return to country, "in order to bear witness to his truth" (275). He quickly recognises, however, that, as a white urban dweller, it is impossible to actually comprehend the "restoration of wellbeing" Dougald knows when he is welcomed to country by Wylah's cry (275). Despite the inherently partial nature of his experience, Max acknowledges early in the journey that, after this, he is "never going to be quite me again" (284). What he eventually bears witness to – and the changes which occur in him – are not, however, what he expects. The journey is physically difficult and

emotionally arduous for Max, who had not "foreseen quite how daunting and alien [...] the bush could be" (282). Whereas Dougald seems to "merge" with the landscape, becoming part of its "shadows," Max struggles to stay positive; especially when it seems that the "way forward" is "barred" by "grey stone" (279). Miller does not presume to delve too deeply into how this return to country is for Dougald, aside from acknowledging that this it constitutes a "pilgrimage [...] to the spiritual centre of his life" (286). For Max, on the other hand, who is aligned with settler Australians, Miller emphasises the way in which the journey cannot have the same impact because the notion of visiting a spiritual centre "has no meaning" for people like him (286).

As Max becomes more and more disorientated, he begins to project his own sense of "bewilderment" onto his guide who, bearing "the appearance of a man who was lost [...] in the heart of his own country" (291), wanders off into the escarpment. Left alone to contemplate his fate, Max considers that he may have to take charge of the situation. Despite his concerns, however, Max realises that he would rather be here and a comfort to Dougald than anywhere else:

> It was with a feeling of relief about myself then that I realised, without needing to debate the matter, that I was not going to abandon him but was going to stick by him, and that if it came to it I would prefer to perish with him there on Gnapun's mountain than make the attempt to save myself (295)

Yet whilst it is this sense of brotherly love that compels him to press forward and search for Dougald, in the end it is the suspicion that Dougald may have forgotten him that compels Max to journey, alone, into this foreign landscape and face his demons.

Being in country encourages Max to confront his repression; to look inside at the dark spaces which have haunted him his whole life and face the unknowable. This cathartic act, however, is not just a result of his immersion in nature. Being in country is an intensely interactive experience which not only connects people with place but also aligns them with each other. After the atrocities of the Second World War, Max claims: "A capacity for deep silence was revealed within each of us, like a cavern we had not known to exist before" (263). The solitariness of these "caverns," however, is symbolically unsettled in the end of *Landscape of Farewell* by a joint act of looking in.

Dougald eventually returns to Max, renewed with vigour and ready to take him on the final leg of the journey, to the resting place of his ancestor. Rather than tentatively placing one eyeball to a small hole and peeking in as he did in the dark

spaces which haunted is childhood, Max and Dougald gaze into the tomb where Gnapun's remains are housed together, head on:

> When we had removed three courses of stones down to a level with our chests he reached his arm around my shoulder and drew me towards him and we leaned together and looked into the cavity. It was a rock shelter rather than a cave. The low ceiling sloped down and met the floor no more than three metres from the entrance. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the shadowed interior. The skull was the first thing I saw (307-308).

While looking at Gnapun's remains, Dougald offers a postscript to the story Max wrote for him, telling how the sons of the "Strangers" who had been killed in the massacre accepted what had happened, and the "Messenger's people" and the "Strangers" were able to live and work together (308). Although this benign ending offered by Dougald seems a little too neat (and possibly reductive), the way in which the two men learn to confront (and in Dougald's case commemorate) the past forms a persuasive pedagogical template for reconciliation.

For Max and Dougald, the potential for well-being is enhanced by sharing choric space; by looking in and bringing light, sound and story to the dark in-between spaces of silence. McMahon suggests that in *Landscape of Farewell*:

> [...] the wanderer is only truly located when they enter into the centre of another, which is figured as being within a continental diversity. Crucial to this transformation is the leap from the abstraction of metaphor into the grounded realities of history and culture—and back again ("Continental Heartlands" 125).

By looking into Gnapun's cave, Max and Dougald break down the barriers between the physical and metaphysical worlds and begin the process of sensitively merging the past with the present; creating a space for meaningful cross-cultural exchange. However, while sharing country brings these men together and enables a working through of grief, these final scenes remain subtly attuned to unknowability. Ravenscroft suggests that "some writing [...] endeavours to make a space for the enigmatic, not to reveal its content or size, not to give it measure, but to give it space where it can remain what it is – unknowable, unspeakable, invisible" (*The Postcolonial Eye* 18). *Landscape of Farewell* concludes by reinforcing the idea that a sense of meaningful coherence can come from partial knowledge, with Max enigmatically claiming: "But there, it is all fragments, and in the midst of it we may know this sense of completion" (318).

