Gender and nation formation in late nineteenth century

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Unfinished business—the 'exclusion' or 'inclusion' of women in bush myths of Australian nation formation

Four decades of debate on bush mythology stretched across at least three disciplines have failed to produce agreement on whether women were included or excluded from the Australian myths of nation formation. Inclusion or exclusion?—the question posed this way appears straightforward enough. The problems that have been encountered in resolving it, however, suggest that the question may be misleading if the purpose of the enquiry is to throw light on the relationship between gender and nation.

The assumption that women did not feature in Australian representations and narratives of nation formation occasioned little comment until the 1970s. Almost unquestioned was the belief that 'Australia' was founded as a nation in the bush by strong masculine labour to tame the inhospitable land and bring it into productive use. The narrators of this nation-forging struggle were identified as the writers and painters of the 1890s, and the twentieth century historians, art historians and literary scholars on whose shoulders the mantle of storyteller eventually settled.

Australian commentators identified the 1890s as the crucible of the nation, a time when artists and writers gave expression to an 'Australian identity' and sought to generate specifically Australian cultural forms. Partly because of the self-conscious and self-reflexive attitude of those writers and artists who sought to articulate what it meant to be 'Australian' and to lay the foundations of Australian culture, and partly because of the centrality of the 1890s in subsequent studies of Australian national identity and culture, the literature and painting of this decade continued to occupy the centre stage of national agendas, at least until the mid 1980s.

Published in 1958, Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend*, set parameters of interpretation of the formation of Australian national culture for both historians and literary scholars. It was not the first such study, but Ward's thesis found fertile ground in the intellectual, ideological and artistic cultural milieu of Australia in the 1960s and 70s. It appeared to sum up what Australian history meant for a nation which
was aware of a new-found maturity. Confident at last of its firm footing in modernity, Australian intellectuals and artists were attracted to Ward's thesis as identifying an Australian pre-modernity.

Ironically perhaps, these intellectuals and scholars turned to an earlier moment that was characterised by the expression of anticipation of and anxiety about modernity. Like Ward himself, intellectuals and artists of the late nineteenth century were seeking to establish a pre-modern past as the basis for the formation of a modern nation. Though they identified with a rural myth of pioneers and bushmen, they were themselves urban intellectuals registering the cultural dislocation of a society embarking on modernisation which was to reconstruct the political, economic and social orders around its imperatives.3 The cultural forms through which writers and painters proposed a pre-modern myth of nation were themselves harbingers of modernism.

The absence of women from this national culture and its formative moments was virtually unremarked and unremarkable: the 'exclusion thesis' was insinuated into national mythologies without any apparent breach in the fabrication. It was taken as read that women were absent from the historical sites of nation formation, just as they were excluded from the literary and artistic intelligentsias of the late nineteenth century and scholarly intelligentsias of the post-war period. Bernard Smith's influential history of Australian painting repeats Ward's assumption that women were excluded both from the bush society that constituted the basis of rural mythology and from the painters who pictured this world as the nation-in-formation.4 Assumptions of systematic exclusions of women from both national history and its narration were to remain largely tacit till the 1970s. The idea that the integrity, validity and rigour of the historical accounts of the formation of nation and national culture was compromised by the exclusion of women seemed to be unthinkable.

The 1970s saw the emergence of 'second wave' feminism. Key assumptions on which histories had been written were laid bare by feminist historians seeking to secure for women a 'presence' in the past and to re-write their own parts in the telling of that past. As one outcome of feminist historiography, the invisibility of women could be named: it was not that there were no women in the Australian past, but that they were 'excluded' from the cultural and literary narratives of nation formation. Following the lead of Anne Summers and Miriam Dixon,5 feminist writers gave voice to the conviction that women were excluded from narratives of nation formation, and
specifically from the bush mythology to which Ward's designation of 'the Australian legend' had stuck. To some extent, in historical accounts of Australian national culture this 'exclusion' could be accommodated by a prefatory *mea culpa*, followed by 'business as usual'. Andrew Milner, for example, observed that "(t)he nationalist counter-public sphere of the 1890s functioned within very clearly defined boundaries, which excluded non-whites, and, less clearly, women... But within these boundaries, radical nationalism was both popular and egalitarian". But as will be shown later in this thesis, the statement that a nationalism forged within such narrowly exclusive perimeters could be radical, popular or egalitarian is problematic.

Following earlier leads by Eve Pownall and Denton Prout and Fred Feely, some historians, art historians and literary scholars undertook the laborious work of recovering female participation in history and cultural production. There were women in the bush, they asserted, and they re-wrote the story of Australian nationhood to include female pioneers (frequently in a way that prised apart the assumptions of class and bush egalitarianism that bush mythology promoted). Initially, the 'inclusion' thesis was grounded in feminist reclamation histories which sought to establish the contribution of women to national culture, partly by asserting their historical presence and agency, and partly by acknowledging their contribution to the intellectual and imaginative processes of constructing a 'national identity'. But feminist engagement with scholarship was not so simple as reclamation strategies supposed. By the late 1970s, it was apparent that if women were to take their place as historical subjects, then the methods of research, the subjects of investigation and the modes of historical narration would radically change. Of relevance to this thesis was the marginalisation of *nation*—nationalism, national identity, national culture—within the major interpretative frameworks in feminist historiography to the late 1980s. Since 'nation' was the pivot around which masculinist histories in which women played little part was conventionally formed, then implicitly the telling of women's stories would find other focal concerns.

In literature and art history too, reclamation of women writers and artists was accompanied by, and sometimes gave way to a critique of the groundrules of the disciplines themselves. The mutually supportive props of canonical texts and national literatures could no longer fit out a stage on which women writers could play significant roles.
One consequence of this growth in sophistication in feminist scholarship was that the 'inclusion thesis'—that women were indeed part of the nation's formative struggles—was to become a conservative position which appeared to address feminist critiques of the disciplines themselves. J.B. Hirst, for example, rebuffed feminist "complaints" about women's exclusion by arguing that women were included in "the pioneer legend":

Feminists may object that too often they are seen merely as helpmeets for men, but their complaint that women have been omitted altogether from Australian history is not true of the popular history fostered by the pioneer legend.12

A further negotiation within historical, literary and art historical studies of the 1970s addressed the question of representation itself. The greatly restricted repertoire of representational strategies for incorporating women came under scrutiny. Studies of the "images of women" proliferated, and were subsumed into a debate about women's agency. Anne Summers' "damned whores and god's police" dichotomy stimulated a rummage through the histories, novels and paintings for images of women engaged in active, productive, rebellious, autonomous, authoritative, self-determining, collective lives.13 The notion that the bush was, in Lawson's frequently quoted phrase, "no place for a woman" yielded right-of-way to studies of female characters in bush mythology. "The Drover's Wife" became the lynchpin of the 'inclusion' thesis as a series of short stories by writers Murray Bail, Frank Moorehouse, Barbara Jefferis, Anne Gambling and Olga Masters negotiated the imaginative terrain on which gendered myths of nation are written.14 The search for female subjects, protagonists and historical actors in its turn produced methodological critiques, this time directed at the 'images of women' approaches which were counterparts to the author-reclamation strategies, both directed towards including women in existing theoretical frameworks of the disciplines.15 Structuralist methodologies, notably semiotics, offered strategies for de-coding the representation of women in literary and visual texts. Avoiding adulation for 'heroines' and dismay for 'victims', semiotic interpretations allowed the constitutive role of gender and the signification of 'woman' to be investigated.

By 1988 the bicentenary of British colonial annexation of the continent (1788-1988) was re-shaping the intellectual and political agendas around Australian nationhood, and the inclusion of women in Australia's formative history emerged as an imperative for the state's national cultural and ideological project. The idea of a male-exclusive nation
could not pass without comment and locating female actors within the national script was becoming state business. This celebration was to be an Australian 'men-and-women' retrospective in which, as Jill Matthews put it, there was to be a "female of all things". But the Bicentennial marked the anniversary of the founding of the British colony, not Federation. Although a sense of urgency was lent to the 'discovery' of female participation in the nation, the primacy of the bush legend and 1890s cultural achievements was dislodged by a heightened interest in exploration and colonial history, and in comprehensive well-funded surveys of Australian history, literature and painting from go to woe.

It is perhaps ironical then that by the mid 1980s the implications of theoretical frameworks and methodologies which were predicated on the exclusion, silence and absence of women from language and culture were being explored. The perception of Western thought as constructed around systems of difference constructed through binary oppositions allowed the formulation of litanies of dichotomous terms—such as male/female, culture/nature—the first of which was understood to be privileged at the expense of the other. The identity of the privileged term was seen to be secured through the repression and erasure of the subordinate term, and generally speaking, repressed, subordinate terms were rendered equivalent to one another by virtue of this relationship to the dominant term. In the light of this analytic strategy, feminist commentators resisted the buoyant incorporation of women into the national cast, identifying 'the feminine' if not women themselves as the repressed Other on which Australian national identity was secured. Kay Schaffer's *Women and the Bush* (1988) for example, argued that though there are few women characters in the narratives that constitute the Australian tradition, a sense of the feminine pervades the attribution of meaning to the landscape, which has, in turn, shaped the representations of female characters and contributed to the misogyny of Australian culture. Australia, she said, is imagined metaphorically as the body of a woman.

Recently poststructuralist approaches to history have stressed the ways in which historical experiences are produced by and mediated through cultural forms. Similarly in literary studies, poststructuralist interpretative strategies have increasingly opened up the possibility of reading repressed meanings of texts through ruptures, inconsistencies, silences and multiplicities. These strategies allowed a reader to elicit a nuanced interpretation of that which was 'excluded' in the interests of securing an apparently coherent, ideologically motivated discourse. The apparent oppositionality of
'inclusion' and 'exclusion' no longer generates an adequate theoretical framework within which the relationships between gender and nation in bush mythology could be formulated.

The '1890s' in the construction of Australian national identity

In Ward's thesis, the nexus between 1890s bush mythology and Australian national identity rested on an assumption of a transparent relationship between Australian rural life and its narration. Ballads, cartoons, paintings, photographs and stories joined press reportage, oral sources and folklore, on the one hand, and documents and data, on the other, to provide an empirical basis for an apparently unmediated access to the colonial past. Important groundwork for this thesis was laid by those historians, art historians and critics who unravelled this jumble and talked about the process by which accounts of nation formation were produced. Their work concentrated on the cultural processes of "inventing Australia", to use Richard White's phrase.

