Gender and nation formation in late nineteenth century

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NOTE

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CHAPTER 9
MATESHIP AND MARRIAGE

Introduction
The journey motif is deeply imbedded in bush mythology, and generates a basic plot formula which consists in a departure from interior space, an 'adventure' in exterior space, and a return to interior space. Characters who are unable to begin the journey or who are unable to complete it by a return to interior space have been the subject of the previous chapters. These characters have been understood to be immobilised in that they are unable to cross and re-cross the border delineating interior and exterior space. They are also generally represented in bush mythology as isolated, because within the basic plot structure their function is determined by their relationship to the mobile journeying characters, from whose point of view they are implicitly perceived. The relationship of these characters to the imagined national community is problematic because they appear not to belong to any community. Rendered marginal to the processes of nation formation, there appears to be no mechanism for incorporating these characters into the nation.

The idea of nations as imagined communities requires some representation of the networks of relationships that together constitute communities. Perhaps the most familiar mythical community in Australian national culture is that of the bushmen, journeying and labouring to tame the land. Their place of return is constituted as the home and conjugal family, and this is represented as domestic and private. The community that journeying men form is one based on male fraternalism, for which the term 'mateship' has been widely adopted in Australia. However, mateship can be understood as a manifestation of a much wider phenomenon of fraternalism. By relating mateship to early modern fraternalism, it is argued in this chapter that the masculine community of journeying bushmen, constituted as a transitory one, and the bonds that consolidate it are those of a 'cohort' of men undergoing a ritual journey.

The completion of this ritual in the imaginary formation of Australian national culture in the late nineteenth century is imagined as a return to the domestic sphere frequently marked by a marriage. Because the domestic sphere is represented as adrift from and in opposition to the public domain, it is only infrequently seen to be part of a wider community. The domestic sphere is secluded and privatised in its representation. And, as has been argued in earlier chapters, those within the domestic sphere are seen as isolated and confined. It has been argued that in the late nineteenth century the relations
of the domestic and public domains were undergoing transformation. The relations of
men and women within the domestic sphere appeared to have reached a critical point,
characterised by both estrangement and conflict over the exercise of authority.
Consequently, in representation, marriage and mateship were constructed as two sides
of a coin, mateship seen as offering what marriage was seen to lack. Consideration of
the question of point of view, which has played a significant part in the analysis in
previous chapters, is pertinent also in the representation of marriage and mateship.

With the anticipation of Federation in 1901, the frontier society of men was
imaginatively cast into the past. The concern for the future of the new nation was not
only to have a 'useable' past to draw on, but to give expression to an imagined
national community that was stable, thriving and on-going. Such a community, unlike
frontier society, would include women and children, and the men would, by and large,
reside in their homes.

These two communities—traveller and sedentary societies—are implicit in the analysis
of nationalism by Benedict Anderson. Anderson's two mechanisms for the formation
of nationalism are the pilgrimage, on the one hand, and the "communion" of readers,
on the other. His prefiguration of his study through the motifs of 'journey' and
'reading' heightens the sense of potential dysjuncture between the imagined bonds of
those engaged in these activities, and the consequent rupture between them and within
the national community they collectively imagine into existence.

**Benedict Anderson: cultural homogeneity and national bonds**

Anderson employs the metaphor of the pilgrimage to describe the emergence of
nationalist ideology and commitment within colonial intellectual and administrative
leaderships. The vast majority of the population, however, do not embark on such
'journeys', whether these are seen as entailing actual travel, social mobility or an
expansion of mental and cultural horizons. Anderson also asks how the general
population might have come to form bonds of community with others whom they had
never met in face-to-face interaction. The community of nation, he argues, is formed
and sustained in the imagination:

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.²
Anderson compares "the image of communion" that binds people to each other as a nation with a different order of bonds experienced in "face-to-face contact". The imagined bonds are those which are not formed in the knowing, meeting, or hearing of, fellow-members or realised in face-to-face interaction. He views the imagined nation as a linguistic community formed through the use of vernacular, print-languages and the widespread dissemination of print-media facilitated by capitalism. The convergence of capitalism and print technology, he argues, created the possibility of a new form of imagined community by connecting "fellow-readers" in a "mass ceremony" in which "each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion":3

These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally-imagined community.4

It was the colonial newspaper, Anderson argues, that created a sense of the interrelatedness of the disparate events and relationships that occurred within the perimeters of the colonial administrative territory and so gave 'shape' to the kind of imagined community that would resist and eventually supercede dynastic and imperial rule.

The bonds of nation are no less strong for being imagined. Anderson describes the emotional attachment men feel for the nation in terms of fatalism, disinterestedness, purity and sacrifice. In everything 'natural', he observes, there is always something unchosen and therefore natural bonds appear to be the products of fate, and "precisely because such ties are not chosen, they have about them the halo of disinterestedness".5 The frequent use of metaphors derived from kinship and home to describe nations denotes this natural, almost unbreakable bond. Such ties connote an 'aura of purity and disinterestedness', on the basis of which the nation can ask for sacrifices.

The nation is imagined as a community, Anderson says, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail, "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship". Anderson's definitions of his key concepts—imagination and community—are sketchy, Gillian Rose adopts Anderson's concept of communities as formed imaginatively, but comments that theorists of community have found the concept of 'community' notoriously difficult to pin down.6 "The chaos of its conceptualisation and the warmth with which it is upheld as a social ideal are," she suggests, "...the very reason for its interest."7 She argues for a definition of community not as a social structure, but as a "structure of meaning", as "a group of
people bound together by some kind of belief, stemming from particular historical and geographical circumstances, in their own solidarity". Tyler Stovall's definition of a community as "a sense of interrelatedness and shared experiences among people living in the same locality" places a similar emphasis on the cultural imagination. Both Stovall's definition of community and Anderson's analysis of nationalism lend weight to the assumption that the imagined national community would be, in theory, culturally homogeneous. Gellner's observation that "nationalism invents nations where they do not exist" implies the fabrication of a unifying culture.