6.3. *That Deadman Dance*

Scott's *That Deadman Dance*, like all the texts analysed throughout this dissertation, foregrounds conceptions of place and space, and the impact that they have on cultural/social identity. In her essay "Capitalism Versus the Agency of Place: An Ecocritical Reading of *That Deadman Dance* and *Carpentaria*," Jane Gleeson White claims that two of the key elements in Scott's novel are its "powerful evocation of place and the natural world" and "its unexpected hopefulness and relevance for contemporary debates on indigenous-settler relations (4). *That Deadman Dance* is a text that makes room for numerous, and often fragmented voices and perspectives. Amidst the cacophony of early contact, however, country – the ancestral home of the Noongar people of Western Australia's south east coast – remains constant: informing, underpinning and inspiring cross-cultural connections as well as emphasising different ways of being in the world. Like Miller's *Landscape of Farewell*, *That Deadman Dance* highlights the divergent sources of well-being that can broadly be associated with being in country, as well as the disparate means through which belonging is cultivated. Unlike *Landscape of Farewell*, Scott's novel is a historical narrative written entirely from the perspective of Indigenous protagonists, principally Bobby Wabalanginy, a character whose name means "all of us playing together" (36). Furthermore, while Miller's novel finds a way, in the end, to move towards reconciliation, Scott's text ultimately reveals the importance of reconnecting at a regional level before attempting to reconcile at a national one.

In the "Author's Note" at the end of the *That Deadman Dance*, Scott states that while the novel "is inspired by history," it is specifically concerned with the ways in which Noongar people initiated and approached early conciliation efforts with the migrants:

> I wanted to build a story from their confidence, their inclusiveness and sense of play, and their readiness to appropriate new cultural forms— language and songs, guns and boats—as soon as they became available. Believing themselves to be manifestations of a spirit of place impossible to conquer, they appreciated reciprocity and the nuances of cross-cultural exchange (352).

Scott's approach 'writes back' to the stories of settlement/invasion that have proliferated in recent decades; stories which have, by and large, sought to either espouse a pioneer ethic or expose settler culpability in frontier violence. By focussing on

a brief period of conciliation on what has come to be known as the "friendly frontier,"[52] Scott's novel has been popularly regarded as a text which is somehow moving beyond reconciliation. For example, following its Miles Franklin Award win, *That Deadman Dance* has been widely described as "a post-reconciliation novel" (Steger par. 4; Jones "Post Reconciliation" par. 3).[53] The idea that *That Deadman Dance* has somehow managed to move beyond the goals and set-backs of the reconciliation movement is echoed in the comments made by Debra Adelaide. In her interview with Megan Clements, Adelaide describes *That Deadman Dance* as a "post-sorry, post-guilt novel" due to the ways in which she sees Scott to have "just stepped over" the trauma of the past "and reached forward to some place in the future and seen beyond the bitterness" (par. 10). Scott, however, has purportedly "baulked" at these kinds of descriptions of his novel (Steger par. 4).

In the interviews following his second Miles Franklin Award win, Scott emphasises the ways in which his text points to the *ongoing* work which needs to continue towards reconciliation. For example, he claims that literature can alleviate the "bland" "policy managerial speak" associated with reconciliation discourse and enable people "to feel and to resonate with what it's about" (cited in Jones, "Post reconciliation" par. 4). *That Deadman Dance* is a narrative which reflects Scott's desire to centralise region and facilitate processes of Indigenous reconnection with lost aspects of cultural heritage. The folds of Scott's Noongar country – specifically, the sea, sky and land around Albany – not only sets the scene in this narrative, but also plays an influential part in the performance of intercultural interaction. A reconnection with region, however, does not obliterate the national frame. As the epigraph used to frame this chapter – as well as my discussion of *Kayang and Me* in Chapter 2 (48) – suggests, reconnecting with region (specifically the cultural heritage and narratives which inform and create it) is a starting point for national projects of reconciliation. In his interview with Anne Brewster, Scott states that:

> This is an Aboriginal nation, you know; it's black country, the continent.
> Some people are starting to think about: can we graft a contemporary
> Australian community onto its Indigenous roots? Possibly. I'm not

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[52] The 'friendly frontier' is a term which is widely used to describe scenes of "cross-racial relationality" between British migrants and the Noongar people in Western Australia's Albany region (Brewster, "Whiteness and Indigenous Sovereignty" 60).

