2001

Once upon a place: writing the Illawarra

Peter Knox
University of Wollongong

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced, by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author.

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Recommended Citation

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
ONCE UPON A PLACE:
WRITING THE ILLAWARRA
An essay and annotated bibliography

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Master of Arts (Honours)

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

PETER KNOX BCA (HONS)

(student no: 9124209)

ENGLISH STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS

2001
SUMMARY

In my search for an Illawarra literary identity, I have annotated nearly 300 works published between 1825 and 1995, including prose fiction, verse, scripts, journals, autobiographies and reminiscences. These texts deal overtly with the Illawarra region, as I define it in this paper.

The Illawarra which emerges from these texts began as an idyllic yet threatening wilderness which was eventually transformed by the colonising process. It was seen variously during its period of subjugation as a rich site of natural resources, a place for pioneering adventure, a sanctuary away from the decay of Sydney, and a focus of parochial attitudes.

Through the early decades of the twentieth century, writers were looking back nostalgically at what had been lost during colonisation, and they attempted to recreate the past in their works. By the second half of the twentieth century, the early pioneers had evolved into national and international industrialists whose production plants, mines and factories sat uncomfortably amidst a scenic tourist destination.

The works in the annotated bibliography at the end of this paper reflect the evolution of the Illawarra region. The later pieces offer fragmented, personalised views of the Illawarra, mirroring the confusing array of cultural artifacts the region has become.
CONTENTS

THE ILLAWARRA:
REGIONALISM AND IDENTITY ................................................................. 1

The Illawarra .................................................................................................. 1

Methodology .................................................................................................... 6

The Illawarra and Regionalism ...................................................................... 13

DECIDING UPON A LITERATURE ................................................................. 21

LITERARY WORKS ...................................................................................... 25

Early Poetry .................................................................................................... 25
• Religious Imagery ....................................................................................... 28
• An Early Nostalgia ...................................................................................... 29
• Political Innuendo ....................................................................................... 29
• Unfamiliar Landscape .................................................................................. 30
• Reminiscence ............................................................................................... 31
• Dangerous Idyll ............................................................................................ 31
• Conservationist/Pioneer Dichotomy ............................................................ 32
• Kiama and the Sea ....................................................................................... 34
• I Ilawarra Bashing ....................................................................................... 36
• Kendall's Special Place ............................................................................... 37
• An Australian Voice in Poetry ..................................................................... 38
• The Other Kendall ....................................................................................... 38
• Republican Poetry ...................................................................................... 39

Modern Poetry ................................................................................................ 40
• Familiar Terrain ............................................................................................ 41
• A Black History ............................................................................................. 42
• The Escarpment ............................................................................................. 43
• The Lawrence Myth in Verse ....................................................................... 45
• Dangerous Landscape .................................................................................. 47
• A Tourist Destination .................................................................................. 49
• The Railway .................................................................................................. 52
• The Modern Illawarra .................................................................................. 53
• Introverted Vision ........................................................................................ 55
• Anti-Industrial ............................................................................................... 60
• The Modern Garden ..................................................................................... 74
• Multiculturalism ........................................................................................... 75

Early Prose ...................................................................................................... 80
• A Hybrid Genre ............................................................................................ 80
• Cedar ............................................................................................................. 80
• The Pioneer Myth ........................................................................................ 81
• A Schizoid Position ...................................................................................... 82
• Access to Wilderness .................................................................................. 83
• A Panoramic View ....................................................................................... 83
• The Rainforest .............................................................................................. 84
• A Dangerous Climate .................................................................................. 86
• Kiama and the Ocean .................................................................................. 86
• Drinking Habits ............................................................................................. 87
• Pre-colonial Presence .................................................................................. 87
• Adventure ..................................................................................................... 88
• The Great White Hunter ............................................................................. 90
• The Cedar-Getters ....................................................................................... 91
• The Sketch .................................................................................................... 93
• Retelling History ......................................................................................... 94
• Surveyor Literature ...................................................................................... 95
THE ILLAWARRA: REGIONALISM AND IDENTITY

The Illawarra

Prior to European colonisation the Illawarra was not a region but a single spot (probably the lake or a particular place on the shores of it) called Elouera. Even in surveyor general John Oxley's map of 1822, it is shown as a single spot. The name appears in the ocean beside the lake, a position which could be indicating present-day Windang, or the lake itself. The area around Wollongong was then known as The Five Islands District, though no official boundaries were ever drawn up to indicate the extent of this region. A moment in the smaller district's gradual evolution to a larger Illawarra is eloquently captured by a visiting journalist in 1875:

The Five Islands (by the Aborigines called Illa-warra) is a tract of New South Wales, a short distance south of Sydney, on the sea-coast, and so named from five islands which lie a short distance off, immediately abreast of it. It may be described loosely as a plot of the richest soil, bounded on one side by the sea, and on the other by enormous masses of mountain, confusedly heaped together. These are covered either with dense dark forests, or low bushy scrub, with flats of swampy table-land, and gloomy ravines, into whose depths the eye cannot reach. The soil is excellent. I have heard some of the settlers say, that they could dig down 40 feet through the soil of their farms, on this seaside tract, without finding a stone as large as a pea. Little crystal brooks of the coldest, and purest water, making their way out of the mountain reservoirs above, traverse the ground at all seasons of the year, in their passage to the sea. It was therefore part of the public policy to grant farms in this district to a number of little settlers; for a poor man's use of land is at first agricultural, and a fertile soil must be an immense advantage; and, amidst the wild, dark gullies of the mountain, and along the solitary course of the cool shadowy streams, grew at that time great numbers of rich and massive cedars, the price of the timber of which was so high as to counterbalance, in the minds of the hardy working men of the Colony, the difficulties, toils, and perils of procuring it for the Sydney market. (K i a m a Independent, 13 May, 1875, 4)
The Aboriginal word Elouera (the true pronunciation of which is not conveyed by the English spelling), was variously transferred to the English palate as Allowrie or Illawarra. Most of the district we now know as the Illawarra was encompassed prior to colonisation by a much larger region in which at least ten Aboriginal tribes lived and were connected by a shared language, Dharawal. This language district extended from Botany Bay in the north to Jervis Bay in the south. The Illawarra as a region, then, is a colonial construction. Its transformation is beyond the scope of this thesis, though the 1875 quote, above, may shed some light. It is worthy of some future academic detective work.

After colonisation there were numerous proclamations of municipalities within the Illawarra from 1859 onwards (details of which can be found in Arthur Cousins' *The Garden of New South Wales*).

Even though the Shoalhaven has been a separate local government entity since 1948, according to modern-day poet and playwright Chris Mansell (whose work appears in the bibliography) "we in the Shoalhaven sometimes belong [in the Illawarra] and sometimes don't." European settlement patterns, inspired by the activities of the cedar-getters who feature so prominently in early Illawarra literature, were similar in the Five Islands District and the Shoalhaven River area, with early timber cutters finding entry from the sea at both places, possibly as early as 1811 (Cousins, 27). Though official land grants were handed out in the Five Islands District first, unofficial European access took place at the same time in both locations, thus closely linking the two future local government areas from the beginning of their European history.
Early writers, too, were confused about the extent of the Illawarra. An anonymous travel journalist writing in 1875 locates the Illawarra thus:

The district of Illawarra commences some forty miles south of Sydney, and extends from North Bulli to Bomaderry Ferry, on the Shoalhaven — and from the Pacific to the Coast Range. It is situate (sic) on the eastern shores of the County of Camden; and is almost sixty miles in length as a bird might fly, but upwards of seventy by the roads; and its width is from half a mile to eight miles ... The lands that lie to the south, or on the right bank, of the lower bends of the Shoalhaven River, are sometimes included under the term 'Illawarra'. (Kiama Independent, 18 Feb., 1875, 4)

This rather restricted Illawarra is surprising in the light of the fact that in 1824, as part of a series of Illawarra land grants, a Matthew John Gibbons "obtained permission to occupy 600 acres about seven miles south of Port Hacking." (Cousins, 51) When it became an official grant in 1833 it had grown to 1000 acres. This property was named Stanwell Park, and its northern boundary corresponds to one of the future contending northern extremities of the Illawarra.

The Illawarra of the nineteenth century may be baffling enough, yet even today there are numerous major versions of the region with fundamental differences. There is an Illawarra Catchment Area, which is confusing because it describes areas where water from the Illawarra mountains runs down to and is stored (mostly to the west and not within the Illawarra local government areas). There is the Illawarra as serviced by Telstra, as well as the local government area, the Illawarra and South Coast Police District, a TAFE district and the Illawarra Tourist Region. Each of these Illawarras has different borders.
In a submission presented to New South Wales Premier Bob Carr on March 23rd, 1997 by Wollongong's Lord Mayor David Campbell, it was stated that:

In order that there be a co-ordinated and agreed interpretation of the Illawarra Region, the various Councils, the State Government and the Federal Government should come to some agreement regarding this matter [of a consistent interpretation of the Illawarra Region]. (1)

The paper suggests Wollongong City Council's support for an Illawarra Region consisting of the Local Government areas of Wollongong, Wingecarribee, Shoalhaven, Shellharbour and Kiama, which co-occides with that described in a 1996 Illawarra Regional Information Service map, though the document concedes that "various departments and indeed governments, differ with this view in some instances and agree with it in others." (1) "This area," the paper goes on to say, "is also synonymous with the definition of the Illawarra as used by the Illawarra Region Organisation of Councils (IROC)." (1) The *Illawarra Mercury* newspaper has also adopted this confederation of five local government areas as its version of the Illawarra. An advertisement in the *Mercury* of 2 September, 1997 (p16), recruiting contributions for a "major annual supplement" titled "Illawarra — Your Region", shows a map of the five areas.

The different Illawarras created an initial difficulty for me because my research looks at where narratives are situated. They have also made it difficult for local notions of identity, both past and present. Certainly, the literary Illawarra is a landscape of the mind and does not necessarily need to belong within any of the geographical entities mentioned here. However, for the purposes of identifying Illawarra literature so that it may be listed bibliographically, as a step in
discovering if a consensual literary identity of the Illawarra exists, a place in which the literature is situated must be identified. As the Wollongong City Council is lobbying for a co-ordinated agreement, the literary Illawarra offered here will conform to Council's suggestion, at least for writings published after 1859, when the local government districts it describes were formed. The limits of this area can be seen in the map in Appendix 1.

In writing about this place called The Illawarra, in my search for its literary identity, it is appropriate that I begin with the region as I arbitrate it, from my position as a postgraduate student in English Studies at the University of Wollongong — which at present is the only Illawarra-based university. As comprehensive as the English Studies program is at this university presently, there is no subject which seeks to investigate the literature of the region in which it is situated. I am interested in local identity formation mainly because much has already been written about national and international identities. Literary works have a role in identity formation and my aim when beginning this thesis was to determine differences and parallels with national literature in literary works which deal with the Illawarra. A literary Illawarra is a landscape of the imagination regardless of how much verisimilitude is employed, and, as with any other constructed artifact, the uniqueness of a region such as the Illawarra depends upon comparison.

The need for an annotated bibliography of Illawarra Literature became obvious to me even as I began my research for material to include in that very document which I intended to create. The great number of bibliographies, surveys and histories of Australian Literature which
presently exist are full of glaring gaps when it comes to regional material — in particular as far as my research is concerned, fictional material set in or related to the Illawarra.

Some of the existing texts I looked at, including the Austlit database, *The Oxford Literary Guide to Australia*, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Children’s Literature*, *Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographic Guide* and *The Dictionary of Performing Arts in Australia*, certainly contain works related to the Illawarra, but finding such works is a tedious job (except in the Austlit database and *The Oxford Literary Guide to Australia*), when what is required is to read through bibliographic lists and annotations from beginning to end to weed out anything connected with the Illawarra. Certainly, it is not fair to expect texts with a national focus to concentrate on regional areas. What I am pointing to is the fact that there has been no regional bibliography compiled which covers the Illawarra, as there has been for Western Australia (Bennett), for example. When national bibliographies do focus on regional areas — which is rarely — they do so selectively. The majority of bibliographic texts are not annotated, so unless some clue to a particular work’s setting or subject is apparent in its title, there is no way to discover if it is Illawarra-related, unless the task of reading every work in a list is resorted to.

**Methodology**

The first place I went looking for references to Illawarra-related writing was the Austlit database, which relies upon detailed cross-referencing by word or phrase and can thus be considered comprehensive enough to cover most regional literatures. I entered as many Illawarra place names as I could conjure and was rewarded with a list of 242 works.
After eliminating repetitions and irrelevant material, I was left with a list of approximately 120 works about the Illawarra which I considered to be prose fiction, verse, scripts, journals, autobiographies or reminiscences. This represents the largest single group of catalogued entries of Illawarra literature I have discovered.

* Austlit * sets out to cover Australian literature mainly from a national viewpoint, with no specific focus on smaller regions within Australia. Entering an Illawarra place name will bring up an entry only if the entered name appears in a title, the first line of a poem, or the list of 'topics' which appear at the bottom of each entry. Works which might describe a particular area without naming it, or a poem which mentions a particular place name after the opening line, might not appear in my listing, unless the * Austlit * compilers decide to mention the Illawarra connection in the list of 'topics'. It is probable, then, that there may be Illawarra-related works in the * Austlit * database which I have missed because of this access restriction.

From my research into the microfilm files at the Kiama History Centre, it became obvious that the compilers of the * Austlit * database have not consulted all (if any) regional newspaper archives. Back copies of the early Illawarra newspapers have proved to be a goldmine of creative material relating to the Illawarra which have not been touched by the * Austlit * compilers. I was able to backdate the * Austlit * entry for the poem titled "Coming Events Cast Their Shadow Before" from the "earliest known date" in the database of 1880 (*Bulletin*, 13 Nov.) to as early as 1864 (*The Empire*, 22 March). A cross reference within the * Austlit * material itself reveals this piece to be the same poem listed as "An Australian Sea-side Lyric" with an "earliest known date" of 1868.
(Colonial Monthly, July). Austlit gives the author's name in both its entries as "F.S.W.". My investigations in regional files revealed the author's name as F.S. Wilson.

The Oxford Literary Guide to Australia (Pierce) is a user-friendly reference book which lists towns and regions in alphabetical order, with a chapter devoted to each of Australia's states and another covering Australian Territories. Though in the chapter titled "New South Wales" there is no listing for "Illawarra", some of the towns within that district appear. The listings are accompanied by annotations of much value to my research, such as names of well-known writers who were born or resided in particular areas, as well as works written about or set in particular areas. The information in the annotations is not greatly detailed, though it is certainly easier to locate when divided into districts, thus eliminating the need for me to read through every author listed (as with the Oxford Companion to Australian Literature, [Wilde, et al]) or every work title as in the Campbell Howard Checklist of Australian Plays in Manuscript (Apted).

I have attempted to circumvent the lack of Illawarra-related theatre scripts in the Austlit and Dictionary of Performing Arts listings (in particular, though the lack is apparent elsewhere) by going directly to the local theatres and searching through their archives. Applying the Campbell Howard criteria of "plays published ... (whether performed or not), and the plays performed, but not published ..." (Apted, 5.) I brought to light 15 playscripts set in the Illawarra which have been presented by Theatre South, prompt copies of which reside in Theatre South's dust-covered and disorganised 'archives' — stacks of folders piled under stairways, beneath desks and on shelves in Co-ordinator.
Des Davis' office. When I have completed my annotations on these works my loose-bound photocopies of the prompt scripts will be presented to Theatre South as the beginnings of archival organisation of these important documents. There is scope here for some academic work of compilation and archiving. I believe playwright Wendy Richardson (whose work appears in my bibliography) has begun a history of Theatre South (1997) which may go some way towards putting the company's archives in order.

The Roo Theatre Company, which is presently based at Shellharbour but has also worked out of Kiama and Jamberoo in the past, presented quite a number of Illawarra-related pieces in its first 10 years, beginning with a production called *We Shall Work, We Shall Live*, which was based on no less than the social history of Kiama and Jamberoo. I managed to extract copies of newspaper reviews of these mostly-musical shows from the Roo Theatre's large archival scrapbooks, as well as one script (of *Quarry*, which consists mostly of song lyrics) but the prompt copies and other versions of the scripts of shows presented by the Roo Theatre Company reside with founder Gordon Streek. I have had to rely on media reviews for my annotations of these works. I also got in touch with The Workshop Theatre in Gwynneville but received no reply to my correspondence. There is room here for research into the Illawarra-related plays presented by this theatre company.

To fill the gaps which exist in existing bibliographic documents regarding Illawarra-related prose fiction and verse, I contacted many local writers' groups and literary societies, as well as other academics working in selective areas of Illawarra literature, such as Jo Davis who has become a recognised expert on D.H. Lawrence and his Thirroul
connection. A couple of newspaper articles in the *Kiama Chamber Chronicle* (26 Feb, 1996) and *The Advertiser* (3 July, 1996), describing my research and asking for information on local writers past and present, attracted some mail with helpful hints.

Along the way my research has not only brought into focus the inadequacies of the present bibliographic material on Australian Literature in regard to coverage of regional works, but hopefully is creating some markers for other researchers. On page 760 of *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, there is an entry for a James Tucker, who is mentioned as the "probable author of the important early convict novel *Ralph Rashleigh* and other works". The information on this mysterious character is sketchy, and even the date of his death remains a mystery. *The Oxford Companion* goes on to say "He was in Goulburn in southern NSW in 1849-53, probably left there for Moreton Bay, but thereafter fades from the convict records. It is now thought that he died in Sydney in 1888, although he has been linked with a James Tucker who died at Liverpool Asylum in 1866". During my research I have come across two poems by a J.O. Tucker: "The Bulli Disaster" which appeared in the *Kiama Independent* of 1 April, 1887, and "An Appeal for the Widows and Orphans of the Bulli Disaster" (*Illawarra Mercury*, 14 April, 1887). Can this be the mysterious James Tucker mentioned in the *Oxford Companion*? I passed the information on to the editors of that book, suggesting in my letter that "it may throw some light on the author's whereabouts in 1887 (it is stated that the poem was written at the Terminus Hotel, Wollongong)". I have been assured that the *Companion's* editors are following that lead, which makes me feel my research is worthwhile in a wider context than the simple satisfaction of local curiosity.
Besides the work of Jo Davis and a few others on D.H. Lawrence and his writing of *Kangaroo*, there has been no comprehensive paper written on Illawarra Writing. There is Ron Pretty's 500-word Foreword to *The Anthology of The Illawarra*, which, rather than being an academic exploration of what constitutes Illawarra Writing, admits to letting the reader take up the challenge: "It's no easy task, then, to capture on paper a region which is as rich and varied as this one. We've chosen to do it by looking at the region through the eyes of its people, and especially through the creative artists and writers of the region" (Pretty, 4). Many, but not all of the pieces from that anthology, reveal overt connections to the Illawarra. This is more importantly an anthology of writing by authors and artists who "have chosen to make the Illawarra their home" (Pretty, 4) and not necessarily of writing about the Illawarra. What does appear, however, is certainly representative of the best Illawarra writing being published today.

Nobody that I can discover has looked at the body of Illawarra writing from its beginnings until today (and its continuance tomorrow) to try to determine its parallels and differences to Australian Literature. A region's status is created by more powerful forces in places depicted as centres, much as literary canons are arbitrated by academics using technologies of power to force their choices into the public gaze. As the Western Australian case has proved, strengthening of regional identity from within can circumvent somewhat the machinations of the powerful centres. Bibliographers in regional areas — such as Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Far North Queensland — have seen the need to challenge the Melbourne/Sydney-
centric viewpoint which seems to permeate the majority of anthologies, bibliographies, surveys and histories of Australian Literature.

The Illawarra is under-represented to the point of being virtually overlooked from bibliographies, surveys and histories of New South Wales Literature. My view suggests that many important works have been created here which should be considered in the overall picture of Australian Literature, as well as in the context of the unique social/cultural position of the region. Much Illawarra literature is not being included by most Australian bibliographers, and the English Studies Program of the region's only university should certainly consider it a priority to document and examine the range of Illawarra Writing.

I am aware that because my bibliography is the first of its kind, it may be responsible for creating a canon which is exclusive because of my decision to include only prose fiction, verse, scripts, journals, autobiographies and reminiscences. I have also excluded material in languages other than English but included those in English translation, because it's the only language I can read. A decision was made not to look at material written after 1997, so I could finish writing this thesis on time.

The annotated bibliography which begins on page 160 will perhaps be the text against which all future Illawarra bibliographies will be measured. My only justification for this position of power is that I saw a need for a research tool to assist with my ultimate aim of searching for the Illawarra as a literary identity, and thus set about to create something I could use. It is not my intention to create the pathways all
future research into Illawarra Writing must take. There are more than likely other relevant past works which did not get into my bibliography, and so I hope the search goes on beyond this text.

In the journey of my research I have glimpsed a rich source of academic study which is yet to be tapped. There is a unique history of literature in the Illawarra which would help contextualise other Australian regional literatures, as well as adding to the tapestry of Australian Literature in general.

The Illawarra and Regionalism
Since most discussion of regionalism in Australian literature is centred on Western Australia, I shall be using this as a general example of what might be argued for a smaller distinctive region such as the Illawarra. What I call the Regionalism Debate is an ongoing discussion within the pages of *Westerly* magazine, about whether particular elements of a region are able to influence the writing which is produced from or about it, to the point where that writing can be identified as unique to that region. The consensus at this stage seems to be, at least in the case of Western Australia and Far North Queensland, that a body of regionally unique writing can be created which utilizes or is influenced by elements of a region’s terrain, its geological situation, as well as any localised cultural activities, traditions and focus. There is also a strong dissenting voice in the debate which suggests that the less regionally-specific elements of Westernised culture render regionality invisible, or that what seems unique to a region is merely a variation on a more universal theme. Peter Ward laments the replacement of regional identity with a form of MacDonalds imperialism which enforces an identical cultural landscape upon all (former) regions. Certainly Peter
Ward's "relentless conformity" (71) makes regional differences more difficult to perceive, while fast-food universalism and the culture of capitalism may, in fact, be diluting regional difference almost beyond our ability to detect it. But this "internationalism" is generally the reflection of a dominant culture group" (Shapcott, 70). Resistance to this may take the form of, say, an insistence by writers upon denoting their regional connections as well as offering regional settings for their fiction and so on.

Resistance may also mean emphasising a region's negative traits as well as its attributes. The dystopian pessimism of later twentieth century poets writing about the Illawarra, such as Conal Fitzpatrick, Kevin Baker, C.E. Hull, Manfred Jurgensen and Kim Oldroyd, for instance, is a valid reading of the region, not least in its challenging of the rampant industrial capitalism which threatens to pollute the district beyond recognition and remove any trace of uniqueness inherent in the topography, flora and fauna or, for that matter, the culture. In challenging the forces of capitalism, this kind of writing is defending the positive aspects of the Illawarra which are being threatened by the scorched earth style of universalism seemingly practised by industrialists.

However the stereotyping, or "Illawarra bashing" as I call it in a later chapter, from the *Bulletin* writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries offers no such defence of the region's attributes. The *Bulletin* writers' target was the region itself, and the small but powerful canon of literature which constitutes the attack attempted to dismantle the region's identity. Any Illawarra uniqueness was portrayed
as illusory, and the region was used merely as a metaphor for everything the *Bulletin* didn't want Sydney to be.

"It makes as much sense to explore the differences of Australia," according to Peter Cowan, "as to mirror the sameness" (75). Western Australia, certainly, has chosen to explore rather than mirror. The strength and confidence of Western Australia as a region (and a site of regional literature) can be seen as the result of a long process of insistence on local differences. The first newspapers appeared in the Swan River Colony by 1830, fifteen years after Charles Throsby became the first non-Aboriginal inhabitant of the Illawarra (or the Five Islands District). The Illawarra region's history — of European habitation and literature — is of similar duration.

In the Illawarra, however, publication of writing about the region and local publishing in general has been — and continues to be — spasmodic. There simply hasn't been a prolonged and concerted case made for the Illawarra. Many Illawarra-based authors are hard to identify as such because they don't write overtly about the region and tend to keep their origins invisible. The most prolific local publisher is Five Islands Press, which publishes mostly poetry collections, not necessarily by Illawarra-based writers. The poetry is certainly of a high standard, as is the production of the books, however only a very small percentage of this poetry is overtly about the Illawarra. Similarly, locally-produced (and recently defunct) *Scarp* magazine has published a number of pieces overtly about the Illawarra, though the magazine is not intended to be regional in scope. *Scarp* began as an in-house university journal, but developed to where it catered to an international audience and writing fraternity which grew with the
magazine's status over the years. *Scarp* editor Ron Pretty has also compiled the first *Anthology of the Illawarra*, with contributions from Illawarra-based authors, though again with only a small percentage of the material overtly about the Illawarra.

Local theatre company Theatre South has been more prolific in its contributions to the literary construction of the Illawarra. It has produced and presented at least fifteen Illawarra-related plays since the 1980s, as has the Shellharbour-based Roo Theatre Company, though the latter's contribution to an Illawarra literary identity has been mostly in the form of musicals. In Western Australia this strong connection to the region through drama does not seem to exist, with the notable exception of Jack Davis' plays. "Although there has been a thriving tradition of local participation in the production and performance of plays in Western Australia, the link between the theatres and local playwrights which might have given impetus to the writing of plays has never been strong." (Bennett, *Literature*, xiv)

Theatrical scripts aside, there seems to be little eagerness by writers to be identified as Illawarra-based. This is not the case with writers who are resident in Western Australia, where a certain status or celebrity is attached to the location. Writing about the decade between 1978 and 1988, Bruce Bennett points out that "the productivity of Western Australian authors has been enormous in this recent period and interest in the culture, environment and history of Western Australia has made the state a topic of great interest to writers from elsewhere, as well as to 'true-born sandgropers'." (Bennett, *Writing*, ix) Being overtly Western Australian for so long has created an interest in the region. This means writers are not afraid to acknowledge their regional origins,
which may have been a stumbling block to recognition in the beginning, but now offers credibility because of associations with successful writers from the region. Of course, it is not just writing which gives Western Australian residents a sense of identity. The state's physical size, location and long existence as a separate state with powers of government have all contributed to its strength as a region.

It may be obvious logic, but it needs to be reiterated that for a regional literary identity to exist (and evolve) a region must be written about. "Literature of the Illawarra" and "Illawarra Writing" are ambiguous terms, encompassing such possibilities as all works by authors who reside or have resided in the Illawarra, or have some connection with the region (the option adopted by Ron Pretty for the *Anthology of the Illawarra*); all works published by Illawarra-based publishers, and works which are set in the Illawarra or offer some literary construction of the region.

I have eliminated the first two possibilities because, for the purposes of this paper as a starting point in discovering the Illawarra as a literary identity, the region must exist in literature overtly, as something more than a tacit influence or background informing stimulus. It needs to go beyond being "the way the environment enters the psyche of the people living there" (Davidson, 78), though it may begin in some cases with that. It should translate from the psyche (and not necessarily of "the people living there") to the page in some recognisable/recoverable form. Otherwise we might read regional influence into every piece of writing we encounter, no matter how tenuous. This is certainly possible, but it's not within the parameters of this thesis.
Nadia Wheatley believes Charmian Clift "[drew] upon a people and a place that she knew like the back of her hand — and which she could observe as she sat writing on her parents' front verandah" (Wheatley, 273). She argues an Illawarra basis for Clift's descriptions of the Himalayas in the novel High Valley.

Wheatley writes,

The settlement at North Kiama, where Charmian Clift had grown up, consisted of twenty or so cottages scattered along the eastern end of a small green valley surrounded by steeply rolling hills and bisected by a creek. Although this valley ends abruptly at Bombo Beach and the Pacific Ocean, it folds back in a westerly direction into a succession of valleys that abut onto the sheer rise of the Illawarra escarpment. Thus, while the Valley of the Dreaming Phoenix is a composite of S-le-t'o and other valleys described in Journey Through Tomorrow, the novelists also drew upon the miniature geographical model that lay at their doorstep. (273)

The geographic descriptions in High Valley, however, offer an entirely different landscape, conjured by Clift's imagination. The "bare red mountains" and the "valley so vast that its limits blurred into an opalescent haze" (17 - 18) as well as the valley "perhaps eighty miles broad at its widest point" with its "highest extremity in the east, abutting the snow-peaks ... at an altitude of sixteen thousand feet" (19) contain most un-Illawarra extremities of distance and height.

These descriptions are the results of an intuitive creativity which, though drawing upon some basic geographical knowledge from a childhood spent in the Illawarra, are meant to evoke an alien and distant land. That basic geographical knowledge which Clift uses is as much from her Illawarra experience as an observation that the sky is
up (and usually blue), while the ground is down (and usually not blue). It is worth noting here that, from reading all of Clift's work, it seems to me that the author went to great effort to keep her regional origins invisible. Though in her weekly newspaper column she wrote about her childhood often, she managed to mention specific locations rarely. Most of her memories are conveyed in universal images more suited and understandable, perhaps, to her cosmopolitan audience. Having said that, I concede that Clift may have been writing with an expectation that her readers would be familiar enough with her life as a celebrity to have extratextual information about her background from other sources.

Of course, writing about a place should not be the exclusive domain of local residents (otherwise High Valley would have had to be written by Tibetans), and in this thesis's version of Illawarra Writing, something of the Illawarra must show up on the page. Simply being published in the Illawarra does not make a work part of the region's literary identity.

There are some other notable differences between Western Australia and the Illawarra. The growth of the Swan River Colony into statehood was not hampered, or complicated, or confused by a proximity to the contending fledgling metropolis of Port Jackson (a place perceived as a 'centre' not a region). Nor did it suffer fragmentation and subdivision into smaller sub-regions with tenuous status, as did the Illawarra when Shoalhaven and Eurobodalla shires were proclaimed. Western Australia became an Australian state bounded by (non-arbitrary) coastline and official — artificial but permanent — borders. Certainly there are regions within those state boundaries, and perhaps people living near its eastern border could debate their allegiance to a capital city so far
away, but only one version of Western Australia as a geographical entity exists, and it has been constructed as a single literary region. For Western Australia, the mapmakers have provided a fairly unambiguous area in which a literature may be situated. As far as I know, no local government entity has had to ask the Western Australian premier for official confirmation about the exact location of Western Australia, as the mayor of Wollongong did in regard to the Illawarra recently, in a submission paper to Premier Bob Carr (Submission, 1).

Of course, the notion of Western Australia is a culturally specific one, and I need to make it clear here that I am talking about the colonial and post-colonial constructions of the area, as I am when speaking about the Illawarra. I am aware that there are many Aboriginal tribal and language regions encompassed by the European idea of Western Australia, and concede that Aboriginal writers may not see the region as I describe it. This also applies to my descriptions of the Illawarra, hence my reliance upon the European notion of publication when dealing with the material and its chronological placement.
DECIDING UPON A LITERATURE

Establishing an Illawarra as a region within which its fictional counterpart may be situated is an important first step, but it is also necessary to ascertain which works — amongst those situated in, or about, this Illawarra — should be included. I will look at how respected academics have defined literary works in regional bibliographies, as well as the literal definitions of writing forms. I will also discuss my decisions to include certain forms and genres, citing researchers of specific kinds of literature.

In the Introduction to Western Australian Writing: A Bibliography, Bennett describes the scope of the works the editors have included under the term "writing": "In Part One ... the emphasis is on 'literary' texts, defined according to the traditional generic categories — novels, plays, verse, short stories, and essays. A relative new-comer to definitions of the 'literary', autobiography, is also included. (In distinguishing between autobiography and, say, social history or travel, we have made judgements about the degree of subjectivity of particular publications.)" (ix)

This definition covers every form of writing which fictionalizes a region and is transparent about its intention. It could be argued that the material which constructs the tourist Illawarra — the numerous pamphlets, booklets, maps and photo essays — in fact offers a fictionalised version of the region. However, this tourism literature purports to be informational and instructive and is not meant to be construed as being the product of a writer's imagination. Though the literary Illawarra may at times extract elements from the Tourist Illawarra in its endeavour to offer verisimilitude, the reader is
positioned to acknowledge the artifice of novels, short stories, plays, verse and so on, while the tourism material — no matter how rhapsodic — is accepted as a true reflection of reality and its constructedness is ignored in the negotiation between reader and text.

I have also included prose pieces from early Illawarra newspapers. These articles may have originally been regarded as factual reporting, but from a late-twentieth-century perspective they reveal a romanticized version of the Illawarra, and conform to one of the dictionary definitions of fiction: "a product of the imagination". (Australian Oxford Paperback Dictionary, 294) The use of the imagery of the fantastic (in Alexander Harris's work Settlers and Convicts, for example) is an aspect of early Illawarra travel prose which demarcates it as fiction, and sets it so obviously apart from the rest of the strictly-journalistic, blandly-factual field notes from regional reporters who were attempting to construct a scientific, unromanticized version of the district.

The articles I have chosen to include are written in a style which is virtually indistinguishable from prose fiction of the time (most notably the adventure genre). What these prose pieces choose to describe, and how they describe it, goes beyond the requirements of mere reportage. Like much prose fiction which feigns realism, this early Illawarra journalese offers story movement, moments of climax, denouement and a narrative point of view which is often far removed from first-hand experience of the setting. Such passages as:

Before you lies the vast and mighty ocean, with the long line of coast on which the restless surf with its white foam is ever breaking, forming a pleasing contrast with the blue waters of the deep, and the dark green foliage of the vegetation skirting the base and sides of these hills. Again,
you see before you a succession of hills stretching away, and seeming to have no end. The valleys beneath these hills in all parts densely clothed with a healthy and vigorous vegetation, the myriads of palm trees, intermingled with masses of tree ferns, and beautiful foliaged trees. The many handsome climbing plants so abundant in these woods, ascending to a great height, or spreading from tree to tree, rendering it a difficult matter to thread your way through the matted and entangled masses of Tecoma Australia, Clematic avistata, Maradonia flavescena. *(Kiama Independent, 12 Jan, 1883)*

are poetically expressed, and blur the boundaries which have been constructed between journalism and fiction.

Autobiographical reminiscences offer unique perspectives of the Illawarra and, though based on supposedly factual material, they are reliant upon their authors' memories for accuracy. Indeed, the filter of intervening years has created a number of often conflicting versions of the same historical event.

Inga Clendinnen calls autobiographies "the most unreliable form of fiction," (8s), and Dorothy Hewett says that "in order to write autobiography, the writer invents a pseudonym, a character." (Colmer, 29) This process of editing reality can also be used to define fiction. Selective as it may be, for the purposes of my bibliography I choose to include autobiography under the category of literature.

Bennett et al's *Western Australian Writing: A Bibliography* also includes some unpublished material, as does my annotated bibliography: "This includes some typescripts of plays which we know to have been 'published' in the sense of having been produced ... the aim in each of these cases, as in some other 'unpublished' inclusions is that their inclusion may stimulate further research: This is especially necessary in
the case of drama." (xi) Applying this criterion to Illawarra writing, I have included all of Wendy Richardson's plays, though only some of them have been published in book form. All of Richardson's plays set in the Illawarra have seen major production by Illawarra-based Theatre South and other regional theatre companies. Similarly, the songs of Ronald Miller have been published in the sense of being performed by the author in his capacity as a professional entertainer. The lyrics of these songs stand on their own as poetry, and I have annotated them as such.
LITERARY WORKS

Early Poetry

I begin my early Illawarra poetry period in 1856 because that is the year of the earliest published piece I have been able to retrieve. I bring this period to an end in 1922 for a number of reasons. The first is that there is a perceivable gap between the year of publication of Pipards' poem and the next 'cluster' of Illawarra poems, which begins with two short pieces by eight-year-old Charmian Clift, who is considered by many still-living readers to be a contemporary. Also, I am aware that the artificial construction of century numbering does not create sudden changes in ways of thinking, and that certain discourses are not confined within those artificial boundaries which appear at the ends and beginnings of centuries. Though the later poems were published in the early part of the twentieth century, they carry with them much baggage from the previous century, which we have come to equate with colonial and patriarchal discourse at its most powerful.

There are many Aboriginal stories and myths situated in the Illawarra region, including the dreaming stories and reminiscences recorded by white anthropologists between 1870 and 1900, those collected by C.W. Peck during 1925 and 1933 (Organ, l — li) as well as those turned into verse and anthologised by Roland Robinson during the 1950s (Organ, li). Most of these stories have been passed down through countless generations and their age cannot be determined. What is certain is that they are the oldest stories in existence today about the area we now call the Illawarra. These stories were not retrieved and published, however, until late in the nineteenth century and onwards.
Their publication came only after an initial denial in the early to mid-nineteenth century of the Aboriginal storytelling tradition because of its close — if sometimes cryptic — connection with an ancient history of Aboriginal occupation of the Australian continent. Denial was followed by a systematic replacement of the indigenous storytelling tradition which had been rendered invisible by the denial. What replaced it was a European literary tradition which struggled to come to terms with an alien landscape. "The unfamiliar landscapes demanded to be read differently by people who carried with them preoccupations and conventions that applied to another place and another set of circumstances." (Arthur, 202)

The poem "An Illawarra Idyll" (refer to Annotated Bibliography) is a perfect example of an attempt by the European colonizers to reconstruct an Aboriginal viewpoint of the Illawarra after the near-genocide which silenced the indigenous storytelling tradition connected with the region. (For more on this aspect of Australian history, see Blood on the Wattle by Bruce Elder and The Stolen Children: Their Stories, edited by Carmel Bird.) The poem, which when it was written purported to be a sympathetic treatment of an Aboriginal viewpoint is, in fact, a reinforcement of the colonial regime's denial of Aboriginal culture, written by Europeans assuming intimate knowledge of that culture, as well as presuming to know the thoughts and feelings of an individual within the remnants of that culture.

The device of the introductory prose paragraph offering supposed background information on inspiration for a poem, was often used by the Bulletin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Much of the Bulletin poetry of this era was purported to be inspired by news
items covering real-life events. The particular news item quoted at the beginning of "An Illawarra Idyll" trivializes Aboriginal culture by offering scant connection to the poem's content. The news item has little to do with the poem, except that Aborigines feature in both. The trivialization is carried further by the pun in the pseudonymic phrase (which is also a European colloquialism) "By Gum", which connects with the gum-leaf-playing Aborigines in the introductory paragraph.

"An Illawarra Idyll" simply acts to validate the early-twentieth-century anglocentric 'truth' that indigenous peoples were incapable of telling their own stories because they failed to grasp the concepts which informed western storytelling. Aborigines could not be poets according to this view of reality because they could not speak the language of poetry. By inference the poets of the colonial regime were deemed to be the only ones capable of telling the Aborigines' story.

"An Illawarra Idyll" belongs in the popular genre of the elegy, which in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was part of the technology of power which helped produce the convenient decline of Aborigines. What is not addressed in this representation of the gloomy Aborigine is the history of violence and genocide which informs the European literary construction of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Australian Aborigine as a forlorn figure. The poem presents this particular figure in its opening stanza with the lines "By a cold lake near the ocean / Lonely mourned a warrior youth," who in the final stanza plunges into Lake Illawarra to take his own life.

By 1911, it would seem, the remnant population of Aborigines was being studied like laboratory rats, and texts like "An Illawarra Idyll"
can be seen as part of a canon of literature which assisted in the organisation and reiteration of the stereotyping of Aborigines. In many ways, the misinterpretation of Aboriginal culture represented by "An Illawarra Idyll" can be equated with the problems the European mind set had with describing the landscape.