There need be no inference that the imagined national culture would espouse egalitarian values. To the extent that nationalism may function as a vehicle for mobilising the people, or segments within it, in the name of the nation, it is likely to be populist. Consequently, nationalist myths tend to posit relationships between the classes on which the nation might be built: egalitarian values could underpin programs for national cultures and social structures, but they need not do so.

The more likely arena for the emergence of egalitarian values is within the 'band of pilgrims', which comprise Anderson's nationalist intelligentsia and leadership cadres. Neither equality nor egalitarianism are necessary accompaniments in the historical formation of colonial leaderships, elites or intelligentsias, but Anderson's prefiguration of the field of study through use of the metaphor of the pilgrimage is suggestive of fraternal equality. The pilgrimage may be viewed as a form of rite of passage. The anthropological term 'liminality', defined as "the state and process of mid-transition in a rite of passage" may be employed to describe the condition of pilgrims. Victor and Edith Turner describe those embarked on the journey as passing "through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state". In this liminal state, they are "stripped of their status and authority, removed from the social structure" and "levelled to a homogeneous social state through discipline and ordeal". In consequence, they argue, "(m)uch of what has been bound by the social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship and communion". Liminals are "betwixt and between" as far as the societies to which they belong are concerned, having shed one identity and status without having yet acquired another.

This understanding of mateship is supported by Graeme Turner's argument that characterisation in Australian narrative lacks "individuation". Turner contests the commonly held view that individualism plays a strong role in Australian cultural texts, arguing that the literary convention of mateship articulates a suspicion of individuality and a fear of difference. Mateship, says Turner, is "the negation of individuality or even specificity of character".
Mateship and Nation

The same qualities that are associated with those who are undertaking such rites of passage and pilgrimages appear to be inscribed into bush mythology as the qualities of the bushmen who have embarked on journeys of nation formation. Set apart from the social order, and united—in their travelling, in the 'ordeal' of 'strong masculine labour', and in their quest of land domestication—their relations with each other are marked by egalitarianism and fraternalism. The journey motif in narratives of nation formation draws its potent appeal from its resonance with the mythical journeys of pilgrimages, rites of passage, and all are finally symbols of the passage of life itself. Bushmen in the bush are likened to ritual liminaries, separated from the social structure to which they will, nevertheless, return transformed if they are to complete the mythical journey. It is within this framework that the concept of 'mateship' is discussed.

In this mythology bushmen are understood to be both frontiersmen and leaders in the formation of a newly independent nation created by the federation of colonies under national self-government. Bush mythology conflates legends of the frontier, which are imperial as much as they are national, with muted myths of independence struggles against British colonial rule. Common to both these is the belief that the qualities of the hero in the struggle for a new society contain within them the seeds of that society itself, that his courage and competence in the battle legitimates his leadership in the society for which he struggled, and that in his motivation to struggle lies the vision which shapes that society. The leader whose quest takes him away from the society to engage in the struggle for its nationhood returns inwardly transformed and outwardly changed to a position of leadership and authority in the new nation. Similar assumptions about the bushman's fitness to rule are imbedded in national mythology. The call for democracy was represented by Lawson and others as emanating from the bush like prophesies of desert wanderers with a near Biblical authority.

For the men who made Australia federated long ago,
And the men to rule Australia—they can wait.
Though the bed may be the rough bunk or the gum leaves or sand,
And the roof for half the year may be the sky -
There are men amongst the Bushmen who were born to save the land!
And they'll take their places sternly by-and-by.16

Mateship then does not necessarily pertain to the national community as a whole: it may be understood as the communal bonds and values of a liminal cohort embarked on a
ritual journey, on the one hand, and a leadership cadre engaged in struggles to forge the nation, on the other.

Fatalism, disinterestedness, purity and sacrifice are the terms that Anderson uses to describe the basis for the passionate commitment to nation that its members may feel. For Anderson, the metaphors of kith and kin connote the naturalness of the tie. But in the late nineteenth century Australian context these metaphors were problematic. 'Home' for Australians ambiguously referred to England or Ireland. In this sense, 'Home' expressed a tie to the Empire. Similarly, England was the 'Mother Country', and Australia could be neither Motherland nor Fatherland to Australians since the 'youthfulness' of the nation contradicted the assertion of maturity that such parental status implies. The ties to kin were themselves perceived to have been weakened by the lifestyle shaped by demographic and economic factors. An unyielding bond between men and nation could hardly be imagined in terms of such readily broken bonds as family ties. In the bush mythology, the bond of marriage buckled under such comparatively light strains as the lure of gold or employment: it could hardly serve as a metaphor for the tie of men to nation. At a time when the institutions of courtship and marriage were deeply troubled, romantic and familial affection could hardly be the basis of love of country.

It is 'mateship'—the ideal but not necessarily the practice—that became the vehicle for expressing the love of country in nationalist discourse and is invested with the qualities which, Anderson argues, give shape to the passionate commitment that men may feel for nation. Mateship is the idealised abstraction of the network of the relationships that constitute the imagined community of Australia. To accept that mateship can function metaphorically in this manner, it becomes necessary to place it on a higher plane than that suggested by the notion of "male friendship". Thus, Bruce Kapferer defines mateship as "an egalitarian principle of natural solidarity and reciprocity between equals". His definition naturalises mateship as "the natural sociality intrinsic to human beings", which is "most powerful between those identical in nature". In spite of Kapferer's gesture towards including women ("Men have women who are "mates", and many women in Australia are now stressing a kind of mateship ethos among themselves."), assumptions of gender difference and inequality are too deeply inscribed in the construction of mateship for his incorporation of women to be convincing.

Like the ties of nation, mateship is characterised by fated and unchosen ties which appear natural and disinterested and can elicit sacrifices which are, in turn, morally elevated and 'pure' because they are without interest. Whilst in principle mateship is open as a form of friendship between men, in practice the circle of mates is limited by
time and circumstance. It is this central role in the articulation of Australian nationalist discourse that gives mateship its 'sacral aura'.

