ABSTRACT

The Bible proved a significant resource for European imperialism both in aiding colonisers to impose their own culture on those they conquered and in justifying their annexation and administration of other peoples' territory. Metaphors drawn from biblical accounts of the garden of Eden and the promised land offering a new home to Jews who had been held captive in Egypt were mobilised in relation to European colonisation. In the biblical context, these motifs emphasised God's cherishing or protection of chosen people to the exclusion of all others and so could be used to justify many forms of containment and exclusion in a colonial situation. The garden of Eden and the promised land also resonate as metaphors within a postcolonial context, and writers have drawn upon them when exploring issues of personal, national, and communal identity. Elizabeth Jolley engages in such exploration in her novel Milk and Honey as she presents Australia, not through the eyes of newly arrived colonists, but from the viewpoint of refugee migrants escaped from Europe during World War II. In a novel permeated with biblical allusion, she portrays the costs both of cultural and social exclusivity and of breaking down barriers erected to preserve identity.

One foot in Eden still, I stand

And look across the other land.

The world's great day is growing late,

Yet strange these fields that we have planted

So long with crops of love and hate.

Time's handiworks by time are haunted,

And nothing now can separate

The corn and tares compactly grown.

The armorial weed in stillness bound

About the stalk; these are our own.

Evil and good stand thick around

In the fields of charity and sin

Where we shall lead our harvest in.

(Edwin Muir: 227)

Biblical images of the garden of Eden, paradise lost, the promised land, and the kingdom of heaven still haunt the Western imagination, although in a secular age, many people dismiss the Bible as a past relic, unaware how far it continues to shape our perceptions of the world. Regina Schwartz, however, claims it "encodes Western culture's myths of collective identity," showing that sacred categories of thought still linger, transformed into secular ones (6). Biblical language, motifs, and narrative pervade centuries of European art and literature. One especially potent image, the garden of Eden and its loss, has generated innumerable plot lines where characters...
attempt the impossible task of recovering that state of primal innocence and bliss. Sometimes, on the other hand, the enclosed world of Eden, no matter how idyllic, appears so restrictive it prompts an urge to escape. Whether as point of origin or ultimate goal, Eden becomes associated with journey, quest, or pilgrimage and, as a result, its story some times fuses imaginatively with the later biblical narrative recording the Israelite wanderings through the wilderness in search of the promised land. While inspiring artists, these narratives also generated political metaphors defining nationhood and justifying imperial expansion. A wide variety of past social and political movements have claimed the Bible's endorsement, and it has proved particularly significant for imposing European culture on indigenous peoples, whilst colonists drew on biblical narrative to justify appropriating their territory.

This paper examines the importance of Edenic and exodus imagery in colonial expansion, with particular reference to Australia, while focusing on its use in one postcolonial text, the novel Milk and Honey (1984), whose author, Elizabeth Jolley, uses it to delineate the plight of a group of refugee European migrants living there after World War II. Jolley begins an autobiographical essay on her schooldays:

Our headmaster often said he knew which boys and girls would hand in their Golden Treasury of the Bible (2 Vols) on leaving school and which boys and girls would keep them as a spiritual guide for the rest of their lives. (1992:27)

Even without the author's half humorous acknowledgment that she still retains the "two grey nondescript books" (1992:30), her fiction reveals how influential the Bible has been. Jolley shows herself well aware of limitations inherent in the Western humanist tradition, sardonically observing it in collision with popular culture; nevertheless, she regularly invokes its great musical and literary masterpieces (the Bible among them), representing these artistic achievements as a profound source of imaginative, spiritual, and moral inspiration. Milk and Honey contains significant reference to works by mike and to Mozart's music, particularly his Requiem Mass, but biblical allusion pervades the entire novel.