The struggle to read the antipodean landscape by colonisers and explorers up until the 1850s — the decade in which the first poetry about the Illawarra was published — is well-documented in Ross Gibson's *The Diminishing Paradise* and *A New Land: European Perceptions of Australia 1788 — 1850* by Stephen Martin. What followed the "familiarization of the strange in an attempt to accommodate it to known worlds and artistic conventions" (Arthur, 202) was a controlled retrieval of 'lost literature', a retrieval informed by a kind of politically-correct guilt for past misdemeanours, with a resulting canon of storytelling transformed by the colonial and post-colonial process.

**Religious Imagery**

Ancient as the Aboriginal dreaming stories may be, the earliest publication date (in the European sense) of all the poetic works I have recovered which relate overtly to the Illawarra belongs to the poem “An Adieu to Wollongong” by a poet with the initials S.K. This piece was published in the *Illawarra Mercury* of 28 January, 1856. It is an ode to the “beauties” of the wilderness as it existed in the Illawarra at the time, full of references to the “Almighty hand” and equating the landscape with the Judaic/Christian concept of a Creator. There is much of the same religious imagery in the 1884 poem “A Reverie,” in which the Creator figure is called "The Architect, the great I Am.”
An Early Nostalgia

It is interesting that the earliest retrievable poem about the Illawarra is written from the point of view of somebody who is leaving it and is looking back at it nostalgically. In the 1872 poem “To Wollongong” another anonymous poet laments the exodus from Wollongong by much of its populace, with similar references to “the majesty of God” and the “call divine in nature.” This exodus, it is hinted at, is to the goldfields, as it is in “The Lament of a Shoalhaven Potatoe Grower’s Daughter” (1856). Similarly, “Shellharbour, Farewell” (1890) and “Illawarra, Farewell” (1891) offer nostalgic reminiscences of a region which the narrators are reluctantly leaving.

Political Innuendo

"A Trialogue Between His Worship the MA(re), Bob Miller, of Gerringong, and Jack the Tanner, of Kiama", by perhaps a group of authors — a common practice in early Australian newspaper publishing — calling themselves Verdant Green for the occasion, was published in The Examiner (formerly The Kiama Examiner) of 7 January, 1860. In many ways this piece typifies much of the early Illawarra poetry which was to follow. Most of the political innuendo of "Trialogue" is lost to the late twentieth century reader. This is true of much of the other early political Illawarra poetry (see Annotated Bibliography.)

"Trialogue" differs from any other work published between 1856 and 1922 in its form as a drama script written in rhyming verse. There are retrievable allusions to graft and corruption connected with the cedar cutting industry, an aspect which no other coverage of it illuminates. We know from certain government reports and official documentation, as well as reportage such as A.M.F’s "Illawarra," (1872) that an illegal
cedar trade was carried out within the Illawarra region during the early to mid nineteenth century. But this poem is the clearest evidence of the machinations of this trade at local government level. In this case poetry opens a window upon a view that the dominant version of history has overlooked or chosen not to record.

Unfamiliar Landscape
As with the literature related to the rest of Australia, the early poetic view of the Illawarra is written in an English which was not equipped for rendering the unfamiliar landscape. Even as late as 1899, the Bulletin literary critic A. G. Stephens — writing about national literature — was lamenting the fact that "in poetry the dead hand of our ancestors is heavy upon us" (Stephens, 47). The same general statement can be made about Illawarra literature.

Many of the other early, non-political, Illawarra poems which offer overt treatments of the region are obsessed with the landscape and climate. Poems such as H. Moss's "A Prospecting Sketch in the Shoalhaven Gullies" (1860) with its "wooded glens" and lines like "I, pensive stray'd, amid the flow'r-strew'd vale"; Gerard D'ArCY Irvine's "Illawarra - A Sonnet" (1903) which describes an Illawarra "dowered with lavish hand", and H.H. Lublin's "Illawarra" (1896) offer an idyllic Illawarra rendered in language more suited to describing the neat, garden-like countryside of the British Isles and are filled with mythical allusions and archaic language. Most, no matter how well-crafted even by late twentieth century standards, offer an inappropriate depiction when compared with later poetic responses and are weakest in their rendition of the wilder, unkempt aspects of the Illawarra topography, flora and fauna. As positive as Lublin's "Illawarra" is, it is full of
descriptions of "Mossy dells and hollows" and "Haunted glens and gullies," inherited from the European experience before its encounter with a landscape which refused to conform to the imported language.

**Reminiscence**

"Australia is still a suburb of Cosmopolis," Stephens wrote in 1901, "where men from many lands perpetuate in a new environment the ideas and habits acquired far away" (48) A favourite ploy of the idyllic poems about the Illawarra is reminiscence, with narrators returning to or recalling an Illawarra of their childhood after many years' estrangement. This reinforces the still-existent notion that the Illawarra — like all regional areas in Australia — is a place to be born in, but not a place to find success. The Illawarra-born must travel elsewhere for that. Many returning narrators remark upon how little has changed during their time away. As in F.R.W's "Beautiful Illawarra" and H. Huet's "On Seeing Kiama," absence of apparent change tells us much about the rate of 'progress' in the Illawarra during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

**Dangerous Idyll**

E.J. Brady's "Coasts of Dream" offers an Illawarra seen through the overpolished lens of childhood memory inhabited by relinquished love affairs. In "Gerringong" Brady favourably compares the town of his birth with the rest of Australia, and in "On Keira" he revisits his youth and laments the loss of a dead sweetheart. Brady's Illawarra is a romanticized pastoral utopia polished bright by nostalgia and devoid of any of the harsh realism offered by some of his more cynical contemporaries. In opposition to this idyllic view of the Illawarra is the poetry which renders the region as a threat to human life (eg, Clifford
Kitson's "Memories of Kiama," F.S. Wilson's "Coming Events"). A tacit danger permeates and underscores the alien beauty of the landscape in these poems. In Lorimer's "Macquarie Pass" we are offered an Illawarra in the process of being tamed, yet the possibility of nature's retaliation is still present. These poems are often infused with a pioneer ethic and viewpoint which offers a down-to-earth, practical reminder of what price wilderness — and the taming of it — brings.

Conservationist/Pioneer Dichotomy
Running parallel to — and often intersecting with — this idyllic/dangerous dichotomy is a similar juxtaposition of conservationist sentiment and a burning desire to hack 'progress' and 'civilization' from the pristine landscape. In A. Gore-Jones' "Wollongong" the idyllic — if somewhat sombre — setting is challenged by the intrusion of the "living mines" within Mount Keira, and the "one great lighthouse star" grafted onto the headland. This poem records the point at which nineteenth-century European technology finally quells the stubborn resistance of the pre-colonial Illawarra landscape. It is as much a celebration of that victory as it is a lament for the passing of the old order, reflecting the schizoid position of nineteenth-century pioneers. In the Illawarra-as-Idyll poetry the region is seen as a Garden of Eden, a view which sits parallel with that of the pre-Christianised Aborigines, who practised a form of 'natural' harvesting of the abundance of foods in the coastal flats below the escarpment.

The Illawarra-as-garden construct contradicts the general literary view of the rest of Australia as a desolate and infertile place. "In Australia," writes Kateryna Arthur, "writing has generated the myth of a barren and hostile landscape." (Arthur, 204) This "vision of Australia as
parody” (Arthur, 204) is certainly evident in some of the more negative late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century poetic treatments of the Illawarra. However, an overview of the poetry which depicts the region between 1856 and 1922 reveals the garden myth as dominant. A desolate and infertile Australia outside the protected solitude of the Illawarra is alluded to in Walter D. White's 1905 poem "Kiama": "Of Illawarra's steeps that guard the vale / And shield from blast of burning, parching winds / From desert wastes and spaces dead and dreary.” This poem suggests the escarpment as a border/barrier between the barren Australia of lore and the then lush coastal fringe.

Spencer's 1904 poem "Illawarra" begins with praise for the natural beauty of the Illawarra landscape, with each stanza beginning "In thy garden, Illawarra". By 1922 and Pipards' "A Word from Wollongong," certainly, it is a garden much transformed — 'tamed' — by European interference, but still a fertile place nevertheless. The picture of a fertile Illawarra helps form the picture of Australia through contrast. It also fits with Ross Gibson's notion of Australia as a diminishing Paradise — with each successive inaccessible region seen as a candidate for Paradise until closer exploration reveals its flaws (Gibson.)

What passed for a conservationist philosophy in nineteenth-century Illawarra poetry (eg, Lorimer's "Jamberoo") saw the destruction of the sub-tropical rainforest garden as lamentable but necessary, an inevitable consequence of the spread of European civilization. In J.W's "A Glimpse of Coast Scenery in New South Wales" and the resulting "Lines Suggested by Reading A Glimpse of Coast Scenery in New South Wales", an idyllic treatment of an Illawarra already in the process of
being tamed, is confronted by the practical viewpoint which imparts the harsh realities experienced by the tamers.

The exchange of views offered by these two poems shows how, "in the case of the pioneers there was often neglect because of the overwhelming demands of simple survival and also because the particularities of the place were not yet visible to them" (Arthur, 205) The Illawarra depicted in Try Again's "On That Natural Curiosity, the Blow-Hole at Kiama," as well as many of the other Kiama poems like Lorimer's "Around Kiama's Coast," H. Huet's "On Seeing Kiama", Clifford Kitson's "Memories of Kiama", Eileen Clinch's "Dusty Blue Kiama" and F.S. Wilson's "Coming Events", contributed significantly to its early image as a place (no matter how idyllically beautiful) only for those who possessed the bravery of the pioneer. "The complaint against Australia," wrote Stephens, "is the complaint of strangers that a new country will not adapt itself to their ingrained beliefs and usages." (Stephens, 213)

**Kiama and the Sea**

Kiama is always inextricably linked with the sea in early Illawarra poetry, as these many examples show. Also, numerous grammatical variations of "surging" and "kissing" waves appear, perhaps inherited from Kendall's "And foam-flecked crags with surges chill" in his 1861 poem "Kiama." In the 1866 poem "On That Natural Curiosity, the Blow-Hole at Kiama" attributed to Try Again, the ocean becomes sentient at its point of junction with human beings at the "blow-hole", where it "sobbing, kissed the tearful shore", and in Kitson's poem the narrator remembers how "The troubled heavy ocean" would "kiss/The crumbling soil" The opening line of F.S. Wilson's "Coming Events" reads "The
Surges were kissing the crags of Kiama” and in Lorimer's "Around Kiama's Coast" "Not often, as now, can I hear the loud surge". In Huet's "On Seeing Kiama" the seaside village is "kissed by the spray".

So too do many poetic versions of Kiama's cliffs appear. They are variously "Iron Clad" (Lorimer), "Iron-bound" (Huet) "steel-clad" (Huet). In Walter D. White's 1905 poem "Kiama" the lines " ... long Pacific seas break into foam/upon an iron-bound coast ... " bear a striking resemblance to H. Huet's poem of 1866, which reads "Washed by the waves, and kissed by the spray;/Girdled around by the iron bound shore".

Kiama is a place where the Illawarra's tacit dangers are strongly focussed poetically, perhaps because of the tragedies depicted in such poems as "The Catastrophe at Bombo, Kiama" by S.E.W., and "In Memoriam of the Minnamurra Fatality" by Lorimer. So strong is this negative image, it is easily invoked in Laurie Brady's 1992 poem "Kiama Drownings" about a much later tragedy.

Disaster poetry similar to the Kiama poems was a popular form in nineteenth-century Illawarra poetry and seems to have been regulated by a common set of unwritten rules. There are similarities between J.O. Tucker's "The Bulli Disaster" and S.E.W's "The Catastrophe at Bombo, Kiama", which was written a year later, as well as "Pre-Eminence in Grief" which appears in the Bulletin of 14 May 1887. Both employ rhyming couplets of iambic pentameter, a final stanza which appeals directly to the reader and emotive, archaic language. Victorian England abounded in such disaster poems, going back through 'black letter' ballads to sensationalist murder and mayhem stories.
**Illawarra Bashing**

Much of the early Illawarra poetry treads a precarious balance between idyllic and pioneer viewpoints. The ethic from which the latter viewpoint springs may have also given rise to the *Bulletin* school of poetry which paints the Illawarra as a cultural backwater, and its inhabitants as brawling drunkards. At the same time as poets like E.J. Brady and Phillip D. Lorimer were painting idyllic word pictures, the *Bulletin* satirists were reinforcing a stereotypical Illawarra of their own creation which was remote and out-of-touch with civilized urban values and peopled by drunken anarchists. Mack’s 1905 poem “Jamberoo” alludes to the town’s *Bulletin*-constructed reputation as a town full of drunkards, by its suggestion that it was named during a drunken spree, and was meant to be called Jamboree, which would be a more suitable name for a constantly-partying village. This play on the town's name is also employed in O.C.C's "The Jamboree at Jamberoo" (1911), in which the reputation for drunken revelry is reinforced. Similarly, W.R. Mackay's "A Wild Night At Wollongong" (1913) depicts a Wollongong populated by alcoholics who use the supposedly constant stormy weather as an excuse to be inside getting drunk.

The Illawarra portrayed in "A Gong Jingle" (1904) is one which no respectable urbanite would dare go near, while Sorenson's "The Man From Jamberoo" (1903) offers the implication that Jamberoo is an out-of-the-way place which breeds tough and heartless rogues. T.E. Spencer's "Illawarra" (1904) begins with praise for the natural beauty of the landscape, but twists into a loathing with the death of the narrator's loved one. Here is a metaphor for the experience of the European pioneers, who also began by describing the Illawarra as a garden, but
who were confronted with hardship and death when they began the taming process.

The Illawarra-bashing meted out by the *Bulletin* in the latter half of the nineteenth century continued as far into the twentieth century as Pipard's 1922 poem "A Word From Wollongong", "reproducing the bush/city split which marked the Bulletin nationalist rhetoric." (Whitlock, 553) The *Bulletin* used the Illawarra as a metaphor for The Middle of Nowhere, and that metaphor survived even to 1978 where, in the Mervyn Rutherford play *Departmental* an unnamed suburb of Wollongong is given the same metaphoric connotation. This metaphor is also apparent in the untitled poem published in the *Bulletin* of 4 April, 1891, which suggests that when we see the word "Jamberoo" in the pages of the *Bulletin*, we are meant to read "Woop Woop" or something equally synonymous.

**Kendall's Special Place**

Of all the poets writing about the Illawarra in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Henry Kendall is perhaps still the best known and celebrated. Kendall's early idyllic viewpoint of the Illawarra he grew up in is certainly expressed in exceptional terms, employing a poetry which can still be appreciated in the late twentieth century. "Only a part of the south-east coast was known to Kendall" during his early years, "but he had drawn that part into his blood." (Stephens, 118) A lot has been written elsewhere about Kendall, and so I won't dwell upon his creative achievements. It needs to be said, however, that much of what followed Kendall's early efforts was derivative of European poetic fashion and hence inarticulate as a creative interpretation of the Illawarra landscape. New lands required new words. Even "Kendall's
model in blank verse may have been Milton." (Stephens, 119) There is no suggestion here that some international school or movement of poetry was being unconsciously conformed to. The early Illawarra poets, in fact, resorted in many cases to the use of outmoded poetic styles and forms "after English models." (Stephens, 83) Not until Nettie Palmer's "A Seafaring" and the groups of Illawarra poems by Lorimer and Brady does early Illawarra poetry come of age. With these poets a mature, appropriate and distinctly Australian response to the Illawarra re-emerges.

An Australian Voice in Poetry
The poetry of Palmer, Lorimer and Brady represents the beginnings of a truly Australian voice in the Illawarra as fiction. In their poetry, the emulative style and alien, inadequate expression apparent in most earlier (and some later) Illawarra poetry is absent. A.G. Stephens, the sternest of critics of early Australian literature, wrote that "Brady is almost solitary in his field, and intimate, and strong." (Stephens, 88) All three poetic voices were unique for their time. "The literary work which is Australian in spirit, as well as in scene or incident," wrote Stephens in 1901, "is only beginning to be written." (Stephens, 106)

The Other Kendall
Henry Kendall's mother Melinda/Matilda (details about her name remain confused, though she wrote under the name Melinda) is relegated to the footnotes of her famous son's story. However, her poetic output was considerable, though only two of her poems contribute to the literary identity of the Illawarra. These are "Fairy Meadow" (1884), which uses the passing of magic as a metaphor for the decay of society's morals, and "The Collier's Strike Song," (1885), a much more political
protest anthem about coalminers' pay cuts. I have recovered another ten of Melinda Kendall's poems during my research. It is indicative of the subordinate role of nineteenth century women that Melinda Kendall's famous son's alcoholism was an accepted aspect of his creative urge, while she has been dismissed simply as a dypsomaniac (T. I. Moore, "Introduction," vii, x and Clarke, 75).

Republican Poetry

Early republican sentiment is obvious in many of the overtly political poems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially those published in the Bulletin. Some of them are valuable examples from the early history of Australia's republican movement. In "The Blacksmith, the Premier, the Kiama Ghost and the Fifty Pounds" (1880) Henry Parkes is criticized for his lack of humility in his position as Premier. As in "Trialogue", corruption in high places is alluded to, and there is much anti-royal sentiment being expressed. "Pre-Eminence in Grief", the poetic response to a news item about the mayoress of Sydney, who was soliciting signatures for a card to be sent to Queen Victoria offering condolences on the death of her husband (Bulletin 14 May 1887), is another wonderful example of the wit and venom of the early republicans. What connects this poem to the Illawarra is the fact that it uses the deaths of eighty miners in the so-called "Bulli Disaster" as a comparison point of grief, thus exposing the obsequiousness of the mayoress's plea.
Modern Poetry

What I have designated as the era of modern Illawarra Poetry begins after a gap of eleven years. This later group of poems certainly shares much with the earlier poetry, such as a fascination with graveyards (represented by three poems) and the now-named escarpment (in the poetry of Ron Pretty, Conal Fitzpatrick, Deb Westbury and Rosaline Olsen). The notion of the ocean as a dangerous entity survives into the modern era in poems by Laurie Brady, Izzet & Ipek Goldeli, Peter Skrzynecki and Peter Rose. The poetic chronicling of disasters which was so prevalent in the earlier period is continued by Brady, Skrzynecki, Rose and Laurie Duggan. The view from the escarpment is still a popular one in modern Illawarra poetry, as presented by Merle Glasson, Conal Fitzpatrick and William Pitt, though with major differences. The notion of the Illawarra-as-garden, however, survives in only one poem by Audrey Bunn. A number of poems — by Bruce Beaver, Charlotte Clutterbuck and Mark Miller — look back on the nineteenth century with a nostalgia inspired by the neglected technological artifacts which can be found in areas of the Illawarra away from the main centres of population. The modern poetic vision of the Illawarra, however, also contains distinct shifts in perspective from the earlier viewpoint.

Perhaps the most obvious shift is from the conservationist-tempered industrial apologist view of progress in the nineteenth century, to a fairly militant environmentalist manifesto with a decidedly anti-industrial slant in the modern era. This is represented by eleven poets, with the fantastic visions of the dystopianists adding another eight poets to the anti-industrial lobby.
The multicultural element of modern Illawarra society is dominantly represented in poetry by Nada Ivanova, Jean McIntyre, Terry McArthur, Shane McCauley, Deb Westbury and Maria Sostarec. Though histories of the Illawarra detail communal settlements of Irish and Scots, no multicultural element was apparent in the early poetry of the Illawarra.

There are numerous other, less dominant themes explored in modern Illawarra poetry including the notion of human beings being separated from the Illawarra landscape by technology, creating human alienation within the natural order. This is represented in poetry by Les Wicks, Elizabeth Riddell and Don Diespecker, and can be seen as closely connected with the anti-industrial sentiment. Perhaps the most obvious difference between the early Illawarra poetry and that of the modern era is the more introverted, personal response to the landscape in the later poetry.

**Familiar Terrain**
Both "Seagulls" and "Kiama's Blowhole" by Charmian Clift reflect a society which is much more comfortable with the Illawarra landscape and unpredictable climate than were the early settlers and their scribes. Though, as in much of the earlier Illawarra poetry about Kiama, the sea is a prominent and powerful entity, the Illawarra is not a foreign location here. In "Kiama's Blowhole" the landscape is written about affectionately. This is a studied and detailed poetic description of the blowhole's activity, gleaned from much observation over time, just as the Illawarra in Mark O'Connor's "The Thunder at Minnamurra" (1989) is familiar territory. O'Connor's poem may be depicting an Illawarra which was also familiar to nineteenth-century poets (because
it is a remnant pocket — see page 60), but his poetry also speaks the language of a lifetime surrounded by the antipodean landscape. Besides this familiarity with the Illawarra terrain, a number of other themes dominate contemporary Illawarra poetry.

A Black History
An alternate, black, history of the region we now call the Illawarra is apparent in the poeticalised versions of Percy Mumbulla's stories (first published in 1958), and is touched on by Conal Fitzpatrick in "Flinders Street" (1984), which presents a quote from Matthew Flinders' journal about his encounter with some Aborigines. A metaphor for colonialism is constructed with the relationship between the naming of the street and Matthew Flinders' firing of his gun to frighten the Aborigines away.

A number of Mumbulla's prose tales have been re-worked into poetic form by Roland Robinson, and these constitute much of the alternate black history which is available to us through modern Illawarra poetry, though I accept the Mumbulla stories as poems with major reservations. They appear in the 1989 collection The Nearest the White Man Gets: Aboriginal Narratives and Poems of New South Wales. The majority are poeticalized versions of prose pieces which appear elsewhere (and much earlier) under the same title with virtually identical wording. Detailed studies of these pieces are presented in the section of this paper devoted to modern Illawarra prose.

"Soon as it was Spring" is a clear example of appropriation and colonization of Aboriginal creativity by non-Aboriginal people. This piece is "related by Percy Mumbulla" according to the information supplied directly beneath the title. However, at the bottom of the poem
is the name Roland Robinson, and the Austlit database listing has Robinson as the author. "Transcribed by Roland Robinson" I could accept, but there is a strong suggestion here of (at the very least) co-authorship. The colonization has occurred in the way the piece (which reads as directly transcribed prose) has been re-formed to look like a poem. If this is Robinson's creative contribution then that should be acknowledged. The narrative is a first-person account of how Percy Mumbulla and his partner sleep out under a tarpaulin, live on bush tucker and move from place to place scavenging the droppings of non-Aboriginal civilization ("Old girl/picked up two bob. We picked up pennies an' a sixpence/ at Mogo"). Aboriginal resourcefulness allows a semi-traditional lifestyle to survive on the fringes of twentieth-century Australian culture.

Sally Bowen's "The Burial" describes the ritual burying of "tribal bones" by Aborigines at Orient Point. The poem is written in 1978, and so chronicles an early stage of spiritual artifact retrieval, before relatively enlightened legislation made it a little easier. A succinct poetic treatment of colonization is offered: "The terrible tide/ Of the white man came./ Death and destruction,/ Hunted like game;/ The culture broken", and an activist response is elicited: "We will watch no more/ Our culture broken,/ Accept no more/ The white man's token". This poem documents the beginnings of a struggle to have the Illawarra returned to some semblance of its pre-colonial state, at least as a site for ritual burial: "This land is ours/ For your rebirth".

**The Escarpment**

The escarpment is a powerful and dominant aspect of the Illawarra landscape, and is rendered in various ways by modern poets, as it was
in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century — though at this earlier stage of landscape translation the description "escarpment" had not been applied, and may not have been until D H Lawrence called it a "scarp" in the novel Kangaroo (203), though he is referring to the slopes which run down from the escarpment at Thirroul. The actual cliff he calls a "tor".

Conal Fitzpatrick approaches the escarpment from a number of angles. Throughout his collection Wollongong Poems he calls it "the Range", and in many of his poems — such as "Behind Dapto," "Premonitions" and "Towards Dapto" — it is a looming, sinister presence.

In Fitzpatrick's "A Reactionary Tale" Chairman Mao has a vision of the escarpment - which, the poem reminds us, "stretch[es] forever from the Cape [York] to the Dandenongs." Mao's vision causes the communist hero to decide to "build a Range, unbroken,/ from Antung to Canton", thus eclipsing the Great Wall and assuring him an important place in history. Mao loses interest in the idea when he realises he would be dead before its realisation. The poem's statement could be one of tongue-in-cheek cultural chauvinism: we have a Greater Wall. The escarpment is also central to the scenario presented by Ron Pretty's "Bald Hill with Gliders".

The narrator and some friends are climbing up the cliff face towards a dumped car, while hang-gliders sail about them. Comparisons are insinuated between the difficult ascent of the climbers "Scrabbling upwards,/ grabbing at shrubs that pull away from the wall, struggling/ for footholds", and the graceful descent of the gliders.
Rosaline Olsen's poem "Stanwell Tops" views the escarpment from its very extremity. It describes the rock pools which sit at the edge of the escarpment and in which people have bathed for health for generations. The pools' waters, when stirred by the wind, perform a "joyful dance" which sees them "rushing on to leap and plummet" over the precipice to the coastal flat below.

The Lawrence Myth in Verse

Three modern Illawarra poems contribute to the myth of D. H. Lawrence in Thirroul which is apparent in modern Illawarra prose, as well as the playscript *Upside Down at the Bottom of the World* by David Allen. Because Lawrence did not visit the Illawarra until 1922, this myth belongs exclusively to the modern era of Illawarra writing. Many books and theses have been written about the international author's stay in Thirroul, during which he wrote most of the novel *Kangaroo*. I have written about the novel in the section of this paper on Illawarra prose. My Research Bibliography will steer interested readers to other related material.

As for contemporary poetic treatments of the myth, "At Thirroul: D. H. Lawrence in Australia c. 1922" by Jeff Guess is an impressively compressed depiction of D. H. Lawrence's stay in Australia, incorporating the bush and oceanscapes which surrounded the author, isolated in his coastal cottage. This poem offers an understanding of Lawrence's creative processes. It reveals the poet's acceptance of Jo Davis' thesis that the political intrigue in *Kangaroo* was carried over from Lawrence's visit to Spain: "He leaves the boat/ ... already turning pages/ of scrawled longhand in his head". Most of the elements of the Lawrence-at-Thirroul myth are squeezed into this succinct poem,
including the feuds between D. H. and Frieda, the author's tryst with a local woman, the author's unshakable belief in his talent as a depicter of the Australian landscape, the relationship between the Lawrences and the novel's two protagonists. It is a powerful rendition of a small part of the Illawarra, worthy of its subject matter.

The poetic description in Geoffrey Sykes' "Wyewurk", of the interior of the Thirroul cottage where D. H. and Frieda Lawrence stayed contributes a skerrick of possibility to the myth which has built up around the author's visit to the Illawarra. In a gentle nod in a mystical direction the poem conjectures at its ending that "he feels strangely here/ that they have been sent/ the wanderer and his wife". The Thirroul which Lawrence sees outside is a hybrid concoction of the pastoral and the suburban, a pre-suburban scene perhaps, with "prettiness of painted bungalows with painted/ roofs and steps cut into earth". The gaze of "the wanderer" — D. H. Lawrence — takes in everything as he sits at the jarrah table in "a big room with five doors". Everything he sees becomes this poem, which manages to convey the isolation of the writer within Wyewurk. From the house's verandah Lawrence glimpses the Illawarra as he writes and the glimpses are interwoven with the prose of his Australian novel Kangaroo.

The inevitable references to D. H. Lawrence and his bush of "pale gums" and his restless ocean appear in Robyn Rowland's "Memories of Thirroul." The ocean is described as "the grey heaving sea." The mostly second-person narrative reveals a couple who are romantically connected, with connotations which could be offering parallels with the Lawrences' marriage. Certainly, the two people in this poem are inseparable from the coastal landscape. One "take[s] solace/ from the
cliffs", while the other (the narrator) is "pinned by the trees/ that lean into me for comfort".

**Dangerous Landscape**

As it is in Fitzpatrick's rendering of it, the Illawarra landscape in Jeff Guess's poetry is malign. In "A Sense of Audience" "the green clenched fist/ of Mt Keira/ is raised above us" (suggesting connections with Fitzpatrick's "knuckles of rock" in "Behind Dapto"). It is as if the mountain is angry at our intrusion yet frozen, powerless to complete the gesture of defence. Even in this threatening pose the inherent beauty of the Illawarra can be admired. The landscape offers two faces; the beautiful and the threatening, as it did to the nineteenth and early twentieth century observer. The threatening aspect of the landscape manifests in Laurie Duggan's "Blue Hills 6" as a sign on the coast road north of Scarborough which reads "Falling rocks/ Keep moving," suggesting a modern Illawarra still fraught with danger. Sally Bowen's "Keira" presents a snapshot of the mountain, in which a sunrise is captured as it throws light upon Mount Keira and its foothills. The escarpment is no guarding sentinel. Here "far blue hills dividing/ The coast from the west" are a less-confrontational protective barrier than Fitzpatrick's rendition of them. In Guess's "At Thirroul: D. H. Lawrence in Australia c. 1922" the mysterious bush and the troubled ocean are threatening and unpredictable, as they were to Lawrence.

The ocean is a dangerous entity in a number of other modern Illawarra poems as well, and the location of this danger is most often Kiama, as it was in early Illawarra writing. Laurie Brady's "Kiama Drownings", written very soon after the real-life event (as was Lorimer's 1894 poem "In Memoriam of the Minnamurra Fatality") starts and finishes with
images of the ocean pounding upon Kiama's cliffs. A human lifetime is a scant moment compared to the time the ocean has been falling against the basalt. Unlike the detailed Lorimer rendition of the earlier tragedy, chilling snapshots of the rescue attempt and the tragic conclusion are offered as clues to the full picture of events which the reader is left to put together. A sense of irony runs through the poem's dominantly bleak mood: "Oblivious/ tourists buy their spoons,/ their cameras fixing time." This tendency to voyeurism manifests after the drownings "as bodies are raised/ from the trawler's deck./ Tourists press and crane,/ Regaling a need." The nineteenth-century notion of the Illawarra landscape — in particular the ocean at Kiama — as a threat to human life is reinforced, as it is in Izzet and Ipek Goldeli's "Kiama: An Experiment on a Landscape Poem".

Like much of the early poetry about Kiama, the sea holds prominence as an evil and aggressive entity in this piece, and as they do in Brady's "Kiama Drownings", the "dark rocks" of the shore do battle with the pounding water. The ceaseless movement of waves against the basalt cliffs is conveyed as a monotonous "Approaching receding/ Forwards backwards." Goldeli's ocean is a female vampiric monster which "Attacks with her fierce teeth/ at the veins of the lighthouse." Like Brady's poem, "Experiment" reinforces the earlier Illawarra poetic viewpoint which sees Kiama as a powerful focal point of danger and the negative aspects of natural forces. The dangerous Kiama environment, so obvious to the colonial pioneers of the early nineteenth century, is still apparent also in Peter Skrzynecki's "Blow Hole".

This is not Charmian Clift's benign natural phenomenon. The cliffs of Kiama in Skrzynecki's poem have escaped the taming influence of
civilization. Disasters still occur here — as Brady's poem illustrates — and "Blow Hole" alludes to them in the lines "Kiama's tourists throng to it/ in pilgrimage - / as if disaster tempted them daily". Many of the poetic images associated with the ocean at Kiama from earlier writing are disinterred: "The sea's upsurge" in this poem is so close to the 'surging" oceans of nineteenth-century Illawarra poetry.

Peter Rose's "Morning at Kiama (for David Mackie)" provides a conservationist viewpoint of Kiama which is more informed and sophisticated than the pro-industrial position from early Illawarra writing. Rose's poem offers a postcard representation of the sea, cliffs and lighthouse, with a warning of the danger which lurks in waiting for careless holiday makers. But the artificiality of these by-now clichéd tourism images is deliberately employed to focus upon the human intrusion into the scene. The ocean here is not merely animate, but a sentient being which makes "musing" decisions about whether to "drown some innocent for breakfast/ In the harbour." Mark Miller's "South Coast Sequence" also depicts a tranquil, postcard-like Illawarra, though without the deconstruction offered by Rose.

A Tourist Destination
Words such as "whisper" and "ambient" help to paint a benign portrait of the Illawarra climate in the first part of Miller's poem. Miller's is the Illawarra which draws tourists to it, and his only negative comment is that they never quite belong. In Skrzynecki's "Blow Hole", the commercialisation of danger is engaged with, and the Illawarra tourist industry is the unnamed antagonist.
The Illawarra depicted in Laurie Duggan's "Down the Coast" is for holidaying city dwellers who marvel at scenes which locals would take for granted: "in the middle of a field/ a horse turns to listen" and "acid green paddocks". The tourist journey is evoked by a succession of snippets scattered over the page; incomplete images snatched as if through a car window, travelling very fast through the countryside. The images are part of the post-industrial Illawarra landscape, and in this poem they become metaphors for places. Dapto is "a bathtub in a paddock", generic to so many other country towns. In Berry "a hand comes out of the hillside/ holding a milk bottle", a roadside sign indicating an invasion of urban values.

The town in Roland Robinson's "Jamberoo" is a holiday destination for the narrator; a rough sanctuary at the "End of the long/ drive", specifically "The shack on the/ pasture-ledge." Small rituals, sounds and smells invoke memories of past holidays: "scratch a match/ for the lamp/ and our ghosts return". This Illawarra is remote, personal, a place opposed to the city which exists between the lines in this poem merely as an insinuation; that which waits at the other end/beginning of "the long drive" and which must, by the same insinuation, have none of that which Jamberoo can offer the traveller. Sanctuary offers the sounds of nature, real and imagined: "rush, hush/ of water through/ chaos of boulders/ clenches of sinew-/ roots in the/ mountain's bowels".

In Stephen Oliver's "Wardrobe Drinkers" tourists from Sydney who purchase holiday retreats in Wollongong's northern suburbs are the threat. This poem connects Austinmer with "yuppies from the north shore" of Sydney - the "wardrobe drinkers" of the poem's title. Clever
counterplay between images from both locations gives this cynical ramble a positivity it does not seem to want to deliberately concoct. The narrator is an Austinmer local who moved from Sydney himself 30 years earlier, before the trend was set. The cynic’s brush spreads widely to encompass Japanese entrepreneurs, from “the Japs on the Gold Coast” (and their association with the poem’s north shore yuppies) to the industrial ships outside Port Kembla harbour “navigated by satellite direct to Japan”. The narrator prefers the past (“in 1941/ as a telegraph delivery boy I made/ 13 shillings 10 a week”) and technology less sophisticated than satellite navigation: “you want the best view? Sublime Pt/ Lookout, right down the coast ...”. Here, the Illawarra as an early twentieth-century retreat clashes with the modern tourist destination. Change is imminent. Ken Bolton’s "Notes for Poems: 1: Big Preamble" is also situated in the northern suburbs of Wollongong, and the narrator could be seen as one of the wardrobe drinkers from Oliver’s poem.

He comes from Sydney, but lives in Coalcliff. He still knows more about the city he has left than his new home and speaks in glowing terms of the northern metropolis. He considers that he is living in an outlying area of Sydney: "I travel to Sydney/ more often than I do to Wollongong." His descriptions of the Illawarra are shallow, sketchy, introspective: "Though/ I do know Wollongong. I know the station, the CES, a/ restaurant, & the Art Gallery". He is only a spectator, however: "... for all I know ... maybe it is a terrible beach, though/ I can't see how". This is an illustration of how tenuously the outer reaches of the Illawarra belong to it, depending upon which direction the inhabitants are facing, and evidence of the arbitrary status of regional boundaries,
an element which could be construed as a threat to an Illawarra identity; an appropriation of the regional by the central.

The Railway

Part of the technology of appropriation, at least early in its history, was the rail line, the building of which became a long-running joke in early Illawarra writing because it was forever on the lips of politicians, but seemed fated never to eventuate. Once it came through, of course, the tyranny of distance (and wilderness) was removed, and Sydney visitors could make the journey into the Illawarra with relative ease. The whole series of Wollongong's northern suburbs between Stanwell Park and Bulli could be seen as a direct result of the rail line being built, including Stephen Oliver's Austinmer and Ken Bolton's Coalcliff.

By the late twentieth century the railway has become so entrenched that in Craig Powell's "Counterpoint for a Native City" it is intrinsically entwined with the history of the Powell family. In five parts this poem follows a rough, sometimes overlapping chronology of the Powell generations, beginning with the birth of the narrator ("Wollongong had me for a son, dumb and squalling") and ending with the narrator as an old man ("object: Powell — three quarters blind and lumpy"). The railway is never very far away, thus offering a variation on the connection between the personal and the geographic as reflected in the poems of Westbury, Curtis, Brown and Broomhall, or the melding of the geographical and technological in the poetry of Wicks, Riddell and Diespecker. Powell's poem offers a third possibility: a co-dependence between the personal and the technological, as represented by the
generations of his family and the railway. This Illawarra is the railway, its stations "gritted with coal mines".

Kate Morris's "Monday Morning at Wollongong Train Station" presents an environmentalist message with the railway as a metaphoric site for an uncaring establishment. This short, two-stanza, eight-lined prosy poem presents the dilemma facing a modern-day, environmentally-minded woman commuter. The unnamed protagonist in this glimpsed one-day episode hastily purchases some hot tea at the station kiosk, then cannot bring herself to put the foam cup in the garbage bin. The cynicism of the piece is directed at the State Rail Authority, who are still allowing the un-biodegradable material to be used, and this is a metaphor for the general decadence of our public transport systems. The protagonist's inability to find an appropriate disposal site for the cup highlights the flaws in our recycling scheme. The drama could have been played out on any railway station, which points out the universalising influence public utilities such as the railway can bring to bear on regional identities.

The Modern Illawarra

Besides the railway there are many other elements which help construct a modern Illawarra. Many of the images related to that construction are available in Charlotte Clutterbuck's "Where are you Roger Bannister", not as stereotypes but as reinforcement of an Illawarra identity. They are mostly connected with the ocean. There is the inevitable "plain between the mountains and the sea" which many early European settlers mistook as the meaning of the word "Illawarra". There are "sandhills" and "terns and whipbirds", as well as "swimmers doing laps" and "a surfboat pulling sleek into the bay". Another of
those images of the modern Illawarra is presented in Larry Buttrose's "Wollongong Bus Service". This poem is an affectionate if poetically cryptic portrayal of Dion's Bus Service, a modern local institution. The wit of the piece is no less effective for its parochial vision. Any Illawarrian who uses public transport should instantly recognise the "Chinamen in Antediluvian/ Blue buses, slow threads/ Through the Illawarra". Lines like "blue buses with Maos" might be dangerously close to defamatory today, but for their affectionate context. An idyllic Illawarra is hinted at in a political sideswipe at then prime minister Malcolm Fraser: "And then to Kiama — can/ Such a place be legal?/ Has Fraser been advised?", in reference to the famous Fraserism "Life wasn't meant to be easy". The inference here, of course, is that life is easy in Kiama, in an Illawarra now thoroughly tamed.