The representation of mateship has much in common with Anderson's theorisation of imagined communities. Mates in the bush speak a vernacular and establish networks of communications. These communications depend, however, not on the vagaries of printed media and mail, but on 'the bush telegraph', which disseminates news and commentary with remarkable efficiency through widely dispersed networks via word-of-mouth. Bush yarns take on the function of journalism in articulating cultural values and national discourses. A sense of interrelatedness and shared experiences gives rise to cultural unities that cut across individual differences which seem to pertain to the past. The land they traverse is constituted as the territory of the imagined nations and they 'map' it with their tracks.

In characterising the relationships of men, writers do not invariably construct these ideal friendships. For example, Lawson is critical of the bushmen who are indirectly the cause of the young unionist's death, and who bury him so casually in "The union buries its dead". But nevertheless he tests the actions of the bushmen towards one of their own against the ideal of mateship. "The union buries its dead" is about the failure to live up to an ideal, but it does not undermine that ideal. On the contrary, mateship emerges as a norm against which men's actions can be gauged. "Macquarie's Mate" poses an opposition between true loyalty of somewhat reprehensible characters and the false friendships of the other men.

Significantly, it is in "Telling Mrs Baker" that Lawson comes closest to interrogating the implications of the ideal of mateship itself. Partly out of "kindness" to Mrs Baker, but more importantly out of consideration for a "dead mate", two bushman gloss over the dishonourable circumstances of Bob Baker's character and last days when they bring his widow the news of his death. Though Graeme Turner has argued that "our endorsement of the convention of mateship ... allows us to ignore the complicating moral and personal contingencies" of this story, in the end those contingencies are not adequately resolved.

Mateship can function as a metaphoric relation of men to nation. And, to the extent that this is the case, fraternalism and egalitarianism may be constituted as ideals in national culture. But there are other qualities to this idealised relationship. Firstly, if mateship is an expression of the relationship between those undertaking mythical journeys—rites of passage, quest or pilgrimage—then a certain anxiety infuses this relationship, for the certainty of outcome cannot be assumed. Describing Lawson's "fictional world",
Brian Matthews says, "(t)ravellers return to find no one knows them, or set out on a particular journey but become sidetracked into endless trampings, or fail to return when expected, or are misrepresented in rumour, or go mad in isolation."23 The possibility of failure insinuates itself into the national narration.

Secondly, mateship is not a network of relationships that is co-extensive with the imagined community of nation. The 'community' formed by mateship is co-extensive with the journeying cohort, constituted as leaders in the struggle to forge the nation. The question of the relationships of other members of the society to each other and to the nation is not addressed by the representation of mateship. As previous chapters have suggested, seen from the point of view of mateship, those outside this community need not be incorporated into any community since it is the domestic domain rather than the community at large that is constituted as the point of return to interior space. The 'privatisation' of the domestic sphere seems to result from the point of view adopted by the narration, so that the domestic domain is represented not only as a discrete unit but also as partially obscured from view.

Thirdly, the bonds of mateship may be transient liminal ones, for with the emergence of the nation and the completion of the ritual journey, the community of mates will disperse. Bush mythology represented an idealised past, and the quest that brought men together as mates could be considered, in the moment of immanent formation of the nation, as complete. The decade of the 1890s looked towards immanent Federation. At that time, it would be reasonable to expect that the question of dispersal would become a significant one. It will be argued here that tensions surrounding this question can be detected in the representation of marriage.

**Fraternalism**

Like nationalism itself, mateship should be seen, not as a unique Australian configuration, but as a particular articulation of a much broader phenomenon within western culture. John Carroll, for example, has argued that egalitarian-mateship attitudes are deeply rooted in the British working class, and suggests that "there is no need to search further for an explanation of the Australian mateship ethic:"

...it was imported from Britain and Ireland, and reinforced by an experience of working-class life similar to that in the countries of origin.24

For Carroll, mateship is "by and large a class product, deriving from the shared experience of economic subordination". Fraternalism is neither a peculiarly working class experience, nor do working class men comprise the only group to undergo
sustained periods of economic uncertainty, subordination or dependency. Drawn from the suggestion that mateship characterises the relationships of a cohort of liminars is the inference that mateship emerges, not out of class-endemic poverty, but out of the economic dependency of young men not yet established as heads of domestic units. It is not within the scope of this thesis to trace possible historical connections between the British working class culture, early modern fraternal relations and representations of Australian mateship. However, approaches to an interpretation of mateship in bush mythology are suggested by Mary Ann Clawson's study of fraternal associations of rural youths and journeymen in early modern Europe.  

Clawson, in her study of early modern fraternalism and the patriarchal family, defines fraternalism as a "type of fictive kin relation", a primarily masculine relationship which contributes to the maintenance of male dominance. Fraternalism coincides with prolonged male dependency in a "twilight zone" in which young adult men have little opportunity to establish themselves as head of the domestic unit. Her approach focuses on the relationship between economic viability, marriage and the patriarchal family.

In a society dominated by household production, Clawson argues, adulthood, proprietorship and the right to marry were inextricably linked. Since full rights were reserved for heads of families and other 'masters', young men remained subordinate to the household head, unable to marry and unable to live or work on their own. This 'semi-dependent' status might continue for many years regardless of age and skills. The initial impact of capitalist production was to prolong youthful dependency and to introduce a degree of uncertainty as progression from journeyman to master was no longer assured. Similarly in rural areas, population pressures and the consolidation of productive land in the hands of large landowners meant that fewer young men could expect to own land. When accession to mastership was increasingly unlikely and no longer linked to lifecycle in a dependable way, fraternal organisations continued to affirm patriarchal values through their creation of a fictive family situation: journeymen were able to rise within the fraternity as compensation for their inability to become masters.