One important aspect of this work has been the attribution of 'authorship' of bush mythology to late nineteenth century urban intelligentsias. In his ground-breaking study "Sydney and the Bush: An Urban Context for the Australian Legend" published in 1978, Graeme Davison explained the genesis of bush mythology in the context of the late nineteenth century Sydney-based urban intelligentsia and its affinities with Sydney's "twilight zone" of unemployed and transient populations. Richard White's Inventing Australia (1981) drove this point home. White attributed the bush myth to the emerging community of professional writers and artists who espoused a masculine bohemian lifestyle, combining radical politics with a sense of estrangement from the experience of modernisation. These "boyish" male intellectuals were cognisant of and influenced by European and American literary and artistic movements, responding to intellectual and political trends, while enjoying the high-spirited lifestyle of 'bohemian' bachelorhood. Davison's argument was taken up by Leigh Astbury, whose City Bushmen (1985) traced the interpenetration of Melbourne's popular press and the so-called Heidelberg school of painting, and by Helen Topliss and Albie Thoms, who both demonstrated the close proximity of the artists' camps to the cities and the interest of the painters in European and American trends in painting.

The most cursory glance at the composition and cultures of these intellectual circles suggests that their work was infused with a deep ambivalence towards women. Where
Russel Ward attributed the masculinism of bush mythology to the circumstances of colonial bush life, Richard White argued that the idealisation of masculinity was an articulation of a cultural style in which women had no part. White noted that "at a time when women were making advances in politics and education, they were largely excluded from the newly professional artistic community of the 1890s". Marilyn Lake took up this issue further in an article that was to play a pivotal role in feminist historians' perspectives on the 1890s. In "The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context" (1986), Lake argued that "the contest between men and women at the end of the nineteenth century for control of the national culture" was "one of the greatest political struggles in Australian history." In parallel to the feminism of the women's movement, she dubbed the politics of the authors of bush mythology "masculinist". At stake in this struggle were the competing ideals and practices of masculinity that were to be legitimated through their alignment with 'national' culture. As both Lake and Susan Sheridan have argued, the discourses of feminism and nationalism were formed through their apparent opposition to one another.

Richard White also undertook to provide a broad-brushed history of the on-going process of "inventing a national identity". From the early modern European belief in the existence of *Terra Australis Incognita* (itself derived from the antiquities), White traced the progressive fabrications of the idea of 'Australia' and the constructions of what it meant to be Australian to 1980. The bohemian "boy" authors of the 1890s provide one episode in the production of Australian national identity, and the mid-twentieth century academics another. Kay Schaffer was making a similar point in her study of the gendered representations of the land-as-woman throughout Australian history. It was not only the writers and artists who 'imagined' Australia into a nation, but also the academics and critics who inferred an Australian national culture from their readings of historical documents and literary and artistic works. Subsequently, theoretical insights from literary theory, literary historiography and visual critical theory into the ways in which reading constitutes texts have lent a sophistication to the unpacking of the concept of national culture.

The assumption that the 1890s exercised a special leverage in the formation of Australian national culture was challenged by the work of such writers as White and Schaffer. The 1890s is written as just one chapter in the history of an idea and the *plein air* impressionist paintings of the 1890s comprises just one section of the survey exhibitions of Australian painting. National identity was no longer theorised as
having a reality outside its constitution by different historical subjects at different times. This was the basis on which Graeme Turner examined the role of recent film and literature in the construction of Australian narrative in *National Fictions* (1986).

Other studies of Australian formative cultural experiences gave priority to historical moments earlier than the 1890s. Ross Gibson's *The Diminishing Paradise* (1984) offered a timely corrective to the assumed centrality of the 1890s in the history of Australian culture. Gibson's study traced changing literary perceptions of Australia from the *Terra Australis Incognita* of the Middle Ages to the 1850s. Gibson argued that the process of familiarisation with the Australian continent was shaped by disillusionment as the long-anticipated 'terrestrial paradise of untold riches' was dismantled by exploration and experience. Both Gibson and Paul Carter, in *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987), anticipated the great popular and scholarly interest in European exploration in search of the great southern continent and colonisation and inland exploration that the Bicentennial of the British colonialisation would bring to a head in Australia. Two significant exhibitions—*Terra Australis—The Furthest Shore* (1988) and *The Artist and the Patron* (1988)—brought together to the public arena visual documents, maps and artworks as well as commissioned essays that enhanced the interest in journeys of exploration, colonisation and colonial culture as did the more popular Bicentennial re-enactments, exhibitions and roadshows. The experience of travel from Europe to Australia and within the continent has been complemented by the central role of journeying in the imagining of nation formation. The use of the journey as a metaphor through which 'Australia' could be imaginatively achieved lies at the heart of much of the literature and painting of the 1890s.

**Theories of nationalism**

The concepts of nationalism and national culture were no more the fabrication of Australian intellectuals in the 1890s than is the current intellectual and artistic engagement with notions of travel and journeying. As Richard White observed, "(n)ot only is the very idea of national identity a product of European history at a particular time, but each addition to the Australian identity has reflected changing intellectual needs and fashions in the West". Until relatively recently, however, historical, literary and art historical studies of Australian national culture have settled for the most perfunctory of nods towards theoretical studies of nationalism. This reflects, in part, the lack of engagement with nationalism as a political and social phenomenon that Tom
Nairn, for example, identified amongst British left-wing intellectuals. However, a resurgence of populist nationalism and a manifestation of nationalism as a deeply-rooted but under-theorised phenomenon of political and cultural life in the 1980s highlighted the need for a critical discourse on nations and nationalism. Nations and nationalism were moving onto the agenda of critical intellectual and political debate. Some commentators have gone so far as to claim, but also to assume, that "the nation functions globally today as an irreducible component of identity". Such claims do not admit the complexities and interrelationships of international, national, local and familial identities and cultures. The reinstatement of nation formation, national culture, nationalism, and national identity as a centre of intellectual work in the 1990s reflects a very different historical context to that of either the 1890s or the 1950s however. Whilst the 1980-90s have witnessed a resurgence of nationalism on an international scale, the sovereignty, integrity and independence of nations and nation-states themselves is increasingly problematic in a world described by Jim Falk and Joe Camilleri as a "shrinking, fragmenting world".

Until recently, and in spite of the fact that histories of feminism itself have generally observed national boundaries, Australian feminism shared with internationalist left wing movements a tacit understanding that the study of nationalism was not a high priority. A number of diverse studies of women's mobilisation by the state or nationalist appeals directed specifically towards women were published by the mid 1980s. But the focus of these studies tended to be on theorising gender, particularly motherhood and sexuality, rather than directly addressing the intersections of gender and nation. Feminist studies of women and nationalism were not grounded in theoretical frameworks that saw gender and nation as mutually constitutive, and consequently did not challenge the generalised validity of gender-blind theories of nationalism and national culture, which both failed to theorise nations as made up of gendered subjects and failed to identify the gender-specificity of masculine nationalisms and men's actions.

The diversity of these studies, however, suggested that women's sense of identity with nation and the mobilisation of women in the interests of the state were not well understood. Many studies tended to assume that women's identification of themselves as 'women' would take precedence over their identification as national citizens, and that they could be mobilised in support of, or in opposition to state and nationalist campaigns by appeals to motherhood. (In the Australian conscription campaigns of
World War One, the moral high-ground of motherhood was claimed by those arguing successfully against conscription.43 In the 1980 Canadian referendum on Quebec nationhood, women were persuaded that they should refuse the nationalist claims for independence of Quebec on the grounds that women had a responsibility for conserving the status quo of Canadian federalism.44) The 'specificity' of nation, so significant in the formation of masculine identities, appeared to be offset by the 'universality' of the categories of 'woman' and 'mother'. The study of gender and nation threw into sharp relief the problematic nature of the categories of 'specificity' and 'universality' themselves. As Deniz Kandiyoti has observed recently, the "apparent convergence between the interests of men and the definition of national priorities", on the one hand, and the centrality of the control of women and their sexuality to national processes, on the other, indicate the need to analyse women's integration into nationalist projects.45 Kandiyoti argues that "elements of national identity and cultural difference are articulated as forms of control over women and ... infringe upon their rights as enfranchised citizens".46

The timely publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities—Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* galvanised critical debate around the question of nationalism.47 Anderson's emphasis on the cultural, as opposed to the structural and functional analyses of nationalism, with its insistence on the decisive roles played by language, print media and colonial intelligentsias offered cultural historians and literary scholars a theoretical fulcrum for the study of the process by which nations could be imaginatively forged in written and visual texts. Anderson's study provides a major point of departure for this thesis because of the centrality he accords to notions of imagination and pilgrimage in his analysis. His concept of nations as "imagined communities" assumed an international currency and set the direction of critical debate on nationalism.

More recently, post-colonial literary theory has played a major role in the analysis of Australian colonial and postcolonial culture and literature. But post-colonial theorists frequently acknowledge a debt to Benedict Anderson, even though they may be critical of some aspects of his work. As Adam Lerner comments, Anderson's approach allows other writers "to consider how discourses of exclusion and subordination have proved central to many attempts by nationalists to imagine their nation."48 A feminist deployment of Anderson's theoretical framework should also be a critical one, given the extent to which his argument is founded in a gender-blind analysis which does not
seek to explain the emergence of national consciousness amongst gendered subjects. It is still the case that women's experience cannot be subsumed into cultural analyses that are implicitly formed around the experience of men.

Post-colonial theories of nation formation, nationalism and national culture are concerned with the development of theoretical frameworks which do not define the experiences of all nations and people in terms of the historical experience of Western nations. In doing so, they emphasise the specificity and heterogeneity of nations-information and of nationalisms. For example, Ivor Indyk has proposed that the time has come to re-read Furphy's *Such Is Life* in the light of "renewed interest in the definition of Australian cultural values". "The current attempt to define Australian culture in terms of multiculturalism," he says, "requires us to accept complexity and diversity as positive social values in their own right."\(^{49}\) Indyk brings to his account of Australian literary culture a postmodern, postcolonial mode of interrogation.\(^{50}\) Heterogeneity, understatement, pathos, exoticism and primitivism are identified by Indyk as ironical re-definitions of elements of European literary traditions in an Australian context.

Of particular importance to recent critical interest in national cultures is Homi Bhabha's stress on the ambivalence that is inherent in the narratives through which the idea of a nation is articulated.\(^{51}\) Partha Chatterjee's distinction between the "material" and the "spiritual" aspects of society and culture, which he defines in terms of "outside" and "inside" domains, is richly suggestive for the theorising of women's participation in the formation of national culture.\(^{52}\) For Chatterjee, the Western imperial powers dominated the "outside" domain of the colonial economy, state, science and technology, but nationalism is formed initially in the "inner" cultural-spiritual domain, which is guarded against the incursions of the colonial state. "[I]t is here that nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a 'modern' national culture which is, nevertheless, not Western."\(^{53}\)

Post-colonial theories of nationalism have responded more fully to the challenge to theorise the relationship between gender and nation formation. The recent publication of *Nationalisms and Sexualities*\(^{54}\) in 1992 heralds the emergence of a body of feminist research and theory on gender and nationalism, to which this thesis aims to contribute.
Myths of national origins and nation formation

In myths of Australian national origins, this thesis argues, the journey has functioned as a central metaphor for the formation of the nation. The journey—in its most elementary formulation of departure, passage and arrival—is employed as an analytic device for interrogating meaning imparted to, and constructed through gender-coded spaces and passages within and between imaginatively differentiated spaces. It follows that attention is paid to boundaries and borders within and across which such movement may, or may not occur. Transforming terrain into territory is a physical and an imaginative act of great significance for nation formation and plays a central role in Australian myths of origins.