Jolley's title derives from the verse in Exodus which also serves as an epigraph-- "and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (3:8). Biblical narratives of Eden and its loss, the Israelites' Exodus to the promised land, the rivalry between Cain and Abel, together with allusions to the Song of Songs and images of labouring in the vineyard, all contribute to the novel's structure and range of meanings. Events in the life of the Old Testament patriarch Jacob are configured in the experience of his namesake, the novel's protagonist. Biblical reference contributes to Milk and Honey's rich fund of imagery but, more importantly, it reinforces the novel's moral weight. The narrative explores interactions between Australian and European culture in the lives of characters who, forced to move countries, maintain an uneasy balance between past and present worlds, the old existence and the new. But although Jolley's characters are buffeted and manipulated by circumstances beyond their control, the author also emphasises how ultimately they must assume responsibility for their own choices. Failure to do so results in catastrophe, internal exile, and the destruction of a yearned-for paradise.

After the expulsion from Eden, God warns Adam he will return to the ground from which he has been taken-- "for dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return" (Gen 3:19). In her prologue to Milk and Honey, Jolley compares political upheaval in Europe to a great wind sweeping away "the soot and the dirt, the horse manure, the brickdust and the thistledown" forming it into innumerable cones of debris that descend to earth in another hemisphere where most disintegrate and mix with "the dust of the new place." But some cones press closer together, determined to remain unchanged, sustaining themselves by drawing "on the fragments of other such cones." Among the principal characters are a migrant family--Leopold Heimbach, his unmarried sisters Tante Rosa and Tante Heloise, his daughter Louise, and his son Waldemar--who escape from Vienna to Australia during World War II. Jacob, the novel's narrator, also from an Austrian family settled in Australia, is introduced into their household aged thirteen to receive the musical instruction his father, uncle, and aunt all believe he merits. The Heimbachs, devoted to music and to one another, while eking out a meagre living through music lessons and dressmaking, depend heavily on money they receive for his board and tuition. Consequently, Jacob is manipulated with tender devotion to become firmly enmeshed within the family and ultimately corrupted by it while being caught in the clash of cultures.

Jolley's narrative keeps moving between present and past, tracing Jacob's movement from innocence through corrupt self-absorption to experiencing the pain of loss and dispossession. He recalls a many-layered past--young manhood, adolescence, early years living with his father in their country vineyard, and a still earlier period before his mother's death.
He also records yet more distant memories relayed to him by the Heimbachs of their life in Europe before and during the war. Past recollections are filtered through the consciousness of the man Jacob develops into, so the vision of the uncomprehending child and adolescent is incorporated within that of the man who has acquired painful, lacerating knowledge. But, mired in self-delusion, he is a far from reliable narrator, and it is possible certain key events, in a novel where realism merges with elements of fairy tale and gothic romance, project his own fevered imaginations, especially when we eventually discover that he recounts his narrative from inside a mental hospital, though whether he is there as patient or worker is unclear.

The situation of the Heimbachs in Milk and Honey, yearning for the lost paradise of home and seeking to recreate it in a new land, is characteristic of peoples who leave their homelands for new countries whether as conquerors, colonists, or refugees. Like Eden on the one hand and the kingdom of God on the other, paradise lies simultaneously far behind and well ahead. This double vision of a past and future paradise infuses the whole history of European colonisation. The earthly paradise "epitomises our dream of order: natural organisation with no frictions, no tensions of any kind" (Hughes: 104), and, for centuries, people hoped it might either be rediscovered or, in some way, recreated. Maps and treatises throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance located the garden of Eden "now east, now west, now on an island, now behind or upon a mountain--but always remote, always inaccessible" (Giammatti: 4). A possibility of actually finding it helped prompt some early European voyages of discovery. As hitherto unknown plants from the New World were brought back to Europe, some thinkers speculated that, after the fall, the contents of Eden must have been scattered throughout the world and believed that including them in newly established European botanical gardens would result not only in a living encyclopedia of plants but in the recreation of the original garden itself (Prest: 9).