Another instantly-recognisable element of the late modern Illawarra is the hang-gliders which take full advantage of an escarpment-dominated topography. A pastime now closely associated with the Illawarra's escarpment cliffs, hang-gliding appears in Skrzynecki's "The Hang Gliders" linked with the history of technology: "Reaffirming Leonardo's vision," as well as in Ron Pretty's "Bald Hill with Gliders", where aspects of modern civilization — in particular car theft and joyriding — are interwoven with gothic images of "the hang/ gliders hovering above us like vultures" and in "Driving Home" by William Pitt. The night view from the lip of the escarpment in Pitt's "Driving Home" shares a number of common images with Skrzynecki's and Pretty's hang-glider poems. In particular the "dark wind" which "haunts eternity" in "Driving Home" is generic to the gothic elements of "Bald Hill with Gliders" and "The Hang Gliders".
The view from the top of the escarpment — so favoured by early Illawarra writers — in Pitt's poem is not much like what the early observers saw. In Pitt's poetic view from Bulli Tops the lights of suburban Wollongong are "the stars of man," blended into a single entity with "the sea and the sea of stars." Fitzpatrick's poetic viewpoint concurs. In fact, in "Transfiguration: Down Bulli Pass at Night" there are "more stars down there/ than the heavens whole", and the city of Wollongong "could almost be/ the Milky Way's emporium of light." This same view from the top of the escarpment is described in Merle Glasson's poem "From Bulli Look-Out at Night" in the language of a children's fairy tale.

As in Fitzpatrick's and Pitt's poems, the lights of Wollongong and its suburbs are compared to the stars. A moving vehicle's lights are seen as "That golden bug that gads its flitter way", while the rows of street lights become "strings of beads." The vista is "a glow-worm cave" and in its entirety the view is an "enchanting spangle-world outspread/ beneath our feet." The view from the top of the escarpment, then, has inspired fantasy since the mid nineteenth century. In Fitzpatrick's "Returning: The Western Plains", Wollongong as seen at night from the top of Bulli Pass is given fresh, though also fantastic, treatment: "Wollongong appears like a sunburst./ You top the Pass casting off speed, the chandelier/ lifting."

**Introverted Vision**

Another element of modern Illawarra poetry which differentiates it from that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is a highly-personal, introverted poetic vision in which the Illawarra landscape triggers personal concerns. The Illawarra in this poetry in
many cases becomes a metaphor for personal turmoil. In particular, in Deb Westbury’s poetry the geographical becomes the personal. Location is a catalyst for creativity, perhaps, but many of Westbury’s poems are internally focussed. Her concerns are more to do with the immediate and the personal, and in many of her poems personal tragedies are hinted at, but not always directly exposed.

In "The Night Before" the narrator imagines the headland at Austinmer to have the profile of a twelve-year-old girl who committed suicide by riding her bike off its edge, stirring connections with the Austinmer headland in John Broomhall’s "Post Cards From Austinmer", in which the narrator feels enticed to walk off "The rim of the cliff" into the air. The narrator’s connection in Westbury’s poem is chronological: "She died as I was born." As the narrator sits on the headland at the very spot "where the wheel last touched/ her grassy brow", she imagines the future; the next day, when whoever the poem is addressed to will phone "and they’ll tell you/ I’m resting comfortably". At the time the poem is written, however, "I sit alone,/ for the last time whole". The central extratextual tragedy — the author’s breast cancer operation — is not revealed directly. It is framed only by this poem written the night before and titled thus, and the final stanza which projects forward to the phone call of someone close to her. That which remains invisible gains strength by its omission, but it is the Illawarra landscape which inspires the poetic essaying.

That landscape intrudes only gently on the narrator’s reverie at a jukebox in "Overnight at Shellharbour Hotel" in the lines "Occasionally the flourescent line/ of a wave breaking/ illuminates the shallow darkness/ of the harbour." But in "Dapto Dressing Up" the Illawarra
landscape is a woman and all the elements of the depicted scene are metaphorical body adornments. The sky "wants to wear short skirts/ while her legs still look good"; the stars and mine lights are jewellery ("silver spangles"), all metaphors for elements of the human condition. There is a sense of encroaching old age, as "dusk is laid low/ and becomes night."

In "Whalespotting at Wombarra", as in "The Night Before", some personal event is cryptically revealed as the Illawarra landscape triggers unwanted memories. The past event in "Whalespotting at Wombarra" involves a "murderer, rapist, accuser", and the second-last stanza: "I look to the eggs I am breaking,/ for the body has a mind of its own/ and a purpose I do not recognize" may refer to abortion. It is the narrator's dwelling upon the cryptic past event, however, which is the poem's concern. What begins as a story about the narrator lying amidst gravestones in the cemetery at Wombarra watching for the fins of whales in the ocean, turns to introspection. In "Self Portrait in a Mirror" the Illawarra is a backdrop for memories of a past incarnation evoked by the rediscovery of a blurred depiction of the narrator on canvas, "in that old house at Shellharbour."

In "Shane's Farewell (at Gerringong)" the rural farmland scenery of Gerringong - not far removed geographically from Beaver's Burrier or Miller's Pyree (see page 74) - becomes entwined with images of a parting relationship, and in this regard there are connections with some of the early Illawarra poems written to or about lost loves, though "Shane's Farewell" is decidedly devoid of melodrama and the landscape is much more recognisable. The remnants of nineteenth-century technology do not meld comfortably with the landscape here, as they do in Beaver's
and Miller's nostalgic acceptances. The narrator in Westbury's poem observes a scene in which dairy industry seems gregariously superimposed upon something more natural/original: "in the light/ it's only the white patches/ on the black and white/ dairy cows. that stand out/ like cricketers/ fielding on the green."

The fields here are not meadows but "summer pasture" and "dry grasses." Shane does not physically leave in this poem; he metaphorically dissolves into the rural scenery. Similarly, Lyn Ingoldsby Brown's "Illawarra Hills" addresses a friend who has since been stricken with cancer, and thus the remembered view of the Illawarra will always be associated with "that last treasured glimpse of you, together", like a postcard snapshot. Like Shane in "Shane's Farewell" the friend and the landscape in "Illawarra Hills" are no longer differentiable.

As in Westbury's poetry, Part III of John Broomhall's "Post Cards from Austinmer" begins a withdrawal from the landscape into the more personal poetry that is the more usual late twentieth-century response to the Illawarra, after the first two parts of the poem look at aspects of the topography from an architect's mathematical viewpoint. In Part III a storm — "Wind-wild, tree-tossed, the dark rain/ is singing of the bright days we've lost" — sends the narrator "Under Cover, curled up in bed," while in Part IV the landscape is excluded, except for a brief acknowledgement of "a winter's/ wind", as more introspective concerns take over. Initially inspired by a mathematical dissection of the coastal scenery at Austinmer, "Post Card from Austinmer" is ultimately concerned with the vulnerability of life.
The personal concerns in Margaret Curtis's "Red Blood Red" are focussed on the difference between the narrator's "comfortably existing" at the edge of a "Steel city" (as in McIntyre's "Place") and the starvation faced by people in Africa, as watched by the narrator on television. The Illawarra portrayed in "Red Blood Red" is a land of plenty — representative of western capitalist societies — which can view the starving Africans through an ironic technology, the miracle of "the satellite machine", which is capable of taking the comfortable western viewer to the coalface of human misery but cannot help the people it makes home entertainment of. As well as the personal concerns which link this poem with the work of Westbury, et al, "Red Blood Red" contains elements generic to the group of anti-industrial poems already discussed, through its critique of this voyeuristic technology.

In many other modern Illawarra poems, elements of the geographic landscape play a less metaphoric role than in the introverted viewpoints of the personally-focussed poetry. As if to illustrate a distancing from the landscape, the narrator's perspective in Lyn Ingoldsby Brown's "Kiama from Jamberoo Mountain" reveals Kiama as "a miniature", a "faraway sea-view", looking like a painting when seen through "broad windows" somewhere on Jamberoo Mountain. With no sounds to offer association ("With sight of the sea, no sounds of the sea whatever") the vista is "Remote, unreal." Unlike the narrator in Lorimer's "Jamberoo" from 1894, the viewer here is not able to transport herself across the valley to the "ten-mile distant breakers brushing the beach." Nevertheless, the picturesque beauty of the Illawarra is conveyed, and it is a positive comment upon a region when an uninterrupted ten-mile view can be reported, with air so clear that details such as "long, shallow curve of sand, dark rocks of headlands,/
pink glow along horizon, foam of breakers" can be easily discerned (at least this far away from the steelworks, and with the wind blowing in the right direction).

Mark O'Connor's two poems about the Minnamurra Rainforest Reserve are not just part of the anti-industrial manifesto. They also offer detailed descriptions of this example of the pre-industrial Illawarra landscape. O'Connor's image-lush verse does justice to its subject — a true remnant of the Illawarra as it was a split second before Europeans hacked their way through it in search of cedar. The numerous similes and metaphors in "Minnamurra Forest" emulate the diversity and abundance which so fascinated the early chroniclers of colonization, and which still exist (or perhaps re-exist) in this tiny pocket of the past. In O'Connor's "The Thunder at Minnamurra" the remnant of earlier Illawarra lushness is a tangle of growth and teeming with wildlife, much as it was described by Barron Field as early as 1825. Carrying through a comparison with an underseascape in "The Thunder at Minnamurra," vines, which were so thick in the early nineteenth-century forests that felled cedars would not fall to the ground, are "creepers [which] thread through the openings, eels/ in a shipwrecked porthole." The waterfall is painted vividly: "mist pouring from the cleft,/ steam from a broken jug." Birdsong and animal cries are presented in poeticalised detail, as are the effects of a storm upon the rainforest.

**Anti-Industrial**

An anti-industrial sentiment begins to show up in Illawarra poetry in the second half of the 1980s, beginning with Kim Olroyd's 1986 poem "Port Kembla - Inner Harbour, 4/10/85." Port Kembla's harbour — once Tom Thumb's Lagoon but now gouged and deepened to accommodate
huge industrial ships — is painted as a pollution-ridden "basin" inhabited by "poisoned poisonous fish", much as it is in Manfred Jurgensen's 1989 poem "Wollongong: The Lagoon." A sense of hopelessness, of a place polluted beyond the point of no return, pervades Olroyd's poem. This is technological/industrial civilization gone rampant. Gone is the belief that industrial progress is a necessity of civilization, as expressed by the earlier Illawarra writers. Quite a number of modern Illawarra poets share Olroyd's concerns.

Much of the prolific Deb Westbury's poetry becomes an anti-industrial manifesto. Her 1987 poem "The Prince: Remembering Port Kembla and The Little Prince, The Tin Soldier and The Happy Prince", though mostly a narrative of migrant displacement, is loaded with metaphoric references to exploitation of migrant workers at the Port Kembla steelworks. Lines like "many a dreamless nightshift in the iron inferno" are powerful anti-industrial statements. Westbury's "After-Image" contains instantly-recognisable universal images of garage restrooms and roadkill, and uses personalised numberplates as a metaphor for the decline of civilization (as does her poem "Sanctions"). Though primarily a poem about class, "After-Image" paints a picture of a society no longer in control of its destiny. Though its imagery is not so gothic and its version of the future not so hopeless, "After-Image" sits comfortably as an addendum to the dark visions of the dystopianists whose work I cover later in this chapter. Another anti-industrial poem, Elizabeth Riddell's "At Shellharbour" from 1989, juxtaposes the images of the beach at Shellharbour and the nearby steelworks to offer a metaphor for much of the late twentieth-century Illawarra: an ugly and polluted face of industry grafted onto the natural aesthetic. It is not pollution which is focused upon as the main enemy of mankind, but
the meaningless existence of two cogs in the gargantuan pollution-creating machinery. Like much late twentieth century Illawarra poetry, "At Shellharbour" offers an introverted perspective; a record of the personal cost of progress.

Similarly, the first part of Kevin Baker's "Place 11: To Berkeley" (1990) portrays an Illawarra of little hope, polluted beyond redemption, looking "like a rancid picture-book./ Across the lake a power station/ Smudges the borders of the sky./ Industry, large and black,/ Penetrates the place/ And from all directions poisons taint the breeze." Part four of this poem reinforces the juxtaposition offered in Riddell's poem, by focussing upon the unsuburbanised environment "Somewhere behind the snub of backyard fences" and how it clashes at the edges of suburban existence. As in Riddell's poem, here is civilization (in this case the economically-depressed, crime-ridden Berkeley) grafted unnaturally onto the pre-industrial Illawarra. Martin Langford's 1991 poem "The Illawarra Plateau" offers a similar juxtaposition, in this case of ancient, seemingly-untouched pockets of landscape and modern technology. In Langford's poem, however, the people and landscape are kept forever separated, not by the back fences of suburbia, but by the air-conditioned vehicles ("power bubbles") in which they "yawn past to the shops."

C.E. Hull's "Coal Dust Storm in Wollongong" (1991) melds two aspects of a stereotypical modern Illawarra: the pollution from the coalmining industry and an antagonistic climate. A strong conservationist sentiment is obvious: "In this twilight of dust/ The sky is screaming." Like much of the late twentieth-century anti-industrial Illawarra
poetry, Hull's view is not optimistic. The Illawarra portrayed here is
doomed to devolve to an uninhabitable state.

Alan Close's view in "Wednesday in Wombarra" (1993), though
certainly strongly environmentalist, with an acknowledgement of the
heavy industry which has insinuated itself upon the landscape ("its
smokestacks silently/ pouring muck into the sky"), is more optimistic.
This poem lauds the scenic beauty as seen from a particular point at
Wombarra, and in the battle between landscape and industry, the
landscape still dominates: "even Wollongong looks good/ from up here,
glittering/busily." Close is willing to focus upon the positive aspects of
the Illawarra's natural assets rather than paint the horror pictures
favoured by dystopian writers such as Conal Fitzpatrick, C.E. Hull,
Kevin Baker, Elizabeth Riddell, Manfred Jurgensen, Kim Olroyd, Deb
Westbury and Ron Pretty. There is an understated optimism here, a
belief in the strength of the natural environment to survive the
onslaught of industry. This environmentalist-tempered optimism is
also obvious in Mark O'Connor's two poems about the pocket of
remnant rainforest at Minnamurra. There is certainly an anti-logging
industry sentiment in these poems — the fourth stanza of O'Connor's
"Minnamurra Forest" (1989) pays homage to a huge red cedar of the
past which "might take a millenium of Chinese art to formalise./ Here
it was found and cut" — but O'Connor's poetry is a defiant shout of
survival and a celebration of what has survived from an earlier
Illawarra. It is this sense of celebration which strengthens O'Connor's
anti-industrial message.

What I have termed the dystopian poets, offer no optimism at all.
Instead their anti-industrial message manifests as an extrapolation of
fantastic scenarios of despair in some future or alternative reality where a hopelessly decayed civilization is a direct (if imagined) consequence of the industrialization ethic begun in the nineteenth century. Conal Fitzpatrick is the most prolific of these modern poetic pessimists.

His 33 Illawarra poems are mostly contained in his one anthology *Wollongong Poems*, published in 1984. After December 1985, with the publication of the single poem "Litany with Pictures", he disappears from Illawarra writing, after having written more poems about the Illawarra than any other author. Fitzpatrick's "The City of Sinuses", a long, four-part poem of cryptic, dystopian images, depicts a Wollongong enveloped by/impregnated with pollution which affects its population like hallucinogens. Like C.E. Hull's "Coal Dust Storm in Wollongong", this poem contains images of a modern yet decaying/decadent industrial city. In "The Iron People", "The Dragon Factories", "Night Shift" and "Dog Watch" the Port Kembla steelworks is the culprit but, unlike Deb Westbury's "The Prince ..." and Elizabeth Riddell's "At Shellharbour", these poems could easily be labelled science fantasy.

The steelworkers in "The Iron People" are robotesque beings whose cultural habits are shaped by the steelworks where they toil. They are portrayed not as human beings the way they are in Westbury's and Riddell's work, but as "graven as steel" automatons who "breathe iron filings." By the end of "The Iron People" they are described as "ants", a description which vividly points out the dehumanising effects of industrialisation as also portrayed in Riddell's "At Shellharbour". In "The Dragon Factories" Fitzpatrick employs one of the favourite images of myth/fantasy as a metaphor for the industrial complex at Port Kembla. The smoke-belching chimneys of "the Works" are camouflaged
dragons which live underground waiting to be fed whenever an industrial fatality occurs. The suggestion is that steelworkers are offered by the industrialists as sacrifices to the monster which is Commerce. Similarly, "Night Shift" is a chilling, gothic interpretation of the Port Kembla steelworks at night.

As in "The Iron People" the steelworkers are "automatons" who are "spread out like eagles on wire", offering connections with the horror genre. In "Dog-Watch" Fitzpatrick presents another gothic look at the steelworks night shift, again in the language of horror: "The night is wound off like a film at speed/ and men still dance in the brittle light of furnaces./ It is a kind of witchcraft, and they flicker like ghouls,/ vulpine, with the fat-yellow on them."

In quite a number of Fitzpatrick's poems Armageddon looms, and some future catastrophe which is the result of rampant industrialization is foretold, with many different incarnations. "Litany With Pictures" sees Wollongong as the focus of the action: "City of the monster coming white with wings and demons." Couplets of juxtaposed notions hold this poem together. The first line of each offers an aspect of the city, and each partner line offers the effect on the first-person narrator. There is not always an obvious or logical connection, suggesting an insanity which is the result of an unstoppable growth: the City. Technological progress here is the culprit which brings on the end of the world, and Wollongong — industrial city — is the metaphor for this progress.

In "The Tunnels Sequence" Wollongong is sent crashing into the ocean as "a great mass will shear off the face of the mountain/ and with the
smallest of moans, will slide down into the/ sea." The culprit behind this future disaster is the coalmining industry, which has created a "labyrinth" of tunnels within the mountains Kembla and Keira. Similarly, "Premonitions" is a technophobic future fantasy about mining disasters and torrents of water pouring over the escarpment in some future deluge created by the coal industry ("They're digging their tunnels/ under the dam above the water-table"). Fitzpatrick reiterates the metaphoric presence of the escarpment as a barrier against some future deluge in "Behind Dapto" with the line "from the Freeway it rises, a great dam-wall." To enhance the aspect of horror inherent in his future dystopia, Fitzpatrick frequently employs mythical images. In "Premonitions" the coastal plain between the mountains and the sea, which is the site of Fitzpatrick's future catastrophe, is "a hoofprint/ beside the waters/ made long ago by some giant creature/ trampling the basin."

In "Captain Cook Looks Into The Future", Cook's naming of Hat Hill is connected with a myth from Beowulf about giant entrails forming continents. In this poem Cook has located the mythical bowel of the ancient creature whose body parts were exploded to all parts of the world, and the pollution metaphor is obvious: "Hat Hill he named the mountain behind:/ It sat upon Shit Head." The motif of excreta also dominates Fitzpatrick's "Illawarra Gothic", a fantasy which sees Wollongong and its environs covered by a mountain of shit which issues unstoppable from a fat poet "scouring in a bowl." A radio announcer talks "shit" on air and a busload of schoolboys sing toilet-songs. As well as being a critique of a decadent, crumbling society, "Illawarra Gothic" also offers an anti-industrial message which lurks
beneath the faecal metaphor, because, of course, Fitzpatrick's "shit" can also be equated with pollution.

The future and the past are both implicated in Fitzpatrick's version of Armageddon. Amongst the collage of cryptic images in "Air-Raid: The Future", which reads more like a sequence of discontinuous dream flashes than an intact narrative, appear ideas about some future Illawarra Blitzkrieg in which all "is powdered to ash in the/ breeze." In "Captain Cook Looks Into the Future", Cook glimpses the region's polluted future in his eighteenth-century version of the dystopian nightmare, while at the same time connecting his own present with the mythical past of Beowulf. In "Coast Watch" it is the 1980s poet who glimpses the future, in a series of dream-like observations from the northern suburbs/coastal villages along Lawrence Hargrave Drive. The poet's gaze is upon the water, and by the final stanzas the future is conjured once again in one of Fitzpatrick's customary dystopian/apocalyptic visions, of a time when

There will be no sound, the birds will have gone, and the sun, having begun to rise, will lose faith and drop back, awkward, below the rising swell.

In "Wollongong: The Lagoon" (1989) Manfred Jurgensen offers dystopian images of a polluted harbour, much as Kim Olroyd does in "Port Kembla - Inner Harbour, 4/10/85," though Jurgensen's images are somewhat more cryptic. Jurgensen's Illawarra is one of "poisoned beauty" where the oceans are 'overruled to still life" and the seagulls cannot find anywhere 'unsewered" to land. The clearest images in this poem are of "a hidden sign: POLLUTED, DO NOT ENTER" at the harbour, and "the stench of surfaced fish." These are the late-twentieth-century
Olroyd's poem, though it starts out with a fairly straightforward anti-industrial message, becomes more morbid as it progresses. Each stanza begins with a derivation of the opening line "My worst idea of a nightmare is", and the dystopian visions build up until in the final stanza we discover the corpse of a murdered prostitute in the harbour waters. Unlike Fitzpatrick's future fantasies, Olroyd's dystopia is already here.

In one of his many self-referential poems (in which the process of writing becomes an element of the poem itself) Ron Pretty cleverly buys into the anti-industrialist, dystopian agenda. The poet/narrator in "Steel City: Cliche and Variations" (1996) apologizes for painting dystopian word-pictures in some previous poem which has offended officialdom. Accused of using morbid clichés about pollution, unemployment, homeless kids and moral degradation, the poet decides to change his tune, and so begins a rewrite using clichés of a brighter hue. The cynicism is glaringly obvious and, though this poem is primarily about censorship of the creative process, it also reveals a clash between the chroniclers of dystopia and the engineers of the Tourist Illawarra, which is bound to occur when heavy industry is situated in such picturesque surroundings. Those in charge of attracting tourists to the Illawarra are willing to perpetuate the nineteenth-century view of progress as unfailingly beneficial, and in doing so they are also willing to subsume aspects of industrialism in
the rhetoric aimed at the tourist dollar. Tourism itself, in this scenario, becomes an accomplice in the construction of dystopia.

An aspect of dystopia which can be located in the real world is the loneliness of modern existence as chronicled by Jean McIntyre, Deb Westbury and Helen Williams. In Westbury's "Sanctions" (1994), fringe dwellers hint at a failed social order; a breakdown of the Australian dream: "the same woman/ collecting cans at the beach,/ the usual flashers behind the dunes,/ the derelicts and madmen/ in their usual enclaves." In McIntyre's "Sleepers" (1994) the loneliness is dissected intimately. An internal monologue reveals the narrator's obsessive/compulsive behaviour in taking on the role of "dozer minder" to wake train passengers who might sleep through their stop. It is the narrator's secret identity which creates a false anonymity in the face of small-town obviousness. There is a feeling of impending insanity, as a natural consequence of the loneliness of modern existence.

For Helen Williams' "Old Man on a park bench" (1987), it is dementia which is the consequence, but the feeling of isolation — of being alone in a crowd of millions — is the same. The 87-year-old man in Williams' poem could be one of the characters remembered by James Sturgiss in Man From the Misty Mountains (see prose chapter) and his secret world is the past, a location also preferred by Stephen Oliver's narrator in "Wardrobe Drinkers" (1994) who "in 1941/ as a telegraph delivery boy ... made/ 13 shillings 10 a week." The old man's rememberances to the narrator in Williams' poem are of pioneering days in the Illawarra:

but logs to cut and haul
to the noisy timber mill
then down Rixon's Pass
to the busy station at Bulli.
The hardships of pioneer life are graphically revealed in lines like "No corner stores, only long treks of half a day" and "his grandmother/ who on her wedding day rode sidesaddle/ into Wollongong, and then rode home again". "Home" was Sherbrooke: "They closed the town in 1902", and this poem is mainly about the old man's continual searching for his forebears' graves in the Water Catchment Area in which they are lost. The elderly, this poem points out, are no longer part of mainstream society — a theme reiterated in the reminiscences from Voice of the Seniors, which I deal with elsewhere.

In some of the modern Illawarra poems, environmental concerns — indeed, a concern for the survival of the human race — are expressed in scenarios in which human beings are separated from the landscape by a distance which is constructed by a technology which promotes human alienation within the natural order. This is an anti-technology (and consequently an anti-tourism) manifesto, not specifically aimed at heavy industry. Though Les Wicks' "Heathcote Pastoral" offers a calm acceptance of a littered landscape, in a scenario where the geo- and the techno- are not so much juxtaposed as transformed (cynically, perhaps) by one another into a third, new possibility, its anti-tourism message is obvious. The human beings in this poem, unlike the garbage they create, cannot be integrated into the natural order. Their sense of self-importance subsumes the surrounding terrain, so that the notion of a National Park seems ludicrous: "German tourists happily stomp by, a group/ so self contained that the scenery begins to look like/ the portable part of this tableau."

A similar but less accepting juxtaposition of ancient, untouched pockets of landscape and modern technology is presented in Martin
Langford's 1991 poem "The Illawarra Plateau." This poem is located in a different version of the pristine landscape to Wicks' bushland. It paints a detailed, desert-like scene in which the struggle for survival — of plants and wildlife — is paramount. The poem's mostly single-line stanzas create a collage effect in which brief glimpses overlap to reveal the eventual whole. In the final two-line stanza the landscape scene is shattered by the intrusion of human beings and their technology which serves to separate them from the harsh yet beautiful tableau: "Bored in their power-bubbles,/ people yawn past to the shops." "The Illawarra Plateau" is as much a comment on the failures and shortcomings of human civilization as a lament for the passing of the pristine landscape — without, I should add, the sense of philosophical collusion with the notion of progress that early Illawarra writers displayed. The fourth part of Kevin Baker's "Place II: To Berkeley" reinforces a theme of human alienation within the natural order: "The fishermen too are depleted and look somewhat out of place/ They live in weatherboards sealed in paint." Baker's technology may be the seemingly-innocuous suburban back fence, but it separates human beings from the pre-industrial landscape no less effectively than the "power-bubbles" of Langford's poem.

Much as Elizabeth Riddell's "At Shellharbour" juxtaposes images of the beach at Shellharbour and the steelworks, Don Diespecker's "The View From Otford" positions the narrator inside a cleared building block surrounded by bushland. The narrator surveys his property, which is one of the places where suburban progress meets some of the remaining wilderness. A battle ensues. In Diespecker's poem the government-ordained wilderness, though it continually encroaches upon the narrator's cleared space, is slowly disintegrating. To the north "the DMR
nibbles/ The once inviolate National Park" and to the west the southern freeway is "Raping its redundant way/ Through the virgin country." As in Les Wicks' "Heathcote Pastoral", the landscape and its human inhabitants, along with their technology (despite efforts to halt it) are intermingled so that any evidence of human progress is disguised by the persistent bush, suggesting a protracted battle whose winner remains unclear. In Wicks' poem the "line of freeway traffic just beyond this/ confluence of trees" is rendered invisible by the bush as if it is now part of the natural landscape. Lines like "Three blue fish dart between the blunt grace of/ a floating garbage (heavy duty) bag" reinforce a notion of nature's ability to integrate the foreign elements so that only a human observer can recognise them for what they once were. The sense of acceptance in this poem, which seems on the surface to challenge the view of conflict in Diespecker's poem, is ironic.

There are other, less ironic, examples of an acceptance of industrial fallout in the poetry of Jean McIntyre, Charlotte Clutterbuck, Alan Close and Liz Skewes. In "Mine", McIntyre seems to feel an affinity with the industrial landscape and manages to connect it with the geographic markers which usually make up the opposing (conservationist) side of the equation:

the constant repetitive
crashing and cracking
of faraway waves
in congruous tune with
eight thousand padding
booted footsteps, steady
humming and buzz
of my steelworks.

This juxtaposition of natural and industrial images is the poem's major theme. Unlike in the more militantly anti-industrial poems already
mentioned, however, "Mine" constructs a sentimental acceptance of the post-industrial status quo which is intertwined comfortably with the scenic aspects of coastal living. This is not the dystopia offered by Fitzpatrick et al, but a tolerance of how things are in the late twentieth century Illawarra. If there is irony here, it is cleverly disguised.

In Charlotte Clutterbuck's "Where Are You Roger Bannister", images of the steelworks interject into descriptions of the natural landscape, so that as this poem moves towards its end the sea and heavy industry are also intertwined, as the opposing elements are in McIntyre's "Mine". Phrases such as "sniffing salt and oil" illustrate this melding of extremes. By the late twentieth century, poets such as Clutterbuck and McIntyre are equating the transplanted industrial landscape with the Illawarra's ancient geography, with an acceptance not encompassed by the dystopian visionaries. In "Where Are You Roger Bannister" the lighthouse is an indicator of technology's conspicuous grafting onto the coastal topography. The nineteenth-century technology it represents is seen in a nostalgically positive light from the late-twentieth-century poetic viewpoint, much as it was when it was new and part of the myth of progress.

In Liz Skewes' "Jamberoo Park", the tourist attraction which has become part of the present Illawarra's identity is captured sharply in a set of brief images/phrases. The poem offers no critique of the politics which surrounded the development of the site. There is acceptance here, as if gouging grooves into the eastern face of the escarpment foothills was the logical consequence of having so many hills.
Another slant on the sentimental acceptance of technology can be seen in the poetry of Bruce Beaver and Mark Miller. The narrator of "Burrier — South Coast" (1995) wishes to share with his lover/wife childhood remembrances of a rural farming community of "half-venerated half-neglected/ rusted machines left lying in the paddocks", an area which boomed in the late nineteenth century but which has since declined/reverted to a less hectic state. Beaver's nostalgia is infused with a certain archaeological curiosity, as well as a wish to return to a technology of the past, rather than some pre-industrial state. In Mark Miller's "Friesian: Outside Pyree Dairy" (1989), not a lot has changed in the area around the Shoalhaven River since the nineteenth century. Pyree dairy has existed since not long after European occupation of the region. It offers a more physical return to outmoded technology than the sentimental rememberance of Beaver's poem.

The second part of Miller's three-part poem "South Coast Sequence" (1993) offers more similarities to Beaver's nostalgic viewpoint. Here the wooden jetty represents all the ageing nineteenth-century technological artifacts of colonization which have survived in isolation as progress moved elsewhere ("Jetties are grey veterans"). Though, as is the dairy at Pyree, the jetties are still put to some practical use, their position in this poem is as objects of nostalgia. The slow but relentless return of the natural landscape in these areas — away from the shifted focus on modern industry — is the dominant factor in the melding of the 'geo' and 'techno'.

The Modern Garden
Only one poem from the modern era — Audrey Bunn's "The Present" (1994) — seems to offer connotations of the Illawarra-as-garden which
reinforce the nineteenth-century construction. In a chronicling of events in a past relationship, the narrator of "The Present" devotes a stanza to her role as a wife in Coledale, "in an Ozzie miner's cabin." There are images of fertility in the descriptions of the narrator's garden and gathering of "chook eggs", which serve to counterpose her own infertility: "But still I miscarried all your babies" — the reason the relationship ends. In this highly personal response to the Illawarra, the garden is the dominant element.

**Multiculturalism**

Another dominant theme in modern Illawarra poetry is multiculturalism. In the case of Nada Ivanova, the multicultural viewpoint is a personal one. In "No Return" (1994) the narrator compares her memories of her country of origin with the Illawarra she has migrated to. This poem confronts issues of cultural alienation, much as Blagoja Neskovski's plays do. There is also a sense in "No Return" that the narrator can never return to her homeland because it no longer exists as she remembers it. There is disappointment in her adopted home:

> I am here  
> surrounded by factory smoke  
> seeing people with wearied faces  
> returning from a night's work.

This is the industrial Illawarra dominated by the steelworks and the coalmines which enticed the immigrant population here. Industrialism is not Ivanova's main concern, however. As in Neskovski's Macedonian plays, two cultures are compared and that of Australia is seen as shallow and uncaring. This issue of comparison is handled differently in Maria Sostarec's "I Am Aussie." In Sostarec's poem the migrant narrator fulfills all of the requirements of being a stereotypical
Australian, which could be construed as a lighthearted dig at the shallowness of Australian culture, or a clever deconstruction of the stereotype using role reversal. I opt for both of these. The stereotypical footy-playing, beer-swilling, Holden-driving Aussie working-class male, according to this poem's strategy, "live(s) in a city called Wollongong". In "No Return", racism is alluded to in the narrator's "understanding cruelty" and, again as in Neskovski's work, the myth of the Illawarra as a multicultural haven is challenged.

Terry McArthur's "No Fish for the Fisherman" (1989) is more obviously about racism. "ho chi min or ho ho & his wife or ho ho ho as she was quickly known" are two Asian refugees who arrive in Australia somewhere near Darwin and are quickly resettled at Nowra. The newcomers "shed their former lives & settled inland inhaling thick Nowra dust wide eyed whispers and incomprehensible gestures." This poem brings into question benevolent government policy which fails to resolve Anglo Australia's ground-level cultural habits: "greet the fisherman hail his asian skin plant him deep in the colossus of Australian life give him seed and butcher's knife." As a site of racist attitudes the Illawarra is relegated to a position "deep in the colossus of Australian life" with no distinguishing features in the xenophobic landscape. The form of "No Fish for the Fisherman" — poetic prose/prose-ish poetry with no capitals and no sentence breaks except for the jagged pauses required to move from line to line — encourages an urgent, breathless, arhythmic reading which suits the subject matter and serves to intensify the cultural duress of the two protagonists.

Though Deb Westbury's "The Prince: Remembering Port Kembla and The Little Prince, The Tin Soldier and The Happy Prince" is not about
racism, it is a narrative of displacement which focuses on another, similar, cultural duress, from the perspective of someone born here. It is generic to Neskovski's plays and the tales of sadness by authors such as Ivanova, Bienek, McIntyre, McArthur and McCauley. The Australian dream which enticed the immigrant steelworkers to Steel City is critiqued, as it is in Neskovski's plays. "The Prince ... " is about one man's anonymity in a place where "latin fathers/ gather at the playground/ after school/ to meet their knee-high children/ and walk them home." No one notices this particular father's "small acts of love", and his thoughts are in his country of origin where "he is still the prince." His memories are romantic visions, as are those of the narrator in Maria Sostarec's "Wollongong".

The narrator in this poem compares Wollongong with her "old city." The comparison favours neither place, but the blue sea of the Illawarra reminds her of "the blue sky" of her homeland, and other tenuous connections impart the feeling of wanting to be in both places at once. A poignant, almost surreal moment occurs with the narrator's desire to "touch the blue sky there", as if her former home has taken on the qualities of a dream world. A common element of the Illawarra migrant experience is voiced in the description of Wollongong as the "Steel city."

The notion of "an iron city" also appears in Jean McIntyre's "Place," a poem located in the suburb of Warrawong at the city's "edge." The Illawarra in "Place" is "a congregation/ of displaced souls" who try vainly to hold on to "scraps of culture." The narrator laments the loss of a history from the position of a first-generation Australian, but this poem is also a celebration of a multicultural Illawarra, with the inevitable connections to food as an indicator of ethnicity:
essences of tomato
garlic, onion,
oregano drift
on ocean breeze
up my hill.

as well as music:

a single drum
an accordion
beat away sounds.

Language in this poem is a divider of cultures:

in distant
playgrounds
children spit and curse
a hundred dialects.

There are tenuous connections with a multicultural Illawarra in "Bartok" by Shane McCauley and "Excursion to Wollongong" by Horst Bienek. In "Bartok" a common academic fascination with European folk music translates to a curiosity about the "folk" of the Illawarra, amid concerns about war-torn European homelands invoked by the Illawarra's multicultural population. The narrator observes — from a jaunt through the Illawarra "From Bateman's Bay to Kiama" — that "what draws communities together/ Has little of economics in it, but/
Much daring in suffering", an allusion to the cultural duress of the Illawarra's multicultural population, as illustrated in McArthur's "No Fish for the Fisherman." It is possible that a multicultural Illawarra is also being depicted in Bienek's poem, though either meaning is obscured during the translation from German to English (the poem appears in both languages), or the piece is deliberately cryptic. It has to do with the reading of portents in termite constructions, with comparisons to old Europe. The termite constructions referred to may
be how the poet sees the network of mining tunnels which cut into the Illawarra mountains (and bring disaster in Fitzpatrick's "The Tunnels Sequence").

In poetry, the Illawarra evolves from an idyllic yet menacing wilderness into a picturesque tourist destination with a strong industrial presence. The concerns of poets writing about the Illawarra are also those of prose writers, though with some additions, omissions and differences.
Early Prose

A Hybrid Genre

Modern literary commentators have been variously lamenting and/or celebrating the arrival of cross-generic, hybrid kinds of writing which blur or annihilate previously-existing genre boundaries. In 1996 Luke Slattery warned that "a new breed of non-fiction is invading the garden of fiction and setting off good and evil in its wake" (6). The horticultural metaphor, in relation to my work regarding the writing of the Garden of New South Wales, as the Illawarra is sometimes known, is somewhat serendipitous. As early as 1825, the Illawarra has been written about in an usually autobiographic, journalistic prose not unlike modern travel writing — adventure fiction in the guise of reportage, perhaps — which, from a modern perspective, offers a romanticized, fiction-like portrayal of the region. This hybrid genre is not, as Slattery suggests, "something new" (6). Of the twelve or so prose pieces I have uncovered which were written and/or published between 1825 and 1917 (and which, for reasons of archival convenience, shall be here deemed as belonging to Early Illawarra Prose) eight can be classed as generic to this hybrid category, with at least three others being a retelling of history as well. Only one of the early pieces of prose I have encountered could be deemed to fit comfortably into the short story definition as we have come to accept it.

Cedar

Slattery's comment that the new genre, "unlike most journalese ... [has] depth and finesse and narrative drive" (6) could easily apply to one of the earlier published pieces, "Illawarra" by A.M.F., which appeared in the Kiama Independent in 1872. As in the poetic offering ("A Trialogue Between His Worship the MA(re), Bob the Miller, of Gerringong, and Jack
the Tanner, of Kiama”) from twelve years earlier, the cedar-cutting industry gets a mention. There is some mention of the Illawarra cedar groves in most of the early prose pieces I have uncovered. Cedar-cutting was the region’s first major colonial industry, and it was the cedar trees which lured Europeans into the Illawarra wilderness in the first place. The importance of cedar as a commodity is obvious to a modern reader of this early Illawarra prose. In 1872 the cedar trees were still plentiful enough for A.M.F. to comment:

They are an ornament to the landscape wherever found, for they spread their boughs wide and free, and their soft foliage is of an exquisite green. (A.M.F. "Illawarra," 4)

A heroic treatment of the cedar-getters, as well as a convoluted history of that industry obtained directly from one of them (a Mr David Smith or Smyth, of Kiama), is counterbalanced by some conservationist sentiment rare for the prose of the time. The concerns expressed by the writer point to how much cedar had, in fact, disappeared by 1872:

A few [cedar trees] have been preserved, here and there, by the sides of the main roads; and in places there are young trees springing up by the same roads, in thick clusters. It is to be hoped they will be saved from the destroyer in the ruthless crusade against trees of all kinds, that has already deprived both homesteads and cattle of valuable shelter, in many parts of Illawarra, and marred their beauty as well. (4)

**The Pioneer Myth**

At the other extreme of the pendulum swing, A.M.F.’s "Illawarra" is imbued at times with an almost melodramatic reverence of the capitalist work ethic. The pioneer myth is reinforced in this piece with such statements as "The spirited proprietors deserve every encouragement and success to which enterprise, skill, and perseverance are entitled".
In 1881, however, G.S.M., in "Through the Illawarra District", comments negatively about local industriousness:

This beautiful, wealthy and fertile district has too long been in the hands of those either unable or unwilling to devote their energies to cultivating the soil (G.S.M. "District," 3).