[53] Note that the post reconciliation label given to *That Deadman Dance* has not been included in the "Judges' formal comments" section on the homepage of the *Miles Franklin Award* website and can only be found through reportage in articles such as Steger and Jones's.

saying we can. Possibly. But if you want to do that it would have to be in the regional way. Can you anchor a shimmering nation state via those regional roots? It's a possibility ("Can You Anchor"243).

That Deadman Dance is, first and foremost, a Noongar text. It is underpinned by the ontological relationship enjoyed between the Noongar people and their country. "The strong spirit of place" imbued in the text is, according to Scott, a potentially "powerful thing that you can fit a lot of other stuff into," such as, presumably, space for healing and future sharing ("Can You Anchor" 243).

Just as Wright's *Carpentaria* is permeated by the creational story and ongoing presence of the Rainbow Serpent, Scott's narrative is infused by the powerful story of the whale, *Mamang*, a significant being in Noongar Dreaming as well as Christian Bible stories.[54] In the opening section of *That Deadman Dance*, Bobby recounts the ancestral narrative he carries with him "wrapped around the memory of a fiery, pulsing whale heart:"

> On a sunny day, walking along a long arm of rock beside a calm ocean, you see the water suddenly bulging as a great bubble comes to the surface and oh! water streams from barnacled flesh and there is the vast back of a whale. You are enclosed in moist whale breath [...] Always curious, always brave, you take one step and the whale is underfoot. Two steps more and you are sliding, sliding deep into a dark and breathing cave that resonates with whale song (2).

Bobby does not finish telling the story – as he is interrupted by Geordie Chaine, the settler character for whom he is watching the water for whales – it is, however, returned to regularly throughout the narrative; framing methods of human/animal embodiment, journey and the potential for cross-cultural exchange.

While this story of embodiment is principally used to draw attention to the strength and adaptability of the Noongar characters, it is also deployed to juxtapose different ontologies and the ways in which they are accommodated. Before telling the story of his totem, Bobby acknowledges the similarity the story bears to the biblical tale

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[54] *Mamang* is the story of a Noongar man who enters a whale and travels around the ocean inside it, controlling the whale's movements by "stabbing" and "squeezing" its heart. Watching the ocean from "within the whale," the Noongar man finally arrives on a distant shore, where he forms a relationship with the local people there. After marrying and having children he returns with his family to his old home, where he is celebrated as a hero. Scott and a community of Noongar Elders have reproduced the story as part of the Wirlomin language regeneration project. An audio version of this story (read first in Noongar and then English) is available at: http://www.wirlomin.com.au/videos/mamang-noongar.mp3

of Jonah (1-2).[55] But, alongside this recognition, he is quick to point out that the Noongar version of this tale is not based upon retribution or fear (2). Although *That Deadman Dance* is firmly embedded in Noongar country and cultural heritage, these two stories of whale Dreaming/dwelling hang in tandem throughout the text; drawing attention to different ontological positions and perspectives. In contrast with Jonah's fear, the comfortable way in which the Noongar man inhabits the whale forms a broader allegory about the varying modes through which the Noongars and settlers make themselves at home in the world. Fish and fishing have served as symbols for potential reconciliation in many of the texts analysed in this study. Although whales are not technically fish, as sentient creatures of the sea they are shown in Scott's text to embody another way of thinking as well as the potential for change.

Throughout the text the sense of well-being the Noongar characters experience while in country is repeatedly, and ambivalently, juxtaposed with the dynamics of Western home spaces and systems of dwelling. Setting the scene early in the novel, for example, the well-being felt by Bobby's kinsman, Menak, is contrasted with the stifling atmosphere of the new dwellings appearing on the bay, the place the settlers have begun to call King George Town:

> At Menak's back the granite boulder was warm with the morning sun. Comfortable he thought of the close air of the buildings further down the slope, and how their roofs were made of timber from the whispering trees around, and their walls were a mix of twigs and the same white clay with which his people decorated themselves (12).