Eligibility for marriage was dependent on the ability to head a household. Fraternal relations emerged out of the shared dilemma of a prolonged period of celibacy, delayed marriage and subordination to the patriarchal authority of the master who was also head of household. Significantly, however, it was at the moment when eventual economic independence, marriage and household authority was no longer assured that fraternal networks were most in evidence.
A study of male "romantic friendship" amongst middle-class American youth in the nineteenth century by E. Anthony Rotundo supports the conclusion that male friendship is strengthened at times of prolonged and uncertain maturation to adulthood where the terrain of manhood is staked out by economic independence on the one hand and marriage on the other.26

In the eighteenth century, Rotundo argues, the transition from boyhood to manhood was a "process of continuity" as young men gained desirable middle-class positions through a process of apprenticeship and family patronage that kept them within the web of their familial connections. By the nineteenth century, however, the process had become "less predictable, more tumultuous, and more elongated". In greater need of emotional security, young men formed intense, intimate and nurturing relationships with one another. There is a recognition by these men in their written letters and diaries of the "childish" nature of these friendships which they saw as unlikely to survive into their adult lives. It was not simply that the intimacy and nurturing of the family would supplant the need for such friendships amongst male friends, nor that their wives would 'come between them'. More significantly, Rotundo suggests, the need for these friendships would abate as men became established in careers and more certain of their personal resources and authority.

The same factors that Clawson and Rotundo identify as giving rise to male friendship and fraternities appear to obtain in the 1890s in Australia. The representation of male fraternity in bush mythology depends on both the imaginative reconstruction of rural male experience from around the mid- and late nineteenth century urban experience. As a result of far-reaching depression and reorganisation in the urban economy in the cities together with drought, consolidation of productive land by large landowners, and the failure of small selections to produce a viable living in the country, young men were likely to experience prolonged economic dependency and face uncertainty in their aspirations to economic independence.

In the early years of the decade, the Depression went right to the heart of male employment, with adult male unemployment reaching close to 30% in the early 1890s.27 But male employment was undergoing a long-term re-organisation. As Jenny Lee has shown, the "redivision of labour" in manufacturing production had significant implications for male economic prospects.28 Colonial manufacturing had been organised along the lines of crafts production with its hierarchy of masters, journeymen and apprentices. The rise of the factory system in the 1880s placed the craft system under strain with juveniles and women increasingly forming the core of the factory workforce. But young male factory workers could no longer anticipate "an orderly
progression" from apprenticeship to the position of master tradesman. Jenny Lee comments that "the hierarchy within the factories had an increasingly wide base and narrow apex". The old craft system of production had provided a structure similar to that of early modern England within which young men might eventually acquire the skills and move towards the status of master. But it was also undergoing a similar period of change as a result of capitalist reorganisation of production. The break-down of the craft system in the 1890s in Australia meant marginally increased rates of employment for young men, but greatly truncated opportunities for career advancement.

Graeme Davison's study of the careers, values and lifestyles in Sydney in the 1890s of male writers and journalists suggests significant parallels between the impact of depression and structural change in the economy and the milieu of male 'bohemian' culture. Davison argues that the arrival in Sydney or Melbourne as "[l]one, impressionable, ambitious young men" is a recurrent feature in the lives of the Bulletin writers. Living in lodgings, often alone, in Sydney's "sleazy urban frontier", combined with the irregular lifestyle that journalism necessitated, brought the writers into contact with the urban poor. Their own sense of marginality, loneliness and alienation ensured their sympathetic response to others living in this "transitional zone". "As a boom occupation," Davison says, "journalism was hard-hit by the depression." Writers and journalists tasted the poverty and insecurity of unemployment and underemployment. That experience lies at the root of the sympathy with male itinerant workers which they displayed, and the bonds of support and solidarity that they understood to be shared amongst a much wider segment of the Australian male population.

Richard White attributes the new self-consciously national image of Australia in the 1890s to the emergence of a younger, Australian-born intelligentsia. Professional artists and writers espoused a masculinist 'Bohemian' lifestyle, emulating and appropriating European cultural and artistic trends to the articulation of their 'radical nationalist' self-definition. "It is significant," White comments, "that at a time when women were making advances in politics and education, they were largely excluded from the newly professional artistic community." White's account of the 'Bohemian' cultural style of the 'Boy Authors', and the men who frequented the Dawn and Dusk Club and the Smoke Nights is suggestive of the patterns of fraternalism identified by Mary Ann Clawson.

This prolonged period of economic subordination was coupled with a growing awareness that the goal of economic independence might be unrealisable. Without the
means to establish a household (even though this might be a productive economic unit rather than a dependent family in need of support), the prospect of establishing themselves as the head of a domestic unit was remote. Late nineteenth century marriage rates certainly bear witness to delayed marriage and to the inability of many men to marry at all. Peter McDonald attributes the high proportion of never marrieds in the Australian population over the period 1861-1921 to "the excess of males and their relative concentration in rural areas, the insecurity of employment and the failure of schemes for family settlement on the land". In the more affluent 1880s, he suggests, "the prospect of owning their own house and land may have induced many working class couples to delay their marriages". But in the 1890s, the disruption of marriage patterns caused by the depression was severe, with a very high proportion of marriageable persons remaining "never married". By 1901, many were destined never to marry at all. The literary response to this historical moment, Patrick Morgan suggests, was an exaggerated celebration of restless larrkinism.

Rather than interpreting mateship simply as a rejection of marriage and female company, we might better understand it as a response to the delay and uncertainty of attaining full manhood status through economic independence and the exercise of authority over the household. Once again, the idea of mateship as a fraternal network of relations amongst men embarked on a journey, which is at the same time a rite of passage to manhood, is suggested.

Early modern fraternal organisations served to distinguish the dependency and subordination of women, also subject to the authority of the head of the household, from that of youthful men, and "to express the fact of eventual male authority." The chief activity of village youth groups, Clawson suggests, was the "regulation of communal sexuality, particularly the access to marriage" and the attempt to "exercise tight control over the eligible females in their villages", even to the point of influencing their choice of husbands. By forming an exclusively masculine relationship with one another, the members of youth fraternities asserted a generalised male authority over women which was in some sense independent of masculine authority within the family. The possession or anticipation of power within the family provided a basis for the generalised authority that was expressed and claimed by male groups outside the family. But at the same time, masculine participation in a world outside the family—a world that excluded women while it created and defined the social order—meant that the man came to the family as an emissary from the outside world, the public domain, carrying with him something of the moral and political force of the entire society. His power in the family was then legitimated, in a way that a woman's could not be, through his participation in male social networks. Moreover, his involvement in male
networks provided him with a source of concrete power in the form of a group that was always ready to intervene in cases in which the individual man was unable to maintain his authority within the family.