Yet Eden, representing both paradise and paradise lost, is an ambivalent location since it is largely defined by the harshness and evil it excludes. The cultivated garden is contrasted with the surrounding wilderness where the ground brings forth "thorns and thistles," but when the Eden metaphor is applied to newly acquired colonial territory, distinctions between garden and wilderness prove somewhat tenuous. Thomas Mitchell, describing his exploration of inland Australia, has no doubts, triumphally asserting a God-given right to the land.

From the vantage point of the Colonial Office, however, Sir James Stephen, in a speech of 1858, sees these new territories as wilderness that British settlers will transform into paradise. "You can therefore understand how it is that they make their way to the ends of the earth, finding the land before them as the desolate wilderness, and leaving it as the very garden of Eden behind them" (283). From the settlers' perspective, Eden more often resembled the country they had left behind. Susanna Moodie writes of Canada in her memoir Roughing It in the Bush: "The unpeopled wastes of Canada must present the same aspect to the new settler that the world did to our first parents after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden" (251-52).

In Jolley's novel, the Heimbach family, ensconced in Australia's land of milk and honey, consider themselves exiles, who, though not Jewish themselves, have been forced to leave Austria because of Leopold's Jewish wife whom they never fully accept as a family member. In Genesis, the loss of Eden represents a universal condition of exile with humanity excluded forever from its true home. But this loss also foreshadows another quite specific exile experienced by a particular nation. "The paradisal garden is an idealised, and lost, land of Israel" (Schwartz: 50). Dispossessed and homeless, after fleeing slavery in Egypt and suffering innumerable trials in the wilderness, the Israelites arrive in that abundant land flowing with milk and honey promised by God in recompense for their sufferings and to reward their faith in him. But the promised land is already inhabited by peoples who must in turn be conquered and dispossessed. Regina Schwartz explores this paradox.

Possession implies domination. Defining identity in terms of territory produces two myths that are the two consequences of possessing (or dreaming of possessing) land: either a people take the land from another people (conquest) or the land is taken from them (exile). Narratives of conquest and exile are the logical elaborations of a doctrine of land possession. But conquest and exile are not simply opposites. Exile also serves as a kind of retrospective justification for conquest. (51)

The history of white settlement in Australia is also permeated with biblical images of Eden, exile, and the promised land. Mythic imagination had focused on the region long before Europeans set foot there. The Celtic Otherworld or Underworld, a "place and source of health, youth, wealth, wisdom, perpetual spring and summer, fruits and feasts, music and joy" was sited in the southern hemisphere (Bird Rose: 195). Ross Gibson
demonstrates how ancient images of an earthly paradise inspired and haunted many journeys of exploration to and within Australia so that, despite the harsh realities they encountered, colonists often "developed a paradoxical ability to tolerate disappointment while continuing to expect some Australian felicity" (1984:37). In Britain some regarded Australia as a promised land flowing with milk and honey where the poor might emigrate to lead a prosperous existence abroad (Lansbury: 157-58). But for many of its European inhabitants, Australia represented exile rather than a land of promise and, given the numbers transported there as convicts against their will, a more appropriate analogy was with Adam and Eve driven from paradise. "The Expulsion myth situates Home as Eden, the monarch as God, and the convicts as sinful fallen people doomed to a life of toil and sweat amidst thorns and thistles" (Bird Rose: 205).

Noting white Australia's myth of victimhood, where battlers combat adversity in a hostile land, Ann Curthoys demonstrates how biblical motifs of expulsion from Eden and entry into the promised land fit neatly together in Australia to

obscure white aggression and justify the conquest of Aboriginal territory. She concludes that much non-Aboriginal hostility to indigenous land claims relates to long-standing fears of homelessness, that such claims "may somehow affect their own land holdings, whether rural farm or urban home" (36). Eden and the promised land are powerfully linked with concepts of home, the place of belonging, but in nations established as imperial possessions home becomes highly problematic. Where is it located—in the country of origin or the land of settlement? In sheltering its inmates, home is defined through exclusion: "it is in the heyday of British imperialism that England gets defined as 'Home' in opposition to 'The Empire' which belongs to the English but which is not England" (George: 4). Not surprisingly, a metaphysical homelessness often persists well after former colonies become independent, as New Zealand poet Allen Curnow indicates in concluding his poem "House and Land" with the lines, "what great gloom / Stands in a land of settlers / With never a soul at home" (Curnow: 39).