While this comparison is subtly negative – the "close air" of these buildings is, for instance, associated with the disease which is spreading throughout the settlement and region (13, 24, 25,) – it is also one which is open to negotiation. Despite his reservations, Menak incorporates the new dwellings into his own ontology; recognising them part of the "whispering trees around." As hybrid spaces which both embody and interrupt the potential for country to be a source of cross-cultural well-being, houses function as important counterpoints in Scott's text, marking shifts in intercultural relations.

The seemingly friendly rapport that exists between the migrants and Noongars at the start of *That Deadman Dance* initially hinges upon the character of Dr Cross; an

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[55] The Biblical story of Jonah – a prophet who is swallowed by a whale after disobeying the word of God – is generally deployed as a parable about the different (and potentially frightening) ways in which God works and to frame the importance of obeying.

enlightened British military surgeon who forms a friendship with Bobby's uncle, Wunyeran. Cross's close relationship with the Noongar people is depicted via the spaces they share. Unlike the other dwellings in town, Dr Cross's house, for example, is a space that seems specifically designed for cross-cultural exchange, constructed using Noongar techniques and boasting a wide and generous hearth for his regular visitors to enjoy:

> Without embarrassment, Cross explained the hut's construction: layers of white clay worked into dry twigs of wattle shrub formed the walls, while the roof was made of slats of local timber. They had used bark initially, he said, but she-oak—*casuarina*, in an aside—was more permanent and quite attractive. Chaine agreed it had a humble charm; the roof had weathered grey on the outside, but inside remained a warm, honey colour.
> This fire place, said Cross from the hearth, was built from bricks manufactured on site and local granite. My friends among the natives sleep here, he said, hands opening and indicating the hearth and adjoining floor almost as if he were scattering petals (35; original emphasis).

Through his friendships with the Noongar community, Cross tries to encourage his fellow settlers to become more accommodating (36). However, while it may seem that Cross is paving the way for potentially meaningful cross-cultural exchange in the fledgling settlement, he is in fact trying to smooth what he sees as the inevitable path of settler expansion. When he visits the Cygnet River colony, for example, Cross displays Wooral, Menak and Bobby as curiosities, figures to advertise the friendly status of his settlement to prospective buyers:

> In the afternoon, Dr Cross and his friends took them to a piano in one of the huts, and the music rose and fell over them like a waterfall […] As is only right, Menak and Wooral sang and danced in turn […] Bobby explained a little of what the dances were about and sang some songs Cross had taught him. Their audience afterwards agreed they had found it very entertaining […] a tribute to the good relationships at King George Town […] Dr Cross's words passed among the crowd: there is land available at King George Town. Good land at King George Town (24).

This scene resonates throughout the narrative. Bobby, who is just a boy, does not understand that he and his people are being treated as commodities by Cross. The duplicitous way in which Cross exploits his good relationship with the Noongars has tragic consequences at the end of the text, when Bobby tries to reinvoke this scene of supposed good will.

Like Menak, who seeks to accommodate the houses built by the settlers into his own epistemological framework, Dr Cross parallels the ways in which the Noongar people are at home in their country with Western trappings of domesticity. However, whereas Menak's generosity is that of a host who is making room for presumptuous guests, Cross's parallels are those of a 'gauche intruder'. In his review of *That Deadman Dance*, Richard Carr suggests that the character of Dr Cross is not "fleshed out" but is, instead, merely a "symbol" of benevolence (212). The way in which Cross behaves while being guided through Wunyernan's country, for example, reveals the extent to which he views the land as a resource that he can ultimately possess; irrespective of the obvious ways in which it is already clearly defined and owned. At a tranquil camp in a clearing by a river, Cross insults Wunyeran's family – who have treated him as a guest in their home – by becoming intoxicated and setting fire to two trees:

> The rushes caught quickly, and two feasting men were held in a red, flickering glow. Like chandeliers, thought Cross, chandeliers held up for us. Like a grand dining room. He was staggering, not dancing. Wunyeran stepped backwards. He heard angry shouts from the other campfire. Wunyeran slipped away. The trees moved in the flickering light of the fire, moved around Cross in a small shifting group. Approached, retreated (98).