This writer is also capable of juggling a reverence of industry and progress in one hand while offering conservationist sympathies with the other. In another piece written two years later ("The Scenery and Vegetation of the Illawarra Ranges"), it is noted by the same G.S.M. that

The plains from the sea to the hills have been denuded of their trees, and the timber on the sides and slopes of the mountain ranges is fast disappearing. The effect of this is already felt in the diminished supply of water, and will be felt in a greater degree unless this destruction of the timber is at once prevented (G.S.M. "Scenery," 4).

A Schizoid Position

The problem of how to cultivate the soil without destroying the forests is not resolved in this piece. The conservationist sentiment may have been there, but no practical solution was forthcoming. The schizoid position which tries to encompass both industrialist and conservationist sympathies is fairly common in newspaper reportage about the Illawarra from the latter half of the nineteenth century. The function of supplying industry and farming statistics is served, yet the urge to poeticize about the region's rapidly diminishing natural beauty seems unstoppable. A certain urgency to record what is about to be lost is detectable.
Access to Wilderness

Another, longer piece also titled "Illawarra", by Judge McFarland, which was serialized in the Kiama Independent between 18 February, 1875 and 24 February, 1876, imparts some interesting history about the different roads which had been constructed up to that time to allow access to Wollongong from Sydney. Road access to the flat coastal land below the escarpment emerges as a preoccupation in Illawarra writing as a whole, beginning with this early prose at a time when many different routes had been forged, only to fall into disuse. Later, the difficult passage down the mountains comes to indicate the barrier beyond which sanctuary awaits.

A Panoramic View

A description by McFarland of the panorama available at the top of Bulli Pass is enlightening for its similarity to other perspectives of the same view in later, even recent, works:

Hundreds of feet below are deep abysses of forest, rolling from you to the sea, and each covered by innumerable trees, palms, myrtles, and vines, impenetrable bush, and quivering foliage, of endless variety, outline, and beauty; while the flashing and wailing of that sea can be seen and heard at many a point, as it frets against the beach, or stretches to the far horizon; and the north-eastern shores of Illawarra, its sands, and lagoon, wharfs and promontories, knolls and meadows, homes and villages, verge inwards, and complete the magic scene (McFarland, Feb. 1875, 4).

This description offers connections with other texts which together almost suggest another preoccupation with the overview available from that lofty standpoint.

In 1883, G.S.M. looked down from the very same summit and recorded the scene in his journal:
Before you lies the vast and mighty ocean, with the long line of the coast on which the restless surf with its white foam is ever breaking, forming a pleasing contrast with the blue waters of the deep, and the dark green foliage of the vegetation skirting the base and sides of these hills. Again, you see before you a succession of hills stretching away, and seeming to have no end. (G.S.M. "Scenery," 4).

McFarland's "Illawarra" relies a lot on large sections of quotes from other works, such as the journals of landholders and explorers, as well as government reports. Confusion is created when some of these quoted sources also quote from other works. In a section from *Settlers and Convicts, or Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labor in the Australian Backwoods by an Emigrant Mechanic*, by Alexander Harris, which was published in 1847 but describes the author's journeys and adventures in 1826/27, another view of the same panorama is offered:

> We now soon came to the edge of the mountain. At one spot we stood on the brink of a precipice of vast depth, and saw down below us the mighty sea diminished into insignificance, almost like the waters of a lower world (McFarland, July 1875, 3).

**The Rainforest**

An even earlier work, "Journal of an Excursion to the Five Islands and Shoalhaven" written in 1823 by Barron Field and published in 1825 as part of *Geographical Memoirs of New South Wales* is described by McFarland as "the earliest publication I have met with that describes the condition and appearance of Illawarra, in its infant state, from Mount Keira to Coolangatta". In the section quoted in McFarland's work, the impenetrable nature of the Illawarra rainforest — another motif common to the travel journals of the time — is revealed:

> The vines wreathed the trees, like boa constrictors, and festooned the way; the valley reminded one of Humbolt's descriptions of South American vegetation. The ground was
unequal, to boot; so that travelling through the jungle was extremely difficult and fatiguing (McFarland, Oct. 1875, 3).

In another view of the Illawarra wilderness Mr David Smyth ("one of the earliest of the cedar cutters who wielded the axe in Illawarra" according to McFarland) relates that in 1821

The whole face of the country, with the exception of some comparatively open land about Dapto, was covered with timber of various descriptions; that there was scarcely a creek or stream, valley, ravine, or gorge between Bulli and Broughton Creek - the sea and the mountains - that was not dotted with cedar trees (McFarland, March 1875, 4).

An interesting choice of description separates the viewpoint of the early industrialist — who calls the trees "timber" — from the explorer, who uses the term "jungle".

Alexander Harris's tale of his trek through the thick rainforest of trees "so thick set, that beneath them was perpetual shadow", to a spot near Kiama where he and his companion build a house for an anonymous settler, reads like an adventure novel set in some exotic tropical location. The escarpment (which all early writers had trouble rendering) he describes as a "heap of mountains", which protect a paradise.

Later literary viewpoints are informed by lifetimes spent growing up close to the escarpment, but its true geological nature is not discernable from the coastal flats. I assume, then, that the modern rendition of the escarpment is also informed by generations of surveying and aerial overviews, the recording of which belongs outside the scope of this thesis.
The Emigrant Mechanic (Alexander Harris) is a perfect example of the Illawarra pioneer who can live quite comfortably with a mind-set which is able to describe the activities of the cedar-getters as "slaughtering trees in all directions", while himself felling a substantial group of blackbutts from which to construct his employer's house and by the end of his tale taking employment as a cedar-getter's mate.

A Dangerous Climate

There is also an entire instalment of McFarland's serialization devoted to the numerous extraordinary storms and resulting floods which had been recorded or remembered up until 1875, summarised by the statement: "Even the comparatively mild and equal climate of Illawarra is liable to some vicissitudes, and can scarcely be depended upon at all times."

This unpredictability of the weather, so important in the early poetry as a marker to the dangers lurking in the Illawarra of the nineteenth century, is graphically illustrated in "The Beauties of Kiama: Opinions of a Sydney Visitor", which appeared in the Kiama Independent of 8 April, 1891:

As the day wears on, and the seas rise higher and higher, the black ball is hoisted as a danger signal on the flagstaff at the top of the hill. It means 'stand off', and vessels are warned by it that the sea runs too high on the bar to justify entry, except at their own peril. (3)

Kiama and the Ocean

As in much of the early poetry about the town, Kiama is linked strongly with the ocean:

The little place, cradled, as it were, on the bosom of the ocean, sleeps along peacefully, soothed by the never-ending lullaby of the waves. (3)
"The Beauties of Kiama" describes the dairy industry and blue metal quarrying, but mainly focuses on the blow-hole, in language which hovers dangerously close to poetic for supposed journalism. In fact, it occasionally bursts into pure verse:

As we stand on the edge of the cliffs looking seaward and watching the slow and troubled progress of the little vessel, the solid rock trembles, there is a roar as of thunder, and a column of spray shoots out of a crater-like opening in the hill. Up it goes, gleaming pure white against the dark background of the cloudy sky, until it reaches the level of the lighthouse. Then the force is exhausted, and gracefully the cloud bursts, amid

The noise of seaward storm that mocks,
With roaring laughter from reverberate rocks,
The cry from ships near shipwrecked. (4)

Drinking Habits

In the final instalment of McFarland's "Illawarra" there appears a paragraph which closely parallels the subject matter addressed in the poems "Fuit Jamberoo" and "Wild Night in Wollongong"; the drinking habits of the Illawarrians and the presence of the Temperance League:

There are public-houses enough, and to spare, in the district; and as much money is spent in them, during one year, as would lay a tramway through a good part of it, or found a school in every parish. But Illawarra is not a bit worse in this respect ... than other districts in the Colony; and the 'old hands' — not the younger, thank God — are the offenders. Let us therefore hope that better times are in store; and already the 'Sons of Temperance' and 'Bands of Hope' have accomplished much (McFarland, Feb. 1876, 4).

Pre-colonial Presence

In his journal of events which occurred in 1826 or 27, only eleven years after Throsby made the first official European foray down the escarpment, Alexander Harris ponders the Aboriginal presence in the
Illawarra. His viewpoint — uninformed and naive as it is — allows us a glimpse of the mind-set which grew from the notion of *Terra Nullius*, only thirty-eight years after the First Fleet entered Botany Bay. As this early explorer made his way through dense subtropical rainforest, relying on many a "wild bush track" already in existence, the reality dawned on him that many other people had, in fact, travelled this route:

Indeed, I could not but wonder how the road we were now pursuing from Appin towards the coast had been discovered. I was not then aware that the Aborigines are so well acquainted with the bush as to be able to point out the best tracks in any direction. (Harris, 20)

What he thought they must have been doing for the countless thousands of years before his arrival is not recorded and, indeed, was probably not part of the perceived common sense of the day. We readers from today have the yarns of Percy Mumbulla, et al, to enlighten us about the goings on of the Aboriginal people in the process of being colonized, but they were not to appear in print until the late 1950s (and I will cover them later in this paper).

**Adventure**

E.J. Brady, who wrote so much wonderful poetry about the Illawarra in the early years of the twentieth century, published a book in 1917 called *Australia Unlimited*. It contains some of the most eloquent and beautifully written examples of this cross-genre prose I have encountered. The chapter "The South Coast" is no exception. Not merely travel writing, this is a highly personalized and often poetic view of the Illawarra, which Brady locates as "these sixty miles of country between Coal Cliff and Shoalhaven."
"The South Coast" is an adventure story of the narrator and his companion's journey by horse and cart from Sydney to St. George's Basin via Appin and Bulli. It is filled with day-to-day details of early twentieth-century life which come to today's reader as cultural antiquities. Writing about the horse which is to pull the cart, for example, the narrator illuminates us:

The last week I brought him in and had him hardened with good Central Cumberland maize, grown in my own paddock - full of nutriment and free of weevils. (218)

This so-easily-forgotten detail from the pre-motorized era relates something akin to a modern tune-up on the car before a long trip. On the third evening of their journey the adventurers camp "on the Bulli Pass, with Illawarra, like the Promised Land, spread out below us". The view from there at night is recognisable even now, and connects this piece with much of the other Illawarra prose pieces I have looked at so far:

Twinkling lights of Bulli and Corrimal and Wollongong lay far below us; the air was sweet with the scent of mountain musk. (219)

There are no dystopian visions here; no skeptical pioneer distrust of the landscape's benign visage. To the narrator of this tale the Illawarra is "a green idyllic coastland". As does his poetry, Brady's prose paints a picturesque panorama of the Illawarra.

This tale marks the end of the era when a trip to the Illawarra was considered an adventure. The modern world was fast catching up with all the challenges the diminishing wilderness could mete out. In 1917 the writer makes it clear that a trip on horseback down the Illawarra
escarpment (still not called that) was a nostalgic choice rather than a necessity. To the reader he states

The manner of your journey rests with yourself. The roads are good, the inns comfortable; you may motor if you can afford it. You may drive, or bike, or travel by train. (223)

Perhaps the modern world had not yet completely intervened and forced its rules and regulations upon the lives of the adventurer in 1917. Brady describes their first night out:

That night we pitched our tent in a clump of forest oak by the village of Appin. The grilled chops, cooked bushman-fasion on the coals, the billy tea, the little sundries of an open-air meal, and, above all, the pipes of aromatic tobacco, smoked under the stars — the gipsy [sic] pleasures, which are free to everybody in this glorious country of ours, sent us to our rugs and blankets in a mood of tired contentment. (217)

The Great White Hunter

What connects all of this adventure fiction masquerading as journalism is a display of some rite of Australian manhood which requires the slaughtering of wildlife. Though the hunted creatures are by no means the dangerous beasts which fit comfortably into the myth of the Great White Hunter, nevertheless the elements are there, and there is a sense of some trial of courage and wit being played out; some test which all adventurers must pass. In Brady's "South Coast" there is a certain lamenting of the culling of flocks and herds which has seen the practice of hunting diminish somewhat by 1917. Reminiscing about earlier days at Tom Thumb's Lagoon (and in 1917 it had not yet been gouged out into a harbour), Brady is clear about his philosophies on the subject:

Those memorable days were spent fishing at the mouth of the Thumb, tramping up quail on the rushy flats, waiting at dusk for wild duck in the swamps, watching the figtrees for flock pigeons ... many a stone plover rose through the
tea-tree and fell, and many a plump brown quail went into the bag in those golden days. (216)

In the 7 October, 1875 instalment of Judge McFarland's "Illawarra" is a story about a Colonel Mundy and his encounter with a giant black swan on Tom Thumb's Lagoon. On the first day he sees it, he is without his gun, and his disappointment is dramatically revealed:

Sportsman reader! What would you have done! My gun was within two miles, there was plenty of light, my mare was as fast as her Arab sire; but it was Sunday, sportsman reader! What would you have done! Perhaps I might as well have galloped at once for my gun ... (3)

Instead the colonel comes back the next day and fires two shots at the giant bird as it takes off from the water. One of its wings is shattered and it falls back into the Lagoon, but manages to paddle into some rushes. What ensues is a battle of wit against instinct which could be straight from the pages of some African big game hunter's journal. The gun triumphs, of course, as does the myth of man's superiority in the order of the things, which is the overriding message in all of this early Illawarra adventure fiction posing as travel writing.

The Cedar-Getters

What emerges from this material is a consensus about the Illawarra as a barely-penetrable wilderness with such abundant resources that no amount of harvesting can diminish them (though hints abound). The pioneer ethic which is so dominant in early Illawarra poetry also appears in the early prose, though with heroic elements. A trip to the Illawarra, up until 1917 when this early prose period comes to an end, is generally depicted as an adventure, with all the life-threatening elements that notion entails. The cedar-getters, whenever they appear, are mostly painted as pioneering heroes, with just a touch of the pirate
emerging, in such passages as the following from McFarland's "Illawarra":

The sawyers of those days were an unruly set; and the consequence was, that a number of bushrangers, or runaway convicts, were harboured by the sawyers, to the great annoyance of the settlers. (*Kiama Independent*, 1 April, 1875, 4)

This portrayal of the cedar-getters is re-presented in the fabricated 1969 Eleanor Spence story *Jamberoo Road*:

Mostly they're as fine a set of rascals as you could want to see. One or two are bound to be escaped convicts, only the others hide them from the troopers. (42)

The parallels with the better-known Ned Kelly as the working-class hero are hard to discard. The ambiguous character of the cedar-getter established in these prose journals and articles is valuable to today's reader of the earliest poetic publication about the Illawarra, "A Trialogue Between His Worship the MA(re), Bob the Miller, of Gerringong, and Jack the Tanner, of Kiama" (an analysis of which appears in my chapter on early Illawarra poetry).

There are a number of pieces of nineteenth-century journalistic prose about the Illawarra which, though they are somewhat typical of the pieces I have looked at here, cannot be considered fiction within the parameters I have set, mainly because they lack any poeticizing whatsoever, but also because they are bogged down with numbers and comparisons, which leaves no room for word pictures of the Illawarra as a fictionalised geographic entity. There is probably scope for documenting these prose pieces, perhaps in the field of journalism. If I had to extract an Illawarra from them, I would have to say it was an Illawarra reduced to numbers. Heads of cattle and gallons of kerosene
do not add up to the Illawarra as fiction, though its identity as a centre
of industry and agriculture is certainly reinforced by the publication of
this kind of information, and that identity helped inform the fiction.

The Sketch

Some of the nineteenth-century journalistic prose about the Illawarra
strays very close to fiction, however. E.A.B.'s "A Cure of Souls", about
the goings-on at the Anglican church at Omega, exists perilously close
to being a short story masquerading as reportage. This genre was
widespread as the "sketch" — a kind of verbal photography with comic
tone. The character of the main protagonist — Reverend Charles Riddell
— is especially lucid and multi-faceted, and the prose reads like that in
many nineteenth century novels:

'Good heavens!' said Dr. Chichester, half aloud. He had
been almost lulled to sleep by the baby in its cradle, but
the amazing metaphor set him wide awake. (52)

The use of dialogue throughout, as well as a constant shifting of
viewpoints, suggests that this is, in fact, a fictionalised version of events
which the piece is attempting to present as having actually occurred.
Like much of the poetry appearing in Sydney journals at the time, this
story contributes to the image of an Illawarra peopled by drunkards
and sinners. The familiar blue ribbon of the Temperence League makes
its appearance again here:

Mr. Tompkins, who was a staunch teetotaller, with a blue
ribbon in his buttonhole, was not inclined to entrust his
money to this establishment ... (52)

As it does in the poem "Fuit Jamberoo", the blue ribbon's appearance
here offers the possibility that the Illawarra was targeted by this group.
It is tempting to see this as a consequence of the image constructed by the Sydney press.

**Retelling History**

"Tom Thumb: Her Voyages", published in the *Lone Hand* magazine in 1913, is a balanced mix of adventure fiction and a retelling of history. The introductory paragraph alone is enough to mark this as adventure fiction:

> When next you pass out into the Pacific through Sydney Heads and turn southward on the way to Melbourne, or London, as the case may be, and regard the great sandstone cliffs over the starboard rail — with the surf creaming round their feet and the forts crowning their brows — and are listening to the speech of the man who knows, where, when, and how the *Dunbar* was wrecked, consider the story of the *Tom Thumb*, which valiant little craft passed out, also, on an October morning in 1795. (Abbott, 173)

The reader's sympathies are directly enlisted with the use of the second person, and we are positioned to expect a truth which is constructed as stranger than fiction. It is noted in one of the many brief journalistic asides that prior to 1795 "Jervis Bay had been entered by Lieutenant Bowen". This is the first mention of the Illawarra in this piece.

The story of Flinders, Bass and "a small boy" (to be given the name Billy Martin in a late twentieth-century children's story which is studied later in this paper) and their trip in a small boat into the Illawarra coincides with the historic version. Quotes from Flinders' journal also appear. However, the narrator's conjecturing about what might have been going through the minds of the adventurers, as well as an animation of the elements ("They stood out to sea for some little distance in order to catch the sea breeze, which was, of course, our old friend the nor' easter"), takes this piece beyond the parameters of
factual reporting. This is a romanticized account, which leaves an impression of the Illawarra as a dangerous beast which has been placated by 1913, so that a visit there has become a "pleasant journey", much as in E. J. Brady's "The South Coast". The weather is depicted as unpredictable when the boat is nearly sunk by a storm ("which could have been none other than our old friend the Southerly Buster") which suddenly appears as the adventurers head back to Port Jackson.

"Unlucky" (by Gas), which appeared in the Bulletin in 1895, is also a retelling of history, this time describing a microcosm amidst the events surrounding the Bulli Mine disaster, an event well-covered by poetry of the time. This piece of prose is invested with a political cynicism which gives it a satirical slant and takes it beyond the constraints of factual reporting. There is bitter irony in the story of Bill the miner who injures himself while down the mine, and is aided to the surface by his mate Joe, whom he persuades to return to work because "he cannot afford to come". Throughout the short tale Joe has remarked on how unlucky Bill is after a number of small misfortunes, but while Bill is in the surgery having his head bandaged, there is an explosion in the mine. Joe is killed, and a modern reader could conjecture on how the newspapers would treat such a story today. "If only Joe had stayed with Bill all the way to the surgery" comes to mind, but in this tale the blatant reiteration of the irony of the situation remains unwritten.

Surveyor Literature
This section covers all of the pieces of prose I have been able to uncover which were published up to 1917. When I was Guest Speaker at a Friends of Kiama Library evening on 2 July, 1996, a member of the audience (whose name I regrettfully did not record) pointed me towards
the many surveyors' reports relating to the Illawarra region. He assured me that many of these reports would rate as Literature and should probably be covered in my paper. I have to admit that the constraints of time make it possible for me to only mention that this material exists, and earmark it as a possible source for research in the future.

An interesting connection occurs later in my paper when I look at contemporary Illawarra prose. The author of the book *The Man From the Misty Mountains* — James Henry Sturgiss — was, in fact, a surveyor in the Illawarra region during the early years of the twentieth century and had a hand in naming many of the places in the area. If the rest of the surveyors' literature is anything like Sturgiss' book, then I concede that I am omitting some marvellous prose from my survey. Hopefully, future research will make up for this.

**Special Mention**

After R. L. Stevenson mentions Clifton in an episode within his novel *The Wrecker* and D. H. Lawrence gathers his insights about the Australian landscape from his brief stay at Thirroul while writing much of *Kangaroo*, prose writing about the Illawarra changed, though the scene itself hadn't. An Australian literary vernacular had developed by the time these two internationally-celebrated authors had published their versions of the Illawarra. Their two books represent a point of negotiation between the previous, alien renditions of the Illawarra and the emerging colloquial viewpoint.

Many elements connect post-Stevenson/Lawrence prose with that which I have deemed Early Illawarra Prose, but the forms and language of presentation change dramatically. Gone is the cross-genre material I
have discussed, which dominated the early period. In its place appears what must be described as modern (for want of a better word), though, in some ways traditional genre boundaries are resurrected.

The Wrecker, it could be said, has more in common with the travel/adventure material from the Early Illawarra Prose period than with anything which appears after its publication. The main protagonist is an adventurer, its autobiographic viewpoint certainly offers narrative similarities, and it manages to successfully weave elements of real-life events into its story line. But this novel does not purport to have any journalistic intentions. Its construction as a men's club reminiscence and its numerous stories within stories create close generic connections with many nineteenth-century prose tales. The Illawarra connection in The Wrecker is brief and of not much consequence to the plot outcome.

In chapter 22 (of 25) of this book, which is described by its narrators in the Epilogue as "less a romance than a panorama", there is a page-long fictionalised version of a supposed real-life event at South Clifton, gathered by the authors, according to the Epilogue, as "an unsolicited testimonial from the powers that be". I have been unable to uncover any news articles covering the catastrophe it describes, however.

The episode involves a character from one of the numerous stories within stories within the main story, who is in charge of a railway work gang which is responsible for checking the track around a particularly unstable section of cliff which has been weakened by weeks of stormy weather. During the incident a ship is discovered in distress in the ocean nearby. Efforts to assist its crew are thwarted by the inopportune
arrival of a train at the dangerous section of track. The train is ushered through, but the ship has disappeared by the time the railway gang is free to attend to it. Elements of the pioneer ethic associated with isolated areas such as the Illawarra are apparent, and there is certainly something Illawarra-esque about a railway track which winds around coastal cliffs. However, for all the location details, the episode could have occurred on the moon, except that the workers' camp is under "the shoulder of bald mountain".

Passages such as "for weeks the rain scarce relented. The whole front of the mountain slipped seaward from above, avalanches of clay, rock, and uprooted forest spewed over the cliffs and fell upon the beach or in the breakers. Houses were carried bodily away and smashed like nuts" offer connections with some early Illawarra prose such as McFarland's "Illawarra" and the Emigrant Mechanic's journal, both which describe storms of similar severity. This description adds to the image of the Illawarra as being cursed with unpredictable, often life-threatening, weather.

The close literary identification of Clifton with the railway — begun in Stevenson's work, it would seem — is reworked in Bruce Beaver's 1984 novella You Can't Come Back, which is looked at later in this paper.

Lawrence's Kangaroo is a much more important work, especially in its foregrounding of the landscape through which its characters take their various journeys. Much has already been written about D.H. Lawrence's stay at Thirroul, and I am not about to enter the debate which surrounds his presence here by reiterating what has already been covered elsewhere. This thesis will attempt only to extract the Illawarra
from Lawrence's work. By comparing the extracts with other representations of the region, it will determine if what has been extracted fits with an Illawarra which might emerge from the body of texts constituting the writing of the Illawarra. If readers are interested in the Lawrence-in-Thirroul debate itself, I direct them to the numerous works in the Works Cited/Consulted at the end of this thesis.

The first mention of the Illawarra in *Kangaroo* (albeit in the guise of a place on the South Coast called Mullumbimby), comes from Harriett Somers as early as chapter 4:

> Harriett wanted to go down to the South Coast, of which she had heard from Victoria. 'Think,' she said, 'it must be lovely there - with the mountain behind, and steep hills, and blackberries, and lovely little bays with sand'. (72)

The use of the term "South Coast" instead of Illawarra is common to much modern fictional prose which is written in Sydney. Peter Corris uses the term in his books, as does Jean Bedford in her novel *To Make a Killing*, and R. Walton in the short story "Subtropical", all of which are dealt with later in this paper. The South Coast is meant to imply sanctuary from the stresses of city life in all of these mentioned works (including *Kangaroo*), and pastoral elements similar to those which have reached Harriett Somers are used to construct this notion of sanctuary. In this regard Harriett's initial impressions of the "South Coast" are similar to those early idyllists I discuss when I look at Early Illawarra Poetry.

In her 1934 autobiography *Not I, but the Wind*, Frieda Lawrence relates the real-life equivalent of the decision in *Kangaroo* to travel south:

> And then we took a train with all our trunks and said: 'We'll look out of the window and where it looks nice we'll
get out.' It looked very attractive along the coast but also depressing. We were passing deserted homesteads: both in America and Australia, these human abandoned efforts make one very sad. Then we came to Thirroul, we got out at four and by six o'clock we were settled in a beautiful bungalow right on the sea. (119)

This version, in some ways, makes a much better story than the one concocted by D.H., of a carefully-planned move to a particularly-chosen spot. Towards the end of chapter 4 there is a discussion between Harriett and another character William James, about the merits of the Somers' move south. James suggests that by moving to such a remote spot surrounded by so many Australians with no contact with the Mother Country, Richard Somers might become infected with the Australian culture, which James sees as something inferior:

... Mr Somers thinking he can live out here, and work with the Australians. I think he's wrong — I really do. They'll drag him down to their level ... (79)

This scenario taps into the attitude displayed by the Bulletin writers from the time, which suggested a proximity to the 'centre' somehow endowed people with a cultural intuition denied to those on the regional peripheries. It is cultural snobbery of this kind which informs the 1922 poem by Pipards, "A Word from Wollongong" — published only a month after the Lawrences left Australia — about the Rural Dean of Wollongong, who dares offer moral judgements from so far away from Sydney. Lawrence's characters in Kangaroo challenge the notion. "But perhaps he wants to be taken at their level" is how Harriett dismisses the snobbery.

When Richard Somers encounters the Illawarra ocean for the first time, he looks beyond the by-then clichéd descriptions of crashing waves and boiling foam. Kangaroo offers a microscopic zoom-in which, in one
short non-sentence, imparts the essence of the scene: "Strangely seascooped sharp sea-bitter rock-floor, all wet and sea-savage." The alliterative "s" sounds poetically emulate the sound of the waves expending themselves at the observer's feet, while the repetition of the word "sea" is reminiscent of ancient Anglo-Saxon poetry, which relied upon such internal connections — alien to modern readers — for its effect.

Because the Somerses were tenanted so close to it in the house called "Coo-ee" (and in a parallel reality, the Lawrences in "Wyewurk"), the sea is a powerful entity in Kangaroo, as it is in the early poetry about Kiama.

In one of his letters published in Frieda Lawrence's autobiography, D.H. Lawrence describes the outlook from the back of Wyewurk:

> The heavy waves break with a great roar all the time; and it is so near. We have only our little grassy garden — then the low cliff — and then the great white rollers breaking, and the surf seeming to rush right under our feet as we sit at table. (124)

In chapter 7 of Kangaroo there is a scene in which Richard Somers is so besotted by the storm-churned ocean at the back of "Coo-ee" that he is compelled to skinny dip:

> Somers ... suddenly began taking off his clothes. In a minute he was running naked in the rain which fell with lovely freshness on his skin ... he ran quickly over the sands, where the wind blew cold but velvety, and the raindrops feel loosely. He walked straight into the forewash, and fell into an advancing ripple. At least it looked a ripple, but was enough to roll him over so that he went under and got a little taste of the Pacific. (167)
The dangerous power of the Illawarra ocean becomes more obvious to Somers as the storm advances and the waves grow bigger and stronger. In chapter 8 he acknowledges the alienness of this southern ocean without trying to understand it in any European frame of reference, with the observation "[The endless water] had a language which spoke utterly without concern of him." (175)

Frieda also describes the southern ocean, and the way the storm suddenly changes it:

Like a fantasy seemed the Pacific, pellucid and radiant, melting into the sky, so fresh and new always; then this primal radiance was gone one day and another primeval sea appeared. A storm was throwing the waves high into the air, they rose on the abrupt shore, high as in an enormous window. I could see strange sea-creatures thrown up from the deep: sword-fish and fantastic phenomena of undreamt deep-sea beasts I saw in those waves, frightening and never to be forgotten. (120)

The consensus, shared by the Lawrences and many of the Australian writers who have rendered the Illawarra storms in words, is that when the region is in climatic turmoil it is a beautiful scene to behold, but for the participants within the *mise en scène* the dangers are more than metaphoric. Towards the end of *Kangaroo*, Richard Somers approaches the ocean at the same spot, though on a much calmer day. The serenity of the scene serves to illustrate even more strongly how fickle the Illawarra weather can be:

The huge, white rollers of the Pacific breaking in a white, soft, snow-rushing wall, while the thin spume flew back to sea like a combed mane, combed back by the strong, cold land-wind ... And in the morning, the yellow sea faintly crinkled by the inrushing wind from the land, and long, straight lines on the lacquered meadow, long, straight lines that reared at last in green glass, then broke in snow, and slushed softly up the sand. (384)
The step D.H. Lawrence makes is to occupy the Illawarra scenes and physically interact with the landscape he is committing to paper.

At the beginning of chapter 10 of *Kangaroo* Lawrence uses the word "scarp" to describe the "steep rise of the tor-face" up which Richard Somers climbs during one of his encounters with the Australian bush. Given the fresh approach Lawrence brings to writing about the Illawarra, it is no surprise that this is the earliest use of such a description I have been able to uncover in the material I have studied. In a letter to his sister-in-law, he is not quite so inventive, opting instead for the tried and true:

> About two miles inland there is a great long hill like a wall, facing the sea and running all down the coast. (Lawrence, Frieda, 129)

"Scarp" means virtually the same thing as "escarpment", which is how the Illawarra Range is described by the late twentieth century. The shorter word was adopted by Ron Pretty as the title for the literature and graphics magazine which was edited and produced within the University of Wollongong Faculty of Creative Arts until 1999.

In the particular encounter with the landscape in *Kangaroo* where the new description appears, Somers ponders the mystery of the bush:

> The same lonely, unbreakable silence and loneliness that seemed to him the real bush. Curiously unapproachable to him. The mystery of the bush seems to recede from you as you advance, and then it is behind you if you look around. Lonely, and weird, and hoary. (203)

Lawrence admits the landscape's alienness and his inability to do it justice. In doing so he manages to make it that much more believable. As Frieda saw it, "Lawrence went on with 'Kangaroo' and wove his deep
underneath impressions of Australia into this novel." (Lawrence, Frieda, 121)

By 1922 when the Lawrences were visiting, modern industrialization had begun to insinuate itself upon the Illawarra landscape. It was not noticeably intrusive at Mullumbimby (Thirroul) where the Somerses were staying, but in chapter 14, when they visit the nearby town of Wolloona (Wollongong), Richard Somers notices it, along with the haphazard creep of future suburbia:

The naked bush, sinking in a hollow to a sort of marsh [Tom Thumb's Lagoon], and then down the coast some sort of 'works', brick-works or something smoking. All as if it had tumbled haphazard off the pantechnicon of civilisation as it dragged round the edges of this wild land, and there lay, busy but not rooted in. (Kangaroo, 316)

It may not be the most flattering of metaphors, to suggest that Wollongong and its suburbs fell off the back of a truck, but it is certainly an appropriate image to illustrate how civilization seems to cling to that strip of land between the mountains and the sea. In a letter written in Australia to his mother-in-law, Lawrence uses a different metaphor to describe the landscape and the veneer of civilization upon it:

A grey, strange spirit, and the people that are here are not really here; only like ducks that swim on the surface of a lake. But the country has a fourth dimension and the white people float like shadows on the surface. (Lawrence, Frieda, 122)

In another letter he uses another metaphor:

That is a queer sensation: as if life here really had never entered in: as if it were just sprinkled over, and the land lay untouched. (Lawrence, Frieda, 129)
Frieda perceived the Illawarra landscape much like D.H. In 1934 she recollected: "The mornings, those sunrises over the Pacific had all the wonder of newness, of an uncreated world." (119) D.H. calls it "a queer, grey, sad country — empty, and as if it would never be filled." (Lawrence, Frieda, 125) Frieda also offers the suggestion that an exchange of ideas may have been going on between D.H. and Australian writers; that a lot of the raw material for the plot of Kangaroo, at least, may have been picked up from the contemporary press:

Lawrence religiously read the 'Sydney Bulletin'. He loved it for all its stories of wild animals and people's living experiences. (120)
Later Prose

No Australian writers' impressions of the Illawarra were published in the *Bulletin* during the Lawrences' stay here. The next prose about the Illawarra to appear in print is the series of Aboriginal yarns — part myth, part recollection, part folk-tale — related by Percy Mumbulla and scribed by Roland Robinson. Robinson says of Mumbulla's stories: "Percy never told me an actual myth but he told me a lot of wonderful tribal memories." (Chittick, 95). The first of this material was published in 1958 in a collection titled *Black-Feller, White-Feller*, but it refers to events which may have occurred during the early years of European settlement in the Illawarra area.

A number of these prose pieces were republished in the 1989 collection *The Nearest the White Man Gets: Aboriginal Narratives and Poems of New South Wales*, this time in poetic form. Except for some very slight changes, the poetic versions are taken word-for-word from the earlier prose pieces. The case for changing the original transcribed conversational prose to verse is flimsy. The decision to do so was an editorial one, with no stated intention from the orator, except in one instance:

Now, I put that into rhyme, the only time I ever did. And I said it to Percy and Percy says 'That's okay'. So it's appeared in that form, in rhyme, with his name on it — 'Bees' by Percy Mumbler. But otherwise I never interfered with the words. (Chittick, 97)

Robinson explains his recording process thus:

I used to take everything from Percy. I'd write it all down. He told me a lot of things but the way he had of telling a story was like a poem. He told me a long story of the whales, a long narrative which I could see was poetry and I just put it into lines. Didn't interfere with it, never touched
the words. It was exactly as Percy told it to me. (Chittick, 97)

Why Robinson took 31 years to decide that Percy Mumbulla's yarns were poems is something he never explained. I find it hard to accept this as criteria for the construction of poetry.

The period of Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Writing to which the Mumbulla stories belong, which possibly began in 1934 when "the first voice, you might say, is heard clearly ... when David Unaipon is published and what he has to say [is] treated with some dignity." (Bennie, 9s)

Though Robinson contends that Percy Mumbulla could not read or write and his storytelling therefore belongs to a perceived Aboriginal oral tradition ("He was an oral man, being an Aboriginal" [Chittick, 95]), in some ways the publication of the Mumbulla series as obviously-transcribed narratives serves to perpetuate a stereotype which author, academic and literary commentator Anita Heiss finds offensive. As Bennie states,

Heiss is impatient with the continued parsimony of this idea [of Aboriginal 'literature' as an oral artform]: 'For some reason, people in mainstream Australia seem to find it difficult to grasp the concept of Aboriginality in a contemporary society.' (9s)

Heiss does not disregard the Aboriginal oral tradition, however. She includes it as part of the category of Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Writing:

In the past 15 years Aboriginal writing has swept across all the genres, whether it be fiction or biography or autobiography, or play writing, poetry, even a lot of our oral history is going into print. (9s)
The thirteen Mumbulla pieces I am looking at are set loosely in the Wallaga Lake district which is a little south of where the modern version of the Illawarra finishes and was part of the larger, pre-colonial Darawhal (or Tharawhal) language district. However, the tales I have extracted from the Mumbulla series describe activities which take place over a wide area, and the characters' wanderings take them into my Illawarra. There are other Mumbulla stories in the Collection Black-Feller, White-Feller which I have excluded from my survey because they were either restricted to the Wallaga Lake vicinity or were not specific at all about location. I acknowledge that this selection process may produce distortions of the kind Heiss disapproves of.

Though connections abound between the Aboriginal Illawarra which emerges from Percy Mumbulla's tales, and the Euro-Illawarra apparent in the non-Aboriginal view of the region, the Aboriginal Illawarra offers a different set of dominant, common images, where humans are the most dangerous element, along with many magical beings who may take on human form. The habitat itself — in opposition to the dominant Euro-view — is usually portrayed as benevolent. Though many of Mumbulla's tales are a jumble of pre- and post-settlement imagery, most of the activities portrayed take place after European contact, illustrating the survival of mythical beings into post-colonial Australia. Magic, it would seem from the yarns of Percy Mumbulla, survived the arrival of Europeans. Most of the stories impart fantastic events which can only be viewed as metaphorical by an audience today. I concede that my knowledge about the function of these tales in Aboriginal culture is limited, and I can only view them from a Eurocentric perspective.
The Illawarra prose from the next three and a half decades consists of a lot of idiosyncratic pieces which are difficult to find connecting elements in. In the 1960s, autobiography dominates Illawarra prose, as does children's literature, while in the 1970s only three Illawarra prose pieces appear in print, with autobiography again dominating. In the 1980s, no less than fifteen prose works appear, with autobiography and anecdote featuring strongly. The issues addressed in this decade are as varied as the styles and genres of the pieces, but from them emerges a modern Illawarra which still manages to include its colonial past. By the 1990s the Illawarra becomes more a metaphoric presence than a geographic setting. However, there are general themes which connect some of the pieces, and I will discuss these here.

**Autobiographical**

Charmian Clift's novel *Walk to the Paradise Gardens* — published in 1960 — is, according to Nadia Wheatley, set in "a fictional Kiama" (Clift, *Paradise*, book jacket). The two main protagonists, Charles and Julia Cant, are city visitors to Lebanon Bay, where Julia grew up. The parallels with Charmian Clift's life are obvious, and the novel can be seen as an attempt by Clift to come to terms with her regional upbringing, which is treated as an embarrassing secret in her essays whenever it makes one of its rare appearances.

*Paradise* shares a sense of nostalgia with the short story "The Year of the Christmas Cake", published in 1966. "Christmas Cake" is also autobiographical and, like *Paradise*, it delves into a past of lost, simple pleasures which have been preserved in memory. The Illawarra in both works belongs in some rosy past, but is irrevocably altered in the
present of each narrative. In *Paradise* it is commercialisation which has changed Julia's remembered past. Her return to Lebanon Bay as an adult unravels the fabric of childhood perspective. In "Christmas Cake" it is natural disaster which overrides the fond memories of childhood holidays in a past Illawarra. The disaster is a consequence of the struggle to tame nature, to civilize the Illawarra, and the suggestion is that the Illawarra should be left in pristine condition, lest it strike out against those who would attempt to tame it.

Another autobiographical, first person narrative — the 1961 short story "To Tom Thumb Island" by Neilma Sidney — covers a trial for the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, from the viewpoint of a visitor/crew member on the ship which is first to finish. The trial takes the ships overnight from Sydney Harbour to Tom Thumb Island and back again. The Illawarra is seen in glimpses: “Far over the bow can be seen the smoke of the tall chimneys of Port Kembla, and behind them the massive plateau of the 'D.H. Lawrence country'.” There is also a brief description of Tom Thumb Island itself: “a little island about thirty feet high with a patch of green grass on its crest and great brown rock shelves against which the ocean slowly heaves.”

