Introduction

At the top of the hill in Katoomba Street stands the Blues café. It’s a site where the boundaries are blurred. Flimsy tables and chairs have been shunted out onto the pavement where they press up against the wall of the café. Closer to the road there are more tables and long benches provided for public use by the council. People buy takeaway food from the café and sit at the benches to consume their meal separated from the eat-in diners by nothing more than a few feet of pavement and the intermittent pedestrian traffic. In the window there’s a blackboard menu with the specials of the day. On two of its edges someone has chalked in a decorative pattern, a right angle of colour and form. Halfway along each axis the pattern stops. It’s replaced by a word. Around the boundary of the blackboard, in neat cursive script, the same word is repeated over and over: borderborderborder. It’s a graphic demonstration of the way in which we use words to establish boundaries.

This thesis examines the way in which stories, both literary and legendary, are used to mark out borders and claim land in the Blue Mountains. In his novel Bubble Reputation (1906) Alfred Buchanan wrote of the Mountains:

In the European sense they are still almost undiscovered. They can still be written about. Your up-to-date author, with that conscientious determination to acquire local colour which makes him such a mine of information in these days, has so far been content to leave them alone…. Meanwhile they are comparatively untenanted. (19 – 20)

Although I would dispute that little had been written about the Mountains before 1906 I find it interesting that he makes so clear a link between stories and
occupation. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988) Michel de Certeau argues that the function of stories is to “authorize the establishment, displacement or transcendence of limits” (123). But more than this stories “carry out a labor [sic] that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places” (118). He distinguishes between place, which he describes as proper and suggestive of stability, and space which is enacted in moments of time. Place has a single story; space has many.

Although land is claimed with stories, because space is always already inhabited, there remains an often unacknowledged anxiety about the legitimacy of the title. This consistently manifests itself in stories that invert the original proposition: we don’t claim the land, the land claims us. Eleanor Dark described the Mountains as “looking-glass country,” country that swallows up the unwary (*Little Company* 154). Moving through the landscape the familiar suddenly becomes foreign. In his essay “The Uncanny” Freud discussed the way in which the terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich* (homely and unhomely) diffuse through each other producing a sense of the uncanny. In *Uncanny Australia* (1998), Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs note that these two words “which at first seem diametrically opposed, in fact circulate through each other” (23). They suggest that a feeling of the uncanny will be engendered when a person’s home is made, somehow, unfamiliar. There is a strong sense of the uncanny in the Mountains which is related to the notion of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. Domestic space can segue into wilderness within a dozen steps; suburban lawns end in sheer cliffs.
In her essay "The Invisible Bush" (which recalls her childhood in the Blue Mountains) Sue Woolfe offers an unusual example of this commingling of the domestic and the wild. She describes the bush as possessing an occult wisdom:

Everything in the bush seemed full of distance, even up close it was different with a mysterious and meticulous knowledge. The merest egg-and-bacon bush on an escarpment held this secret knowledge, how it came there, how it thrived, its silence. And the long ripple of gullies and hills whispered into an unreadable horizon. (81)

Her father, who was an artist who renovated houses, brought the mysterious bush into their home, painting pictures of trees on the walls. But eventually he’d cover them up with a smooth coat of cream-coloured paint. Yet, despite the domestic façade, Woolfe knew that "the bush was underneath, another secret" (82).

The stories I consider are all located within the Blue Mountains, which can be a somewhat ill-defined entity. As David Foster so succinctly puts it, "In the beginning they were just the mountains the citizens of Sydney could see to their west" ("A Walk in the Southern Blue Mountains" 193). In The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia (1886) they are said to stretch from "the thirty-fourth parallel of latitude [that is, just north of Camden] northward to the Liverpool Range" (Garran 1: 52). No eastern or western boundaries are suggested, perhaps because the authors of the Atlas thought these were self-evident. These borders differ markedly from contemporary standards. In The Blue Mountains Re-Discovered (1996), Chris Cunningham defines the Mountains as "all the land bounded on the east by the Nepean and Hawkesbury Rivers, on the north by the Broken Back Ranges south of Singleton, and on the west by the Cox’s and Wollondilly Rivers. To the south it is difficult to fix an exact boundary but the rough country just north of the Mittagong-Bowral Road is as good an edge as any" (33).
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In the terms of this thesis, the Blue Mountains consist of the towns and villages along the Great Western Highway and their environs. It’s bounded on the east by Lapstone Hill and on the west by Victoria Pass (in the early days of the Western Road it would have been Mount York.) It includes the farmland of the Megalong and Burratorang Valleys (the latter now mostly covered by the waters of Lake Burratorang which was created when the Warragamba was dammed) and, as a kind of dormitory, Jenolan Caves. However, I’ve excluded those towns and villages which lie along the Bell’s Line of Road such as Kurrajong and Bilpin for the reasons outlined below.

I have defined the Mountains in cultural, rather than geographic, terms. The mountains to the north of the Grose Valley (see map over page) were known, at first, as the Carmarthen Hills while those to the south were the Lansdowne Hills. That almost arbitrary geographical distinction came to be reproduced culturally. In a 1985 report the Blue Mountains City Council noted that “the developed parts of the City, i.e., those parts which do not comprise purely National Park lands, follow two distinct ridges, separated from one another by the Grose Valley” (Zions 14). But the Report notes that “the nature of development and land usage on the two ridges is different... the main development within the City follows the Great Western Highway and Railway on the Southern Ridge” (14). The histories of these two regions share some similarities – both were reputed to be health-giving and both became retreats for the wealthy – but culturally the two areas are quite distinct from each other. The towns that dot the Bell’s Line of Road (the Northern Ridge) are more rural in character, they’re
quieter and the area has never embraced the intense, entrepreneurial tourism of the towns that developed along the Great Western Highway.

Figure 1: [Adapted from] Blue Mountains, map, Australian Registry of Tourism and Accommodation, http://www.arta.com.au/nswmaps/blue_mountains.html

In his essay “Imagined Counterpart: Outlining a Conceptual Literary Geography of Australia” Martin Leer suggests that “Australian literature has been more diligent in literally, metaphorically and self-consciously mapping the continent than almost any other old or emerging national literature” (1). Maps, charts, itineraries and surveys are found in many of the narratives I examine and are a major motif in this work. The Irish, who sought a utopic community beyond the Mountains, had a talismanic itinerary with the points of the compass marked on it. The adventurers of Treasure Cave of the Blue Mountains (1898) have a chart and a key imbued with occult symbolism and for which they are willing to put their lives at risk. Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth each wrote a log of their journey across the Mountains with every change in direction carefully noted.
Tom Drew, in Eleanor Dark’s novel *Return to Coolami* (1936), becomes enchanted with the romance of the road. The surveyor William Govett is eclipsed in the popular imagination by a bushranger who bears his name.

Certeau makes a distinction between maps and itineraries (or tours). He notes that the itinerary, which pre-dates the map, had its beginnings in the pre-scientific age and has its basis in narrative. The map on the other hand is a tool of the post-scientific age and seeks to dissociate itself from the itinerary which preceded it. As Certeau writes, “the map has slowly disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibility” (120). This doesn’t mean that the two forms no longer co-exist. As Certeau points out when we give someone directions we often include both actions and a hastily sketched map of the route (120), and guide books frequently combine the map with the tour (see Figure 2 over page). But, Certeau argues, the map “colonizes space” (121). For Certeau the difference between the map and the itinerary is the difference between seeing and acting. The map is “a totalizing stage on which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a ‘state’ of geographical knowledge” (121). It’s panoptic. The itinerary places a person, or people, within a landscape. Martin Leer describes this as getting “from the bird’s-eye view of geography to the ground-level, where geography surrounds as much as it underlies” (9).

W. Anderson demonstrates this difference in the journal he wrote of his world tour in 1879 – 80. He travelled by train from Sydney to Lawson but it wasn’t until he reached the Mountains and looked back over the country he’d passed through – that is, when his gaze became panoptic – that he realised their charm:
Figure 2: Favourite Bushwalks of the Blue Mountains, Blue Mountains Wonderland: Accommodation and Visitors Guide (Sydney: Jaynarda, 2003) 24.
Introduction

I found that we had journeyed through most beautiful country. The rich level meadows; the dense forests, the little villages and farm houses, together with the winding course of the river, formed a picture that would cause even old Diogenes himself, like Lot’s wife, to pause and turn around. (n. pag)

Central to this thesis is the concept of the liminal. The root of this word is *limen*, or threshold. It designates a boundary, a space of uncertainty. The Mountains combine the wild and the urban. Signs on Lapstone Hill and Victoria Pass describe them as “the city within a world heritage wilderness area”. They’re a liminal space located, both geographically and in literature, between the city and the bush. The expression of liminality in the Mountains is various. Because the Mountains are allegorised through the notion of passage rather than ascent they figure as both a nomadic space and as a place that enables mediation and communication. For the Darug and the Gundungurra the Mountains incorporated boundaries between themselves and other peoples. In *The Road to Botany Bay* (1988) Paul Carter describes Aboriginal boundaries not as static lines but as passages that enable communication and, in particular, communicated difference. He writes:

> it appears reasonably clear from the anthropological literature that, to speak very generally, the Aborigines recognize boundaries or, rather, decisive differences. But it is equally true that they are rarely able to say precisely where the boundaries lie. Boundaries are, indeed, *debateable* places: not just zones of uncertainty, but places where intertribal communications can occur in a controlled way. (163)

Ben Carlon,¹ whose father was one of the first European settlers in the Burragorang Valley, recalled such a meeting taking place there in the mid-nineteenth century. An emissary from the people who lived at Edwards River

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¹ Meredith points out that, although the account is written in the first person, Ben Carlon isn’t the author. William Cuneo, a friend of Carlon’s, actually wrote it.
made contact with the local Aborigines. The man didn’t immediately enter the
camp but waited about a quarter of a mile away. He was unarmed but carried an
elaborately carved stick which acted as a kind of passport and his arrival
necessitated the gathering of the scattered clans. Once everyone had congregated,
his message was delivered and a corroboree was held. Afterwards the man was
escorted from Gundungurra territory (Meredith *Last Kooradgie* 32).

The Irish considered the meeting of high ground and plain as a threshold
of enormous possibility and so they were able to incorporate the Mountains into
an imaginatively liberating geography. The Mountains became a potential point of
access between the new world and the old. This tradition contributed to later
fictions that imagined the Mountains as the site of a lost or fabled civilisation. The
landscape also furthered this notion. Travellers likened the terrain to the ruins of
an ancient castle or city and divined an air of antiquity which they could only
explain as the residuum of some forgotten culture or the detritus of a world before
people.

The Mountains are also perceived as a kind of limbo, a place that houses
the dead/ not dead: the undiscovered homicide, the consumptive caught on a cusp
between recovery and dissolution, the ghost endlessly pleading for help no one
can give. In Dymphna Cusack’s novel *Say No To Death* (1951), Jan Templeton
describes her time in the Mountains as akin to being on a “train that had been
shunted off onto a siding and stood there in the darkness, without direction and
without a destination... waiting” (69).

This notion of liminality, of the Mountains as a threshold, may illuminate
a perplexing question. Walter Skeat explains that the word threshold derives from
the Anglo-Saxon *threshwold*, literally the wood under an entrance door that is threshed or beaten by the tread of the foot (506). A threshold wears down because it is used so often. Since the 1870s, when Henry Parkes penned his poems in a cottage at Faulconbridge, many writers have made their home in the Mountains. Numerous poems, novels, short stories and even a few plays have been located here. Even when the area was largely unpopulated it seemed that few literate travellers passed through without recording their sojourn. In letters, verse, articles, journals and fiction the Mountains were described, eulogised and, occasionally, dismissed, but seldom ignored. Yet despite this strong association with writers and writing no one has ever written a literary history of the Blue Mountains.

The first edition of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* has an entry of 22 lines for the Blue Mountains but by 1994, in the second edition, the Mountains have disappeared altogether, apparently edited out of Australian literature.\(^2\) Suzanne Falkiner's *The Australian Writers' Landscape* (1992), a study on the place of landscape in Australian literature, has only two entries in the index under Blue Mountains. Admittedly both projects were enormous in their scope but how can such a prominent literary feature become almost indiscernible?\(^3\) In *The Forest of Symbols* (1967) Victor Turner points out that, in the liminal stage, the initiand has a physical but not a social reality because the former social state has been left behind and the new social state has yet to be achieved. This means that during the liminal period the subject of passage ritual is not generally

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\(^2\) This omission is possibly due to the publication of the *Oxford Literary Guide to Australia* (1987) which includes an entry not only for the Blue Mountains but also for individual villages in the Mountains.

\(^3\) Many writers have lived in, and been inspired by, the Blue Mountains and many novels, poems, short stories and even plays are located there.
Introduction

acknowledged, the subject is “structurally, if not physically, ‘invisible’” (95). This may explain why the Mountains are largely absent even from more general literary histories. They are a liminal space in many ways, but, in particular, they negotiate the transition between twoliterary landscapes: the city and the bush. Existing outside these dominant traditions they’ve become, in a sense, imperceptible.

The thesis is divided into four sections: “A Pocket Guide,” “Found,” “Passage” and “Lost”. Each of these sections is composed of chapters which, rather than progressing in a linear fashion, are organised around the themes indicated in the title. Each chapter explores a facet of the theme in relation to the Blue Mountains. To continue the spatial metaphor, the structure of the sections is akin to a person who stands on an eminence and slowly turns, examining the changing prospect.

A Pocket Guide

• Reasonable and Resembling
• With Vent’rous Tread
• The Western Road is the Romantic Road
• Pinnacled With Crags
• The Lonely Peaks
• The Summer Resort of the Jaded Denizens of Sydney
• Come to the Blue Mountains
• Ghost History

“A Pocket Guide” locates the reader within a cultural landscape. This section is formatted slightly differently to the remainder of the thesis. The most obvious structural influence for this section, as indicated by the title, are the many tourist guides and itineraries that I consulted while researching this project. Frank Walford’s *New Walks and Sights: Katoomba and Leura, Blue Mountains NSW* (n.d.) is typical of the genre and the epigraphs for each section are taken from it.
Introduction

countered. Turn to the left on the road, and a walk of 15 minutes will bring you to Waterfall Rock. The journey from Katoomba to Medlow, by this route, will be accomplished in half a day.

BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

A very popular route is "Anfford". When you reach the fork in the road from Medlow, where the fire is started, veer sharply to the left along the track to the right. Keep covered along the road as the rain, and keep covered by the road as the rain. Follow this path to its natural end and examine the view from every probable "up" or point.

A person who is not an expert bushman should not attempt this trip. There are no physical difficulties; the scrub is very thick, and the contours of the country very deceptive. A "noah's ark" would be needed to carry all his belongings, and probably water would be a necessity but the scenery is wonderful.

Join the trail by entering from the south until the first turn is reached. Once the creek, and then the second turn, or may, on your right. On the northern side (from which you approach) it will be found easier to descend upon a low hill. Follow this ridge upward to the inner general direction which you have been travelling, until you reach a point where it opens out, perhaps a little inside from the intersection where you descended. Here it is possible to descend into the pit which leads up to the point. Then follow the outer direction of the creek, and strike straight out from the hill. This will bring you to the track to Medlow, and about six miles from here. Strick up hill on the left of the creek, swing the road left towards its course (with the left of the waters for five hundred yards. When the top of the ridge is reached, follow it east on the opposite point, where a number of rock shelters will present itself, including Shearing Falls.

This trip involves very rough travelling, and the terrain is not well set for the casual journey. It should be undertaken only by practised walkers, and as few; too, the number of parties should be an expert minimum.

Although Arthurs Falls, may be reached dry, it is impossible to get down explicit directions for the hikers. Still, those who do not take rough travelling, and a certain amount of physical discomfort, may get to the top of the falls. See the direction in "A Mountain Pool." From this pool simply walk down the bed of Strickland, to the creek or about three miles until you are reached. It seems getting wet to the waist, and the elevation of some very rough country, but the sight is worth the discomfort sustained.

Figure 3: New Walks and Sights: Katoomba and Leura, Blue Mountains NSW, Frank Walford (Sydney: Wilson's Publishing, n.d.)

A less apparent influence is Eduardo Galeano's classic work *Memory of Fire* (1995), a history of the Americas, particularly Latin America. It begins with Pre-Colombian creation stories and continues to the 1800s. *Memory of Fire* consists of small chapters – Galeano calls them "texts"; or, at least, this is how the word has been translated – and, because of the way they are laid out on the page, they resemble a guide book. The chapters in "A Pocket Guide" are longer than Galeano's and the theory is more overt but I hope I captured a little of the panoramic feeling engendered by *Memory of Fire* and the way in which Galeano incorporated myth (both the traditional stories of indigenous people and the legends of Europeans) into his work.

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4 *Memory of Fire* collects three books which were originally published separately: *Genesis* (1985), *Faces and Masks* (1987), and *Century of the Wind* (1989).
A “Pocket Guide” is precisely that: it sketches the Mountains in broad outline, introducing a number of key stances that figure throughout the thesis. “Lost”, “Found” and “Passage” are more sustained journeys. The titles of the chapters in “A Pocket Guide” are quotes from within the body of the text. “Reasonable and Resembling”, while acknowledging a continuing Aboriginal presence, begins with the European naming of the Mountains. The Mountains captured the imagination of the fledgling colony and their exploration became the ambition of soldier and settler alike, but because they remained uncrossed for the first twenty-five years of colonisation they were perceived as a barrier. The myth of impenetrability contributed to the romanticisation of the area. “With Vent’rous Tread” outlines some of the first tentative journeys into the Mountains. The construction of the Western Road opened up the plains inland and for many years the Mountains were merely a way-station on the route to some other place.

“The Western Road is the Romantic Road” suggests that the Mountains were perceived as a sublime landscape. The rugged terrain certainly contributed to this perception but there was also an element of fear present. As Edmund Burke noted in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime” (36). In her essay “Travelling Through the Romantic Landscapes of the Blue Mountains” Julia Horne argues that the classification of the Mountains as sublime established a link “between European civilisation in Australia and that in Europe” (97) and that it contributed to the cultural acquisition of the Mountains.
Introduction

(96). She exhibits a postcolonial understanding of cultural acquisition, which she defines as "the ways in which cultures define or imagine spaces," noting that it's "extremely important when claiming land, especially that which is occupied by other cultures" (96). It should also be noted that the etymological root of sublime is limen the same as that for liminal. Notions of the sublime, as defined by Burke, inform the remainder of the chapters in this section, particularly "Pinnacled With Crags" and "The Lonely Peaks" which emphasise the solitude of the Mountains.

The association of the Mountains with the sublime has contributed to its construction as a therapeutic site. In the nineteenth century it was described as "The Summer Resort of the Jaded Denizens of Sydney" (Simmonds 3). Mountain air was routinely prescribed by doctors, particularly in cases of tuberculosis. The Mountains were also seen as inspirational. Brian Castro links these two notions in his novel Double-Wolf: "They used to come up here for cures, the mentally ill, the pulmonary, the artistic" (1). But the most persistent visitor is the tourist. Tourism is the main industry of the Mountains. Once again the sublime landscape fosters this interpretation of the area as "Come to the Blue Mountains" notes. The last chapter in "A Pocket Guide" is called "Ghost History". It looks at Spiritualism in the Mountains and also at the notion of unspoken, and yet significant, histories.

Found

- In(scribing) the Penal Colony
- Utopia
- Caesura
- Inheritance
- Legend
- Twenty Mile Hollow

"Found", the second section, explores various strategies present in the stories told of the Mountains, both literary and legendary, that allocate land. In it
consider myth and legend, explorers’ narratives, notions of inheritance, tales of land use that construct a judicial meta-narrative, the way in which certain groups are excluded from the country, and the sometimes torturous ways in which we make our way home. The term “found” isn’t merely the antonym of “lost” but is used in the sense of foundation. As Certeau argues, stories “found spaces” (123).

“In(scribing) the Penal Colony” discusses the persistent belief of Irish convicts, during the early years of colonisation, in a settlement which lay beyond the Blue Mountains whose inhabitants would take them in if they could only reach it. Contemporary commentators saw this belief as an example of extreme credulity. I argue that the tales were congruent with traditional Irish stories and that they allowed the convicts to gain some measure of control over their lives. Despite official attempts to inscribe a different story on the bodies of the convicts, first through corporal punishment and then by the ordeal of a terrible journey, the Irish retained their belief in a utopic elsewhere.

The Irish stories of an asylum beyond the Mountains inform Eleanor Dark’s historical trilogy *The Timeless Land* (1941), *Storm of Time* (1948) and *No Barrier* (1953) which I discuss in the chapter “Utopia”. Vincent Buckley notes that utopias are a persistent concern in Dark’s work. He suggests that her exploration of utopianism ends, at least within *The Timeless Land*, in “immersion in the primitive and the pre-historical” (45). I argue that Dark explores the tension between Aboriginal beliefs of place and a European notion of asylum which is framed by discourses of liberty and equality. This tension is revealed in the text by the stories which are told by the various characters and how these tales are received by their audience. The adoption or rejection of certain rituals and
customs, such as the symbolic use of a key or the assumption of European clothing, is also revealing. Both stories and rituals relate to different ways of owning or understanding the land.

The *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* defines caesura as a joint, and adds, “the essence of the concept of a joint is both a gap and the bridging of that gap, so that movement across it is smooth” (Preminger 160). “Caesura” explores the seamless way in which Aborigines were often edited out of European accounts about the Blue Mountains. Aborigines aren’t entirely absent from Blue Mountains texts – François Barrallier, for example, detailed his observations of the Gundungurra – and yet a number of nineteenth century writers claimed that the Mountains were uninhabited until they were “conquered” by Europeans. In fact, the Mountains were occupied by the Darug and the Gundungurra peoples and there is a considerable body of evidence that supports this, including archaeological remains and traditional stories, such as that of Gurangatch and Mirragan. A comparison of the writings of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth demonstrates some of the strategies that explorers employed in order to validate their writings as founding texts, a process which demanded that the country traversed be empty.

A number of adventure romances, which had as their goal the discovery of a lost civilisation, were published during the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century. These romances were almost always explicitly associated with Lemuria, a mythical continent which was said to pre-date Atlantis. (The Irish stories of an inland colony contributed to these fictions.) These novels are informed by notions of “Inheritance”, which is the title of this chapter. Although
the majority of these tales were set in remote inland locations one was situated near a major city: Henry Oliphant Smeaton’s *Treasure Cave of the Blue Mountains*. Robert Dixon argues that these romances often defined the national self in relation to an Other, the Aborigine. In *Treasure Cave of the Blue Mountains* Oliphant Smeaton symbolically “disinherits” Aborigines in a two-fold process. An Aborigine reveals the location of the cave to a European (a common feature of the Lemurian novel) and this transaction is presented as a bequest from a member of a dying race. Aborigines are also placed outside the line of inheritance by the introduction of a race of light-skinned people whose civilisation pre-dates Aboriginal occupation of the Mountains.

The Three Sisters is a Blue Mountains icon. So strong is its identification with the Mountains that it’s often used to represent the area as a whole. There is a narrative attached to this site which purports to be a traditional Aboriginal story. In this tale three women are desired by men from another tribe or, in some versions, the women are in love with the men. There is a battle between the two tribes and in order to prevent the sisters from being captured their tribe’s clever man turns them into stone. He is killed during the fighting and no one else has the knowledge to restore them to flesh and blood. Despite some similarities with Aboriginal stories from other areas the tale was actually written in the 1930s by a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl for the children’s page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Nevertheless, the story has been widely disseminated and is generally accepted as an Aboriginal traditional story. “Legend” examines the effect of this narrative, which implies a loss of Aboriginal spiritual authority and appropriates a cultural space leaving no room for other texts.
Introduction

“Twenty Mile Hollow” is the original European name for Woodford. It doesn’t reflect an aspect of the local landscape or a sentimental remembrance. It marks out a measurement as if that is the only point that differentiates the site from the rest of the landscape. In the 1830s it was the scene of a dispute over territory. Two men – Thomas Pembroke and William James – both laid claim to Twenty Mile Hollow. Pembroke applied for a land grant there but James was already in residence although he was squatting. Certeau describes the way in which such disputes are resolved judicially through the construction of a meta-narrative that reconciles the stories – records of acts – of the disputants. A decision on this conflict was delayed and for a time both men, and their families, occupied the location, their boundaries overlapping. It was eventually resolved through a review of the men’s performance as residents of the site. In a final twist to the story James was arrested and tried for the murder of his wife. Current accounts of the trial construct Pembroke as the author of James’ misfortune, suggesting he was the principal witness against his neighbour and inferring that this was another move in the argument over territory between the two. An examination of the records proves this to be false. “Twenty Mile Hollow” also lays the ground for one of the later chapters: “Revenant”.

Passage

- *A Dark Adapted Eye*
- *Intermezzo*
- *Initiation*

“Passage”, the third section, functions as an intermezzo – an interval between two longer pieces – thus reflecting its premise that the Mountains are a liminal space in its textual placement. “Passage” refers to the way the Mountains
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link city and bush. It also indicates the difference between European and American metaphors regarding peaks and those related to the Blue Mountains. The Mountains are allegorised through the notion of passage rather than ascent.

“A Dark Adapted Eye” contrasts the allegorical ascent by Petrarch of Mount Ventoux (as described by Simon Schama in *Landscape and Memory* [1995]) with a similar climb in Eleanor Dark’s *Return to Coolami* (1936). The journey in *Return to Coolami* – from Sydney, over the Mountains and down to the western plains – is akin to a pilgrimage. Within this schema the ascent of a mountain, – Jungaburra, the spirit place – represents a moment of revelation, although of a different type to that expounded by Petrarch. “A Dark Adapted Eye” defines a cultural construction of ascent and illumination which is then contrasted, in “Intermezzo”, with the very different metaphorical associations of the Blue Mountains.

The road across the Mountains follows a ridgeline and, while there are changes in elevation, there is no clearly discernible peak which one ascends and descends. Until the construction of the railway in the 1870s the Mountains were a place you passed through on your way to somewhere else. In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms the Mountains were a nomadic space. In the popular imagination bushrangers were co-opted as the nomads of the Mountains. Stories about bushrangers, with no apparent foundation in fact, became attached to sites such as King’s Cave at Linden and the use of an archaic term for waterfall – “leap” – spawned a romantic story of an escaped convict plummeting off a cliff rather than allowing himself to be recaptured. These romances obscured the presence of
Introduction

Aborigines (nomads in both the anthropological and the Deleuzian sense) and also
the surveyor, a figure set in opposition to the nomad.

The next chapter is entitled “Initiation”. Because of their liminal nature the
Mountains are a particularly suitable landscape for an initiand. The characters in
Return to Coolami are engaged in a rite of passage, they’re in a liminal state. The
time they spend in the Mountains is critical to the understanding of the four
characters who pass through there, and the ways in which they are transformed.

Found

- *The Lost Child*
- *Where the Bodies are Buried*
- *The Blue Heart, the Deadly Valley*
- *Revenant*

“Found” and “Lost” are two sides of the same coin. While “Found”
examined some of the ways in which we claim land, “Lost” looks at our fears that
the land will claim us. The word “lost” is ambiguous. Its primary meaning is
defined in the *Australian Pocket Oxford* as “vanished; not to be found,” but the
dictionary also offers complementary meanings which include: “astray; deprived
of help or salvation... swallowed up or engrossed in... thrown away upon” (473).
The Mountains are seen as predatory and the notion that they swallow up both the
living and the dead is pervasive. The area is perceived as a vast, illicit cemetery; a
newspaper article described them as “Sydney’s killing fields” (Koch 8 – 9). Of
course, the grave, mother earth, is the inevitable fate for all, and the home, as
Freud puts it, to which we all ultimately return (*Standard Edition of The Complete
Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* 12: 301).\(^5\) Perhaps the most potent

\(^5\) *Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* is hereafter indicated by *SE*. 
example of this consumption is possession. The Mountains are often represented as a haunted site. Ghosts are trapped in a certain place and a particular moment of time. In *Uncanny Australia* Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs note that “Ghost stories are traditionally about possession; one takes possession of a haunted house and is possessed in return; all this happens on a property which is usually imagined as malevolent and overwhelming” (32).

“The Lost Child” explores the familiar theme of the bush-lost child and how it has been employed in the Mountains. The lost child is a familiar figure in Australian literature and legend and, as Peter Pierce notes, there is a cross-fertilisation between fictional and factual stories of lost children. Because of the proximity of homes and tourist sites with wilderness the Blue Mountains are a fertile source of such stories. This is a reflection of lost child narratives in general in which the benevolent and beautiful face of the bush conceals a dark and dangerous underbelly. For Robert Scheckter this indicates an anxiety about European occupation of the country in which the lost child represents a loss of part of the national future — particularly if the child dies (69). Three of the lost child narratives which I consider were written in the nineteenth century and they exhibit many of the characteristics which Peter Pierce notes as typical of the genre in *The Country of Lost Children* (1999). However, unlike the majority of such fictional stories, each of these tales ends optimistically with the safe return of the children indicating a more hopeful national future. The fourth text I examine is Marie Bjelke Petersen’s novel *The Moon Minstrel* (1927) in which fiction and fact are blended. This novel introduces notions of damnation and redemption, which are taken up in the following chapters.
Introduction

“Where the Bodies are Buried” notes the perception of the Mountains as an illicit cemetery, using as examples Kylie Tennant’s unfinished manuscript “Murder Mountain” – which was sparked by the experience of a body being discovered on the boundaries of the property she was buying at Blackheath – and the trial of the infamous nineteenth century murderer Frank Butler. The Mountains are seen as a place that swallows people up, as a mausoleum, and as a site peculiarly suited to tragedy and violence. These attributes are seen as of primary cultural significance, as was demonstrated by the local outcry when it was believed that the site where one of Frank Butler’s victims had been buried was going to be part of a land development.

Dorothy Porter’s verse novel What a Piece of Work (1999) is also the story of a lost child — not a child who has been physically displaced but one who was sexually abused. It’s through the wider meanings of the term – astray, deprived of help, thrown away – that we understand Peter Cyren as a lost child. What a Piece of Work is structured as an inverse alchemical process—it traces the dissolution of Cyren rather than his redemption. The novel uses Jungian symbolism as its major metaphor but there is also evidence of another psychiatric discourse, Freudianism. As an adolescent Cyren had a sexual relationship with his mother, breaking what Freud considered to be the ultimate taboo. Freud argued that the mother defined the three major relationships that men had with women: mother, lover and destroyer. Within the novel the Megalong Valley is aligned with the mother, it’s “the blue heart, the deadly valley” (Porter 103), of Cyren’s experience, the site that defines his life. In a sense it’s his mother earth; the place that spawned him.
Introduction

Of all those immured in the landscape the most inextricably bound to place is the ghost or revenant. In E.J. Brady’s poem “The Western Road” the narrator imagines a succession of former travellers passing by his camp fire: prospectors, convicts, settlers, explorers, soldiers and bushrangers all make their way along the road. They’re only passing through on their way elsewhere, with one exception:

Then – well remembered in my dream – a picture came to me
Of bitter fruit that ripened once upon a roadside tree;
How travellers shunned the haunted spot and evermore forbode
To camp beside the hangman’s tree along the Western Road. (168 – 169)

It seems, of all the travellers, only the dead remain. More than this, they haunt, engaging in a perpetual encore. This is, after all, the origin of the word revenant: one who returns.

“Revenant” examines two texts written by Henry Lawson. As a young man Lawson lived at Mount Victoria and his writings from that time include two ghost stories. His poem “The Ghost at the Second Bridge” tells of the visitations of a woman in black who haunts the Victoria Pass. The poem was based on a local superstition told to Lawson by some friends. The ghost is currently linked with the murder of Caroline Collits in 1842 although there is little evidence to support this supposition. Nevertheless, there are some interesting correlations in the representation of the two women in the newspaper accounts of Collits’ death and Lawson’s poem. Lawson’s other ghost story, “The Third Murder”, also concerns a haunted site, a house where several murders are reputed to have been committed. Both these texts are contingent on the death of a woman or women and “Revenant” considers the link between women and death in Western thought.
A Pocket Guide

In the directions set forth, to enable tourists to reach places unknown to the average person, the sole aim has been to combine exactitude with simplicity. Complication has been excluded rigorously. In many instances the directions commence at some spot which can be found with facility.

*New Walks and Sights: Katoomba and Leura, Blue Mountains N.S.W.*

Frank Walford
"Reasonable and Resembling"

In April 1788 Governor Arthur Phillip led an exploratory party westward from the colony at Port Jackson in search of good, well-watered land. By the end of the second day of their journey the group had been almost halved. Phillip sent two seamen, barefoot and exhausted, back to the ships accompanied by Lieutenant Ball and a marine. (On the first day the party had waded chest deep through a river and trudged through swamp and woods but it was the high rocky country beyond that tore the shoes from the sailors’ feet.) That afternoon the six remaining men set up camp on the bank of a stream, at the precise place where tidal salt gave way to sweet water. It was, one of the men later wrote, a place of the “most desert, wild and solitary exclusion” (J. White 124). Despite the romantic nature of their surroundings, the men busied themselves in the prosaic domestic task of washing out their shirts and stockings.

The next morning they hid their tents and most of their provisions and, encumbered by no more than rum and a little bread, set off on a forced march to the west. Their push ended at the top of a hill, which Phillip called Belle Veue [sic]. In the distance was a familiar range of hazy blue mountains bisected by a gorge. Closer was an eminence, which Phillip named Richmond Hill. The range to the north he called the Carmarthen Hills and that to the south the Landsdowne Hills. There was a propriety in his assignment of names, a nice sense of hierarchy. The closer hill, and seemingly the largest – “conspicuously highest”, Surgeon White wrote – is named for the Master-General of the Ordnance, the Duke of Richmond (J. White 130). The more distant peaks are named for marquises.
In *The Deerslayer* (1841), the first novel in James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking series, Natty Bumppo meditates on the politics of naming. There is seldom any sense of an individual place in the names allocated by map-makers or government officials, he decides, but the indigenous people of an area, and the hunters and trappers who follow them, almost always adopt a name that is both “reasonable and resembling” (44). In this case the official names were overwhelmed by a more popular appellation. A year later a party, which included the Governor and Captain John Hunter, stood on Richmond Hill and looked west to the still distant heights. Hunter wrote: “This range of mountains we supposed to be those which are seen from Port Jackson, and called the Blue Mountains ... In that range of high land there is a remarkable gully, or chasm, which is seen distinctly at a distance ... The hills on each side of this gap were named by Governor Phillip; on one side the Carmarthen, on the other, the Lansdown hills” (104–105). There’s a clear distinction between what the Mountains are called and what they were named.