Thus, Clawson suggests, fraternalism was "a distinctively male relationship which contributed to the maintenance of a generalised masculine authority". Further, fraternal institutions were critically linked to the authority structures of the patriarchal household in a relationship that was sometimes antagonistic, often supportive, but always close. Fraternalism was imagined as a type of fictive kin relation, and was consequently never a simple egalitarian relationship, even among men. With its patriarchal bias and its origin as a type of kin relation, it always carries with it notions of hierarchy and paternalist authority which appear, because of their roots in kin relations, as categories of "natural" dominance and subordination.

The phenomenon of an antiauthoritarian impulse, linked to a strict and self-conscious support of masculine authority within the family, accounts for much of the political ambivalence that seems to characterise fraternalism. It is an ambivalence we may recognise in many later popular movements combining repressive attitudes toward women with progressive positions on other issues.

Mateship and male authority

The 'nomad tribe' of pastoral workers in the mid nineteenth century in fact had little or no chance of marrying. Even in the 1890s the numbers of males who remained unmarried was remarkably high. (Between 1891 and 1901 in New South Wales, for example, 64% of rural men were unmarried.)

From their vantage point in the cities, writers and artists imaginatively reconstructed the lives of single bushmen. But their views of bush bachelorhood were shaped also by their own experience of the difficulties of getting married, not to mention the difficulties of being married. Though the demographic imbalance was reduced considerably in the 1890s and, though there was an evening out of the proportion of males to females in Sydney (compared to the rest of the rural sector), there was a significant and rapid drop in the marriage rate in this decade. The depression appears to account partially for this decline.

Susan Magarey has argued that the numbers of women who were of marriageable age during the 1890s and who did not marry during this decade, and indeed who never married, is surprisingly high. While 'conventional wisdom' has taken it for granted that the decline in marriage rates represented the failure of men to marry, or their choice to
defer marriage, Magarey argues that the possibility of women's rejection of marriage should be considered. Whichever position one adopts, it seems likely that young men, in cities and as well as in the bush, would have countenanced the possibility of not marrying. It also seems to be a reasonable inference that male communities would have entertained ambivalent attitudes to marriage, including notions of male and female "fitness to marry".

Rather than accepting the interpretation of mateship as an exclusion of women and female companionship, we could understand it as both an adaptation to knowledge that marriage may not be achieved and an expression of the kind of interest in the regulation of sexuality and access to marriage which Clawson suggests occupied such a central position in the activities of early modern fraternal organisations. Rather than accepting that mates constitute an exclusively male community, we might ask whether mateship allows an assertion of a generalised male authority over women which was in some sense independent of masculine authority within the family.

Stories of courtship in fact suggest a high level of communal interest in potential romantic and sexual alliances, both on the part of the male network and the rest of the community. In "Joe Wilson's courtship", the married and settled Jack Barnes takes the initiative in the romance, suggesting that Joe "ought to try a bear up in that direction", and acting as a 'go-between' to stimulate the mutual interest of Mary and Joe. Young Black the squatter's son was "sweet on her" but, Jack says, "they say she won't have anything to do with him". Later, Mary pays too much attention to the jackaroo from Sydney for Joe's liking, but we infer that her intention is to jolt Joe into declaring his serious intentions. To Joe's chagrin, Romany, the nasty-tempered but handsome shearer,"was supposed to be shook after Mary too". Romany looked like a gipsy and was reckoned to have foreign—'Eye-talian'—blood in him. Michael Wilding describes him as "the sexual, gypsy, bohemian violinist". Romany represents the threat of illicit sexuality. When he snarls that he'd "heard a tom cat sing better" than Mary, we learn that "the chaps didn't like Romany's talk about Possum at all". Jimmy Nowlett breaks their silence:

"I suppose you got bit, too, in that quarter, Romany?"

"Oh, she tried it on, but it didn't go," said Romany. "I've met her sort before. She's setting her cap at that jackaroo now. Some girls will run after anything with trousers on," and he stood up.
Illustration 5: Norman Lindsay, Joe Wilson and Mary Brand
Later, when Joe fights Romany over this slur on Mary's character, it is Jack Barnes who backs up the inexperienced Joe with last minute instructions. Mary Brand's reputation for sexual propriety is not really in question, but the incident does indicate the considerable interest that her selection of a mate has for the community of men working at Black's station. Jack Barnes has a foot in two camps: he is a member of the male fraternity, which does not include the jackaroo or Black the squatter, but he belongs also to the non-itinerant station community.

The story of Joe Wilson's courtship addresses the issues of sexual "innocence" and "experience". Joe and Mary are brought into self-conscious physical proximity when he helps her hang out the clothes, and the wet sheets are covert allusions to their sexual awareness of each other. Mary's shooing Joe away when she reaches the underwear suggests that this is a premature awareness. The "purity" of courtship, which the narrator exhorts young men to respect, is contrasted to the "soiled" state of sexual maturity. Sexual experience in marriage offers the opportunity of ritual cleansing (the sheets and underwear can be washed without shame), but there can be no return to innocence.47

The interest in sexuality, female as much as male, of the male fraternity is conveyed not only through the incidents described but also through the relation of the narrator to those incidents. The defeat of Romany and his physical departure from the community dispels the threat that Mary will marry outside the community. Her feigned interest in the jackaroo dissipates as she recognises Joe's depth of affection for her.

Romany, the sexually besmirched outsider, and Joe, the innocent insider find their equivalents in Steele Rudd's account of Dave's falling in love.48 "Dave in love" tells of Dave's year-long courting of a dairymaid called Fanny Bowman who at twenty was "fresh-complexioned, robust and rosy—a good rider, good cook, and a most enterprising flirt".49 Dave's courting is as innocent and as inept as Joe Wilson's, and he competes with "cool" Jack Gore, Bowman's employee, a "superior young man" whose intimacy with the Bowman family—and, as it turns out, with Fanny—suggests that he is aspiring above his station. Nor are these two the only men to take a fancy to Fanny: "Tom Black, Tom Bell, Joe Sibley, and Jim Moore all had sought her affections unsuccessfully."50 "Always the unlucky one", Dave is no more successful than they were. Then Jack Gore is suddenly sacked and leaves Saddletop, but he returns after some months.
Work was suspended for twenty-four hours, and at mid-day, a tired, dust-covered parson came to their door astride of a poor horse, and got down and married Jack Gore to Fanny.