At first sight, the refugee family in Milk and Honey, poor and marginalised in their host country, have little connection with the imperial conquest of Australia and the dispossession of its native population. But they too are convinced of their inherent superiority to their Australian neighbours and have few qualms about exploiting others in defence of their own exclusivity. The Heimbachs (the name means home stream) are fiercely attached to the ideal of home, the safe place "built on a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions ... a way of establishing difference" (George: 2). Their true home, their paradise, is their pre-war world of European high culture and social refinement, which they seek to recreate and maintain within their own household by excluding the new environment as far as possible. "it is not easy with one's needs and refinements to adapt to a new country. It was all so strange, language, customs, climate, everything" (Jolley, 1984:121). As exiles with a refugee mentality, they carry substantial mental baggage from the past along with the precious household goods they keep locked away in trunks—"It is vulgar to display one's possessions" (Jolley, 1984:170). For them, Australia is merely a cultural wilderness. Leopold, himself a musician, expresses contempt for players in the local symphony orchestra.

Leopold regarded the members of the orchestra as vulgar people. He told me once that some of the people just played to make a living and that they had no feeling for music at all. "They have no ear, they have nothing except a certain skill to manipulate their fingers and an instrument and so produce the required sounds." (57)

Yet maintaining the enclosed Heimbach world requires money, and Jacob's tuition fees help provide the milk and honey of relative prosperity, symbolised by regular supplies of real coffee, chicken livers, Polish cucumbers, and sesame bread (33). To ensure continuing abundance, the family tricks the thirteen-year-old Jacob into believing that, after a brief tussle, he has killed Waldemar, Leopold's idiot son. Waldemar has, in fact, been spirited upstairs to the attic (which Jacob has been told remains unused because the roof leaks badly), to be cared for by the aunts rather than being confined within an institution. Jacob, believing himself a murderer, accepts he is now bound irrevocably to the household —"I had no wish to be free" (36)—while the Heimbachs continue to treat him with loving devotion, fostering his musical career and accepting him as a substitute son. The family consider that their own victim status in Vienna justifies this deception, as Tante Heloise later explains, "I cannot describe what it is like to have one's home taken away and used by uninvited people and then we were not used to poverty" (120).

The Heimbachs' difficulties in coming to terms with Australia represent the conflict existing in many postcolonial societies where a newly evolving culture continues to be measured, often disparagingly, against that of the former imperial power. The ill effects of such conflict are most apparent in the life of their protege Jacob. Just as the movement from Eden to the promised land may symbolise the forging of national identity, so
it can represent the progress of an individual soul driven inexorably through the world by time. Jacob's attempts
to capture an ideal existence, to reconcile the foreign and the familiar, are represented in terms of landscape
where cultivated space like the Heimbachs' garden is set against, or linked with, a more spacious natural
landscape. His father's vineyard, like Jacob himself, is located between the two. Although cultivated space, it is
also part of the surrounding countryside. Initially, Jacob's lost paradise is his childhood innocence equated with
the vineyard where he originally lived with his father and for which he continues to yearn as an adult. As a
child the surrounding landscape inspired his reverence, evoking possibilities of a union between heaven and
earth--"the vineyards crossing great space end in a quiet meeting with the sky" (10). Transition from childhood
to the corrupt adult world is symbolised on Jacob's arrival at the Heimbachs' by an episode in their garden where
Waldemar, crouched among the branches of a mulberry tree, holds out both clenched fists, asking in his
strangely accented English, "Which hend you hev?" (12). When Jacob taps the left one, Waldemar lets fall a
cockroach on his shirtfront, then pops a mulberry in his mouth. Jacob now eats from the tree of knowledge of
good and evil and his mulberry-stained hands suggest the taint of original sin. On the first night in his new
home, he runs away to the vineyard, only to be turned back by his Uncle Otto standing, like the angel with the
fiery sword, in a square of light at the open door. There is no re-entry to the world of childhood, for time cannot
be reversed.