The Aboriginal name for the Mountains is unknown although it’s clear that the Europeans questioned Aborigines about the area. Both the Darug and the Gundungurra peoples lived in the Blue Mountains. The traditional lands of the Gundungurra were bounded on the east by the Nepean River. They extended south beyond Goulburn, possibly even as far as Tumut, and included the Burradorang and Megalong valleys. The traditional lands of the Darug encompassed much of the western Cumberland Plain and extended into the Blue Mountains. Early in the nineteenth century a French scientific expedition, led by
Nicolas Baudin, visited Australia. In their account of the voyage François Peron and Auguste Freycinet, two members of the party, wrote:

The savages of these parts have a sort of religious terror for the Blue Mountains: they think them the residence of a kind of evil spirit, whom they represent by a variety of grotesque figures. They suppose that this terrible daemon hurls amongst them from the summits of the mountains, thunder, inundations, and burning winds, which lay waste their territories. (Peron 291)

The Frenchmen also included three sketches of the “dieu des montagnes bleus”. It was thought for some time that these drawings were sketches of rock carvings but in his book *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century* (1994) Andrew Sayer suggests that the drawings are too hesitant, too tentative, to be the work of Charles-Alexander Lesueur or Nicolas-Martin Petit, the artists who accompanied the expedition. He believes they were done by un-named Aborigines who were given paper and crayons and asked to draw the creatures of which they spoke (73).

There is a difference apparent between the rock engravings of the Sydney area and those in the Mountains. Around Sydney there is a high proportion of human figures but in the Mountains mundoes, or human footprints, which metonymically represent people, are more common. Rock engravings were generally created by drilling a series of holes in the rock in the desired shape. These holes were then joined together. The resultant groove was then often smoothed out with a pointed stone. The rock engravings took a considerable time to create. In addition, they were often reworked, touched up, and tend to be concentrated in certain areas. For these reasons rock engravings are generally considered to mark out sacred and, quite possibly, secret sites. They are associated with storytelling. Early colonists noted that often, when telling a story, the coastal
Aborigines would also sketch figures in the sand and this tradition is still witnessed amongst contemporary Aboriginal people. It’s thought that rock engravings were incorporated into traditional stories in much the same way. They were a focus of ceremony (Eugene Stockton 71). There is a complex series of engravings on a rock shelf at Ticehurst Park in Faulconbridge. It includes munroes and several emus as well as axe grinding grooves and stone wells (there is some debate about whether the axe grinding grooves had a ceremonial purpose or not). During his research on the engravings Roger Cooper spoke to various members of the Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council who suggested the following interpretation of the engravings:6

At the southern end of the platform we see the tracks of the hunter as he enters the hunting ground in search of the emu. At the water wells he sharps [sic] his axe and spears ready for the hunt. The tracks lead to the first emu, which is depicted in a normal pose as he peacefully grazes on the grass. At the northern end we see the second emu. Here the emu is displayed with a full crop after feeding. At the bottom of the northern end the emu lies in an awkward pose with a neck at a very odd angle as if broken. The emu has been chased across the platform and finally captured and killed. (Cooper)

6 Cooper qualifies the story with these comments:
The following story is as suggested by various members of the Land Council. One of the things that they suggested is that they felt that the real story was probably open to interpretation by the viewer of the whole platform. It was also suggested that full understanding was only possible after experiencing a process of maturity as a person (coming of age) that would have eventually led to full initiation within the aboriginal group. As such it was felt that even for the current land council members full understanding of the significance of the engravings was not possible as they are not initiated members of the area. As there would appear to be no fully initiated people from the area to whom the tales of the Ticehurst platform have been directly handed down it is unlikely that anyone will know exactly what the significance of the place was to those who created it. (Cooper)
Figure 4: Ticehurst Park, photograph by Roger Cooper.
http://www.deerubbin.org/ticehurst/ticehurst.html

Figure 5: Mandoes, photograph by Roger Cooper.
http://www.deerubbin.org/ticehurst/ticehurst.html
Figure 6: Emu feeding, photograph by Roger Cooper, http://www.deerubbin.org/ticehurst/ticehurst.html

Figure 7: Emu with full crop, photograph by Roger Cooper, http://www.deerubbin.org/ticehurst/ticehurst.html
“With Vent’rous Tread”

Although the Mountains were clearly seen, they were unknown. The name reflects this: the Mountains are only blue from a distance. They were a constant — the background of a dozen paintings and sketches — but peripheral, in that they bounded the colony, and also because they were ever-present on the edge of vision, in the corner of the eye. They drew the imagination. A number of parties set out to explore and, if possible, cross the Mountains in the early years of the colony. The first adventurers returned exhausted and with similar tales. They told how their way had been continually barred by deep ravines that had to be negotiated before they could press forward. Later explorers tried different approaches. The party of Captain William Paterson attempted to row up the Grose
River in light boats but unseen snags damaged their craft and they had to turn back. Several years later Governor and Mrs Macquarie, with a party of gentlemen, were rowed up the Nepean and then the Warragamba to Norton’s Basin. They explored the surrounding gorge as far as the first set of rapids, but made no attempt to go further because they could see several other falls in the distance.

In America Lewis and Clark were able to follow the Missouri River to its headwaters, cross the Continental Divide, and make their way to the Pacific Ocean. In New South Wales the rivers weren’t so obliging. How can you navigate a river that is all portages? Nevertheless, Barron Field, a Judge of the Supreme Court of NSW, felt that “in spite of the want of navigable rivers, New Holland will be a second America” (Mackaness 2: 50).

George Bass carried special climbing equipment and vast lengths of rope but the rugged country still defeated him. François Barrallier established a depot at Nattai and ranged into the Burrarorang Valley. Although he didn’t succeed in finding a route through the Mountains he gave a detailed account of the Gundungurra people he encountered there, describing their clothing, the foods they ate (he tried roasted lizard and found it superior to possum [Historical Records of New South Wales 5: 755]), hunting practices and a weapon used by the Gundungurra which was unfamiliar to him. 7

George Caley, who had been engaged by Sir Joseph Banks to collect specimens in New South Wales, forsook his botanical endeavours, writing to his mentor of one trip: “You must excuse me for saying that botany is not the primary object but there is an enthusiastic pride of going further than any person has yet

7 Historical Records of New South Wales is hereafter indicated by HRNSW.
been” (Cunningham 114). In addition to these government sanctioned expeditions there were undoubtedly unofficial explorations such as that of Matthew Everingham and his two companions. Everingham was a former convict. His trek is recorded in a letter-book, which he sent to his mentor in England. John Low notes:

In considering the saga of Blue Mountains exploration we are, in all probability, only looking at part of the story – the part that, for one reason or another, happened to be recorded. And, while some of those involved in these recorded ventures may also have undertaken further unrecorded ones, the likelihood of excursion into the mountains by other men, never documented and quite forgotten by history, should not be ignored. ("A Rude Peculiar World" 47)

Included in this category are the kangaroo hunters who roamed the Mountains such as James Byrnes (or Burns) who showed Gregory Blaxland the route up the eastern escarpment. Gregory Blaxland, William Lawson and William Charles Wentworth are commonly credited as the first Europeans to cross the Blue Mountains. Recent research questions this assumption. In 1792 a former convict named John Wilson, who had lived amongst the Aborigines and acquired some knowledge of living off the land, led a party into the interior of New South Wales. Some scholars suggest that he was the first European to make the traverse. Nevertheless, in the popular imagination Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth “conquered” the Mountains. The three men were aware of the cachet this aura of heroism lent them and weren’t averse to trading on it. In 1823 William Wentworth, who was studying at Cambridge, submitted a poem for the Chancellor’s Medal. The poem, entitled “Australasia”, was published in the *Sydney Gazette* on 25 March 1824. In it he apostrophises the Mountains:
A Pocket Guide: With Vent'rous Tread

... when first with vent'rous tread
We dared to rouse thee from thy mountain bed!
Till gained with toilsome step thy topmost heath
We spied the cheering smokes ascend beneath,
And, as a meteor shoots athwart the night,
The boundless champaign burst upon our sight. (n. pag.)

In case the reader fails to discern his involvement in the 1813 journey he makes it clear that he was one of the party in a footnote. Despite his claims for a particular authenticity his poem only gained second prize.

In her novel No Barrier (1953) Eleanor Dark addresses the issue of pre-eminence, pointing out the inherent irony of this debate. The title refers to the opening up of the country beyond the Blue Mountains. Miles Mannion wants to be the first man to find a way across the Mountains. He arranges to meet with Johnny Prentice, who has lived with the Darug people since he was a child, to ask him for any information he might have. But he is chagrined when Johnny points out the flaw in his logic. Mannion attempts to explain his reasons for wanting to cross the Mountains:

“All my life, since childhood, I have wanted to be first. Call it pride, if you like – vanity, stubbornness – it doesn’t matter. And besides…”

But Johnny, with the expression of sardonic amusement deepening in his eyes, interrupted suddenly:

“First, eh?”

Not since his childhood, when some blast of reality had swept away a cherished fantasy, or some ruthless adult edict had destroyed his soaring plans, had Miles felt so abrupt and violent a sense of deflation. He gazed blankly at Johnny, realizing that in assuming achievement to be the prerogative of his own class, he had actually failed to see the implication of his request. He said flatly: “You, I suppose, have been…?”

“Aye, but I wouldn’t claim to be the first. There’s been natives crossin’ back and forth maybe for hundreds of years.”

(286)
Johnny does guide Miles to the plains beyond the Mountains but because their route goes past Johnny's hideaway Mannion can never reveal it to anyone. He has the pleasure of the journey, even though he is not the first, but he must keep even that knowledge to himself.

"The Western Road is the Romantic Road"

One of the first pieces of fiction published about Australia after colonisation concerned a fantastic crossing of the Mountains. In January 1815 an article which purported to be written by "An Officer of the 101st Regiment" was published in London. In this narrative the Mountains were likened to the great tower of the monastery at Raucoux. The heights were said to house mythic tableaux and the bones of fabulous beasts. A cataract, of scarcely less height than Niagara Falls, raced from a cliff so sheer it could only be ascended by driving stakes into the rock wall. These stakes rose diagonally and were joined by basketwork treads to form a stairway. Of the curious flora discovered at the summit the most arresting was a tree covered in bayonet-like thorns which was invariably surrounded by the bones of animals that had died impaled on its spikes. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, in which this fantasy appeared, assured the reader that the story would be continued (25–26). But, in the same month a letter from G.W. Evans, the deputy surveyor of Van Dieman's Land, was published in a rival journal, the *Monthly Magazine*. In it Evans gave a brief account of his journey over the Mountains to the Bathurst Plains. In the face of this history the anonymous story was never completed.
Governor Lachlan Macquarie had sent Evans to retrace the route taken by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth. The thick undergrowth impeded his way but eventually he was able to make his way into the plains beyond, which he named Westmoreland. On his return trip Evans saw the Mountains ablaze: “The Mountains have been fired; had we been on them we could not have escaped; the Flames rage with violence through thick underwood, which they are covered with” (Mackaness 1: 39). As Evans moved through the charred bush he discovered that the fires had made his job easier: the thick undergrowth had been burnt away enabling him to make much more accurate measurements. When he arrived back in Sydney he suggested that “twelve men in three months would make a good road, and render it so passable, that carts might be driven in safety to the newly discovered country” (Richards 135).

The Governor assigned William Cox to the task. Cox’s concentration on the task at hand was formidable, his gaze fixed inexorably ahead. In his journal one word is continually repeated: forward. He wrote, “We removed forward... Gave orders for six men to pack up and go forward in the morning... Went three miles forward to examine the road” (Mackaness 1: 48– 49). The descent from the Mountains was one of Cox’s greatest problems. The proposed route down Mount York was, he wrote, “much worse than I expected” (1: 52). No other way could be found and so he persevered with the original choice. The incline was so steep that later, when the road was in use, large logs, which acted as brakes, had to be attached to the back of drays before they could descend.

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8 Several different routes were constructed down Mount York over the years but they were all superseded by Mount Victoria Pass which was opened in 1832.
When the road was first completed Governor Macquarie attempted to restrict access to the newly opened country, ordering that no one should cross the Mountains unless they were "Gentlemen or other respectable free persons" who had requested and received a written pass (Mackaness 1: 81). This stance didn't last very long as these same gentlemen were clamouring for more land. Michael Massey Robinson was moved to write of the new country, in his poem "Ode for the Queen's Birthday, 1816":

Where yon Blue Mountains, with tremendous Brow,
Frown on the humbler Vales that wind below,
Where scarcely human Footsteps ever trac'd
The craggy Cliffs that guard the ling'ring Waste.
O'er the wild Surface of the Western Plains,
Aerst the lorn Range of Isolated Trains: -
Where from the Birth of Time the slumbering Soil
Had borne no Traces of the Peasant's Toil-
Behold, where Industry's encourag'd Hand
Has chang'd the lurid Aspect of the Land;
With Verdure cloathed [sic] the solitary Hills,
And pour'd fresh Currents from the limpid Rills;
Has shed oe' r darken'd Glades a social Light,
And BOUNDLESS REGIONS OPEN TO OUR SIGHT. (n. pag.)

Despite its drawbacks Cox's Road fulfilled its purpose. It opened up the country inland. As one anonymous traveller wrote: "The Western Road is the romantic road, because it leads direct to the Blue Mountains, to Bathurst, and thence the Lord knows where" (Mackaness 2: 77).

The New South Wales Calendar and Post Office Directory of 1834 contained itineraries of the major roads in the colony including the Bathurst Road. As already noted an itinerary is an alternative to a map. It describes a route rather than displaying it pictorially. It's a narrative, of sorts, which places the reader firmly in the landscape. It's also a very prosaic form, but when the author of the
Directory reaches a certain point in his journey he abandons practicalities, for a moment:

Weatherboard Hut, a very good mountain Inn, on a fine stream which forms a cataract at a short distance to the southward. The water which rises in this valley... is inconsiderable, but the wild scenery of the inaccessible valley into which it vanishes is well worth the travellers [sic] attention. (89)

Many visitors to Govett's Leap and the Weatherboard Falls (later known as Wentworth Falls) lamented the lack of water, those potential Niagaras unfulfilled. The drop, the fall into the abyss, was magnificent they conceded. But, as one anonymous author put it, to call Wentworth Falls “a cataract is absurd; it would be easy to make as good a one with a tea kettle” (Mackaness 2: 38). The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia (1886) was more forgiving, suggesting that, “though the views are mostly named from the falls, the real grandeur of the scenery lies in the valleys, where depth and distance deceive from their very magnitude, and where the sombre hue of the gum forests, far down below and beyond, contrasts with the bright colour of the cliffs reddened with ironstone stains” (Garran 1: 53 & 55).

Gregory Blaxland speculated that the gorges had been caused by and earthquake or “some dreadful convulsion of nature” (Mackaness 1: 15). David Christie Murray – whose words were recalled by J.H.M. Abbott – elaborated this notion. When Murray looked out from Echo Point he “marvelled at the tremendous volcanic activities that had brought those stupendous gorges into existence... he felt awed at the contemplation of the titanic forces that had rent the earth asunder, and piled it into such shapes of massive grandeur as were before him” (Abbott 96).
In fact, the gorges were, and continue to be, formed by water. Despite the meagreness of their flow the rivers have helped shape the landscape. Most of the rocks which make up the Blue Mountains range in age from 230 to 290 million years or, in other words, date from the mid-Permian to the mid-Triassic eras. They consist largely of coal measures, which are covered by either sandstone or shale. In the upper Mountains the rivers have worn away the sandstone and reached the softer coal measures beneath. This erodes more readily than the sandstone, creating an undercutting effect. As the softer rock is worn away the unsupported sandstone above breaks off and drops into the valley. Charles Darwin had been reminded of the action of water on rock in 1836 when he visited the falls near the Weatherboard. He wrote: “one stands on the brink of a vast precipice, and below is the grand bay or gulf (for I know not what other name to give it)... If we imagined a winding harbour, with its deep water surrounded by bold cliff-like shores, laid dry, and a forest sprung up on its sandy bottom, we should then have the appearance and structure here exhibited” (Mackaness 3: 41 – 42).

Up until the 1870s there were few inns or other permanent dwellings on the Mountains and travellers threw together temporary camps wherever they could find a drop of moisture. Or, as Godfrey Charles Mundy put it: “Wherever nature or the last thunder-storm had supplied a rill, a spring, a water-hole, or even a puddle, however muddy, there were encampments” (138). E.J. Brady recalled the hordes of miners who had thronged the road in the 1850s in his poem “The Western Road”:

A motley crowd of eager folk, with tools and tents in fold
Came on Adventure’s early quest to Gulgong, grief and gold;
They passed me in a jostling host, with anger or with mirth,
The fortune-seekers gathered from the ends of all the earth.
Yea, sailormen and tailormen, and prostitutes and peers,
Some honest and of good intent, some rogues and buccaneers.
Their campfires lit the darkened range, where, by the creeks, they lay
And dreamed of nuggets in their sleep – impatient for the day. (169–170)

Mundy commented on the smoothness of the road on either side of Blackheath
and described the iron-gangs who repaired and improved it. Ever since the
Bathurst Road was first built there had been men stationed along its length,
moving backwards and forwards, refurbishing, re-forming, creating new ways, but
after the construction of the railway the road was used less and less (at least until
the advent of motor vehicles). In his book *A Visit to the Queensland Goldfields*
(1870)\(^9\), Chas H. Allen wrote, “Side by side with … [the railway] goes the old
dray road, now almost neglected; though you still pass occasionally the heavily
laden dray, with its eight or ten horses or bullocks, slowly lumbering along” (54 –
55).

The route for the Western railway was surveyed in 1860 but it wasn’t until
1867 that the first section of the line, which terminated at Weatherboard, was
opened. Drays and coaches met the train here to carry goods and passengers
further on their journey. Chas H. Allen described “the singular discomfort of my
journey by night in one of Cobb’s ‘bathing machines,’ which took more than four
hours to jump and jolt over this short rough piece of road. So steep are some of
the ascents that the horses can scarcely drag the coach up them” (58). The line
was soon extended as far as Mount Victoria, which remained the terminus until
the Lithgow zigzag was completed. A.G. Guillemard described some of the

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\(^9\) Despite the title of this book Allen did devote a chapter to Sydney and the Blue Mountains.
difficulties associated with the construction of this section of track in his book

*Over Land and Sea* (1875):

The Lithgow Zigzag is the great attraction to travellers, and certainly it is a marvel of engineering. Before reaching it we run through some cuttings eighty feet deep, hewn out of the solid rock, and pass beneath the Mount Clarence Tunnel, 3700 feet above sea-level, the highest point of the line. From this tunnel the train descends nearly 700 feet in five miles, zigzagging down a steep hill-side. So precipitous was the descent, and so great the difficulties to be overcome, that the surveyors and workmen had to be suspended by ropes from the summit. (131–132)

It was opened in 1869 and remained in use until 1910 when it was superseded by a series of ten tunnels. Space concertinaed with the opening of the railway, as if the Mountains had moved closer to Sydney, so that they became a popular destination.

*“Pinnacled With Crags”*

In “Australasia” Wentworth described the Mountains in sublimely terrible terms:

> How mute, how desolate thy stunted woods  
> How dread thychasms, where many an eagle broods  
> How dark thy caves, how lone thy torrents roar  
> As down thy cliffs precipitous they pour. (n. pag.).

This was to become a familiar refrain. Governor Lachlan Macquarie was one of the first people to travel on the new route. In his account of an excursion to Bathurst in 1815 he also described the Mountains in sublime terms: “the Mountain terminates in abrupt precipices of immense depth, at the bottom of which is seen a glen, as romantically beautiful as can be imagined, bounded on the further side by Mountains of great magnitude, terminating equally abruptly as the others” (Mackaness 1: 75). In her essay, “Travelling Through the Romantic Landscapes
of the Blue Mountains,” Julia Horne suggests that Macquarie was intimating that the Mountains could supply the same emotional succour as another sublime landscape: the Scottish Highlands (95). Several authors explicitly compared the two. Elizabeth Hawkins travelled to Bathurst in 1822. In a letter to her sister, rather than attempting to describe the landscape through which she was travelling, Hawkins referred her sibling to Miss Porter’s *Scottish Chieftains* [sic].\(^{10}\) She felt that the description of the landscape in that novel would give a clearer picture than her own words. A poet known only as J.G. compared the Blue Mountains to the Grampians.

Blue Mountains of Australia! Ye oh ye,
Whose wondrous beauties to the eye unfold,
And make us feel the heart can ne’er grow cold—
Whate’er the number of our days may be—
Recall, and not without a sigh to me,
Scenes if less splendid than I now behold
Round their great shoulders forest mantles fold,
In all the pomp of rock-crowned majesty!
Yet elder-born of fame, and to the eye
In bleak and savage grandeur far more wild,
“Dark Loch-na-gar,” and you ye Grampians high. (3)

It seems that, in the nineteenth century, words sometimes failed travellers when they attempted to describe the Blue Mountains, particularly when it came to the view from the cliff edge. Elizabeth Hawkins simply admitted her inability to adequately describe the descent from Mount York. She wrote:

I leave it to your imagination. I feel it out of my power to give a proper description of it. I have offered the pen to Hawkins, but he refuses. I tell him I must take a leap from top to bottom, but that he will not allow, so I must write on as well as I can. (Mackaness 2: 24)

Hawkins voiced a concern often left unexpressed by more erudite writers: that her

\(^{10}\) Jane Porter’s novel *The Scottish Chiefs* was published in 1810 and concerned the life of William Wallace. It was very popular.
power of expression was unequal to the task of describing the prospect before her. Some, like Barron Field, retreated to banalities, "the views were very grand", he wrote after his trip to Bathurst (Mackaness 2: 36). Others — Louisa Meredith was one — compared the Mountains to European ranges, the Pyrenees, the Alps, or the Cordilleras. Still other writers resorted to literary allusion. Several nineteenth century authors drew on the scene from *King Lear* where Edgar leads Gloucester to the cliffs of Dover. In his book, exhaustively entitled, *Travels in China, New Zealand, New South Wales, Van Dieman’s Land, Cape Horn etc.*, James Holman wrote of visiting Govett’s Leap. Refusing the restraining grasp of his guide he stood on the edge and looked down: "I could not help thinking of blind Gloster at the cliffs of Dover, the situation was very similar, and my imagination easily supplied equivalent figures to that of the one, who ‘half-way down hung gathering samphire, dreadful trade’" (450).

Also typical is the use of the word "sublime" as a substitute for depiction. Frances Ferguson states that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "In the popular view, the term amounted to a description: it represented primarily a subject matter, the wild and desolate natural scene" (1231). Both these tendencies are present in Barron Field’s brief statement: "The views were very grand. The night was stormy, but little rainy— all in the sublime. ‘The power of the hills was on me,’ as Wordsworth says" (Mackaness 2: 36).

Ferguson goes on to mention another common perception: that the sublime "dwarfed the individual human figure" (1231). For Edmund Burke the sublime was characterised by Divine power as evidenced in nature. He wrote, "we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a minute, annihilated before
him [sic]” (Burke 63). This notion is present in Charles Harpur’s poem “A Storm in the Mountains.” As a child Harpur had wandered away from his brothers and his father’s shepherd, and made his way up into the Mountains where he was overtaken by a violent storm. Adrian Mitchell writes that “The ‘terrific vision’ moved him deeply; it was this, he felt, that made him decide to be a poet, for he knew at the time that ‘it was for me eventually to make a poem’ of that experience” (xiii). Harpur invokes the Divine:

Fast the dim legions of the mustering Storm
Throng denser, or protruding columns form;
While splashing forward from their cloudy lair,
Convolving flames, like scouting dragons, glare:
Low thunders follow, labouring up the sky;
And as forerunning blasts go blaring by,
At once the Forest, with a mighty stir,
Bows, as in homage to the Thunderer! (57)

Although Harpur was never a resident of the Mountains – he grew up in Windsor – he felt that they were integral to his desire to be a poet. In her biography of Harpur, Judith Wright describes the Blue Mountains as “the recurrent image that haunts him… the mysterious mountains that must have obsessed his mind in his youth as they did the minds of many of the settlers” (7).

The sublime was also considered to be vast. When Louisa Meredith crossed the Mountains in 1839 she wrote of the tedium of the landscape: “Our route still lay through the same wild, monotonous scenery as the day before. The sight of vast mountain-ranges spread all around, folding in and behind each other as if they filled all space, could not be otherwise than grand in the extreme, but it was most dreary, desolate grandeur” (Mackaness 3: 54). This is reminiscent of what Edmund Burke calls the artificial infinite (68–69). Burke sees infinity as an attribute of the sublime, while recognising that very little is actually infinite.
A Pocket Guide: Pinnacled With Crags

However, if the boundaries of an object can’t be discerned it may appear to be never-ending. The artificial infinite, as he terms it, is constituted by succession and uniformity. Succession gives an impression of progression beyond actual boundaries, while uniformity is necessary in order that the imagination is not checked by obvious difference.

Burke contrasted the sublime and the beautiful, writing; “sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive” (113). When reading “The Weatherboard Fall” it almost seems as if the author, “Australie,” used Burke’s comparison as a template to construct much of her first stanza.

Ah! who can show the beauty of the scene?
Above, the wooded mountain summit green,
Now gently falling into softer banks,
Emerald with fern, gleichenia, grass-tree bright,
Yet boldened, strengthened, by rough aged crags,
In bare wild outline, amber-tinged, or streaked
With hoar grey lichen, yet oft holding too,-
Like touch of child-love in a cold stern breast,-
Cherished in cleits, some tender verdant nests
Of velvet moss, lone flowers, and grasses soft. (35)

A tension between the sublime and the beautiful is also present in paintings and drawings of the Blue Mountains. In his book Landscape Art and the Blue Mountains (1981) Hugh Speirs notes the desire for an ordered landscape that is present in early sketches and paintings of Australia and, in particular, of the Blue Mountains. He suggests several reasons for this, including
A somewhat desperate desire to make the best of the new "home" of enforced exile by turning it into a blissful Arcadia. Also, the visual disorder of the Australian bush... was harshly alien to the sensibilities of British settlers. To impose an order was to find a sense of security through the return to images more reminiscent of Kew Gardens than of eucalypt forest with attendant tea-tree undergrowth. Again, the landscape tradition best known to those early artists was that of Cotman, Crane and Constable. (113)

Certain representations of the Mountains, such as Alphonse Pellion's works Vue de Cox-River, dans l'ouest des Montagne-Bleue and Passage de Cox, dans les Montagne-Bleue (ca. 1819), seem, to Speirs, impossibly Arcadian, with their park-like spaces contained by neat fences and all traces of undergrowth removed. He suspects that, rather than being accurate representations, they are idealised versions of the actual scene. Much earlier than this, in 1813, Thomas Watling – artist, forger and convict – lamented the lack of contrast in the landscape of New South Wales. All was uniform. He could find no scene ready for his pencil, although he conceded that if he were to select and combine he might compose a vista where there was none (Watling 13). In this context the word compose has several complementary meanings: to make of elements or parts; to create; to make calm or tranquil. In other words, to order. When Watling speaks of selection it's clear that, for him, order is often achieved through an absence, by what is excised from the representation.

There is a sketch by W.R. Govett – "View of a camp and surrounding hills" (c. 1835) – in which the pictured scene is framed between verandah posts. Speirs suggests that the strong vertical statements of the verandah posts juxtaposed with the horizontal lines of the hills order the landscape very positively (119). In The Coast Dwellers (1994) Phillip Drew describes the verandah as a structure that enables people access to the sublime. He writes: "the veranda put
people in touch with the infinite, and made it more human somehow by placing it within their grasp and within a man-made frame; encompassed it, limited it, placed its power within a human referential framework" (9). Delia Falconer echoes both Drew and Speirs in her novel *The Service of Clouds* (1997): “the wealthy ... cleared the scrub away from the waterfalls and built the frames of back doors and verandahs to make the landscape match the paintings in their eyes” (3). But when the photographer Harry Kitchens comes to Katoomba the locals’ expectations are challenged: he educates their gaze in a different aesthetic. The townspeople become so accustomed to viewing the landscape through Harry's lens that, after his departure, when another photographer begins to print
and sell Harry’s postcards as his own work, only Eureka Jones recognises that
they are, in every sense of the word, Harry’s views. The locals accept that this is
how the Mountains appear: Harry’s perspective has excluded all others (301).
David Foster also writes of the way in which photographers construct the local
landscape, training the gaze of tourists and locals alike. In *The Pure Land* (1974)
Foster writes, “through an examination of Manwaring’s saturnine photography
alone it was possible for the tourist to construct for himself a town, together with
most of its environs and many of its inhabitants, if not the real Katoomba, in some
ways preferable. Less sunny perhaps but infinitely more romantic. The tourist
who bought Manwaring’s cards took away in his memory a palimpsest on which
Manwaring’s account, written in the more durable script, was bound to prevail”
(Foster 4 – 5).

*“The Lonely Peaks”*

In his book *The Australian Abroad* (1879) J. Hingston described the feeling of
solitude which he felt while travelling through the Mountains on a rail journey
from Sydney to Bowensfels:

The mountain tops we have now reached, and the dark valleys all
around us can only be dwelling-places for opossums, wild cats, and
eagle-hawks, now and forever… Little stations are reached every
now and then and stopped at, apparently for form’s sake. The idea
of taking up passengers from the population hereabouts never
enters the mind. We have got beyond passengers and taxes. A man
might dwell here and never get into the census. In times gone by a
monastery would have been perched upon one of the lonely peaks,
or on the side of one of these inaccessible valleys, after some holy
hermit had chosen such a place for his peculiar life, and got sainted
for so doing (278).
This illusion of isolation was a potent lure. In the 1870s wealthy Sydney-siders began to build country residences in the Mountains. This was a familiar pattern. In Holiday Business (2000) Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt note that the British routinely abandoned the hot plains for nearby highlands in summer: "The hill station syndrome was to some degree evident in Australia, when wealthy professionals, politicians and businessmen built salubrious residences for themselves in elevated localities adjacent to the cities" (14). Sir Henry Parkes was one who did so. He built a country retreat about two miles west of Springwood. A platform was soon opened on the railway line nearby and was called Faulconbridge, after the name of Parkes' home. A morse telegraph line was installed so that Parkes could be kept up to date on the affairs of the state. The need for technology in order to remain in touch with the outside world emphasised the remoteness of the Mountains but this didn't mean Parkes was without neighbours. Nearby were Sir James Martin, Sir Alfred Stephen and Dr Charles Badham and, although politically the men had little in common, they were frequent visitors in each other's homes. As A.W. Martin notes in his biography of Parkes, a house in the Mountains was a mark of success (296). (The Mountains remain closely associated with the genteel country retreat. As recently as 1994 the Lilianfels hotel employed this perception in one of their promotions. The ad suggested, "This summer escape to your country house in the Mountains" ["This summer"]).

Parkes' residence in the Mountains coincided with his second term as Premier of New South Wales. Parkes is mainly remembered for his political career but he was also a newspaperman – the Empire, of which he was both the
Proprietor and editor, was established in 1850 and ran until 1858 – and a poet. His poetry was first published in journals in the 1840s soon after his arrival in the country and he published several collections of poetry over the years. As Brian Elliott notes in *The Landscape of Australian Poetry* (1967) “Colonial newspapers were usually glad to print ‘literary’ verse; it was thus a way of becoming known. The old connexion between literature and preferment was not yet obscured” (59).

Parkes was inspired by the Mountains and a significant percentage of his poetic output extolled the beauty of the area. He acknowledged the isolation of the Mountains in his poem “Solitude”:

There, 'mid giant turpentines,  
Groups of climbing, clustering vines,  
Rocks that stand like sentinels,  
Guarding Nature's citadels,  
Lowly flowering shrubs that grace  
With their beauty all the place -  
There I love to wander lonely,  
With my dog-companion only;  
There indulge unworldly moods  
In the mountain solitudes (9)

(The *Australian Encyclopedia* (1956) concluded, charitably, of Parkes's poetry: “it is true that his work could sometimes be almost unbelievably bad; yet though he had no claims to be a poet he wrote some strong, sincere verse which has occasionally been included in Australian anthologies” [488]). Douglas Sladen’s poem “Faulconbridge” described Parkes’s home as “a joint-gem/ Of Art and Nature” – Parkes had a series of terraced gardens constructed below the house as well as a number of walking tracks – but declares that it was most significant as a place of inspiration: “The chosen field wherein a statesman’s mind/ Food for artistic cravings strove to find” (700).
Eleanor and Eric Dark moved to the Mountains in 1923 shortly after their marriage. In 1939 they demolished the weatherboard cottage in which they'd been living to make room for a new house which they called Varuna. It was designed by Eleanor and included a separate studio for her out in the garden. The Darks also fashioned a hideaway in a cave to the northeast of Katoomba, which they named Jerrekellimi. The cave was divided into two rooms. They smoothed out the floor with clay from a termite’s nest, built fireplaces and made bush furniture out of hessian and branches. A nearby creek was dammed to make a swimming hole (Brooks 341–342). The cave wasn’t used as a retreat for writing; nevertheless, Eleanor Dark believed that at times solitude was necessary to a writer. In an essay on the Darks, written during the early 1940s, Jean Devanny quoted Eleanor: “[The writer’s community] should understand that when he chooses to withdraw himself he must be allowed his period of solitude. I expressed this point in The Timeless Land, where Wunbullla, the song maker, suddenly leaves the tribal hunting party to go off and make a song” (250). Devanny wondered if Dark could sustain this stance. “Will the torments and anxieties and impulses of world war enable her to maintain her place on the Olympian Heights?” Devanny asked (256). While her question ostensibly refers to whether Dark will be able to maintain the high standard of The Timeless Land, there’s also an implicit edge of criticism, an imputation that Dark lives in an ivory tower.

The Blue Mountains retains a reputation as a place of retreat. In “Head for the Hills,” an article in the Sydney Morning Herald published in 1993, Sally Loane observed: “In the past few years many writers and artists and musicians have moved from the city to the Blue Mountains, driven out by high housing
prices and the need to find solitude” (25). Brian Castro endorses this: “There’s a romantic tradition in mountains and mist. And silence, too. You get a certain amount of emotional time in the mountains you don’t get in the city. People ring up or drop around when you’re in the city” (25). Dorothy Porter, another of the writers Loane interviewed, said that the writing community had increased since she had first moved to Mount Victoria: “There’s more poets and writers here now. Varuna has made a big difference” (25).

When Michael Dark, the son of Eleanor and Eric, inherited Varuna he decided, after community consultation, to donate the house and grounds as a writers’ centre. Varuna offers writers from all over Australia, and overseas, space and time in which to work; the opportunity to withdraw from everyday life for a time and, in Eleanor Dark’s words, to “put their writing first” (Devanny 250). Since Varuna became a writer’s centre it has been represented in many texts.