The interlinking concepts of nation formation and journeying are not peculiar to Australia. On the contrary, it is argued here, the notion of the journey is deeply embedded in the perception of national origins generally. Early modern European explorers and 'discoverers' contributed to this process by rendering 'new lands' meaningful in language. Arguably, the first of these 'new lands' to be claimed as national territory was that which was contained within national boundaries. Henri Lefebvre describes the nation's relation to space as constituted in two 'moments'. The first of these is the creation of a market in a hierarchy of centres and the national capital. The second is the extension of political power from the national centre to control and exploit the resources of the market. "Nationhood," Lefebvre observes, "implies violence". The combination of these two processes produces the space of the nation-state. But that space, if it is to be integrated into the systems of legitimation on which nation-states depend, must be rendered imaginatively if not physically accessible to national subjects. It is this imperative that generates the "necessity of narration" observed by a number of postcolonial literary theorists.

Nationalism involved not only identification with other people as fellow 'nationals', but also the stretching of the domain of identity beyond the horizon of physical experience to the national border—this far and no further. Imaginative and physical exploration of wild lands and travel to unfamiliar parts that lay nevertheless within national borders effected an absorption of territory and inhabitants into apparently coherent and unified nations. The initial colonisations were intra-national. The experience of this process was asymmetrical, of course. The metropolitan 'traveller' anticipated the role of coloniser; the far-flung 'native', the colonised. The incorporation of distant and 'foreign' communities within the nation was concurrently a search for national origins.
The urban, literate, early modern traveller was engaged in a process of constructing spatial breadth and temporal depth to the imagined nation. As Ana Maria Alonso has observed, "national chronologies establish both a historical right to a specific territory and a territorial right to a particular history. The nation appropriates the totality of the history enacted in its territory, ... and the totality of the territory dominated during this history is also claimed for the nation. Territory and history are the privileged political spaces within which nations are imagined and through which 'sovereignty' is constructed."56

In incorporating outlying pre-modern rural communities within the national 'community', there could be a perceived restitution of loss of community and identity that modernity occasioned in the cities. The idea of communality was grafted onto nation-states and national social orders through the evocation of heritage achieved through the recovery of folklore and its transmutation into literary form. The articulation of cultures as 'national' was effected through a romantic valourisation of a disappearing pre-modern age. "The evocation of deep sacred origins ... (became) a contemporary, practical means of creating a people," says Timothy Brennan.57 Collecting stories necessitated travel to those areas which had been least affected by modernisation, for it was in these parts that pre-modern cultures seemed most intact. But this contact was, for those outside the metropole, part and parcel of the experience of a colonising modernisation through appropriation of their 'living' cultural forms. The act of collecting and re-telling stories served to create a common national past, but in the process the stories and the cultures from which they were gleaned themselves were transformed. The modern urgency for creating a unifying cultural identity to legitimate the claims of nation-states to exercise authority over subject-peoples and delineated territory coincided with an ambivalent appropriation of the very cultures that were being eroded by the processes of modernization.

Fabled and legendary journeys and quests must have struck a resonant note for these metropolitan travellers—the physical journey generating an appropriate metaphor for their own perceived personal transformation. The authors who appropriated folk tales to write national mythologies could identify with the heroic protagonists' legendary stories, and this identification inflects the mode of narration. This identification observed in the emergence of modern European national cultures is reiterated in Australian bush mythology. The narrator is implicitly the protagonist of the story and he forges a link between city and bush, past and present. "I am an Australian Bushman
(with city experience)," says Lawson's narrator.58

**Myth in oral narrative traditions**

Journeying is a common element of both oral narrative traditions and early modern traveller's tales. The modern literary travel narrative was grafted onto an archaic one, simultaneously articulating new experiences and attitudes while casting them as meaningful in relation to deep-rooted metaphoric significance of the journey, as quest, as rite of passage, as pilgrimage and as the passage of life itself. Jurij Lotman suggests that 'origin of plot' can be discerned in the construct of a journey.59 Lotman's functionalist and structuralist approach, within which functions of characters in relation to plot are defined, has provided a useful starting point for this thesis. Plot in bush mythology tends to be quite simple, but even if this were not the case, the elaboration of the journey narrative rarely impacts greatly on the condition of waiting for those characters whose function is determined by the absence of the protagonist. These are the characters whose problematic incorporation into the imaginative formation of nation is under investigation here. The significance for theories of nationalism and national culture of the presence of immobilised characters in narratives of nation formation is at issue.

In oral narrative traditions and oral histories the articulation and organisation of the story plays a significant part. If the plot tends to remain simple in much bush mythology, then the emphasis falls on the manner in which the story is delivered. Some, but not all, of the writers considered here appropriate the mode of oral narration. Indeed, in the case of Henry Lawson, it has been argued that the source of "The Drover's Wife" lies in anecdotes told by Louisa Lawson.60 In Joseph Furphy's *Such Is Life*, the characters themselves display a great interest in both the form and content of 'yarns'. The methodology employed in the analysis of the narrative sequencing in bush mythology traces its derivation ultimately to Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.61 Propp's syntagmatic structural analysis of the formal organisation of the folktale was based on the linear sequences of elements ("functions") in the stories as reported by informants. The paradigmatic structuralist approach of Claude Levi-Strauss has been more influential over the past two decades in the search for the latent content of myths and in the use of *a priori* binary principles of opposition as the basis of methodology.62 For the purposes of this study, the two approaches are adopted for their heuristic value. Whilst the work of Levi-Strauss has played a major part in identifying the ways in which gender is inextricable from the construction of meaning,
Propp's approach allows greater sensitivity to the movement of the protagonist and the unfolding of plot. There is a reductivist tendency in structuralist analysis that is countered by an analysis of the performance and articulation of the story, on the one hand, and of the textuality of visual and literary works of art, on the other. Viewing language not simply as a vehicle for delivering the story but as the means by which story and meaning are constituted has been a powerful corrective to reductivist decoding strategies in studies of mythologies.

The late nineteenth century paintings and literature which forge an idea of, and attachment to 'Australia' through representing rural environments and life are designated 'bush mythology' in this thesis. The allusion to pre-modern oral traditions which is retained by the term 'mythology' is of value for the study of nation formation. The search for deep-rooted cultural heritage was part and parcel of the process of forming national cultures in general and it was the intention of many writers and painters to give expression to Australia's definitive character. Russel Ward's claim to have named 'the Australian legend' makes an ambivalent claim to both authorship and transmission which echoes Lawson's identification of himself as a 'myth-maker'. Such claims of authorship, with their connotations of self-as-origin and authority, are counter-pointed by a perspective in which both Lawson and Ward are narrators reiterating and thereby re-forming legends. Writing in the early 1970s, Geoffrey Serle commented that the *Bulletin* tapped the folk culture of the pastoral interior which emerged in the forms of song, ballad and yarn. From this perspective, Ward's use of the term 'legend' may be interpreted as a claim to a kind of truth value (an 'effect of truth') for both his own historical work and the images and narratives that he re-constituted as cultural historical 'documents'. An ambivalent shifting between the desire for cultural heritage in a collective oral tradition and the modern claims of authorship is invested in this use of myth. More recently, the question of origins has been posed from within postmodern and postcolonial perspectives in which the myth of the bush, in Ivor Indyk's words, "is one of multiple and indeterminate origins, composed of fragments and echoes of other myths".

**Mythologies—interpretative frameworks**

The concept of mythology underpins the theoretical, interpretative and methodological frameworks of this thesis. But the concept of mythology has itself been determined by the various ways it has been employed by anthropologists, historians, and cultural and literary theorists. The anthropologist Malinowski defined myth as "a charter for the
present-day social order", which functions "to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events". More recently, myth has been used to signify not only a charter, but also a charting, a process of shaping inchoate experiences into culturally meaningful forms. In this usage, 'mythologies' describes a process of mediation between what appears eminently 'knowable' and what remains perceptibly 'unknown'. Myths are seen to evolve in relation to crises and form part of the on-going process of constructing inhabitable worlds. In this sense, mythologies are part of a dynamic history, integrally tied to the notion of collective identity and each community defines its identity through the telling and re-telling of its story.

Roland Barthes' influential semiotic analysis of myth as "a type of speech" also informs the methodology adopted here for reading bush mythology. The relationship of meaning and form in myth is seen by Barthes as a kind of predation or parasitism in which "a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions" is employed as a vehicle for the signification. Barthes deplores this process of signification as inevitably "impoverishing" the prior meaning. "One believes that the meaning is going to die," he says, "but it is a death with a reprieve; the meaning loses its value, but keeps its life, from which the form of the myth will draw its nourishment. The meaning will be for the form like an instantaneous reserve of history, a tamed richness, which it is possible to call and dismiss in a sort of rapid alteration." Myths are formed through a sequence of significations: the sign formed initially becomes a signifier for a new concept in a "second-order signification". As 'meaning-become-form', the newly formed signifier proportionately enriches the concept which it now signifies. Barthes attributes an almost malign agency to this chain of signification. His metaphors of predation, impoverishment, larceny, nutriment and hiding impart an evaluation which is a consequence of his insistence that mythic speech is complicit in the maintenance of a hegemonic cultural order. Barthes, however, restricts his analysis to the functioning of myth as a form of communication. He does not attend to its role in the generation of cultural meaning, assuming that meaning inheres in the structure of signs or the formation of codes which constitute the 'message'. This assumption contributes to the negativity which underpins his now-classic analysis of mass-mediated myths in popular culture. Despite this emphasis, Barthes' work continues to be extremely useful and is utilised here as a component of the methodology in this study.
In particular, his stress on the insistence of repetition is used heuristically in this study to examine not only the repetition of concepts through many forms, but also the repetition of opaque or apparently incidental motifs through a range of texts. Jacques Le Goff, in *The Medieval Imagination*, makes a similar observation about the significance of repetition. Since repetition served to aid memorisation, they are "especially important for the historian of the imagination and of mentalities and sensibilities and as such deserve close study. They are key elements in the formation of collective memory."^72