While through this act Cross latently recognises the way in which country constitutes home for the Noongars, his giddy parallel between their conception of country and the trappings of a manor house does not, by extension, constitute a recognition of sovereignty. Like William Thornhill from Grenville's *The Secret River* – who is always imagining the presences of manor houses and believes that "a person was entitled to draw any picture they fancied on the blank slate" of settlement (319) – Cross is projecting his own ontology onto Noongar country; revealing his need to transform what he perceives to be a wilderness into a domestic landscape. Cross's burning of the trees is the act of a stranger, someone who does not know (or care) about the protocols of country. While Wunyeran smooths over his guest's numerous *faux pas*, and, later, tries to accommodate them by turning his errors into a story to be shared (101), Cross's lack of respect for the cultural practices of his hosts draws attention to his innate ethnocentrism.

Although Cross has genuine affection for his friends in the Noongar community – he requests, for example, to be buried alongside Wunyeran when he dies (57) – and

experiences a sense of well-being when visiting country (100), he is ultimately unable to dispense with his desire to possess and, therefore, dispossess. In her comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous modes of belonging, Moreton-Robinson states that:

> In the Australian context, the sense of belonging, home and place enjoyed by the non-Indigenous subject – colonizer/migrant – is based on the dispossession of the original owners of the land […] It is a sense of belonging derived from ownership as understood within the logic of capital […] (23)

Cross, although inevitably a product of his Western value systems, tempers his desire for possession by regularly reminding himself that the land is not his to just take. Copying from Cross's journal, for example, Bobby writes a list comprising a series of statements, each of which functions as an acknowledgement and confession:

> Bobby could soon make out words even in Cross's journal, but put them differently in his own hand. From trying to write in his own language he used phonics.
> *A most intelajint kuriositee.*
> *We haf taked ther land.*
> *Deseez and depredashen make them few.*
> Not then quite fully understanding the meaning of the words he wrote (140; original emphasis).

Penned by Bobby's innocent hand, this transcription is chilling. We do not know Cross's tone here, whether he recorded these comments in lament or in celebration of the 'advancement' of the settlement.

While Cross remains the primary settler symbol of cross-cultural exchange in the text, the Chaine family also emerge as important figures in early conciliation efforts. Unlike Cross, who is keen to keep peace with the natives, Chaine's interaction is more explicitly motivated by personal gain. Initially, however, by paralleling the perspectives of Bobby and the Chaine family, country is framed as a source of settler, as well as Noongar, well-being. The period during which Bobby lives with the Chaine family is represented ambivalently in the text. On the one hand, this brief time is one of beauty and signifies the potential for a meaningful new – and distinctly intersubjective – way of being to emerge. Together, Bobby, Mrs Chaine and the twins, Christine and Christopher, experience happiness by sharing a love of the arts. Through the instruction and example of Mrs Chaine, Bobby, for instance, learns to play the piano. This act of exchange, travels beyond the confines of the house and moves out "through the window" and into the

wider world, until it is intermingling with "the trembling light" which lies "over the harbour" (179). Painting also becomes an act of cross-cultural communication as Mrs Chaine and the children strive to represent the beauty of the natural world:

> They made washes of grey-blue skies, clouds billowed on the paper, clouds that had bellies heavy with rain. And when Bobby made a solid stem, a dark cloud joining ground to sky, and explained it in his own mother tongue, they worked out that the English words for it would be *a leg of rain* (179; original emphasis).

Bobby incorporates and welcomes the cultural practices of the outsiders into his own representational framework; in this instance, rendering a romanticised water colour picture of country. While a shared love of the arts is shown to have the potential to create an affective intersubjective dialogue, the gentle idealism of these instances are unsettled in the text by the presence of Geordie Chaine.

Whereas Cross's desire to possess is positioned more furtively in the text – mainly through his reluctant acceptance of the wheel of colonisation – Chaine's perspective is often quite literally framed by the products of his ambition, such as the 'developed' architectures of his dwelling spaces. Watching the movements of the children from the precincts of his house, for example, Chaine is shown to be only partially aware of what is occurring on the periphery; in the space of difference beyond his possessive gaze:

> Now, from inside the house, Geordie Chaine saw movement at the edge of his vision. Three children, Christine, Christopher and black Bobby leaping in the flaws of his window glass, bent and sliding down toward the river over the other side of a patch of open, grassy ground. Damp ground, good soil [...] (180).