After a fellowship at Varuna Dipti Saravanamuttu wrote, echoing Dark’s comments about solitude and writers:

Accused of waking alone, I
counter that words
are a permanent struggle
without some phantasy
of a beloved presence
working here
when the weather is delicious
rain beating in the trees
the wind
around this house all day
like water
and in the occasional stillness
the sounds of birds/ return (69)
(Louisa Atkinson noted the impression of solitude that the calling of birds and the sound of running water can induce [21].) Lauren Williams, on the other hand, noted the inhibiting effect of working in a famous writer’s study:

I am sitting at a famous writer’s desk
in her study
looking at the trees she used to look at.
The Blue Mountains sky races past.
Sunlight blazes through the window
bounces off the famous desk into my eyes. (50)

Perhaps the most extended “borrowing” of Varuna occurs in Brenda Walker’s novel Poe’s Cat (1999). Poe’s Cat juxtaposes two stories of cousins: in the present are Thea and Finn who were lovers in their adolescence, in the past are Edgar Allan Poe and his wife (and cousin) Virginia. The contemporary scenes are set in a house in the Mountains that belonged to Thea and Finn’s grandfather. The house described is clearly Varuna:

Today I opened the ladder room because I wanted to climb up through the roof and look down on the northern garden... The ladder room is one of the internal rooms, flanked by the gallery on one side and the long study on the other. Three rooms open into the long study. Nobody ever studied there. The windows are huge and the light is too strong... I can see why Finn set himself up in the rooms at the end of the first floor... [There is] a high bed which must be climbed up into, like an old car without the doors, and a sunroom to one side, with windows opening on to birds and lichen. I like to sit quietly in the darkness of the ladder room. Until today I’ve never climbed the ladder. Nobody has, for years and years. The ladder is bolted flat to the wall. I can only manage toe holds on the rungs. At the top there’s a framed wooden square with an iron handle. I force it aside and keep climbing. I’m crouching in a big shallow roof space. To one side and ahead of me I can see another ladder. It must end in a trapdoor, yes, it does... The northern garden is a sea of copper leaves. Each leaf is a stiff hand-sized scoop, like a wave. They’ve fallen in thick drifts. I know they’re copper-coloured because they show orange, or gold against the reddish black of the iron boats which have appeared in the garden. These boats are too beautiful to be the cast-offs of someone’s welding class. My father must have bought them in a gallery in the city. (51 – 53)
There is a darker edge to solitude. It can degenerate into isolation. Eve Langley moved to a small hut in Katoomba in the early 1960s. Her life there was difficult. All the water had to be fetched from an outside tank and the open fireplace was her only source of heating. There was a lounge room filled with books and in the main room were a sofa and the fireplace, which was fuelled by whole logs, which she gradually fed into it. Her son Karl recalled that there were “open windows down the back and it had a very low roof. It was very sooty and smoky. The chimney didn’t work at all. There were no mod cons there. The bus outside was a kind of storage space” (Thwaites 461).

Figure 10: Eve Langley's bus, 1995. photograph by Michael Attard.

Langley also found the winters arduous and spoke of returning to her beloved Gippsland. In a letter to a friend she wrote: “I hope I can get a house put up there and stay around or else I’ll have to live some other place, for the Blue Mountains winter is ahead of us. Snow all the way. A page from Dr Zhivago in winter each
day here” (Eve Langley Papers BMCC). But Langley ended her life in the Mountains. Joy Thwaites, Langley’s biographer, suggests that in Langley’s case solitude ceased to be creatively enabling and became a symptom of her increasing eccentricity. In Thwaites opinion Langley died “in total isolation and artistic silence” (3).

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The link between landscape, solitude and inspiration has remained strong but the Mountains were seen as a refuge in another sense. In his journal of the 1813 expedition the soldier William Lawson notes: “in a Political point of View if in case of an Invasion it will be a safe Retreat for the Inhabitation [sic] with their Familiys [sic] and Stock for this part of the Country is so formed by Nature that a few men would be able to defend the Passes against a large body” (Richards 104). He wasn’t the last to note the strategic potential of the Mountains. During World War II Eleanor Dark’s husband Eric, who was a member of the Volunteer Defence Corps, was put in charge of a small group of men and told to familiarise them with the bush. He also scouted the Mountains for potential guerrilla hideouts in the event of invasion (Brooks 246).

It was widely believed, at this time, that many wealthy people, especially those who lived by the harbour or beaches, were moving to the Mountains. Disapproval of this trend was expressed in songs like “Painting the Blue Mountains Yellow” (Brooks 54). Eleanor Dark thought the reports were sensationalised but Margaret Trist used the phenomenon in her short story “The Cottage”. After his retirement, Joe Edwards spends his time building a cottage to sell. When it’s completed, although many people come to view it, they fail to see
any charm in the crooked windows, the not-quite-square rooms, the lop-sided floorboards and the total lack of any modern conveniences. The cottage is empty for years. One morning Joe’s wife Annie remarks on a newspaper article about people from the city snapping up houses in the Mountains due to the war. As if her words are some kind of incantation within minutes not one but two families want to buy the cottage, almost coming to blows over the key. More prospective buyers arrive on the train and by the end of the day Joe’s cottage has sold for almost twice the asking price (92–96).

More welcome were the many children who came to the Mountains during World War II. Children were evacuated by both public and private means. Early in 1945 Dymphna Cusack and her friend Florence James moved to Hazelbrook, to a house called Pinegrove. With them came James’s two daughters and Cusack’s niece. Eleanor Dark cared for the children of a friend during 1942. Hotels and guesthouses were converted for the use of children whose fathers were in the armed forces while their mothers worked in essential services such as the munition factory at Lithgow. Eleanor assisted at Wykehurst, one of the guesthouses, for two afternoons a week and helped to establish a library for the children.

“The Summer Resort of the Jaded Denizens of Sydney”

Allied to the notion of the sublime in the Mountains is the idea that they are therapeutic. As the editor of the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* wrote, “These Mountains are now becoming the great sanatorium of Sydney” (Garran 53). In
Horrocks's Handy Guide to the Blue Mountains & Caves of New South Wales

(1888) J.H. Simmonds suggested that:

The Summer resort of the jaded denizens of Sydney is the Blue Mountains. When faces begin to look sallow, when men complain of livers, and when women grow cadaverous, exhausted and thin (that is to say, between Christmas and Easter), the trains running westward are full, and the houses and purses of the indigenous mountain folk are in the same condition. (3)

A house in the Mountains allowed people to escape the heat of summer and the insanitary conditions of the city. After an outbreak of smallpox in Sydney, Parkes was chided in the Bulletin by “A Young Poet” for his supposed indifference to urban sanitation. The ghosts of those who died haunt him in his mountain home:

Faulconbridge, at midnight
Is quietly at rest
But the nightmare broodeth
Upon the Premier’s breast

Twenty pustuled spectres
Walk slowly up to him
Variola’s victims
So silent, ghastly, grim (9)

The Picturesque Atlas suggests that the various elevations were beneficial for different ailments (53). The rarefied air of the Mountains was thought to be particularly helpful for consumptives and some guide books from around the early twentieth century went so far as to claim that there had never been a case of TB amongst permanent residents of the Mountains (Low, Pictorial Memories 76). But the proprietors of guesthouses, which often acted as unofficial sanatoria, were reluctant to advertise the presence of consumptives in their establishments because it might discourage other potential boarders. Instead they emphasised the factors which were seen as helpful in cases of TB. One example of this is found in Oakura Estate, a pamphlet from 1905. It quotes from an un-named tourist guide:
“At Woodford the scenery is wild and romantic, bounded in the distance by the bluish broken hills toward the N.E. It enjoys a fine bracing atmosphere, and its dainty dells and glens are very pleasing... Since 1868, when the parent boarding establishment of the mountains was opened here, this place has maintained its reputation as a health resort. Here, invalids get well and healthy people improve and build up their strength” (26).

It’s interesting that the first point made concerns the wild and romantic scenery. Susan Sontag wrote in *Illness As Metaphor* (1978), “There were special places thought to be good for tuberculars: in the early nineteenth century, Italy; then islands in the Mediterranean, or the South Pacific; in the twentieth century, the mountains, the desert—all landscapes that had themselves been successively romanticized” (33). The purity of the air is often seen as the paramount reason for the plethora of sanatoria in the Mountains but the romanticisation of tuberculosis also made a sublime landscape seem an appropriate setting for the eventual recovery or dissolution of the patient.

In Delia Falconer’s novel *The Service of the Clouds* the atmosphere of the Mountains is almost another character. It’s visible, can be tasted, ingested. Falconer paraphrases the claims of Dr Philip E. Muskett which were often quoted in tourist guides and gazettes:

People, as a general rule, do not realise sufficiently that in many diseases mountains air is a remedy which cannot be surpassed. They do not appear to understand that it is often superior to all other treatments put together. They evidently do not know that it can do good when everything else has proved unsuccessful. A patient inhaling mountain air is being treated by an active restorative every second of the twenty-four hours continuously, night and day without intermission.

Mountain air has particular and special chemical and vital qualities which make it conspicuously valuable in the treatment of
many diseases. One of its distinguishing features is its absolute purity. There is a perfect freedom from the organic impurities and foul emanations common to crowded cities. It is free from any contamination whatever, and in this purity lies one of the most potent factors in the treatment of disease. In addition to this, mountain air contains a relatively large amount of ozone. Ozone itself being one of the most powerful disinfectants known, it follows that it is a great purifier of the air, and further, ozonised air is healthy and stimulating.

The violet rays of mountains sunlight act chemically upon the blood, and improves its quality by increasing its red corpuscles. Mountain air also induces a feeling of well-being and exhilaration, in addition to bracing up the whole body. With most people it acts as a general tonic, and promotes the appetite.

Not only does a person inhaling mountain air eat well, but he usually sleeps well too. Indeed, it generally acts – especially on literary, professional, and business men – as a soporific. The rest, too, is very much more refreshing than that obtained at lower levels – six hours sleep in elevated regions being as good as eight hours elsewhere.

Mountain air has, further, the remarkable property of promoting metabolism, that is to say, it hastens the various changes which are continually taking place throughout the system. In this way it replaces the worn out tissues with new material. It ensures a greater regularity in all the functions of the body; it makes the muscles firmer; it strengthens the nerves; it increases the mental powers; and what is more noticeable, it brings back the glow of health to the colourless face. (qtd. in Julie Stockton “Health” 87)

*The Service of Clouds* tells the story of Eureka Jones and Harry Kitcings. The title is an allusion to John Ruskin’s assertion, with which Falconer prefaces the novel, that “if a general and characteristic name were needed for modern landscape art, none better could be invented than ‘the service of clouds’”. Many of the organisations she describes, such as the Fresh Air League and the Katoomba Amusement Company, actually existed and the character of Harry Kitcings is loosely based on Harry Phillips, a photographer who was fascinated by clouds and produced a number of view books which were immensely popular. When Eureka first meets Kitcings he’s suspended in the air, in the basket of a flying fox which dips down into the valley behind the Hydro Majestic. The owner of the Hydro
demands to know what he's doing, and Harry replies, "I am serving the clouds"
(111).

Eureka describes the workings of the Fresh Air League, a charitable body that brings ailing children and mothers for a rest at farms in Springwood and Blackheath. Those selected get a month of sunshine, orchard fruit, milk puddings and beef tea. Every meal is "served with generous lashings of mountain air" (47). Then they're returned to their slums. Eureka's mother considers these holidays "a form of unwitting torture", adding, "They need to import the children to the mountains in order to convince themselves that the air is fresh" (47). But, with formation of the League, the overblown claims for the efficacy of the atmosphere become institutionalised.
Despite her cynicism Mrs Jones has, herself, been lured to the Mountains by the air. After the death of her husband she tells Eureka she wants, “to study the clouds with her own keen eyes and learn how to live from her observations... see her life spread out below her gaze until she could make out its bright topography at last” (19). Eureka Jones becomes a nurse at a TB sanatorium, the King George Home, at Wentworth Falls. She describes it as the last place in the Mountains where the fog lingers. Here the clouds are seen as part of the cure. The windows are left open and mist drifts into the wards. Susan Sontag describes TB as a disease of fluids and of air. “TB is disintegration, febrilisation, dematerialization; it is a disease of liquids – the body turning to phlegm and mucus and sputum and, finally, blood – and of air, the need for better air” (14). Air and water combine in clouds or fog, and so, if a patient can learn to regulate these perhaps he, or she, can regulate their disease. Eureka describes,

the philosophy of open-air treatment, which claimed that breathing soft clouds in a mountain landscape would gradually heal tubercular lesions on the lungs. The high air was purer, and more concentrated. It was visible. Its medicinal effects could be relied upon and gauged. Matron Coan was inclined to endow these facts with a moral aspect. In her opinion, the cure also put a patient’s character to the test. There had been much talk, she knew, about the refined sadness, the fugitive mystery, of clouds. But here, in the sanatorium, the consumptives had to learn to master the mists which exercised a repellent fascination on them, creeping like ghosts of caterpillars slowly through the wards. They must learn to ration the damp air or choke upon it. They had to expose themselves to the clouds until they conquered their own blank fear of death. (240 - 241)

A common complication amongst the patients is spes phthisica, which translates as the hope or expectation of consumption. Those suffering from this condition are “afflicted with a false joyfulness, they displayed an unusual vitality; their passions and appetites increased, they discovered new vigour in their limbs and
other neglected organs" (261). One of the patients, Les Curtain, displays all these symptoms but, although Eureka recognises this, she still succumbs to her passion for him. Sontag writes, "Having TB was imagined to be an aphrodisiac, and to confer extraordinary powers of seduction" (13). In the afternoons, if Les and Eureka can find some time alone (often in the cemetery) they begin to explore each other's body. When they finally make love it brings on a devastating bout of coughing for Les and he is sent to the infirmary, a ward reserved for the most seriously ill patients. Eureka spends several weeks at her aunts' home in Katoomba. When she returns Les's condition has improved markedly but this also means he's recovered from the *spes phthisica* and is now indifferent to her.

Sontag describes this phenomenon. She writes that the metaphor of TB was

a way of describing sexual feelings — while lifting the responsibility for libertinism, which is blamed on a state of objective, physiological decadence or deliquescence. It was both a way of describing sensuality and promoting the claims of passion and a way of describing repression and advertising the claims of sublimation. (26)

In other words, passion was seen as a physical symptom rather than an emotional response.

Dymphna Cusack also wrote about TB in her novel *Say No to Death* (1951). For her, the subject was more personal. Cusack had been invalided out of the Department of Education because of her poor health. She was suffering from trigeminal neuralgia, pernicious anaemia and suspected cancer and tuberculosis and was told she would never work again. Early in 1945 Cusack and her friend Florence James had moved to the Mountains. At Pinegrove (their house in Hazelbrook), despite constant pain, Cusack abandoned herself to writing. Over the next two and a half years she produced an enormous amount of work. As the
physical act of writing induced some of her most debilitating attacks she began to dictate her books, at first to Florence James and later onto a dictaphone.

In the garden at Pinegrove there was an orchard. Cusack wrote that a “disastrous bush-fire had swept mountain and gully, destroyed the orchard and left half of a plum-tree blackened and burnt. The other half astonished us the following spring by sending forth a wealth of white blossom from which developed small plums” (Freehill 179). Cusack learned at Hazelbrook that, despite her physical frailty, she could continue to write. Many years later she wrote a novel called *The Half-Burnt Tree* (1969) which used for its central image the plum tree at Pinegrove. The tree was for her a symbol of re-birth after great hardship, an optimistic representation of her experience of the Mountains. She wrote: “Condemned as I was by medical opinion, I used to look at that little tree and hope” (Freehill 179).

Cusack’s aim in writing *Say No to Death* was unashamedly polemic. She explained, in her biography *Dymphna* (1975), that Dr John Hughes, the head of the TB section of the Department of Public Health, had asked her to “write a book about the appalling conditions under which tubercular patients suffered in New South Wales” but that she had refused (Freehill 66). Cusack prided herself on the accuracy of her research but a wealth of material, with which Hughes promised to supply her, wasn’t sufficient to engage her interest. Cusack had to be “caught up personally as well as moved by passionate indignation” (67). This occurred for her when a close friend, nominated only as Kay in Cusack’s biography, died of TB. Although Kay could afford private health care some of her treatments took place in public facilities and she told Cusack of the conditions there. Cusack took
up Hughes's offer of documentary material, lived for a time in the Bodington Sanatorium in the Blue Mountains and also visited various public sanatoria. By the time her research was completed her notebook contained the history of more than 120 "life-and-death stories" (67). Central to her experience of her friend's death was the change in Kay's husband: "I saw him develop from a handsome, pleasure-loving playboy into a man of infinite strength and compassion" (Freehill 67).

Despite, or perhaps because of, its concern with TB this novel is, at heart, a romance. Jan Blakely and Bart Templeton are lovers but the already precarious equilibrium of their relationship is disturbed when Jan discovers she has TB. Jan is sent first to Locklynn, a crowded city sanatorium, and then to Pine Ridge, a private facility in the Mountains. The two sanatoria function as microcosms of the city (dark, overcrowded, fetid) and the country (light, open, sweet). Sontag suggests that the plethora of landscapes that were thought to be helpful in the treatment of TB — mountains, deserts, islands — actually constituted a rejection of the city. She wrote:

In *La Traviata*, as soon as Alfredo wins Violetta's love he moves her from unhealthy Paris to the wholesome countryside: instant health follows. And Violetta's giving up on happiness is tantamount to leaving the country and returning to the city — where her doom is sealed, her TB returns, and she dies. (74)

The Mountains live up to their promise. Although the process is slow Jan's condition improves. Part of the healing process is Bart's continued support. Jan's roommate, Mrs Carlton, tells her that each time Bart kisses her "it's as though he says 'No' to death" (82). His love is therapeutic. When she first arrived at Pine Ridge Jan was confined to bed. For her, time seems to stop: "Days like this, time
stood still. There were nights when the stars she could see through the doorway stood still. Then time had no meaning at all; then the sound of the train might have been a comet rushing through space, the flaming plumes of its engines marking its progress across the sky. You were suspended in a moment of breathless waiting” (69). Now her condition has improved so much she’s allowed to stroll around the garden. Bart’s unaware that she’s once again mobile because she wants to surprise him. She goes to a seat overlooking the road to await him. He arrives not by train but by car and she sees him farewell the driver, Magda, with a passionate kiss. She stays to watch as Magda holds a mirror to Bart’s face so he can wipe her lipstick from his mouth then she flees up a steep slope aptly known as Haemorrhage Hill.

Bart’s betrayal is devastating but she doesn’t confront him with what she’s seen. In fact, Jan is so animated it’s one of the happiest visits he’s had in a long time. But her exertion isn’t without cost; it brings on a bout of pleurisy. While her relapse may have been physically precipitated by her flight up Haemorrhage Hill it’s caused by seeing Bart kiss another woman. Sontag notes the connection between TB and thwarted passion in consumption mythology: “There is generally some passionate feeling which provokes, which expresses itself in, a bout of TB. But the passion must be thwarted, the hopes blighted” (23). Jan’s health suffers a setback so severe that she’s expelled from Pine Ridge and the Mountains. Her return to the city is the beginning of her slow and inexorable dissolution.

Despite Cusack’s research, her desire for authenticity, Say No To Death re-hashes the major romantic cliches associated with consumption. Ironically, the text which most clearly subverts TB mythology was written in the nineteenth
century when the myth was at its height; it's also a children's book. In *Miss Bobbie*, published in 1897, Ethel Turner mercilessly burlesques the romantic conventions of the disease. Bobbie and her friend Isabel have been sent to the Mountains for the summer because Isabel is too delicate to withstand the heat and miasma of Sydney. They amuse themselves by playing a game in which Bobbie is: “an invalid, generally a consumptive dying to slow music with an ineffable smile on her face. She used to drape the table-cloth over her shoulders and lie on the sofa propped up with pillows, and cough little dry, hollow coughs, and hold her handkerchief to her mouth. Sometimes, to make it more realistic, she sprinkled the white cambric with red ink” (248). When Isabel, who played the faithful maid, took too long to fetch the doctor Bobbie “employed the interval in dying and laying herself out. She pulled the blinds down till the room was in a dim, religious light, and she closed the door. Then she took a white table-cloth from the side-board drawer, and made a shroud of it, tied up her chin with a table-napkin, and lay flat down on the floor, her eyes closed, her hands crossed, and the flowers from the vases on her breast” (251).

The novel is satirical; the irony is biographical. Turner had two children, Adrian and Jean. Like her mother Jean Curlewis became an author. She wrote poetry, novels and a book on prosody. Dorothea Mackellar wrote of her admiration for Jean’s poetry, which was first published when Jean was only eighteen or nineteen. Her first novel was published when she was twenty-three. Curlewis married Dr Leo Charlton on 23 October 1923. They left for England within a few weeks of the wedding, returning to Australia some two years later. In 1926 Curlewis was diagnosed with tuberculosis. After this, much of her time
was spent in a sanatorium in Katoomba. Ethel Turner had a cottage built at Leura where she could stay when visiting her daughter and where Jean could stay when she was well enough. Philippa Poole, Turner’s granddaughter, wrote, “Jean spent months at a time at a private hospital at Katoomba and Ethel visited her and sat with her, and hoped against hope that the mountains would perform their miraculous cure as had always happened in her books” (Turner Diaries 264). It was at this time that Turner wrote her last novel. *Judy and Punch* (1928) is a revisiting of *Seven Little Australians* in which she recounts Judy’s time at a boarding school at Mount Victoria and how she ran away and made her way home. (All these scenes occurred off stage, as it were, in *Seven Little Australians*.) An admirer had asked for this story but it might also have been therapeutic for Turner to return to a time when her doomed young heroine overcame all obstacles in order to return to the family she loved.

Curlewis died in 1930. Zora Cross wrote a poem in her memory which linked the sorrow she felt at Curlewis’ death with the grief she had felt as a child when reading of Judy’s death in Turner’s *Seven Little Australians* (1894):

Yet am I stretched apart this April day
With stinging tears for Poesy’s sad loss
My heart cleft open with a sorrow wide
As once it knew when midst blithe childhood play
I lay grief-stricken on my fairy moss
Because a little book-girl “Judy” died” (11).

Philippa Poole also linked Jean’s death to the fictional death of Judy when she edited Turner’s diaries. Poole notes that the first pages of her grandmother’s diary for 1930, the time of Jean’s death, are blank; “she was too moved to record the final days” (E. Turner 267). Instead Poole offers, as a vivid description of this period, the passage from *Seven Little Australians* that describes Judy’s beatific
death: "The shadows were cold and smote upon their hearts; they could feel the wind from the strange waters on their brows, but only she who was about to cross heard the low lapping of the waves... Then the wind blew over them all, and with a little shudder, she slipped away" (267 – 268).

"Come to the Blue Mountains"

It seemed that few people had travelled through the Mountains without commenting on the scenery but during the final decades of the nineteenth century the Mountains became a popular holiday destination. Davidson and Spearritt suggest that "notions of the sublime, with its jarring hint of terror, had by the 1880s given way to the idea of nature as a succession of vistas" (12). Paths and lookouts were constructed and each village had its array of beauty spots. In Miss Bobbie Ethel Turner lists the indispensable sights of the Mountains in the 1890s:

They had three days at the world-famed Jenolan Caves... They saw Govett’s Leap from the three best points of vantage; gazed at the Orphan Rock; climbed nearly to the bottom of Nellie’s Glen; threw bits of sandwich paper to be whirled down Wentworth Falls, and had a glorious bathe in the beautiful, crystal pool place at Woodford. They gathered maidenhair at Springwood, mountain moss in the big Blackheath gorge, flannel flowers and early Christmas bush at Falconbridge [sic]. They killed a little brown snake on one of the Katoomba roads, disturbed an iguana two feet long at the Gemini Falls, and discovered a kangaroo rat with five "little ratlets"... in a gully at Mount Victoria. After that, Miss Crawford declared they had done the mountains completely, and there was nothing more to be seen; she seemed utterly at the end of her resources. (242 – 243)

Douglas Sladen published a series of poems in the Australian Town and Country Journal during 1883, which extolled the beauty of the Mountains. In his poem
"The Blue Mountains: An Invitation" he exhorted jaded Sydneysiders to leave their toil and,

Come to the Blue Mountains, Blue Mountains, Blue Mountains
Come to the Blue Mountains this lovely spring day
To see crisp runnels and bright little fountains
Bubbling and gushing and hurrying away
Come to the Mountains, to see the spring flowers
The wattle, the tea tree, the heath in bloom
To quaff the fresh breeze that blows through their bowers
Refreshing the sense and sowing perfume!” (1180)

From the late nineteenth century tourism became the chief industry. In his photographic study, *The Blue Mountains and Jenolan Caves* (1952), Frank Hurley wrote: “In one major direction the various towns on the Blue Mountains are unique. They possess no industries, either primary or secondary. They grow nothing and they make nothing... They subsist entirely on the tourists who come to view their scenic splendours and breathe their pure air” (qtd. in Stockton “Health” 86). There was some mining at Yerranderie in the Burratorang Valley and at Katoomba but, as Jim Smith points out in his book *From Katoomba to Jenolan Caves* (1984), “the mining industry declined to the point where it became more profitable to carry tourists than coal and shale on [John Britty] North’s inclined railway” which is now better known as the Scenic Railway (9).

In Ethel Turner’s novel *Laughing Water* (1920) tourism is seen as the obvious answer to the economic problems of the Tucketts. Mrs Tuckett is the laundress for various families who are holidaying near Katoomba. The washing is done at the clients’ home and this makes it very difficult for her to watch over her children. One of them is found wandering on the railroad tracks. The “Mountain Devils”, a group of young holidaymakers, decide to help out. Their assets are “A week, twenty-five pounds, and thirty-seven Mountain Devils” (136). They intend
to extend the cramped cottage in which the Tucketts live and, in particular, to
build a large verandah from which Mrs Tuckett can sell tea and ginger beer to the
picnickers who pass by on their way to the Goblin Pool. Not only do they achieve
this, they even manage to buy a cow for Mrs Tuckett because it would be
unthinkable to offer people blackberry tarts without cream (143). They also
construct a miniature railway and The Goblin Fishing Pool to amuse the children
while their parents are eating. The venture is a great success and, “Before long the
Tucketts were capitalists in a small way, able to let their boys attend school and
wear clothes positively bought to fit themselves” (146).

In Eleanor Dark’s novel *The Little Company* (1936) Gilbert Massey
describes an odd pique felt by the residents for the valleys that bring visitors to the
area:

As a whole, he discovered, the town took small notice of the
valleys. They were its livelihood, its reason for existence, but they
dwarfed it, and some half-conscious resentment, perhaps, at being
dwarfed, tempted the townsfolk to assert themselves by creating an
atmosphere of complacent suburbanism. They made indeed a
grudging gesture of acknowledgment to scenic immensities by
constructing sedate and easily accessible vantage points from
which visitors could gape, and turn away. Smooth paths skirted the
cliffs for the tourist, broad roads invited his car, signposts directed
him, refreshment rooms beguiled him, rubbish bins invited, but did
not always receive the litter of his picnics. And yet the valleys
were omnipresent; no one ever quite forgot them. (153–154)

Tourist sites can be places of despair or triumph. In *Edens Lost* (1970), the
first section of which is set prior to World War II, Angus Weekes feels as if he has
passed a test when, at his first attempt, he sees the Emu, a naturally formed
“relief” on a cliff visible from Sublime Point at sunset. Conversely he is sickened
(literally) by his descent in the gondola that takes workers to a mine (it had not
then been developed as the Scenic Railway). Taking in the sights can be a chaney
thing. Often the magnificent views are obliterated by fog. It seems that water in
the mountains continually frustrates expectations. There is either too little of it, or
too much. Kate Llewellyn wrote in *The Waterlily* (1988): “The days and days of
fog are rigorous. Not being able to see out for several days has a queer effect and
gets very claustrophobic; even to the edge of a desperate white panic” (94). Fog
soaks up sound, creates the illusion of solitude. A parrot screeching through the
wall of white shocks as if someone had burst into your living room. Mist is
pervasive, invasive. It follows you inside: condensation on the windows, your
own white breath.

But now visitors to the mountains no longer have to contest with water
unless they wish to. They can go to a cinema and see it subdued by technology.
Each day, several times a day, a Maxvision cinema in Katoomba screens *The
Edge*, a film that concentrates on the landscape of the Blue Mountains. On the big
screen if a sea of fog obscures your view of the valley time lapse photography
takes care of it: the mist breaks like a sea, rolls back, dissipates in moments. You
can forget the meagreness of the waterfalls when the camera takes you to the cliff
edge and beyond, suspends you above the abyss, as if you are held up by the roar
of the falls alone. It’s described as “the ultimate environmentally friendly
recreation for jaded city dwellers” (Skinner 27). The primary meaning of this
statement concerns preservation of the natural environment but it also describes
the “friendly” surroundings of the cinema. A storm rages across the screen but
around you all is controlled and comfortable.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries much of the poetry located
in the Mountains concerned observations from lookouts. It’s only more recently
that the Mountains have been allowed to have an urban presence in poems. For
many years it was as if the Mountains were uninhabited, as if the only use for a
human figure here was as a contrast to the vastness and power of nature but more
recently contemporary poets, such as Deb Westbury, celebrate the human side of
Katoomba. Westbury’s poems are peopled with honeymooners, eccentrics and
banished smokers. She writes of K-Mart and pigeons, the Carrington and the
Savoy, notices in shop windows:

A misery of smokers exiled
huddle like pyromaniac pigeons
under leaky awnings and narrow dripping eaves.

Only they are fuming.
St Joan and Don Quixote
are busy with their trolleys,
the tourists with maps and agendas.

The locals are eyeless
with dreams of various utopias.
K-Mart is warm
and the payphone works.

The mad, as usual, are stoic in their joy.
They only drink, the righteous mad,
and chew on their moustaches.

The rest of us are holding hands
and looking at the clock. (63)

In the twentieth century, with the increase in tourism, many poems began
to contrast natural beauty with commercial tawdriness. Lauren William’s poem
“The Sad Anthropologist” describes a walk into “greenery and grandeur” and an
ascent through “living rock” but at the culmination of her hike there’s only a
souvenir shop. Although she has reached the summit of her journey she feels that:

From a state of awe I plummet
Into teaspoons and boomerangs,
Pinball and video machines,
A cafeteria crowded with unhealthy food
That I buy and take outside
To a carpark full of stinking buses (52)

Bushwalking, under various names, has long been popular and, because of its proximity to Sydney, the Blue Mountains was one of the most favoured destinations for bushwalkers. In 1896 John Le Gay Brereton and a young companion tramped from Sydney over the Mountains to Jenolan and then Wombeyan caves. From there they made their way to Moss Vale, through the Kangaroo Valley to Berry and back home to Sydney. The journey took a month. Brereton described the trek in a lightly fictionalised account entitled *Landlopers: The Tale of Drifting Travel and the Quest for Pardon and Peace* (n.d.). He described himself as a “trav’ller”, one of the unemployed (it was a time of depression) who roved from town to town looking for work, begging, occasionally stealing, perpetually on the move. But his chief motive appears to be a delight in this way of life, at least as a temporary measure. “The old longing is upon me,” he wrote, “the longing for the open road and its lazy labour” (24).

Although Brereton’s own rambling seems more in the nature of recreation than necessity he’s dismissive of hikers: “three tourists passed, making for the coast. They were English, I suppose, and looked determined – seriously resolved to enjoy their tramp” (131). Nevertheless, Brereton later joined the Warragamba Walking Club, an early bushwalking group, and even wrote some humorous verse featuring its members (Gibson 13).

In the early decades of the twentieth century bushwalking became more and more popular. This interest rose to dizzy heights in the 1930s when a series of Mystery Hikes was sponsored by a large chain store. Trainloads of walkers would
be taken to a secret location, “to set off like a carnival of ants not knowing where they were going” (Gibson 15). One such hike – to Hawkesbury, in 1932 – needed eleven trains and involved 80,000 people (Davidson and Spearritt 232). Despite the money they injected into the local economy the relationship between locals and hikers quickly became an uneasy one. In Margaret Trist’s short story “Mountain Town” Mrs Burrows, the postmistress, notices a pair of hikers entering the village. They niggle at her consciousness as she continues to sort mail and serve customers. She wonders about them, hoping they’ll come into the Post Office, for stamps perhaps, or visit the teahouse where her friend Mrs Peters presides. She can recognise anyone in the town not just by their voice but by their footfall or the sound of their cough but these people are outside her knowledge. It’s imperative that she finds out why they’re here. Although they refresh themselves at the tearoom she’s still unsettled: their motives may remain unknown. As they pass out of the town she vents her exasperation, “I don’t hold with this hiking… What is there in it anyhow?” (121). But no one answers her.

While Eleanor Dark was writing *The Timeless Land* (1941) she and her husband Eric decided to re-trace William Dawes 1789 expedition into the Blue Mountains. The Darks were experienced climbers and hikers who spent a great deal of time in the bush. They set out from Emu Plains and headed for Mount Hay eventually emerging at Wentworth Creek. They estimated they’d gone even further than Dawes. Eleanor wrote: “Eric had his map and his altimeter, and I kept a little ‘log’ of the journey, and we have plotted a graph of it” (qtd. in Brooks 345). Not everyone was as well prepared when they entered the bush and the
Mountains gained a reputation for their own form of consumption. In *The Little Company* Dark describes the terrain as,

looking-glass country; country in which the surest way of not reaching a given spot was to walk straight towards it. Country that tempted you forward with a vista of gentle undulations, and then stopped you dead with an unexpected cliff. Country that camouflaged its contours with dense undergrowth, enveloped you suddenly in an impenetrable veil of white mist, left you floundering, disorientated; country which swallowed the inexperienced hiker and held him prisoner. (154)

When someone is lost in the bush they are, in a sense, in a liminal state, their fate unknown. This is made clear in *The Little Company* (1945) when one of the characters wanders away from her Katoomba home. There is a period of several days when Phyllis Massey is positioned between life and death: literally because she is trapped on a cliff ledge but even more so in the minds of the people searching for her. She could be lost and wandering, injured and calling for help, perished. For a time, she’s like Schroedinger’s cat: simultaneously alive and dead. They might never find her and she could remain in that mysterious limbo forever. For Phyllis’s husband Gilbert the landscape reflects this liminality, it’s grey and neutral and even though he isn’t lost the terrain consumes and disorients him. In the pre-dawn, after a night of searching for his wife, he muses:

in this suspended hour between night and day, when the grey light made ghosts of the trees, and all colour was washed out to greyness, and the grey ashes stirred like feathers over a few live embers, and the silence itself was grey and heavy, like lead, it was

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11 In *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (ed. Ted Honderich) E.J. Lowe describes Erwin Schroedinger’s thought experiment: Imagine a cat confined to a box containing a bottle of poisonous gas which will break, killing the cat, if and only if a device connected to it registers the radioactive decay of a radium atom. If the atom, device, and cat together constitute a quantum system, then it seems that this system will exist in a superposition of states unless and until an observer tries to determine which state it is in, by seeing whether or not the cat is dead. But this implies that in the absence of such an observation the cat is neither determinately dead nor determinately alive. (125).
no longer a place at all. It was the essence of quiet and the ultimate experience of loneliness. You could not draw it into yourself, make it your own; instead it sucked you out of your body, absorbed your thought, and struck your sense of time and being away from you.
(297–298)

In his book *The Country of Lost Children* (1999) Peter Pierce suggests that, generally, Australian authors abandon the lost to their fate: “once strayed they are ignored until found alive or dead” because the narrative interest lies in outcomes (44). The story follows the searchers, although physical evidence may allow them to describe the movements and actions of the lost person. This trend may reflect the liminality of the lost who, even when mobile, are perceived as being in stasis. When the searchers eventually find Phyllis she is not only unhurt, she is exalted. In despair and renunciation she had leapt from the cliff into the mist below forgetting there was a ledge only ten feet from the top. But she isn’t dismayed by her lack of success. She considers her survival a vindication. She exclaims to Gilbert “I wasn’t meant to die... when I prayed down there I knew someone would come because I wasn’t meant to” (303).