Myths constitute powerful, if veiled, constructions of meaning which may compete, overlap, contradict, absorb and eclipse one another. The construction and validation of myths occurs in a process in which particular myths and ways of interpreting them may be appropriated into the parlance of dominant discourse, eclipsing and repressing the possibility of other stories or other meanings giving alternative shape to those experiences. The ambivalence that is inscribed in this process of appropriation and repression of meaning finds its parallel in the ambivalence already identified in the postcolonial perspectives on narrations of nation formation. Because the meaning of a myth or a body of myths is conveyed through metaphor and allusion as much as it is by more explicit strategies, myths become the subject of interpretation. In turn, these interpretations are absorbed into the myths themselves: each interpretation is itself an articulation of the myth. Myths, like art, are rarely exhausted by a single reading. Because myths function as a form of historical memory, it is important to bear in mind that like memory, myths record many things we prefer not to have recalled.^73

In this thesis, the use of the term 'mythology' is suggestive also of the importance attached to metaphoric interpretation. It is significant, therefore, that the term 'legend' has been commonplace in reference to both the 'Australian legend' and the 'legend of the nineties' since this term carries particular connotations in relation to truth.^74 Legends may be defined as mythological narratives which tell of events that may be strange and uncanny, but which may nevertheless be thought of as true and which use representational strategies of apparent verification to create 'effects of truth'. They are, for example, frequently grounded in local and specific details: a particular location, a known person, an event which is believed to have taken place. In the introduction to their collection of legends, for example, the Brothers Grimm spoke of a "cooperative union" in which "the undeniable familiarity with the nearby events and the visible
existence of the site together outweigh any doubts about the wondrous events associated with the location".76

The effect of truth is created not only by this grounding in the everyday construction of the 'real world', but also by the manner in which legends are typically recounted. Tales with almost identical themes and structures are told about widely divergent locations and people. Although legends are imparted with a credibility that derives from their known sites, people and events, this specificity is deceptive. Legends, Donald Ward has observed, are most frequently incorporated into conversation to illustrate a point, the matter-of-fact quality imparted through tone of voice suggesting "accounts of events that are interesting enough to warrant telling and re-telling".77 In contrast to the formal closure of fairy-tales, the recounting of legends typically remains open-ended, creating an iconic repetition of the unfolding of action in the narrative structure of representation. The use of realist genre conventions contributes to this sense of the actuality of the events in Australian legends.78 Through the use of such 'effects of truth', the legend achieves a quality of disinterestedness which readily accommodates its role as "mythic speech".79

These observations about legends are pertinent to the understanding of the way legends have contributed to the "halo of disinterestedness" which Benedict Anderson argues characterises nationalism.80 Within mythologies, legends can be seen as employing the literary conventions of realism. Implicit in the realistic recounting of the legend is a denial of the fictionality of the account.

**Exploration, colonisation and representation**

If, as Mikhail Bakhtin says, "(t)he novel's roots must ultimately be sought in fables,"81 then methodological approaches to modern narrative forms may usefully appropriate practices of interrogation developed in relation to oral narrative traditions. But, of course, it is necessary to avoid the trap of thinking of nineteenth century fiction as 'folklore'. The visual articulations of bush mythology do not trace their legacy directly to medieval or folk cultural forms, but, as Bernard Smith argued in 1945, nineteenth century 'plein air' painting played a significant role in establishing the connection between landscape painting and the idea of a national art.82 Yet the plausibility of an intertextual interpretation of the visual and literary works derives from commonalities of form as much as content.
The forms of bush mythology reiterate the centrality of the formative experience of journeying—of exploration, colonisation, migration, settlement—in Australian history. These experiences are in fact integral to modernity globally, but specifically Australian factors are at work in determining the cultural meanings and significance of journeying. Other nations underwent different formative experiences, such as competing imperialist claims to territory, or national independence struggles, or the existence of other adjoining nations in relation to which national sovereignty and unity was organised. Since myths form links with the past analogous to memory, nationalist myths are likely to repress aspects of the formation of the society that are unable to be accommodated in favourable light. Two areas of repressed national memory relate to Aboriginal ownership and convictism. In late nineteenth century Australian representations of nation formation, the still-unresolved question of invasion and annexation of land is posed, but never resolved. Resolution is pre-empted by the symbolic erasure of Aboriginal prior occupancy and continued inhabitation. Distance, isolation, desolation and exile—all of which work to impart to the journey motif its particular inflection—can be understood as the wash of the convict experience.

The visual recording of European colonists' journeys of exploration and observation, which include mapping and representations of people, landforms, animals and plants, find their literary counterparts in the diaries, journals, letters and public commentary of travellers. The overt and ostensible intention was to report and depict 'accurately' what was observed and experienced; that is to say, the conventions within which the reports were prepared generated 'effects of truth' with all the connotations of disinterestedness that attend such implied truth-value. Yet neither the record of observation nor the recounting experience was easily achieved, given the lack of a visual and linguistic means through which to render the new world meaningful. "Inarticulateness," says Lennard Davis, "is the recurrent feature of unclaimed territory that cannot be understood through recognizable European signs." From the first sight, the reports about the land were motivated by the purposes for which expeditions had been launched, whether they were hopes of exploitable natural resources, trade or colonial territories. Representation has never been a transparent record, and it is well to bear in mind that as the visual and literary modes of articulation evolved, so too did the purposes which motivated the desire for information about the 'new country'. But significantly for this thesis, those purposes have, by and large, been bound up initially with colonisation and subsequently with the
nation formation. Mapping, descriptive drawing and various form of reporting contributed to the privileging of realism in both visual and literary cultural forms of the late nineteenth century and played a role in the ways in which that realism was achieved. The close relationships between late nineteenth century Australian painting, on the one hand, and press photography and illustration, on the other, has been the subject of a number of art historical studies. The spatial rendering of bush mythology is informed, therefore, by the evolution of spatial description that was called into play by exploration, scientific investigation, surveillance, publishing and colonisation, all manifestations of the drive to control and exploit that powered modernity.

Map-making and official reportage were intended to provide practical information with minimal symbolic, emotional or subjective intervention. Nevertheless the forms and subjects of maps and reports were determined to a large extent by the intentions of those who required and provided information. Intentionality and anticipated audiences play an even greater role in paintings and fictions which knowingly imbue their subjects with symbolic meaning. Ian Burn comments that "the process of mapping the landscape into the imagination continues to create visual metaphors for the new society... In a country urbanised before the landscape was colonised, a 'geography' of the land continues to be shaped as much by imagination as by reality." Tim Bonyhady drives this point home when he observes that changes in the themes of nineteenth century Australian landscape painting were responses to, not simply illustrations of changes in land-use in the colonies. "Far from simply chronicling the progress of European settlement," he says, "artists developed a series of opposing or contrasting images of Australian scenery."

The three initial themes Bonyhady identifies are an antipodean arcadia occupied only by Aborigines enjoying a bountiful existence; a pastoral arcadia occupied by squatters, sheep and cattle from which Aborigines were erased; and a magnificent wilderness which settlers had entered but not yet tamed. While the first two of these themes had lapsed by the 1860s, the wilderness theme retained currency throughout the century. Two new thematic representations emerged between 1860 and 1880: Louis Buvelot's domesticated countrysides frequently occupied by women, and less frequently by children; and the melancholy landscapes which were the visual counterparts of Marcus Clarke's description of "weird melancholy" of the bush. From the late 1880s landscape painting was informed by impressionism, plein air painting and aestheticism in
recording midday heat and glaring sunshine or twilight and the rising moon. In all these themes is found the intention to describe the appearance of land and to imbue it with meaning in such a manner that it is rendered comprehensible to its white colonisers. It is not until the final years of the century that the urge to invest the landscape with symbolic meaning began to assert any primacy over the representational realism, and then it was to turn the landscape into an *art nouveau* styled setting for European fantasies and enchantments.

The territoriality of the nation finds its symbolic equivalence in the locations in prose fiction. In Australian bush mythology, the form of the prose is seen to be grounded in the land itself. As A.G. Stephens commented of Lawson in 1896: "he is an Australian—and one likes to have a little land-plot and a literary-poetry plot to call one's own."90 Patrick Morgan reiterated this view in 1988 when he suggested that the openness of the country and its featurelessness are conducive to "a certain lack of coherence".91 The short story, he said, was a suitable vehicle because it had "little plot and could focus on endlessly repeated daily routines". Furphy's writing reflects the same character of the land and the life it supports, says Morgan. "Furphy chose not the short story, but endlessness, which is another way of depicting life apparently without shape."92 Read together, the short stories of such writers as Lawson, Rudd and Baynton build up pictures of the land and its inhabitants in such a way that observations made by literary theorists in relation to the novel can be usefully extended to Australian fiction of the 1890s.

The complex rendering of fictional space, Lennard J. Davis observes, "is involved in a series of more or less hidden, ideological presuppositions about the nature of property and lands, foreign and domestic, the relationship of various races and classes to those lands, and the ways Europeans at various times found it necessary to represent, describe, and control terrains and property."93 As a number of writers have commented, the representation of the natural environment is deeply implicated in the production of space in the novel. Luiz Costa Costa Lima comments that "after its desacralisation, nature becomes the scenario of a narrative, the narrative of the national state."94 Homi Bhabha has also argued that the "recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasises the quality of the light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalise the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression."95
Representations of land and nature played an important role in nation formation because the nation exists in space: it has territory and is defined and described by its territorial boundaries. With Federation, the Australian border was theoretically defined by the sea, but as long as it was not possible to traverse the land, to map it, to criss-cross it with roads and tracks—in short, to know it—the national territory was neither secure nor defined. It was, perhaps, experienced as a form of antipodean reversal that the boundaries of nation formed the physical centre of the territory, and the metropole formed the outmost perimeter.96

In Australian bush mythology, the representation of the land and of the natural order has played a central role, one shaped largely by the perceived hostility of the land to European settlement. As Ian Burn comments, "in Australia the landscape has been held up as a mirror for a 'national psyche' far more than it has a mirror of the 'human soul'."97 In the struggle to domesticate the land for European settlement, the land-as-adversary has become the central motif of nation-formation.98 It ought not be assumed, however, that women were imagined as drawn into the same relationship with the land as men. It is argued in this thesis that a very different relationship with the bush qualifies the representation of women's participation in, and membership of the nation.

**Territory and subjects: the representation of national communities**

Spatiality emerges as a necessary but not sufficient condition of nations. There must be people—citizens and subjects—and the legitimacy and authority of the nation-state is ultimately dependent on their sense of 'nationality' and nationhood. In spite of divisions on the basis of class and gender, of race and ethnicity, and arguably because of them, nations must be formed in the cultural imagination as communities. Thus, representation not only locates nations in territories, but also proposes the terms on which a national community can be imagined. Historically, those terms have inscribed inequality and subordination in nations in the same moment as they have proposed communality across class and gender lines. The Australian study is particularly significant in this respect since the achievement of nationhood coincided with modernisation and industrialisation of the economy with concomitant restructuring of class relations, on the one hand, and restructuring of the gender order on the other. This thesis focuses on the changes and contestation in the gender order and their implications for the incorporation of women as national subjects. It argues that anxiety and conflict over gender relations in the late nineteenth century are inscribed in the
formative representations of nation.