When his father dies, Jacob, now a young man, agrees the vineyard be sold as prime real estate. Revisiting the
district after this decision, he notes some vines in surrounding vineyards appear to kneel at prayer, while others
have "arms lifted and hoisted over high posts" in an image suggesting both Israel's bondage in Egypt and Jacob's
situation with the Heimbachs. "I thought again of them as I did when I was a child. I imagined them to be slaves
with their shoulders lifted too high and lashed to posts" (46). Vineyards, which figure in the Bible as metaphors
for God's relationship to his people and his disappointment with them, have affinity with narratives of the
garden of Eden and the promised land. In Isaiah, the vineyard "planted with the choicest vine" produces only
wild grapes (5:2). In the New Testament, where vineyards represent the kingdom of God, a son's loyalty to his
father is tested by his readiness to work there (Matt 21:28-32), while in another parable (Mark 12:1-9), the
owner's workers beat and kill the servants he sends to bring back the fruits of the grape harvest, eventually
murdering even the owner's son in hopes of gaining his inheritance. While Jacob continues to be manipulated
for the sake of his new wealth, he is now complicit in the situation, acquiescing in the destruction of childhood
promise for material gain.

I had not expected to see my father's vineyard burned. The whole way down to the river it was burned.
Blackened spines of vines spread out on either side. Wooden pegs marked the sites for shops and houses. (47)

Like Eden, biblical vineyards are associated with judgment as well as abundance.

And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had
the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes
are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into
the great winepress of the wrath of God. (Rev 14:18-19 KJV)

Surveying the burnt vineyard, Jacob notes that a pair of scales still hang in the old fig tree--corresponding to the
Heimbach's mulberry tree--where Jacob and his father used to weigh melons and grapes for sale. Everyone is
eventually weighed in the balance and life's sweetness must be paid for.

Despite a sense of loss, Jacob, cosseted by the aunts with little treats of milk-sugar biscuits and sweet wine,
chooses to remain in his comfortable new home, his land of milk and honey--the enclosed re-creation of
European culture--even though he finds it all rather bland and stifling. Under Leopold's tutelage, he becomes a
concert cellist performing frequently with the local orchestra and gradually finds himself drawn to Leopold's
daughter Louise with whom, as his narration somewhat disingenuously implies, he is manipulated into betrothal
and marriage, so his inherited wealth remains in the family. Sexual love is another variant of the paradise motif,
and initially, for Jacob, desire focuses on Louise's room, a secluded flowery space--"A garden enclosed is my
sister my spouse"--which can be reached only by traversing "the dark gulf which was Tante Rosa's room" (123)
followed by Tante Heloise's room.

Penetrating the two guarding rooms I felt excited. I looked with delight at her little room. It was small and
framed in flowers for there were two little windows overhung with wisteria. Immediately outside were two trees
grown together, the sweet scented chinese privet and a cape lilac. These were the enchantment pressing into the
small maidenly room. (54)
But during his courtship and marriage to Louise, Jacob embarks on a love affair with Madge, who plays first violin in the local orchestra. Both women represent contrasting possibilities. Madge, married and considerably older than Jacob, is very Australian. Although something of a philistine—Jacob notes a lack of books and music in the intervals of their love-making—Madge shrewdly points out that, if local musical standards are provincial, Leopold's are equally so. Vulgar, slangy, and knowledgeable about sex, she is also warm-hearted and generous, associated with abundance and fulfillment. Louise, innocent and sexually inexperienced, embodies the refinement and enclosure of the little world her father and aunts have constructed, while Madge is linked to the spaciousness and promise of the Australian landscape. For Jacob, her body resembles the promised land: "It was like seeing the hint of the colour of petals in an unopened bud. There was always the promise of something more" (2).