While he is aware that the children are interacting he chooses to ignore the significance of their exchange – particularly the growing friendship between Bobby and Christine – and how it establishes a potentially meaningful counter narrative. Instead, Chaine fixates on what he owns and what he believes may trouble his 'progressive' pioneer vision of settlement; the obvious weakness of his son Christopher who is the heir to the Chaine family's growing empire (180). Emphasising multiple perspectives, however, this scene then cuts back to the children, with Bobby looking back at the "blank windows at the house" (180). Bobby's confidence in his abilities means that he is only ever half aware of the danger settler ethnocentrisms pose to the well-being of his people. Yet,

even from this early age, Bobby has trouble reading the space of the house. While the Chaine's dwelling is a terrain of home for Bobby, it is also a space which is unreadable, or symbolically blank.

Within the vicinity of the homestead, Bobby attempts to incorporate stories of the fledgling settlement into his own ontological narrative:

> I come back from the islands out there, Bobby told his friends, pointing. I come back and I speared him in the leg! I rode a boat with a gun in my hand. I stood on the old men's shoulders and waved down at the soldiers!
> Bobby told them stories, sometimes nearly the same ones Papa told them. Nearly, but different (180)

However, once away from the fenced garden – in the safety of the reeds, where "the trees were women leaning to the water to wash their hair, and when the children stood under their limbs they were among loved ones" (181) – Bobby reveals different things: how he can warble along with magpies, techniques for catching fish, where to find different shades of ochre and how to read animal footprints (183). While Christopher is reluctant to engage in these activities – and, instead, ponders his father's plans to use this land to "fatten sheep and cattle" – these exchanges immerse Bobby and Christine in an intense zone of well-being, "held high in strong limbs and dappled leaf light" with "whispering all around them" (183). These moments of intimate exchange instil a sense of common ground; a recognition that a shared love of place could potentially nourish both settlers and Noongars alike.

As in Jones's *Sorry*, the potential for meaningful cross-cultural exchange between children is unsettled via the desire for possession in *That Deadman Dance*. The scene of Noongar sharing, where Bobby and Christine are enveloped in a shared appreciation of the natural world, is exploited at the end of the text. The now adult Bobby – who, with Menak and Wooral, has begun to fight the settlers for the right to access the land for food – is lured out of hiding when Chaine arranges a meeting by the river; using his daughter as bait:

> Christine, cushioned by the cloth of her dress, was sunning herself on the warm granite beside a pool thick with green reeds. A fallen tree left by some past flood stretched its limbs towards her so smooth and white and tiny-dimpled. Her mother was close by, reading. A small bird splashed at the side of the pool, tail held high and dancing. Christine turned her head, and her unseeing face floated to Bobby through a sparse cross-hatching of saplings, leaves and spider web (338).

While Bobby's relationship with Christine has irrevocably changed by this point in the text – and the beauty of the natural world the children once occupied has become tainted by Christopher's drowning – this scene by the pool harks back to a time of comparative innocence, when country could still be meaningfully shared. The sense of nostalgia is broken, however, by Chaine's "footsteps sounding on rock" (338) after which, Bobby is captured and taken to the King George Town gaol.

Whereas Miller's *Landscape of Farewell* ends with a return to country and an exploration of the ways in which well-being can be derived from an intersubjective immersion in the natural world, *That Deadman Dance* concludes with a turning away from a shared vision for the future. Following his incarceration, Bobby petitions Chaine to be able to perform a dance for everyone, in the hope that it might bring people together as it had when he was a boy (346). Chaine arranges, however, for the performance to occur at his new homestead; a space of settler power and refinement, with "bright gleaming walls" covered with paintings and "high ceilings" (339). While Bobby would prefer to perform at the gaol so more of his people (who are being increasingly incarcerated) can see the event, he gives in to Chaine's request, mistakenly thinking that he will be among friends. Arriving at the homestead, Bobby – pleased to see that the space embodies a sense of country – perceives his stage to be one of potential:

> The doors and windows of the largest room of Chaine's new house were opened so that the fresh light shimmered on the walls, and the air was raw-earth fresh. Bobby glanced around him: a coat stand in the corner, with no coats on it; no furniture, no rug, the room so new and never used and our fresh white ochre on its walls [...] Bobby Wabalanginy knew that he could sing and dance the spirit of any gathering of people, show them what we gathered together here really are. He reminded them he was a gifted dancer and singer, what Dr Cross called *a gifted artiste*, and by those means and by his spirit he would show them how people must live here, together (345-46; original emphasis).