Because of its eloquent incorporation of 'the lower orders' into the national community, realism was a privileged mode of visual representation and literary narration in nineteenth century national discourse. In Australia, Douglas Jarvis notes, the *Bulletin* was likely to describe any literary tendency that treated 'lower class' subjects seriously or sympathetically as realist.\(^9\) As in Europe, realism allowed the serious treatment of everyday life and the incorporation of the lower classes into the imagined national community, subject always to the mediation of bourgeois surveillance. The close alliance between popular imagery and realism has been argued convincingly by Linda Nochlin in the case of realism in mid-nineteenth century France and Leigh Astbury in the case of Australian bush mythology of the late nineteenth century.\(^1\) Nochlin suggests that the use of popular imagery allowed a simplicity and directness in composition by which to signify cultural values which included the regional and folkloric. In realist modes of representation the lower orders became co-terminous with 'the people', in a way that obscured the fundamental difference between the working classes 'produced' by capitalist modernisation and the 'folk' as an expression of a form of communal life which was displaced by this profound shift in political, economic, social and cultural institutions. In the Australian bush mythology, the constitution of a national community entailed these shifts between working class, rural populations and bushmen. It will be argued, however, that the incorporation of women into these national narratives cut across deeply inscribed assumptions about the nature and place of women, rendering the terms of their participation in the national community problematic and unresolved. Though nationalism constructs inter-class communities, it ought not be assumed that it creates 'inter-gender' communities.

Whilst the representation of the national community and territory are necessary components of the imagined nation, a further requirement is the representation of the formative process itself. This process invokes narration so powerfully that in the case of visual representation, an implied narrative is likely to be inserted into the construction of image. This narrative has frequently taken the form of a formulaic struggle of a protagonist whose quest is associated with the achievement of manhood. The roots of this pattern draw sustenance from fables, legends and folklore of oral narrative traditions. The protagonist is at once the hero and the modern nation's 'everyman', the representative of the nation, and its allegorical equivalent.\(^1\) Graeme Turner argues that the dominant mode of characterisation in Australian fiction works
against individuation, undercutting the assumed value placed on individualism in Australian culture. Australian (male) fictional characters, he argues, represent social groups, and are defined in terms of their relationship to the land and their work. The literary and visual representation of Australians is particularly susceptible to the reduction proposed in the nationalist formula "one, yet many".

Not all characters can play out this symbolic role. Lawson's Bush Undertaker, for example, or Mrs Spicer hardly seem appropriate figures to represent the 'solitary hero' of Australian nationalism. Significantly, Brian Matthews' existentialist interpretations of Lawson's stories, to which those offered in this thesis are indebted, overlook the historical, national and gender specificities which are the subject of the present study. For Matthews, the land—"at best indifferent, at worst hostile and pitiless"—and its destructive but poignantly human effects on those who inhabit it are the key elements in Lawson's insight into the human condition. The Bush Undertaker and Mrs Spicer can be read as studies of "madness" or "human disintegration", but they cannot also function as the heroes of the national cast. Nevertheless, their presence in a mythology that imaginatively projected Australia as a nation, and that has been read over and over since as laying the foundations of a national culture, has implications for the way in which Australia is imaginatively formed.

It is argued in this thesis that this figure of the 'one, yet many' in Australian bush mythology is typically the bushman, claiming the territory by traversing the land and taming the territory into productivity through his labour in the name of 'Australia'. The bush through which he travels and against which he labours is constituted narratively as the 'exterior space' of the journey: the home, the 'point of departure and return'. Particularly in Lawson's writing, it is not infrequently the narrator himself who is the bushman and his relationship to the immobile inhabitants of the bush is that of the perceiving subject whose varying and limited capacity for insight and experience and whose viewing position structures the representations of other characters, even where they are the apparent subjects of the story. In this case, the bushman-narrator's placement in and movement through space is as significant for the construction of meaning in the narrative as is the location and lack of mobility of the subjects of the story. Christopher Lee and Kay Schaffer have argued that the critical reception of Lawson's writing has tended to identify Lawson very closely with his subject matter. Lawson himself was to become the "one, yet many" in late nineteenth
century national literary culture. "Henry Lawson is the voice of the bush," wrote A.G. Stephens, "and the bush is the heart of Australia." To the extent that the author is identified with the travelling bushman, his journey becomes that imaginative (and indeed, physical) distance between city and country.

**Gender, modernity and the representation of space**

By the late nineteenth century, spatial description could function not only to construct imagined locations but also to reinforce characterization and meaning and movement of characters through the plot. Elrud Ibsch identifies the following functions for spatial description in prose fiction: prediction of the continuation of the narrative, reinforcement of the content, and metonymic duplication of the psychology or fate of the characters. Realist narrative, Ibsch says, is characterised by a subtle interaction between psychic condition and spatial description. Drawing on the work of Philippe Hamon, Ibsch argues that spatial description in realist narrative results in circularity and redundancy, "the world inspiring in the character a desire materialised in the things of the world and the things reflecting the psychology of the character". Brian Matthews argues that such a strategy allows Lawson to "communicate, somehow, the psychological and spiritual intricacies of people who cannot themselves articulate them". Lawson, he says, conveys "something of the inner life of his inarticulate, reticent, or submerged characters by placing them in an organic world which is the mirror of their own condition".

Since psychological determinants do not play such a significant role in determining the outcomes of the narrative in the naturalist narrative, spatial description serves rather to predict the action. "The selective principle of spatial description is the inescapability, the lack of an escape from the milieu." In the analysis of bush mythology undertaken in this thesis, descriptions of the bush are seen to serve both these functions. The conclusion that Ibsch reaches in relation to both realism and naturalism has relevance to the study of bush mythology:

In spite of the important function which spatial description has as an explanatory and/or predictive factor vis-a-vis the level of action, it is action which contributes primarily to the construction of meaning in the Realist and Naturalist narrative. The main signifiers are the changes occurring in the conditions of the characters in the course of time; these changes are either steered actively or endured passively.
But, as Brian Matthews has argued of Lawson's work, Ivor Indyk and G. W. Turner of Furphy's, Shirley Walker of Baynton's and Leigh Astbury of McCubbin's, neither the literature nor the paintings under consideration here are adequately defined within the conventions of realism or naturalism. The genre conventions which are adopted and adapted in bush mythology are muted by both the historical cultural moment—the brink of modernism—and the colonial distance from the cultural soils in which these genres were nurtured. Ibsch's observations in relation to the modernist novel have also been found useful in the interpretation of late nineteenth century Australian texts. The fictional reality of space, Ibsch says, is determined by the perception of characters. In the visual and literary texts examined here, the perceiving subject is frequently the narrator whose relationship to and perception of both the bush and the domestic space differs from that of the (other) characters of the story. This difference in viewing position and perception results in a degree of ambiguity in the construction of the meaning which is inscribed into the delineation, differentiation and definition of exterior space—the bush—and interior space—the domestic domain.

Griselda Pollock sums up modernism as "essentially a literature about transformations in the public world and its associated consciousness". Her definition of nineteenth century modernity as a "product of the city" is a useful one, allowing for differences between European and Australian contexts.

It is a response in a mythic or ideological form to the new complexities of a social existence passed amongst strangers in an atmosphere of intensified nervous and psychic stimulation, in a world ruled by money and commodity exchange, stressed by competition and formative of an intensified individuality, publicly defended by a blasé mask of indifference but intensely 'expressed' in a private, familial context.

Since the spaces of feminity were restricted in relation to those defining modernity, the distinctions made and reinforced in modernity between public and domestic spaces, she observes, "problematized women's relation to the very activities and experiences we typically accept as defining modernity". The spatial experience of modernity, says Pollock, was defined not only in terms of physical access to public space but also in terms of a gender-specific visual access to the "spectacular" city. The spaces of feminity are defined by "a different organisation of the look".

Consequently, in terms of sexual difference, two implications follow from the issues of
space and perception in bush mythology. The first is that mobile male characters (the bushmen) and immobilised characters (the mad, the bad and the women) have different relationships to the bush and domestic spaces they occupy. The second implication, arising out of these differences of location and relationship, is that male observers and narrators bring to their task of representation a partiality of sight and perception.

The question of male observation of domestic space and its artefacts is the subject of Norman Bryson's study of still life painting *Looking at the Overlooked*. From his observation of Dutch seventeenth century interior painting, Bryson notes that women—both as subjects and as painters—are "truly at home" in domestic space in a way that men are not. By contrast, he says (t)he asymmetry of the sexes with regard to domestic life constantly works to place the male painter of still life in a position of exteriority to his subject."\(^{118}\) The male painter effectively colonises the household, positioning himself as its perceptual centre. But he is "peering into a zone that does not concern him directly", which "cannot be known from the inside." The result, Bryson concludes, is "often the production of the uncanny: although everything looks familiar, the scene conveys a certain estrangement and alienation..."\(^{119}\) Bryson employs Freud's notion of the uncanny to argue that the domestic domain is inflected with the mystique of the maternal body, separation from which is pivotal to masculine subject formation and his ability to stake his claim in the public domain. Since Bryson theorises the separation of domestic and public domains in terms of the oedipal transition of male subjects, feminine space appears not only alien but also simultaneously menacing and fascinating. Elsewhere I have criticised Bryson's underlying thesis which interprets domesticity and the feminine in terms of human 'creaturality', as he calls it, for implicitly locating domestic life and mothering practices outside history—for effectively naturalising what is both historically and cultural specific.\(^{120}\) Nevertheless, Bryson's analysis of the way in which domestic space is constituted by male observation is pertinent to late nineteenth century representations of domestic life.

This discussion of space and its perception in determining meaning in narrative and visual representation has implications for theorising the formation of nations as imagined communities. It is argued in this thesis that domestic life appears to be cut adrift from the public world in which nations are formed. Domestic space seems at once set apart from the public domain and located outside the temporal framework within which 'significant' historical events occur. Domestic life is constituted
discursively around an implied universality of both woman and domesticity and women's maturation is represented as accompanied by increased domestic confinement. Appearances, however, can be deceptive. It is not the case that domestic life is the neglected domain of historical change. The very separation of public and domestic milieus is an effect of the processes of modernity, to which the emergence of the nation-state and national culture also belong. Domestic life may be rendered opaque by the position from which it is viewed, but that may tell more about the viewer and the viewing position than it does about domesticity. The rhetorical insistence on the separation of domestic and public life has that quality of "protesting too much", which suggests that far from domesticity being experienced as 'time out' from the perplexing experience of change in the public arena, modernization was again re-forming domestic life and its relations with other arenas of social activity. If bush mythology insists on the inviolability of the domestic domain, then this must be seen as a response to the mutual interpenetration and re-structuring of domestic and public life at the turn of the century.