It was a quiet wedding.  

In this story it is the women who monitor Dave's progress, and who express opinions between themselves about Fanny's behaviour. When they learn of the wedding, "Mother and Sarah whispered things to one another." But the judgement of Fanny's sexual experiences is expressed as much in the narration, from a masculine point of view, as in the women's comments:

Fanny was a dairymaid - mostly neat and natty and nice.  

Illustration 7: Kate Rudd (Alf Vincent) and Fanny Gore (unsigned)  
(Source: Steele Rudd, On Our Selection, Queensland University Press, St. Lucia, 1987.)
The dismal off-handedness of Fanny's wedding is in sharp contrast to the joyful, robust fracas that attends Kate and Sandy's wedding in "Kate's wedding". In both these stories, the narrator's perception (and that of the implied author) of male and female sexual practices and desirability as marriage partners appears to be in accord with the views expressed by the characters within the stories. It is not that the author stands outside the situation he represents in fiction, and shows that male authority is maintained by fictional male characters over female characters within the story. Rather, in the telling of the stories themselves, the regulation of sexuality and the control over eligible women, including the choice of their husbands, is rendered the proper concern of fraternal networks.

While the number of bush marriages that appear as the direct subject of the bush stories may seem slight, marriage is a constant theme of bush yarns in Lawson's and in Furphy's writing. Warrigal Alf Morris presents Tom Collins with a series of four solutions to the discovery of a wife's sexual infidelity, and asks which of the husbands "acted right". The first story tells of a recently married squatter who returned home one night to find "his place occupied" by an intimate friend, who was a barrister. Without revealing his discovery, the squatter had his friend draw up a will leaving everything to his wife; and went out and shot himself. The second story is that of a tank-sinker whose wife got soft on a young fellow and everybody but the husband saw how things stood. Presently he sent round a rumour that he was going to New Zealand and sent his two children to boarding school. He sold up, bade all including the Don Juan good-bye and headed off alone with his wife across country to Wagga. Two years later, he was found living in Queensland with a new wife and his children. He said that his first wife had died, but the finding of her charred bones and personal relics made it clear that he had killed her. In the third story, an American digger realised that his trusted work-mate was involved with his wife. He arranged for his mate to fall down a shaft and ensured that his neck was broken. Though he forgave his wife for her infidelity, and never spoke of it or of his vengeance, she lived in fear and horror. His children died young of diptheria and she died, he said, of a broken heart. The husband turned to drink. And finally, Alf tells the story that the reader, but never Collins, realises is his own. A saw-mill owner married a good-looking but ignorant, vain and utterly unprincipled woman and they had one child. When he guessed that she was unfaithful, he spied on the pair to be certain and then terrified the "vile rat" into confession. Then he sold out, dividing the proceeds with his wife, and reserving enough capital to start up in a new line. All that earned he forwarded to her, to spend or squander, on the condition that she acknowledge each remittance and answer questions he might choose to ask. Three years later the child died and, as we know, it was Alf's heart that was turned to stone.
These stories reflect attitudes to women and to marriage that permeate western culture far beyond the confines of the Australian colonies of the 1890s (indeed, Collins' response to Alf Morris' question is to cite Shakespeare) The narration conveys an implicit commentary on and judgment of sexual behaviour by both men and women, but the point of view is a masculine one. In Alf Morris' stories, the wife is seen to be more or less culpable for her infidelity, but the issue Alf Morris raises is that of the husband's response. The question he asks Tom Collins is which action was the morally correct one. Whilst it is the case that attitudes to sexuality implicit in bush mythology adhere to much more widely held cultural norms, the representation of marriage in Australia is peculiarly skewed because it registers the heightened sense of uncertainty, conflict and estrangement that pervades the institution of marriage in the 1890s.

**Mateship and marriage**

Against the desire for marriage is set the uncertainty of achieving it. In this uncertainty, however, lies the desired possibility that membership of the male fraternity could extend into the fullness of manhood. Fraternal cultures are likely to articulate ambivalence in regard to the eventual withdrawal of members. Though this withdrawal is not simply the result of the competitive claim of marriage, amongst mates it is frequently understood in this light. The act of marriage is constituted as a form of betrayal of higher ideals or a failure in the face of too great a quest. And indeed, since mateship is bound up with the representation of nation formation, the withdrawal from the male network apparently instigated by marriage is constituted as desertion or minor 'treason'. The vehement misogyny that attends much of the writing about marriage from this period, and the sheer volume of negative representations of marriage is far from balanced by the less prevalent (but often more successful in literary terms) sympathetic representations of wives.

Marriage is variously identified with the end of the journey, the completion of the rite of passage, the return to interior space. Significantly, the re-crossing of the boundary that marks this moment of closure is associated not with return to the community as a whole but to the isolation and confinement of the privatised, domestic home. The ideological construction of 'separate spheres' posits an oppositional relationship between the bush and the home, eclipsing the possibility of a community to which men might return.

"If I got married I couldn't settle down," said Mitchell. "I reckon I'd be the loneliest man in Australia... I reckon I'd be single no matter how much married I might be." 55
Since the representation of women's place in the bush is formed in the context of the male network of mates, they tend to be seen as outside communities altogether. "The bush," says Lawson, "is no place for a woman." Bush mythology is replete with isolated women, fretting or patient.

The isolation of women, however, appears to be partly a consequence of the partially obstructed view of the bushman, the narrator and the implied reader. From the point of view of women characters, it may seem that marriage is an institution within a broader community framework. Weddings, where they are not marred by breaches of community norms, are public celebrations that bring communities together. The shotgun wedding of Fanny Bowman and Jack Gore is, by contrast, a 'private' event. Weddings and other family events serve to reinforce communal rules, and breaches of those rules are subject to communal sanctions. However, communal enforcement of codes of morality reflects the strength of the ties that bind families to communities. The narrator's understanding of the codes and the relationships within the community is frequently far from comprehensive and impartial. In bush literature, those community activities which carry the endorsement of both the fictional community and the narrator, can more readily be brought into language than those which breach mores or which reflect communal or personal experiences of those outside the narrator's comprehension. Rudd's boyish narrator—if not the author—appears to find events such as the shotgun wedding inexplicable.