As the ship heads north after rounding the island, the skipper comments “right now we're off Wattamulla” and the Illawarra is forgotten as the drama of being caught in a storm distracts the crew away from the land. The reference to D.H. Lawrence is of interest, as if the land did not exist before he wrote about it. The unpredictable ocean so favoured by early Illawarra poets here gains new importance because of the narrator's position upon it.
There are other autobiographical texts which contribute to a literary Illawarra. The valuable little book *The Forgotten Generation* (1989) contains nine brief life summaries of people living at Mount Warrigal Nursing Home. They are presented in the simple, matter-of-fact language we associate with the reminiscence. The stories were extracted through interviews by Warilla High School Year 12 Community Studies students and each story is a valuable window to the usually-unwritten past of the unfamous.

The stories in *The Forgotten Generation* represent a sketching in of blank areas of the documented past, from an autobiographical perspective. Two short prose sketches by Ranald Allan — "The Vision Years" and "Post-Object Postcard" (1989) — offer a more contemporary reminiscence. In "The Vision Years" There is a small one-and-a-half page section of this twelve-page autobiographical sketch which is set in "the industrial city of Wollongong" which the writer differentiates from "the country". The narrator is forced by circumstance to live with his parents who have moved to Wollongong. He spends most of his time in the house consuming beer and food, and the rest of his time commuting to Sydney Uni, where he is an undergraduate. Eventually "I was sick of travelling to Sydney. It was time to move back there".

Only a few small mentions of the Illawarra appear in "Post-Object Postcard", the next long autobiographical chapter of Allan's longer work *Tennis with Jack at Warren's*. The narrator receives a writer's grant and decides to use it to write the great Australian novel: "Such an enterprise demanded the right environment and as soon as I had returned I began looking for the requisite garret by the sea. I found a delightful little cottage at Wombarra, a sleepy seaside village consisting mainly of
Peter Knox

retired coal miners. It wasn't far from the cottage at Thirroul where D.H. Lawrence had written *Kangaroo* ... perfect!" He attends an acting workshop in Sydney, then "we spent the last weekend of the workshop at my cottage in Wombarra". After a jaunt to Queensland the narrator returns to his Wombarra cottage, and notices something of the Illawarra: "I sat in the cliff in the cemetery next to my place and gazed at the damage the heavy storms had done to the wall of the tidal pool in my absence."

The personal perspective is also the most apparent aspect of the narrative viewpoint in Thea Astley's "A Letter from Cambewarra" (1989). Like Liverani's "Letter from Wollongong", this is not really a letter at all, but a transcript of Astley's address to the 1989 National Word Festival. In it Thea Astley writes wittily about the shortcomings of public transport, and her many adventures aboard trains and buses. Illawarra residents who regularly commute can identify with the constant interruptions to service caused by "railway workers mending a bridge". Astley's sarcasm refuses to be contained: "They have been mending it for three years and I don't think I can stand the bus section of the trip much longer". There are tales of teenage drunken revelry and the pace of the Illawarra trains: "Of course, when I go to Sydney, the train always shuffles about a bit round Coniston and Dapto. The train sits about and seems to wait to say hello to other trains". Connecting her public transport concerns with writing, Astley at the same time articulates the access dilemma faced by regional dwellers: "I'm beginning to believe that anyone at all who lives in a far flung place serviced by Australian public transport deserves a grant whether they write or not".
The eight sketches in "Memories of Old Illawarra — from Voice of the Seniors" (1994) are reminiscences by different autobiographers. The connecting motif in all these pieces is change. The vacant paddock where some modern building now stands is a repeated image.

Peter Hodson's "Memories of Old Illawarra — 3, from A Migrant's Magpie Memories" holds the suggestion of being an extract from a longer work. Written more like fictionalizations than reminiscences, the four pieces are not connected chronologically. They are simply fragments teased from the larger picture which is the author's memory. They do not seem complete. They are like extracts. "1. Port Kembla Hospital" is about the construction of that complex, from the viewpoint of one of the labourers. It is inhabited by soap opera characters like Ben Casey the foreman, and many comic and tragic episodes. It finishes with a plea to the reader, to remember the human cost of such large building projects. "2. Rabbits" is a short piece which could be the abstract for a situation comedy skit, though the plea for cultural tolerance is obvious. The clashing of cultures is illustrated in an episode in which a rabbit breeder presents one of his rabbits to "those New Australians up on the hill". They eat it, and he calls them savages. "3. A Drowning at Warilla" contrasts the placid scenery of the creekside village with the frantic efforts to rescue a drowned boy. Mud is the dominant motif, and again the sense of tragedy is strongly conveyed. "4. The R.S.L. Buries its Dead" (an obvious reference to Henry Lawson's "The Union Buries Its Dead") is about the hastily-organised funeral of an unidentified man, though most of the piece is the narrator's memories, inspired by graveyards and deaths: "I found my mind taking flight, and the memories came, brought out from the computer. Filed correctly under death and graveyards. The pictures were clear and lifelike". In one of these
pictures the narrator is "back on the south coast of NSW". On a headland he comes upon "mouldering gravestones set in a carpet of green". This image begs a query about the fascination with seaside cemeteries which makes itself evident in Illawarra writing.

Charmian Clift's mentions of the Illawarra are also from an autobiographical viewpoint. Her Kiama is forever at the mercy of the fickle elements, and the sea manifests as a destructive force, as it was in early poetry. Clift reveals a disdain for local patriotic fervour and is scathing of small-town viewpoints. She sees the Illawarra as a industrial dystopia like later poets such as Conal Fitzpatrick. Juxtaposed postcard descriptions pre-empt later poetic constructions of the industrial / scenic dichotomy, while also revealing a fondness for the geographic landscape.

Along with those elements familiar through other, earlier descriptions of Kiama: the hills, the sea, in this snapshot the stone walls (which are actually neither of convict origin nor ancient), so much a part of modern Kiama's identity, make their appearance for the first time in Illawarra prose.

Because Clift was a nationally-renowned writer, the mentions of the Illawarra in her writing - brief and reluctant as they may be - contributed to a sense of Illawarra's identity by disseminating knowledge of the region throughout Australia, much as D.H. Lawrence did to his international audience.
Return to the Past

It is interesting that in 1967 Spence should return to the nineteenth century to re-present much of the material contained in the prose pieces previously covered here. The gap of 67 years, it seems, created a need for the nineteenth-century Illawarra to be reiterated to a reading audience which had forgotten the origins of its myths.

Except for obvious discrepancies such as the single-day's journey from Appin to somewhere just north of Kiama — in 1825, when the landscape was still regarded as jungle — *The Switherby Pilgrims* is an authentically-constructed story of displacement, illustrated by the thoughts of one of the orphans who make the journey from a small village in England to the fringes of the colony in New South Wales:

> No, thought Cassie, I cannot complain any longer that I am not allowed to be myself. The trouble is, I don't seem to know any more just what I am. When I worked at my lessons in Switherby, I at least knew that I was clever at book-learning. Here there are no books and no lessons, and although I'm so happy, it's rather as if I were drifting nowhere in particular. (103)

*The Switherby Pilgrims* relates a migrant experience from early in Australian colonial times, when convicts were still being transported to Port Jackson, and free settlers like Arabella Braithwaite (Missabella) in Switherby were being given land grants as incentive to live in wilderness areas such as the Illawarra. The Illawarra's status as a wilderness is illustrated by a comment from a cedar-cutter towards the end of the book:

>'If he only knew it, he'd be better off in prison than wanderin' in that scrub,' remarked Harry. 'You could be lost there for fifty years and never set eyes on a livin' soul...' (162)
The changes wrought by the industrial revolution in England are the impetus which propels Missabella and her ten orphans from certain and familiar poverty in Switherby to the uncertainty of the Colony of New South Wales. Missabella's group of children are quite aware that they are leaving behind a future in the dreaded workhouse, but their destination is frighteningly mysterious.

The description of their trip from Sydney parallels that of the Emigrant Mechanic, who was travelling through the Illawarra at about the time this story is set. There are similarities also with the sentimental journey made by E. J. Brady 92 years later, as related in 'The South Coast'. In Pilgrims the impending journey is discussed:

He suggests that we travel by coach as far as Appin, which will mean that about half of our journey will be made in fair comfort. Then he will lend us a dray and a guide to take us to the Illawarra, as apparently the track is very steep and difficult in places. (Pilgrims, 59-60)

The view from the lip of the escarpment in Pilgrims (somewhere between Bulli and Mount Keira) is also familiar in its similarities to early Illawarra prose writing, set in a similar time:

...quite suddenly the trees vanished, and the ground opened at her feet. She was gazing down a long, thickly overgrown mountainside so steep that it seemed almost a precipice. Far below, so far that she drew in her breath in disbelief, light-green patches among the prevailing dark foliage showed the presence of the cabbage-palms Phelan had described; she let her glance travel slowly away from them until she saw the pale-gold arcs of sand and the white foam, and then the immense deep blue of the sea. (84)

The pioneer ethic, so apparent in early Illawarra prose fiction and verse, is recreated in Pilgrims: "An' that's just what your farm will be — acres of trees, all waitin' to be chopped down." (84)
When the newly-settled group wants to send mail, or pick up supplies, they do so with the help of the cedar-cutters, who anchor their boats at The Five Islands or Kiarmi (Kiama). The journey of communication between the wilderness settlement and the village at Port Jackson is illustrated at the beginning of chapter 10:

Cassie's letter, after lengthy delays, finally reached Francis in Chapel Row at the end of June. It had rested awhile with other mail in the hut of one of the few settlers at the Five Islands, then been put aboard a timber-carrying vessel which travelled as far south as Shoalhaven Heads before making its laborious return journey to Sydney. (114)

The blowhole at Kiama, such a familiar icon of the south coast village in early poetry and prose about the Illawarra, appears in Pilgrims:

'One day I shall take you back to Kiarmi and show you the hole in the rocks where the water spouts up,' said Francis, his weariness slipping away now that he was among friends. 'It rushes through a sort of tunnel, and throws the spray yards into the air.' (131)

It is the blowhole which brings an end to the main antagonist Gracechurch, who has kidnapped his young son Robin and escaped into the fog along the beach at what is probably present-day Shellharbour. It is the very geographic uniqueness of the Kiama coast which brings about the narrative's resolution. Gracechurch is somehow sucked into the blowhole, while his son is saved by the pursuing cedar-cutters. One small aspect of the Illawarra landscape in this novel is instrumental in saving the day.

Spence's Jamberoo Road picks up the story of the Switherby Pilgrims five years after their arrival in the Illawarra. This sequel is not about displacement. It chronicles the gradual shift of the Switherby Pilgrims
from being immigrants who feel acutely their loss of cultural identity, to becoming Australians. More than the fact that they have superimposed a veneer of Europeanness over the landscape, they now feel a close affinity with it.

*Bass & Billy Martin* (1972) is a re-presentation of history, very much in the style of the two Spence novels from the 1960s already discussed. In *Bass & Billy Martin* the boy who accompanied Bass and Flinders when they sailed to the Illawarra in the small boat "Tom Thumb" is given a name and a fabricated history of his own, albeit taken from Bass's servant boy, who existed, and very closely connected with events as they appear in official records.

In Flinders' journal Billy Martin gets this small mention: "We called these Martin's Isles after our young companion in the boat" (Flinders, 14). The narrative of *Bass & Billy Martin*, however, is from the boy's perspective, thus rearranging the hierarchy of history. What is perhaps the most famous scene from Illawarra colonial history is enacted: Flinders trims the hair and beards of a number of the tribesmen. Each account of this constructs a different version of events. The common elements suggest that the Aborigines become aggressive when Flinders attempts to clean the water from one of his muskets, and the trio beat a hasty retreat in fear of their lives.

In an "Author's Note" at the beginning of *Bass & Billy Martin* Phipson states that "the accounts of the various voyages are taken from Bass's and Flinders' own accounts, and from Flinders' *Voyage to Terra Australis*. Flinders' journal, however, does not mention the episode with the cleaning of the musket, though the rest of his account — except for
a difference in style — is virtually identical to Phipson's, though Billy Martin is the observer in Phipson's work.

A version which belongs to local Aboriginal oral history and has never been written down, suggests that Flinders, in fact, shot one of the Aborigines. In the version of events in *Bass & Billy Martin* the explorers don't actually sail into Tom Thumb's Lagoon (or possibly present-day Lake Illawarra), instead having to retreat after replenishing their fresh water supply at a brackish waterhole. On page 89 Bass says "Did you hear, Matt, the natives call it Allowrie, or something similar?"

In Phipson's fabricated version of history, Billy Martin accompanies Bass in a later expedition, when the explorer encounters the blowhole at Kiama (not then named):

> The Thing roared again. But this time they all saw a great spurt of water shoot into the air from the very middle of the jumbled rocks. Bass and Thistle jumped back as the spouted water descended in a splatter of white foam ...

*(144)*

*The Winter Sparrows* (1975) is nostalgic re-creation of the immigrant experience during the post-World War Two period, from the late 1940s to the 1950s. It is a personal tale which attempts to illuminate some of the characters who do not people the official history books. Though there are racist episodes throughout this book, and it is a tale of displacement and hardship — not unlike *The Switherby Pilgrims* and *Jamberoo Road* in this regard — the overall tone is lighthearted, even comical. The immigrant family's entry into the Illawarra begins as their train from Sydney emerges from the railway tunnel at Stanwell Park:

> We went into a tunnel that was longer than the others and fumes came rushing in through the open windows. I licked them off my mouth, trying not to breathe and then we
were out again in the cold dusk, high above the sea, on top of a scarp that was curving round like the bend in an elbow. Down below, tucked into the curve, was a tiny village. The sea was its boundary, like the stroke of the letter d. The few houses looked private and secure, propped up against the strong back wall. (200)

In this book Wollongong is called Gullawobblong, but the description of the railway station offers a clue to its true identity:

We were in a street shaped like a bottle opener, big and round at the station end with a narrow neck leading to another street, which father said was Gullawobblong. (202)

A bus trip reveals a suburbia which has grown beyond D. H. Lawrence's tentative, clinging veneer, yet with remnant elements from the superseded pastoral scenery interjecting themselves.

The version of civilization depicted here is left over from some earlier building boom, during which the beginnings of suburbia observed by D. H. Lawrence have taken root and become decadent in their steadfast holding position between the farmlands of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the encroaching sprawl of the not-too-distant future. There is a sense of decay.

Other changes are documented. Lake Illawarra, so much a focus in earlier times — source of food and recreation — is in the process of becoming what it is today; a dead (if large) pond:

Alas, a fisherman told us, the lake was going to die one day, for a sandbank grew like a cancer across its mouth, steadily thickening and solidifying and insidiously repelling the eager tidal waters, condemning the lake to die of thirst and over-salting. (247)

At the beginning, the immigrant schoolgirl narrator sees Australian culture — as exemplified by her Illawarra experience — as "dreary"
Liverani's shorter prose piece "Letter from Wollongong", though published only four years later in 1975, is written in a very different prose style to her novel *Winter Sparrows*. This is not, in fact, a letter. It is a rambling, almost stream-of-consciousness prose, except for its sentence and paragraph breaks. Many familiar images appear: "the road and the edge of the escarpment almost converge and tip you out into the ocean"; hang gliders that "swoop like giant bats" (reminiscent of Skrzynecki's 1989 poem "The Hang Gliders"); the steelworks with their "pusseous umbrella" of pollution; the view from Bulli Tops (à la Conal Fitzpatrick and Merle Glasson): "Bet you haven't seen a view like that for ages."

The narrative mood of this piece shifts from disgust and dislike to nostalgic fondness, during which perceived industrial evil becomes tolerated eccentricities. Wollongong is compared with the surrounding country, sometimes favourably, sometimes not. Cultural evolution is noted with the appearance of an art gallery and a "new art column in the Mercury". The university is viewed through cynical eyes. The narrative becomes Italian immigrant Julian's story for a while, then rambles on to being a story about Wollongong's aged citizens. The main message, however, is about taking a trip to the country whenever Wollongong gets to you, then returning to view it in a different light.

Here is a narrator who has matured with her characters. While *The Winter Sparrows* is written in a style which could be attributed to an adolescent narrator, "Letter from Wollongong" is the voice of someone
much older, and the viewpoint offers a much more poetic and cynical response to the Illawarra. The later narrator is in transit from nostalgia for the past, to a rude awakening in the industrial dystopia of some of the later Illawarra poets. In 1970s prose the Illawarra has — like much of the rest of Australia — left behind the relative innocence of the 1950s and 1960s and is preparing to enter the 1980s, when the cynicism which can come with enlightenment is translated into an impersonal yet manic quest for capitalist fulfilment. Illawarra prose responds variously and prolifically to the not-so-Orwellian, sure-of-itself decade in which the Americanism "absolutely" becomes a catchphrase.

The link between past and present is represented in Audrey Heycox's untitled short story from 1980 which looks at an elderly tenant of a nursing home, where "each year the waiting list grew longer, names of people grown redundant in a society they had helped to create." (Untitled, 42) This is a society which is progressively more willing to relegate its elderly to the scrap heap, as "there was no room in their homes and no time in their busy lives for a frail old man." (42)

In the 1980s it is no longer 'cool' to care. There is no nostalgic representation in this story, of narratives available in more official historical documents. Untitled presents a personal nostalgia. The old man who is the central character here (and whose point of view the narrator reveals exclusively) escapes from the nursing home and heads for the beach. He thinks about his dead lover/wife, then

The sea, ever swelling towards him became her heaving breast in her dark green, lace-edged blouse. He enjoyed the sight of it for a while - then he walked into her loving arms. (44)
This story is about the relegation of people to the margins of an uncaring society which is self-obsessed. It is also about alienation and change, as well as stereotypical misrepresentation of the aged. It presents an Illawarra which is, culturally at least, becoming indistinguishable from modern Western society at large.

The style of writing in "Burrier" by Bruce Beaver (1986) is very much different to Heycox's, and also the reminiscences from The Forgotten Generation. What it has in common with both works, however, is that it also links the present of the 1980s to the (this time colonial) past. This time it is generational bonds which strengthen the connection, in an almost stream-of-consciousness prose which imparts the narrator's urgent outburst of nostalgic childhood memories upon visiting his family's farm at Burrier. Images flow so immediately behind one another that they often meld or become a confused cacophony, thereby emulating memory. There is a sense of the pioneer tradition, a long association with the land which is the narrator's legacy: "The one remaining family, first there, last to leave". Unlike in the Illawarra of nineteenth-century poetry, this place has changed markedly in the thirty years the narrator has been away. Burrier, once famous for its dairy produce, is now the site of sand mining operations. The nineteenth-century pastoral version of progress has evolved — by economic necessity — into industrial pillage of the landscape. The present intrudes ("too late, for now has broken in") and the momentum of nostalgia is lost.

In her short prose piece "Austinmer", Olga Masters also offers connections with the past. Written as part of a series of sketches by well-known writers of their places of abode, "Austinmer" is a highly
personal and personalised view of the writer's home town. In a second-person address to the reader, the narrator transports us to an earlier time inspired by a row of old dressing sheds "still there like the wing of a family home no-one has the heart to pull down although the children have all gone". Men's and women's bathing fashions (dictated by law) are described in a hypothetical meeting outside the sheds, not as nostalgia but to point out the eccentricities of present-day Austinmer bathers. Referring to the now-ridiculous earlier bathing apparel and formal manners, the narrator offers a gently ironic postscript: "You could carry on that way today. No-one would take any notice".

James Henry Sturgiss's collection of tales, *The Man from the Misty Mountains*, offers a version of the Australian male which is similar to that in *You Can't Come Back*. This book also links the 1980s with Illawarra's colonial pioneering past, through the author himself, as well as the characters he meets. In the preamble "Historical Background" at the beginning of this book, Bob Snedden states "his great-grandfather and grandfather had witnessed the use of convict labour and he himself saw the demise of the last tribal Aborigines of the region." (vi)

Though the Austlit database lists only one chapter from this book — "The Alleys" — as being Illawarra-related, the whole book is, in fact, a series of anecdotes and reminiscences set in the vicinity of the Budawang Range, east of Ulladulla. The book is peppered with pieces of verse inspired by the prose which accompanies them. The narrator is 93 years old when he relates the tales in 1983, and many of the characters are elderly people he met or heard about in his youth. This means that much of the narrative connects us to first-hand accounts of
pioneering times in the Illawarra. This is a proudly politically incorrect pioneer's viewpoint of the European settlement of the area. In the "Foreword" Sturgiss admits the fictive nature of reminiscence: "Looking back we re-create a picture of lost and cherished illusions, rather than actual realities." The schizoid nature of the pioneering ethic — so obvious in nineteenth-century Illawarra poetry and travel writing — is here reiterated by the narrator's awe-filled descriptions of the landscape on the one hand, and his insistence upon the necessity of progress on the other. In Chapter 19, "The Shoalhaven", after a lengthy description of the river's diverse environs, he states: "A wild, untamed, aquatic brumby, the Shoalhaven has never bowed to the will of Man, or accepted his restraint, until the day before yesterday, when plans were made for its subjugation and captivity ... like many other greater and wilder stream, the Shoalhaven must ultimately accept restraint and diversion to the will and need of man. This is following a world-wide pattern." Similarly throughout the book, the narrator is an apologist for the proto-industrialists who harvested the giant Illawarra forests and farmed or mined the land. The book is filled with characters of super-human strength, endurance and ingenuity.

Bruce Beaver's short novel You Can't Come Back taps into the same stereotypical image of the contemporary Australian male as Sturgiss, versions of which have existed since the nineteenth century. This very short novel is set in Clifton, and is about a group of railway workers who are constantly either drunk or in the process of drinking away a hangover. Bernie the narrator describes the characters' existence in his typical ockeresquely poetic way as "thriving to death on a diet of bull-dust and beer". His narration becomes more bizarre the drunker he gets. Bernie meets Jean and immediately falls in love. Jean, who is
Indian, induces some alcohol-addled philosophies about multiculturalism in Bernie, whose simplistic yet condescendingly sympathetic viewpoint can be seen as a metaphor for the Euro-Australian's position on race: "Still, I did seem able to get on with Abos ... Maybe it was because I never argued the toss with them. If they said 'It's our country, isn't it? We were here first, weren't we?' I'd just say 'Sure, sure' and leave it at that. I don't think we're the same inside and we're certainly different outside, but we've got a lot in common, and God only knows who's the better man, because I don't. Put it this way, we look and act differently but, for better or worse, beer tastes the same to us". Clifton seems to be full of pubs which are always filled. The Illawarra is seen as a hopelessly rural civilization hanging on only by its fingertips. Statements like "a cow was just as likely to come out from between two houses as a dog or a sort" hark back to the 1904 poem "A Gong Jingle" by Willum Shakspear.

Anne Brooksbank fictionalizes history, once again — much as Eleanor Spence and Joan Phipson did in the 1960s and 1970s — in her 1985 novel Archer, about the first horse to win the Melbourne Cup. Here is a monumental story — based on actuality — of Dave Cutts, a young strapper working on a property in the Illawarra, who rides the racehorse Archer overland to compete in the first Melbourne Cup at Flemington racetrack on Tuesday, 7 November 1861. The reader is reminded of how much has changed since 1861, when Dave is warned about the dangers of bushrangers and Aborigines: "'You know what they do, don't you?' said the boy. 'They sneak up on you in the dark and run a spear through you, then they eat your kidney fat ... it gives them the power of their enemy'." The Illawarra is connected to the bigger picture of History, as it was through D. H. Lawrence some 60 years later.
A piece by Garry Griffith, which appears in The Anthology of the Illawarra as "Memories of Old Illawarra — 4, 'Pig Iron Bob' and the Dalfram Dispute", is not, in fact, a memory of old Illawarra as suggested in its title in this publication. The fact that this is an excerpt from a BA (Hons) thesis is evident. In fairly matter-of-fact language it discloses to a new generation the history behind the famous nickname for Robert Menzies — Pig Iron Bob. The Port Kembla steelworks figures prominently, and the reputation of the Illawarra as an industrial stronghold is reinforced.

Contemporary Issues

"Blood Is Thicker" (1984), a short story by locally-based crime writer Peter Corris, weaves numerous elements from contemporary Illawarra society into a murder mystery. Like much of the private eye genre, this tale is full of intrigue and violence. Corris' hero from many of his other stories — Cliff Hardy — is employed to find a dying man's missing son. The search takes Hardy to Wollongong where he becomes embroiled in industrial espionage. Wollongong is painted as an industrial powderkeg: "Do you know anything about the mines in this neck of the woods, Cliff ... they're basic to the character of the place ... there's a strong democratic spirit around here, the miners keep it alive ..." The big coal mining companies are the villains who are ready to exploit their employees and shirk their environmental responsibilities without a second thought. Connections with Conal Fitzpatrick's viewpoint of industrialism are easy to make. This is an Illawarra overrun by tourists, yet with pockets of sanctuary still detectable: "Packed in between the sea and the scarp on which the land slips so that people can't hang their timber and glass fantasies off it, the coal towns don't seem to have
changed much in the past twenty years". Danger from the environment — in the form of escarpment land slippages — is still apparent as it was in the nineteenth century, but here it merely fuels the narrator's cynicism about the bourgeoisie.

Jean Bedford's 1994 novel *To Make a Killing* incorporates many aspects of modern-day Illawarra, to build a crime thriller which belongs very much in the private investigator genre in which her husband Peter Corris is so prolific. This novel involves shady real estate dealings, corrupt local politicians, environmentalist saboteurs, a feud between conservationists and developers over a proposed marina in the Nowra area and the obligatory murder.

Female private investigator Anna Southwood is hired to look into the murder of an environmentalist who "had been found dead at the bottom of a dangerous cliff walk on the Shoalhaven River." (2) Anna Southwood, the first-person narrator, has obvious conservationist leanings:

I imagined nineteenth-century British immigrants chopping down the gums and planting windbreaks of pines, and then, given the old brick silos that still dotted the landscape, presumably planting wheat like mad. Now the cattle were grazing away what goodness was left and the native trees were dying. (10-11)

The industrial activity of earlier, colonial times is still apparent, as it is in Bruce Beaver's "Burrier" in the 1980s. There is the sense that there was an attempt to industrialize the area around the Shoalhaven River, but interest shifted elsewhere — Port Kembla, perhaps — and what remains is only remnant evidence of industrial glory. In chapter 4 of *To
Make a Killing there is a detailed description of the Shoalhaven River, from a boat on the water sailing inland:

As we got away from town the cliffs grew taller on each side, with fantastic rock formations and caves and gnarled trees twisting precariously into small pockets of soil or wherever they could find a crack. (31)

The Illawarra, for the rest of this novel, acts as a metaphor for defiled paradise; a formerly-pristine wilderness in which the prime coastal spots are overtaken by caravan parks from some former, gaudy, decadent, tourist era. It is one feature of the Illawarra not mentioned by any of the other writers I discuss in this thesis.

There are small glimpses of the Illawarra in Libby Gleeson's children's novel Skating on Sand, written in the pared-back, basic English which adults think is all children can grasp. Hannah and her family go on a holiday to Jervis Bay and Hannah insists on wearing her roller skates throughout the excursion. The family's entry into the Illawarra from suburban Sydney is probably down Victoria Pass west of Jervis Bay. There are many similarities with the Bulli Pass descent: "Giant gums, their trunks lost far below in ferns and shrubs"; "The road bends, steeper and steeper, tighter and tighter corners. Suddenly it straightens and flattens, the view widens to open grassland, fat black cows and the sea"; "They watch the water, staring out to the point where the blue-white of the sky and blue-green of the sea meet". They traverse a rural panorama "Past houses and farms, through small dairy villages, across wide full rivers". Their camping area seems unspoilt by tourism trappings. After the holiday, during which Hannah learns to skate despite the innapropriate environment, there is the inevitable "climb from the coast up the steep escarpment" to leave the Illawarra.
There are numerous other modern prose pieces which could also be categorised under contemporary issues, though their viewpoints are highly individual and without connections to those I have looked at here.

**Multicultural Illawarra**

The Illawarra’s reputation as a multicultural haven is deconstructed in "The Woman from Wollongong," one of a collection of stories centred around the Moree Hot Baths, written by Zeny Giles and published in 1989. The first-person narrator compares inland Moree and nearby Inverell with the Illawarra: "Fancy being here at Christmas. It was bad enough in Inverell in the summer; you can’t beat the coast for the southerly busters." (99) Her viewpoint of the world is simplistic, her language that of the bumpkin. The conglomeration of ethnicities at the Baths inspires her to articulate the Illawarra’s multiculturalism — "I don’t mind foreigners — we’ve got a lot of them in Wollongong. They come because of the steelworks" — and taps into racist myths: "Billy, our other son, said that the Macedonians were buying up so much property all over Wollongong, someone ought to put a stop to it." She becomes a mouthpiece for often opposing elements of migrant stereotyping: "He tells us he’s got a friend who’s renting a house and the Macedonian landlord won’t spend anything on repairs"; "Work! You’ve never seen people work like that. Their fruit shop’s open seven days a week."

**The Lawrence Myth in Prose**

Gail Bell’s 1991 short prose piece "Thirroul" belongs in the myth-of-Lawrence-at-Thirroul sub-genre. The seaside cottage described in "Thirroul" could very well be *Wyewurk*, the house in which the
Lawrences stayed in 1922. The back yard is an exact replica: "falling away gradually, then slipping suddenly, steeply into the sea", except this is not 1922. It is 1970 and the Lawrences are not mentioned, certainly not by name. Nor is the house identified. An inference is here, however, in the beginnings of a spat between a wife and her husband, newly-married yet somehow infected by the arguments from 50 years earlier. As in the Lawrences' time, this coastal spot is witness to the fury of the elements. The ocean is rough, a heavy wind is blowing, and it is raining heavily. It is as if the weather effects the occupants of the house, in 1922 and — as a consequence — in 1970 as well.

"Thirroul" is offering a dual retrospective of the seaside cottage and the coastal Illawarra village/suburb, as if D.H. Lawrence's occupancy is superimposed upon the present — whether it be in the 1970s or in 1991. It is ironic that texts such as this short prose piece are what make the continuing superimposition possible.

Margaret Barbalet's 1988 novel *Steel Beach* cleverly buys into the myth-making which has built up around D.H. Lawrence's stay in Thirroul and his writing of the novel *Kangaroo* (qv). Jeff Casswell is writing a book about D.H. Lawrence. He rents a house a mile away from "Wyewurk" for the task and the inspiration. He compares present-day Thirroul (1988) with Lawrence's descriptions in *Kangaroo*: "What a mess the whole town looked! Lawrence would have hated this valley, seen it as just wreckage, a slew of ugly houses, far uglier than the ones he had known". Casswell goes looking for the actuality which backgrounds the Lawrence myth and turns up little gems: "An historian had interviewed an old man who had been a delivery boy in Thirroul in 1922. He had gone up to the gate of Wyewurk and then gone away again frightened
by the shouting voices within". In some literary wishful thinking, the novel provides a few fictional missing pieces in the Lawrence-in-Australia jig saw. There is a secret dalliance between Lawrence and a local woman, discovered through some lost pages of the original handwritten *Kangaroo* manuscript. There is a son and a grandson of Lawrence's, still living in Thirroul. Towards the end of the book Jeff Casswell is given some ageing pages torn from a notebook. They contain some prose written in D.H. Lawrence's hand, which fit neatly into the published versions of *Kangaroo* immediately after the first paragraph of Chapter 10, with occasional identical passages to strengthen the connection: Thirroul in *Steel Beach* is barely recogniseable as the landscape from *Kangaroo*. The headland is now overrun with the sprawl of suburbia.

Richard Hall's "Australian-American Collaboration in the Fight Against World Terrorism" (1991) also participates in the Lawrence-at-Thirroul mythmaking, though to a lesser degree. Told in the drone-like first person narrative of television detective fiction, this nevertheless intelligent tale is set mainly in D.H. Lawrence country — Thirroul. It is a cynical portrayal of international espionage and, like much post-1922 fiction involving Thirroul, offers a connection to Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo*. The Narrator, reading from a supposed FBI file, offers a geographical and political description of the Illawarra. This file's geographical version of the Illawarra "extend[s] from a buffer national park south of Sydney for about fifty miles to the Shoalhaven River", while the political version is "Socialist (ALP Left), as well as a strong Trotskyite influence in the trade unions". The nineteenth century notion of Wollongong as the capital of the middle of nowhere lingers. Its isolation from the centre (Sydney) is reinforced by such statements
as "Wollongong, steel city, was not exactly on the tourist beat" and "there are only two roads into Wollongong from the north, the coastal or the escarpment road". There are some detailed descriptions of "the tangled forest country along the foot of the escarpment" near Thirroul which conjure up Lawrence's backdrop for much of Kangaroo. It is obvious that Hall knows the northern suburbs of Wollongong well.

Rick Fennely's novel Sly belongs in all of the above categories. It is the ultimate fictionalisation of the Illawarra, offering a story of a boyhood friendship throughout the 1960 and 70s as well as a parallel history of European settlement of the region, reconstructed through the generational story of the Fox family, and a history of the Aboriginal encounters with Europeans, presented through the stories of Wadi Wadi elder Jurunga and The Fox Testament, a diary kept by generations of the Fox family. Sly presents just about everything which makes the Illawarra identifiable. Hang gliding from Bald Hill and surfing are integral to the plot and the endings (there are at least two); the narrator emerges from the smoke-filled railway tunnel to take his first glimpse of the region; industrialisation is shown via Port Kembla Steelworks and the various coalmines, as well as activism through various strikes and demonstrations; early whaling at Bulli is part of Jurunga's story; there is even a connection to Lawrence Hargrave's experiments with flight through Daddy Fox's fascination with box kites. The saga comes full circle with land claims being made by modern descendents of the Wadi Wadi. Many of the cultural, geographic and historic elements which are uniquely Illawarra-based appear in modern Illawarra prose. This makes the genre particularly instrumental in the construction of Illawarra's literary identity.
Illawarra Scripts

I encountered some difficulties in retrieving scripts which deal overtly with the Illawarra, and I acknowledge that there are probably many I have missed. In publicity for the Roo Theatre, for instance, comment is made about this theatre company starting up in the 1980s after a break in the region of eight years. I have been unable, however, to uncover anything about the activities of earlier local theatre companies. An opportunity exists in this area for further research. The archiving of scripts, I have discovered, is haphazard and unorganised. I was unable to directly view many of the Roo Theatre scripts, and so have relied upon press reviews for dramatic content. This is not a very reliable way of analysing a text, I admit, but necessary in this instance.

A Multicultural Illawarra in Scripts

I have retrieved two radio plays, seven musicals and seventeen drama scripts with which to work, and from them a multicultural Illawarra emerges very clearly.

The late Blagoja Neskovski's three Macedonian plays — *Full House*, *Say Goodbye to the Past* and *Conqueror Cole* — are written from the author's uniquely-sympathetic viewpoint as a young Macedonian immigrant who grew up in Australia. The title of *Full House* refers to both the boarding house where the action takes place, and the obsessive card playing of the boarding house's Macedonian tenants. The main concern of the play (to take a phrase from the "Biography" which precedes it) is "the struggle and cultural conrontations" of these tenants, most of whom work at some time at "Steelwork". All of them drink heavily and gamble for high stakes. Alcohol becomes a metaphor for cultural degradation, while at the same time symbolising the aridity
of Australian working-class culture (much as it does in Bruce Beaver's "You Can't Come Back"). This version of the play is in English (Neskovski wrote his plays in both English and Macedonian). It is a stylized creole which buys into the stereotyping of the "wog" and serves to illustrate further the chasm of cultural misunderstanding which lies between the Australian and Macedonian peoples. It is interesting to ponder on how this 'accent' in English would be dealt with (if at all) in the Macedonian version of the play. Family ties are the most powerful force in this play, and account for all the characters' obsession with making money. Each of them sends money home to assist poor relatives. The gambling is meant to help this process; the alcohol threatens to destroy it. By the end of the play Rade — a central character — has gambled all of his savings away, put another character in a coma after a drunken fight, lost his job at "Steelwork" and suffered some form of mental collapse. The power of family is demonstrated in the play's final scene, when Rade's mother appears, after selling the prized family sheep to pay her fare to Australia because Rade has not written regularly. Rade is overcome with shame, and finally "Rade has a mental attack and starts struggling with Nikola even more furiously ... At the end of it, Rade is on the ground in a catatonic state, looking like a human vegetable". The Macedonian sense of duty to family and the degrading influence of Australian culture play out a battle within Rade which neither side wins. Only the venue/host is destroyed. The battle goes on elsewhere in this despondent indictment of multicultural Illawarra which promises money in return for hard work, but offers no cultural support.

*Say Goodbye to the Past* is about cultural displacement and the power of language as a weapon of alienation. The main protagonist Ilinka —
an ageing Macedonian widow living in Warrawong — at one point explains her predicament metaphorically: "My tongue has been cut out". Her frustration is acute. After coming out of hospital she explains "I just wish I could speak the language! I like to tell the doctors what's eating my soul, with my own mouth". What is ailing her might not be easy for her to articulate for other reasons. Throughout the play Ilinka converses with her dead husband Dimce. Indeed, Dimce appears on stage often, and it is not until Scene 5 (of 7) that we realise Ilinka is fantasticising. As in Neskovski's Full House the importance of family is highlighted. In Say Goodbye to the Past Ilinka's growing insanity has her alternately rejecting family members and complaining because nobody visits her. Ilinka's children have all married and moved away, forsaking Macedonian tradition in the process. In the final scene Ilinka decides to move back to the "old land", but her husband appears and coaxes her to go with him, into death. Even at this penultimate moment, family ties dominate. Ilinka's last words are "I should have said goodbye to the kids".

Conqueror Cole is about the rorting of Australia's compensation laws. But it is also about cultural displacement and the tendency for expatriate groups to enshrine and perpetuate outmoded cultural elements. In Scene 4, one of the characters (Alex) puts it succinctly: "Back in Macedonia — this guy was telling me — they're so up with the times. Like you're in Paris, he said. All the young girls have boyfriends. The boys pick them up from home — you should have heard what he was saying. But you can't do that here, you'll cop a beating and get tossed out". The main plot streams are interwoven. It takes Cole's compensation payout to get him in the position to visit Macedonia, and when he does he is treated like a foreigner. The Macedonia he left
no longer exists. He has been unable to progress with the modern Macedonia. He is thus an outsider; displaced in time more so than in location. There is much more reliance upon the subleties of character interaction in *Conqueror Cole* than in Neskovski's two earlier plays. It is hard not to be sympathetic towards Cole, even when it seems he is being grossly dishonest. The play appeals to the anarchist in us all, who delights in seeing the bourgeoisie undermined.

The theme of exploitation of immigrant workers which underscores Neskovski's works is touched upon in Wendy Richardson's *Windy Gully*, though in Richardson's play it is Scottish coalminers in the late nineteenth century who serve to illustrate the exploitative tactics of Illawarra industrialists. In Act II, Scene 1, the comment "It's the poor coots they brought out from Scotland and promised 12/- to 14/- a day I feel for" offers historical precedent for the exploitation which Neskovski focusses upon.