One conclusion from this analysis is that Australian narrative representations of nation formation are inscribed with uncertainty and 'moral panic' in relation to gender relations and domestic life. A further conclusion is that women's participation in nation formation is inexplicable from within the conventions of bush mythology. It is not, therefore, argued here that women did not, and do not form attachments to and identifications with nation, but rather that these are not explained within the terms of bush mythology.

But these are the same terms under which domestic life has been represented generally speaking in the writing of national histories. The same construction of the separation of public and domestic domains which informs works of the nineteenth century national imagination give shape to contemporary historical writing on that moment in the national past. It becomes necessary, therefore, to examine the over-determination of domesticity by masculine viewing positions in trajectories of historical writing. As Christina Crosby has observed, "men are constituted as historical subjects and find 'man' in history by virtue of locating women elsewhere".

"man" can emerge as an abstraction, can know himself in history, find his origin there and project his end—but only if there is something other than history, something intrinsically unhistorical. "Women" are the unhistorical other of history.
Historical narration and literature

Since history writing is itself a form of narration, the questions relating to narration that are posed for literary narrative apply also to the writing of history. In *Metahistory*, Hayden White defines history as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them". In order to figure 'what really happened' in the past, the whole set of events reported in the documents must be constituted as an historical field, that is, as a possible object of knowledge. This occurs in a precognitive and pre-critical act of prefiguration which is poetic in nature. White concludes that the modes of historiography are in reality formalisations of poetic insights which analytically precede historical explanations.

In this thesis, it is argued that the idea of a journey—physical, imaginative or intellectual—functions as just such a poetic prefiguration. Because the notion of a journey has played an integral role in the way in which nations have been formed imaginatively, its use as a prefigurative device makes it difficult to discern the gender-specificity of theories of nationalism. For example, why does Anderson's use of the notion of pilgrimage to explain the emergence of national consciousness amongst 'fellow-travellers' not ring warning bells, when it is clear that these pilgrim-functionaries will almost inevitably be men? The answer appears to be that the journey functions as a pre-critical device which naturalises specific gender relations, and the reason for its potency appears to lie in the deep-rooted metaphoric use of journeys for intellectual endeavours, from solving problems to reading books. Thus the linearity and spatiality of the journey both constitutes beginnings and endings and imparts to them a stasis and irrelevance that is a function of the structural device. Nation, journey, representation, history—it is the nexus and interrelationships between these centre-stage players that are teased apart by gender enquiry.

The question of fictional and historical narration can be approached from the opposite direction: not only is historical writing comparable to fictional narrative, but fictional narrative has drawn close to the mode of analysis of history. Luiz Costa Lima argues
that the novel, in particular, has aligned itself historically with the form of history in *Control of the Imaginary—Reason and Imagination in Modern Times*.¹²⁶ In particular, Costa Lima argues that Realism sought to "locate its art close to the everyday world, and, what is more, close to the directions dominant in its world." He continues: "It was not by chance that it concentrated on the novel. Because of its narrative form, and the personalised conflicts of its characters, the novel is close not only to the prose of everyday life but also to the narrative form privileged since the end of the eighteenth century: the form of history."¹²⁷ The novel "sought to ignore its original germ in fable," Costa Lima argues, "making itself like history."¹²⁸

Costa Lima draws attention to the close relationship between the disciplines of history and literary historiography and the emergence of the nation-state and a concept of nationhood. Just as nineteenth century History had become by and large a political history of the nation-state, Costa Lima argues, literary historiography became complicit with the interests and values of the national state.¹²⁹ He cites Hans Robert Jauss: "The new history of national literatures, however, became an ideal counterpart to political history, and claimed to develop, through the context of all literary phenomenon, the idea of how national individuality could attain its identity, from quasi-mythical beginnings to the fulfillment of national classicism."¹³⁰

Because of its close alliance with nationalism and the nation-state, history had become a privileged discourse. Consequently, fictional forms which most closely approximated the form of history were accorded the highest value. The nineteenth century realist novel emulated the form of 'scientific' historical writing, the central interpretative device of which was the nation.¹³¹ In doing so, says Costa Lima, it "overlooked" its fictional character. "Nationality was—and is—the means of justifying the veto of fictionality by giving it a 'usefulness'."¹³² Literature sought to justify itself as "a chapter in the history of the nation."¹³³ As a corollary, J.H. Jensen has suggested that it is "strange" that historians' understanding of nationalism is so inadequate given that "historians have had a great deal to do with making nationalism into a common coin in the currency of political and social description."¹³⁴

Costa Lima's analysis of the "veto of imagination" in representations of nation in both realist prose fiction and historical writing is highly suggestive for the literature and paintings of the 1890s that embraced the need to imaginatively project Australia's nationhood as an achievable goal for that decade. If, as Anderson proposes, nations are
"imagined communities", then the act of imagination through which nations are
constituted must necessarily be suppressed. Thus, imaginative literary and visual
works of art are charged with forging an imagined national community in a process that
implicitly denies the fictionality of either the representations or the nation.

Imagination

"Every concept tells a story," Richard Kearney observes in *The Wake of Imagination.*
"And this is nowhere more true than in the case of imagination—itself an indispensable
condition of all story-telling." Though imagination seems to play such a central role
in human culture, it has proven to be an elusive concept. Paul Ricouer analyses
the problematic nature of imagination in Western philosophy by ranging theories of
imagination along two intersecting axes: "on the side of the object, the axis of presence
and absence; on the side of the subject, the axis of fascinated or critical
consciousness".

At one pole of the first axis, Ricouer places *reproductive imagination* in which "the
image relates to a perception of which it is merely a trace, in the sense of a weakened
impression". At the other extreme of the same axis he places *productive imagination* in
which "the image is essentially construed in function of absence, of what is other than
present." The productive imagination, and to a qualified extent, the reproductive
imagination, operate on a second axis "according to whether the subject of imagination
is capable or not of assuming a critical consciousness of the difference between the real
and the imaginary". At one end of this axis, he places non-critical consciousness in
which the image is confused with, or mistaken for the real. At the other end, where
"the critical distance is fully conscious of itself, imagination is the very instrument of
the critique of reality".

From Ricouer's analysis, these variations in the ways in which the concept of
imagination has been theorized appear considerable and perhaps irreconcilable. "What
after all," Ricouer asks, "could be in common between the state of confusion which
characterizes that consciousness which unknown to itself takes for real that which for
another consciousness is not real, and the act of distinction which, highly self-
conscious, enables consciousness to posit something at a distance from the real and
thus produce the alterity at the very heart of existence?" In general, however, there
appears to be considerable slippage and elision between these uses of the term.
This analysis is of great value in investigating the concept of imagination and the apparent necessity for its "veto" in late nineteenth century literary and visual texts, and indeed in contemporary historical writing in relation to nation formation. The idea of imagination was very much in the minds of nineteenth century commentators as they strove to understand its relationship to their experience of modernity and to the now-dominant discourses of realism and rationalism, epitomised in scientific thought. Jochen Schulte-Sasse notes that radical social and material changes occasioned by modernisation "profoundly changed the conception of the imagination and, presumably, the imagination itself".140 Says Kearney:

With nature becoming increasingly dominated by the mechanistic principles of the positive sciences, and society riven apart by the industrial strife and exploitation of expanding capitalism, imagination felt more and more compelled to recoil into a magical world of its own making.141

While the imagination could take free reign in artforms which were ostensibly separated from everyday life and the legitimation of social orders, the uncertainty of that separation ensured that the concept of imagination would play an ambiguous role in relation to modernity. Jochen Schulte-Sasse suggests that from the eighteenth century two reactions were common. The first was a fear of the disruptive potential of the imagination, leading to the necessity that it be "tamed" by reason. The second reaction was a concern that imagination, alternatively seen as a mode of critical resistance to modernity and counterforce to rationality, might be unable to survive the process of modernisation. The resolution of this ambiguity lay in the separation of art from everyday life and the exclusion of the imagination from discourses that most directly legitimated the existing social order. "Human subjectivity," Kearney continues, "could ostensibly continue to be creative in spite of history—by negating history."142 Contained within the field of art, the 'productive' imagination could be given free reign. Such 'untamed fancy' which infringed other areas of human activity would necessarily be held in tight check.
Nation formation and the distrust of imagination

It goes without saying that nation formation was a central area of human activity into which this 'productive' imagination must not intrude. Consequently narratives—including fictional and historical writing—and visual representations of nation were beyond the bounds of the 'aesthetic' imagination. At the same time, however, they were dependent on the capacity of imaginative work to represent aspects of Australian life and culture as 'national'. But, as many studies of bush mythology have shown, this representation cannot be adequately understood as simply an act of 'reproduction' of something that had a prior existence. The artistic intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century was engaged in a process of producing a nation, but the effective outcome of this process entailed a masking of that productive process. While bush mythology is, as Ricouer puts it, 'an image construed in function of absence', it was this absence that was necessarily repressed. This is why the 'effects of truth'—legends, realism—play so insistent a role in national mythologies. The product of imagination is construed as a representation of the real in a way which erases the imaginative process. At the same time, the nationalist ideological role that bush mythology has played in nation formation has tended to depend to a large extent on a response of 'fascination' in which representations of nation are 'confused with reality'.

To what mode of imagination does Anderson himself refer when he names nations as 'imagined communities'?

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.

Anderson implicitly compares the image of communion with the reality of face-to-face contact, of which this imagined communion is, in Ricouer's words, a trace, or a weakened impression. Such a usage implies a 'reproductive' imagination. However, Anderson's subsequent evocation of imagination tends towards a concept of a 'productive' faculty. His citing of Gellner makes this usage clear: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist."

Regardless of this degree of slippage, along Ricouer's second axis Anderson's use of
imagination seems consistently closer to the pole of 'state of confusion'. His treatment of the 'nation as imagined community', an idea formed within nationalist discourse, lies closer to a notion of a non-critical consciousness incapable of discriminating between the real and the imaginary, than the notion of highly conscious, critical imagination which, in positing a distance between the real and the imaginary, becomes the instrument of the critique of reality. That Anderson conceives of the imaginings of nation in terms of a non-critical consciousness is implicit in his qualifications of them as "limited" and "shrunken". The central problem posed by nationalism, he says, is the willingness of millions of people, not to kill, but to die for such limited imaginings. He asks, "what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history (scarcely more than two centuries) generate such colossal sacrifices?"\textsuperscript{146}

Nevertheless, Anderson's treatment of the notion of imagination seems unresolved. The textual quality of his writing imparts a more complex, but also more heroic quality to the act of imaging nations into historical existence. His thesis as a whole does not sit easily with his assertion that these are "shrunken" imaginings. Anderson appears to share the paradoxical resistance to the notion of imagination that is intrinsic to the representations and narratives within which nations are imaginatively formed.