Narration in bush literature functions analogously to the 'bourgeois public sphere', as described by Bommes and Wright, in that it organises and articulates the experience of men while it disorganises and negates the mode of experience of women. The 'privatisation' and repression of women's experience of marriage and community ties in bush mythology is a function of the privileged position of male 'public' experience. Bommes and Wright argue that oppositional modes of organising historical experience would have to be reconstructed out of moments of historical rupture, such as crisis, war, or revolution. The bourgeois public sphere excludes oppositional forms or transforms them in the process of including them:

The dialectic of inclusion and exclusion obstructs autonomous organisation: some aspects of working-class experience are reconstructed and absorbed, while others, though not obliterated, are disqualified from the constructed field of public relevance.

This notion of rupture is usefully applied to the examination of women's experience in bush mythology. The experience of women is disorganised, fragmented and partially
obscured by the same process of representation that organises and articulates the experience of men. It is from the textual raptures and loss of certainty in articulation that women's experience can be reconstructed. This should not be romanticised as an 'authentic' women's voice, of course, but is based on an intimation that authors 'know more than they realise' about the repressed experiences of women, and that this knowledge acts to unsettle the assumption that narration from the point of view of men tells the whole story. In the representation of marriage as oppressive of men, this unsettling awareness finds expression in a sense that the narration is in 'bad faith' in its one-sidedness and partiality.

Double-time in nation and marriage

Significantly these texts themselves emerge in a moment of historical rupture, for the 1890s represents a turbulent and transitional moment in Australian history. This thesis concentrates on the convergence and simultaneity of two points of rupture—formation of the nation and change and contestation in the gender order. In its imaginative formation of an Australian nation, bush mythology registers also a transitional moment in the gender order. To imagine Australia as a national community in the 1890s meant looking backwards in time to picture a struggle to forge the nation and forwards in time to imagine the future nation that is the goal and result of this past struggle.

One of the most familiar strategies of nationalist mythology has been the creation of a national past. Writing in the late eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried von Herder advanced the theoretical grounds for grounding the nation-state in the construction of a unified "people" through the concept of an organic national culture, distinct from cultures of other nations. Though the political formation of the modern nation was new, the myths of nation were build around the concept of volkgeist, the 'spirit of the people' which could be traced to a past beyond the reaches of history. The task of 'recovering' folklore was integrally bound to the formulation of a national identity. 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. Despite the realism of the literary conventions of national narratives, the articulation of national cultures rests on a romantic valourisation of a disappearing pre-modern age. According to Timothy Brennan,
The evocation of deep, sacred origins—instead of furthering unquestioning, ritualistic affirmations of a people (as in epic)—becomes a contemporary, practical means of creating a people.60

Geoffrey Bennington has pointed to the role of repetition in constituting the "founding moment, or the origin of the nation, as part of its claim to legitimation". "The nation narrates the founding moment and produces the effects of legitimacy through repetition," he says.61 In Australian mythology, the 'founding moment' is an inglorious image of imprisonment and invasion. The establishment of the British colony in Australia could be celebrated only by suppressing the shame of penal servitude and dispossession of Aboriginal peoples of their land. It is not, therefore, the founding moment that is repeated in Australian narration, but the movement from that moment. The journey itself takes priority over its initiation. The journey's lineal narrative marks the temporal movement from the ambivalent origin of European settlement towards Federation even while it remains fixed in the mythical past.

As many cultural historians, art historians and literary scholars have demonstrated, the urban intellectuals of Australian society, whilst undergoing modernisation, celebrated and created a mythical Australian past.62 But their work does not simply express a nostalgia and national pride in the past; it is also infused with an anticipation of the future. Neither the construction of a national past, nor the anticipation of the future nation are unambiguous. Much bush literature, in particular, conveys a wry recognition that the past was not always as heroic as the story suggests. The task of imagining an Australian national society in the near future seems to have been a daunting one, partly because the contemporary society could not be seen to lay the foundations of an ideal nation. If the past was filled with heroes and struggle, the future called for an imagined social order that was stable, settled and on-going. The shape of the desired future did not emerge out of the heroic past, nor out of the transitions of the present, and this imparts a sense of temporal dislocation in the texts themselves.

Homi Bhaba observes that in narratives of nation, "the people" are the "historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event".63 But, he argues, "the people" must be simultaneously constituted as the national community of the present in order "to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process."64 Bush mythology registers a disconcerting
lack of continuity between the "people" of the past who laid the historical foundations of the on-going national community and the "people" whose present cultural practices constitute the national community. Poised in a moment of historical rupture in which a future formed out of the present cannot be embraced without anxiety, the imperative for imaginatively forming a national community is counter-balanced against a sense of the irreconcilability of past, present and future.

Relating this concept of temporal dislocation to the notion of the journey, we might observe that homesickness and wanderlust frequently go hand-in-hand. The beginning of rites of passage are marked by a ritual severing of the participants from their social networks. There is a delicate but essential balance between severing connections to begin a journey and erasing the memories and emotional attachment to the point that there is no longer a thread of attachment that will guide the traveller home. To cut the binding thread between the past and the present threatens the return home in the future. The memory of the past and the anticipation of the future hold the bushman to his quest. But, at the same time, the return home marks a dislocation from the past of the journey, which often seems a great deal more exciting than the settled present.

This sense of temporal dislocation—of the incommensurate difference of past, present and future—is invested in the representation of marriage. Marriage and mateship are not simply constructed in opposition to each other but in a temporal relationship of past to present, or present to future. Men on the roads look back or forward to settled life within marriage. Joe Wilson comments in "A double buggy at Lahey's Creek" that he "was always anxious when I was away from home". Marriage may represent the time when 'future grows dull and decided/ And the world narrows down to the Place'^5^, but permanent homelessness is the condition of the disspirited.