Houses, frequently identified with the ideal of home and one of the principal marks made by colonists arriving in a new land, also serve as metaphors for attempts to construct a private world of personal harmony and delight: "our house is our corner of the world.... it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (Bachelard: 4). Like Eden, however, they too are ambivalent places, providing a haven on the one hand, "a refuge from the impersonal open space of the landscape, or the disorienting space of the city" (Ferrier: 40), but, on the other, forming a possible prison from which occupants may long to escape. They can also be expressions of personal and national identity. Often, when establishing oneself in a new colony or migrating to a new country, "the act of building signifies the assertion of culture" (Ferrier: 42). In childhood, Jacob perceives the Heimbach house as romantic, if rather sinister, resembling a slightly decayed Austrian schloss. It is an attempt to re-create in some measure the family's beautiful old house, their home in Vienna, but "an entire past comes to dwell in a new house" (Bachelard: 5). Home, apparently so familiar and comfortable, is readily disrupted by the uncanny and unfamiliar, sometimes resembling a labyrinth with a monster at its heart (Salzman: 38). The Heimbachs' Australian house, its rooms mysteriously opening out of one another and its doorways heavily curtained as if to impede easy entrance or exit, is a nest of secrets concealing unmentionable episodes in the family's past, which a mildly tipsy Tante Heloise reveals one evening to the adult Jacob.

Leopold's Jewish wife, whose frail mind gave way under the pressures of migration (her race the reason for their Exodus), has been committed, at Tante Rosa's insistence, to the local mental hospital. Leopold's Australian wife, whose frail mind gave way under the pressures of migration (her race the reason for their Exodus), has been committed, at Tante Rosa's insistence, to the local mental hospital.

Waldemar's presence in the attic constitutes a still more explosive secret of which the growing Jacob receives hints and intimations he chooses to ignore. Although he realises that questioning the family might set him free, he remains silent even after Tante Heloise openly reveals the truth. A house may be "one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind" (Bachelard: 6), but Jacob chooses to integrate with the contorted, labyrinthine house, which had originally seemed so foreign to him. When he looks for a house to rent as a love-nest for Madge and himself, the one he settles on is mysterious, romantic, sumptuously appointed, and very private, a suitable repository for family secrets. Standing well back from the road, thickly shrouded in dark trees, "it is protected by a battlement of balconies and verandas" and surrounded by a high brick wall with wrought iron gates locked from the inside (Jolley, 1984:103). Jacob devises a fantastical plan of transporting the entire Heimbach family there to live on the first floor, with the top floor reserved for Waldemar and the basement reserved for Tante Rosa and Madge. His complicity in the family's deception is now so great he seeks to contrive ways they can transfer Waldemar without his official knowledge. For Jacob, the new house is merely an extension of the one he has lived in for so many years, with a special area to incorporate his own secret along with the rest. Madge, once associated with expansiveness and promise, is now to be secluded in a confined and secret place.

Jacob wants to maintain his comfortable existence by containing people important to his life within separate layers of the same structure, but inevitably his two worlds collide catastrophically. After Leopold's death from heart disease, he takes Tante Rosa to see the newly rented house while Madge unexpectedly visits the Heimbachs. On his return, Jacob discovers her body in the garden, brutally murdered, presumably by Waldemar. Jacob discovers her body in the garden, brutally murdered, presumably by Waldemar who, having grown into a strong, enormous man since his incarceration in the attic, is given to violent outbursts. In a like spirit of mindless savagery, Jacob rushes indoors, demanding to know how Madge died, and in the face of the aunts' real or apparent incomprehension, hurls the kerosene heater across the room, enveloping Tante Rosa in Flames. The initial deception of the young Jacob into believing he had committed murder reaches its terrible conclusion with the fire that destroys everything the family sought to preserve. Jacob is now a murderer in earnest, for Tante Rosa dies horribly of her burns. Waldemar is removed to a mental hospital. Tante Heloise's mind gives way under the strain, and she spends her remaining years senile in a geriatric ward.