This paradox is enacted in bush mythology of the late nineteenth century. Lawson's apparent distrust of imagination can be inferred from the associations he draws between delusive madness and imagination. McCubbin's paintings of children observing fairies reinforce both the childishness of imagination and, read in the light of an interest he shared with many of his contemporaries in the 'lost child' theme, the danger of succumbing to such fantasy. To return to Ricouer's schema, it appears that these late nineteenth century artists understood imagination as 'productive' but also as "fascinated", a confusion of fairies and hallucinations with reality. The distrust of fantasy and delusion, forms of imagination associated respectively with childishness and madness, acted as a prohibition of productive imagination. This wariness of imagination informs subsequent criticism of the literature as much as it finds expression in the writing of the late nineteenth century. A. A. Phillips' comment that Barbara Baynton was "driven by the need to free her own spirit from nightmare obsessions" implies that her writing expressed her own inability to distinguish the product of her imagination from the real world.\textsuperscript{147} The idea of a productive imagination generating images of what lay outside the realm of experience and perception was understood as an inability to distinguish between the real and the illusory worlds.
This relationship between the imaginative formation of the texts themselves, the treatment of imagination as content and subject matter, and the formation of 'Australia' as an imagined community is examined in this thesis. Henry Lawson, Joseph Furphy, Steele Rudd and Frederick McCubbin—writers and painters who consciously articulated a concept of 'Australia' and sought to contribute to its cultural formation—all display a direct interest in imagination, typically in its negative association with madness, hallucination, childishness, and generally restricted to the margins of what might be called the nationalist centres of their work. In the formal and stylistic sense, these artists appear resistant to the use of imagination as an instrument of their own practice. Such a use of imagination would implicitly undermine the 'truth claims' made in the work.

Barbara Baynton's more explicit use of imagination as a mode of practice imparts a very different ambience to her *Bush Studies*. Whilst her writing is not informed by the nationalist commitment of other bush writers, it frequently investigates the same aspects of bush life from the 'under side'. Her stories bring to light what is repressed in nationalist bush mythology. They are subversive not only of the idealisation of bush culture: to the extent that bush culture lays the foundations of national culture, they are subversive of the imaginative formation of the nation. The work of Baynton, and that of other female writers and painters discussed in this thesis, can be read as a reproduction of the middle-class woman's relationship to patriarchal modernity. As Terry Lovell observes of gothic fiction, "the relationship it reproduced is a deeply ambivalent one, which protested while it submitted. It may be read as conciliatory, reconciling women to their own subordination. It may also be read as reproducing and reinforcing women's characteristic fears of male domination, their resentment against it, and wish to escape it." Susan Sheridan, Rosemary Moore and Kay Schaffer have criticised attempts to read Baynton's *Bush Studies* in terms of the conventions of realism. Read as a realist writer, says Sheridan, Baynton "offends by drifting out of control into melodrama and sentimentality", and even "distracts from the Gothic mode by being too satirical." Baynton is seen by these feminist critiques as using the conventions of the bush story to critique both the genre and the values endorsed by masculinist bush mythology and realist criticism. Similarly, Dorothy Jones has argued for the subversive quality of Mary Gaunt's *Kirkham's Find*. Mary Gaunt, she says, accepts the masculinist nationalist contrast between the man's world of the bush and the fertile arcadian realm of women, "but
subverts it by dismissing the male world as sterile and peripheral and giving prominence to the female domain".\textsuperscript{154}

By subverting the conventions of realism within which the nation has been imaginatively formed, women writers (and to a lesser extent, painters) contested the mode of imagination itself, and the realist use of 'effects of truth' which mask the process of imagination. Oddly, in the light of criticism of Baynton, it may be her work which represents the potential of imagination as the "instrument of the critique of reality", and the robust realism of conventional bush mythology may be founded on a "fascination" which confuses the image for the real.

Towards a history of imagination

The 1890s was a remarkable moment in Australian history. This thesis does not attempt to survey the social, political, economic and cultural changes of the late nineteenth century in their entirety but concentrates on the relationship between two significant arenas: nation formation and gender order. It argues that change, contestation and crisis in relations between men and women enacted in both public and domestic domains, and re-formation of those domains played a significant role in the imaginative formation of the nation. Since Australia is virtually unique in the convergence of the emergence of feminism and women's suffrage campaigns, on the one hand, and the formal declaration of nationhood on the other, the Australian case-study has profound significance for the theorizing of the relationship between gender and nation in general.

It is not that the literature and paintings under consideration here should be read as 'documents' of this socio-political history, but rather that contemporary concern arising from changes in gender relations are inscribed in the texts through which Australian nationhood is addressed. By and large these literary and visual texts inscribe conservative responses to gender, against which claims that these works articulate "radical" nationalist values and views should be brought to account. Nevertheless, Dominick La Capra suggests, a restricted reading of literary texts as historical documents "typically engenders a historical narrative that is less self-critical and probing than the literary narratives for which it tries to account".\textsuperscript{155} This study is predicated on the assumption that literary and visual works of art will describe in complex ways the historical possibilities of cultural imagination. Other studies of late nineteenth century discourse have sought to locate contesting voices in other literary
genres—Susan Sheridan's influential essay on romantic fiction is perhaps the prime example of this strategy.\textsuperscript{156}—or in alternative modes of discourse—Marilyn Lake's essay locates ideals of masculinity competing with those conventionally associated with bush mythology in other class-radical publications.\textsuperscript{157} This study investigates the ways in which the apparently robust masculinism of bush mythology is undermined by lack of resolution and anxiety in relation to matters of gender, even as it delineates constricted parameters within which women may act as national subjects. In this sense, there is, of course, some attempt to illuminate aspects of cultural life beyond the texts themselves.

Nor is this an attempt to simply interpret the works in the light of the social contexts of their production. It is well to bear in mind Dominick La Capra's warning that "(i)n the absence of a concern with critical reading and a sensitivity to the problematic relation between texts and contexts, the great temptation of historiography is to veer in the direction of over-contextualisation."\textsuperscript{158} He suggests that contemporary historical writing could learn from the novel's self-critical mode of discourse and argues for a reading of novels which "may alert us not only to the contestatory voices and counter-discourse of the past but to the ways in which historiography itself may become a more critical voice."\textsuperscript{159} Whilst the study does propose interpretations, these are not intended to be definitive. They are interpretations motivated by a particular set of questions, and as such, they do not necessarily satisfy the intellectual curiosities of those who seek answers to different questions.\textsuperscript{160} Previous studies of bush mythology have sought to interpret these texts in their historical moment of writing but have paid too little attention to issues of gender relations and contestation. Kay Schaffer's feminist study \textit{Women and the Bush} examines constructions of the feminine in bush mythology, but is not concerned with the historically specific moment of the 1890s, nor with women as historical actors. In this thesis, though mindful of the trap of over-contextualisation, it is argued that the specific historical contexts of production are inscribed in the construction of gendered narratives of nation formation.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the history of imagination. The 1890s was a moment of historical rupture and there is a sense of temporal dislocation registered in the spatial distance between city and bush in the literature and paintings under investigation. Bush mythology sought to imagine a national community on the basis of representations of the past. But the images from which a nation could be imagined were located in a past which had been cut adrift from the present. What could be imagined was constrained
past. But the images from which a nation could be imagined were located in a past which had been cut adrift from the present. What could be imagined was constrained by a sense of temporal rupture between past and future, given profound disquiet about the present. The production of a 'useable' national past in which women played so marginal a role was counterbalanced against a concern that the future should be invested in a stable, thriving and on-going national community. Such a community, unlike frontier society, would include women and children, and the men would by and large reside in their homes. This sense of temporal dislocation results from a perception of incommensurate difference separating past, present and future.

Anderson offers an explanation of the social and cultural processes by which nations could be formed in the collective imagination. The 1890s appears to have been a moment when that process may have been enacted. But was it possible then to imagine a national community? If it was, and to the extent that it was possible, it is reasonable to assume that the outcome of this imaginative endeavour would be registered in precisely those works which were based on imagination and sought to image the nation. Further, in spite of the scant attention given to the question in even recent theories of nationalism, a national community without women is—should be—unimaginable. Yet, it is this very act of incorporation that seems so difficult, not only for artists and intellectuals of the nineteenth century, but also contemporary historians and critics. As far as the past is concerned, this study will conclude that 'Australia' describes a failure of the imagination.

As for the present, if it is the case that studies such as this one are able to interrogate the boundaries of the cultural imagination, then that very act presupposes the possibility of extending those boundaries. It is ironic that just at the moment when women are asserting their historical agency, the whole question of nationhood should become unravelled.


6 Vicki Steer, "Australian National Identity: Rectifying an All-Male Perspective", paper presented to the *Second Women and Labour Conference*, Melbourne 1980; Conference papers, Volume 2, pp. 518-531. (Note that this paper was not included in the edited papers published as Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (eds), *Worth Her Salt—Women at Work in Australia*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1982.)


In this thesis, the designation of the time-span under discussion is generally "late nineteenth century", and refers to the years between the late 1880s and the early 1900s. The 1890s represent the core of this period. The view that the 1890s has been itself the subject of mythologizing has been argued convincingly by both literary and art historians. This thesis does not rest on the claim that the decade of the 1890s witnessed the self-conscious laying of the foundations of national schools of literature and painting, but rather argues that the literature and painting under consideration here permits insight into the process of imagining Australia as a national community at a significant moment in the process of achieving nationhood. Such a view does not imply that was a great rupture and rebirth of literature and painting that separates this moment from earlier colonial works. It is possible to draw out similarities and continuities with the past, just as it is possible to point to new grounds and breaks with past practices and products. The artists and writers did not make the avant garde claim that their work represented a break with the past, a new origin of national culture, but they did see their work as contributing to an understanding of what it meant to be "Australian". Their work is characterised by a self-conscious identification with the nation. The fact that the 1890s imagination has been mythologised over and over since then has meant that the kinds of ambivalence that are inscribed in these works has continued to resonate through modern concepts of Australian "character", "way of life", "identity" and most recently "national culture". For further discussion, see: John Carroll (ed.), *op. cit.*; Richard White *Inventing Australia—Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1981; David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion—A Search for Australian Cultural Identity*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1976; Chris Wallace-Crabbe (ed.), *The Australian Nationalists*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1971;


26Debates amongst art historians concerned with sources, influences, styles and origins have implications for the way in which late nineteenth century painting is named. The 'Heidelberg School' implies a collective and mutually interdependent artistic process, but privileges a specific group of Melbourne painters, and therefore constitutes a partial (in both senses of the word) account. The debate around the label "impressionist" tends to focus on the relationship between Australian artists and French Impressionism, with a number of authors pointing to other European influences and to Australian colonial popular imagery. 'Plein airism' denotes the


29Marilyn Lake, "Women, Gender and History", *Australian Feminist Studies*, nos 7 & 8, Summer 1988, p. 5; Susan Sheridan, "Louisa Lawson, Miles Franklin and Feminist Writing, 1888-1901", *Australian Feminist Studies*, nos 7 & 8, Summer 1988, pp. 30-1. Susan Magarey has argued that feminist historians in the 1970s-80s were not sympathetic to the platforms and campaigns of late nineteenth century feminism because of its apparent endorsement of bourgeois domestic ideology. Susan Magarey, "Jane and the Feminist History Group", *Australian Feminist Studies*, nos 7 & 8, Summer 1988, pp. 115-153.