Rather than being a place of reconciliation as Bobby hopes, however, the Chaine's homestead is a site of settler duplicity where the power of Bobby's performance is rebuffed. The novel concludes with a refusal for treaty and an evocation of radical difference:

> Bobby knew he was a storyteller, dancer, singer, could dance around a spear and make a song to calm any man. Yes, Bobby Wabalanginy believed he'd won them over with his dance [...] Suddenly, he felt not

> fear, but terrible anxiety. Faces [...] had turned away from him. Bobby
> felt as if he had surfaced in some other world. Chairs creaked as people
> stirred, coughing. Chaine led them to their feet. Figures at the periphery
> of Bobby's vision fell away. He heard gunshots. And another sound: a
> little dog yapping (350).

Bobby's performance signals the end of the period known as the friendly frontier. His final dance unsettles the normalising discourses that the British migrants have attempted, through settlement, to overlay. Bobby is no longer a young boy whom the settlers consider an interesting curiosity, in their eyes he is now a fully grown man; dancing barely clothed in a drawing room. It also signals the moment when the settlers dispense with the facade of conciliation.

Ravenscroft suggests that "Scott's writing figures his Indigenous protagonists in their differences to the colonists, differently sensate and differently desiring, in ways that are deeply strange to non-Indigenous subjects" ("The Strangeness of the Dance" 72). Bobby's belief in the power of dance – the ways in which, as a ceremonial tool, it has the ability to make his audience feel "animal fur and feathers brush their the skin, so softly" and breathe "the scent of sandalwood smoke wisping across them" (349) – is out of place in the colonial homestead, a site which, based upon European hierarchies, is ordered to exclude nature and cultural difference, rather than incorporate it. While Scott's text offers some new and inspiring insights into the history of race relations in Australia, and potentially provides a glimmer of hope for the future, *That Deadman Dance* is framed by the problems and issues of the reconciliation movement, rather than at a point "shimmering" somewhere beyond them.

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In both *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance*, country is presented as a threshold space; a site of percipient intercultrality However, while in Miller's the coming together is framed through scenes of chora – the collision of the physical and metaphysical realms – in Scott's work, it is positioned via the potential for a shared appreciation of place, or region, and the Indigenous cultural history it is implicated with. While a sense of Indigenous belonging is foregrounded in both texts, what is shown to be most important to cross-cultural exchange is the way in which country can enable a shared sense of well-being, an entangled coming together in nature.

7

Conclusion

Spaces of Hope and Entanglement

"Blue, between black and white."
-Ashley Hay "Ultramarine" (106).

The concept of cultural bridging – of spanning a gap or divide which separates Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples – frames most reconciliatory discourses, including the fictional works which I have examined throughout this dissertation. In light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that metaphors pertaining to water (namely rivers, seas, fish and flotsam) proliferate in these contemporary Australian texts, signifying the diverse and essentially fluid nature of the social/cultural arena that processes of reconciliation seek to integrate.

In novels such as *The Secret River* and *Her Sister's Eye*, for instance, rivers simultaneously structure and undermine narratives of settlement and belonging, revealing a pre-existing and continuing life force which cannot be separated from millennia of Indigenous inhabitation of the land. In *Carpentaria* and *Gould's Book of Fish*, non-Indigenous characters who are able to make meaningful connections with Indigenous characters and/or communities literally become fish; a metamorphosis which embodies their capacity for movement and cultural transformation. Water, fish and fishing are pedagogical tools in these texts; used to pass on lessons about life and to frame different approaches to making oneself meaningfully at home in the world. They also, symbolically, highlight the power and problems associated with cultural bridging and the kind of creativity required when reconfiguring personal and national conceptions of being at home. In *Journey to the Stone Country*, for example, when the characters are visiting the abandoned homestead of Ranna – which I examined at length in Chapter 4 (110-111) – the unsuitability of the space as a shelter for reconciliation is foregrounded by Bo's inability to catch fish (166). Miller also uses fish, however, to frame scenes meaningful cross-cultural exchange in his novel. The period of courtship between Bo and Annabelle is emphasised by the preparation of a fish, which Bo caught and brought to share with Annabelle: "Bo paused in his

filleting and turned from the sink. He stood looking at her, expectant, the steelblade and the pale fish steady in his fingers, the bright eye of the fish intimate in his hand [...] The space between them tight (245).