This excerpt recalls the scene in *King Lear* in which Gloucester, after he’s betrayed and blinded, wishes to kill himself by leaping from a high cliff. Like Gloucester Phyllis is sightless, although this is a temporary product of the fog rather than a permanent disability. As I note in “Pinnacled with crags” (42–43) several nineteenth century travellers used this scene from *Lear* to evoke an impression of the great depths they observed from some eminence in the Mountains. Unlike Lear, who merely resigned himself to living after his failed attempt at suicide – “I’ll bear affliction till it do cry out itself ‘Enough, enough’ and die (Shakespeare 908) – Phyllis embraces her survival. She feels she has
entered into a new life. In her mind the attempted suicide becomes a leap of faith, a rite of passage.

Gilbert perceives this event quite differently. For him she hasn’t reached some new level of maturity. Instead he describes her as being “like a child, living from one moment to the next” (303). Phyllis does often behave childish but Dark may also have been acknowledging a link previously postulated between lost adults and immaturity. In his essay “Lost, Stolen or Strayed: From the Australian Babes in the Woods to Azaria Chamberlain” Robert Holden describes how Joseph Furphy reduces the iconic explorers Burke and Wills to the level of children in his novel Such is Life (1903). One character goes so far as to say of Burke “Why, there was no end to that feller’s childishness” (Holden 67). Holden also notes an amendment to Marcus Clarke’s short story “Pretty Dick”, the tale of a lost child. When it was first published in 1869 Pretty Dick was twelve years old but when it was re-published in 1873 Clarke reduced the boy’s age to seven because many readers had found the notion that a twelve year old boy raised in the bush would become lost implausible (67).

Ethel Turner implicitly makes the same connection between lost adults and immaturity in her novel Miss Bobbie. Bobbie and her best friend Issie, who are holidaying in the Mountains, decide to play “lost in the bush” (257). They take on the personas of Bill and Joe, “men off the track”, complete with swag, pannikins and a billy (258). Clearly the two girls are familiar with certain narrative conventions associated with men lost in the bush. They parcel out their rations, hunt the local wildlife with pretend guns, and when their strength fails, write a final note of farewell. (Bobbie would like to write it in blood but can’t squeeze
sufficient gore from a nicked finger to do so.) But this is only play. Although the
two girls roam far beyond their normal territory and even venture a little way off
the track Bobbie has no intention of actually becoming lost. She carefully marks
their trail as she goes because “it was all very well to play at being lost but she
had also acquired the wholesome horror every Australian child possesses of really
being bushed” (261). If an eleven year old city-bred girl knows to take these
precautions what does this say about adults who become lost in the bush?

Peter Pierce makes a distinction between nineteenth century lost child
narratives and those of the twentieth century. He subtitled the second section of
The Country of Lost Children “In the Twentieth Century: The Child Abandoned.”
These two distinct perceptions are present in Sue Woolfe’s Leaning Towards
Infinity (1996). This novel is haunted by the presence/absence of Matti, the
narrator’s brother, who disappeared from their home in the Blue Mountains when
he was fifteen. It’s possible that Matti ran away; he didn’t get on with his father
and his mother had impossibly high expectations of him. His parents refuse to
believe he could have abandoned them, even preferring the notion he has drowned
in the nearby lake. Surprisingly, the townspeople also take this view. The narrator
is, as an adult, unable to account for this perception except as a mark of respect
for her father. Where once the lost child was lured away by a seductive and
deceptive landscape, in the twentieth century lost children are more likely to be
discards: abused, abandoned, abducted or aborted. They are associated with an
often violent disjunction. The word loss derives from the Anglo-Saxon los, to

12 Although the girls never consider themselves to be lost, except in play, their families do. While
the girls, worn out by their long hike, are sleeping peacefully out of sight between two fallen
trees, dozens of searchers are combing the bush for them.
lose, or destroy. In the twentieth century the fate of the lost child is almost always destruction: abduction, murder, domestic violence, institutionalised abuse. So it’s a sign of approbation that the locals impose a nineteenth century interpretation on Matti’s disappearance rather than a twentieth century one.

"Ghost History"

In 1921 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle visited Australia and New Zealand. He was accompanied by his wife and their three children and the family stayed for several weeks at the Hydro Majestic. He recorded his impressions of the trip in his book *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist* (1921). He was enthusiastic about the beauties of Medlow Bath and the unexpected amenities of the Hydro Majestic. He also noted the soothing properties of nature but advised of its dangers. Wilderness was virtually at the back door, which meant it was easy to lose your way in a very short space of time:

> The wild scrub flows up the hillsides to the very grounds of the hotels, and in a very few minutes one may find oneself in the wilderness of ferns and gum trees unchanged from immemorial ages. It is a very real danger to the young or to those who have no sense of direction, for many people have wandered off and never come back alive – in fact, there is a specially enrolled body of searchers who hunt for the missing visitor.” (Doyle 229)

Doyle was interested in those who were lost in another sense. He was in Australia to lecture on Spiritualism. Doyle’s conversion to Spiritualism had come about during World War I. He had been interested in the subject for many years and was a longstanding member of the Society for Psychical Research. So convinced was he of the reality of Spiritualism that he was able to address a Spiritualist meeting
only hours after he had been informed of the death of his son Kingsley because he was sure that he had "survived the grave" (Stashower 345).

While he was in Australia he met the poet Leon Gellert who gave him a copy of his book *The Isle of Sam* which had been illustrated by Norman Lindsay. Doyle commended both poet and artist:

Leon Gellert... promises to be the rising man in Australia in this, the supreme branch of literature. He served in the war, and his verses from the front attain a very high level. His volume of war poems represents the most notable literary achievement of recent years, and its value is enhanced by being illustrated by Norman Lindsay, whom I look upon as one of the greatest artists of our time... now that he is turning more and more from the material to the spiritual it is impossible to say how high a level he may attain. (167)

Coincidentally, perhaps, Lindsay had recently become interested in the occult after the death of his brother Reg during World War I. Lindsay appeared to be both fascinated and repelled by Spiritualism. He would later castigate himself as a "loon from the moon" and "an intolerable bore" for his involvement with the occult (*My Mask* 188). In his defence he cited the times. It was "after the 1914 war, when the holocaust of death and the aftermath of epidemic sent nearly everyone on earth, sane or silly, desperately searching for some assurance of the continuity of life" (188). But even at the time of his most ardent involvement he tried simultaneously to distance himself from Spiritualism.

Lindsay constructed his own device for contacting the dead, a "spirit board" which consisted of the alphabet on a sheet of cardboard which he hung on the wall. The planchette was a stick (Jack Lindsay 304). At first he designated his wife Rose as the nexus between the spiritual and the physical worlds even though both their hands were on the planchette. When Rose was absent due to illness he
A Pocket Guide: Ghost History

began to receive messages himself without her intervention and his resistance took on a more sematic flavour. While retaining the practice he disavowed the nomenclature. He advised his brother Daryl, “it is a good plan to wipe out talk of spiritualism which, like every other ism, runs to religious gabble, and place the problem as solely one of matter and hidden intellectual power” (Letters 166). He also avoided a meeting with Doyle because he was so vocally associated with Spiritualism.

There is no record of Doyle taking part in any seances during his time in the Mountains, although he did attend seances elsewhere in the country. Perhaps he decided that his time with his family at Medlow Bath should be a complete break from his hectic schedule of speaking engagements. This didn’t save him from being denounced from at least one local pulpit (“New Revelation” n. pag.). Nor was this the first time that Spiritualism had been debated in a Blue Mountains newspaper. In 1909 Miss Elsie Thorncroft, the elocutionist, held a concert at the Masonic Hall at Katoomba. Amongst the performers was Ernest Hosking. Hosking’s entertainment consisted of a reproduction of the type of phenomena common at seances.

Under the supervision of a number of well-known and respectable local identities Hosking was trussed up, tucked inside a bag with only his head protruding and placed inside a cabinet so that it was impossible for him to “move hand, foot or even the head” (“Elsie Thorncroft’s Concert” n. pag.). The lights were lowered and the curtains of the cabinet were drawn. A number of manifestations then appeared: a tall figure danced on the stage, a white-robed
apparition bowed to the audience, and a young woman invited the gentlemen to kiss her before dematerialising.

The performance didn’t have quite the effect that Hosking had hoped for. He assured the audience that the apparitions were fake but at least some of the spectators didn’t believe him. In a review of the concert the un-named author concedes that Hosking is a clever performer but questions whether his act debunks Spiritualism:

We wish to state right here that the “trick” (for Mr. Hoskins [sic] says it is only a trick) is an exceedingly clever one and mystifying to an audience, and will, no doubt, satisfy the unread and unthinking that such is the explanation for all the materialising phenomena that has convinced scientists in England and Europe for years past... Our personal experiences in England, Europe and America are such that it will take a lot of that sort of thing to convince us that we have been “fooled,” in company with many of the brainiest minds the world has produced, and it would not take a page’s space to knock sky-high the contention that all materialising manifestations are purely trickery. That Mr. Hoskins [sic] is a wonderfully clever performer is undoubted, and his claim as such freely acknowledged; but as an exposé of the wonderful phenomena occurring in Europe to-day, well, we have our own opinion. (“Elsie Thorncroft’s Concert” n. pag.)

In a letter to the Blue Mountain Echo Hosking refuted this description of events and lamented the poor observation of witnesses in general, remarking with some heat and a little perplexity: “there is nothing whatever, in all the fastenings, to prevent me from using either ‘hand or foot, or even the head.’ I have been telling people this for 16 years, and they will not believe me” (Hosking n. pag.). In reply, the editor of the Echo argues that an imperfect recollection of the details of the performance is of little consequence. He notes a specific spatial difference. Displays like Hoskins are enacted in public spaces, which can be set up

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13 The Echo used the singular “Mountain” rather than the plural “Mountains”.

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beforehand and which, although he doesn't note this, are used to house performances. A séance, on the other hand, is most often enacted in a domestic space within an intimate circle to which the medium has no prior access. He describes a séance he attended in which the forms of several children appeared, running about the room and touching the faces and hands of those present. Until someone can explain to him how such visitations are produced he declines to give up his belief in Spiritualism.

Delia Falconer describes a similar scene in *The Service of Clouds.*\(^{14}\) A decade before Eureka and her mother came to live with them, her aunts had held a séance in their home. The manifestations had included a gaggle of spirit children:

Suddenly three small coffins appeared and spirit children jumped out and ran about the room. Their cheeks were as pale as plaster and their white-lashed eyelids were marked with delicate purple veins... They pinched the women and pulled the earrings from their ears. They reached out and stroked their cheeks with small indecent hands. (53)

The aunts were so delighted by these phantoms that they stopped up the gaps and cracks in their house in order to entrap them. The spirit children seemed unaffected by their enforced stay. The only trace of them was an occasional faint impression left on a bed or chair and a faint milky scent. They either were, or represented for the aunts, their seven younger siblings who had died in infancy. The aunts can't remember the faces of these short-lived brother and sisters, they can only recall "a series of presences which clung to their childhood like phantom limbs" (40).

\(^{14}\) The scene may have been inspired by this article. Falconer studied the local newspapers when she was in the Blue Mountains working on *The Service of Clouds.* Falconer’s character Elsie Thorncroft, the elocutionist; Mr Medlicott, the pharmacist; Nurse M. Coan, the corsetiere and Mr Fowler, the photographer and appalling poet, all appear in the pages of the *Blue Mountain Echo.*
In *The Spectral Mother* (1990), although in a different context, Madelon Sprengnether describes this as a “ghost history”: “children absorb what is unspoken along with what is spoken, a family’s hidden or ghost history along with its official one” (15). This notion can apply to vaster social structures than the family. In Falconer’s novel the medium who summoned the spirit children and who was British, noted a difference in the Australian ghosts:

In the old country they were headstrong; here, in this new country, they needed to be coaxed rather than appeased, since they were shy and uncertain in the ways of ghosts. Yet sometimes, if she was not careful, she felt an ugly droning at the edges of her skull, as older presences demanded her attention; the concentration needed to tune them out left her with a migraine headache which persisted for several days. (52)

Eureka notes that this psychic repression is enacted by her aunts in the corporeal world: “Strange,” she wonders, “that my aunts could see spirits but passed without a glance by dark faces in the streets around the Family Hotel” (54).
Unknown Sights
SIMPLE DIRECTIONS FOR VISITING PLACES
DEVOID OF PROPER TRACKS

BLACK’S LADDER

Proceed to the Marked Tree, and turn down the road behind it. Keep straight on, taking no notice of turns to right or left, until a white post is reached, about 500 yards from the Main Western Road.... Follow this road until a block of land is reached about 500 yards further on.... Fifty yards past this block the road forks. Take the right-hand turn, and proceed for 150 to 200 yards. Then turn into the bush on the left, and cross top of hill. On the slope of the hill... will be found a foot track. It leads to the Black’s Ladder...

New Walks and Sights: Katoomba and Leura, Blue Mountains N.S.W.

Frank Walford
In(scribing) the Penal Colony

It has been a convention that, for the first twenty-five years of white settlement in Australia, the Blue Mountains were an impassable barrier confining the colony to the Cumberland Plain. This notion of the Mountains as a blockade is present in both historical and literary texts.\(^{15}\) When Anthony Trollope visited Mt Victoria during his tour of Australia in 1871 he wrote,

> They presented a cruel, awful barrier to the earliest settlers, and for a long time disbarred them from the land beyond, which they hoped to find flowing with all the requisites for milk and honey. (319)

More recently this notion of impenetrability has been questioned.\(^{16}\) Certainly many expeditions set out to cross the Mountains and returned without having done so. The determination of these parties to succeed is not in question. More problematic is the commitment of the various governors to finding a passage over the Mountains. An article in the *Sydney Gazette* of 1803 stated:

> Missions, well-directed and equipped, have indefatigably endeavoured to explore them... and they, altho' provided with every necessary for the long and laborious travel, have been successively compelled to abandon the design. ("Dismal")

That the missions were well equipped is arguable. Certainly they were supplied with food, compasses, guns and ammunition. What they lacked was time. Alan Andrews points out that these expeditions could not "afford the luxury of searching for ridge routes, their time being strictly limited by what they could

\(^{15}\) The *Historical Records of New South Wales* records several instances of official disillusionment concerning the crossing of the Blue Mountains. Perhaps the most vehement of these is Governor King’s assertion of 1805: "I cannot help thinking that persevering in crossing those mountains... would be as chimerical as useless" (5: 726). Charles Harpur, in his poem "The Creek of the Four Graves", refers to "Those barrier mountains", while Michael Massey Robinson describes them as "craggy cliffs that guard" in his "Ode for the Queen’s Birthday, 1816".

\(^{16}\) For examples of this see Perry and Cunningham.
carry on their backs” (5). The use of pack animals would have allowed them more
time but packhorses were not used until Blaxland’s privately funded
expeditions. 17

There is a tension apparent between the expressed desire to cross the
Mountains and the time constraint imposed by the lack of pack animals. In
Charles Harpur’s poem “The Creek of the Four Graves”, the story of an abortive
attempt to cross the Mountains, the settler Egremont comments, “On foot were all/
For horses then were beasts of too great price/ To be much ventured upon
mountain routes” (3). But this seems too simple an equation. In the “Returns of
Livestock” for August 1803, three hundred and fifty eight horses are listed
(Historical Records of Australia 5: 33). 18 If crossing the Blue Mountains had been
a high priority surely one or two of these animals might have been risked. That
this wasn’t done would seem to indicate that the crossing of the Mountains was a
low priority for the authorities. 19 Although expeditions continued to make the
attempt successive governors seemed more interested in the possible discovery of
resources, such as salt or coal or gold, by these parties than in the crossing of the
Mountains. The previous quote from Trollope continues, “it was felt by all the
settlers that the Blue Mountains hemmed them in, making, as it were, a prison for

17 François Barrallier was allowed two horses for his first exploration into the Mountains in 1802. But this initial
expedition wasn’t an attempt to cross the Mountains but to see if it were practicable. Governor King wrote: “An officer is
going a journey (sic) into the interior at least so far as to endeavour ascertaining whether there is a passage thro’ the
mountains. That fact once known it is my intention to form a chain of depots” (HRNSW 4: 669). The depots were set up
and an ox cart used to bring in provisions. This did give Barrallier a little extra time but the men still had to carry their
own provisions on their explorations from the depots. In 1792 John Wilson fed his party off the land to some extent and this allowed them extra time.
18 Hereafter designated as HRA.
19 Governor King states this quite clearly in a letter to Sir Joseph Banks written after François Barrallier’s unsuccessful
journey of 1802. “passing these barriers, if at all practicable, is of no great moment to attempt any further at present” (HRNSW 5: 136).
them on the shores of Port Jackson (319). I would suggest that the notion of the
Blue Mountains as a barrier that contained the Cumberland Plain was actively
promoted by the authorities in an attempt to discourage absconders, in particular
the Irish.

The transport Queen arrived at Port Jackson on the 26th September 1791.
On board were one hundred and twenty six male prisoners, twenty-three female
prisoners and three children. All were Irish. They were in a poor state of health,
the strongest among them being, Judge-Advocate David Collins wrote, “in an
emaciated and feeble condition” (1: 150). The prisoners claimed that the master of
the Queen had withheld provisions from them. Governor Phillip took their
accusations seriously. He referred the matter to the Secretary of State. His own
powers, he felt, were too limited to deal effectively with the ship’s master. Collins
doesn’t record the man’s eventual fate but he does review the decline of the
convicts: the voyage was so debilitating that by May of the following year only
fifty of the male convicts landed from the Queen were still alive.

Despite the hardships of their journey and the subsequent ill effects on
their health the Irish convicts had been in the colony for little more than a month
when their first mass escape took place. Twenty men and a woman set out from
Parramatta with tomahawks, knives and a week’s supply of food. They thought
they could walk to China or find “a settlement wherein they would be received
and entertained without labour” (Collins 1: 154). Most of the absconders were
eventually found and brought back to the colony but several of them once more
took to the woods. In an effort to curb these excursions Governor Phillip had all
the recent arrivals assembled. He told them that in future any absconders would be
fired upon whenever they were discovered. However, he was not unduly worried by the runaways. In a letter to Nepean, Phillip wrote, “as these people work daily in the woods, the preventing such desertions is impossible; but this is an evil which will cure itself” (HRA 1: 309). Phillip's final remark implies that the folly of such expeditions will become self-evident. This notion might seem to be confirmed in Watkin Tench's account of the interrogation of some of the returned absconders:

Upon being questioned about the cause of their elopement, those whom hunger had forced back, did not hesitate to confess, that they had been so grossly deceived, as to believe that China might easily be reached. (243)

Paul Carter is troubled by the apparent readiness of the absconders to recognise that their fictional settlement is a myth. “One is bound to wonder”, he writes, “at the miraculous power of ‘experience’ that instilled in these ignorant folk so considerable a grasp of world geography in so short a time in the bush” (302). He suggests that the convicts have had “words put into their mouths”, that they have acquiesced to their interrogators’ analysis of their motives, an analysis that relegates their inspiration to the level of myth. Carter sees the fictional settlement, not as a primary objective, but as a rhetorical strategy that allowed the absconders a space in which to pursue more pragmatic escape procedures such as the acquisition of food and tools or the procurement of a boat (302). There is, however, another way to read this passage in Tench's journal. It is not a verbatim account. If we accept that the judgement of the story as grossly deceptive is Tench's and does not represent the opinion of the absconders then their unlikely recantation no longer needs to be explained. Certeau discusses the function of
tales and legends in *The Practice of Everyday Life* and much of what he writes is relevant to the Irish stories:

The formality of everyday practices is indicated in these tales, which frequently reverse the relationships of power and, like the stories of miracles, ensure the victory of the unfortunate in a fabulous, utopian space. This space protects the weapons of the weak against the reality of the established order. It also hides them from the social categories which "make history" because they dominate it. And whereas historiography recounts in the past tense the strategies of instituted powers, these "fabulous" stories offer their audience a repertory of tactics for future use. (23)

For the Irish the stories were more than rhetorical strategies. They weren't merely told, they were enacted. As Certeau writes, "moves, not truths, are recounted" (23).

The notion of a paradise that lay to the west would have been particularly congenial to the Irish. Stories of such sites, fabulous island which were there one moment and gone the next, had been part of their mythology for centuries. They were accustomed to looking to the west for such places. The Irish had a strong oral tradition; the printing press had a much more limited impact in Ireland than in other countries and bards continued to compose under patronage until the seventeenth century. In addition to the formal bardic institution, homely folk tales were handed down from one generation to the next. As recently as 1959 folklorist D.A. McManus wrote,

Do not let anyone imagine that I have had to travel far and wide painstakingly collecting stories here and there, as if plucking rare and precious flowers. Not in the least; for these stories have come to me without strenuous searching on my part... many of these tales I have known and lived with for years. (qtd. in Raine x)

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20 Walter J. Ong uses an interesting metaphor to describe this process: "The old communal oral world had split up into privately claimed freeholdings." In this context, the Irish adherence to the oral could be seen as a nomadic response, a rejection of the "private ownership of words" (131).
Some of these oral tales were recorded as early as the twelfth century. The two manuscripts known as *The Book of the Dun Cow* and *The Book of Leinster* preserve the earliest Gaelic sagas, partly in prose and partly in verse. They include a number of stories that belong to the *Imrrama*.

The *Imrrama*, or voyages, is an important group of tales in Irish literature.\(^{21}\) Central to the *Imrrama* is the search for another world — a world without. Without literally, in that it lay outside Ireland across the western sea, but also “without grief, without sorrow, without death/without any sickness, without debility” (Meyer 6). Seekers of the world without were wanderers, their destination clear but the route hazy; *immram* translates literally as “rowing about”. It is a voyage undertaken voluntarily unlike *longes*, which is a voyage of exile. By seeking that other world in Australia the Irish regained control of their lives. Their *immram* cancelled out, to some extent, the *longes* or enforced exile of transportation.

Although many of the absconders were recaptured or made their way back to the settlement, others were never seen again. John Wilson, a former convict who had lived with the Aborigines when his sentence expired, claimed to have seen the skeletons of more than fifty people in the woods. From the remnants of clothes and other belongings he judged them to be absconders.\(^{22}\) But Irish

\(^{21}\) They include “The Voyage of Bran” (*Imrram Brain*), “The Voyage of Maile Duin” (*Imram Maile Duin*) and “The Voyage of the Sons of Corra” (*Imram Ua Corra*).

\(^{22}\) The Government and General Order of 13th May 1797 had contained a warning to Wilson and three other men thought to be living with the Aborigines. They were to give themselves up to the authorities within fourteen days or be liable to immediate execution when they were captured (HRNSW 3: 207–208). The four men were suspected of aiding the Aborigines in their guerrilla warfare against the settlers. When Wilson eventually gave himself up, long past the official deadline, he was neither executed or sentenced to hard labour. Hunter pardoned him and set him to tasks more suited to his skills. He was supplied with a musket and ammunition for hunting birds and kangaroos, and also, according to Collins, absconders.
mythology allowed another possibility: that those absent had found the world without and could not safely return.

W.B. Yeats wrote of Tir-na-n-Og, the Country of the Young, and of the poet Oisin’s sojourn there and his return to Ireland:

The bard, Oisin... lived there three hundred years, and then returned looking for his comrades. The moment his foot touched the earth his three hundred years fell on him, and he was bowed double, and his beard swept the ground. He described his sojourn in the Land of Youth to Patrick before he died. (179)

Oisin’s story is not one of the Imram. It belongs to another category of the world without tale. He doesn’t wander from island to island searching for Tir-na-n-Og but is taken there by his Sidhe lover, Niam. The Sidhe are the folk of the mound, the dwellers in the hollow hill, they are associated always with high ground. Such boundaries are dangerous in Irish mythology: thresholds, crossroads, any site where the vertical and the horizontal meet, such as a hill or mountain. They are ambiguous places, neither one nor the other, liminal spaces where almost any thing might happen. So it’s not surprising that within a few years the mythical “world without” of the Irish would be located beyond the natural boundary of the Blue Mountains. Judge Advocate Collins thought the Irish convicts’ tale originated from a white man who had lived among “the mountain savages” and had heard the story from them (2: 55).23

Governor Phillip had predicted that the attempts to find a world without would be short-lived but instead the tale became more elaborate, more vividly

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23 This notion is evident in later fiction such as “Oo-a-deen”, an anonymous short story first published in 1847, “From my earliest acquaintance with the aborigines [sic], in the districts nearest the coast I had met with the traditions concerning the existence of a superior race in the country... So shadowy was the rumour conveyed by the blacks who visited Sydney that their report was assigned to their having fallen in with some runaway convicts” (16).
imagined. Seven years after the first attempt to find the world without, Governor Hunter complained to the Duke of Portland that Irish absconders had stolen two brood mares to aid in their escape and attempted to take others. It was, he said, “a serious inconvenience to the colony” (*HRA* 2: 129).

More alarmingly, Hunter received word that as many as sixty convicts planned to abscond. Written directions headed by the figure of a compass had been circulated between districts and a rendezvous nominated. A party of armed constables rounded up twenty of the potential absconders who were brought before the governor. When persuasion proved ineffective Hunter had the ringleaders flogged and the rest put under strict supervision. They remained intransigent. Hunter decided that “nothing but experience will convince them” (*HRA* 2: 130). He ordered them to select four of the strongest and most hardy among their number to be part of an experimental expedition into the interior. This expedition was to be led by John Wilson.

Paul Carter described the Wilson expedition (1797) as a “free lesson in empirical reasoning”, but such a reading would indicate that Hunter felt the absconders were capable of reasoned judgements based on impartial observation (314). This was not the case. The Irish were described as ignorant, their belief in a beneficent white colony as rash, foolish and absurd. Hunter wrote that the expedition was implemented “for the sake... of humanity and a strong desire to save these men, *worthless as they are* [my italics] from impending death” (*HRA* 2: 130). The men were considered worthless in terms of their production. Hunter prefaced his account of the expedition and the events that led up to it with this denunciation: “The Irish convicts are become so turbulent, so dissatisfied with
their situation here, so extremely insolent, refractory and troublesome, that, without the most rigid and severe treatment, it is impossible for us to receive any labour whatsoever from them” (*HRA* 2: 130).

In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Michel Foucault wrote, “the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (26). Hunter’s plan, rather than a humanitarian endeavour, was a scheme to turn worthless bodies into productive ones. The disciplinary model Foucault cites is the panopticon. Jeremy Bentham outlined this system in 1791. Its major principle was the illusion of constant but unseen surveillance:

> the more constantly the persons to be inspected are under the eyes of the persons who should inspect them, the more perfectly will the purpose of the establishment have been attained. Ideal perfection, if that were the object, would require that each person actually be in that predicament, during every instant of time. This being impossible, the next thing to be wished for is, that, at every instant, seeing reason to believe as much, and not being able to satisfy himself to the contrary, he should conceive himself to be so. (Bentham 4: 40)

When Bentham discovered that David Collins was returning to Australia as commandant of the new penal settlement at Port Phillip Bay he approached Collins, urging him to construct a panopticon on the site. They dined twice and Bentham gave Collins a copy of “The Panopticon versus New South Wales” in which Bentham had used extracts from Collins’ *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* to support his arguments against the penal colony. Collins was polite but unenthusiastic: “I have been lately so occupied... as to prevent my waiting on you to receive the Hints for my pursuing the Panopticon System, which you were so good as to prepare for me. Be assured that my Prison shall if possible be a circular one” (qtd. in Hughes 123). The panopticon relied on an
incarcerated population: any labour performed took place in the cells and was industrially based. In New South Wales the convicts were employed in manual labour – agriculture, building, road-making – or as servants. The colony couldn’t support an incarcerated population. But the notion of a self-regulating prisoner, which underlay the principles of the panopticon, remained a very attractive notion. In the panopticon a prisoner never knew when he was under observation; in New South Wales he could not, as Governor Phillip had early discovered, always be watched. But if the rules of the colony could be incorporated so that the prisoners became self-regulating the principle of the panopticon could be realised. Collins wrote of the Wilson expedition:

They were to be accompanied by three men upon whom the governor knew he could depend, and who were to lead them back, when fatigued and exhausted with their journey, over the very worst and most dangerous part of the country. (2: 55)

It is clear from Collins’ account of the proposed expedition that the four Irishmen were to be led over the most difficult of terrain by their guides. The expedition was designed, not as a pious humanitarian exercise, but to create a counter-myth, a myth of danger and impenetrability located in the Blue Mountains and written on the bodies of the convicts.

The journey was analogous to the machine described in Franz Kafka’s short story “In the Penal Colony”. In Kafka’s story any person infringing the law is punished by having the rule he has broken incised on his body by this device. The harrow, a series of needles set in glass, inscribes the regulation repeatedly – honour your superiors or be just – each time slicing a fraction deeper, cutting closer to gut and bone, until finally the condemned man dies. But before death there is a process of revelation: the transgressor begins to decipher the law written
on his flesh, he reads not from the outside but from within. This enlightenment begins during the sixth hour, halfway through the execution.

It begins around the eyes. From there it spreads out... Nothing further happens, the man simply begins to decipher the script, he purses his lips as if he were listening. You’ve seen that it isn’t easy to decipher the script with one’s eyes; but our man deciphers it with his wounds. (137)

Kafka’s offenders had the rule they had broken incised on their bodies. The Wilson expedition was designed to incise a rule on the flesh of the Irish convicts. Like Kafka’s victims they were to discover this rule for themselves, a revelation based in their bodies; but, unlike Kafka’s characters, they were not condemned to die but to live and pass on their knowledge. The rule they were to learn was not “honour your superiors” or “be just” but be fixed. As Foucault said, “discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways” (19).

John Wilson, with John Price, a man named Roe, four marines and the four Irishmen, set out from Parramatta on 14th January 1798. On the 24th of that month the marines returned with three of the four convicts. The prisoners, “completely sick of their journey, and of the prospect before them” (Collins 2: 56), had returned with the marines who had orders to turn back at the base of the Mountains.

The governor had asked John Price to keep a journal of the expedition. It’s interesting to note that he didn’t begin to write this document until after the

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24 Collins noted that one convict elected to go with Wilson and the others into the interior. There is no further mention of him.
Found: In(scribing) the Penal Colony

convicts had begged to be returned to the colony. Like The Book of the Dun Cow, which was said to have been written on the hide of the marvellous beast kept by St Ciaran, the journal of the journey up until that point was written on another medium: the skin of the convicts. Their exhaustion, their wounds were designed to convince, not just the individuals concerned, but the Irish in general, that the Mountains were an impassable barrier. Events had gone according to Hunter’s plan: the convicts had capitulated and been brought back to their peers bearing the marks of their prostrating journey and yet the escapes didn’t cease.

Several months later Collins wrote of the discovery of some Irishmen in the woods who had gone in search of the elusive settlement, “that delirium still remaining unsubdued among them” (2: 79). Later still the Sydney Gazette described the escape of fifteen convicts from Castle Hill and their subsequent crimes. The Gazette piously concluded the article: “Justice to the prisoners at large in the Colony requires that we should here observe, that this banditti is entirely composed of Irish prisoners” (“Fugitives”). The majority of these men were recaptured but not before they had raided several settlers. They were in search of weapons, food and a compass. They no longer had any faith in a figure drawn on paper. Motives for the escape were sought at their trial and “one of the unhappy men declared that he had embarked on this fatal expedition with no other view, than that of crossing the mountains... and thereby rejoining his family!”

25 Nor was this the last such incident. As late as 1828 Irish escapee John Donahoe, in company with other bushrangers, raided out-stations on the Bathurst Plains of their stores. It was said they planned to secure sufficient supplies to enable them to travel to a settlement of white men they thought existed in the interior. Donahoe inspired the ballad “The Wild Colonial Boy”, an early version of which contains the chorus: “‘Then come away my hearties, we’ll roam the hills so high/ Together we will plunder, together we will die/ We’ll cross the wild Blue Mountains, and scour the Bathurst Plains/ For we scorn to live in slavery, bound down with iron chains’” (qtd. in Meredith The Wild Colonial Boy 65).
("Trial"). The Gazette's exclamation mark expresses its incredulity at this astonishing notion of geography: Ireland beyond the Blue Mountains. Several months later the world without is described as being supposed to have "masted vessels", so it is possible that the prisoner hoped to regain Ireland in this way ("Dismal"). I think it more likely that the place referred to is not Ireland but a space accessible both from Ireland and the colony, a space where re-union was possible.

In Culture and Imperialism Edward Said describes the imaginative retrieval of the native land as an essential first step in any anti-imperialist literature. The imaginative construction of a beneficent white race in the interior can be seen in this light. Said writes:

If there is anything that radically distinguished the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical element. Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by loss of the locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored. Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through the imagination. (271)

The Irish had been exiled from their native country. Ireland was so distant it may well have seemed irretrievable but they could imagine a place that, while not Ireland, was essentially Irish.
Utopia

The mass absconding of the Irish and their stories of the world without inform
Eleanor Dark’s historical trilogy: *The Timeless Land* (1941), *Storm of Time* (1948)
and *No Barrier* (1953). The three books are meticulously researched accounts of
the early years of British occupation of Australia. They are particularly concerned
with the relationship between the Europeans and the Aborigines. Dark also details
the various attempts at exploring the Mountains, including that of Governor
Phillip in 1788. While the Mountains are a constant presence they are, conversely,
easily set aside. Phillip muses in *The Timeless Land*, “he had forgotten, except at
rare intervals, to lift his eyes from the soil of Sydney and Rose Hill to that far line
of lavender-coloured hills, and wonder what lay beyond them” (396). While many
of the characters are historical figures Dark also created fictional characters,
amongst them the Prentice and the Mannion families. The Mannions are moneyed
free settlers and the Prentices are convicts. Ellen Prentice, Stephen Mannion’s
housekeeper, does whatever is necessary in order for herself and her children,
particularly Johnny, to survive. Both her husband Andrew and then Johnny seek
refuge in the Mountains.

Andrew absconds from the settlement and is succoured by the
Boorooberringal people, a Darug clan whose traditional lands are in the Richmond
area. He is given a wife, Cunnembeille, a woman of the Boorooberringal and takes
her to live in the foothills of the Mountains. When he feels that white men are
getting too close to their smallholding he moves further inland but still within the
Mountains. Andrew is killed saving Cunnembeille and their son Billalong from
the flooded Nepean River. It's an act of true emancipation. To save his Aboriginal family he must betray his presence to Stephen Mannion, knowing Mannion will do his best to track him down. For a moment he considers remaining in hiding and allowing Cunnembeille and Billalong to die. Although he saves Cunnembeille and their son, Prentice is crushed by a huge floating log. Meanwhile, his son Johnny has run away from the settlement and when Cunnembeille discovers him she takes him to be the re-incarnated spirit of Andrew because of the family resemblance.

The Timeless Land covers a time period from 1788 to 1792.

Storm of Time takes place in the years 1799 to 1807 during the governorships of John Hunter, Philip Gidley King and William Bligh. It describes how Cunnembeille raised Johnny and Billalong and Johnny’s integration into the clan. He marries Ngili and they have a son Kooree but he doesn’t stay with her people. Stephen Mannion continues to prosper. He returns to Ireland to marry Conor Moore and bring her back to his property Beltrasna. Amongst the convicts working at Beltrasna is Matthew Finn an Irish rebel.