The consequences for Jacob and Louise are equally devastating, since Jacob's money, kept by the aunts wrapped in parcels, is destroyed along with other family treasures. Once he agreed to burning his childhood home and vineyard so he could invest the resulting wealth in the Heimbach household and the values it embodies, only to
burn that down as well. Because his attempts to extinguish the fire leave Jacob with a crippled claw for a hand, he must now exist without either love or music since he has lost his touch for both. Louise, stripped of her family's support, lives the rest of her life in a loveless, poverty-stricken marriage exiled to the wilderness in a "cold little house" bordering an industrial wasteland with her young daughter Elise who, like Waldemar, is severely retarded. Her factory work maintains the family, since Jacob's efforts as a door-to-door salesman are largely ineffectual. Now a permanent outsider with other people's doors continually shut in his face, the case of products he always carries, like the luggage so many migrants keep ready packed, symbolises his state of exile. Louise's eventual death, from overwork and despair, precipitates the final crisis in Jacob's life.

In Genesis, the story of Cain murdering his brother Abel follows immediately on the account of their parents' expulsion from Eden and also prefigures the later rivalry between Isaac's twin sons Jacob and Esau, when one brother cheats another of his birthright, each going on to found rival nations, Israel and Edom (Gen 27:1-14). Regina Schwartz claims these ancestral myths of kinship demonstrate a tragic requirement of collective identity, "that other peoples must be identified as objects to be abhorred" (80).

According to the biblical myth, the origins of hatred and violence among brothers is scarcity. If there is not enough to go round, then Jacob must literally impersonate Esau to get what is his, and Cain must destroy his rival to seek the favour that was Abel's. Scarcity, the assumption that someone can only prosper when someone else does not, proliferates murderous brothers and murderous peoples. (Schwartz: 83)

To preserve their family and cultural identity, the Heimbachs cast Jacob in the role of Cain to substitute him for Waldemar, whom they cannot bear to expel from the household, although publicly they deny his continuing existence. Jacob, through his gradual awareness and acquiescence, appropriates Waldemar's birthright. Jolley draws several analogies between her character and his biblical namesake. Each is manoeuvred into marrying one woman while in love with another (Gen 29:15-28). The biblical Jacob wrestles all night with an angel who touches his thigh: "and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him" (Gen 32:25 KJV). After Louise's death in Milk and Honey, Jacob, unable to face returning home, books into a motel. Baffled by complicated and unfamiliar taps in the shower, he slips and falls badly scalded, injuring his groin. After a night of hallucinatory pain, he begins to confront his past actions, deciding he must now seek out Waldemar.

Imprisoned in the Heimbachs' attic, Waldemar represents the wildness, barbarism, and coarseness his family cannot incorporate psychologically into their refined, cultivated vision of the world. Repressing such characteristics intensifies their power, so their eventual eruption becomes highly dangerous. Waldemar functions as Jacob's double, a projection of his destructive impulses. Both are the same age and have been raised in European families. Jacob hungers after the sweetness of existence, and Waldemar is greedy for sweet food. Both are imprisoned, Waldemar in "this terrible room" (49) and Jacob in a snare of emotional blackmail. In manhood, Waldemar's corpulence reflects Jacob's moral grossness, and his violent behaviour corresponds to the increasing destructiveness of Jacob's nature. Jacob implies his marriage is unconsummated, suggesting Elise is Waldemar's child, but this may be wishful thinking, and his frenzied vision, shortly before setting fire to the house, of brother and sister copulating in the attic, may well be a nightmare perception of his own relationship with Louise.