30Ann Galbally notes that many myths about the Heidelberg School were a product of "the wash of sentimental nationalism which flowed through Australian institutions in the 1920s". Artists themselves contributed to this mythmaking in relation to their work of the 1890s through their recollections and reconsiderations of their careers in the light of a subsequent nationalist commitment. Ann Galbally, "Mythmaking in

Graeme Turner, *op. cit.*


Andrew Parker, *et al.(eds)*, *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992, p. 3. An alternative approach is proposed by Jeff Archer, who distinguishes between 'ideology', 'doctrine' and belief. "When all other forms of political identity are made subservient to nationality, and more than this, where political doctrine is replaced by political ideology, and where politics is understood in ideological terms to be a process whereby the "nation's destiny" is realised, then we have nationalism." (p. 85) Defined thus, Archer concludes that "Australia is a land where beliefs often do not add up to coherent doctrines, where culture is fragmented and frequently not constrained by nationality." (p. 91) Borrowing Salman Rushdie's observation made in relation to Pakistan, Archer suggests that Australia may be "unsufficiently imagined by its inhabitants". Jeff Archer, "But Is It Australian Nationalism?" *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1990, pp. 84-93.

Judith Allen has argued that the privileging of national studies of feminism over comparative and international studies has given a mandate to parochialism, most notable in English and American studies. "It is time," she says, "that historians of feminism pursued the implications of feminism's internationalism since the late nineteenth century." Judith Allen, "Contextualising Late Nineteenth Century Feminism: Problems and Comparisons", paper presented to Conference of the Canadian Historical Association, University of Victoria, British Columbia, May 1990.


Anna Davin's influential study traces the historical emergence of a nationalist/imperialist discourse of motherhood; Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", History Workshop, no. 5, Spring 1978, pp. 9-65.

For an early study, see Carmel Shute, "Heroines and Heroes: Sexual Mythology in Australia 1914-1918", Hecate, vol. 1, no. 1, January 1975, pp. 6-22.


ibid.


Ivor Indyk, "Some Uses of Myth in Australian Literature", Australian Cultural History, no. 5, 1986, pp. 60-74; see also, G.W. Turner, "Josephy Furphy and Narrative Art" in Alan Brissenden (ed.), Aspects of Australian Fiction, University
53 ibid., p. 522.
54 Andrew Parker, et al (eds), op. cit..
63 See, for example, Lawson's exchange in 1892 with A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson: Henry Lawson, "Up The Country, A Camp-Fire Yarn, op. cit., pp. 228-9, and "The City
Bushman", *ibid.*, pp. 234-6. Writing of *The Australian Legend* in 1978, Ward observed that "for the last twenty years the book's title has been freely used, in both popular and scholarly circles, without quotation marks or acknowledgements, to indicate the object it describes." Russel Ward, "The Australian Legend Re-Visited", *Historical Studies*, no. 18, 1978, pp. 171.


As I wrote this sentence, I became aware a large brown snake stretched along a line of books on a shelf formed where the slanted roof of my A-frame studio meets the vertical wall, not more than two meters away from my desk. It has now slithered behind the wall. I now write with a bush-hook at my side. The reader is likely to appreciate the irony of this situation.


*ibid.*, p. 118.

The snake re-appeared and has been killed.


For further discussion on the function of medieval past in creating the modern conscious of the past, see Brian Stock, "Historical Worlds, Literary History", in Ralph Cohen (ed.), *The Future of Literary Theory*, Routledge, New York and London, 1989, p. 49.


The use of this phrase is borrowed from Ana Maria Alonso, *op. cit.*, p. 33.


As a number of writers have pointed out, however, writers of the 1890s frequently employed devices that worked against these 'effects of truth', such as the narrative conventions of a yarn, a tall story or a joke, or an unreliable narrator whose observations must be viewed with circumspection. See Robert White, "Grim Humour in Short Stories of the 1890s" and G.W. Turner, "Joseph Furphy and Narrative Art", in Alan Brissenden (ed.), *Aspects of Australian Fiction*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands W.A., 1990, pp. 17-39, and 41-52 respectively; Dorothy Jones and Barry Andrews, "Australian humour", in Laurie Hergenhan et al. (eds.), *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1988, pp. 60-76.


For studies of European familiarization, mapping and naming of Australia, see Ross Gibson, *South of the West: Postcolonialism and the Narrative Construction of


87 See, for example, Leigh Astbury, City Bushmen, op. cit.; Nigel Lendon, "Ashton, Roberts and Bayliss: some relationships between illustration, painting and photography in the late nineteenth century", in Anthony Bradley and Terry Smith (eds), op. cit.


90 A.G. Stephens (Bulletin, May 1896), response to E.E. Morris' review (Bulletin, April 1896) of Lawson's In the Days When the World was Wide, cited in Leon Cantrell, "A.G. Stephens, The Bulletin, and the 1890s", in Leon Cantrell (ed.), Bards, Bohemians and Bookmen: Essays in Australian Literature, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1976, p. 112. Colin Roderick was making a similar point in 1966 when he wrote that "Steele Rudd concentrated on bringing the Australian story into contact with the Australian earth. And unless a story is associated with the Australian ethos, unless it mirrors a pattern of Australian life, it is hard to see how it can be called Australian." Colin Roderick, Henry Lawson: Poet and Short Story Writer, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1966, p. 57.


92 Patrick Morgan, ibid., p. 248.

93 Lennard J. Davis, op. cit., p. 54.

94 Costa Luiz Lima, Control of the Imaginary—Reason and Imagination in Modern Times (trans. Ronald W. Sousa), Theory and History of Literature, vol. 50,

95 Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation", in Homi K. Bhabha, op. cit., p. 295.

96 Ross Gibson has argued the significance of the construct of the unknown and unknowable centre of Australia in a number of publications, including Ross Gibson, "Formative Landscapes", Back of Beyond, 1988, pp. 21-32; Ross Gibson, The Diminishing Paradise, op. cit.; Ross Gibson, "On "The Back of Beyond"", interview conducted by O'Regan, T., Shoesmith, B. and Moran, A. (5 December 1986), Continuum, vol. 1, no. 1, 1987.

97 Ian Burn, op. cit., p. 8.


101 Once again, this observation has been made recently by a number of writers. Brennan suggests that historically the novel accompanied the rise of nations "by objectifying the 'one, yet many' of national life." (Timothy Brennan, op. cit., p. 49.) Anderson observes that "we see the 'national imagination' at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside." (Benedict Anderson, op. cit., p. 35.) The many as one, says Homi Bhabha, is "the spatial expression of a unitary people." (Homi Bhabha, op. cit., p. 294).


105 Brian Matthews, The Receding Wave: Henry Lawson's Prose, Melbourne


111*ibid.*, p. 200

112Elud Ibsch, *op. cit.*, p. 101

113*ibid.*, p. 102


116*ibid.*

117*ibid.*, p. 84.

ibid., p. 170. Note that a similar conclusion was drawn in Sue Rowley, "Inside the Deserted Hut," _Westerly_, 1989.


This, of course, is the problem of periodisation re-formulated.

Costa Luiz Lima, _op. cit._

ibid.

ibid.

ibid., p. 39.


The relationship between realism and rationality is discussed by Paul Gillen. Gillen defines the realist aesthetic as "a striving to establish consensus by situating subjective experience within an objective social and historical framework" (p. 102). Paul Gillen, "'Commitment Is All': The Aesthetic Foundations of Nationalism", _Writing Australian Culture: Text, Society, and National Identity_, ed. Julie Marcus, _Social Analysis_ (special issue), no. 27, April 1990, pp. 102-109. See also Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth: "Realism proceeds on the assumptions of Renaissance humanism and science: nature is uniform; space and time are homogeneous; the fundamental order of the universe can be illuminated by the light reason."; Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, _Realism and Consensus in the English Novel_, University Press, Princeton, 1983.

Luiz Costa Lima, _op. cit._, p. 120

ibid., p. 112.


*ibid.*, p. 401.

*ibid.*

Keamey's narrative definition of imagination is indebted to Ricouer's analysis. He suggests four main usages of the term:

1. The ability to evoke absent objects which exist elsewhere, without confusing these absent objects with things present here and now.
2. The construction and/or use of material forms and figures such as paintings, statues, photographs etc. to represent real things in some 'unreal' way.
3. The fictional projection of non-existent things as in dreams or literary narratives.
4. The capacity of human consciousness to become fascinated by illusions, confusing what is real with what is unreal. *ibid.*, p. 16.


*ibid.* (emphasis in original).

Douglas Jarvis has discussed the Bulletin's rejection of aestheticism, along with romantic idealisation and classicism on moral and ideological grounds. Realism was valued because it was seen to express radical, egalitarian and nationalist values, and most closely approximated a 'scientific' method of observation. Douglas Jarvis, "The Development of an Egalitarian Poetics in the Bulletin, 1880-1890", *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, May 1981, pp. 22-34.

Christopher Lee has argued that Lawson's contemporaries found his writing objective, accurate and 'artless', and saw these aesthetic values as the foundations of a national literature. Christopher Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-122.


Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Methuen, London,
Like Baynton, the female painters who participated in the 'plein air' movement were less likely than their male counterparts to see their work as representing a notion of 'Australia'. The subjects of their work were most frequently domestic locations and women at work in the fields or their backyards. Helen Topliss, *The Artists' Camps: 'Plein Air' Painting in Australia*, 1992, op. cit., p. 17. See also Victoria Hammond and Juliet Peers, *Completing the Picture—Women Artists and the Heidelberg Era*, Artmoves, Hawthorn East, 1992; exhibition catalogue, *Completing the Picture—Women Artists and the Heidelberg Era* (curated by Victoria Hammond and Juliet Peers), Heide Park and Art Gallery (and touring), 1992.


Susan Sheridan, *ibid.*, p. 73.

Rosemary Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Dorothy Jones, "Water, Gold and Honey: A Discussion of *Kirkham's Find*", in Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), *op. cit.*


Marilyn Lake, "The Politics of Respectability", *op. cit.*, pp. 116-131

Dominick La Capra, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

ibid., p.132

However interpretations rarely exist in total isolation from one another. This study owes a debt to Brian Matthews, whose questions to Lawson's writing nevertheless appear to be motivated by different experiences and values.