Dark mentions the Irish absconding briefly in the novels – chiefly in the peevish remarks of various government administrators – but the fate of one runaway is recorded. A convict searching for the world without dies in the Mountains. When Johnny Prentice finds the body he strips the corpse and dons the clothes. This is a symbolic assumption of his European heritage. He is beguiled by the thought of, “Johnny Prentice, the white man, no longer cut off from his own tribe by nakedness” (Storm 238). This small incident functions, in effect, as a mise-en-abyme for the later story of Johnny and Matthew Finn. The same elements are present: death, the desire for refuge, and Johnny’s recognition of his
need for community. But more than this, Dark uses the relationship between the two men to explore the persistent belief in, and desire for, a utopia, and what that utopia might be.

Vincent Buckley traces a concern with utopias in Dark's work. In *Return to Coolami*, he claims, Coolami is seen as a place of peace and healing.²⁶ (I would be more specific and suggest that this more accurately describes Jungaburra, a nearby mountain.) In *Sun Across the Sky* (1937), he writes, "the values of great art are used to give plausibility... to the uncontaminated 'natural community', which the forces of ignorance and greed are trying always to contaminate, and which they end in destroying" (45). But the notion of utopia is most explicitly examined in *Prelude to Christopher* (1934), which describes the final days of Linda Hendon. Linda’s husband Nigel is injured in a car accident. While in hospital he recalls his life. His attempt to create a utopic society of handpicked people – healthy, intelligent, sane – failed decisively, ending in murder and desertion. And yet the first thing that enters his mind when he regains consciousness is an image of the island where the experiment took place. For him the island is "Hy-Brazil, the lost Eden, the island of the blessed" (19). As Hy-Brazil was legendary, Nigel hopes that the children born on the island will come to think of the outside world as "if it were history, a legend of bad days long past" (43).

Buckley describes utopianism in *The Timeless Land* as the end of a greatly significant journey which Dark has taken in her fiction but one which ends in "imaginative failure" (45). He suggests that utopianism in *The Timeless Land* (he makes no mention of *Storm of Time* and *No Barrier*) is "given imaginative life

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²⁶ *Return to Coolami* is discussed in more detail in "A Dark Adapted Eye."
through the animistic attitudes of the aborigines [sic]. The restless search has
ended in complacency, the complacency of an immersion in the primitive and the
pre-historical” (45). I would argue that in the historical trilogy, in particular the
two latter novels, the notion of utopia is strongly associated with asylum, and is
constituted around western notions of liberty and equality.

These democratic ideals are most clearly enunciated by Matthew Finn.
Finn is an Irish convict who is assigned to the landowner Stephen Mannion to
work on his property Beltrasna. He was transported for his part in the 1798
uprising, which indicates he was a member of the United Irishmen. (He also
mentions that Joseph Holt was his leader, a further indication of his allegiance.)

This society was formed in Belfast around 1791. The group sought the help of the
French in order to oust the British from Ireland. In May 1798 the United Irishmen
seized the city of Wexford, in the county of Wicklow, but they were ultimately
defeated at the Battle of Vinegar Hill. Later still a French force, which included
Wolfe Tone, prominent in the society, landed at Killala Bay, but this contingent
was also defeated. In *The Irish in Australia* (1986) Patrick O’Farrell describes the
1798 uprising as “the last of the primitive Irish rebellions” (32). He continues:

> Because of its timing, and links with France, it has been assumed that the 1798 Irish rebellion was in the tradition of the then new and modern popular demand for liberty, equality and fraternity, a radical nationalist demand for freedom. In reality it was an anachronism, a harking back to the desperate and primitive uprisings of seventeenth-century Ireland, riddled with localism, sectarianism and sheer savagery. (32)

Dark, however, clearly subscribes to the more popular viewpoint. Finn is devoted
to the notion of liberty. Through all the horrors of transportation and servitude he
has managed to preserve a copy of Common *Sense* (1776) the pamphlet by
Thomas Paine which argued for America’s separation from Britain. It’s eventually discovered by Toole, the overseer at Beltrasna, and tossed into the fire by Stephen Mannion. Mannion’s wife Conor retrieves the book before it is quite consumed and reads amongst the scraps that remain, “O! ye that love mankind! Ye that dare to oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant stand forth... O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind” (228–229).

Finn was selected only reluctantly by Toole because, “There’s throuble [sic] in that rascal” (Storm 110). Mannion agrees and tries to keep Finn separated as much as possible from the other convicts. It’s inconceivable to him that Conor might be affected by Finn’s words but, despite the brevity and the acrimonious nature of her few meetings with him, this is the case. Accustomed to being beloved, she finds herself the enemy. Familiar with the benign power of youth, beauty, and social position she now realises that a few words of complaint from her can lead to a man’s flesh being flogged from his bones. She begins to question notions that once seemed simple, like the definition of criminality:

What are felons? I thought I knew, Sir. I thought they were breakers of the law. Yet here do we not know – Is it not openly acknowledged – that people in high situations of trust and responsibility daily flout the law? Yet they are at liberty, they are held respectable, they are even wealthy and esteemed... It is a riddle, is it not? (Storm 259)

Loyalty is an equally vexing question for her. During the convict uprising of 1804 Beltrasna is in a state of siege, the convicts locked up, doors and shutters bolted. There are only three men to defend the house. Bessie the nursemaid, who knows how to use a musket, offers to fight. Conor is surprised because there are also settlers amongst the insurgents, perhaps people that Bessie knows. When Conor mentions this, Bessie is affronted, telling her, “No friends of mine, Ma’am[...] I
never held with wild talk and trouble-making. Know your place, I say, and you’ll come to no harm” (*Storm* 329). Bessie has accepted her place in society but Finn does not. Dark underlined a passage in her copy of Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man* which illuminates his unspoken protest: “It is by distortedly [sic] exalting some men, that others are distortedly [sic] debased, till the whole is out of nature. A vast mass of mankind are degradedly thrown into the background of the human picture, to bring forward, with greater glare, the puppet-show of state and aristocracy” (Paine 23).^27

Finn has been imprisoned separately from the other convicts and chained up as well so that he can’t inflame them with his "raving talk" (328). When Toole goes to the barn to feed him Finn, realising that the uprising has begun, tries to overpower him and take his keys but the overseer escapes. The insurrection is quickly defeated and Finn is punished with a flogging for his desperate attempt to join it. Thinking of his “mad and hopeless effort to support their madness” Conor asks herself, “Oh, where and what was loyalty...?” (*Storm* 330).

For Finn loyalty lies in the notion of asylum. He envisages the establishment of a utopic community where his fellow convicts can find freedom. For this reason he resists an escape to the Mountains, which are temptingly close, because the starving and harried release they represent would be his alone. He “thought of a liberty which could strike shackles not only from his own feet, but from the feet of all men everywhere” (*Storm* 296). He doesn’t imagine a world without waiting for him as his real-life counterparts did, he wants to create a world without to which others can flee. Finn’s chance comes when Johnny

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^27Eleanor Dark’s copy of *The Rights of Man* was published by Watts & Co. in 1937. It is held at Varuna: The Writers’ House.
liberates him from Beltrasna. The quote which Dark underlined in Common Sense continues, "In the commencement of a revolution, those men [degraded by society] are rather the followers of the camp than of the standard of liberty, and have yet to be instructed how to reverence it" (Paine 23). This passage explains Johnny's thought processes. His motive is not humanitarian; there is no abstract ethical basis to the deed. He sees Finn as the property of Stephen Mannion whom he despises. He "steals" Finn, as he stole a footstool from the verandah of Beltrasna, in order to irk his enemy.

Finn isn't a comfortable companion. He works hard on Johnny's small farm in the Mountains but he can't forget the men still at Beltrasna. He believes Johnny's hidden smallholding could become the world without, an asylum for the fugitive, but this isn't what Johnny wants. Like Conor, he's deeply troubled by his exposure to Finn's philosophy. He's baffled and outraged by the man's desire to rescue and take in other convicts. He even considers killing Finn but he discovers that the Irishman's company has become necessary to him.

Finn may not believe in the world without as envisaged by other convicts but his notions of asylum are informed by his personal mythology. Finn's stories are of his own time. They consist of passages he can recall from Common Sense, rebel songs and his experiences in the 1798 uprising. But in the telling they are transformed by his audience. The stories are so remote from the experience of his listeners - Johnny, his wife Ngili and half-brother Billalong - that they are changed into legends. Conor Mannion had wondered if stories didn't make a homeland but she had been unable to spin Ireland from the "fine threads of memory", her legends were too fragile to bear the weight of this new country.
(Storm 201). She mused to herself at one time: “we are strangers here with no stories behind us” (199).

In some ways Ngili also has no stories behind her. She has been separated from her tribe and it’s as if this exile has also cut her off from the traditional stories of her people. She knows that, “all children...must learn the legends of their tribe, the stories of ancestral heroes and great deeds” but the tales she tells her son Kooree are about his father and paternal grandfather (No Barrier 70). It’s as if Kooree’s history only begins with the advent of Europeans, the Beerewolgal. Ngili’s recounting of a traditional belief – that after death the spirit takes the form of a child and ascends to the sky – is only inserted into the text in order endorse the re-appearance of Andrew Prentice, the man, in the form of Johnny the child.

The reception of Finn’s stories makes them as mythic as Conor’s stories of Finn mac Cumhail or Deidre of the sorrows. Like Conor, Finn feels that his stories can’t bear the weight of the land. He despairs when he hears Billalong singing Irish songs in a way that strips them of meaning. When he tells them stories of 1798 the experience is outside their comprehension, they can only relate to them as myth:

They asked for tales and he gave them tales. And in the telling he could see from their rapi, blank eyes that events and people, so real to him, were being transformed into legends. That they – incapable of relating such tales to any familiar life – were adjusting and distorting them, stripping them of incomprehensible detail, reducing them to a fake simplicity. (456)

Nevertheless, Finn realises that his stories have made a difference to Johnny. Over several years his attitude to Finn’s utopia changes. Finn muses that, although his

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28 Finn is identified with Finn mac Cumhaill the legendary Irish warrior-poet, father of Oisin and leader of the Fianna.
precious book has probably been destroyed and that for all he knows the author may be dead, the words are still in his mind and in the minds of other men, including Johnny. Johnny has internalised Finn’s message: “[The words] were there, pressing into his nerves, his blood, his muscles, driving the hand that held a hammer and the hand that held a nail, building... an asylum to receive the fugitive” (Storm 505). Over the years he’s acquired stock – cattle, goats, sheep, fowls – and the soil of the valley is suitable for cultivation.

Johnny, whose mother Ellen is the Mannions’ housekeeper, fled Beltrasna as a child. His intention was to live amongst the Aborigines, rejecting white society. But he discovered within himself a need for community which wasn’t assuaged by his Aboriginal family: “Indignity, servitude, and a hated master had inspired him to escape, and memories of those things had held him aloof – yet there was no satisfaction in aloofness” (Storm 503). Finn’s notion of constructing a refuge enables him to reconcile these conflicting impulses. Liberating convicts from Beltrasna and giving them asylum on his smallholding in the Burratorang Valley will satisfy his need for community while striking a blow at the society he hates. But this is not to be. Their plan to free some of the Beltrasna convicts is betrayed and Finn is captured and killed. Johnny returns to the farm alone but not before he kills Stephen Mannion. Once more Johnny turns his back on the white community. It seems that Finn’s utopia will remain a dream.

In No Barrier (1953) Johnny’s circumstances change for the worse. His young son Kooree dies. Ngili refuses to stay in a place where a death has occurred and Johnny refuses to abandon all he has worked so hard to secure. So Ngili returns to her people without him. For her, Johnny’s refuge has always been a
place of exile. Not only was she isolated from her people but Johnny had moved away from the rhythms of work that she was used to insisting that they both toil without cease from dawn to dusk. Finn and Johnny's failed attempt to liberate more convicts had been understood by her as a step towards constituting a tribe: "others whose arms would lighten the burden of toil, and whose presence would make a tribe, where there had been only a family before" (69).

With Ngili gone Johnny is alone; even Billalong, who had often stayed with him, will not trespass on the territory of the dead. However, he does return to bring Johnny terrible news: three white men have murdered Ngili. Revenge draws him back into contact with European society. This contact is fleeting, merely sufficient for him to track down and kill the three settlers responsible for Ngili's death. However, after he kills the final murderer on a lonely road, he discovers the man's newly married wife in the wagon. Knowing she can describe him, Johnny, who prizes freedom above all else, sacrifices Emily's liberty in order to preserve his own. He takes her back to his farm.

When he first tells her of the farm she imagines he means a place in one of the settled districts. When they finally reach his remote dwelling she asks who granted it to him: "Was it Gov'nor Bligh granted it? Or Gov'nor King?" (211). At first Emily can only conceive of land ownership in relation to the legal system she has grown up with but later she tells Miles Mannion that she thinks Johnny's hard work makes the place his (300). To Miles this view is a heresy but Emily's attitude is reminiscent of the stories associated with boundary disputes, which Michel de Certeau discusses in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), in which use indicates, but doesn't necessarily establish, ownership. When Miles meets
Johnny he’s astonished by the air of authority he possesses and which he relates to the land: “With just such an air might Patrick [Mannion, his brother] stand before a stranger on his property, waiting for him to state his business” (284). Johnny’s relationship with the land is shaped by the way he uses it, his farming. In *Returning to Nothing* (1996) Peter Read argues that “the ways in which humans demarcate their space are bound by the rules and customs of the cultures of which they form a part... [and] probably reflects other organising principles of that society and its world view” (2). If this is the case then clearly Johnny has embraced his European heritage. His gestures of ownership are European rather than Aboriginal. Before he stole Finn away he had taken in another absconder, Tom Towns. When Tom had first found him he was bemused when Johnny locked the door of the hut with a key he kept around his neck but left the windows unshuttered. Locking the door is a ritual of ownership, signifying the right of exclusion. The key belonged to his father and it symbolises his inheritance of the property it unlocks.

Some months after his abduction of Emily, Johnny receives a message from Miles Mannion, Stephen’s younger son, sent via Billalong. He has deduced that Emily is with Johnny (who had been Conor’s maid before her marriage.) Conor is concerned for the girl, Miles wants a guide to show him a way over the Mountains: Johnny is the key to both their concerns. Miles wants to meet with him and Emily. Johnny’s first thought is to ignore the message. He’s afraid of losing Emily. After much deliberation Johnny tells her about the proposed meeting because he realises if he remains silent he will have become what he most despises. He muses:
She was here—as surely and safely imprisoned by the bush as she could have been by any key; and he, whose whole life had been given to preserving his own freedom, he who hated the enslavers, he who had learned from Finn the misery of captivity, was her gaoler.... The fear of losing her was like a dull ache, but the fear of keeping her against her will was like a streak of intolerable pain. (267–268)

Emily chooses to stay with him and this choice signals the beginning of the realisation of Finn’s asylum although not in the form he’d envisaged. When Johnny offers Emily her freedom he is finally following the standard, rather than the camp, of liberty.

Miles fails to understand Johnny’s elation at the notion he’s no longer alone. Miles had thought Emily would be a burden, instead she’s a source of triumph. He doesn’t understand that Johnny is no longer an outcast. Johnny, Emily and her baby, whom Johnny accepts as his own, are the nucleus of a new community but others soon join them. Johnny has been considering the possibility of liberating convicts from the new road that has been built along the ridge line but, in the end, it’s his half-brother Billalong and his family who join them.

Billalong is a refugee from a world that, since the advent of Europeans, has changed irrevocably, not only physically but also spiritually. Johnny thinks of Billalong as being “in flight from the unendurable spectacle of mystery dissolving” and realises that a man may be a fugitive from more than whips and chains (No Barrier 383). White settlement is expanding, consuming hunting grounds and sacred places. The newcomers continually flout the old ways and yet there are no repercussions for them. They live “unscathed in forbidden places” and violate “with impunity laws which black men had always believed inviolable” (383). In an echo of Johnny’s assumption of the dead convict’s clothes, when
Billalong comes to join Johnny he’s wearing European garments. Johnny notes how the clothes, which hide his tribal markings, emphasise his lighter skin and sharper features. Like Johnny, Billalong has made a conscious decision to embrace his European heritage.
In 1822 Barron Field stated unequivocally that “these hills [the Blue Mountains] had, from the beginning of time, formed an impassable barrier between [the coastal and the inland] tribes” (Mackaness 2: 36). The inference is that the Mountains were uninhabited. It’s a singular assertion, unsupported by archaeological evidence, which suggests that Aborigines have frequented the Blue Mountains for more than 20,000 years. Many traces of past occupation remain: paintings, rock engravings, axe grooves, wells, rock arrangements and tools. In fact, Ian Johnson estimates that there is “one art/occupation rock shelter for every kilometre of exposed cliff-line” (qtd. in Eugene Stockton 55).

Despite the evidence of continued Aboriginal occupation over thousands of years there remains a comparative absence of Aborigines in European writings about the Mountains. This is particularly true of nineteenth century accounts, although there are notable exceptions such as the journal of Ensign François Barrallier. Twenty years before Field made his fretful traverse of the Mountains François Barrallier was sent by Governor King on “an embassy to the King of the Mountains” (HRNSW 5: 136). Barrallier had already undertaken several exploratory expeditions for the Governor but his excursions had been curtailed by his Commanding Officer Colonel Patterson who claimed that “officers being at all detached from their regimental duty was contrary to the Instructions he had from the Duke of York” (HRNSW 5: 136). The embassy to the King of the Mountains was a ruse designed by King to thwart Colonel Patterson but, Barrallier, assisted by his Aboriginal guide Gogy, did meet with members of the Gundungurra
people, whom he termed “mountaineers” (HRNSW 5: 753). He described in some
detail the costume, lifestyle and diet of those Gundungurra with whom he came
into contact but, as his journal was sent by King to Sir Joseph Banks, was written
in French – his native tongue – and in what King described in an accompanying
letter, as “an unintelligible hand” (HRNSW 5: 136), it was largely unknown.
Others chronicled the traces they found of Aborigines in the Mountains,29 and yet
in 1830 Robert Dawson, the chief agent of the Australian Agricultural Company,
confirms that Field’s assertion was once widely accepted: “It was formerly
supposed that the Blue Mountain Range prevented any means of communication
between the natives of the coast-line and those west of that range” (336).

It’s possible that Aborigines simply avoided the area once the road was
built, after all they were aware of other routes over the Mountains. George Evans,
who surveyed the route, and William Cox, who supervised the construction of the
road, were among the few Europeans who mention Aborigines which might seem
to support this theory. Certainly, the area would have become less hospitable for
the traditional owners. However, there’s evidence that the Mountains were of
ceremonial importance. In the mid-Mountains area there are more than two
hundred and forty documented Aboriginal sites, including thirty-five rock
engravings and more than fifty cave paintings. These figures reflect, to some
extent, the concentrated study of certain target areas such as Eugene Stockton’s
survey of Lawson Ridge (Stockton 59). If other areas were as intensively studied
they might yield similar results. Nonetheless, the central Mountains contain a
unique combination of ceremonial sites plus a large number of occupation sites

29Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, as well as George Evans and William Cox, noted evidence of
Aboriginal occupation in the Mountains.
that show only slight signs of use. (Use is gauged by the amount of occupational debris). While occupation sites in both the upper and lower Mountains have yielded considerable amounts of worked stone as well as artefacts, in the central Mountains many of the rockshelters hold only a “scatter of flaked stone” (Stockton 30). This indicates to anthropologists that the central Mountains was an area visited for ceremonial purposes. Eugene Stockton suggests that the central Mountains marks “the boundary between the Darug and Gundungurra people, a sort of no-mans land serving as an inter-tribal ceremonial ground” (72). Under these circumstances it seems unlikely that the area would have been abandoned by the Darug and Gundungurra altogether.

Shortly before his death in 1914 A.L. Bennett interviewed Werriberrie of the Gundungurra people, also known as William or Billy Russell. Later that year Bennett published a small booklet entitled *My Recollections by William Russell* (1914). Much of the booklet consists of Werriberrie’s recollections of early European settlers but it also includes a glossary of Gundungurra words and some of Werriberrie’s first memories. He told Bennett:

My earliest recollections are naturally of my mother, “Wonduck,” named after the place where she was born, near Richlands, which was the general custom in the tribe of my race, i.e., – The GUN-DUNG-GORRA, though Wonduck’s husband being named “Muroon,” which is the name of the wild cucumber vine bearing oblong berries, called Moom-bir, and which are of a brown colour when ripe, the vines are rather plentiful in stringy-bark country. My uncle was “My-an-garlie,” wrongly called “Mullun-gully” by whites. “My-an-garlie, my uncle, became principal man of our tribe about 50 years ago, his chief camping ground being in the Burragorang Valley. The chief man before him that I can remember being a very old blind man whose name I have forgotten; and then “Old Boyne,” who was a clever man either with the spear, Boomerang or sheild, [sic] as well as feats of strength and fighting. I have also heard the name “Goondel” mentioned as an early chief man. I was born on the banks of Werri-berri Creek,
near where Mrs Felix O’Hare’s farmhouse now stands (William Russell 9–10).

Werriberrie’s recollections indicate the importance of land in Aboriginal culture: people were often named after the place where they were born and knew the site of their birth with some accuracy. He is also aware of the chief camping ground of his ancestors. In 1896 R.H. Mathews described the bunan, or male initiation ceremony, of the people who lived around the Shoalhaven area. An integral part of the ceremony was the shouted recitation by the headman of each clan to the rest of the camp of the “chief camping grounds, water holes, or remarkable places in his country” (333). He noted that this ceremony also applied to the Gundungurra people.

There is often a link between traditional stories and the land. In Textual Spaces (1992) Stephen Muecke writes of the way in which song-cycles “progress nomadically, going from place to place across a stretch of country, literally following in the footsteps of the ancestor who first walked through there and created the landforms” (52). This is the case in the Gundungurra story of Gurangatch and Mirragan, which describes the origin of significant topographical features of the Burraborang Valley, and beyond. The topographic description in this story is so clear that many of the sites are still recognisable and it serves to indicate some of the boundaries of Gundungurra territory. It’s an itinerary that charts both a cultural and a physical space. Mathews collected a number of traditional Gundungurra texts but this was the only one which was published in any detail.

Gurangatch, who is described as part fish and part reptile, was in a deep waterhole known as Murrauaul situated at what was to become the junction of the
Wingecarribee and Wollondilly rivers. This wasn’t his permanent home; like the Gundungurra he was nomadic. Mirrigan the native cat caught sight of Gurangatch’s eyes gleaming in the waterhole and, because he had never seen so large a fish, he became determined to capture him. He attempted to stun Gurangatch by placing hickory bark (also known as millewa) in the water. The bark was ineffective because of Gurangatch’s size so Mirrigan went to fetch more. When he returned he discovered that Gurangatch had fled. A number of large flat rocks around the waterhole are said to be sheets of millewa that Mirrigan left there when he pursued Gurangatch.

During his flight Gurangatch excavated a number of waterways including parts of the Wollondilly and Cox’s rivers, Jock’s Creek, portions of Katoomba, Billagoola and Harry’s Creeks and several deep waterholes. All these channels were filled from Murrauual and this vast supply of water bore him along. He hid in Wombeyan Caves and Mirrigan attempted to dislodge him by digging holes over the top of the caves and poking a long stick down into the chambers. These potholes still exist. After Gurangatch fled the caves Mirrigan caught up with him at a place the Gundungurra called Wonggaree and they fought for such a long time that the rock there was worn smooth and slippery. Europeans call it Slippery Rock.

Later Gurangatch made his way to Jenolan Caves (known as Binnoomur or Binomil by the Gundungurra) where he met some of his relatives. They took Gurangatch out of the caves and over the range to a deep waterhole known as Joolundoo. When Mirrigan discovered this he decided to enlist the aid of some of his friends in the hunt. Before he left he built a wall of rock between the range and
Joolundoo so that Gurangatch would find it difficult to return to familiar country. The Gundungurra called this place Wandakmaloi but Europeans corrupted this to Dukmaloi.

In the end Mirragan doesn’t catch Gurangatch, nor does Gurangatch escape. The situation is resolved by a kind of compromise, although it’s a somewhat painful solution for Gurangatch. Mirragan and his four friends, all of whom are noted for their diving, make their way to Joolundoo. Neither Gundhareen, the black duck, nor Goonarring, the wood duck, can reach the bottom of the pool. Goolagwangwan, the diver\(^{30}\), manages to capture two small gurangatches but not the one Mirragan has been pursuing. Finally Billagoola, the shag, dives into the waterhole and swims to the bottom where he can see Gurangatch despite the efforts of his relatives to conceal him with mud. Gurangatch is wedged in so tightly amongst the rocks that Billagoola can’t dislodge him. Instead he tears a piece of flesh from Gurangatch’s back and offers it to Mirragan who is appeased with this portion of his prey. The five friends roast and eat the meat and then leave Joolundoo (Mathews “Some Mythology”).\(^{31}\)

The story isn’t only concerned with pursuit but also with violent confrontation in which Mirragan uses a club and Gurangatch retaliates with blows from his tail. The conclusion of the text, however, subverts a Western reader’s expectations of closure. Rather than one of the combatants being vanquished, while the other is triumphant, Mirragan’s victory seems more symbolic than literal. (Unless you assume that Gurangatch, like Grendel, died of his injury.) Also central to the story is the importance of family and friends to each of the

\(^{30}\) Jim Smith suggests that this is the grebe (Aboriginal Legends 60).

\(^{31}\) For the complete text see Appendix 1.
protagonists, both of whom are assisted by kin or allies. Despite the capture of
several smaller gurangatches the remainder continue to hide and succour their
relative. The reference to Gurangatch’s relations also being known as gurangatch
indicates that, rather than being a proper name, gurangatch is the name of a
species.  

32 At the end of the published text Mathews lists the Aboriginal names of
a number of waterholes in the Cox’s and Wollondilly rivers which were thought
to be Gurangatch’s resting places and noted that the Gundungurra believed that
his descendants still lived there.

As Muecke points out, texts such as the story of Gurangatch and Mirragan
enabled Aboriginal people to know not only the country’s physical attributes –
landforms, water and game – but also its historical and spiritual significance
(Textual Spaces 52). Ken Upton, a contemporary Darug descendent, explains the
necessity of telling stories in the appropriate location. He gives, as one example,
his own experience of being told the story of the Bunyip at a particular waterhole
when he was a child of eight: “In the deep end of this pool, where the water was
deeper and colder and much darker, that was where the Bunyip lived and I
believed this – as I was there and you could see the water... and you could feel
the water getting colder” (8). He also explained that rock carvings are part of
some stories and so “you have to be there to show them to see, feel and smell
them too” (8). This close association between the land and indigenous spiritual

32Mathews also refers to creatures called gurangaty which live in waterholes and drown strangers
(“Ethnological Notes” 345). It’s possible that gurangatch and gurangaty are the same creature
(Mathews isn’t always consistent in his spelling of Aboriginal words). James Kohen explicitly
conflates the two in his book The Darug and Their Neighbours (41–42). He also notes that
gurangaty may be associated with eel dreaming sites.
practice makes it seem unlikely that the Aborigines would simply have abandoned
the Mountains.

It could be argued that the terrible devastation suffered by the Aboriginal
people after white colonisation, the effects of disease, destruction of food sources,
as well as punitive expeditions, might have irretrievably disrupted their religious
customs. This isn’t necessarily the case, although these factors shouldn’t be
underestimated. As James Kohen points out in *The Darug and Their Neighbours*
(1997), “the death rate around Sydney was so great that traditional burial customs
were discontinued, and bodies were found floating in the harbour and lying in
rockshelters. An example of the degree of social disruption caused by this disease
[smallpox] can be seen from the plight of the Cadigal band that lived immediately
adjacent to the settlement at Port Jackson. Of the fifty or sixty Cadigal alive in
1788, only three remained alive by 1791” (15). At the same time the
determination of Aboriginal people to preserve their culture should also not be
underestimated. Ben Carlon spoke of stumbling across a Gundungurra ceremony
in the Burratorang Valley one night in the 1850s:

It now dawned upon me that I had innocently invaded one of their
sacred temples and then I began to take stock of my surroundings.
Several trees were carved from the root upwards to a height of ten
feet or more. On the tree in which the sacred fire was burning, and
which faced the east, a large bird was carved, an emu, I think it
was. Strange herring-bone markings were drawn on the ground.
Some, like those seen on the grave trees of common blackfellows,
others were more intricate and winding. I also noticed several
small mounds, but strangest of all was the life-size clay figure of a
man in the centre of the tracings. The usual small fires were many,
therefore I could plainly see the rude model of the human being
lying prostrate on the ground. (qtd. in Meredith, *The Last
Kooradgie* 40)
From the description given it seems likely that Carlon stumbled upon a bunan, or male initiation ceremony. R.H. Mathews outlines this rite of passage in some detail in his article “The Bunan Ceremony of New South Wales”, describing the markings dug into the ground and carved into trees and noting the presence of two human shaped figures. The larger of these represented Dharamoolun, a legendary figure, and the smaller his wife. The bunan took place over several days and nights and involved several tribes. There are also more contemporary examples of the continuance of traditional ceremonies. Kohen records several of these in his article “The Darug Aborigines”. A member of the Lock family, who are Darug descendants, was a karadjji (healer) in the 1940s. Kohen also mentions a sacred site, which is still known to some Darug families and is prohibited to women. In addition, traditional stories are still extant within the community (Jim Kohen 62–65).

It’s possible that Aborigines avoided the road itself but continued to visit the ceremonial sites, which were often on the secondary ridges. Some of the sites were undoubtedly not only sacred but secret as well and so the Aborigines may have taken great care to avoid Europeans in order to preserve their sanctity. European travellers seldom left the road unless they were sightseeing or looking for strayed stock. The Aborigines, with their greater knowledge of the bush, could have concealed themselves: in his Bathurst Road journal of 1814 William Cox wrote of hearing the “chattering of natives” but of being unable to see them (Mackaness 1: 44).

Mathews is inconsistent in his spelling of this name. In his article “Ethnological Notes on the Aboriginal Tribes of New South Wales and Victoria” he records it as Dhurramulan.
However, there may be another explanation. Perhaps the Europeans simply edited Aborigines out of their texts: as Stephen Muecke points out in *Textual Spaces*, “there are institutional modes of forgetting as well as remembering” (20). In 1819 three Frenchmen, Messieurs Quoy, Gaudichard and Pellion, crossed the Mountains escorted by William Lawson. Quoy described their meeting with the Aboriginal leader Karadra and a young man on the Bathurst road.

it was in one of these pleasant retreats that we first saw any of the wretched inhabitants of these lofty regions; there were only two; one was a sick old man, lying on kangaroo skins, near a fire, and receiving the attentions of a younger man. Mr. Lawson recognised this old man as Karadra, supreme chief or king of that part of the mountain. (Mackaness 2: 9–10)

This might seem to support the thesis that Aborigines avoided Europeans on the Mountains: it could well be that the two men were only discovered because Karadra was too ill to move and his companion stayed to assist and, possibly, to protect him. But a selective editing occurs here. Quoy mentions only Karadra and the younger man and yet Pellion sketched not only Karadra and his companion Hara-o but also Aurang-Jack “chief of Springwood” and his two wives. None of these people are mentioned in the account, in fact the text states explicitly, “there were only two” (see figures 12 and 13 over page.) Nor is this the only example of differing accounts of the same events by spectators. Eye-witness testimony is privileged in Western thought but consider these three entries concerning May 24 1813 from the individual journals kept by Lawson, Wentworth and Blaxland during their Blue Mountains expedition:

Mr Blaxland Wentworth and Self proceeded a head (sic) to Examine and Mark our Road and returned to camp at five o’clock (Lawson qtd. in Richards 102).

Whilst we were one evening marking our way we came unperceived within about 15 yards of a native who was busily occupied in cutting a worm out of a tree with his Mogo. Not choosing however to molest Him as we had made a determination to avoid all Intercourse with them we shouted upon which he immediately retired. (Wentworth qtd. in Richards 113–114)

they heard a Native chopping very near them as they were marking their Road – he ran away before he could be discovered the Dogs frighten [sic] him and appeared to run after him for some distance (Blaxland qtd. in Richards 163).

The question isn’t who, if anyone, is telling the truth, or who is the most accurate. Ultimately the most interesting facet of these three accounts is the way they establish what are to become familiar refrains in the representation by Europeans of Aborigines in the Mountains or, rather, a lack of representation of Aborigines in the Mountains. Lawson saw and heard nothing he found worthy of recording; in Blaxland’s account an Aborigine is driven off with violence and pursued by dogs (a hunting pack trained to pull down kangaroos), while Wentworth’s Rousseau-like protagonist courteously retires. (He reiterates this notion in his poem “Australasia” in which these lines occur: “... the mournful genius of the plain/ Driv’n from his primal solitary reign/ Has backward fled, and fix’d his drowsy throne/ In untrod wilds, to muse and brood alone” [n. pag.]).

A decade later Blaxland published an edited version of his journal. In her essay “Anthropology and Myth: the Antipodean Other in François Auguste Peron’s Voyage de Couvertes aux Terres Australes” Margaret Sankey suggests that “accounts of real journeys, elaborated after the event, obey the same narrative rules as the fictitious journey and incorporate the same elements: a narrator who recounts the journey in which he has participated and a plot which assumes that the hero sets off in search of a goal, undergoes different adventures, attains the
object of his quest and usually returns to his point of origin” (137). In many ways this seems an apt description of Blaxland’s account of his journey. The crossing, while arduous, was not dangerous, but Blaxland does his best to represent it as a quest, a legendary journey. There was little to record and so he magnifies small incidents: the dogs bark in the night as some creature flees through the bush, the explorers observe smoke from Aboriginal fires, and discover a place where spears have been sharpened. When Blaxland’s account was published these incidents, which were discrete events in the original document, are slid one inside the other like a babushka doll so that they present a single face. He writes,

In the beginning of the night, the dogs ran off, and barked violently. At the same time, something was distinctly heard to run through the brush-wood, which they supposed to be one of the horses got loose; but they had reason to believe afterwards, that they had been in great danger; that the natives had followed their track, and advanced on them in the night, intending to have speared them by the light of their fire, but that the dogs drove them off. (Richards 169)34

Blaxland’s account could also be seen as an attempt to assure his place in Australian history. Blaxland wrote a letter of complaint to Governor Lachlan Macquarie because he felt that he and his companions had been slighted when the Governor named two significant geographical features – the pass down the Mountains and the first river that lay beyond – after William Cox rather than one of the explorers. He wrote that, “Mr Cox could himself only expect such honor [sic] or such remuneration as would of necessity be attached to the simple task of

34 An oddity of Blaxland’s journal is that he writes in the third person, almost as if he hadn’t been present. This could be an attempt to endow the document with an impartial tone. Stephen Muecke suggests that the use of the third person gives an effect of objectivity to a text so that it becomes self-validating (Textual Spaces 64 – 65).
making a road he could by no means expect or intend to appropriate to himself the merit of a first discoverer” (Richards 146).³⁵

In his essay “Plotting: Australia’s Explorer Narratives as ‘Spatial History’”, Paul Carter questions the notion that explorers’ journals are “retrospective fictions, self-seeking glosses of historical events” (16). He notes that Australian exploration literature differs from that written about other countries in two ways: the journeys don’t culminate in major discoveries and, generally, indigenous people play no structuring role within the text. Carter writes, “explorers fail on the whole to locate economically, or even conceptually, profitable geographical objects” (12). He exempts Charles Sturt’s discovery of the Murray River; another exception to the rule is Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth’s traverse of the Blue Mountains which opened up the fertile Bathurst plains. In the dedication to his journal Gregory Blaxland wrote of the,

important alterations the result of the expedition has produced in the immediate interests and prosperity of the Colony. This appears in nothing more decidedly than the unlimited pasturage already afforded to the very fine flocks of Merino Sheep, as well as the extensive field opened for the exertions of the present as well as future generations. It has changed the aspect of the Colony, from a confined insulated tract of land, to a rich and extensive Continent (Blaxland in Richards 65).