In Polish-Australian author Paul Rybak's radio play *Mitten Hill* the main character Olive May Belgrove has a nervous breakdown and spends some time in an institution. "When I left the madhouse," she explains, "I returned to great change. There was an influx of migrants from Europe and the city took on a cosmopolitan feel." The stereotypical indicators of ethnicity were what Olive May Belgrove noticed first: "The food was different, people spoke different languages and I heard new music." Olive May's reaction to the post World War Two wave of immigration was positive: "I felt a hell of a lot better." She becomes good friends with a Polish piano teacher named Ludmilla. A succinct summary of the plight of some immigrant workers is presented: "She lived with her husband Stefan who worked at the
steelworks as a welder even though he was a qualified architect. In those days foreign qualifications weren't recognised."

Rybak's script is organised around the reminiscences of Olive May Sotheran, and her Anglo-Australian perspective — devoid as it is of any racist connotations — is a valuable element of the Illawarra multicultural position. In Wendy Richardson's *That Christmas of 75*, Rybak's view of a tolerant, accepting Anglo population is reiterated. The Anglo Anderson family are surrounded by immigrants. On one side of their suburban Wollongong home is the Papadopolous family, and on the other the Rossettis, with the British Websters at the back. The Andersons' attitudes towards this diverse array of neighbours is also devoid of any racist connotations. Certainly, the play foregrounds some indicators of ethnicity, but these are embraced as acceptable eccentricities. Without the audience ever seeing it, a vivid picture of the Rossetti yard is painted. In Act 1, Scene 2, Thelma Anderson says "I'm going into Rossetti's if I can get past their Alsatian. They've got that fountain out the front. He likes fountains", and in Act 1, Scene 3: "The Greeks know all about sculpture." In the same scene Stamatina Papadopolous enlightens us a little about the feelings of displacement felt by our immigrant population, and the importance of cultural artifacts: "He will be making a little of the old country to remind him," in reference to Stravros Papadopolous' fountains, sculptures and grapevines.

Playwright Peter Copeman, too, is Anglo-Australian. Long before I saw a performance of his play *Hearts and Minds*, (1992) Copeman told me he wanted his play to be about the Vietnam war from the point of view of its victims, not a celebration of male Anglo-Australian heroism, as so
many other treatments of it have been. The fact that he has succeeded is a credit to his breadth of research and depth of understanding of the dramatic possibilities inherent in Australia's Vietnam War legacy. For both Nguyen Au Phuong, the refugee, and Skip Ordman, the combat veteran, the war is not over. They are its direct victims while their families are victims of their suppressed burdens. For Phuong the burden is the blame she places upon herself for her husband's death during their desperate flight from the communist regime. For Skip, it is the guilt he has harboured for twenty years over his friend's death in the Vietnam conflict. This play is as much about the drama created when Skip's son Donny falls in love with Phuong's daughter Mai, as it is about the clash of cultures felt acutely by the children of migrants growing up as first generation Australians. *Hearts and Minds* confronts many of the untouched issues of an Illawarra which has yet to come to terms with its multicultural identity. The typical Australian, Skip, presented by this play is born and raised in Wollongong.

In Wendy Richardson's *Lights Out Nellie Martin*, a collision between Australia's early multicultural aspirations and its ingrained xenophobia is highlighted. At the beginning of Act 1, Scene 2 a radio announcer defines the official internment policy and its effects on grassroots Australia:

> Under the National Security Act, arrest and subsequent internment of aliens, that is German- and Italian-born people living in Australia, began in the early hours of Monday morning. The movement of Wanted Persons had been checked carefully for some time before the orders were given for their round-up. An elaborate system of watchers and telephone posts was designed to keep the authorities informed of any suspicious movements among aliens ... Moving scenes were witnessed in the night and early dawn as men were ordered to leave their families and accompany the police ... (22)
In the rest of the scene an Italian Mother, Italian Wife and Italian Sister from Wollongong voice their disillusionment, and the notion of the Illawarra as a site of racial tolerance is challenged.

Barbara, the central character in Katherine Thomson's *Diving for Pearls*, is initially presented as a loveable rogue, someone the audience can sympathise with, even when she is sprouting irreverent and politically-incorrect statements about multicultural Illawarra. In Act 1, Scene 1 her architectural opinions are laced with racism: "Why that church? Very woggy if you ask me. Couldn't be woggier if they tried." (3) This and other racist comments peppered throughout the script help to construct a xenophobic who by the end of the play has lost the audience's sympathies and become the main antagonist. This is the Illawarra's identity as a multicultural haven being challenged in a different way, from a closely-focussed view of a working-class citizen unable to accept difference. Other comments by various characters in this play reinforce this. In Act 1, Scene 4 Neskovski's ideas about the power of language are reiterated: "I mean, you didn't have to stay being a labourer, a T.A. You speak English for one thing," (16) and in Act 2, Scene 5 Barbara trivializes cultural difference with the use of stereotyping. Commenting on a string of flashing lights at a backyard party she says "Looks like every Maltese wedding I've never been to," a statement which also serves to illustrate how uninformed xenophobic opinion can be. In stage directions at the end of Act 1, Scene 2 the script reveals the cultural influence of immigrants: "There are sounds of various radio stations (one classical, one Macedonian)."
In Roo Theatre's 1988 musical *Quarry* there is an Italian character called Johnny, who falls in love with Mary, a quarryman's daughter. He voices an element of his stereotyping (the hot-blooded latin lover) when he says "I know you think Italians only want one thing." (8) Class is played off against ethnicity in this exchange:

Mother: Oh, he's alright now is he? I seem to remember when he first came he was "The Itie" — the garlic eater — butt of all the men's jokes. Now it's alright for him to marry your daughter.

Father: He's a good worker, he won't fill her head with fancy ideas.

Mother: Like eating salami sausage.

The cultural displacement felt by the Irish mining families is expressed in the song "Past Present and Future":

People born here  
Can never understand  
Us who came from another land  
That your heart is torn in two (16)

In the *Kiama Independent* of 15 June, 1988 the Roo Theatre production of *It's a Long Way Back* is described as "a show that dealt in a moving and humorous way with a variety of migrant experiences, including displaced persons from war-torn Europe, those who came seeking prosperity and refugees who were forced from their homeland."

In *Vroom Vroom*, which parallels the life of champion motorcyclist Wayne Gardner, the main protagonist Warren has an Italian friend called Mario, who is seen by Warren's parents as a negative influence with his womanising and devotion to surfing. Mario is known as "Fruitshop", and the stereotyping is reinforced in Act 1, Scene 1 when
Warren's mother says "Look, Warren, Mario's a nice boy — and Mr Menotti's worked hard to buy that fruitshop ... I won't begrudge him that."

The villain in this piece is Warren's manager Craig, who during an argument in Act 1, Scene 6 says to Mario "No cheek from you, you little reffo" and "You shut up, you greasy little dago." Craig's character is transparent and shallow and his disapproval of Mario is obvious throughout the play. In Act 1, Scene 2, when Mario displays his chauvinistic attitudes to women, as well as his sexual prowess ("all night ... amore, amore, amore!!!"), Warren responds with an affectionate "Jeez, you're a dago." Mario, however, challenges the stereotyping with "True blue, mate. True blue Aussie."

Characters and events from History

Wendy Richardson's first play Windy Gully is a re-creation of events which led up to the Mount Kembla mining disaster of 1902, offering the stories of the relatives of those who died. There is a chronological reordering which helps to ironically connect otherwise disparate events. Fate is a dominant motif and omens are presented as indicators of this. For example, in Act 1, Scene 4:

ANDY: Saw a blower in the pit today. Big one. Kind of scared me. Makes you think doesn’t it? We burnt out the gas and shifted the lattice. There's always been blowers in the pit. Makes you think.

In Act 1, Scene 7 on the evening before the disaster in which Andy dies, Andy's wife Hannah sings a traditional mining song to their child:

HANNAH: They'll carry your daddy, all broken and bleeding,
They'll carry your daddy and bury him near.
Don't dream of the pit, it's a lifetime of sorrow,
Don't dream of the pit, it's a lifetime of fear.

Much as in Greek tragedy, the plot outcome is already determined by history and cannot be changed. The interest is in the irony of events and the history of industrial disputes and nineteenth-century work practices. Mr Ebenezer Vickery, one of the mine's owners, represents the early capitalist/industrialists whose cost-cutting policies, this play suggests, were responsible for the mining disaster.

In the Roo Theatre's musical Quarry a similar disaster at the Eureka quarry (as reported in the Kiama Independent of 29 May, 1912) is chronicled. An inquest is held and a Ganger Eyles is blamed. He commits suicide. A relief fund is organised, and a petition is sent to the Premier asking for a reform of quarry safety regulations.

Wendy Richardson's Lights Out Nellie Martin and Chris Mansell's Some Sunny Day are set in World War Two, as is Vanessa Badham's Undiscovered Country, and Michael Smart's Diggers Darling. In Richardson's play the Illawarra is a backdrop for a set of universal images of the War, in this case connected with the women who stayed at home, while in Mansell's play the Illawarra landscape plays an important role.

Scene 2 of Some Sunny Day is about a plane full of American troops which crashes into a mountain "there at Foxground". The Illawarra landscape is hostile to the unwary: "There was sort of a low flat cloud on top of it. Because they weren't locals — locals would have known, locals would never have done it — because they weren't locals they
thought that they could sail phew! straight through the cloud and out the other side, but they didn't." (10) Similarly in Scene 13 there is a description of a ship full of American troops foundering at Bass Point: "We don't know how long we'll have these extra young American men — some are in Kiama Hospital." (40) There is mention of the steelworks at Port Kembla as a military target, as well as a planned evacuation of cattle "up Hoddle's Track" (up the face of the escarpment) to Barren Ground in the event of military action on the coast: "The government's got a scorched earth policy but I tell you what, nobody on these farms would want to do it. Some of these people have been on this patch of dirt for generations." (43) In Scene 14 there are rumours about a Japanese submarine sailing into Kiama's small harbour under cover of night "getting water or provisions". History is challenged: "If the Japs could bring a sub into Kiama — cool as you like — what else was there that we didn't know about?" (42) One of the characters offers up another military secret: "One night I tracked a Japanese reconnaissance plane as it swept the coast". (43)

The same incident, or similar, is reported in *Lights Out Nellie Martin* by a radio announcer: "An unidentified plane has been sighted over Port Kembla ... Citizens are urged to stay calm ... stay indoors." (66)

In Richardson's play the geographical location only appears in detail in the setting description at the beginning of Act 1: "Built early in the century, NELLIE MARTIN's weatherboard house stands on Cliff Road overlooking Belmore Basin, the lighthouse, the steelworks to the south and Bulli to the north." (18) Other brief mentions of the Illawarra appear as reminders of the location. In Act 1, Scene 9 Nellie reminisces: "When I was very small I used to think that rainbows were like bridges
and once you set out you could leave our valley and finish up behind the mountain range that was so far away”; Port Kembla is mentioned as a possible military target in Act 1, Scene 10 (49); Crown Street Wollongong is mentioned in Act 2, Scene 4 in relation to US troops harassing Australian women (“She was crossing Crown Street and the wind blew her dress up a bit at the back and this Yank coming behind whistles”); the radio announcer mentions location in a warning about air raid safety (“All responsible citizens of Wollongong will have provided themselves with a place of shelter should we sustain an enemy attack by air”); but *Lights Out Nellie Martin* serves more to illustrate the universalizing influence of World War Two, and how it created something akin to true socialism. As for a literary identity of the Illawarra, it is found in this play in the characters, and in the sense that the region was both susceptible to attack and a line of defence because of its length of coastline so close to Sydney. Regional identity during this particular conflict was subsumed by more pressing concerns.

*Undiscovered Country*, like *Lights Out Nellie Martin*, is about the people who stayed at home during World War Two. Badham’s play, however, highlights the strategies employed by those who chose to avoid military service amid an overwhelming climate of patriotism. It is also about the manipulation of women workers by industrialists who were confident they could exploit people while attention was elsewhere. The identity of the Illawarra as a site of industrial militance and a focus for workers’ rights, so evident in modern Illawarra prose and verse, is reinforced here.
Similarly, *Diggers Darling* looks at the conditions of women workers who were employed to manufacture the Owen Gun, invented by a local man, and issues about the place of women in wartime Australia are predominant.

Many issues about worker redundancy and exploitation of the workforce are also looked at in Wendy Richardson’s *Slacky Flat*. The action of this play takes place during the Great Depression, with families evicted and camps being set up for the consequent homeless. People steal live poultry to eat, and Railway Police guards are engaged to stop mass fare evasion on trains as the population moves around looking for work. The point is, people are destitute because the system has failed, but government policy deals only with the symptoms. Bureaucracy is the main antagonist. Desperate measures are employed by the characters in order to survive, for example the character Jack’s highly-suspect money-making schemes always seem to get him in trouble with the law. The exploitative ballroom dancing competition scene (reminiscent of the film *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?*) as well as the boxing and medicine man scenes highlight how hungry people were taken advantage of. In the boxing scene JACK is paid a paltry amount of money to be beaten black and blue by the supposed champion boxer in a travelling sideshow, while in the medicine man scene JACK is meant to act as a stooge in the audience and pretend to buy some of the medicine man’s wares.

Roo Theatre’s *Kemira! Sit-In* is, according to the *Illawarra Mercury* of 24 September 1993, “based on the mining dispute that rocked Wollongong in October 1982.” The same article describes the actual event:
The Kemira sit-in was devised by miners upset by massive industry retrenchments in 1982. One night 32 miners stole quietly into the mine and set up camp for 16 days, sparking a hostile protest outside Parliament House in Canberra to emphasise the desperation of the retrenched workers.

The Illawarra Mercury of 6 October, 1993 offered more details of the actual events surrounding the strike:

The miners united the Illawarra by their actions with miners, steelworkers, unions, shopkeepers and others in the community rallying behind them in protest at massive job losses in the industry.

There is a pronounced politically-aware treatment of the Illawarra in these plays, something not so prominent in other genres except for later poetry. This is perhaps because of theatre's traditional role in the Illawarra as the medium of the working class. Theatre companies such as Theatre South have fostered this role.

In a local newspaper article (no publication details available), the Roo Theatre’s production of Gordon Streek’s musical We Shall Work, We Shall Live is described as “a celebration of the pioneers: the story of our past. Its characters are cedar cutters who opened up the Kiama-Jamberoo area, farmers, quarrymen, convicts, personalities straight from pioneer times. All had to struggle to survive.” We Shall Work, We Shall Live Two continues the story from the end of the Great War where the first play left off, and according to press clippings includes the effects of the Great Depression on the people of the Illawarra, as well as an affectionate look at the youth cultures of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. According to the Kiama Independent of 21 September, 1988, We Shall
Work, We Shall Live Two shows "the arrival of such inventions as the Charleston, telephone, electricity and artificial insemination."

The local press describes Streek's Chisholm's Women as "the story of the 23 families colonial philanthropist Caroline Chisholm brought to Shellharbour in 1843 to help open up what was then a wild and undeveloped area ... It is a story of bravery amid hardship, courage amid despair." (Illawarra Mercury, 15 May, 1997) There are similarities with Eleanor Spence's novel Switherby Pilgrims:

Local landowner Robert Towns gave Mrs Chisholm a lease on 2000 acres to settle the families. In return they were expected to clear it and make it suitable for farming. Conditions were extremely primitive, with the families housed in tents while they hacked away at the dense bush. But against the odds, the plan worked. Within a year a school had been opened, thanks to Robert Towns, and the township of Shellharbour was taking shape (no publication details available).

The Illawarra's pioneering past is evoked, and also its status as a wilderness, with all the associated hardships that entails.

The musical Wonderful Wollongong is described in its opening song "Masters of Ceremonies — Patter Song" as a journey "through history in song, dance and rhyme" (3) It is a melodrama/pantomime with all the deliberate elements of villain, heroine (two in this case), rescuing hero and many moments of self-referential humour which take the actors out of character to comment on the script and story itself. The lighthearted musical frolic is, however, centred around some serious incidents from history.
The two convict heroines Mary Mulvaney and Norah Malone are wrongfully accused of a man’s murder. There is a strong message here about the lack of rights for women and convicts in Australia’s colonial society. The two heroines are rescued from execution by Bulli Jack the bushranger, and the dramatic scenario of the escapees on the run in the Illawarra wilderness is connected to real history at the beginning of Act 2 with an aside from the NARRATOR about a person called Convict Twenty:

One night in 1821, Convict Twenty cut through his leg-irons with a saw-tooth bayonet and escaped to the mountains. How he lived, or even how long he lived there, we don’t know. More than fifty years later a skeleton was found, lying next to a campfire made with the surface coal of Mount Keira. Convict Twenty was the first to find it useful. (28-29, researched by Anne Lear)

As in some of the early Illawarra prose and later prose and verse which seeks to recreate the past, the dubious character of the cedar-getters is hinted at. In Act 2, Scene 8 Jenny Smith “one of ten free women in the Illawarra of marriageable age” (1) rushes on and announces “I was just over at Market Square talking to the cedar-cutters, and one of them chased me, and I fell,” to which Bridie Murphy (who turns out to be Jenny’s mother in one of the many incredible plot twists which bring the play to an hilarious if illogical conclusion) replies “I told you not to mingle with those ... ruffians.” (66)

The sequel Even More Wonderful Wollongong is all about the trauma of change associated with a 1950s country town becoming a modern city and, though it is presented as a tongue-in-cheek musical pantomime, the message about developers taking advantage of small-town business owners is clear. Illawarra’s industrial landscape is foregrounded. When
Rosalie, the expert caramel milkshake maker, falls for Dennis from the steelworks, she sings “My love is deeper than the Inner Harbour / My heart is higher than the highest stack”, and the chorus of “His Name is Dennis” includes the lines “Oh oh oh Dennis! He’s a third year apprentice / He works in the platemill seven to three.” (17) Much of the action occurs in the steelworks, and other songs include “Fittin’ and Turnin’”. This play ends with similar incredible character connections as Wonderful Wollongong, and is really a recontextualised retelling of that play.

*Dream Machine* by Geoffrey Sykes documents Lawrence Hargrave’s quest to discover a powered flying machine, but the play is centred more on the inner struggle of Hargrave the man. However, a passing parade of pre-Great War historical characters and events connects this inner struggle with history as we have come to know it. The Illawarra terrain, which comes to be so important to the later twentieth-century activity of hang-gliding, is closely connected with Hargrave’s box-kite experiments, an element of history which is so much a part of Illawarra folklore as to be easily and recognisably employed in Rick Feneley’s novel *Sly*.

David Allen’s *Upside Down at the Bottom of the World* is about D.H. Lawrence at Thirroul. It melds the Lawrences’ infamous marital discord with the plot line from Lawrence’s book *Kangaroo*, thus suggesting that the novel is purely autobiographical, something D.H. or Freida never admitted to. Texts such as this are elements in the Lawrence in Australia myth. There is nothing in this play that isn’t offered by *Kangaroo*. Jack, the Australian political activist, tries to entice Lawrence, the internationally-renowned writer, to join his socialist
cause and "fight with words". Lawrence is opposed to the "structured viciousness" of the protest rallies which end in violence. Lawrence is painted as the impotent partner in his marriage with Freida. He is the consistent loser in their frequent arguments and, indeed, resorts to his writing to articulate his point of view. The Illawarra doesn't get a look in here, except as the representative Australian bush, which Lawrence compares to the dead heart of the continent's centre. This bush is not a lush garden, however, but a shrivelling growth which hugs the edges of the continent, seared by the heat from the desert interior.

**Exploitation of Women**

There are a number of other themes which appear in some of the other Illawarra plays, though they are not shared by a large number of them. Katherine Thomson's *A Change in the Weather*, like *Diggers Darling* and *Undiscovered Country*, is about the exploitation of women workers and the role of women in patriarchal Australian society, though it is set in 1982, and ends with the industrial action which allowed women to work in formerly male-only positions at the Port Kembla steelworks. It is also about changing roles. In Act 1, Scene 1 the character Robin says "You get satisfaction, knowing you've got a job under your belt, knowing you can do something — especially a job that's traditionally been done by a man." (7) In *Windy Gully* an earlier challenge to patriarchal values is presented when miners' wives march on a mine being worked by scabs. In Act 1, Scene 5 the character Robertson, who represents the mining company as well as patriarchal society, tells the women: "You and your kind are a disgrace to your sex. Go back to your respective homes where you belong. This isn't fitting behaviour for a group of women."
Working-Class Connections

A strong connection between the Illawarra and the working class - so evident in many of the plays about the mining communities and the steelworks - is established early in Vroom Vroom, in parochial/patriotic songs like “Illawarra Wollongong” (16) with its lines “So the cars are rusty rattlers / But the folk are Aussie battlers.” Roo Theatre’s Quarry is about the blue metal quarry workers of Kiama at the beginning of the twentieth century. The poverty of the early Illawarra working class is illustrated in the song “Miracles” (6) sung by a group of quarriermen’s wives, who “create nothing into scrumptious dishes” and offer advice on cooking: “There’s only so many ways to cook a rabbit.” (6) Issues of class are raised in Quarry. Mary the quarryman’s daughter falls in love with George, who is the son of a rich landowner. She reluctantly tells him “It won’t work, we’re a quarry family,” (12) but by the end of the play class barriers are being breached as the two families begin to socialize.

In Diving for Pearls conflict exists between working-class Barbara and upper class Marj, and their disagreement about the upbringing of Barbara’s daughter Verge helps drive the action. Against an equally important backdrop of steelworks stand-downs and the human misery caused by industrial rationalization, the disruption caused by Verge’s reappearance in Barbara’s life is central to the play’s critique of modern civilization.

The Roo Theatre’s Abigail’s Party — an adaptation by Gordon Streek of a play written by British dramatist Mike Leigh — “takes a long, unflinching look at the nastiness and pretentiousness of the nouveau riche” (Roo Theatre archives — publication details unavailable) and is
about “five people who must keep up with the Joneses.” *(Illawarra Mercury*, Jan 4th, 1988) From the material I have to go by, it looks like the main change to the British play is the relocation to Gainsborough Housing Estate near Kiama. Local residents — as is suggested by press reviews — were able to recognize a similar class structure in the situations presented.

The Roo Theatre’s *Over The Edge* challenges the stereotype of the working class male. “The story,” according to a local press review, “revolves around a steelworker who is trying to rediscover the fun life has to offer. He begins drama classes, something he has always wanted to do but was afraid of being laughed at.” (no publication details available)

**Illawarra Climate**

The Illawarra climate as a threatening entity — a dominant theme in Illawarra poetry — makes its appearance in Illawarra plays as well. Storm is a continuing motif in Richardson’s *Lights Out Nellie Martin*. It is used as a signifier of bad tidings and the violence of war; the sounds of storm and battle often intermingle, as in this example from stage directions at the beginning of Act 1, Scene 9:

> Sounds of storm coming in from the sea - wind, flashes of lightning, and thunder - giving way to sounds of war, with its urgent drums, crackling gunfire and thudding heavy artillery and sounds of battle absorb the natural storm. The cry of the wind becomes the whine of the shells falling. (43)

Storms at sea threaten the lives and livelihoods of the fishermen in Richardson’s *The Last Voyage of The Gracie Ann*. Harry, one of the main characters, articulates the danger when he states “It’s the sea
Charlie. Runs us all. The wind and the storm and the waves. She could snuff us out just like that.” (105)

**Change**

The threat of change which is the dominant point of conflict in *More Wonderful Wollongong* also drives the main protagonist Charlie in *Gracie Ann*. In Richardson’s play the past and the future are in conflict. Charlie represents traditional fishing methods (raising issues about livelihood versus conservation) while the Government Man is the future of stricter quotas and crippling fees (raising another issue about conservation at a cost of over-intervention). In this particular battle the past loses. Charlie loses reason and dies, while Harry inherits his boat and opts for compromise as the answer. At the end of the play the 'Gracie Ann' is turned into a charter boat to take advantage of the Illawarra’s status as a tourist destination, offering visitors the chance to be “fishermen for a day.” (142)

In *Quarry* the change is generational and is articulated in the song “Past Present and Future”:

They are the future  
We are the present  
You live with your past  
This is their life  
They must live it  

(16)

The conflict between past and future is personified through the character Thelma in Richardson’s *That Christmas of ‘75*. Thelma represents the elderly, who are relegated to the fringes of society. She is somewhat demented, so her grasp on the present is tenuous. Thelma’s monologue in Act 1, Scene 1 (148) is a lament for lost Australian icons
("The old toilet’s been made into a shed for the motor mower. The choko vine went and the 44 gallon drum incinerator. They’ve put in pavers.") In Act 2, Scene 1 the past and present are compared. “Back in ‘75,” laments Thelma, “we never locked a door.” (185)

Conservationist sentiment

Conservation was a prevalent theme in Australian literature in the 1980s. It is also dominant in Illawarra scripts.

A conservationist strand is woven through the plot of Wonderful Wollongong via the character Wayne, who is a time traveller from the future sent back to sabotage the cedar-getting industry before the Illawarra cedars are all removed. This conservationist sentiment, which connects this play with much of the later Illawarra poetry and some of the later prose, I can assume is also evident in the Roo Theatre’s 1987 production Wild, which is described in the Illawarra Mercury of 2 December, 1987 as “a bright, happy show which covers a group of disgruntled picnickers who journey into the rainforest but are so preoccupied ... it takes the park ranger to entice the group to ‘stop, look and listen’ and absorb the beauty of the rainforest.”

Vroom Vroom offers an affectionate swipe at industrial pollution, amidst a flurry of local patriotism, in the refrain of the song “Illawarra Wollongong”:

I love each beach and headland -
Even Kembla with its pong (18)

In Diving for Pearls an intermingling of acceptance of industry and an anti-industrial sentiment exists. In this play the “Works” are the
enemy because of questionable industrial practices, though in Act 1, Scene 1 the westerly wind “blowing off the top of the coalwash” is looked upon affectionately by the character Den. Barbara, however, re-balances the equation with “How much more of that stuff do they want to dump? How you can stand living up here I don’t know.” (6)

*Diving for Pearls* is set in the 1990s, when the building of the Resort Beach International Resort offers a move away from the grip of the steelworks for Barbara, who decides to retrain as a hostess. Back in the 1960s recreated by *Vroom Vroom*, Warren retires from motorcycle racing and decides to buy some land:

CRAIG: North Beach?

WARREN: Yeah. In a few years Wollongong’s gonna be a tourist resort.

AILEEN: Wollongong!!

WARREN: Sure thing. I’ll flog that land for a fortune, you see. Some big chain’ll build a luxury hotel there.

CRAIG &

AILEEN: In Wollongong!!!! (69)

**Aboriginal Illawarra**

Aboriginal presence is not a strong feature of Illawarra plays. I have unearthed only two examples, both which expand on the viewpoint offered by Percy Mumbulla's prose.

Coral Lansbury's 1949 radio play *Krubi of the Illawarra* is a somewhat melodramatic portrayal of pre-colonized Australian Aboriginal life. It tells the story of Krubi, a young Aboriginal woman who refuses to marry Arilla, her betrothed. Many elements from Greek Tragedy are employed: Krubi displays a form of hubris in her defiance of tribal tradition, as
does Arilla when he shows Krubi Churinga, the secret place of men's initiations. Krubi's very existence is revealed as having been foretold in a prophesy, and her fate, as determined by this ancient prophesy, is unchangeable, though Krubi defies it to the end. There is even a kind of Greek chorus in the character Wingaree, the wise Aboriginal elder who "watches far beyond the gaze of men". Krubi's defiance of tradition, which causes a breakdown in the harmony of her tribe's existence, could also be construed as a metaphor for colonialism, which eventually disintegrated the Illawarra tribes. There is a glimpse of the future in the opening scene, when Wingaree "for a moment steps out of his own time and looks across the beach at anchored ships rocking in a harbour".

In Katherine Thomson's *A Change in the Weather* a more contemporary Aboriginal presence in the Illawarra is presented through the light-skinned Aboriginal woman Beverley:

> You don't see many Aboriginals in factories, in shops here. They know they won't get the job so they save theirselves time. Stay home. Me, I can hassle my way in. Being black, or white. If you don't tell them, they don't know. (17)
CONCLUSION

Though many of the elements which make up the literary identity of the Illawarra in the writing I have looked at are common to a wider Australian (and often world) experience, there are numerous aspects which can be seen as uniquely (though perhaps not always exclusively) belonging to the Illawarra region. Historically, the Illawarra evolves from an almost impenetrable wilderness (with varying viewpoints about its status as either an idyllic setting or a site of danger) to a tamed rural entity which further evolves into an industrialized landscape which is somehow able to co-exist with a scenic tourist version of itself.

I have stated already that Rick Feneley’s novel *Sly* is the ultimate Illawarra fictionalization. Most of the elements of the Illawarra’s literary identity are apparent in this novel, from the pre-colonial Aboriginal Illawarra which was a garden to be harvested regularly then allowed to regenerate, to a colonized landscape which is mined and farmed and de-timbered to an almost unrecognisable state, then to an urbanized outpost which serves as a holiday destination, then to the modern entity it is today, dependent upon its scenic aspects as much as its industry, with the two often clashing for attention.

The Illawarra which emerges from the body of texts I have looked at has a unique topography which allows enthusiasts to hang-glide off the edge of the escarpment with the ocean as a safety net below them. That same escarpment allows the poet to survey almost the entire region from a single vantage point, while protecting the sliver of fertile coastal flats and foothills from the harsher interior which destroyed many early explorers.
Many of the elements which constitute the identity of the Illawarra today were forged early in its literary history. The image of the region as a fertile (if sometimes hostile) garden, which the idyllists began to construct as early as 1865 with the poem "A Glimpse of Coast Scenery in New South Wales", has survived into the late twentieth century, when rich crops of ore are being harvested from the all-but-denuded foothills below the escarpment. The pioneer ethic has seen the lush subtropical rainforests plundered, and the plundering continues unabated below the bared surfaces of the old forest floors. The tacit dangers which dogged the early taming process are now manifested as mining disasters. The conservationist sentiment, tied as it was to the acceptance of loss by the onslaught of 'civilization', is now in full-blown opposition to the industrialists who are the inheritors of the pioneer ethic. Destruction of the environment is no longer seen (by a growing minority, at least) as a necessary consequence of progress. In fact, today's poets (Conal Fitzpatrick on behalf of the Illawarra, in particular), perceive an end in sight for progress, and that end is not pretty.
Annotated Bibliography


The story of Flinders, Bass and "a small boy" and their trip in a small boat into the Illawarra coincides with the historic version. Quotes from Flinders' journal also appear. This is a romanticized adventure.

A.J.D. "Shellharbour, Farewell." Illawarra Mercury, 18 Nov., 1890: 3. [verse]

As with S.K.'s "An Adeiu to Wollongong" (qv), our first glimpse of nineteenth-century Shellharbour is a nostalgic look back on "many wearisome days" spent there, from a narrator who is reluctant to leave.


In a section of this autobiographical sketch the narrator is an undergraduate at Sydney University. He reluctantly moves into his parents' house in Wollongong. He sees himself as a city-dweller and resents having to reside so far away from the activity of the metropolis. He stays inside the house most of the time eating and drinking beer. The rest of the time he spends commuting to Sydney, and so gets to see very little of the house's surroundings.

In this next long autobiographical chapter of Allan's work, the narrator receives a writer's grant and decides to use it to write the great Australian novel in a garret by the sea at Wombarra. He is inspired by his close proximity to the cottage at Thirroul where D.H. Lawrence had stayed while writing *Kangaroo*.


About D.H. Lawrence at Thirroul, this play melds the Lawrences' infamous marital discord with the plot line from *Kangaroo*, thus suggesting that the novel is purely autobiographical. The Illawarra here is the representative Australian bush, which Lawrence compares to the dead heart of the continent's centre. This bush is not a lush garden, however, but a shrivelling growth which hugs the edges of the continent, seared by the heat from the desert interior.


Though written in flowery and stilted journalistic prose, describing dryly the industries of the Illawarra with annotations on the churches of the district, this is nevertheless a romanticised portrayal of the Illawarra and its pioneers. Statistics regarding the early coal mining, kerosine manufacturing and timber cutting industries could be of interest to researchers in that area. The Illawarra revealed here starts at the Bulli coal mine in the north and stretches to Broughton Creek in the south, though no district boundaries are assumed. What we now call the escarpment is described as a "continuous mountain range".

This poem is a glimpse of an Illawarra when the remnants of the Aboriginal Illawarra perpetuated by storytellers such as Percy Mumbulla (qv) overlap with the colonized Illawarra depicted by later twentieth-century poets like Conal Fitzpatrick. Death and the landscape are strongly linked; for the Aborigine, a natural consequence; for the European observers, a melodramatic tragedy.


This anonymous single stanza laments the taming of the wilderness, describing the Illawarra as a "dangerous rival" of progress.


In this address to the National Word Festival, Thea Astley writes wittily about the shortcomings of public transport, and her many adventures aboard trains and buses.


This poem is unique in that it is the main text of an advertisement for Knight's Bankrupt Store. Every line starts with the single letter "B" (meant to signify "be"). Revealing of the spending habits of Kiama residents in the depression of the 1880s and 90s, this poem is also a blatant spruik, loaded with clever digs at the other social habits of the populace.

This biting piece of sarcasm admonishes the widows of the miners killed in the Bulli mining disaster, for arguing over how much each should get from funds raised to assist them.


This play is about the people who stayed at home during World War Two. It highlights the strategies employed by those who chose to avoid military service amid an overwhelming climate of patriotism. It is also about the manipulation of women workers by industrialists who were confident they could exploit people while attention was elsewhere.


The first part of this four-part poem portrays an Illawarra of little hope, polluted beyond redemption. The suburb of Berkeley in this poem is an economically and socially depressed ghetto of delinquents who "snarl their sad defiance" at passing motorists. The local school is portrayed as a fortress which "defends itself as best it can." Here is civilization grafted unnaturally onto the Illawarra.


This tale assists in dating the Mumbulla story "The Battle at Wallaga Lake" (qv) to after the arrival of Europeans. The
narrator's father is hidden as a baby in a hollow log, as the child's parents are pursued by the Victorian tribe introduced in the Mumbulla tale. The rest of this piece is more personally autobiographical: "Me? I'm Billy Bamboo". It reads like an interview with the questions omitted. The tale finishes in a lament for lost culture.


This is virtually the same tale as "The Wild Cherry-Tree" with some phrases omitted and occasional words altered. Besides the different title, which acknowledges the autobiographical nature of the piece, the main difference is that "The Wild Cherry-Tree" is transposed as prose, while "Billy Bamboo" appears on the page as verse.


Jeff Casswell is writing a book about D.H. Lawrence. He rents a house a mile away from "Wyewurk" for the task and the inspiration. In some literary wishful thinking, the novel provides a few fictional missing pieces in the Lawrence-in-Australia jig saw. There is a son and a grandson of Lawrence's, still living in Thirroul. Towards the end of the book Jeff Casswell is given some ageing pages torn from a notebook. They contain some prose written in D.H. Lawrence's hand, which fit neatly into the published versions of Kangaroo immediately after the first paragraph of Chapter 10, with occasional identical passages to
strengthen the connection. They reveal a secret dalliance between Lawrence and a local woman.


This short story is about a young man's physical abuse of his fiancée. It is a chilling tale of vengeful murder which takes place on a wet and slippery coast road on the way to Wollongong.


In almost stream-of-consciousness prose "Burrier" imparts the narrator's urgent outburst of nostalgic childhood memories upon visiting his family's farm.


The narrator addresses his lover/wife on the unreliability of memory: "I see now it was all an inward world", and offers to share the landscape which exists now only in his mind. Though the present reality is disappointing, the narrator wishes to pass on his childhood rememberances of the locality.

---. *You Can't Come Back*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1984. [prose]

This very short novel is set in Clifton, and is about a group of railway workers who are constantly either drunk or in the process of drinking away a hangover.

B.E.D. "Sunrise at Wollongong." *South Coast Times*, 5 Oct., 1901: 4. [verse]
This poem could be describing one of the magnificent Wollongong sunrises of today. Clouds are "light wreaths of mist upon the rugged hills" which "melt like phantoms from the eye" when day finally breaks in slow motion at the ocean's edge.


This novel involves shady real estate dealings, corrupt local politicians, environmentalist saboteurs, a feud between conservationists and developers over a proposed marina in the Nowra area and the obligatory generic murder. The Illawarra acts as a metaphor for defiled paradise; a formerly-pristine wilderness in which the prime coastal spots are overtaken by caravan parks from some former, gaudy, decadent, tourist era.

"Beggars, The. (Vide Stuart's speech at Wollongong)." *Bulletin*, 20 Jan. 1883: 14. [verse]

This poem appears as an item in a column called "Political Points". The message about political influence within the various Churches and 'jobs for mates' in parliamentary cabinet, is as understandable today as it obviously was then.


The 1970 seaside cottage described in this short prose piece could very well be Wyewurk, the house in which the Lawrences stayed in 1922. As in the Lawrences' time, this coastal spot is witness to the fury of the elements. The ocean is rough, a heavy wind is blowing, and it is raining heavily. It is as if the weather
affects the occupants of the house, in 1922 and - as a consequence - in 1970 as well.

"Blacksmith, the Premier, the Kiama Ghost and the Fifty Pounds, The."

Bulletin, 19 June 1880: 4. [verse]

Beneath this poem's title is a reference to an article in the Bulletin of 5 June, 1880, which tells of an unemployed blacksmith named Thomas Ball who offers Henry Parkes 50 pounds to secure him a government job. An anonymous poem "The Simple Blacksmith" (qv) which accompanies the article has the Kiama Ghost urging the blacksmith to approach Parkes. There are so many other contemporary intertextual connections here, it might take a thesis to follow them. The tale of the Kiama Ghost is available to late 20th century readers in Bill Beatty's A Treasury of Australian Folk Tales and Traditions. The poem's main purpose is to criticise Henry Parkes for his lack of humility in his position as Premier.


The narrator of this prosey stream-of-consciousness preamble comes from Sydney but lives in Coalcliff. He considers that he is living in an outlying area of Sydney: "I travel to Sydney/ more often than I do to Wollongong." His descriptions of the Illawarra are shallow, sketchy and introspective.

This poem describes the ritual burying of "tribal bones" by Aborigines at Orient Point. The poem is written in 1978, and documents the beginnings of a struggle to have the Illawarra returned to some semblance of its pre-colonial state, at least as a site for ritual burial: "This land is ours/ For your rebirth".


In this snapshot of the mountain, a sunrise is captured as it throws light upon Mount Keira and its foothills. The escarpment is no guarding sentinel as it is in some other Illawarra poetry; here "far blue hills dividing/ The coast from the west" are a less-confrontational protective barrier.


The Illawarra is mentioned in three of the 28 stanzas, which relate the reminiscences of a man who is lying in his sick bed. The narrator has travelled extensively, and here offers poetic interpretations of most of the eastern coastal regions of Australia. The Illawarra is but one of these but, in anticipation of the other Brady Illawarra poems to come, it is an Illawarra seen through the over-polished lens of childhood memory, inhabited by relinquished love affairs within an idyllic terrain of romanticized beauty and fertility.


Here Brady makes use of archaic language and syntax, as well as mythical and historical references, to bestow upon the
Illawarra flame tree the attributes of royalty. The regal gaze of his humanised plant takes in the mountains, the sea, the forests and even the coal seams of the district. Brady's Illawarra is a romanticised pastoral utopia polished bright by nostalgia and devoid of any of the harsh realism offered by some of his more cynical contemporaries.