One of the primary assertions of this thesis is that for reconciliatory discourses to become useful pedagogies – to educate and inspire people, rather than just inform and unsettle – they need to create spaces of hope. Lucashenko claims that:

> The best writers will see and write past (or through) their own neuroses to something deeper and richer [...] These writers work hard to create stories that tell readers that yes, I can see you, and yes, you matter, and yes, you belong here, because this is your story too, and just look at how we all might end up if we try this, or this, or this... ("On the Same Page, Right?" 3)

For discourses of reconciliation to be effective – to "help heal wounds" and, as I stated in Chapter 1, "build the foundations upon which the rights and affairs of indigenous Australians may be dealt with in a manner that gives respect and pride to all Australians" (Dodson vii) – they must address the ongoing trauma of colonisation in a way that recognises the suffering wrought by cross-cultural contact *as well as* the potential for intercultural spaces to unite people in their differences.

"Geographies of hope," as Coombes, Johnson and Howitt claim, "are in constant tension with persistent geographies of marginalization, disadvantage and desperation" (694). On the one hand, hope is important if Australia is, as a nation, to move beyond (or engage more productively) with the ongoing impact of its colonial history. In my discussion of the homestead, for instance, I drew attention to the ways in which the revisiting of scenes of colonial trauma – or impasse – could potentially stall reconciliation processes and negate future hope. At the same time, however, in my examination of travel and disconnection from home in Chapters 4 and 5, I highlighted some of the problems associated with trying to move forward too quickly, and the way in which a separation from home or country can be debilitating. While, throughout this thesis, I have emphasised the importance of making room for hope in discourses that engage with processes of reconciliation – particularly in narratives that are involved in historical revisioning – optimism needs to remain tempered by reality. In imaginal pedagogies of reconciliation, just as in official discourses, the potential for future reconciliation (or hope) lies in an awareness that obstacles such as the ongoing impact of trauma need to be negotiated rather than ignored and the recognition that some

cultural differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians cannot be bridged. By focussing on scenes of cross-cultural interaction in a range of literary works by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian writers, therefore, I have shown that beneath conceptions of cultural bridging lurks a less idealised notion of cultural entanglement.

In my analysis of the floating island of rubbish in Wright's *Carpentaria*, for instance, I examined the ways in which a reconciliatory ethic is gestured towards through a heterotopic reorganisation of space and the chaotic amalgamation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ontologies. Whereas bridging implies a methodical kind of crossing, the condition of entanglement arises via diverse interactions that occur between people and place and connotes an action of coming together which is difficult to clarify and not comprehensively agreed upon; best defined as a "confused medley; a compromising relationship" or "an unsuitable liaison" ("Entanglement" *OED* online). Unlike bridging (or its institutionally conceptualised equivalent, reconciliation), entanglement can be partial or total, incorporates dissonant elements and, perhaps most importantly, inspires ongoing contact and debate. The scenes of entanglement imagined in texts such as *The Secret River*, *Her Sister's Eye*, *Sorry*, *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Carpentaria*, *Dirt Music*, *Gould's Book of Fish*, *Landscape of Farewell* and *That Deadman Dance* all contribute to an important and ongoing reconciliatory dialogue; they do not constitute a comprehensive or settled body of work but, instead, gesture towards the various compromises and ongoing associations – the reconciliatory ebbs and flows – that are present within cross-cultural relationships.

Entanglement does not assume a concise or streamlined approach to interculturality but reveals the complex and often contested relationships which exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, particularly in terms of the how they imagine themselves to be at home. Currents of movement and entanglement continue to underpin contemporary representations of race relations in Australian literary works. In Alexis Wright's most recent novel, *The Swan Book* (2013), for instance, tidal forces once again overflow their ill-conceived boundaries. But, instead of the virtual obliteration this causes in *Carpentaria*, what we see in this text is the variety ways in which people learn to live in these changed conditions; how people continue to dwell once the flood gates are open and spaces of home are recognised as a sites of cross-cultural entanglement.

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