Although Blaxland is clearly not a disinterested party the general opinion of the time seemed to concur with him. The Reverend Samuel Marsden was “in rapture of the country” (Mackaness 2:26) and Barron Field described it as “truly a land flowing with milk and honey” (Mackaness 2:44). Blaxland’s assertion that their

³⁵Blaxland’s family were equally determined to preserve his reputation as a foundational figure in Australian history. When his son published a reprint of the journal he took care to establish his father as the leader of the party.
journey had transformed the colony into a continent argues for its value as conceptually profitable and is also confirmed by other commentators.

Carter suggests that in much of the literature of exploration the author "sublimates his desire of arrival and finds satisfaction in the certainty of disappointment" (18). There are traces of this attitude in Blaxland's journal but this isn't surprising. The published journal differs very little from the notes Blaxland wrote at the time and, until the nineteenth day when they made their way down what would become known as Mount York, there was no guarantee that the expedition would succeed where so many others had failed. Its modest forty-eight pages, however, is very different to the multi-volume works about failed explorations that Carter describes.

Echoing Blaxland's appraisal of the distinction between a first discoverer and a roadmaker Carter suggests that explorer's journals differ from other traveller's tales because they describe a first, or pre-road journey. He argues that "the historical meaning of the exploration journals is inseparable from their spatial occasion" (11) and writes that the spatial experience of the explorers on their pre-road journeys served to plot a line along which "historical time might later flood in on a tide of names" (22). Explorers' accounts of their journey are a re-drawing of that first line and give "their spatial experience narrative form" (23).

Central to Carter's argument is what he describes as the unnameability of the landscape through which the explorers travel. Either they can't designate phenomena accurately because the landforms contravene geographic conventions or the landscape is so monotonous, so undifferentiated, that sites can only be named for what they are not, so that a sandy eminence becomes a mount. In an
extreme of this phenomenon, although Blaxland notes a number of geographical features including streams, rivers, swamps, a heath and precipitous cliffs, he makes no attempt to name them. Even the high hill, which marked the termination of their journey, remains undesignated. (It was Macquarie who later called it Mount Blaxland.) Carter points out the contradiction inherent in the explorer’s efforts to convert space to place by naming it because, as the story of Gurangatch and Mirragan demonstrates, the land was already occupied, was already named:

This struggle to name space, to speak it as place, constitutes at least part of the explorers’ historical interest. But it also defines their pathos – and the fragility of the cultural tradition which makes them foundational figures. For the country, of course, was not empty (23)

This oversight recalls the second thematic difference of which Carter remarked: generally, in Australian explorer literature, indigenous people play no structuring role within the text. This doesn’t mean that Aborigines aren’t mentioned. They are noted, as native flora and fauna are noted, but they’re rarely allowed any “narrative status” (“Plotting” 11) nor are they consulted for local information. In his poem “Australasia” Wentworth denies that Aborigines have any stories about the land. He addresses them:

...whence your ancient lineage, what your name
And from what shores your rough forefathers came?
Untutor’d children fresh from Nature’s mould
No songs have ye to trace the time of old. (n. pag.)

He goes further, suggesting that the country is without stories, that it’s bereft of narrative. He calls on “celestial poesy” to remedy this and offers the Mountains as a site for so doing:

...bright Goddess, on those far blue hills,
That pour their thousand swift pellucid rills,
Where Warragumba’s [sic] rage has rent in twain
Opposing mountains – thund’ring to the plain,
No child of song has yet invok’d thy aid,
’Neath their primordial solitary shade,—
Still, gracious pow’r, some kindling soul inspire,
To wake to life my country’s unknown lyre,
That from creation’s date has slumb’ring lain,
Or only breath’d some savage uncouth strain. (n. pag)

Wentworth’s claim that the country has previously had no song positions his poem as a founding text. Unlike the Aborigines he is able to name the British founding fathers of the land. “Australasia” valorises Captain James Cook, “the Columbus of our shore,” who has charted this unknown world, and couples him with Sir Joseph Banks. Together these two men have stamped the soil and designated the land with a “lasting brand” (n. pag). The poem serves to demonstrate that Europeans map and name, in contrast to the Aborigines whose landscape is, at least according to Wentworth, pathless and who are unfettered by any but the most temporary ties to the land:

Swift-footed hunters of the pathless plain,
Unshackled wanderers, enthusiasts free,
Pure native sons of savage liberty,
Who hold all things in common, earth, sea, air,
Or only occupy the nightly lair (n. pag.)

In the dedication of his journal Blaxland wrote that although he had used Aboriginal guides in an earlier exploration he had decided not to do so during the 1813 attempt to cross the Blue Mountains because “very little information can be obtained from any tribe out of their own district” (Richards 65). As previously noted, Wentworth went further stating that they had determined “to avoid all intercourse” with the Aborigines of the Mountains (Richards 114). According to Carter this refusal to constitute any kind of communication with the Aborigines condemned the explorers to “inhabit a mirror state – where often all they could
see in the distance was a mirage resembling the illusion of their own presence”
(“Plotting” 23). This statement is amply borne out by Blaxland’s narrative.

In the last days of their journey westward, before Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth turned back and retraced the ridgeline, Blaxland wrote of seeing the fires of Aborigines below them. The explorers were attempting to find a way down from the ridge they’d been following. Soon a second camp, “more in their direct course”, was spotted. The next day Blaxland wrote, “the natives moved before them about three miles”, and the day after, “The natives, as observed by the smoke of their fires, moved before them as yesterday” (Richards 165–166). He represents the Aborigines as retreating before an inexorable advance but might he not, with at least equal validity, have said, they followed the natives down the mountain? According to an article published in the Sydney Mail in 1896 the local Aborigines believed that this was the case: “The local natives... moved to and fro on the tableland, and they believe that it was their tracks which Blaxland, Wentworth, and Lawson ultimately followed successfully” (E.D.H. 1250). The party spent many days hacking through thick brush so they weren’t always able to follow a clearly defined trail, but at Linden, where the ridge is very narrow, Blaxland noted a small rugged track and there were many other indications left by Aborigines.

Blaxland’s narrative can accommodate the Aborigine as adversary and also the Aborigine who appears to cede the land to the European but it can’t countenance an exploration that moves along a centuries old trail marked out by traces of the people who forged it – huts, spear sharpening grooves, the light of their fires, the sound of stone axes on wood.
Inheritance

During the latter half of the nineteenth century elderly Aborigines were routinely characterised as the last of their tribe. As Stephen Muecke puts it in Textual Spaces, “right up until the 1960s... the disappearance of the Aborigines from the face of the earth was a foregone conclusion (29). In Inventing Australia: Images and Identity (1981) Richard White outlines the role Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution played in this perception. Darwin’s On the Origin of the Species was published in 1859 and, as White points out, “although revolutionary in many respects... [it] was very much a book of its time” (68). It endorsed a belief in progress and could be used to justify the social order. The theory of natural selection – the mechanism of evolutionary change – was employed to defend the dispossession of indigenous peoples. Natural selection appeared “to give a scientific – and therefore moral – sanction to despotic social relationships... Social Darwinism, as this misapplication of Darwin’s ideas came to be called, was used to justify the oppression of one group by another” (69). The wide acceptance of this discourse is apparent in an article published about the Mountains in 1896.

Billy Lynch, described as “an active, clear-headed, intelligent veteran, of Parksian [sic] appearance”, was one of several people interviewed for an article on the Mountains by a journalist from the Sydney Mail. Lynch belonged to the Therubalat clan of the Gundungurra. He was born in the Kanimbla Valley and lived all his life in the Mountains. The journalist sought him out at his camp on a
bridle track near Katoomba where, as he put it, the “last of the mountains aboriginals” [sic] lived (E.D.H. 1250). 36

Lynch outlined some of the changes in the environment he had observed in his sixty odd years of residence. He could recall a time when,

ducks, kangaroos, and shags were in large numbers, and when the rivers and ponds were full of black fish, perch, sprats, mullet, and eels, especially in the Cox. On the other side of the dividing range were bream and cod. Lowries, king parrots, rosellas and the cockatoo parrots made the bush gay with their plumage, and the lyrebird was in numbers. Now all is changed. The old animals, birds, and fruits have gone. (1250)

Many of the native fruits – geebung, burrurang, wild cherry, and babuba – were also disappearing. Even snakes were less numerous; you could “go the whole summer without seeing more than two or three”, where once there had been one “every ten yards”. The journalist was surprised by the reported depletion of native plants. “How can you account for it?”, he demanded of Lynch, “For the white men have not shot the fruits.” Lynch replied, “I suppose it is that the time for my people to be replaced by another had come, and so all the animals, and fruits, and birds they depended on vanish” (1250).

The journalist’s naive assertion that “white men have not shot the fruits” fails to consider other, more insidious, forms of harm. In Culture and Imperialism (1994) Edward Said understands the imperial impulse as primarily geographic and notes several physical manifestations of it. He describes Alfred Crosby’s notion of ecological imperialism:

wherever they went Europeans immediately began to change the local habitat; their conscious aim was to transform territories into images of what they had left behind. This process was never-ending, as a huge number of plants, animals, and crops as well as building methods gradually turned the colony into a new place, complete with new diseases, environmental imbalances, and traumatic dislocations for the overpowered natives. (271–272)

36 James Kohen states that descendants of Billy Lynch and his wife Fanny still live in and around Katoomba (132).
During Lynch’s lifetime the ecological changes in the Blue Mountains would have included the construction of the railway, vastly increased tourism, with the attendant creation of buildings and bridle and walking tracks to accommodate the influx of people, coal mining in Katoomba, silver mining at Yerranderie in the Burragarong Valley, the damming of creeks – including Bull’s Creek near Linden – and the farming of the Burragarong, Megalong and Kanimbla Valleys. Yet neither he nor the journalist suggest that these innovations might have some connection with the disappearance of the flora and fauna. In other words, Aboriginality is associated with a traditional lifestyle. The Mountains Aborigines are grouped in with the wildlife and plants and, like them, are disappearing. The journalist lists native food plants that have diminished in number and comments, “These were the natives’ fruits, and they largely formed his food, but they were vanishing like himself” (E.D.H. 1250). Paul Carter notes, in The Road to Botany Bay, that in nineteenth century narratives of life in Australia Aborigines are relegated to the back of the book with flora, fauna and natural productions, or as he so aptly puts it, they are made to “inhabit the world of the etc.” (335).

The concept of natural selection wasn’t entirely reassuring in its effect, it also raised worrying questions for Europeans. The cyclical nature of the rise and fall of nations and races suggested that their own culture would inevitably fall into decline. This anxiety was present in a number of novels published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about a lost civilisation known as Lemuria. J.J. Healy noted that the notion of Lemuria, a pre-historic continent that stretched from Madagascar to Malaya, originated with the zoologist C.L. Sclater and was an attempt to explain the geographical distribution of the lemur. Later
Lemuria became attached to the myth of Atlantis, which it was said to pre-date. A map of Lemuria, first published by the Theosophical Society in 1904, includes Australia in the vast continent, but even earlier than this Ernest Haeckel, in his *History of Creation* (1876), had concluded that Australia was the largest remaining part of Lemuria (Healy 310).

Healy identifies other sources for the Lemurian tales such as the discovery by Sir George Grey of a carving of a human head within a rock cave in the Kimberley. Grey was surprised by the sophistication of the work and had difficulty reconciling the art with his concept of Aborigines. In a Lemurian context the art could be explained as the remnant of a lost civilisation. This is stated explicitly in J.F. Hogan’s novel *The Lost Explorer* (1898). The narrator, Arthur Louvain, says:

> I remembered how Sir George Grey, one of the earliest and most observant of Australian explorers, had come upon evidences that pointed unmistakably to the existence of a race of comparative culture and refinement in the far Australian depths. (139)

The novels of H. Rider Haggard, works such as *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887), are often cited as a major influence on Lemurian fiction. But “Oo-a-deen, or The Mysteries of the Interior Unveiled”, a short story published in the *Corio Chronicle and Western Districts Advertiser* in 1847, indicates another possible influence: the Irish stories of the world without. Although “Oo-a-deen” uses many of the conventions of Haggard’s romance/adventure tales, it pre-dates *King Solomon’s Mines* by almost forty years.

Two conflicting authorial voices are evident within “Oo-a-deen”. The greater part of the narrative consists of a manuscript written by a young
Englishman named Grantley and tells of the idyllic land of Ooadeen\textsuperscript{37} which he discovered in the “very heart of Australia”, and its inhabitants the Mahanacuman (21). Grantley is not a convict but he is a convict-like figure. Disgraced in England he writes, “[I] awoke to my miserable and degraded condition, chastised by shame” (15). This shame induces Grantley to flee to Australia. There he hears a story about the “existence of a superior race in the country” from Aborigines (16). At first he believes these stories were generated by the Aborigines having met up with absconding convicts, and later considers that they may represent contact with “early navigators on the coast” but eventually he comes to believe that there is a race of light-skinned people living in the inland. He becomes obsessed with finding these people and in the end succeeds. To reach their civilisation he must pass through a mountain range, “climbing steep after steep and surmounting ridge after ridge”, until at last he sees “a country fair as the ‘land of promise’ seen by the Hebrew Lawgiver from the top of Mt Pisgah” (17).\textsuperscript{38}

He is taken in by the Mahanacuman, the people of Ooadeen, which means “Place of Perfect Rest” (20). Although he is obliged to remain in Ooadeen this is no hardship as the Mahanacuman are a peaceful, leisured people whose crops are grown and animals raised “almost without care” and for whom “the restraint of law is hardly needed, for their simplicity of life keeps them virtuous and the whole are regulated as one great family” (22). Additionally, Grantley has become the lover of Yarrance, daughter of the Priest and Law-Giver of Ooadeen. When it’s discovered Yarrance is pregnant, however, and that Grantley is the father, he

\textsuperscript{37} Ooadeen is hyphenated only in the title.

\textsuperscript{38} A number of nineteenth century accounts of crossing the Blue Mountains describe the view in these terms. (See Mackaness 2: 30, 37).
Found: Inheritance

is sentenced to death. He is placed on a raft which is set adrift on the river Madideeroo which disappears into a cavern "whose depths were too dreadful even to be looked into" (25). Grantley survives the ordeal but can never find his way back to Ooadeen.

There is, however, a second voice evident in "Oo-a-deen"; Grantley's account is not allowed to stand alone. It is bracketed by another narrative, that of an un-named squatter who qualifies and attempts to explain Grantley's story. Grantley, he writes, "is certainly insane" and the nameless narrator sends him back to England where he is placed in a private lunatic asylum (13). In an epilogue to the manuscript, the squatter has the last word. Grantley, he learns, has escaped from the English asylum and made his way back to Australia where he continues to search for Ooadeen. Eventually, he concludes, the monomaniac's bones will be found bleaching in the wilderness.

There are clear resonances in this story with Irish tales of the world without, in particular, the steadfast belief in a hidden utopic community despite official disavowals that such a place exists. There are also striking congruities between "Oo-a-deen" and Lemurian novels: many Lemurian lost civilisations are located behind impenetrable mountains, they are inhabited by a light-skinned people, and the first intimation of the city or civilisation is often found in an Aboriginal story. While it's fair to say that Haggard established there was a readership for the lost world genre it would seem that many of the influences for the Lemurian stories were already present in Australia.

Most Lemurian stories are set in remote locations, far from the city: central Australia, the far north of Queensland or Western Australia. They're sited
on the frontier. Robert Dixon suggests, in *Writing the Colonial Adventure* (1995), “textual production of ‘the nation’ is achieved by a ceaseless marking of boundaries, both internal and external. Popular fictions narrate the nation’s unity by differentiating it externally from other nations and by the inscription of a hierarchy of internal discriminations” (10). These discursive boundaries are often mirrored within the text by geographical boundaries or frontiers, places remote from civilisation. Henry Oliphant Smeaton’s novel *Treasure Cave of the Blue Mountains* (c. 1898), however, is located within 100 miles of Sydney. In the early years of the colony the Blue Mountains were seen as a frontier but the novel is set in the 1890s when, as Oliphant Smeaton admits, the Mountains are the haunt of “tourists and pleasure-seekers” (27). However, as I argue in “Initiation,” the Mountains, because they are liminal, are a borderland, and therefore a kind of frontier. They’re seen as a wilderness, sublimely terrifying and ancient. Oliphant Smeaton writes:

> The massive limestone rocks... resemble the ruins of ancient masonry or gigantic Titanic statuary and sculpture, while the heart of the mountains themselves is literally honeycombed with caves and caverns, some of them extending immense distances into the very depths of the ranges. For miles upon miles do these successive ridges of bare rock and densely wooded cliff, of vast rolling forests and gloomy ravines, extend, valley succeeding mountain, and mountain valley, all of them strewn with these colossal fragments of grey limestone, bleached and lichenized, until one wonders if by chance he have [sic] not strayed into that mysterious battleground of the Gods and Titans, where Pelion was piled upon Ossa, and where yet lie, terrific and forbidding, the monstrous crumbling fragments of an elder world. (41)

The novel begins with a domestic scene. Jack Cameron and his two friends, Billy Arbuthnot and Arthur “Bobbin” Roberts, are relaxing in Cameron’s house.

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39 See Hogan, Firth, and Praed.
40 See p. 198
"Gazeout Cottage”. They are “friends of many years’ standing, tried and true, practical miners all of them, who had sought to carve their fortunes in a literal sense out of Mother Earth on most of the great goldfields” (7). At the moment though they are each pursuing more pedestrian occupations and the “black devil of ennui has got [them] by the liver” (2). A letter arrives from Jack’s manager, John Cardiff. Cardiff has a business proposition for Cameron. He offers to reveal the secret of a treasure, which is concealed in a series of extensive caves hidden in the Blue Mountains. His only caveat is that, if Cameron takes up his offer, he will give a portion of the treasure to Cardiff’s daughter. Cardiff is too enfeebled by illness to retrieve the treasure himself but he wishes to provide for Leila.

The secret entrance to these caves was revealed to an escaped convict named Ferrars by Kaloola, an Aboriginal chief, after Ferrars saved the life of Kaloola’s wife. Inside the caves, in the dry course of an underground river, Ferrars and his men, also escaped convicts, stumbled over gold nuggets, which they mined and refined in the cave. In addition to the ore, they secreted the treasure from a Spanish shipwreck. However, before they could benefit from their newfound wealth most of the band was apprehended and they all died within a year of their re-capture. Cardiff learnt the secret of the caves from D’Arcy Thornton, the only member of the band to escape the law. (Cardiff had concealed him from the authorities.) Thornton, Cardiff and Cardiff’s two brothers worked the mine for a number of years but they eventually had a dispute about working methods. Deciding that their opinions were irreconcilable they broke up the partnership but agreed that none of them would reveal the secret while the others were alive. In effect, this pact is a tontine: the last man left alive inherits all.
Cardiff's brothers perished soon after in a shipwreck and he has just discovered that D'Arcy Thornton, who had been pardoned some years previously, has also died, freeing him to speak at last.

The notion of inheritance is a strong motif in this novel. John Cardiff, as the survivor of the tontine, inherits the cave and its treasure. This suggests that Kaloola's revelation to Ferrars was in the nature of a bequest. Intrinsic in this notion is the death of the testator. As Cardiff passes the secret of the cave on to Cameron when he feels his health failing so Kaloola told Ferrars. There is, therefore, the inference that this was the bequest of a doomed man. It even hints at the notion that Kaloola's race may be dying. Why else would he pass on sacred knowledge to a European however grateful he were to him? This idea is borne out by the absence of Aborigines within the contemporary story. Leila Cardiff asserts that the Aborigines believe that the valley in which the treasure cave is located is "haunted by the most malevolent spirits" (152). They avoid not only that specific area but the Mountains as a whole.

Often in Lemurian novels Aborigines are represented as the Other of the (white) national self, the enemy whom the adventurer must defeat in order to reach their goal (Dixon 64). But in Oliphant Smeaton's novel the wilderness (as opposed to tourist sites) is said to be peopled by criminals hiding from the authorities. Cardiff writes in his initial letter to Cameron, "The Blue Mountains... are now infested with a set of desperate outlaws, bushrangers, sheep-stealers and horse-lifters, as well as criminals of all kinds, of which the government knows nothing, as these men do not venture much near any of the haunts of civilisation" (18). A man known as Black Bob leads these desperadoes. (As I point out in
"Intermezzo" the figure of the bushranger often displaces the Aborigine in European myths of the Blue Mountains and this tendency may have contributed to Oliphant Smeaton's choice of adversaries for his adventurers.\(^{41}\)

Black Bob and his men are considered to be unfit heirs; pretenders to the treasure. They are clearly differentiated from Ferrars and Thornton. Ferrars was transported for shooting a man who trifled with his daughter and Cameron describes him admiringly as "a man of great ability and force of character" (74). Thornton was a socialist and a democrat before these ideas were acceptable and who, therefore, "had to suffer for his opinions" (16). He was eventually pardoned through the auspices of his cousin, who happened to be the Lord Chancellor. The inference is that, although Ferrars and his men were once deemed bushrangers, the men were not truly outlaws but the victims of, as Cardiff puts it, "the absurd criminal laws of England in those days" (16).

Cameron and his friends decide to take up Cardiff's offer. The three men are surprised to learn that Leila intends to accompany them. They remonstrate with her but she overcomes their protestations by explaining that their only hope of getting to the caves is with her as a guide. She has twice travelled the route, which is both intricate and dangerous, with her father. Reluctantly they acquiesce in her determination to accompany them. Leila possesses a chart that will assist her in her navigation. (The chart is actually an itinerary.) Once the party is in the bush she shows it to Cameron who reads it aloud to his companions:

If ye would find the Devil's Gateway, then come ye from the land of the rising sun. Track ye the River of Ghosts up to the point where it washes the feet of Derrick's Drop. Then strike ye up through the Valley of Dry Bones, until ye come to Boaz and to

\(^{41}\) See p. 186.
Jachin. Follow the leading of the thread taken through the left light through the extingushed "Lamp of Life," in Jachin…. (79)
(The chart continues but this portion gives an idea of the language used.) The men are baffled by it. Leila explains that it's deliberately obscure so that if the itinerary should fall into the wrong hands it would be useless.

Generally, an itinerary places a person within a particular landscape but the deliberately obfuscating names and descriptions in this itinerary mean that unless, like Leila, you've travelled the route before you need the key to find your way. The chart has another more subtle purpose. The cave, which was an Aboriginal sacred site – the entrance to "the abode of the spirits" (76) – is now located (literally) via the emblems of another system of belief: the chart is rich with Masonic symbolism. Jachin and Boaz,42 for example, were two pillars in the Temple of Solomon. Also mentioned are the Skull Rock, which is reminiscent of Golgotha, and three rocks in the shape of a triangle which are referred to as the "pillars three". In addition, during the journey one of the markers is a cross and, at one stage, they must use a plumb in order to plot their course (80). All of these figures are part of a complex symbolism through which initiates understand Freemasonry. The effect of this new story is to once again exclude Aborigines from the narrative.

Unfortunately, Black Bob has a copy of the chart's key. If he were ever to get hold of the chart he would be able to decipher it without any trouble. Leila describes him as, "a demon incarnate [who] knows of the existence of the treasure, and for years has been trying to discover it" (26). She begs Jack to kill Black Bob without mercy if he should ever have the chance. Though Jack admits

42When Cameron hears these names he asks Leila if Ferrars had been a "member of the Masonic order" and she replies that he was (127).
to himself the “the request is a strange one to come from a young and beautiful girl” he readily agrees (100). These men are, after all, “more degraded by lust and brutality than the very beasts themselves” (110). Jack’s heart “thrilled with horror as the thought flashed across his mind—what if poor Leila were ever to fall into the hands of these scoundrels? What fate would await her?” (100). He doesn’t have to wait long to find out. The members of the party are disguised as geologists but despite their subterfuge Black Bob discovers their plans and pursues them. Leila has resolved to “die rather than permit herself to be captured” (53), but Black Bob succeeds in carrying her off, determined to drag the secret of the cave from her by torture.

It’s clear that Black Bob wants more from Leila than information. When they reach the gang’s hideout he tosses Leila onto the heap of skins and ferns that constitute his bed. He addresses her as “my proud little beauty” and suggests he’ll tame her. When he returns for her Leila pulls away from his touch and Bob says: “It thinks it stains its purty little person to have Bob’s hands on it... Oh, ye’ll maybe hev more ter do wi’ me than ye think yet.” Leila shudders at “the horrible insinuation contained in the speech” (116).

In his discussion of Rosa Praed’s novel Outlaw and Lawmaker (1893) Robert Dixon describes two of the characters, Moonlight and Trant, as doubles “like Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde” (43). Moonlight is a bushranger, the doomed hero. Trant is his second-in-command but more importantly he does what Moonlight cannot — he constitutes “a direct sexual threat to the heroine” (43). There are strong indications that Black Bob is Cameron’s dark alter ego. His treatment of Leila is a distorted mirroring of Cameron’s actions. Black Bob throws Leila onto
his bed; Cameron covers her with his own warm opossum skin rug when he
notices her shivering in her sleep while he’s on watch. Cameron’s courteous
address is viciously parodied by Bob’s jeering pretence at civility. Cameron has
been considering Leila as a potential wife; Black Bob presents Leila to his men as
his spouse: “My wife, gen’lemen,” said Bob with exaggerated courtesy. “She axes
your parding, because ’er ’ands is tied, ‘cause of a leettle family disagreement
we’ve been ’avin’ over the colour of her noo silk dress” (116). Black Bob’s touch
revolts her but when she is rescued she falls into Cameron’s arms.

Black Bob could be seen as an example of the hybrid. Robert Dixon
writes: “Between the self and its others, there flourishes a dangerous and unstable
hierarchy of bastard types. The fictional lost races that proliferate in imperial
romance are an example of this” (64). Usually these races are represented as
hovering in an uneasy racial limbo. The hybrid challenges the division between
black and white and represents an anxiety about the degeneration of the white
race. Black Bob is explicitly constructed as a hybrid figure:

No one could look on his lowering brows and full, sensuous lips
without perceiving that before them stood a man in whom every
bestial and animal instinct had obtained the mastery over his better
nature. His complexion was so dark as to raise the suspicion that he
had a strain of negro blood in his veins. His long hair and beard, jet
black in hue, constituted the distinguishing feature suggesting his
sobriquet (114).

Black Bob represents a warning: the dangers in adventure are not only physical
but spiritual as well. This is what the adventurer may become. The frontier is the
site of potential racial decline.

The frontier was also seen as a site of vitality and renewal, the foundry
that forged the Coming Man. It offered the potential for, but not the promise of,
redemption, as “The Story of My Gold Cross” demonstrates. This short story was published in the *Town and Country Journal* in 1887. While travelling over the Mountains two women are abducted from their coach by a band of bushrangers. They are saved by Henry, the ne’er-do-well cousin of one of the women who, as black sheep do, has made his way to Australia. While the other members of the gang go to a grog shanty he leads the women to safety. Too steeped in dishonour to return to his old life, Henry returns to the bushrangers’ camp where he is killed for his betrayal. His last words to his cousin Mattie are, “My life will atone” (“Mathilde” 1174). His sacrifice redeems him. The gold cross, which Mattie had once given to him and which he returned to her, becomes the symbol of that redemption.

Dixon argues that in the adventure novel “narrative conventions focus on changing definitions of gender and power by bringing into conflict... the New Woman and the Coming Man” (82). Leila is certainly an example of the New Woman. She’s self-reliant and a “first-rate bushwoman” (135). On their arrival in the Mountains she makes it clear that she expects no special treatment; she will carry her own knapsack, literally and metaphorically: “I wish no coddling from any of you; and I warn you that no one will displease me more than by wishing to relieve me of it. I shall be cook to the party, and the only help I ask is to be kept supplied with firewood” (44). She is also familiar with firearms. When they arrive at Medlow station Leila is left alone for a few moments while the men supervise the unloading of their gear. She is accosted by a would-be thief who attempts to steal her knapsack. When Leila pulls out her revolver and aims it at his head he
quickly retreats. When she makes a solitary, dangerous sortie to Medlow Bath in order to telegraph her father for vital information, she dons boy’s clothes.

Often in adventure romances there are two female characters: a powerful, sexual woman who is usually destroyed by the end of the novel, and a more yielding heroine who ends up with the hero. In The Last Lemurian: A Westralian Romance (Firth 1898) the figure of Tor Ymmothe, the powerful and rapacious queen, is counterbalanced by the gentle English heiress Margaret Digby. In Rosa Praed’s Fugitive Anne (1902) Erik Hansen contrasts Anne Bedo, another heiress, with Keorah the high priestess of Aak: “She was very dear to him... dearer than he had before realised, and he knew that strange and strong as had been Keorah’s power of fascination, it needed but a word from Anne to break the spell of that enchantress” (364). These two constructions of femininity are correlations of two conflicting modes of masculinity in the adventure novel. Physical bravery and prowess, along with an adventurous spirit, were admired but, at the same time, “young men were exhorted to become dutiful, domesticated husbands and responsible citizens” (Dixon 30). They respectively represent the woman with whom you dally and the woman whom you marry. But, as there is only one female character in Treasure Cave of the Blue Mountains, Oliphant Smeaton must try to reconcile these conflicting feminine impulses in the single figure of Leila Cardiff. In order to become marriageable the New Woman and the sexualised woman must “die”.

The deaths of both Tor Ymmothe and Keorah are associated with fire. Tor Ymmothe is shot but when she falls to the ground she is covered ‘with dull lambent flames flickering and gleaming” (251). Keorah is consumed in a volcanic
eruption. Their deaths are reminiscent of the destruction of Ayesha in H. Rider Haggard's *She*. Ayesha steps into a column of flame, which has previously sustained her life, but which now reduces her to shrunken, monkey-like creature. In a sense, Leila is also consumed by fire. She is once again captured by Black Bob who dislocates her arm in an attempt to torture information from her. She is rescued by her friends who render first aid but she begins to burn with a high fever. During her illness she speaks continuously, without artifice or cynicism, and in so doing reveals herself to Cameron: "For two days she lay at death's door, quite unconscious of her surroundings. From her side Cameron never stirred for a moment. He had his reward for from her ravings in her delirium he learned more of the purity and nobility of her character than ever before as well as the depth and sincerity of her affection for him" (265). Despite her knowledge of the bush, her proficiency with a gun and her temporary assumption of male clothing, in her delirium she can't hide her allegiance to the domestic.

When the three men first met Leila she told them "I have been far too much out of suits with fortune to have the makings of a fine lady in me" (24) but by the end of the novel it's discovered that she's the heiress to an extensive (and extremely respectable) estate in England. Before they entered the cave the adventurers stumbled across a human skeleton. From items taken from the body they realise that these are the remains of Leila's uncle who had disappeared many years before. (Often a long lost relative was sought after in Lemuria but it's somewhat unusual to discover one there by accident.) His watch bears the inscription: "Edward Arcliffie Cardiff, Bevenley Park, Hants" (147). Dixon notes that inherited property is far more romantic than new money, an idea which
Oliphant Smeaton implicitly endorses. D'Arcy Thornton was transported for expressing his socialist and democratic ideals but in the end, when he is pardoned, he returns to England to take up his inheritance. He had fallen "heir to his brother's estates in England, and settled down to the life of a wealthy country squire" (17). Leila had previously objected to being "fine-ladyfied" (72) but her inheritance confirms the opinion of Cameron's housekeeper that "that 'ere damsing [is] a parfit lady" (22) and therefore worthy to become Cameron's wife.

The four adventurers eventually decide to make their way back to civilisation but instead of re-tracing their original route they choose to exit the caves via the underground river. It's at this point that the Lemurian content of the story occurs. A city located further within the caves has been previously mentioned but with an air of scepticism. However, when Leila's party decide to try to exit the caves via the subterranean river, which is still flowing although it has changed its course, they recall the story and decide to investigate. The river branches and they take the left channel. What they discover is unique in Lemurian literature. Unlike other Lemurian novels the adventurers don't have to contend with the remnants of a lost race.

They drift into sight of the city, which is lit from above by several fissures in the roof of the cavern. It is silent and deserted; when they enter a large hall they realise that the city is a vast necropolis, a "City of the Dead belonging to some elder race in the world's history, whose civilisation had reached its flower thousands of years before Europe was colonised, when mayhap Lemuria, the vanished continent of the Western Pacific, was in its glory" (285). The hall is lavishly, but tastefully decorated, and jewels and gold cover the bodies of the
Lemurians who have been embalmed by some long-lost process that leaves them whole and unchanged as if they are merely sleeping. They are a copper-skinned people with high cheekbones and aquiline noses. The artistry with which they preserve their dead raises a question.

Previously the party had discovered six skeletons on a high ledge in one of the chambers of the caves. Leila told her companions that the bones “belong to a race immensely older than the present blacks inhabiting Australia” (204). The remnants of this race, according to Kaloola (the Aborigine who first revealed the cave to Ferrars), now lived in central Australia and were “much more civilised than the other natives” (205). Cameron speculated that the bones had something to do with the underground city. But if the people of the city knew how to embalm the bodies of their dead so successfully why would these six people be allowed to reduce to bone? The skeletons aren’t laid out, they’re standing erect and in an attitude of listening. This indicates that the bones were placed on the ledge and in that particular manner for a reason. Perhaps they were criminals – the practice of displaying the body of an executed criminal was common in many countries – or the skeletons could have been intended as guardians for the caves. Or perhaps they indicate the devolution of their race. The knowledge that enabled their ancestors to embalm the human body so exquisitely was lost and the bones were symbolic of their inability to preserve their race either in life or death.

This supposition is supported by the reaction of the adventurers. Leila exclaims “Oh, Jack, let us go; I am so miserable. This is the most terrible sight I have ever seen!” Her repulsion is not caused by distaste but because these people are, “forgotten, forgotten by all!” (286). All the adventurers are struck by the same
thought and by the implication that their own society may some day fall into
decay. Arbuthnot speaks for them all when he asks “Will such ever be our lot?”
(286). Peter Pierce notes this tendency in a number of lost race romances,
describing it as the “chastening knowledge... of the melancholy cyclical
movement of history in which all races are implicated” (“Weary with Travelling”
83). Dismayed by their discovery, the others accede to Leila’s suggestion and
leave with no further exploration.