As with Brady's "Gerringong" (qv), the well-travelled Brady here revisits his youth. This poem is a lament for a woman he had been in love with when he lived in the Illawarra, and whose grave is on Mount Keira.


This long poem documents Brady's travels and compares the rest of the country to Gerringong, where he grew up. Brady published many collections of his poems, and by the time of this publication was already well known. It is therefore a tribute to the Illawarra that such a well-travelled celebrity should admit that Gerringong is still his favourite place. "Gerringong" is a celebration of the Illawarra's diverse scenery; its beaches, its forests, its many kinds of trees and flowers; and is evidence of the poet's keen talent for detailed observation.


This is a highly personalized and poetic view of the Illawarra, which Brady locates as "these sixty miles of country between Coal Cliff and Shoalhaven". This is an adventure story of the narrator
and his companion's journey by horse and cart from Sydney to St. George's Basin via Appin and Bulli. It is filled with day-to-day details of early-twentieth-century life.


In a succession of quatrains which transport the reader from location to location on the high seas in no particular order, a single stanza refers to the Illawarra: "On high Shoalhaven forelands,/ And down by Wollongong,' The green seas shout and thunder/ Their wildest Wagner song."


Written very soon after the real-life event, this poem starts and finishes with images of the ocean pounding upon Kiama's cliffs. A human lifetime is a scant moment compared to the time the ocean has been falling against the basalt. Chilling snapshots of the rescue attempt and the tragic conclusion are offered as clues to the full picture of events which the reader is left to put together. A sense of irony runs through the poem's dominantly bleak mood: "Oblivious/ tourists buy their spoons,/ their cameras fixing time".


Here is a monumental story — based on actuality — of Dave Cutts, a young strapper working on a property in the Illawarra which is painted in detail. Dave rides the racehorse Archer overland to compete in the first Melbourne Cup at Flemington racetrack on Tuesday, 7 November 1861.

There are four parts to this poem, which address different aspects of the landscape. The final Part is about memory and its perpetuation through generations. The vulnerability of life is the narrator's ultimate concern.

Brown, J. “Our William John.” *South Coast Times*, 23 Feb, 1907: 3. [verse]

This poem is “respectfully dedicated to our Mayor for 1907”. It is an undisguised election campaign speech on behalf of one of the candidates.


The narrator's perspective reveals Kiama as "a miniature", a "faraway sea-view", looking like a painting, when seen through "broad windows" somewhere on Jamberoo Mountain.


The poem addresses a friend who has since been stricken with cancer, and thus the remembered view of the Illawarra will always be associated with "that last treasured glimpse of you, together", like a postcard snapshot. The friend and the landscape are no longer differentiatable.

In a chronicling of events in a past relationship, the narrator devotes a stanza to her role as a wife in Coledale, "in an Ozzie miners cabin". There are connotations here of the Illawarra-as-garden which reinforce the nineteenth century construction.


This is an affectionate if poetically cryptic portrayal of Dion's Bus Service, a contemporary local institution. The wit of the piece is no less effective for its parochial vision.

Cameron, L. "In Memoriam to Kembla Disaster, July 31st, 1902." *South Coast Times*, 30 Sept., 1905: 4.

This is the only poetic coverage of the mining disaster which has come to dominate our modern perspective because of its reiteration by playwright Wendy Richardson (qv). Though this disaster was not covered as extensively as the Bulli Disaster — which had six poems written about it — similar themes of heroism and ironic circumstance are employed.


This doggerel was written specifically to be recited "at the Methodist Institute meeting", and is full of references to civic
leaders and village personalities, all of whom we can assume were part of the audience during the recital. There is mention of a tourist industry of sorts: "Scenery of Kiama which I am going to relate/ Is pronounced by all tourists as the best in the State", as well as the presence of heavy industry which threatens to undermine the tourism.


The news item which precedes this poem tells of members of the Illawarra light horse who collided with a tip cart in Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Seizing the moment of weakness, the poem serves the Illawarra a drubbing, accusing it of being a breeding ground for rednecks who attack tipcarts Quixote-style. The almost tragic incident is dismissed as a comedy of errors. The Illawarra of this city poet's gaze is recogniseable only for its "oily butter", and is peopled by "maidens [who] are all milkmaids" and "young men [who] are all milkers".

C.H.M.D. "The Graveyard on the Beach at Wollongong." Illawarra Mercury, 17 June, 1879: 2. [verse]

In this poem, the gravestones and coffins are washed away by the rising tide, at the place where the Wollongong Entertainment Centre now stands. The poem suggests that the headstones which are now part of a memorial fixture at the back of the Entertainment Centre, are in fact only a small percentage of what was there before the sea did its work.

Clift, Charmian. "Kiama's Blowhole." Kiama Independent 14 Jan., 1933: [verse]
One of two of Clift's "lost" poems recently rediscovered, and her earliest known published work, "Kiama's Blowhole" was written when the author was only eight or nine years old

---. "Seagulls." *Kiama Independent* 14 Jan., 1933: [verse]

Written when Clift was in primary school and living in Kiama, "Seagulls" preoccupation is with the birds and their activities. Except for an anonymous "sunny beach", a "shiney sea" and "the creeping tide" which we can assume are situated in Kiama, the Illawarra landscape does not feature.


This story is, according to Nadia Wheatley, set in "a fictional Kiama" (Clift, *Paradise*, book jacket). The two main protagonists, Charles and Julia Cant, are city visitors to Lebanon Bay, where Julia grew up. The parallels with Charmian Clift's life are obvious, and the novel can be seen as an attempt by Clift to come to terms with her regional upbringing, which is treated as an embarrassing secret in her essays whenever it makes one of its rare appearances.


This is a re-written version of an article (titled 'Hometown Revisited') which Clift wrote for the *Kiama Independent* after her visit to Kiama in 1964. She writes about Kiama fondly in this essay, though she also hints at her reasons for leaving in the first place. Along with those elements familiar through other, earlier
descriptions of Kiama: the hills, the sea, the ancient stone walls, so much a part of modern Kiama's identity, make their appearance for the first time in Illawarra prose.


In five of Clift's newspaper articles collected in this volume, Kiama's stone walls make an appearance, Wollongong is mentioned as a comparison point to Elizabethan London and in connection with student activism, the *Kiama Independent* is given a serve of urban chauvinism and the weaving of cabbage tree hats by early Illawarra pioneers is given nostalgic treatment.


In the two mentions of the Illawarra in this collection, Clift compares her present and her past, mostly in relation to schooling and employment, the industries centred in Port Kembla and other Wollongong suburbs get a mention, with a hint of the industrial dystopia so dominant in the work of later poets such as Conal Fitzpatrick, suburban growth is noted, and a possible future is extrapolated in which one huge city extends from Newcastle to Wollongong.


This poem appears in a section called "The Little Laureate's Corner". From its placement we can assume that the author is a very young poet. Nonetheless, this is intelligent, well-crafted
poetry, with clever rhymes, intelligent syntactical placement and only slightly archaic language. Clinch’s Illawarra is a safe place to be, and not because it is being looked at through the rosey, nostalgia-tinted lens of childhood memories. This is direct childhood experience from an early twentieth century perspective.


An extremely sympathetic treatment of the Illawarra, this poem lauds the scenic beauty as seen from a particular point at Wombarra. There is acknowledgement of the heavy industry which has insinuated itself upon the landscape, but in this poet’s view the landscape still dominates.


Many of the images which help construct a modern Illawarra are available in this one poem; not as stereotypes, but as reinforcement of an Illawarra identity. They are mostly connected with the ocean. The evolution of technology is illustrated with the comparison between "the automatic lighthouse" and "the iron balcony and weather vane/ of the oil fired lighthouse".

The Vietnam war from the point of view of its victims, not a celebration of male Anglo-Australian heroism, this play is about the clash of cultures felt acutely by the children of migrants growing up as first-generation Australians. *Hearts and Minds* confronts many of the untouched issues of an Illawarra which has yet to come to terms with its multicultural identity.


Corris' hero from many of his other stories — Cliff Hardy — is employed to find a dying man's missing son. The search takes Hardy to Wollongong where he becomes embroiled in industrial espionage.


We can assume from this poem's position in a collection of poetry by Illawarra-based poets that the "Steel city" it refers to is Wollongong/Port Kembla, though it is not named. The focus of the poem is on the difference between the narrator's "comfortably existing" at the edge of the city, and the starvation faced by people in Africa, as watched by the narrator on television. The Illawarra portrayed here is a land of plenty, which can view the
starving Africans through an ironic technology, the miracle of "the satellite machine".


The narrator surveys his property — one of the places where suburban progress meets some of the remaining wilderness. The landscape and its human inhabitants — despite efforts to halt it — are intermingled so that any evidence of human progress is disguised by the persistent bush.

Djon. “Yellow Rock Creek.” Illawarra Mercury, 3 Dec., 1895: 3. [verse]

This is an idyllic treatment of the Illawarra, in which the sounds of the forest (here called “the primeval woods”) dominate, with no hint of the presence of the Europeans, who by this time were removing the cedar trees in haste.


This poem is a succession of snippets scattered over the page, incomplete images snatched as if through a car window, travelling very fast through the countryside. The images become metaphors for places.


This poem reads like a list of things to do, on a journey which begins outside of Wollongong on the F6 freeway and ends (or, at
least, the poem stops reporting it) on the the coast road north of Scarborough at a sign which reads "Falling rocks/ Keep moving" in the same demanding direct imperative mood as the rest of the poem.


In this short story the Illawarra — represented by Stanwell Park — is at once a haven from suburban life and a site of natural disaster, much as it was seen by the city visitor in the nineteenth century. The poor family represented here — in what reads like a Great Depression scenario — travel by steam train to camp near the water at Stanwell Park under a "tent fly". In this particular year the family have won a Christmas cake in a raffle. Their good luck amidst a life of hardship continues when, at the end of the story, they watch in horror from the train station as the camping grounds they have just left are engulfed in water.


This piece exists somewhere between reportage and fiction. It tells of the goings-on at the Anglican church at Omega, and the central character is Reverend Charles Riddell, who "had found the place spiritually a howling wilderness of apes, and he had converted it into a decent community of church-going people". The blue ribbon of the temperance movement makes an appearance here, as it does in the poem "Fuit Jamberoo" (qv), which offers the possibility that the Illawarra was targeted by this group because of the image constructed by the Sydney press.

Though on the surface this is a story about a boyhood friendship throughout the 1960 and 70s, no less than the entire history of European settlement of the region is reconstructed through the generational story of the Fox family. A history of the Aboriginal encounters with Europeans is also presented through the stories of Wadi Wadi elder Jurungu and The Fox Testament, a diary kept by generations of the Fox family. The saga comes full circle with land claims being made by modern descendants of the Wadi Wadi. Anybody curious about what makes the Illawarra unique should read this book.


Dotted with puns on the names of local political figures, this piece of cynicism is a protest at the planned construction of a court house in the then-village of Shellharbour. The message is clear: the huge cost of the building could be better spent elsewhere, especially in the light of the corrupt justice system it will house.


Reading very much like the rest of the explorer literature in the *Memoirs*, this piece is nevertheless valuable as one of the earliest prose descriptions of the Illawarra as the European
pioneers saw it. Field compares the Illawarra "jungle" to that of South America.


This collection of 30 poems presents a series of predominantly dystopian visions of an Illawarra overwhelmed by rampant industrialism and the resulting pollution.


This is the same poem as "Captain Cook Looks into the Future" from Fitzpatrick's 1984 collection *Wollongong Poems*. The *Overland* version is attributed to Coral Fitzpatrick.


This poem describes, with irony, a day in the life of a nun, Sister Theresa of the Little Flower. There is nothing in this poem to situate it in the Illawarra except for the title, which refers to a collection which does not exist, and therefore cannot be relied upon. The poem is also not a love song, except for the fact that "Vincenzo, the Convent gardener, has designs on her".


Armageddon looms, as it does in many of Fitzpatrick's poems, and Wollongong will be the focus of the existence-destroying
action: "City of the monster coming white with wings and demons".


This valuable little book contains nine brief life stories (more like summaries) of aged people living at Mount Warrigal Nursing Home.


The narrator perceives the significance of the family histories spelled out on the headstones, and offers a generational connection as he notices “On the sand below the cemetery, my children/ are running away”.


In line with early _Bulletin_ practice, this poem is inspired by an advertisement by the Jervis Bay “lightkeeper” for a live-in teacher for his children. The sense of isolation is strong, and the “Light” of the lighthouse is equated with the “light” of knowledge which education represents.
F.R.W. "Beautiful Illawarra (revisited after an interval of 33 years)."
*Kiama Independent*, 14 Aug. 1894: 2 Microfilm files, Kiama Library. [verse]

The central theme can be summed up in two lines from this poem: "Unchangeable indeed, sweet scene, thou dost remain/ A joy eternal thou - but oh how changed am I".


This poem documents the coming of the Temperance League to the Illawarra. Until this occurrence, Jamberoo had been (according to this poem) synonymous with hard drinking, gambling and other unnamed sins.


There is bitter irony in the story of Bill the miner who injures himself while down the mine, and is aided to the surface by his mate Joe, whom he persuades to return to work. Throughout the short tale Joe has remarked on how unlucky Bill is after a number of small misfortunes, but while Bill is in the surgery having his head bandaged, there is an explosion in the mine and Joe is killed in the Bulli mine disaster.

The narrator compares inland Moree and nearby Inverell with the Illawarra. The conglomeration of ethnicities at the Moree Baths inspires her to articulate the Illawarra's multiculturalism.


The view from the top of the escarpment is described in the language of a children's fairy tale. The vista is "a glow-worm cave", and in its entirety the view is an "enchanting spangle-world outspread/ beneath our feet". This is an Illawarra of fantasy.


Hannah and her family go on a holiday to Jervis Bay and Hannah insists on wearing her roller skates throughout the excursion. They traverse a rural panorama "Past houses and farms, through small dairy villages, across wide full rivers". After the holiday, during which Hannah learns to skate despite the innapropriate environment, there is the inevitable "climb from the coast up the steep escarpment" to leave the Illawarra.

As in much of the earlier poetry about Kiama, the sea holds prominence as an evil and aggressive entity in this piece, and the "dark rocks" of the shore do battle with the pounding water. Everything which is inanimate becomes animate. Even "The fog walks/Down the embrace of the hills deserted by the sun."


The idyllic — if somewhat sombre — setting is challenged by the intrusion of the "living mines" within the mountain, and the "one great lighthouse star" grafted onto the headland. This poem records the point at which nineteenth century European technology finally quells the stubborn resistance of the pre-colonial Illawarra landscape.


It reads like a tribal myth written in some alternative reality or possible future. In clever metaphoric connections, Gorman presents a much-shrunken Illawarra which can only exist as a literary identity. There is cultural/class satire in the construction of an enemy who can be seen to represent the nouveau riche city dwellers from our reality who buy up properties in the northern suburbs of Wollongong to use as weekend hideaways.

Most of the political inuendo of "Trialogue" is lost to the modern reader. "Trialogue" differs from any other about the region in its form as a drama script written in rhyming verse. There are retrievable allusions to graft and corruption connected with the cedar cutting industry.


The fact that this is an excerpt from a BA (Hons) thesis is evident. In fairly matter-of-fact language it discloses to a new generation the history behind the famous nick-name for Robert Menzies. The Port Kembla steelworks figures prominently, and the reputation of the Illawarra as an industrial stronghold is reinforced.


The author criticizes local laziness:

This beautiful, wealthy and fertile district has too long been in the hands of those either unable or unwilling to devote their energies to cultivating the soil.


In this piece written two years after "Through the Illawarra District", it is noted by the same G.S.M. that

The plains from the sea to the hills have been denuded of their trees, and the timber on the sides and slopes of the
mountain ranges is fast disappearing. The effect of this is already felt in the diminished supply of water, and will be felt in a greater degree unless this destruction of the timber is at once prevented.


The landscape offers two faces; the beautiful and the dangerous. What is going on at the conference seems out-of-place, meaningless, when weighed against the surrounding environment.


In an impressively compressed depiction of D.H. Lawrence's stay in Australia, incorporating the bush and oceanscapes which surrounded the author, isolated in his coastal cottage, this poem offers an understanding of Lawrence's creative processes.


Told in the drone-like first-person narrative of television detective fiction, this nevertheless intelligent tale is set mainly in D.H. Lawrence country — Thirroul. It is a cynical portrayal of international espionage and, like much post-1922 fiction involving Thirroul, offers a connection to Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* (qv).
Harfleur. “The Sea at Clifton.” *South Coast Times*, 9 March, 1901: 3. [verse]

In thick, archaic language, this short poem attempts to recreate the fearful ocean which can be seen in a “league-long view” from Clifton.

Harris, Alexander. *Settlers and Convicts, or Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labor in the Australian Backwoods by an Emigrant Mechanic*. London: G. Cox, 1852 (first published 1847) [prose]

Though published some years later, this prose piece describes the author's journeys and adventures in 1826/27. A view of the panorama from the top of Bulli Mountain is offered:

"We now soon came to the edge of the mountain. At one spot we stood on the brink of a precipice of vast depth, and saw down below us the mighty sea diminished into insignificance, almost like the waters of a lower world."


According to its introduction, this poem is taken from the lyrics of an amateur musical review. It contains racist remarks about “niggers” and “darkies,” as well as now-obscure references to local celebrities. Corruption at government level is the poem's main target, and the “Invasion” in the title refers to a visit by Sydney politicians who promise much for the fledgeling outpost.


There are numerous references to the Illawarra in the 1850s, when the letters were written. The most notable mentions are on
pages 31 (the view from Bulli Mountain), 32 (building a house from the still-plentiful cedars), 272 (a description of Lake Illawarra), 284 (the Illawarra climate) and 285 (the Illawarra railway).


Here the mountain is a "sentinel" which exudes "tranquility", and is nothing less than "Nature in concrete display," "veiled in mist."

---. "[Untitled short story]." *First Draught: Campus Writing*. Wollongong: Department of English, University of Wollongong, Sept. 1980: 42-44. [prose] The link between past and present is represented in this story, which looks at an elderly tenant of a nursing home, where "each year the waiting list grew longer, names of people grown redundant in a society they had helped to create." (42) The old man who is the central character here (and whose point of view the narrator reveals exclusively) escapes from the nursing home and heads for the beach. He thinks about his dead lover/wife, then "The sea, ever swelling towards him became her heaving breast in her dark green, lace-edged blouse. He enjoyed the sight of it for a while — then he walked into her loving arms." (44)

Written more like fictionalizations than reminiscences, the four sections of this piece are not connected chronologically. They are simply fragments teased from the larger picture which is the author's memory.

In this short story about a Vietnam veteran who is haunted by the memory of a child he killed during the war, the Illawarra landscape becomes a site of healing.

This poem celebrates the successes of champion rower William Beach, but also pleads for donations so he can continue his sporting career. Beach, history tells us, won many medals for rowing in the late nineteenth century, but he had to struggle constantly against the lack of facilities and resources in the isolated Illawarra.

Heavy use of Middle English pronouns "Ye", "Thee" and "thou" as well as other archaic language makes this poem seem too contrived to be the result of spontaneous inspiration. However, it very competently portrays the contrasts within the
landscape and the changeability/unpredictability of weather in the Illawarra. The narrator has returned to Kiama after many years away and it has changed so little that he is easily reminded of his "boyhood years".


In this short 15-line, single-stanza poem, two aspects of a stereotypical Illawarra are melded: the pollution from the mining industry and an antagonistic/anathemic climate. A strong conservationist sentiment is obvious: "In this twilight of dust/ The sky is screaming."


Irvine was the priest who conducted the service at Henry Kendall's funeral. This piece uses the supposed memories of an ancient tree to reflect upon the taming of the Illawarra wilderness.

---. "Lake Illawarra." *South Coast Times*, 27 Dec., 1902: 3. [verse]

Once again, Irvine uses the viewpoint of a tree — this time "a stately fig" — to describe the civilising of the Illawarra.

---. "Illawarra — A Sonnet." *South Coast Times*, 2 May, 1903: 4. [verse]

The narrator in this poem is not identified, but the viewpoint takes in everything from the flame-trees to the "sheltering range," the "beauteous lake" and the "islands five."
Ivanova, Nada. Translation by Mendo and Elena Trajcevski. "No
Return". Anthology of the Illawarra. Wollongong: Five Islands
Press Associates in conjunction with Illawarra Writers and the
University of Wollongong, 1994: 78. [verse]

The narrator compares her memories of her country of origin
with the Illawarra she has migrated to.

J.S.W. “Flagstaff Hill, Wollongong by Moonlight.” Illawarra Mercury, 6
Feb., 1874: 3. [verse]

The ocean dominates this narrator's view from Flagstaff Hill.
It conjures spectres of horror; “hidden things;” and “Myriads
living, myriads dead.”

Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1989: 70. [verse]

Offering somewhat cryptic, distopian images of a polluted
harbour, this is the viewpoint of an audience member at a
conservationist rally.

J.W. "A Glimpse of Coast Scenery in New South Wales." Kiama
[verse]

This poem is a haphazard jumble of rhyme and meter.
Nevertheless, it is a positive treatment of the Illawarra landscape
written at Kiama by a visitor (as revealed in the final stanza),
which encompasses everything from the (then new) coast road
between Gerringong and Jamberoo: "a pleasant road, by flower
and tree/ lies 'tween the mountains and the sea", to birdsong:
"the Laughing-jack and Whip-bird's sound", to the "fresh beauties" of the scenery.


The second earliest Illawarra poem I have recovered, this piece chronicles the change of fortunes of a once-prosperous potato grower, and in doing so records the shift of wealth to the gold miners. The "Lament" is for lost marriage opportunities for the young female narrator, because all the eligible young men have gone to the goldfields.


The author of this first publication is Henry's untrustworthy brother. The same poem, with only the name of the mountain changed, appeared in the same year as "Keira," with the author as Henry Kendall. The narrator watches a sunset from the mountain's "ancient cone," and his gloomy mood, inspired by the approaching darkness, reflects his impending move away from the Illawarra.


This poem's lament about the disappearance of "fairies and elves", from the treeless field surrounded by thick rainforest which gave Fairy Meadow its name, is really a comment on the degradation of modern society, represented by "men, just returned from a spree, / With their pockets all empty, their heads
reeling round, / While an army of bottles lie strewn on the ground."


This poem is a militant rally cry against a pay cut for coalminers, directed at “the masters” who “get the profit.” The viewpoint of the miners’ wives is foregrounded, along with an anti-capitalist sentiment.


The Illawarra landscape inspires memories in the narrator, this time of his and his brother’s childhood together “round / Our haunts at Wollongong.” Basil in this poem is a “wild dreamer” who had the potential for “brighter bays than I can ever claim,” but for a “dubious dark” we can assume from history to be alcoholism and a preference for illegal acts.

---. "Bellambi’s Maid." *Empire*, 6 Feb., 1861; 1862; 1920. [verse]

The narrator hears the voice of the dead “dark Bellambi’s Maid” as he watches the evening mists roll “round Keera’s Cone” (incorrectly spelt, as it is in a number of other Kendall poems) and the “peak of Corrimal.” There is a hint of a past romance which the evening view of the mountains has stirred memories of.

The first published version of this poem is shorter and markedly different to the one which appears in collections and in later publications. The narrator sits beside his bride viewing an idyllic scene of Kiama's hills and the ocean breaking upon the cliffs. His love for his wife inspires visions that "the cliffs above — are sitting fondly hand in hand!" The poem reads like a song with the final line of each stanza repeated, chorus-like.

---. "Wollongong." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 May, 1861; 1862; 1920. [verse]

This poem offers a more expansive version of the memories stirred in "To My Brother," though Basil is not mentioned. Similar "Fleeting dreams and idle fancies," however, are subsumed by "the gloomy after Age."


---. "The Maid of Gerringong." *Empire*, 1 July, 1862; 1862; 1920. [verse]

In another of Kendall's love poems inspired by the Illawarra landscape, the windy coast at Gerringong during a storm reminds the narrator of the night he parted with the Maid of Gerringong, who has since died. He believes he is visited by her ghost, but is awakened from a dream by the worsening storm.

---. Kiama Revisited." *Empire*, 24 April, 1867; rpt in *Australian Journal*, March 1870; 1920. [verse]

In this poem the narrator is inspired by the rough ocean off Kiama, to remember a woman he loved in his youth. He is
tempted by a dream to return to the woman, but he fights the temptation and is resigned to “wear Love as a raiment.”


In this poem the narrator remembers the rolling seas, "the rocky beach", "the swelling grassy hills", "the troubled heavy ocean kiss[ing]/ The crumbling soil". We are also given a brief glimpse of Saddleback Mountain, around which "blows fresh and free/ The mountain gale."


A juxtaposition of ancient, untouched pockets of landscape and modern technology is presented here. This poem paints a detailed, desert-like scene, in which the struggle for survival — of plants and wildlife — is paramount. This poem is as much a comment on the failures and shortcomings of human civilization as a lament for the passing of the pristine Illawarra landscape.


This radio play employs stylized poetic language and speech patterns. In fact the language is so poetic, the play won the Henry Lawson prize for poetry. This somewhat melodramatic portrayal of pre-colonised Australian Aboriginal life tells the story of Krubi, a young Aboriginal woman who refuses to marry Arilla, her betrothed. There is a glimpse of the future in the opening scene,
when Wingaree "for a moment steps out of his own time and looks across the beach at anchored ships rocking in a harbour".


This is an important work, especially in its foregrounding of the landscape through which its characters take their various journeys. (See preceding essay for details.)

Lawrence, Frieda. *Not I, but the Wind...* Toronto: Macmillan, 1934: 118 - 133. [prose]

In this autobiography Frieda Lawrence relates the real-life equivalent of the decision in *Kangaroo* to travel south. Frieda perceived the Illawarra landscape much like D.H. In 1934 she recollected: "The mornings, those sunrises over the Pacific had all the wonder of newness, of an uncreated world." (119) D.H. calls it "a queer, grey, sad country — empty, and as if it would never be filled." (125) Frieda also offers the suggestion that an exchange of ideas may have been going on between D.H. and Australian writers; that a lot of the raw material for the plot of *Kangaroo*, at least, may have been picked up from the contemporary press.

Lindsay, W. "Illawarra, Farewell." *Illawarra Mercury*, 1 Jan., 1891: 3. [verse]

The Illawarra here is a "garden of the southern coast," with "verdant mountains" and "giant trees," created by Nature "in some wild, fantastic mood," which the narrator celebrates in a gesture of farewell.

This is nostalgic re-creation of the immigrant experience during the post-World War Two period, from the late 1940s to the 1950s.


This is not, in fact, a letter. A very different prose style to her novel *Winter Sparrows* (qv), this is a rambling, almost stream-of-consciousness prose. Many familiar images appear: "the road and the edge of the escarpment," hang gliders, the steelworks, the view from Bulli Tops. The narrative mood shifts from disgust and dislike to nostalgic fondness, during which perceived industrial evil becomes tolerated eccentricities.


Lorimer's poetry (along with Nettie Palmer's, qv) represents the beginnings of a truly Australian voice in poetry about the Illawarra. In this long poem (82 lines), the derivative style and alien, inadequate expression of most earlier Illawarra poetry is absent. There is a familiarity with the landscape which is reflected in the Australianness of the language. The poem takes us on a journey up the side of the escarpment to the top of Macquarie Pass, not an easy journey even on today's tarred road; downright life-threatening in 1892.

This poem appears beside an article covering the memorial service for the victims of the so-called Minnamurra Fatality, in which a group of holiday makers were swept to their deaths at the spot where the Minnamurra River meets the sea. The poet's focus is the lone survivor, whose husband and three children perished.

---

The narrator of this poem is a botanist who has been searching for "ferns and flowers" around the village of Jamberoo. He is tired and so falls asleep "beneath the shelter/ Of a broad leaf coral tree". In his sleep he flies above the Jamberoo valley and describes the idyllic scene below.

---

A reference at the beginning of this poem points to an earlier untraced publication in the *Southern Mail*. Stereotypical images of Kiama abound: the roar of the ocean waves, the blow hole, the battle between rock and water.

---

Lorimer here celebrates the fact that a century has passed since Bass and Flinders landed on an Illawarra shore, and muses on the civilisation process which has occurred in that time.

Lublin's Illawarra is a romanticized, utopian landscape inhabited by "fairy forms" and "young vernal fledglings."


This piece of doggerel conveys the cynical disappointment of a tourist who has come to see the Kiama blowhole, which fails to produce its famous "blow". The most appealing aspect of the poem is the way it is presented with a Norman Lindsay sketch which incorporates the words of the poem itself (with an artistic 'typo' in the last line.)


The six short lines of doggerel are squeezed into a column of paragraphs called "Answers to Correspondents", much like the modern summary of unpublished letters to the editor. These paragraphs, however, are biting criticisms of rejected pieces, as well as insults, disguised as humour, aimed at authors.


By 1913 the *Bulletin* poets are still taking swipes at the Illawarra. In this poem, Wollongong cops a beating similar to that meted out to Jamberoo in "Fuit Jamberoo" (qv).

Magister. "Lines Suggested by Reading 'A Glimpse of Coast Scenery' Which Appeared in The Kiama Independent on March 2nd."

A sarcastic reply to J.W's (qv) poem which refutes the positive claims about the Illawarra overflowing from the earlier poem. The main focus is the unsealed road from Jamberoo to Gerringong which is revealed as dangerous and at times impassable/unuseable — a metaphor for the whole of the Illawarra.


Scene 2 of this World War Two drama is about a plane full of American troops which crashes into a mountain "there at Foxground". The Illawarra landscape is hostile to the unwary. Similarly in Scene 13 there is a description of a ship full of American troops foundering at Bass Point: "We don't know how long we'll have these extra young American men — some are in Kiama Hospital." (40) There is mention of the steelworks at Port Kembla as a military target, as well as a planned evacuation of cattle "up Hoddle's Track" (up the face of the escarpment) to Barren Ground in the event of military action on the coast. In Scene 14 there are rumours about a Japanese submarine sailing into Kiama's small harbour under cover of night "getting water or provisions". History is challenged: "If the Japs could bring a sub into Kiama — cool as you like — what else was there that we didn't know about?"

Written as part of a series of sketches by well-known writers of their places of abode, "Austinmer" would be less out-of-place in a novel than in a travel article. This is a highly personal and personalised view of the writer's home town.


This piece of poetic prose/prose-ish poetry has no capitals and no sentence breaks, except for the jagged pauses required to move from line to line. "No Fish for the Fisherman" is about racism: "ho chi min or ho ho & his wife or ho ho ho as she was quickly known" are two Asian refugees who arrive in Australia somewhere near Darwin and are quickly resettled at Nowra. As a site of racist attitudes the Illawarra is relegated to a position "deep in the colossus of Australian life" with no distinguishing features in the xenophobic landscape.


There is scant coverage of the Illawarra in this poem about a group of people who travel "From Bateman's Bay to Kiama", with an interest in Bartok their common bond. This allows a voicing of concerns about war-torn European homelands invoked by the Illawarra's multicultural population.

McFarland, Judge. "Illawarra." _Supplement to Kiama Independent_. 18 Feb. 1875; 4 March 1875; 18 March 1875; 1 April 1875; 15 April

This serialisation imparts some interesting history about the different roads which had been constructed up to that time to allow access to Wollongong from Sydney.


This is a short prose piece which omits the most important plot element, leaving the completion of the episode to the reader's imagination. Much detail is presented regarding the nameless male protagonist's train journey from Central Station to somewhere in the Illawarra.


A poem about the Wollongong suburb of Warrawong, located "on edge/ of an iron city", "Place" is a celebration of a multicultural Illawarra, with the inevitable connections to food as an indicator of ethnicity. This Illawarra is "a congregation/ of displaced souls" who try vainly to hold on to "scraps of culture". The narrator laments the loss of a history from the position of a first-generation Australian.

In this internal monologue — of a train passenger who has taken on the role of "dozer minder" to wake other passengers who might sleep through their stop — the most revealing aspect about the Illawarra is the statement "he wasn't a Port Kembla regular". Wollongong is such a small town in this prose piece that the narrator is able to recognise where everyone in the train carriage lives.


A series of short statements, not necessarily connected syntactically, combine to form a completed picture of living in a suburb next to the steelworks. The narrator feels an affinity with the industrial landscape and manages to connect it with the geographic markers which usually make up the opposing side of the equation.


The eight sketches are reminiscences by different autobiographers. The first sketch by M.R. Morton is a historic glimpse of the Illawarra region, with citations from explorers' journals and other evidence readily available elsewhere. The
second, by Mrs Hilda Harmon, is a similar treatment of some local history about Mount St. Thomas and "a much publicised murder trial of two convict servant girls". Some family history is offered by Fred Guest in the third sketch: of the dynasty which created Guests Auto Repairs and Guests Bakeries. In the fourth sketch Tom Roy Page offers a genuine personal reminiscence of the early days of Wollongong in 1913, when the town would be flooded if the entrance to Tom Thumb Lagoon became clogged with shifting sand. In the fifth sketch Renee Mackie relates a rather complicated journey from Mount Drummond (now Coniston) to Wollongong, before a road existed between the two villages. In the next sketch 70-year-old Elsie Gilbert relates her personal history, with much illuminating detail about the early coal miners. Doris Jay juxtaposes early and present-day images of Wollongong in the seventh sketch, connecting the past with the present with the words "the Byron family moved to the corner of Kembla and Burelli streets where the NRMA now stands. The large lovely old magnolia tree in front of the office was in their front yard". The final piece is about Wollongong during World War Two, when troops marched through the streets, commandeering delivery trucks from business people, amongst other skulduggery. The connecting motif in all these pieces is change. The vacant paddock where some modern building now stands is a repeated image.


There is nothing about the Illawarra in this poetic depiction of a cow either urinating or emptying its swollen udder. But the
historic connections with the Illawarra’s dairy industry are obvious. Pyree dairy has existed since not long after European occupation of the region. Unlike Bruce Beaver’s “Burrier” (qv) not a lot has changed since the nineteenth century at Pyree.

---


Consisting of three parts, only the first of which gives us a clue to which south coast is being written about, this poem depicts a tranquil, postcard-like Illawarra. The ocean is the common element linking the three parts. This is the Illawarra which draws tourists to it, but they never quite belong.


This song offers a short history of Alexander Berry’s trip from Scotland to take up a land grant of 10,000 acres near Coolangatta Mountain, his status as an employer and founder of a town, and his death in 1873. There is a hint about his reputation as a hard master in the mixed reactions to his death.

---

"Shoe and Nail." Unpublished song ts. Author’s private papers.

The horse in this song is a reminder of the Illawarra’s colonial past, which the narrator views favourably against the present.

---

The narrator is a traveller who longs to return to the town he grew up in. The “country roads” he travels upon are a constant reminder of his boyhood in the Illawarra.

---

"Song Over Gerringong." Unpublished song ts. Author's private papers.

This song celebrates the Illawarra landscape around Gerringong.

---


During a stop at a country town, the narrator is reminded by playing children and the rural scene of his home town in the Illawarra.

---


In this song a father and his children play with a hand-made kite beneath the “Hills of peace and mountains rising” around Gerringong.

---

"[Untitled]." Unpublished song ts. Author's private papers.

The narrator is a “country boy” who keeps an eye on the unpredictable Illawarra weather for signs of rain to help the crops on his farm.

---

"You, Me and the Mountains." Unpublished song ts. Author's private papers.
The narrator invites his lover to leave the city and “Come away from the bright lights / To the dark misty mountains,” to an Illawarra which is a sanctuary from the busy city life.

---

"Beneath the Mountains I Ride." Unpublished song ts. Author's private papers.
This song celebrates the mountains inland from Gerringong, as seen by the narrator on horseback.

---

The landscape, flora and fauna around Gerringong are celebrated in this song, inspired by sunrise and sunset.


This short, two-stanza, eight-lined proseish poem presents the dilemma facing a modern-day, environmentally-minded woman commuter.

This poem is valuable for being full of Aboriginal mountain and locality names, many of which are now no longer in use. The scenes it describes are idyllic, yet the narrator extracts geological importance from them, as sites for future mining. The escarpment is called "a vast alpine chain."


This story is of indeterminable age, and imparts many fantastic events which can only be viewed as metaphorical by a modern audience. In a jumble of pre- and post-colonial imagery "The Battle at Wallaga Lake" tells of Old King Merriman, who witnesses the massacre of his Wallaga Lake tribe by "a big army from a Victorian tribe."


This short prose piece is transcribed by Roland Robinson from an oral telling by the author. Aspects of present-day Lake Wallaga district are melded with what seems to be Aboriginal myth, though it reads as if it is being made up on the spot.


This story describes Bugeens as "clever blackfellows" who are able to change their shape or disguise themselves in various ways. Their sole purpose for existence seems to be to create dangerous
mischief. This tale can be located in Euro-Australian history by the fact that the narrator's grandfather uses a muzzle-loader to shoot at a Bugeen who has shaped himself like a kangaroo.


Though this tale abounds with mythical references and magical goings on, it is firmly fixed in European historical time because "it was the time of the visit of the Duke of Gloucester" to Canberra. The dilution of traditional magic is documented when Bertie Bennelong, who has broken tribal rules of intermarriage, is offered training by Jimmy Clemens ("There is a wax figure of old Jimmy Clemens in the Canberra Museum") to ward off the magic of the Doowan, the "two avengers" sent to extract revenge. The ending is inevitable, though not as optimistic for the future as "The Bugeen, The Kangaroo Man" (qv). After being pelted with "the Guneena, the devils' stones", Bertie pines away and eventually dies. Though the power of traditional Aboriginal magic is clearly illustrated, so too is the breaking of that tradition by colonization.


More a description-by-example of an Aboriginal mythical figure than a story in itself, this piece of prose does, however, offer a short episode in which the Doolagarl (in this case in the form of a hairy-man) does not behave violently as legend would have it. All of this takes place at Tathra in the days of the narrator's
father, illustrating the survival of mythical beings into postcolonial Australia.


This loose transcription from an oral telling contains two episodes. One story is about Abley Wood, who can run further and faster than any other person on the South Coast: "He could race the horse-drawn mail-coach from Ulladulla to Bermagui and down to Bega". But he is unable to outrun two Bugeens who have been sent to throw Guneena ("The Devils' Stones") at him in some payback ritual. The other story tells of Harry Carpenter, who was bitten on the neck as a baby by a Gooin, "a spirit."


This is a very short (single-page) piece which nevertheless serves to paint a vivid prose picture of the character Billy Bulloo, while at the same time illustrating the ingenuity of the colonized Aborigine. In this instance Billy Bulloo is able to procure food and equipment from white settlers by using his inherited knowledge of the bush to find gold which he trades at a Nowra pub.


People don't seem to die of natural causes in Mumbulla's stories. In this short tale, the death of the narrator's uncle is seen as the consequence of mopokes (Doonoots) calling out all night as he tries to sleep by his campfire.

This prose sketch is mostly description: "Those wild women want you for a husband. They take you away into the bush and the mountains for six months. They make you stupid. You can't hear anything. There is always six of them. They come down to Currambene Creek near Huskisson". The breaking into second person gives the narrative a feel of direct transcription from an oral telling, as does the use of several series of short statements.