The game was right enough for a single man—or a married man whose wife had got the nagging habit (as many Bushwomen have—God help 'em), and who wanted peace and quietness sometimes.65

For some, marriage is represented as a sort of reluctant maturity; for others marriage is the past. Either way the relationship between the past and the present is one of rupture. Brian Matthews implicitly recognises this temporal ambiguity when he observes that Lawson's characters "seem constantly to be invited to capitulate":
To give up the struggle with the land, to retire from the battle to keep home and children, to seek in nostalgia the better days of the past... the temptation is always there.  

But the ambience of the literature and the paintings positions mateship, not marriage, as the national past. Mateship is identified with "organic communities". In fact, Bruce Kapferer's perception of mateship as a form of "natural sociality" suggests uncritically its opposition to the "artificiality" of the modern state:

> It is the basis of natural society, the way society forms, independent of artificial mediating institutions such as those implicit in the concept of the state.

Nevertheless, the immanent transformation of the institutions of the state and the processes of modernisation infuses the late nineteenth century construction of mateship. Marriage is an institution of both the present and foreseeable future. Mateship is a form of cultural practice that is associated with mythic pre-modernity just at the moment when Australian society becomes aware of its transition to a modern nation-state and an industrial capitalist economy.

**Conclusion**

Not one but two kinds of community can be discerned both in Anderson's conceptualisation of nations as imagined communities and in bush mythology. The first is that of fictional journeying characters who share many characteristics with Anderson's notion of pilgrims. These appear as the heroes and protagonists, by virtue of whose actions and attributes the nation takes shape. The second is that of settled communities, which in Anderson's analysis, come to perceive themselves as forming a national community. Their role is more passive and their representation more implied than that of the network of journeying men in bush mythology. The journeying protagonists can be expected to be men, and indeed, that expectation is fulfilled overwhelmingly in the writing on both nationalism and Australian national formation.

The implied role for those who do not undertake journeys is waiting, and in Australian bush mythology, waiting is the privatised, domestic activity *sine qua non*. If men return home to marry, then they face the prospect of withdrawal from the male fraternity and from the active participation in the affairs of the nation. Men derive authority within the household from their ability to represent the public order of which they are part. Men who remain unmarried form fraternal networks with others in similar positions. Although membership is barred to women, women are nevertheless a matter of concern to the fraternities. In particular, fraternities, like those of early
modern Europe, participate in the regulation of sexual activity and marriage within the
community and in doing so, participate in the generalised exercise of male authority
over women. However, it has been argued in this thesis, fissures appear in the texts of
the bush which can be prised apart to reveal a lack of ease and disputing of male
authority within the domestic domain.

The communities of male itinerants bind those who are mid-way in a ritual journey that
will end with their return to interior space. Such journeys are of limited duration and
have been treated here as rites of passage, suggesting that those embarked on them are
in a liminal state. It would be difficult to conceive of a nation based on the model of
these liminal fraternities, as attempts to shape Australian national identity around
mateship have demonstrated. Two significant and related problems hinder such a
construction of an imagined community of mates. The first is the exclusion of half the
population. Women's ties of community are perceived to be too local and too familial
while they are simultaneously represented in terms of universal constructs of
womanhood. The second is that stable on-going communities require mechanisms of
continuity, renewal and reproduction. Within the conventions of bush mythology,
these mechanisms generally require the presence of women, and their effects are
registered in the presence of children.

Writing at a moment of transition in the social and culture order, writers and artists of
the 1890s looked back wistfully to pre-modern frontier cultures, but forward hesitantly
to the federation of the colonies, independence from British colonial rule, and the
formation of a modern nation. Their perception of the relationship of past, present and
future is characterised by discontinuity and historical rupture. This imparts to their
imaginative formation of national culture a sense of deep ambivalence. To imagine the
future was to effect a rupture from the valued past. The representation of women is
cought up in this moment. To write women into the nation may allow the representation
of a stable social order, but at the expense of a heroic national past that depends on their
erasure.

1 J. B. Hirst says of Lawson: "As a nationalist, he wanted to give his country a past to
be proud of." J. B. Hirst, "The Pioneer Legend", in John Carroll (ed.), Intruders in
the Bush—The Australian Quest for Identity, Oxford University Press, Melbourne,

2 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities—Reflections on the Origin and Spread of

3 ibid., p. 39.
4ibid., p. 47.
5ibid., p. 131.
7ibid., p. 425.
8ibid., p. 426.
13ibid., p. 249.
21Graeme Turner, op. cit., p. 95.
22For further discussion on uncertainty and failure in Australian narrative, see Ross Gibson, The Diminishing Paradise, Angus and Robertson, Australia and United Kingdom, 1984; and Graeme Turner, op. cit..


28ibid., pp.352-372.


30ibid., p. 110.

31ibid., p. 126.


33ibid., p. 101.

34Peter MacDonald, Marriage in Australia: Age at First Marriage and Proportions Marrying, 1860-1971, Canberra, 1974, p. 163.

35ibid., p. 164.

36For a comparison of Australian literary preference of the 'restless' and 'settled' responses to historical adversary, see Patrick Morgan, "History Versus Literature", Journal of Australian Studies, no. 32, March 1992, pp. 75-82.

37Mary Ann Clawson, op. cit., p. 381.

38ibid., p. 371.

39ibid.

40ibid., p. 386.

41Peter McDonald, op. cit., p. 57.

42ibid., p.143


48 Steele Rudd, "Dave in Love", *On Our Selection*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1987, pp. 182-188.

49 *ibid.*, p. 185.

50 *ibid.*

51 *ibid.*, p. 188.

52 *ibid.*, p. 186 (my italics).

53 Steele Rudd, "Kate's wedding", *ibid.*, pp. 78-86.


57 Bommes and Wright speak of "oppositional public forms" in preference to the exclusive focus on class that "proletarian public" implies.

58 *ibid.*, p. 261.


60 Timothy Brennan, "The national longing for form", *ibid.*, p. 50.


63 Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation", in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 297.

64 *ibid.*


66 Henry Lawson, "A Double Buggy at Lahey's Creek", *ibid.*, p. 734.

68 Bruce Kapferer, *op. cit.*, p. 158.