Before Cameron leaves he filches some of the jewels adorning the dead:
“There can be no harm in taking these,” he says nonchalantly as he pockets two or
three carved jewels “in memory of the forgotten people” (286). This is a typical
response: Lemurian civilisations brim with treasure and this is their principal
allure. Pierce suggests that such looting is a doomed attempt to alleviate a
seemingly inevitable future decline because, “No imagined treasure, borne from
the past to provide for the future, can fully assuage their disquiet. The treasures
variously discovered or abandoned or not in existence at all in these romances
allow no purchase on the future” (89). Yet this theft could also be seen as a
symbolic inheritance. In The Nervous Nineties (1991) John Docker notes the
inference in many of these adventure novels that Europeans are resuming places
that were once the domain of other light-skinned people (176). Within this schema
Aborigines are outside the line of descent.
Legend

The rock formation known as the Three Sisters (located at Echo Point in Katoomba) is currently the most widely recognised symbol of the Blue Mountains and the story associated with it – in which three Aboriginal women are turned to stone – is pervasive. Variations of the Three Sisters story appear on postcards, in novels and children’s books, on websites (although, significantly, not on the website of the Gundungurra people whose traditional lands encompass the Three Sisters [Gundungurra Tribal Council]), in tourist brochures, and as a

LEGEND OF THE THREE SISTERS
According to an aboriginal dreamtime legend, three beautiful giant sisters, named “Meehni”, “Wimlah”, and “Gunnedoo” once lived with the Katoomba tribe in the Jamieson Valley. These maidens were in love with three brothers from the Nepean tribe, but marriage was forbidden by tribal law. The brothers were brave warriors and decided to take the maidens by force. A large tribal battle forced the witchdoctor of the Katoomba tribe to turn the sisters into stone. He intended to restore them after the danger had passed. Unfortunately, the witchdoctor was killed in the battle and to this day nobody has been able to break the spell and turn the three sisters back to their natural form.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME KATOOMBA
It is generally assumed that the name “Katoomba” is a corruption of an aboriginal word meaning “Shiney, tumbling waters”.

Figure 14: Three Sisters, Echo Point, Katoomba NSW, postcard, Bartel Collectors’ World, 2003.

43This wasn’t always the case: in the latter part of the nineteenth century Orphan Rock was a more popular icon. Davidson and Spearritt suggest that “Victorian sentimentality over foundlings was projected on to the isolated outcrop, which unwittingly served as a metaphor for the colonists themselves, separated from England” (17).
recorded story (in both English and Japanese) at Echo Point (Smith *Aboriginal Legends* 73–77). The version on the postcard pictured is typical.

The site wasn’t always called the Three Sisters. In the 1830s it was known by Europeans as Tri Saxa Point: Tri Saxa is Latin for three rocks. When the change in name took place is uncertain but in 1883 Douglas Sladen was apostrophising the “Sisters” in indifferent poetry and this would indicate that the name was already established at this time: “Thy ‘Sisters’ stand like the west walls of aisles/ In England’s old cathedral gothic piles” (“Katoomba” 604). The poem characterises the rocks as women turned to stone describing them as “petrified in Niobeian woe” (604). In Greek mythology Niobe, the wife of Amphion the King of Thebes, died of grief after Apollo and Artemis killed her fourteen children. After death she was changed into a rock from which sprang trickles of water, recalling the endless tears she had shed (Brewer 778–779). The notion of women being petrified is present but no mention is made of an Aboriginal legend either in the poem or in tourist guides of the time although these volumes attempt to attach a nascent narrative to the site. The *Pictorial Guide to the Blue Mountains of New South Wales* (1885) writes of the Three Sisters: “The whole mountain takes the form of a cathedral with three spires, and a rocky formation resembles an old woman entering at the porch” (Russell 34). The *Tourist’s Guide to the Blue Mountains* (1887) describes them as “like three weird monuments of Egyptian architecture” (10).

This omission could be explained by the reluctance of Europeans to include indigenous people in their stories of place but it has also been suggested

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44 There are some variant spellings recorded.
that the Three Sisters legend is not a traditional Aboriginal story. Much of the speculation about the origins of the story has centred on the figure of Mel Ward who, it was thought, first published the story in 1949. Mel Ward was an actor who, after his retirement from the stage, became a respected, although amateur, carcinologist whose expertise in the classification of crabs was widely recognised. He travelled extensively in Australia and overseas searching for specimens. Eventually, his collection expanded to include ethnological and historical items, including Aboriginal artefacts, and was housed in his Museum of Natural History and Native Art in the grounds of the Hydro Majestic at Medlow Bath. Ward published a number of Aboriginal legends in the magazine *Outdoors and Fishing* between 1948 and 1951, including the story of the Three Sisters. In *Aboriginal Legends of the Blue Mountains* (1992) Jim Smith suggested that Ward invented the story, basing his deductions on an analysis of Ward’s character (72–77). But such an analysis is only relevant if Ward was the first to publish the story and this isn’t the case. Since the publication of *Aboriginal Legends* an earlier version of the story has been discovered.

This version appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1931. “The Three Sisters: Wimalah, Meeni, and Gunedoo” was submitted by Patricia Stone, aged 16.

In the long ago, years and years before the white people came to settle in Australia, there lived a tribe of aboriginals [sic] in the bush of the Blue Mountains, around what we call “Katoomba”. Now, among the Wunullas, which was the name of this tribe, there were three sisters – Wimalar [sic], Meeni, and Gunedoo – and these maidens, unlike the other girls, were very, very tall, being, in fact giantesses, and were highly thought of by the other natives. Now not very far away lived another colony of black people, who were continually attacking the tribe to which the three young giantesses belonged, and if it hadn’t been for their enemies, the Coodas, the
Wunullas would have been very happy and contented. One day the Coodas attacked the camps of the Wunullas, intending to seize Wimalah, Meeni, and Gunedoo, carry them off, and then try to force them to remain with their tribe, which was leaving the district in a few days. When the Wunullas saw their enemies approaching they guessed that they would try to capture the three girls, so they quickly told them to run to a hill behind the camp, while they themselves would try to prevent the Coodas from coming too near. Wimalah, Meeni, and Gunedoo did as they were told, but the Coodas came in such great numbers that they broke through the Wunullas, and ran towards the terrified girls, who turned and fled in the direction of the valley. Seeing that their enemies were gaining on them, Yooma, who was the native wizard of the tribe, suddenly turned the three giantesses into immense masses of stone, thus preventing their capture and baffling the Coodas, who, amazed at this turn of affairs, hurried back to the camp of the Wunullas. In the fight that followed, Yooma was taken unawares and killed, and as no one else in the tribe possessed such magical powers, the three maidens were compelled to remain always in the shape of rock and stone, and to this very day they stand as silent guardians of the great Jamieson’s Valley. So the next time you visit Echo Point, and gaze at “The Three Sisters” as they are called, you will know exactly what their names are, and how they came to be there. (9)

Patricia Stone was born in Sydney in 1914. Her father, Ralph, ran a real estate firm in Forest Lodge and was involved in local politics. He was an alderman for many years and was the mayor of Glebe in 1917. Initially the family lived in Annandale before moving to Beecroft. Stone attended Abotsleigh College. She died in 1980 but her older sister Gwynneth remembers her writing “The Three Sisters". Her recollection is that the story was written in response to a competition to name the Three Sisters. There is no evidence that Patricia Stone had any Aboriginal heritage from which she might have drawn the story, however, it’s possible she could have read or heard it somewhere and merely re-told the

45The names Stone uses, both for the people involved in the story and the tribes, seem to be her own invention. They don’t appear in the standard Darug and Gundungurra glossaries nor can they be found in W.W. Thorpe’s List of New South Wales Aboriginal Place Names and Their Meanings (1927).

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tale. The family visited the Mountains, including Echo Point, when Stone was eleven or twelve, staying overnight at the Burlington guesthouse. Her sister, however, is convinced she would have known if Patricia had been told the story by another person or if she had found it a manuscript or book. She is convinced that Patricia invented the story (Smith “Letter”). Stone had previously had another story printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald*: “How the Australian Blue-tongued Lizard Got His Name” (11). ⁴⁶ It was also written in the form of an Aboriginal legend but it was clearly headed as a short story. The two pieces are structured very similarly and it seems probable that the tale of the Three Sisters is as much a short story as that of the blue-tongued lizard. Stone’s Three Sisters story was reproduced in the newsletter of the Aboriginal Inland Mission, *Our Aim*, in March 1935 and it was perhaps at this time that the tale was legitimated.

Why has this particular story garnered so much cultural capital? There are some similarities between Stone’s tale and other extant Aboriginal stories. The idea of a person or people being turned to stone during the Dreaming isn’t contrary to Aboriginal belief. There are a number of Aboriginal stories in which this occurs to both women and children. R.H. Mathews states that, during the legendary period, women weren’t permitted to speak to dogs and if they did so the consequences were “somewhat similar to the fate of Lot’s wife” (“Ethnological Notes” 347). He cites two examples:

Among the Wiraidyuri tribes there is a story that on one occasion during the period the youths were away in the bush going through the course of initiation, a dog left the party and went away back to where the women were camped. They asked the dog where their sons were and what they were doing, and he told them, whereupon all the women and children were transformed to stone. This

⁴⁶ See Appendix 2
happened near Lake Cudgellico, where there are some rocks of different sizes, which, at a distance, and good stretch of imagination, bear some similarity to women and children sitting down.

The natives of the south-east coast of New South Wales [the Thoorga] have a legend that two women were out in the bush, gathering burrawang seeds for food, which they placed in their net bags, kurama. During the day they met a dog carrying a mullet, murra-murra, and asked him where he caught it. Upon his answering their question, they were immediately changed into stone, together with their bags of burrarangs and their yamsticks, gawalang. Rocks bearing a fanciful resemblance to these women are pointed out at a place on the hills between the Kangaroo Valley and the coast (347).

In both these cases the stones are associated with specific sites and demonstrate the dangers of defying cultural prohibitions. Unlike the Three Sisters story the people aren’t petrified as a protective measure but as a punishment. There is a strong suggestion that the penalty is associated with forbidden knowledge because, in both cases, the women and children aren’t turned to stone until the dog replies to them.

There are also a number of Aboriginal stories that concern the genesis of the Pleiades (also known as the Seven Sisters, or Many Sisters) which include the sisters being turned into rocks.\(^\text{47}\) It might seem contradictory for the women to be both stars and stones but there is often a link between the terrestrial and the celestial environments in traditional Aboriginal texts. In classical mythology the Pleiades were seven sisters, the daughters of Atlas and Pleione, who were pursued by the hunter Orion and whom the gods transformed into stars. (Orion was also changed.) The transformation of women after a pursuit by a man, or men, is a theme present in many of the Aboriginal stories. Charles Mountford collected a

\(^{47}\)Although I use the term Seven Sisters, as it is more familiar to European readers, the more accurate term is Many Sisters as Isobel White points out in her essay “Sexual Conquest and Submission in the Myths of Central Australia” (140 n.).
number of texts, from various sources, concerning the Kunkarunkara, a family of women who were, or became, the Pleiades. They were pursued – and often raped – by a man, Jula, who was, or became, Orion. These texts occur from the Warburton Range in Western Australia, through the Rawlinson, Petermann, Mann and Musgrave ranges and extend to Glen Helen in the Northern Territory. In many of the stories rocks are said to be the bodies of the Kunkarunkara: their appearance in the night sky doesn’t preclude their presence on earth in a geological form. The rocks are numerically diverse, ranging from a single large stone (often said to be the eldest sister) to groups of boulders, which are the Many Sisters.

According to Bill Hardie, a Gundungurra man, the Three Sisters are part of the Seven Sisters song line, “what we know as the Three Sisters are in fact the Seven Sisters — part of the story line, or song line, which has crossed Australia through tribal storytelling for many thousands of years” (The Sisters Project). In southeast Australia there are several stories in which the Sisters are pursued by a man and in which they become stars but aren’t turned into stone. Pine trees are a common attribute in these stories and the women are often associated with winter. The Bundjalung people of the Clarence River in New South Wales call the sisters the Warweenggary. A man named Karambil abducted one of them so her sisters travelled far to the west and sent bitter cold weather to Karambil’s camp until he released his captive. After her release the sisters travelled to the east where they found summer and released its warmth in order to succour the people who had

48Mountford writes that somewhere between the “Petermann and Mann mythical route, the name of Orion was changed from Jula to Nirunja, and that of the Seven Sisters from Kunkarunkara to Kunkarangkalpa” (462).
suffered from the cold. They then ascended to the sky to become the Pleiades.

Later Karambil also rose into the sky, climbing a pine tree to escape a fire lit by his enemy Bullabogabun. He is the star Alpha Tauri (W.E. Thomas). K. Langloh Parker tells a similar story in which two of the sisters, who are collectively known as the Meamei, are stolen by a man named Wurrunnah. The two women escape from him by embedding their axes into a pair of pine-trees which grow rapidly, taking them to their sisters in the sky (Parker).

Anthropologists assumed that no Gundungurra Seven Sisters story was collected but, although it doesn’t appear to have been published, R.H. Mathews did record such a story. It differs from the previously mentioned texts in that none of the sisters, who are known as the Dyirrang or black magpie women, is the victim of a rape. Instead, one of the women marries the importunate suitor although only because of a sense of obligation. (He saved her from drowning.) The woman is unhappy in her marriage although she has the support of her sisters who set up camp alongside her. One day it begins to rain and the married woman begins to strip bark from a tree in order to make a shelter. (The husband has refused to do this.) Her sisters sing a goor-ree-al-ain, or charm song, to help her and to make the tree grow taller and taller. As the bark lifts the woman follows it up the tree, going higher and higher, with her sisters following behind until they reach the sky and become stars. There is no discernible link to the Three Sisters in the story but Mathews recorded another account of the Dyirrang women that explained the creation of the moon and perhaps there were more in this cycle of texts (Papers of Robert Hamilton Mathews). 49 Frederick D. McCartney claimed

49 Mountford notes the Kunkarunkara were also pursued by the moon-man, Kula, as well as Jula.
that Mathews had collected a Gundungurra story about the Three Sisters but could
give no further details (3). Burri Jerome, an Aboriginal painter, has described the
Three Sisters as one of the most important Dreaming sites in Australia and it
seems unlikely that there was no traditional story associated with the place (Smith
Aboriginal Legends 77).

Patricia Stone’s story may have sounded authentic to European readers
and they might also have recognised that it was unlikely that the site had no
tradition associated with it. But I believe that other factors may have contributed
to its widespread acceptance as an authentic example of a traditional Aboriginal
story. It’s familiarity, both stylistically and thematically, would have been
reassuring; the majority of readers would have been aware of Biblical and
classical tales with similar occurrences. The story is associated with a specific,
and well-known, site and because it enhanced the tourism potential of the area it
was in the interests of local businesses to promote it. Davidson and Spearritt quote
from a 1930 article on Aborigines in the Wentworth Magazine, a quarterly
publication of the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney, “There is an increasing interest
shown in the lives and the ways of these people” (110). The story was generically
unthreatening. It initially appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on a page
entitled “For the Children”, a regular feature of the Saturday edition. “For the
Children” included simple historical and scientific articles as well as poetry and
fiction, some of which was contributed by primary and secondary students like
Patricia Stone. In Textual Spaces (1992) Stephen Muecke describes the tendency
for Aboriginal texts to be shifted into what is seen as the most suitable Western
genre, often the children’s story. He writes that “children’s stories were seen as an
appropriate destiny for the texts, and one traditional narrative device of (magical) transformations was retained for ‘just-so’-type stories” (53). He argues that, although it may be apposite for stories to be rendered for children, when major texts are reduced for this purpose or, I would suggest, if this becomes the dominant form, “something much more serious is going on” (53). Furthermore, Muecke describes the children’s story as an uncontroversial genre that serves to place the text outside a conceptual category that would include race relations (73).

Two versions of the Three Sisters story are regularly re-invoked and both are based on children’s tales. The first consists of variations on Stone’s account, such as the one on the postcard. The second is a re-telling of a picture book written by Victor Barnes and published in 1971. In this story the sisters are reduced from giantesses to careless children who are pursued by a bunyip after one of them accidentally throws a pebble over a cliff. Their father saves the girls by turning them to stone but he is then pursued by the bunyip. He turns himself into a lyre bird in order to escape but he loses his magic shin bone in the process and is therefore unable to turn either his daughters or himself back into their original forms. This version of the story is particularly prevalent on the internet.50

When Stone’s story was reprinted in Our Aim it was the first in a series of “Aboriginal Legends”. The word legend has several meanings. It is often used to indicate a traditional but unauthenticated story, which is nevertheless believed to be historical. But on a map a legend provides an interpretation of symbols, this meaning derives from the words earliest Latin roots: legere, to be read. What interpretation does the legend of the Three Sisters offer? In Uncanny Australia

Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs note the way in which the sacred is privileged in European discourses concerning Aboriginal-land relationships: “almost all expressions of Aboriginal territory are bound up with expressions of sacredness: the former bears a synecdochal relationship to the latter” (52). The Three Sisters story, while it purports to be traditional – in other words, a text that would normally link Aborigines with the land – suggests instead that Aboriginal spiritual authority has been lost. It severs that link. In all versions of the story knowledge is invested in a single person who either mislays the source of his power or dies. While there are resemblances between the stories of the Dyirrang and the Kunkarunkara and the tale of the Three Sisters the former never suggest in any way that spiritual knowledge has been forfeit. Stone’s story goes further because it gives an explicit time: “In the long ago, years and years before white people came to settle in Australia” (9). I’ve already noted some of the ways in which European colonisation disrupted the transmission of traditional beliefs which, nevertheless, survived. But in this scenario Europeans are excused from blame: Aboriginal knowledge was lost long before their advent and the Three Sisters act as a testament to this notion. Perhaps this explains why the story is so popular.

In her essay “Master Narratives and the Dispossession of the Wiradjuri” Gaynor MacDonald suggests that what she describes as “the Dreaming discourses,” that is the European emphasis on the link between Aboriginal spirituality and the land, suppress the importance of other modes of Aboriginal
peoples' relationship to it (172). While this emphasis may be partly explained by European privileging of high culture she suggests that it also absolves Europeans of cultural genocide because,

While loss of economic and social relations is directly attributable to colonisation, loss of mythic/religious relations can, in contrast, more easily be seen as an inevitable consequence of the meeting with the modern world: the attractive but fragile and primitive spiritual beliefs by which superstitious peoples organised their social and economic lives, destined to disappear with the advent of modernity. Constructed in these terms, it follows that, if the beliefs that are essential to their economic and social existence are deemed to have disappeared, all else – despite evidence to the contrary – will be deemed to have disappeared. Fragility of culture has been a myth of colonial justification. (175)

Two articles appeared in the Blue Mountains Gazette in 1997. The two stories took up the majority of the front page. One of them outlined the recently lodged Native Title Claim placed by the Gundungurra people and was headed “Land Claim on Mountains.” It was accompanied by a map that included Katoomba and other towns within the designated claim (although the text stated that Native Title didn’t extinguish Freehold Title.) Above it, in the position of lead story, was an article that asked the question, “Three Sisters Story Untrue?” In this article Ward is once again credited with first publishing the story. Chris Illert – who is, according to the Gazette, a retired professor and author – describes it as

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51 In his book Civilization (1969) Kenneth Clarke used this argument (allied with a very inflexible definition of “civilisation”) to rationalise the depredations of European culture on Polynesian peoples. He wrote that:

although we may all agree that the impact of European civilisation on places like Tahiti was disastrous, we must also allow that the very fragility of those Arcadian societies – the speed and completeness with which they collapsed on the peaceful appearance of a few British sailors followed by a handful of missionaries – shows that they were not civilisations in the sense of that word that I have been using. (275)
"probably a romanticised myth." Illert also suggests that the Three Sisters was a sacred site but that "there were numerous clans fighting for control of [it]" (1).

The article implicitly attempts to undermine the Gundungurra land claim. Firstly, it repeats the story of the Three Sisters with its emphasis on the loss of Aboriginal knowledge: "the witch-doctor was killed and to this day nobody has been able to break the spell, and turn the women back into their natural form" (1). Next, it questions the authenticity of the story. (These two strategies might seem to contradict or cancel each other, but they are more in the nature of a two-way bet. Either the story erodes Aboriginal spiritual authority, or there is no story, no mythic link to the land.) Finally, although the Three Sisters is recognised as sacred, it's also portrayed as a site of contention over which tribes and clans fought. If this is the case how can the Gundungurra claim it as theirs? My own questioning of the authenticity of the Three Sisters legend might appear to be doing precisely the same thing. Yet I would argue that the positioning of this article strongly suggests a link between an inauthentic story and an inauthentic land claim. My concern is that Stone's story and its variations appropriate a particular cultural space. For Said one of the central features of decolonising cultural resistance is the restoration of the "imprisoned nation to itself" (259) and a crucial element of this is the "practice of a national culture" (260). He writes,

from slogans to pamphlets and newspapers, from folk tales and heroes to poetry, novels, and drama... national culture organises and sustains communal memory... it reinhabits the landscape using restored ways of life, heroes, heroines, and exploits; it formulates expressions and emotions of pride as well as defiance. (260)

\[52\] Within the context of this article myth appears to be defined as an inauthentic story.
But what if there's a cuckoo in the nest? What if European narratives masquerading as traditional stories have appropriated that cultural space? Said points out that “the partial tragedy of resistance [is] that it must to a certain degree work to recover forms already established or at least influenced or infiltrated by the culture of Empire” (253). He uses the example of borders imposed by Europeans, which have no relation to traditional boundaries. But the introduction of so-called Aboriginal Dreaming stories that are actually authored by Europeans would be a comparable instance.

In his essay “Morphic Echoes, Stony Silences” Martin Thomas contends that whether the Three Sisters story is true or not is unimportant. He writes: “Far from deriding it as a suspect or bogus myth, I would argue that the Three Sisters legend, precisely because of its ambiguity, qualifies as myth in the deepest sense” (45). He links three Blue Mountains stories: Ward’s version of the Three Sisters, a similar legend concerning Orphan Rock in which an Aboriginal child is only saved from death when she is turned into stone, and an account of a massacre of Aborigines in the Grose valley. “It is,” Thomas writes, “appropriate to regard all these narratives in similar light, for their concerns have a way of overlapping.” He particularly notes the “connection between landscape and violent conflict [and] the brutalisation of femininity and childhood” (59).

The story of the massacre was recorded by James T. Ryan in his memoirs Reminiscences of Australia (1895) and is associated with William Cox, the roadmaker. Cox recorded no interaction with Aborigines in his journal but on November 5 1814 he noted “The blacksmith made eight pikes for self-defence

Thomas was apparently unaware of Stone's story and uses the text written by Mel Ward which he believes to be the original version.
against the natives” (Mackaness 1: 53). They had glimpsed two parties of
Aborigines some miles distant, on the lowlands, but Cox gives no indication that
they were threatened in any way; nevertheless, it was a time in which Europeans
feared Aboriginal assault.

Many new settlers had been granted land in the Mulgoa district and
hostilities between these people and the Aborigines increased during and after
1814, exacerbated on both sides by the effects of drought, which depleted food
sources. In 1816 Governor Macquarie sent out three punitive expeditions against
the Gundungurra. These forces, which had Darug guides, found no one. A party
without Aboriginal guides came upon a camp near Appin early one morning and
killed fourteen men, women and children. The bodies of two of the men were
hung in trees as a warning. But this isn’t the massacre of which Ryan wrote:

Just after the penetration of the Blue Mountains a soldier’s
barracks was erected at Springwood, only three soldiers occupying
the building, two having to do duty a little further up the line,
where a road party was making a pass over the mountains, under
Captain Cox. The blacks watched their opportunity, killed the
soldier stationed at the barracks, and robbed the place, taking the
red coats with them, after cutting off the hands of the poor
unfortunate victim…. There were three well-known men then
living. Kibble, of Windsor; Tom Coolan, and Gratten, of Nepean,
who were always foremost in the slaughter of the blacks. It has
been stated that these men were in the pay of the Government, but
there is no foundation for such an assertion… They followed on
the track the whole day, and just about nightfall the trackers got
sight of the campfires on the mountain side, south of the Grose
River…. Two of the black gins, wearing soldiers’ coats, were
sitting on a log, each having a hand of the murdered soldier and
pulling the sinews together, at the same time singing “Soldier make
a do-boy, a do-boy, a do-boy,” thus making a song of this cruel and
bloody deed…. At daybreak next morning they proceeded to the
blacks’ camp, and coming stealthily in, they got close up to it when
a little dog gave the alarm, and one of the blacks got up, but was
shot down almost immediately. The gins and piccaninnies set up a
scream, but many were shot before they could rise, others running
here and there trying to escape from their pursuers… About one-
half (numbering about 20) were slaughtered on that memorable morning by the three bloodthirsty wretches. (4 – 5)

Thomas dismisses this account. He writes that local historians have “scoured the story, checked its abundant details – names of perpetrators, the incident of the murdered soldier – to find that not a skerrick fits with recorded data” (59).

Maureen Breckell, the only local historian he cites on this question, writes: “A check of Cox’s journal reveals no attack; the only member of his party reported to die succumbed to dysentery. Since Cox reports injury and illness among his men and also any sightings of natives, there is no reason to suppose he deliberately held back any item of information so important as a murder and a massacre” (120). This statement makes two assumptions: that unofficially sanctioned massacres of Aborigines by settlers would be recorded, and that the two events – murder and massacre – are indissolubly linked. In Breckell’s reading of the text cause – the murder of the soldier – produces effect – the massacre of the Aborigines – so that if one part of the story is disproved then the rest is also false. While Breckell has undermined the validity of the motive given for the massacre of the Aborigines this doesn’t prove that such a massacre didn’t take place.

Ryan’s tale of the murder of the soldier, in particular the part played by women in the mutilation and desecration of the body, could be seen as a justification (either by him or by those from whom he’d heard the story) of the slaughter of those women (and their children: Ryan quotes Kibble “Nits would come to lice” [5].) There is another account of the massacre. In Australian Reminiscences of the Gold Fields and Elsewhere in New South Wales (1907) Martin Brennan, a retired police officer, speaks of the massacre on the Grose and names the ringleaders: Kibble, Coolan and Gratten. Brennan could be simply
repeating Ryan's story, which had been published thirteen years earlier, but if
that's the case why does he make no mention of the murder of the soldier which
Ryan recounts in such detail (203)? This could indicate that, while the tale of the
murdered soldier was apocryphal, the depredations of the three settlers weren't.

There's a final ironic aspect to Ryan's story. According to him the three
Europeans were guided to the camp on the Grose by two Aboriginal trackers. He
writes that the trackers described the "wild blackfellow[s]" as "murry mutong"
which he translates as "very savage" (4) but when I consulted a dictionary of
Darug words I found that "murri mutsong" means "very brave" (Kohen
"Dictionary" 159).

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Recently, while researching the life of Frank Walford, Jim Smith uncovered
another Three Sisters story. Frank Walford lived in Katoomba for many years and
was a journalist and the author of some rather sensational novels. He was also
involved in local politics and was the mayor of Katoomba for several years. Frank
Walford Park is named after him. The story was one in a series explaining the
mythic origins of various Blue Mountains landforms which was broadcast on
ABC radio in the early 1940s. Walford states that the story was told to him by
"Old Jimmy", an Aboriginal man who lived on the outskirts of Katoomba. Jim
Smith believes "Old Jimmy" to have been Jimmy Shepherd, who lived in what
would later become Frank Walford Park.

The story is entitled "The Three Stone Maidens". An evil spirit - called
the Dark One in this story - saw three young women swimming in Megalong
Creek. The Dark One was a kangaroo by day and an owl by night. He lived in a
deep hole at the foot of a casuarina at Cox’s River. He decided to lure the women away to his home. Migge, who is a good spirit and possibly an All-Father figure, discerned this and resolved to save them. He changed himself into a goanna and when the women saw him in this form they chased him but the Dark One, in his form as kangaroo, distracted them and they abandoned their pursuit of the goanna to hunt him instead. He led them to Echo Point where he intended to grab them and leap down to the valley below. To save them from this fate Migge threw a ball of magic white clay at each of the women and when this touched their forehead it turned them into stone. (Migge had originally tried to transform the Dark One to stone in this manner but he was immune to the magic.) If Migge had taken a sprig of boronia picked by moonlight and touched the three women they would have returned to their original forms (Walford n. pag.).

There are some similarities between this story and Stone’s tale. Once again an importunate male pursues the women, although in this instance the chase is more subtle (the women are lured into pursuing the Dark One). Unlike Stone’s version of the story and its variations, Aboriginal spiritual authority isn’t lost in this story. Instead, although Migge has the power to return the women to their original forms, he chooses not to do so. Despite Walford’s citing of an Aboriginal informant I have some reservations about this story. It seems unusual to me that the women pursue the kangaroo because, generally speaking, the hunting of large game is the province of men. This could be explained if the story concerned the breaking of cultural prohibitions; and perhaps it did. If he did collect this story from an Aboriginal informant (whether Jimmy Shepherd or someone else) Walford may well have imposed his own interpretation on the events. It’s also
possible that Walford made the story up and inserted the figure of “Old Jimmy” (who might have been based on an actual person) in order to give some authority to the narrative. “The Three Stone Maidens” is clearly intended to be an entertainment rather than an anthropological article. Walford had previously written a poem concerning the origin of the Three Sisters, entitled “The Three Sisters: a Legend”. It centred on the figure of Astraea, a classical goddess, who represented justice and innocence. According to mythology Astraea lived on earth until sin began to prevail then she reluctantly abandoned it and became the constellation Virgo. In Walford’s version Astraea doesn’t want to leave the earth and, as an ironic punishment, Jove transforms her and her two handmaidens into the Three Sisters. Rather than providing an elucidation, this “classical” rendering, because of its similarity to the story of “The Three Stone Maidens,” serves to further confuse the issue and to cast doubt on the legitimacy of Walford’s indigenous tale.
Twenty Mile Hollow

For want of a better alternative this place was named for an absence. It’s one in a
series of voids: Seventeen Mile Hollow, Eighteen Mile Hollow, Twenty Four
Mile Hollow. The roadmaker, William Cox, hammered in a distance peg and the
place was named. Some time before 1830, William James built a hut of stone and
timber and bark here; a place of chinks and breaches through which wind and
neighbours (when they arrive) can pry. He would soon learn that the boundaries of
his home were far too permeable, too open to intrusion. I don’t know if he came
alone at first, if his wife and children trudged along the road with him or followed
afterwards. William James and his family disappear from the records for four
years. They’re listed in the muster of 1825 but not in the census of 1828. There is
no record of their children being baptised. Between 1825 and 1830, when the
surveyor general was directed to report on James’s illegal hut, there is no word of
him or his family.

James didn’t seek permission to build, or a license to sell spirits. The hut
was a fugitive dwelling in the forbidden mountains, redeemed only by the tyranny
of the road. Travellers had to pass by and as one writer put it “the traveller will
find here a pretty spring of excellent water; and, as it is the first handy place for
twenty miles, he should halt and take a drink” (Mackaness 2: 84). Settlements
have always clustered around a reliable source of water and the Mountains are no
exception. An early traveller remarked: “At midnight the barking of dogs and the
running of a stream drew us from our reveries and heralded the approach of some
habitation” (Quoy in Mackaness 2: 11). James’s monopoly of the site didn’t last
for long. On August 6 1830 Thomas Michael Pembroke was granted two acres of land at the Twenty Mile Hollow in order to build an inn and was promised more land if he conducted himself properly for two years and established a good respectable hostelry.

Pembroke had originally applied for land further west at Twenty Four Mile Hollow where, like James, he'd been squatting. He was granted the land but changed his mind. In his new application he wrote that Twenty Four Mile Hollow was too close to the Weatherboard Hut, a well-established resting-place. But perhaps he simply realised how canny James had been. There was a steep climb to Twenty Mile Hollow and both people and stock craved rest by the end of it.

A site on the south side of the road, opposite his rival, was recommended to him but when Assistant-Surveyor William Govett arrived to survey the grant in 1831 he discovered that Pembroke had not only selected an area to the north but that it included James's hut and stockyard. It was an obvious attempt to get rid of the competition. In his survey Govett deviated around James’s hut but included part of his stockyard. Furthermore, Pembroke was told he must compensate James or make a new selection. In the struggle for this piece of land it was, at best, a partial victory.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau describes the way in which stories found and articulate spaces. In particular he notes the use of stories in a juridical setting, stories which are used to establish boundaries. In fact, as previously noted, he suggests that the primary function of stories in such cases is "to authorize the establishment, displacement or transcendence of limits" (123). The judge in these cases must reconcile the various stories of the disputants; he
must construct a meta story. The dispute between James and Pembroke is an example of what de Certeau calls “spatial legislation,” that is, stories which concern acts or actions which establish a claim to the land, like planting a fruit tree or constructing a midden (122). Although Pembroke had gone through the correct bureaucratic procedures that didn’t automatically give him title to the land he requested. James was there first but as he was squatting illegally this priority was of little weight. The main basis of his case was use: he constructed a hut and a stockyard. Those acts allowed him at least a temporary respite.

In 1832 William James was told that he and his family could remain at the Hollow pending an inquiry into an accusation that his conduct was disorderly: he’d been accused of running a sly grog shop. Pembroke was busy with the construction of a substantial five-roomed stone hostelry with a verandah at front and a separate kitchen at the rear at this time. He named it the Woodman’s Inn. Some years later James Backhouse, one of two Quakers who were travelling from Sydney to Wellington contrasted the two buildings: “at Twenty Mile Hollow there is a miserable hovel adjoining a public house” (Johnston 6). Pembroke had countered James’s hut with a stone inn, built to last. In some people’s minds it appeared that the dispute had already been settled. The New South Wales Calendar and Post Office Directory (1832) contains itineraries of the major roads in NSW. It includes the following entry: “Twenty mile Hollow, where there is a good spring of water, and the land is reserved as resting place. There is also a hut, kept by Pembroke, on the right” (108). Clearly the authors of the directory believe that in the settlement of the two conflicting claims Pembroke will be the winner.

The same entry is included in the directories for 1834 and 1835 (there is no
reference to the construction of the more substantial Woodman’s Inn). Neither is there any mention of William James. He and his family have been excluded from this itinerary.