In this tale, lying under the she-oaks reminds the narrator of the death of his grand-uncle, as related in "Uncle Abraham and the Doonoots". This leads to another series of reminiscences of the narrator's childhood, when he would pester the older men to teach him traditional ways: "Every time I come to a river like this and hear the wind in those she-oaks, I sit down and those times come back to me". Place here becomes a window in time, and a hint is offered of the Aboriginal connection with the landscape, in which particular loci are equated with specific memories.


This is another tale about Bugeens, which are referred to here as "spirits", as opposed to "clever blackfellows" as they are described in "The Bugeen, the Kangaroo-Man". Nevertheless, they are able to use magic to change their shape.

This parable offers insights into Aboriginal marriage as regulated by the Wallaga Lake people, particularly how adultery is dealt with. Details of Wallaga Lake Aboriginal justice are also offered, with a description of the ritual of "spearing", which connects this part of the Illawarra to the rest of Aboriginal Australia.


This is a short, poeticized description/explanation of Wathagundrals, who "live in the rocks an' caves at Tilba". Their *Mudjingarls* (or totems) are bulldog ants, and this poem relates in graphic detail how the Wathagundrals kill people by dragging them onto ants' nests, and yet the little people remain unharmed.


A poeticized version of the prose piece which appears in *Black-Feller, White-Feller* under the same title (qv), with virtually identical wording, except for the final paragraph in the prose version, which is missing here.

Whaling is used here to illustrate the Aboriginal affinity with the antipodean environment: "The dark people would never go lookin' for whales. The killers [killer whales] would let them know if there were whales about". The message in this explanation of Aboriginal whaling methods is clear: The traditional ways were superior to European whaling technology as, by inference, were most other aspects of Aboriginal culture.


There are sections taken virtually word-for-word from two prose pieces to make this poem. Parts 1 and 2 (titled "Guneena" and "Marrung") are, in fact, the entire text of the prose piece "Under the She-Oaks" (qv), with minor changes to accommodate the poeticization. Parts 3 and 4 (titled "Muleemah" and "Doonoots") are the entire text — with slight adjustments — of the prose piece "Uncle Abraham and the Doonoots" (qv) [see annotations of these two stories for details]. "Under the She-Oaks" makes passing reference to the death of the narrator's grand-uncle, while "Uncle Abraham and the Doonoots" relates the circumstances of Uncle Minah's death in much more detail.

Except for a few small changes and omissions, this poem is virtually the entire text of the prose piece "The Gold of Billy Bulloo" (see annotation of this story for details).


There is much more poetic structure in this piece than in the blank verse poeticizations of prose stories which make up the rest of The Nearest the White Man Gets. The poem consists of two 6-line stanzas and a final quatrain. "The Surprise Attack" is a fairly straightforward account of "the time the Red-Hill tribe was cleaned right out". Much is made of the power of the boomerang, which "teared through bone an' gristle", and the spear is also described in awesome terms: "You couldn't pull them barbed spears from inside/ a man. You'd drag his guts out if you tried". Once again, human beings are the biggest danger to one another in the Aboriginal Illawarra.


In this Aboriginal version of Captain Cook's first encounter with the original inhabitants of the Illawarra at Batemans Bay, a clash of cultures is evident. The Aborigines are not impressed by
the Europeans, and Captain Cook’s interaction with the Batemans Bay tribe is inappropriate and condescending.

---. "Soon as it was Spring." The Newcastle Herald, 26 November 1988: 8. [verse]

Here is a clear example of appropriation and colonization of Aboriginal creativity by non-Aboriginal people. This piece is "related by Percy Mumbulla" according to the information supplied directly beneath the title. However, at the bottom of the poem is the name Roland Robinson, and the Austlit database listing has Robinson as the author. The narrative is a first person account of how Percy Mumbulla and his partner sleep out under a tarpaulin, live on bush tucker ("Shot a wallaby/ an' found a honey-tree") and move from place to place scavenging the droppings of non-Aboriginal civilization.


This is the poem "Uncle Abraham, Whose Blackfeller's Name Was Minah" (qv) unchanged, with illustrations by Bronwyn Bancroft. The vividly-coloured illustrations help to recon­textualise the poem as a children's picture book.


Like Melinda Kendall’s “The Collier’s Strike Song” (qv), this is a rally cry for workers to strike for better conditions and pay. It’s anti-industrialist stance is obvious and militant.

The title of this play refers to both the boarding house where the action takes place, and the obsessive card playing of the boarding house's Macedonian tenants. The main concern of the play (to take a phrase from the "Biography" which precedes it) is "the struggle and cultural confrontations" of these tenants, most of whom work at some time at "Steelwork". All of them drink heavily and gamble for high stakes. Alcohol becomes a metaphor for cultural degradation, while at the same time symbolising the aridity of Australian working class culture. This version of the play is in English (Neskovski wrote his plays in both English and Macedonian). Family ties are the most powerful force in this play, and account for all the characters' obsession with making money. Each of them sends money home to assist poor relatives.

---


This play is about cultural displacement and the power of language as a weapon of alienation. The main protagonist Ilinka — an ageing Macedonian widow living in Warrawong — at one point explains her predicament metaphorically: "My tongue has been cut out". Ilinka's children have all married and moved away, foresaking Macedonian tradition in the process. In the final scene Ilinka decides to move back to the "old land", but her husband appears and coaxes her to go with him, into death. Even
at this penultimate moment, family ties dominate. Ilinka's last words are "I should have said goodbye to the kids".


This play is about the rorting of Australia's compensation laws. But it is also about cultural displacement and the tendency for expatriate groups to enshrine and perpetuate outmoded cultural elements. It takes Cole's compensation payout to get him in the position to visit Macedonia, and when he does he is treated like a foreigner. The Macedonia he left no longer exists. He has been unable to progress with the modern Macedonia.


In this short piece of entertaining silliness — a response to a fishing report which states "Bream are biting well at portions of Seven Mile Beach" — the fish are so large and ferocious they ignore the bait offered and "bite at portions of the beach", making rocks and boulders disappear.


The article preceding this poem relates the news that an ex-Jamberoo resident has been knighted. In a clever response similar to "The Champion Fish Lie" author O.C.C. offers a witty pun on the name Jamberoo, while at the same time casting aspersions upon the populace of the town for their drinking habits, thus reinforcing the myth created by other poems such as "Fuit Jamberoo" (qv).

The image-lush verse does justice to its subject — a true remnant of the Illawarra as it was a split second before Europeans hacked their way through it in search of cedar. Just as the Minnamurra Rainforest Reserve is a triumph for conservation, so this poem champions the cause.

---


Here the lush Minnamurra rainforest — during a thunderstorm — is likened to an underseascape where "storm beats on the plumwood tips/ like waves over a coral reef" and "Cedars sway in the slanting lines of rain,/ a kelp-forest under sea". As in O'Connor's "Minnamurra Forest" the remnant of earlier Illawarra lushness is a tangle of growth and teeming with wildlife. This poem may be depicting an Illawarra as seen by nineteenth century poets, but O'Connor's poetry speaks the language of a lifetime spent surrounded by the antipodean landscape. This Illawarra is familiar territory, but no less inspiring because of it.

O.E. "[Untitled]." *Illawarra Mercury,* 17 May, 1861: 3. [verse]
This poem gushes eloquently about a flower which is “The Queen-flower of this land,” which grows in a secret spot in the Illawarra. There is no clue to which plant genus is being described. It is possible, at such an early stage in exploration, that the narrator doesn’t have a name for it.

Ogilvie, W.H. “The South Coast.” *South Coast Times*, 25 Aug. 1906: 3. [verse]

The sea and waterways — the Shoalhaven River, Conjola and Ulladulla Bay — dominate this poem, viewed from a “steamer” as it “rounds the Moruya bar” and travels along the south coast. In a digression, the narrator also describes the view from the top of Bulli Pass, a favourite early poetic view.


This poem makes reference to the fact that Port Kembla ("The Port") township was, in 1985, the centre of street prostitution in the Wollongong area. Its harbour — once Tom Thumb's Lagoon but now gouged and deepened to accommodate huge industrial ships — is painted as a pollution-ridden "basin" inhabited by "poisoned poisonous fish" which the locals ("Crowds of Asians, Greeks, immigrants") catch and eat. A sense of hopelessness, of a place polluted beyond the point of no return, pervades the poem.


This poem connects Austinmer with “yuppies from the north shore” of Sydney — the “wardrobe drinkers” of the poem’s title.
The narrator is an Austinmer local who moved from Sydney himself “30 years ago/ before the wardrobe drinkers”; before the trend was set. The narrator prefers the past (“in 1941/ as a telegraph delivery boy I made/ 13 shillings 10 a week”) and technology less sophisticated than satellite navigation: “you want the best view? Sublime Pt/ Lookout, right down the coast ...”


Written in free verse, this short poem — two unrhymed quatrains and a final unrhymed couplet — describes the rock pools which sit at the edge of the escarpment and in which people have bathed for health for generations. The mood is serene. Even the plummeting of the water over the precipice, stretched as it is over two lines, seems to be in slow motion.


This poem laments the closing of some unnamed industry in Dapto, which involved “the furnace roar” and “the rich ore.” A clue for those who know might be the mention of a “Blower wheel” and the description of workers as “Old wheelers.”


The narrator, who is standing for political office, voices indignation, in a characterisation of an Irish brogue, that one of his countrymen is refusing to vote for him. The reasons are hinted at in the line “Tis true that I went to Shoalhaven for
Berry," a reference to Alexander Berry, who was considered by many to be a ruthless industrialist.


This is a love poem, published in the first few years of Palmer's married life. (The poem above it on the *Bulletin* page relates her thoughts during pregnancy.) The backdrop is Kiama, with the inevitable ocean and cliffs, hills and forests, here seen from inside a boat away from land. A short review of the collection *Shadowy Paths*, from which this poem is taken, appears after it here. The anonymous reviewer (probably A.G. Stephens) writes that Palmer "strikes no new note in our Australian gamut", yet this poem offers a brisk and unusual metric pattern which, combined with a lucidity of expression devoid of cliche and British emulation, places the poem high amongst Illawarra poetry to this point.


This musical is described in its opening song "Masters of Ceremonies — Patter Song" as a journey "through history in song, dance and rhyme" (3) It is a melodrama/pantomime with all the deliberate elements of villian, heroine (two in this case), rescuing hero and many moments of self-referential humour which take
the actors out of character to comment on the script and story itself. The lighthearted musical frolic is, however, centred around some serious incidents from history.


This play is all about the trauma of change associated with a 1950s country town becoming a modern city and, though it is presented as a tongue-in-cheek musical pantomime, the message about developers taking advantage of small town business owners is clear. This play is a recontextualised retelling of Wonderful Wollongong.


This is a re-presentation of history, very much in the style of the two Spence novels from the 1960s (qv). In Bass & Billy Martin the boy who accompanied Bass and Flinders when they sailed to the Illawarra in the small boat "Tom Thumb" is given a name and a fabricated history of his own, albeit taken from Bass's servant boy, who existed, and very closely connected with events as they appear in official records. In Flinders' journal Billy Martin gets this small mention: "We called these Martin's Isles after our young companion in the boat" (Flinders, 14). The narrative of Bass & Billy Martin, however, is from the boy's perspective, thus rearranging the hierarchy of history.

Consistent with early *Bulletin* practice, this poem is preceded by a news item, this one about the Rev. D.J. Knox, the then Rural Dean of Wollongong, who is quoted as saying it is "a deplorable thing to see young married women selling their perambulators and cots and buying golf-clubs and motor-cars". The poem extols the Reverend's views in satirical agreement, at the same time skillfully incorporating some of the nation's paranoia about the threat of a Japanese invasion and birth control. Here is documentation of the effects created by a perceived challenge to entrenched values, as Australian women began to unburden themselves of the positions created for them by a crumbling patriarcal hierarchy. The city poet is indignant at the Rev. Knox's impertinence in offering worldly wisdom from such an insignificant outpost as Wollongong.


In this poetic view from Bulli Tops, the lights of suburban Wollongong are "the stars of man", blended into a single entity with "the sea and the sea of stars". This night view from the lip of the escarpment shares a set of common images with a number of other Illawarra poems and the "dark wind" which "haunts eternity" is generic to the gothic elements of Fitzpatrick (qv) and Pretty (qv).

Plummer, John. "The Kembla Disaster." *South Coast Times*, 16 Aug. 1902: 3. [verse]

With the repeated cry "Dead! Dead! Dead!" this poem evokes the confusion and fear experienced by relatives and friends of the
miners trapped in the Mount Kembla mine. The narrator is one of the miners’ wives (“Tell me, men, is my husband safe?”), and events leading up to the fateful day are remembered with the same sense of irony adopted by Wendy Richardson in her play *Windy Gully*, about the same disaster (qv).


The same graveyard as that in “The Graveyard on the Beach at Wollongong” by C.H.M.D. (qv) is described here. In this earlier version the water has not begun to wash the graves away as it does later, but there is a hint of things to come in the lines “The sand creeps upwards from the yellow shore, / And laps the tombs, twice burying the dead.”


In five parts this poem follows a rough, sometimes overlapping chronology of the Powell generations, beginning with the birth of the narrator ("Wollongong had me for a son, dumb and squalling") and ending with the narrator as an old man ("object: Powell — three quarters blind and lumpy"). This Illawarra is the railway, its stations "gritted with coal mines".

with Illawarra Writers and the University of Wollongong, 1994: 56.
[verse]

The escarpment is central to this poem. The narrator and some friends are climbing up the cliff face towards a dumped car, while hang-gliders sail about them. Aspects of modern civilization — in particular car theft and joyriding — are interwoven with gothic images of "the hang-/gliders hovering above us like vultures", reminiscent of the picture painted by poems like William Pitt's "Driving Home" (qv) and Peter Skrzynecki's "The Hang-Gilders" (qv) which also look at hang-gliding.


The activity of fishing and the act of communicating are inextricably intertwined in this poem. The surface of the water beneath the bridge becomes the page/stage upon which the fisherman/wordsmith writes/speaks. He casts words into the water, as bait, and reels in complete sentences, much as small pieces of fish might catch whole fish. The poem is about itself; a clever, almost paradoxical, self-referential metaphor for the creative process which brought it into being. The icons of Windang, the pelicans, are here looming large "scooping meaning from the lake", and the activity of fishing — such an established Illawarra pastime — is an important element in the metaphoric construct.

The poet/narrator in this poem apologizes for painting dystopian word-pictures in some previous poem which has offended officialdom. Accused of using morbid cliches about pollution, unemployment, homeless kids and moral degradation, the poet decides to change his tune, and so begins a rewrite using cliches of a brighter hue. There is an obvious clash here between the chroniclers of dystopia and the engineers of the Tourist Illawarra, which is bound to occur when heavy industry is situated in such picturesqueness.

*Quarry.* Shellharbour, NSW: Roo Theatre archives, 1990(?) [ms playscript — musical]

This play is about the blue metal quarry workers of Kiama at the beginning of the twentieth century, and a mining disaster which brings them together.


Wendy Richardson's first play is a re-creation of events which led up to the Mount Kembla mining disaster of 1902, offering the stories of the relatives of those who died. There is a chronological reordering which helps to ironically connect otherwise disparate events. Fate is a dominant motif.


The threat of change drives the main protagonist Charlie in *Gracie Ann.* The past and the future are in conflict. Charlie
represents traditional fishing methods (raising issues about livelihood versus conservation) while the Government Man is the future of stricter quotas and crippling fees (raising another issue about conservation at a cost of over-intervention). In this particular battle the past loses. At the end of the play the Gracie Ann is turned into a charter boat to take advantage of the Illawarra's status as a tourist destination, offering visitors the chance to be "fishermen for a day." (142)

---


In this play the Illawarra is a backdrop for a set of universal images of World War Two, in this case connected with the women who stayed at home. The war is more dominant than the geographical location, which only appears in detail in the setting description at the beginning of Act 1: "Built early in the century, NELLIE MARTIN's weatherboard house stands on Cliff Road overlooking Belmore Basin, the lighthouse, the steelworks to the south and Bulli to the north." (18) Other brief mentions of the Illawarra appear throughout as reminders of the location.

---

Slacky Flat. Ms. Theatre South Archives. Bridge Theatre, Coniston NSW.

Many issues about worker redundancy and exploitation of the workforce are looked at in this play. The action takes place during the Great Depression, with families evicted and camps being set up for the consequent homeless. People steal live poultry to eat, and Railway Police guards are engaged to stop mass fare evasion on trains as the population moves around
looking for work. The point is, people are destitute because the system has failed, but government policy deals only with the symptoms.


The conflict between past and future is personified through the character Thelma in this play. Thelma represents the elderly, who are relegated to the fringes of society. She is somewhat demented, so her grasp on the present is tenuous.


This is a brief sketch of the lives of Mrs & Mr Beam, one a housewife, the other a steelworker. There is a sense of hopelessly repetitive daily patterns, in which Mrs Beam sleeps late, while her husband goes to the steelworks at Port Kembla "to worship the fire/ and the smoke/ black-white, yellow-white, orange-white/ soaring and streaming". A juxtaposition of images — the beach at Shellharbour and the steelworks — offers a metaphor for much of the modern Illawarra: an ugly and polluted face of industry grafted onto the natural aesthetic. Like much modern Illawarra poetry, this poem is an introverted perspective; a record of the personal cost of progress.


This poem is divided into three loosely-related parts. Part III — subtitled "Mr and Mrs Beam" — is virtually the same as
Riddell's poem "At Shellharbour." Shellharbour, so close to the steelworks at Port Kembla, nurtures different forms of insanity. The human cost of progress is brought into focus.


This is a fairy tale, replete with mythical and magical images. The shells along the shore of the river, where it empties into the ocean, are "fairy shells." Rangoon Island is "like an ogre's castle domineered by fairy law" where "the mermaids and the elves come out." Minnamurra is described as "a clump of little shanties" which seem to be "a thousand miles from nowhere."


Jamberoo is a holiday destination for the narrator. Small rituals, sounds and smells invoke memories of past holidays. Sanctuary offers the sounds of nature, real and imagined: "rush, hush/ of water through/ chaos of boulders/ clenches of sinew-/ roots in the/ mountain's bowels".


A postcard representation of the Kiama sea, the cliffs and the lighthouse, with a warning of the danger which lurks in waiting for careless holiday makers, this poem lists much of the sea life
which the earlier poets either were unaware of, or deemed not important enough to include.


The inevitable reference to D.H. Lawrence and his bush of "pale gums" and his restless ocean appear. A couple who are romantically connected offer parallels with the Lawrences' marriage. Certainly, the two people in this poem are inseparable from the coastal landscape.


This two-act play about two policemen who are suspected of stealing money from the station safe, is set somewhere in suburban Wollongong, though the setting seems almost irrelevant to the action. Everything takes place in two rooms inside the police station, some time around 1978 when the play was written. Here, as in a lot of the nineteenth-century poetry in this bibliography, the Illawarra is used as a metaphor for the middle of nowhere, or at least a place far away from the disciplinary influence of larger city police precincts.


This poem is about the numerous broken promises from Sydney politicians regarding improvements to the Illawarra, with hints at corruption in high places. Names meaningless to the modern reader are punned.

A response to a news item about a quarry accident which left four men dead and a number injured, this poem uses highly emotive, archaic language and biblical allusions in rhyming (heroic) couplets. The final stanza is a poetic plea for donations to relatives of the dead miners, so it is poetry with practical application. The plea seems to have worked, as an article covering The Bombo Disaster Benefit appears in the *Kiama Independent* of 8/6/1888.


The poet takes the opportunity to land a blow in the Sydney vs Illawarra bout, when responding to an article about "Bulli electors [who] strongly resent the old name of 'Woronora' being changed to 'Wollongong'. The last stanza of the 5-line poem reads "Oh, have you ever been to Wollongong?/ If you never have, and never do, you can't go wrong". The only excuse the writer can dredge up for this advice is that "cows graze in the main street".


This poem covers the events surrounding the 1887 mining disaster. The names of rescue heroes "MacCabe, Green and Evans" are repeated often, and an inevitable plea for donations for widows appears in the final few lines of the poem's long single stanza.

This autobiographical, first-person narrative covers a trial for the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, from the viewpoint of a visitor/crew member on the ship which is first to finish. The trial takes the ships overnight from Sydney Harbour to Tom Thumb Island and back again. The unpredictable ocean so favoured by early Illawarra poets here gains new importance because of the narrator's position upon it.


This is the poem which inspired a sequel, published 14 days later ("The Blacksmith, The Premier, The Kiama Ghost and the Fifty Pounds" — qv). In this earlier poem the Kiama Ghost encourages the blacksmith Thomas Ball to approach Henry Parkes about a job. As in the later poem, the ghost represents the premier's humbler past as the Member for Kiama, and the blacksmith is meant to stand for the high unemployment which preceded the Depression of the 1890s.


This is an ode to the “beauties” of the wilderness as it existed in the Illawarra at the time, full of religious references and Creation imagery. Ironically, this earliest retrievable poetic glimpse of the Illawarra available to us today, is written from the viewpoint of a narrator who is about to leave it after many years' residence.

The tourist attraction which has become part of the modern Illawarra's identity — Jamberoo Fun Park — is captured sharply in this short (two-stanza) poem. The poem offers no critique of the politics which surrounded the development of the site.


The danger, so obvious to the colonial pioneers of the early 19th century, is still apparent here. The cliffs of Kiama have escaped the taming influence of 'civilization'. Disasters still occur here. The tourist commercialisation of danger is attacked in this poem.


A pastime now closely associated with the Illawarra's escarpment cliffs, hang-gliding here is linked with the history of technology: "Reaffirming Leonardo's vision". Gothic images of "sailcloth shaped like bats' wings" abound, and the unforgiving Illawarra meteorological conditions ("Stanwell's slashing winds") are reiterated.

---. "Scarborough Cemetry." *Twentieth Century,* Autumn 1971: 268. [verse]

A gothic gloom descends upon three night visitors to the Scarborough cemetery (sic). The unpredictable Illawarra weather seems to conduct proceedings.

[verse]

This clever, songish, Lawonesque verse has little to do with the Illawarra, save that the tale's antagonist is a bushman from Jamberoo. The adventure takes place "up the Murrumbidgee way" and is about two men who are conned by the cunning 'hero.'


The rhyme scheme of this poem, so obvious in its original Croatian version, does not survive into the English translation. However, the feeling of loss for a former home does. The common element of the Illawarra migrant experience is voiced in the description of Wollongong as the "Steel city".


Some of the rhyme does survive in the English version of this poem, which reads like a ditty to be sung to the rhythm of a swinging beer glass. It is a satirical treatment of the stereotypical footy-playing, beer-swilling, Holden-driving Aussie working-class male. The irony of the narrator's pride that "I am Aussie" is lost entirely in the English version, but in Croatian the language is the whole point.

Except for obvious discrepancies such as the single-day's journey from Appin to somewhere just north of Kiama — in 1825, when the landscape was still regarded as jungle — *The Switherby Pilgrims* is an authentically-constructed story of displacement. *The Switherby Pilgrims* relates a migrant experience from early in Australian colonial times, when convicts were still being transported to Port Jackson, and free settlers like Arabella Braithwaite (Missabella) in Switherby were being given land grants as incentive to live in wilderness areas such as the Illawarra. It is the blowhole at Kiama which brings an end to the main antagonist Gracechurch, who has kidnapped his young son Robin and escaped into the fog along the beach at what is probably present-day Shellharbour.


This novel picks up the story of the Switherby Pilgrims five years after their arrival in the Illawarra. There are "riches" of value to the colonists, yet the unpredictable weather — idyllic at one moment, dangerous the next — makes the Illawarra a place for only the hardiest pioneers, which is what the Switherby Pilgrims are.


This lament begins with praise for the natural beauty of the Illawarra landscape, with each stanza beginning "In thy garden, Illawarra". It is a much more positive viewing than is the usual case for the *Bulletin* at the time. By the second stanza the reason for the poet's rosey view becomes apparent. He has fallen in love
with a woman from the Illawarra, and expends a stanza comparing her to the topography and flora. The third stanza reveals how the poem does, in fact, sit comfortably with the *Bulletin*’s campaign of Illawarra bashing. The poet’s love has died, and now the Illawarra turns from a "garden" into a "sepulchre".


In chapter 22 (of 25) of this book, there is a page-long fictionalised version of a supposed real-life event at South Clifton. Efforts by rail workers to assist the crew of a sailing ship are thwarted by the inopportune arrival of a train at the dangerous section of track. The train is ushered through, but the ship has disappeared by the time the railway gang is free to attend to it.


In a local newspaper article this Roo Theatre production is described as "a celebration of the pioneers: the story of our past. Its characters are cedar cutters who opened up the Kiama-Jamberoo area, farmers, quarrymen, convicts, personalities straight from pioneer times. All had to struggle to survive."


Described in the *Illawarra Mercury* of 2 December, 1987 as "a bright, happy show which covers a group of disgruntled picnickers who journey into the rainforest but are so preoccupied
... it takes the park ranger to entice the group to 'stop, look and listen' and absorb the beauty of the rainforest.”

---. *We Shall Work, We Shall Live 2.* Shellharbour, NSW: Roo Theatre archives, 1988. [ms playscript — musical]

This play continues the story from the end of the Great War where Part 1 left off, and according to press clippings includes the effects of the Great Depression on the people of the Illawarra, as well as an affectionate look at the youth cultures of the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

---. *Kemira (Sit-in).* Shellharbour, NSW: Roo Theatre archives, 1993. [ms playscript — musical]

This play is, according to the *Illawarra Mercury* of 24 September, 1993, “based on the mining dispute that rocked Wollongong in October 1982,” in which 32 miners set up camp for 16 days at the Kemira mine in protest over massive job losses.


Though the Austlit database lists only one chapter from this book — "The Alleys" — as being Illawarra-related, the whole book is, in fact, a series of anecdotes and reminiscences set in the vicinity of the Budawang Range, east of Ulladulla. The book is peppered with pieces of verse inspired by the prose which accompanies them. The narrator is 93 years old when he relates the tales in 1983, and many of the characters are elderly people
he met or heard about in his youth. The book is filled with characters of super-human strength, endurance and ingenuity.


This is not an explanation at all, but rather a series of questions which challenge the stereotyping of characters on a train trip from Sydney to North Wollongong.


The gaze of "the wanderer" — D.H. Lawrence — takes in everything as he sits at the jarrah table in "a big room with five doors". Everything he sees becomes this poem, which manages to convey the isolation of the writer within Wyewurk. From the house's verandah Lawrence glimpses the Illawarra as he writes and the glimpses are interwoven with the prose of his Australian novel *Kangaroo* (qv).


This play is about the exploitation of women workers and the role of women in patriarchal Australian society. It is set in 1982, and ends with the industrial action which allowed women to work in formerly male-only positions at the Port Kembla steelworks.

This play is set in the 1990s, when the building of the Resort Beach International Resort offers a move away from the grip of the steelworks for Barbara, who decides to retrain as a hostess. Barbara is initially presented as a loveable rogue, someone the audience can sympathise with, even when she is sprouting irreverent and politically-incorrect statements about multicultural Illawarra.

Tompkins, P. "Within a Mile of Dapto." *Illawarra Mercury*, 4 June, 1885: 2 [verse]

This is a songish poem of the narrator's love for a Dapto store owner's daughter. He sends notes to her via a friend, because the father does not approve of his amorous intentions.

"To Wollongong." *Illawarra Mercury*, 6 Feb., 1872: 4 [verse]

This long poem, without stanza breaks, laments the exodus of Wollongong citizens to Sydney ("For jarring discord in a city large") and the goldfields ("For grinding toil in mines of yellow gold"). It also employs the device of a "stranger" who seems to appear out of the ocean, to wax philosophically about the state of humanity.

This is a powerful poem, befitting its subject: the powerful sea which seems to concentrate its energy at the hole in the volcanic Kiama cliffs. The poem builds in intensity over seven 6-line stanzas, like the succession of waves which precede a blowhole 'blow', only to be spoilt/dissipated by a weak and contrived final stanza, like the blowhole on a bad day.


There are many similarities between this poem and S.E.W's "The Catastrophe at Bombo, Kiama" (qv) which was written a year later, as well as the untitled (qv) poetic response to the same disaster which appeared in the *Bulletin* of 14 May 1887.

---. “An Appeal for the Widows and Orphans of the Bulli Disaster.” *Illawarra Mercury*, 14 April, 1887: 3 [verse]

This poem reinforces the appeal at the end of M.J. Shannon’s poem (qv) for donations to help the widows of the Bulli Disaster.


This is a workers' song or chant concerning the lack of work during the Great Depression, and the Illawarra is the only region to be mentioned twice — surely a reflection of its importance as a centre of industry.

"[Untitled]." *Bulletin*, 14 May 1887: 6. [verse]

An anonymous poetic response to a news item about the mayoress of Sydney, Lady Darley, who was soliciting signatures for
a card to be sent to Queen Victoria offering condolences on the death of her husband. The poem offers comparisons between the queen's grief and that of the widows and orphans of eighty men who died in the Bulli mine disaster, which is reported more fully in the Bulletin of 29 June, 1895. Here is another wonderful example of the wit and venom of the early republicans.

"[Untitled]." Bulletin, 4 April 1891: 19. [Poem]

A short (12 lines) tongue-in-cheek poetic response (hidden within a Wolfe's Schnapps advertisement) to a news item about "J.T. Cole, president-elect of Jamberoo School of Arts, Kiama", who had the audacity to proclaim that this insignificant backwater had a "high reputation for intelligence and culture" to maintain. A picture emerges which suggests that, in the pages of the Bulletin, when we see the word "Jamberoo" we are meant to read "Woop Woop" or some other appropriate metaphor for the middle of nowhere. Jamberoo, it seems, was commonly used by the Bulletin to hone its urban chauvinism.


The anonymous poet/columnist (who signs as "The Bookfellow" at the bottom of the column in which this short verse appears and is therefore probably A.G. Stephens) has managed to combine 14 Aboriginal place names to create a six-line poem, while at the same time entering the Bulletin debate about the appropriation of Aboriginal words by the colonial regime. The 14 names which make up the poem are of new federal electorates, and Stephens remarks snidely "Why not preface federal parliament with a corroboree to that chant, instead of the time-
dishonoured prayer?" The suggestion is that English words sound much more dignified and 'civilized', while the Aboriginal words are simple, meaningless gibberish. The only word connected with the Illawarra which appears is Cambewarra.


This short story takes place in Sydney, but there are numerous references to a "beach house" somewhere "down the coast" which is a refuge from the stress of city living. The location is never directly mentioned, but the description of a planned metropolis — an "invisible city" of furrows and dozed roads, now overgrown — points to the Federal land around Jervis Bay, south of the Shoalhaven River. Statements such as "It always rains down there" reinforce the city dweller's view of the Illawarra climate as harsh. A reference to "a grave in the bush" connects this harshness to the earlier, life threatening Illawarra depicted in nineteenth-century poetry.


In six parts this poem chronicles the visits of a middle-aged son to his aged mother in Bulli Hospital, which is "nestled in the dark green escarpment". The son is a miner working in the Bulli mine, and the change of shifts referred to in this poem's title is the sound of "the whistle calling shift changes/ at the mines", by which the aged hospital residents tell the time. The change of shifts could also be referring to the passing of generations.

The Illawarra landscape is a woman in this poem and all the elements of the depicted scene are metaphorical body adornments. This highly-personal, introverted poetic vision of the Illawarra is what differentiates the modern response to the landscape from that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.


In a completely-lower-case stream of consciousness narration dotted with colloquial dialogue, this piece relates Brett Whiteley's death from the viewpoint of a cleaner working at the Thirroul motel where Whiteley died. Her concerns are for mundane issues. The death of the artist is of little importance to her. Her main concern when the press arrives at the motel is that "I could lose the dole y'know if they saw me on TV". There are numerous levels of meaning operating here, not the least of them the gentle irony of Bette Midler singing "some say love is like a hunger ... an endless aching need" on the radio — a reference to Whiteley's heroin addiction.

Images universal to 1990s motels abound in this short five-quatrain poem. There is a skateboarder in the car park, and a loud drinking session in progress somewhere nearby. The Illawarra landscape intrudes only gently on the narrator's reverie at the motel's jukebox: "Occasionally the flourescent line/ of a wave breaking/ illuminates the shallow darkness/ of the harbour".


Here the narrator looks at an image of herself in a painting she has salvaged from "amongst the relics and rubbish/ on top of the wardrobe". The painting is the narrator's past, and is somehow indistinct "So no one could tell it was me/ pregnant and alone/ in that old house at Shellharbour". This poem is about stasis amidst change.


The rural farmland scenery of Gerringong becomes entwined with images of a parting relationship. Shane does not physically leave in this poem; he metaphorically dissolves into the rural scenery.


This poem is about class. A working-class narrator addresses a "you" who is obviously and ostentateously well-off. The addressee
and his female companion "drive/ your matching sports cars/ with personalised number plates." That this is an Illawarra poem is revealed in the caustic lines "in a flash of mirrored shades/ coming down Bulli Pass/ at strange hours/ driving your car/ back from the airport." Wollongong is dystopia: "the tender veins,/ and gritty arteries/ of our city in stasis." There are cryptic clues to the unethical origins of the rich person's wealth, both in the poem's title and the lines "and South Africa/ might go out of business tomorrow."

---


In Westbury's usual highly-skilled wordplay, this poem offers remembered glimpses of a car trip on the Princes Highway south of Wollongong. Instantly-recognisable universal images of garage restrooms and roadkill complete the picture of a society no longer in control of its destiny. Though its imagery is not so gothic and its future not so hopeless, "After-image" sits comfortably as an addendum to Conal Fitzpatrick's dystopia.

---


This poem is about one man's anonymity in a place called Steel City. The Illawarra is a multicultural site where "latin fathers/ gather at the playground/ after school/ to meet their
knee-high children/ and walk them home." No one notices this particular father's "small acts of love", and his thoughts are in his country of origin where "he is still the prince."


As with much of Deb Westbury's poetry, the Illawarra landscape triggers more personal concerns. Personal tragedies are hinted at but not always directly exposed. In this poem the narrator imagines the headland at Austinmer to have the profile of a 12-year-old girl who committed suicide by riding her bike off its edge. The narrator's connection is chronological: "She died as I was born". The central extratextual tragedy (the author's breast cancer operation?) is not revealed directly. It is framed only by this poem written the night before.


What begins as a story about the narrator lying amidst gravestones in the cemetery at Wombarra watching for the fins of whales in the ocean, turns to introspection as the narrator dwells upon some cryptically revealed past event involving a "murderer, rapist, accuser". The second-last stanza: "I look to the eggs I am breaking,/ for the body has a mind of its own/ and a purpose I do not recognize" may refer to abortion, but it is the narrator's dwelling upon it which is the poem's concern.

With clumsy internal and end rhyme, and overly-poetic syntax, this poem instructs the reader about climbing Mount Keira.


In this poem the lines "long Pacific seas break into foam/upon an iron-bound coast" bear a striking resemblance to other early verse about Kiama. The "long green hills" west of Kiama appear, a hint of the escarpment which is seen as a protective barrier, keeping the arid interior of the continent from invading the coastal garden.


Natural bushland and unnatural flotsam - intrusive elements of pollution discarded by human inhabitants - sit side by side in this poem, which offers a calm acceptance of the littered landscape. The geo- and the techno- are not so much juxtaposed as transformed by one another into a third, new possibility. Human beings, unlike the garbage they create, cannot be integrated.

The narrator of this poem is “caught breathless” by the sight of the moon casting shadows upon the mountain, and reflects upon his own situation, “finding crows-feet shaping my face, / grey hairs insisting in my beard.”


Very little reference is made to the actual geographical landscape, except “‘The whitest sand/ in the world’” as a general quote from tourism material. This vignette is more concerned with a body surfer and a woman who “floats with her breasts to the sun” observed by the narrator and some undescribed companion.


The 87 year old man in this poem recounts his pioneering days in the Illawarra:

but logs to cut and haul  
to the noisy timber mill  
then down Rixon's Pass  
to the busy station at Bulli.

This poem is mainly about the old man's continual searching for his forebears' graves in the National Park in which they are lost.

This poem appeared in the Colonial Monthly and the Bulletin after its Empire and Kiama Independent publications, under slightly varying titles with the author's name as F.S.W. (qv) There is one minor but important difference in the Bulletin's version. The final line of the middle stanza reads "Coming events cast their shadows before" to match the final lines of the first and last stanzas. In the other three versions this line reads "Coming events cast their brightness before", which sits more comfortably with the line before: "We see not the sun, but he heralds his dawning". Is the heavy hand of the Bulletin editor apparent here? Did the Bulletin make a mistake? Or did the author make a change before submitting to the Sydney paper? The AustLit database (when I consulted it in 1995) gave the earliest known year of publication for this poem as 1868 and did not connect it with the poem published in 1880 or the two 1864 publications. The Illawarra here is a dangerous place — with "glooming clouds" and ominous ocean storms sending waves roaring onto Kiama's cliffs — which awaits the taming hand of European civilization.

---. "Illawarra." Illawarra Mercury, 30 Aug., 1867: 2 [verse]

This poem is lush with idyllic descriptions of a wilderness which is yet to be affected by European settlement ("Illawarra is unaltered — here the freshness lingers yet!")

W.J.S. "The River Shoalhaven." Illawarra Mercury, 10 Jan., 1871: 4 [verse]
A racy pace with short, rolling lines emulates the swiftly flowing river described in this poem. The Shoalhaven River here is a dangerous entity littered with "frowning rocks" and other dangers. Its path over a waterfall is described dramatically: "Then with one exulting leap/ Plunges down the deep abyss."

Wynn, J. "A Year Ago Today." Illawarra Mercury, 24 March, 1888: 3

Published a year and a day after the mining disaster it commemorates, this poem's series of quatrains reiterates the events covered by the other four poems in the group which cover the Bulli mine explosion. It reads as if it belongs on a tombstone.


This is a poetic response in the drumbeat-like (read 'primitive') trochaic tetrameter made popular by Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha", to the death of an Australian soldier in the Sudan, the first "to die overseas while serving in an Australian expeditionary force", according to K.S. Inglis in The Rehearsal — Australia at War in the Sudan 1885 (119). The dead soldier was "a son of Illawarra" and two of the poem's three long stanzas are devoted to describing the idyllic beauty of Cordeaux and Kiama as they existed (at least in poetry) in 1885. Much is made of the contrast between the lush terrain of the soldier's birthplace and the bleakness of his desert gravesite.

---. "Fairy Creek." Illawarra Mercury, 4 Aug., 1885: 2
This poem celebrates the idyllic beauty of the Illawarra, as observed "In an hour at the end of the day."

---

"By Shore and Hill (Illawarra)." *South Coast Times*, 20 Jan. 1906: 5

[verse]

Twenty-one years after his first two publications of Illawarra poetry, Hubert Young appears again, still exuberant about the idyllic Illawarra views. This is a conversation between a poet and his muse, in which the poet remembers "the fairest place in the land" as "a spot between sea and range," suggesting he is no longer there.
Illawarra Region

WORKS CITED / CONSULTED


Hay, P.R. "Comment." *Overland* 105 - 1986: 25


Mansell, Chris. Letter to Peter Knox, January 10th, 1996.


Organ, Michael comp. Illawarra & South Coast Aborigines. Wollongong: Aboriginal Education Unit, Wollongong University, 1990


Submission to State Cabinet. Wollongong City Council, March 1997.