To meet Waldemar again, Jacob revisits the mental hospital where he and Leopold once taught some of the patients singing. At first he fails to find him and returns to the car where he discovers Elise distributing his entire salesman's stock to a group of patients, Waldemar among them. Divested at last of the baggage he has been carrying around, Jacob feels a sudden release, freed into a new way of life and receiving the possibility of a new start as Waldemar asks once more "Which hend you hev?" In a gesture of love and reconciliation, Jacob takes Elise's hand and places it in Waldemar's, himself taking Waldemar's other hand. Once again an Old Testament story is re-enacted, where Jacob meets the brother he has wronged offering him munificent gifts and presents him to his wives and children: "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him: and they wept" (Gen 33:4 KJV). Waldemar out in the open, his violence controlled by medication, is very different from the prisoner in the attic who haunted Jacob's imagination. In taking Waldemar's hand, Jacob acknowledges and accepts the animal impulses in his own nature, with all their destructive possibilities, so rendering them harmless.

The hospital gathers up many of the novel's principal motifs--paradise, wilderness, home, exile, and the promised land. Visiting in the past involved crossing a stretch of waste ground--a place resembling the burnt vineyard--where there was a tip ringed with smouldering fires and a tractor ploughed "bottles and tins, old clothes and unwanted furniture into the sour ground" (132). But, driving to the hospital with Elise, Jacob finds the wasteland transformed into a park and realises burnt flesh can heal.
Perhaps the rubbish in a person's life could be pushed somewhere beneath a smooth skin. Perhaps a shining and elastic skin could grow and, in place of a decrepit human being, there could be something radiant and glowing. (175)

Like the Heimbach house and the one Jacob rents for himself and Madge, the hospital "is ringed with trees," many characteristically found in Australia: "Norfolk Island pines, kurrajong trees, jacarandas and flame trees" (182). Initially, on his visits with Leopold, Jacob finds the hospital alienating and disturbing. But he is impressed by the building itself with its cool hall and marble mosaic floor inlaid with green and blue flowers, though questioning the appropriateness of its handsome staircase, to which Leopold responds, "it is right that there is something extravagant and beautiful for the people in here" (177). Ultimately, however, the hospital becomes home for Jacob, Waldemar, and Elise, all of whom find occupation there, Jacob as a cleaner, Waldemar as the shave orderly, and Elise carrying patients their meals. The once dreaded place is now an image of the kingdom of heaven as the staircase and white-robed nuns evoke the biblical Jacob's vision when he dreamt of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with "the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Gen 28:12).

For Jolley, paradise and its negation are regions people create in their minds and imagination. Along with the verse from Exodus, she includes as an epigram Blake's poem:

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

Love seeketh only self to please
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despair.

Human inadequacy and imperfection, against which paradise appears a refuge, taint all attempts to envision or create it in actuality. Jacob eventually wins through to a measure of self-knowledge and understanding, perhaps the only paradise anyone can hope to attain. Paul Salzman claims that, in the hospital, Jacob and Waldemar reflect "the foreign that has been contained" (39). For Jolley, however, the hospital is an image of inclusion as opposed to all the images of exclusion earlier in the novel. The only haven which comes close to being satisfactory in the novel is one which incorporates otherness, all those traditionally marginalised by society--"foreigners," sinners, the intellectually handicapped, and the mentally ill. With all its limitations, the hospital is an image of plenitude as opposed to the state of scarcity Regina Schwartz refers to where "someone can only prosper when someone else does not." In Milk and Honey, the promised land represents a "new" country, Australia, where exiles seek a home but remain blind to the abundance and possibilities it offers. Milk and honey flow only for those who cease clinging to the past and forego the treasures they believe are rightly theirs.

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Source Citation (MLA 7th Edition)

Document URL

Gale Document Number: GALE|A82670861