By 1835 the advantage had clearly shifted in Pembroke’s favour. Governor Bourke granted him a further 48 acres of land adjoining his residence. James, on the other hand, was convicted of selling spirits without a license and his character was described as altogether bad. The authorities were instructed to take immediate steps for the removal of his home. As if this weren’t bad enough James had also been accused of harbouring absconders, an extremely serious charge. If James were harbouring runaways he may have had no choice. In his reminiscences, Judge Therry describes being bailed up by bushrangers in the Mountains in 1834. He noted that:

Afterwards I ascertained that the three bushrangers had slept in the outbarn of the mountain hotel where I had stopped on the previous night. The bushrangers were up and stirring before me in the morning. I ascertained, moreover, that the landlord was quite aware of their being in this barn, but gave me no warning to beware or swerve from the road I had to travel over. I could not reasonably find fault with him, for these bushrangers on visiting the mountain hostelry gave the proprietor plainly to understand that, if he gave the slightest hint of their having been there, they would visit him at night, set his house on fire, and destroy him, his house, and its inmates, and they were scoundrels who (if the occasion required it) would have executed their threat. (126)

The man who accused James of harbouring absconders was Patrick Crenan.54 A road gang had been assigned to the stretch of road between Seventeen Mile Hollow and Twenty Mile Hollow. They were guarded by soldiers of the 4th Regiment. In July Crenan was appointed to the chain gang as a scourger. He

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54 Crenan’s name has also been rendered as Crehen, Creinon, Creiton and Creren.
earned eightpence a day plying his trade. In colonial society a “flogger” was despised by all. James Tucker illustrates this point in his novel *Ralph Rashleigh* which was written between 1845 and 1850. Philip Foxley’s band of bushrangers raid an isolated homestead. Amongst the inmates they discover a man named McGuffin; “McGuffin the tyrant” Foxley calls him (187). McGuffin has been given the power to flog any, or all, the men in the road gangs without benefit of trial and he rides “about on horseback all through the country, with a flogger at his heels for a running footman, serving [sic] out stripes to all and sundry, so as to show, not only that he had got the power, but also that he was determined not to let it go to sleep in his hands” (187). But when Foxley begins to beat him with a stirrup leather McGuffin taunts him by saying “I knew from your looks you was [sic] nothing but a flogger the first time I set eyes upon you. And you can’t say I ever flogged a man in my life!” (189). From this it’s clear that the greatest opprobrium rests not on the person who instigates the punishment but on the one who inflicts it. As Foucault notes, in *Discipline and Punish*, the executioner “shared the infamy of his adversary” (53).

James had previously been convicted of assaulting the scourger and had been fined 25 shillings. Nor was he the only person whom Crenan accused of criminal offences. He alleged that Peter McAdam, who was assigned to a road gang, robbed him of 9 pounds on the road near Black Bob’s Creek. McAdam’s trial was held on the same day as William James’s. McAdam was found not guilty (“Before Mr Justice Burton” n. pag.). Crenan had also been charged with perjury at some time. The accusations may have been a form of blackmail. He admitted he
went to see James and that James had offered him a pound and a pistol to settle the matter.

Many travellers noted the hauteur of those who journeyed along the mountain road. In 1824 Rene Primavere Lesson and Jules Sebastian Cesar Dumont d'Urville, who were members of a French scientific expedition to the Pacific, travelled from Sydney to Bathurst. D'Urville was the expedition's botanist and Lesson acted as the naturalist (he was a surgeon) and they gathered specimens along the way. Lesson recorded a meeting on the road:

We met on the road two young Australians well mounted and followed by a pack of hounds. It was the MacArthurs returning from Bathurst plains where they have immense holdings. At the moment we were on foot, in the pursuit of insects, and with that mechanical instinct that accompanies the courteous man, I greeted them politely, but these two noble gentlemen, taking us for convicts at least, cast us a glance of scorn which I here return publicly to those two ill-bred Australians. (Mackaness 2: 64)

Uncertain of the social standing of their fellow travellers most people remained tight-lipped, but not the two Quakers, Backhouse and Walker, who were returning to Sydney. They addressed everyone they met, from convicts in the road gang to a gentleman returning from carrying out his solemn duty as a magistrate. He told them he was “returning from an inquest, on the body of a woman, who had hung herself in a state of excitement from drinking” and whose “husband had been committed for having assisted his wife in the accomplishment of this rash and wicked act” (Mackaness 2: 31). They weren’t surprised to learn that the tragedy took place in the “miserable hovel” they had noted on their way to Wellington.

James was tried twice. The first trial was abandoned because Thomas Pembroke, who was a witness, was found to be drunk. He was taken from the court to the nearby General Hospital where he was to “undergo a course of
purgation” in order to sober him (“Friday” n. pag.). Several hours passed and Pembroke was returned to the witness box. He seemed, at first, to be capable of testifying. He took his oath on the Bible and began to give his evidence but suddenly, according to the Judge’s notes on the case, “he appeared to be again on a sudden quite drunk giving such confounded answers and making such gesticulations” (Burton “Notes”). Although he had already given some evidence it was clear that the Defence would be unable to cross-examine. Justice Burton suggested that his testimony be struck from the record but the Defence argued that it couldn’t be erased from the minds of the jury. Justice Burton felt he had no choice but to discharge the jury and for James to be re-tried.

Burton was concerned that Pembroke’s drunkenness might have been a case of witness tampering although he conceded that Pembroke’s “natural infirmity or a brutal propensity” might equally have been to blame (“Rather Singular Case” n. pag.). There is another possibility; Pembroke might not have been drunk at all. He died several years later in the insane asylum. The alternating bouts of lucidity and confusion the judge describes might have been episodes of mental illness. In his reminiscences Roger Therry, who was James’ barrister during his first trial, wrote that “he appeared like a maniac,” although Therry attributed this to fear rather than mental illness (211).

At James’ second trial the Defence raised a point of law. He questioned the competency of the Court to try the prisoner, “he having been formerly tried, when through the drunkenness of a witness the jury had been discharged without giving a verdict”. The judge didn’t deny the point but he decided the trial should continue, however, if convicted James would “have the benefit of it” (“Before Mr.
Justice Kinchela” n. pag.). James’ trial for the murder of his wife is persistently associated with his dispute with Pembroke over Twenty Mile Hollow; it’s represented as yet another manoeuvre in the chess game between the two men. A 1984 newspaper article on the history of the inn states “Pembroke and others insisted that James had a hand in it, that he had been seen tying the noose around her neck” (“Academy of Sorrow” 30). But an examination of the records proves that the case against James rested on the evidence of Patrick Crenan alone. Crenan claimed to have seen, through a chink in the bark wall, James and his wife Mary alone in their bedroom. Mary had climbed onto a box and fastened a silk handkerchief around one of the beams but it was James who fastened it around her neck. Then, according to Crenan, she’d baulked at the last minute. James had pushed his wife from the box and then pulled on her legs to make sure she was dead.

All the other witnesses, even those called by the prosecution and including Pembroke, cast doubt on this story and on the veracity of Crenan. The judge, Mr Justice John Kinchela, summed up: “The present case as it effects the prisoner, stands solely on the evidence of Crenan; you have heard his evidence, and you’ve heard what’s been said about him, and it is for you to show by your verdict whether you believe him” (“Before Mr. Justice Kinchela” 3). The jury did, although it took them until the next day to come to an agreement. James was sentenced to death. He was respited until the judge could confer with the British authorities concerning the legality of the second trial.

Scarcely a month later Thomas Pembroke lost the Woodman’s Inn. He’d mortgaged the property earlier in the year and by September the mortgagees had
sold it. Pembroke owed them 178 pounds. On July 5 1837 Her Majesty was graciously pleased to order that a pardon be granted to William James. The news didn’t reach Sydney until February 8 the following year.

In 1841 the government surveyor W.R. Davidson finally marked out the additional 48 acres granted to Thomas Michael Pembroke five years after he had relinquished the land. The Surveyor-General noted that the occupation of Crown Land at Twenty Mile Hollow by William James had long ceased and the land was open to selection by purchase. When Davidson marked the boundaries of the 50 acres he straightened the western line that had once skirted James’s hut. The property was finally as Pembroke had originally envisioned it.
Follow directions set out to reach Echo Point. From Echo Point a track leads out to the left, which terminates at the look-out above The Three Sisters. On the left of this look-out will be noticed a flight of stone steps, fenced off, and marked "Dangerous". It is not advisable to attempt these steps; but it is possible for an agile person to reach the Federal Pass by their medium. The task is dangerous, as several instances have occurred where adventurous tourists have failed to reach the pass beneath, and also have been unable to retrace their way. Like Mahomet's coffin, they had to remain between heaven and earth until rescued.

*New Walks and Sights: Katoomba and Leura, Blue Mountains N.S.W.*

Frank Walford
A Dark Adapted Eye

In *Landscape and Memory* (1995) Simon Schama discusses Petrarch's allegorical account of his ascent of Mt Ventoux in 1336, and notes "how carefully he [Petrarch] has crafted the excursion as a cultural history" (419). He suggests that Petrarch encompasses some of the most characteristic philosophical stances of his time in his letter to the Augustinian friar Dionigi di San Sepolcro.

In her novel, *Return to Coolami* (1936), Eleanor Dark also recounts a densely allegorical description of a mountain climb that could be considered a cultural history. Dark's narrative has much in common with Petrarch's account but it also has many divergences. The action in *Return to Coolami* takes place over two days as Susan and Bret Maclean, with Susan's parents Tom and Millicent Drew, make the journey from Sydney across the Blue Mountains and over the plains to Bret's property Coolami.

The Macleans' marriage is troubled. Susan and Bret's brother Jim had been lovers. It was a relationship that Bret disliked, partly because of Susan's assumption of what he considered a male prerogative: Susan was fond of Jim but she didn't love him (although he loved her). Bret resented that she had been "actually attempting, heaven smite her, to kiss and ride away" (42). He also resented the pain she caused Jim and Jim's subsequent neglect of Coolami.

When Susan discovered she was pregnant Jim pressed her to marry him. She asked for a night to think it over. On his way to meet her the next day Jim was involved in a car accident and subsequently died. Before his brother died Bret promised to see Susan through the coming months. Bret and Susan married for the
sake of the child. But the baby didn’t survive. Bret and Susan must now decide whether to continue their marriage. The situation is complicated by Susan’s love for Bret.

Although the party passes through the Blue Mountains the ascent doesn’t take place there. Instead, the mountain they climb rises steep and solitary from the plains. It is called Jungaburra, which means “a spirit place,” and it is situated on the property owned by Susan’s brother Colin and his wife Margery (163). Colin’s experiences in the war have left him an alcoholic. On the day his family is due to arrive he and Margery have an argument and he drives away from the house in a drunken rage. When he doesn’t return that night Bret recalls seeing smoke from a campfire on Jungaburra that afternoon and goes to look for him on the mountain.

Schama describes how Petrarch “uses the humanist device... of a set of choices confronting the hero, as a way of commenting on the moral significance of his action” (419). Petrarch’s first choice involves the selection of a companion. Rejecting various friends, whose characters make them unsuitable for the journey, he eventually chooses to take his brother on the climb. Bret also has his choice of companion. His parents-in-law are rejected immediately: all the younger members of the family conspire to conceal, as far as possible, Colin’s drunkenness from his parents. But he also rejects Margery’s offer of assistance, and her suggestion that Susan would go with him. Bret opts to climb alone. Indeed, all three who climb the mountain that day do so separately. On his way to the mountain Bret recognises his innate isolation:

He was aware, painfully of solitude. Not only, he realised gropingly, of the physical and mental solitude of his immediate environment, but another more alarming aloneness in the whole of space and time, so that he felt, ridiculously, an overwhelming
desire such as a child might feel in the dark, for the comfort of some human companionship. (217)

He feels this essential aloneness after stumbling in a rabbit burrow and falling heavily to his knees. When he looks up Jungaburra is looming above him. It's the sight of the mountain that triggers his thought.

Jungaburra and Susan are linked in the novel. The descriptions of woman and mountain have much in common. As Bret approaches Jungaburra he wonders at the way in which "the formidable masses of its naked rock [contain] so elusive a suggestion of the delicate, the insubstantial fabric of a dream" (216–217).

Margery has earlier described Susan as a person who "made you feel that her presence at any given spot was accidental, temporary, even illusory" (182). But this dream-like impression only holds when Susan is seen from behind. When she turns to face her sister-in-law Margery admits that Susan is a blend of "too many human qualities" (182). Like the mountain she is at once solid and ephemeral, but her humanity grounds her. There is an explicit instance of the coupling of Susan with Jungaburra. Bret is stirred by the silhouette of his wife in a lighted window and wonders why his emotion seems to be "at once for the intimate and human beauty of Susan silhouetted against the light and for the dark majestic, and rather intimidating beauty of Jungaburra, black against the sky" (186).

Is his ascent of Jungaburra an allegorical attempt to conquer Susan? That doesn't seem to be the case. To "conquer" a mountain is generally perceived as reaching the summit, and this isn't Bret's aim. Schama describes the summit, in the time of Petrarch, as the "place where innocence is restored" (417). But no such innocence is available to Bret or to Colin who have lived through and fought in
Passage: A Dark Adapted Eye

World War I. They have both previously climbed Jungaburra but there was no restoration of innocence, no moment of revelation for them.

When Petrarch reached the summit of Mt Ventoux, Schama tells us, he was faced with an ancient question: can the visible world illuminate the interior life? Schama says,

[This was] the most acute dilemma for humanists of Petrarch’s and Dante’s generation: the problematic relationship between empirical knowledge and devout introspection. Could the survey of the outer world (and what better place to seize its form than from the prospect of a mountaintop?) ever disclose essential inner truth? Was such a lofty view a faithful picture of the world or was it merely a moral mirage, a shadow of the eternal verities that were, in their nature, unavailable to the scrutiny of the senses? (421)

Petrarch opts for introspection; “the range of human contemplation” (421). But Bret’s night climb denies him the choice between the inner and the outer gaze. He does not reach the top of the mountain, but even if he did he would see nothing in the dark. Bret is not normally introspective but the circumstances of this climb force introspection on him. The climb is, in fact, the culmination of a long period of self-analysis. He thinks later,

Never... had he done such an infernal amount of thinking and feeling and worrying and wondering as he had done since he married Susan! There was hardly, hang it all, an hour when he could be comfortably and stolidly himself, doing a definite job with a clear and easy mind. He couldn’t, he realized, with amazement and trepidation, get up and walk across the veranda without beginning to analyze his motives like some blasted, bespectacled highbrow dabbling in psychological bunk. (270)

Bret’s psychological delving is clearly of a different order to Petrarch’s religious introspection. Bret examines his personal motives; Petrarch questions his relationship with God. On his journey he must make a choice between two paths. Should he take the hard path straight up the rock face, or the gentle path that meanders around the mountain? His brother takes the hard path while Petrarch
follows the easier way, but he discovers that he must work twice as hard as his sibling in order to keep up. Bret doesn’t have to choose between two physical paths. There is only one way up Jungaburra and Bret knows it well; he has climbed the mountain before, he recalls its pitches and chimneys, its gaps and handholds. The two paths he must choose between are allegorical: his marriage is unconsummated. Should it remain so? Unlike Petrarch he doesn’t have the choice of a hard or an easy path. Both his choices seem strewn with difficulty.

He saw furiously two alternatives ahead of him, each menacing, poisoning, what he had always valued most, the orderly contentment of his life at Coolami making of it, which ever road he took, a life of dingy frustration, of furtive compromises, of endless situations in which one’s self-respect must shrivel and fade like young corn in a drought. (215)

His two choices are distinctly imaged. He sees clearly – “like a tiny illuminated symbol” – the connecting door between their bedrooms at Coolami. Shut, it hides “loneliness and bitterness, all the unwholesome maladies of normality tortured and denied.” But open it reveals a more subtle misery, “efforts at decency failing... friendship, admiration, fading into hatred and contempt; children, perhaps, conceived in secret, unadmitted loathing” (215). There is, of course, a third choice. He and Susan could divorce but this option is admitted only briefly in the question he asks himself: “Take her, leave her alone, let her go?” (216). Nor is it as clearly imagined as are the first two choices.

Bret desires Susan and has approached her sexually (and aggressively) several times: “She’d been brushing her hair, and then in a second she was off her balance, the stiff bristles digging into her neck, her throat strained painfully beneath the violence of his kiss. In a panic of sheer physical pain she had fought insanely” (91). On another occasion Susan didn’t struggle but “resisted, mentally
and physically rigid, and at last her absolute rigidity had chilled him” (90). He had released her, looked at her in the half-darkness and realised “in a moment of acute shame and nausea, her utter helplessness” (90). He could physically conquer Susan as he has previously conquered the mountain but it would be equally profitless.

While he is climbing Jungaburra life is a simple matter of physical equilibrium but when Susan, alarmed by his long absence, climbs after him this changes. He is plunged back into “an existence bristling with emotional complexities” (247). But these complexities have somehow altered. Bret has no clear moment of revelation on the mountain. He only knows that something is different: “something had happened — something had changed” (247). The “something” is his attitude to Susan. Before the marriage he had told Susan’s mother that he didn’t care about Susan or her happiness. His concern was for his brother’s child. What he knows of Susan “is not to her credit,” and he blames her for Jim’s death (114). But even then, when he was most angry and bitter he conceded: “I’m not quite sure. I haven’t had time to think about it — to make up my mind if she has any justification” (114).

In the same way that he knows Jungaburra, he has come to know and care for Susan. Bret’s experience is close in feeling to the opinions of such nineteenth century alpinists as Leslie Stephen. According to Schama, romantics such as John Ruskin felt that you could discover the truth of a mountain by looking at it. But Stephen wrote that a mountain could only be known by someone who had spent “hours of labour, divided into minutes – each separately felt – of strenuous
muscular exertion” (qtd in Schama 505). The alpinists considered the mountains to be teachers; over the months of their marriage Susan has taught Bret.

In this context the conflation of Susan and Jungaburra is not merely another example of the merging of woman and landscape in Australian literature. Jungaburra and Susan are linked because they are both, in effect, teachers. It’s as if they are made of the same stuff. Susan moves easily on the mountain. Bret is disconcerted when he realises that “where he and Colin had to strain and squeeze and pull in the narrow chimney, Susan, light and unhampered, could go up easily” (248). Petrarch confessed to Dionigi that he was burdened on his journey, that he hadn’t the necessary lightness of being that allows the pure of soul to leap to the summit “in the twinkling of an eye” (420). Susan has this lightness, this purity of soul. She is the spirit in the spirit place.

On his way home Petrarch continually glanced back at the mountain up which he has laboured. It seemed to him “scarcely a cubit high compared with the range of human contemplation” (421). Jim had been a barrier between Bret and Susan. Bret’s impulse had been “an attempt to creep around the barrier and leave it standing – no longer between, but everlastingly before them,” but Susan had resisted this (269). Bret discovers after the climb that his emotions, which had once loomed “with the unchallenged permanence of Mont Blanc,” have changed (258). He could remember Jim “without anger or resentment, and with no hurt beyond the hurt with which one loses any friend to death” (297). Jim is no longer a barrier, but has shrunk to normal proportions; from mountain to mole hill.
Passage: Intermezzo

Intermezzo

But why, when her characters were travelling through the Blue Mountains, did
Dark create Jungaburra for them to climb? The Mountains have peaks. Matthew
Everingham, a former convict, describes his ascent of several summits in 1795:

We descended this mountain and crossed a very deep Cut of water & slept at the foot of the Mountain opposite that night... it was near half after Eleven before we reached the Top of this Mountain... We climbed up a very lofty Tree to find the best road to the next Mountain. We descended this Mountain that night and Slept at the foot of it; In the morning we began to cross the valley before us in order to ascend the other mountain; by three in the afternoon we had reached the Top. (53)

In Europe mountain ranges are generally traversed through a pass, that is a passage between peaks. If the peaks were climbed the objective was to reach the top. Everingham and his two companions, on the other hand, climb peak after peak (as others had done before them) without attaining their goal: to find a way through the Mountains.  

When the range was officially crossed the route lay not through a pass, or up and down the peaks, but along a ridgeline. Although some travellers compared the Blue Mountains to European or British ranges – Louisa Meredith was reminded by the “wild scenery and the zig zag road [of] some of the ‘passes of the Alps’” – the ridge route was quite different to the European experience (Mackaness 3: 48). As Charles Allen wrote: “What would the members of the Alpine Club think, if after climbing a high spur, they had to walk fifty-three miles to the summit?” (55). The dominant metaphor of the Blue

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55 George Bass took climbing equipment he had designed himself in order to ascend the peaks. François Peron wrote, “With his arms and feet protected by iron crotches, Mr Bass several times escalated horrible perpendicular mountains; being often stopped by precipices, he caused himself to be let down by ropes into their abysses” (qtd. in Cunningham 70).
Mountains wasn’t one of ascent but of passage. Therefore, any allegory sited within the Mountains would have to be very different to Petrarch’s journey up Mt Ventoux.

There is a little known ballad by James Harvey entitled, rather prosaically, “Ride from Bathurst to Sydney in Twenty Hours, 1857” (qtd in Meredith 24–25). It tells the story of Jack Skillicorn who bet fifty pounds at three to one that he could ride from Bathurst to Sydney in a day. It’s an unremarkable work consisting mainly of a litany of place names:

Now, up Mount Victoria, on to Blackheath
Where he slackened a little, the horse to breathe
The Pulpit Hill and William’s Chimneys
(No Katoomba then)
He pressed the weatherboard lockup
And soon at King’s Table End
And now, my boy, we will do it with a will
As he ploughed the sand, and jumped the rocks
He was going down the hill
Then the Dead Man’s Camp
O’er Godfrey’s Hill, going with a spin
As he passed T. Dunn’s “Blue Mountains Inn”
Then “Eighteen Mile Hollow”
The old track he’d follow
At Coxe’s Downfall
Was going a great rate (25)

Like Skillicorn, the poem goes “at a great rate”. Its galloping rhythm is indicative of one of the most enduring perceptions of the Blue Mountains; that it is, in effect, a hall or corridor; a passage to somewhere else. It’s a site that must be negotiated as quickly as possible (a perception intensified by the imperatives of a wager.) Even the construction of the road was speedy. Tom Drew, Susan’s father in

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56 This feat is also mentioned in the ballad “Goorinanawa”: “That was in the good old days, you might have heard them say/ How Skellicorn from Bathurst rode to Sydney in a day” (273).
Return to Coolami, is astonished to discover that the original road was built “in six months from Penrith to Bathurst” (Dark 205).

After he’d first crossed the Blue Mountains Governor Macquarie wrote of this road, “the traveller may assure self of good grass and water in abundance” (Mackaness 1: 80). For his party there may have been sufficient fodder for their animals; it was the first excursion across the Mountains and the company was not too large. Later travellers were less fortunate. Constant consumption ensured that the existing fodder was quickly exhausted. In 1822 Elizabeth Hawkins wrote, “In addition to our luggage we had to take corn for the cattle, as in the mountains there is not sufficient grass for them” (Mackaness 2: 19). Barron Field was even more blunt saying, “there is no grass on the whole road over the mountains, whatever Governor Macquarie may say” (Mackaness 2: 49). The situation became so serious that many animals died by the roadside. In 1839 Louisa Meredith described a road marked out by bones. She saw,

the remains of unfortunate oxen, that had perished of want in their toilsome journeys over the mountains, where neither food nor water remained for them... In some places by the roadside white skeletons alone remained; farther on we saw other carcasses still covered in hide; then bones again; and so on, continuously meeting these terrible proofs of the poor brutes’ sufferings and death. It recalled to my mind descriptions I have read of the caravan tracks of Africa, where the bleached bones of animals that have perished in the journey serve as guides for future travellers. (Mackaness 3: 49)

Travellers either took grain with them, using up valuable storage space, or bought it along the way, which was an expensive business. As one anonymous writer put it, “I had previously heard that our horses would be very badly off going over the mountains, but I was not prepared to hear of corn being sold by the quart”
(Mackaness 2: 83). This meant that the Mountains had to be passed through as quickly as possible.

Figure 15: Passage Over the Blue Mountains New South Wales, lithograph by Edward Purcell, 1821, National Library of Australia, Canberra, http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an016407-v

In *The Poetics of Space* (1958) Gaston Bachelard roams from the cellar to the garret within the home but he doesn’t dwell on the corridor. Bachelard is interested in the spaces of reverie and the corridor or hall is not one of these; it’s a
space of movement. And yet the Mountains were, and still are, a place of reverie. If the
Mountains, or more specifically the road across the Mountains, can be seen as a
corridor then, in a continuation of the metaphor, the vantage points within the
Mountains could be considered rooms. Rooms with a view. Like Bachelard’s
garret, which also commands a prospect, they are, paradoxically, intimate spaces
which encourage daydreaming. For Bachelard the house is inevitably “imagined
as a vertical being. It rises upward” (15). This verticality is maintained by the two
poles of the cellar and the garret. He contrasts these two domestic spaces: the
garret, as a space of contemplation, is the site of rationality while the cellar
“where darkness prevails day and night” is irrational; the house’s unconscious
(19).

James Tucker demonstrates this space of reverie in his novel Ralph Rashleigh. Ralph Rashleigh is a convict — as was the author — and the novel
describes his life and misadventures in various penal settlements. Rashleigh
spends the first years of his sentence at Emu Plains which lies at the foot of the
Blue Mountains, but it’s not until after he’s assigned to some settlers, the Arlacks,
that Rashleigh ventures into their heights. After a violent argument with the
Arlacks Rashleigh gives himself up to the local constable, hoping that he will be
able to justify himself in court. But before he can do so he is taken from the lock-
up by a band of escaped convicts who have come to rescue their leader, a man
named Foxley. Although he doesn’t want to join the bushrangers he is forced to
accompany them and is made to carry their swag and cook their meals.

The group takes to the Mountains after one of the gang tries to betray them
to the authorities. They travel for four days before they come to the summit “of a
lofty range, where a prospect equally unexpected as it was beautiful burst upon
the sight of an enraptured Rashleigh, whose tormenting feelings, induced by fear
of what fate might have in reserve for him... gave way before the majesty of
nature” (166). But Rashleigh is not allowed to enjoy the sublime view for long, he
is roused from his “reverie of pleasure” by Foxley who strikes him upon the
shoulder and demands, “Are you dreaming?” (167).

Mountain “rooms” are places of reverie but a reverie continually
interrupted by other exigencies: the need to attain shelter or, as in Rashleigh’s
case, the need to remain hidden from the authorities. But more commonly, it’s the
need to push on through the landscape. Lieutenant-Colonel Godfrey Charles
Mundy wrote in his book *Our Antipodes* (1852):

> Starting at 6 A.M. (sic) we reached the Weather Board Hut... in
> about an hour of heavy pulling. Here enthusiasts in scenery are
> expected to halt, in order to visit the Regent’s Glen. Having
> however a long day’s journey before us, and a scenic lion of the
> same calibre to visit at Blackheath... we pushed on... (157)

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write of smooth
space which functions as a communication between striated spaces. Smooth space
is the space of the nomad; striated space belongs to the sedentary. Both smooth
and striated space are defined, in one sense, by the relationship that the
inhabitants/owners have with the land/ground. Deleuze and Guattari make a
distinction between land, which is particular to striated space, and the ground of
smooth space which serves to support the nomad. For the nomad “land ceases to
be land, tending to become simply ground (sol) or support”, whereas “the
sedentary’s relationship with the earth is mediatized by something else, a property
regime, a State apparatus” (381). Striated space is gridded, parcelled out, while
smooth space is inhabited but unallocated. Deleuze and Guattari write that the State attempts to either striate smooth space or to use it:

One of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilise smooth spaces as a communication in the service of striated space. (385)

The construction of the western road could be seen as an unsuccessful attempt to striate the Mountains; a road may follow a nomadic trajectory (Aborigines had been using the same route the road took for centuries) without changing smooth space to striated space. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, the main function of the sedentary road is to “parcel out a closed space to people” (380). But only the barest minimum of habitation was allowed in the Mountains, which were seen as a wilderness that needed to be crossed in order to reach the Promised Land. Samuel Marsden, in 1822, explicitly refers to the Bathurst plains as the “land of Goshen” (Mackaness 2: 30). In the same year Barron Field wrote that Mt York (popularly known as the Big Hill) should have been named Mt Pisgah “for it affords the first view of the promised land of Australia, after the wilderness of the Blue Mountains” (Mackaness 2: 37). Instead of being transformed the smooth space of the Mountains was utilised as a communication between the striated spaces of Sydney and Bathurst.

Who were seen as the nomads of this smooth space? The most obvious answer is the Aborigines, but they were often written out of European histories. The European people who used the road were migrants shifting from Sydney to Bathurst (or from Britain via Sydney to Bathurst). They deterritorialised only to reterritorialise; they always had an end point in mind. Or they were excursionists who travelled to Bathurst and back as a pleasure trip. They didn’t inhabit the space. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, movement isn’t the essence of the nomad:

The nomad distributes himself in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle. It is
therefore false to define the nomad by movement. Toynbee is right to suggest that the nomad is on the contrary he who does not move. (381)

"Immobility" and speed are the traits of the nomad. They are also the traits of the bushranger, who moves through space, waiting at some point for his victim/s, then moves on only to appear at some other point ready to rob again. Movement isn’t the essence of the bushranger, rather, as it is in the game Go, "it is a question of arraying oneself in an open space, of holding space, of maintaining the possibility of springing up at any point" (Deleuze and Guattari 353). Many accounts of the Mountains mention bushrangers; Mundy goes so far as to describe the Mountains as the place where "bush-ranging may be said to have been first invented" (161). He defines the bushranger as "a runaway convict, desperate, hopeless, fearless" one who "takes to the bush" (162). Charles Darwin noted a distinction between absconders when he wrote,

A "crawler" is an assigned convict who runs away, and lives how he can, by labour and petty theft. The "bush ranger" is an open villain, who subsists by highway robbery and plunder, generally he is desperate, and will sooner be killed than taken alive. (Mackaness 3: 35)

The fear of robbery is expressed in several contemporary accounts. Although actual robberies are recorded in newspapers and reminiscences this fear is strongly associated with the belief that the Mountains were a place of asylum for bushrangers. In both fictional and factual accounts the Mountains are a haven.

57 In Ralph Rashleigh Tucker appears to use "crawler" in a different sense, as a convict who is too intimidated to abscond or to seek revenge against the authorities. Foxley and his gang look on such people with contempt, reviling Rashleigh when he says he would like to be revenged on his former master if he could do so "without murdering him or his family" (Tucker 50).
58 Barron Field disagreed. He wrote: "the unarmed might travel as safely as from London to Bristol" (Mackaness 2: 37).
Mundy comments that “several notorious runaways were known to be harbouring somewhere within reach of the road among the deep fastnesses of the mountain” (161) and The Australian of November 6, 1829, declared that Jack Donahoe’s gang were “intimately acquainted with the numerous fastnesses and passes in that wild and mountainous part of the country [around Mt York]” (qtd. in Meredith Wild Colonial Boy 6). In Ralph Rashleigh, when Foxley’s gang are pressed, they hurry through “the heart of the mountains” in order to elude their pursuers and are not captured until they reach the plains (202).

Deleuze and Guattari propose that “nomad existence necessarily effectuates the conditions of the war machine in space” (380) and also that “bands in general, even those engaged in banditry... are metamorphoses of a war machine... they animate a fundamental indiscipline of the warrior, a questioning of hierarchy, perpetual blackmail by abandonment or betrayal, and a very volatile sense of honour” (358). All these traits are evident in Foxley’s band. Although Foxley is their leader, the band is non-hierarchical in the sense that, as Rashleigh notes, “no particular order appeared to be observed” as they moved through the bush, and their loot is divided into equal portions and distributed by lot (160). The band fears betrayal from within: Rashleigh is watched closely in case he tries to escape. When Foxley stops one member of the band, O’Leary, from beating Rashleigh, O’Leary is offended and attempts to avenge himself by revealing the

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59 According to Deleuze and Guattari the war machine is an invention of the nomads, exterior to the State apparatus, and has a spatiogeographic aspect (smooth space), an arithmetic aspect (they argue that numerical organisation, which is inevitably present in the military, is actually adopted from the war machine), and an affective aspect (as an example they note, “the martial arts do not adhere to a code, as an affair of the State, but follow ways, which are so many paths of the affect” [400]). Moreover, they suggest that war is not necessarily the object of the war machine but that it is a supplement to it (351-423).
gang’s whereabouts to the local constables. Even Foxley isn’t exempt from betrayal. When he loses his senses his remaining confederates discuss killing him and taking his head to the authorities in order to gain a pardon.

The cliff lines of the Blue Mountains are pocked with shallow wind-eroded caves. Such caves are particularly prevalent in bushranger legends: Tucker describes several grottoes where Foxley and his men hide but factual accounts are equally persistent in peopling the caves of the Blue Mountains with bushrangers despite little evidence to support these suppositions. King’s Cave at Linden is one example of this. In 1876 approximately fifty acres of land near Henderson’s Railway Platform was reserved for public recreation and according to the Government Gazette (1876) this reserve, later known as Linden Park, included “the King’s Cave” (2: 3302). The Pictorial Guide to the Blue Mountains of N.S.W. (1885) states that, “Tradition gives the name of King to the cave, a more than usually cunning bushranger, who, with his gang, evaded justice here for some time; and numerous stories are related of their raids and exploits in olden times, when the Blue Mountains were nearly a terra incognita to the general public” (Russell 25). Near the cave was the headstone of a man named John Donahoe. Donahoe’s grave was subsumed by the railway when double tracks were introduced to the Mountains early in the twentieth century. In 1952 his headstone was recovered and sited by the railway boundary fence. It was later moved to its present site at Glassop Road (Searle 15). In his column “Old Sydney” “Old Chum” (J.M. Forde) wrote:

The legend in connection with the stone is that Donahoe was a constable shot in an encounter with a bushranger named King, and was buried on the spot where he fell. (“Old Chum” n. pag.)
Forde points out that at the time of Donahoe's death the military were stationed at Seventeen Mile Hollow (Linden) and it was unlikely that a bushranger would have a hideout so close. Allan Searle goes further, suggesting that the cave was, in fact, named by the military, specifically, members of the 4th Regiment of Foot, the King's Own Regiment, when they were stationed in the area in order to guard the ironed gangs (15).

While this is supposition, at least one element of the bushranger story can be clearly disproved. Forde accepted that Donahoe was a constable, stating "I understand that the Police Department is satisfied, after due inquiry, that Donahue [sic] was a constable who died from natural causes" but in this case he was wrong (Forde n. pag.). There were three constables stationed at Seventeen Mile Hollow in 1837 but Donahoe was not one of them. He was a convict working on the road gang.\(^6^0\) His death is listed on the Convict Death Register (New South Wales Archives Office Reel 690), demonstrating that, for him, a life sentence was quite literal.\(^6^1\) Once the story of Donahoe the constable is discounted the idea of King the bushranger becomes proportionately less likely.

This isn't the only example of tales of bushrangers occupying nomadic space. At Blackheath, in a park between the railway and the highway, stands a statue of a thin-faced man astride a rearing horse. This statue commemorates the legend of Govett's Leap. The story concerns a convict named Govett who, after attempting to rob a coach, was pursued by troopers into the bush nearby. Racing his horse along the creek Govett was stopped short by a deep chasm. The troopers

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\(^6^0\) Donahoe was convicted of highway robbery at Tipperary in 1818 and was sentenced to transportation for life.

\(^6^1\) The Archives Office of NSW is now known as State Records of NSW.
were hard on his heels and, rather than surrender, Govett galloped his horse straight into the void. This tale, as a plaque on the statue points out, is a myth. The waterfall is named for William Romaine Govett, the surveyor, leap is an old English word for waterfall. Descendants of Govett were protesting about the dissemination of this story in the 1870s and yet not only does the legend persist but it’s celebrated.

Figure 16: The Legend of Govett’s Leap, statue by Arthur Murch, photograph by Michael Attard, 2002.

Passage: Initiation

Initiation

The central metaphor of Phillip Drew’s *The Coast Dwellers* (1994) describes the seaboard of Australia as a verandah. Within this metaphor the Great Escarpment is described as the “east facade, the house front of Australia” (15). It is, in some ways, an attractive notion: the centre of Australia as a large, predominantly empty, perhaps haunted, house. As a metaphor it works most clearly in a visual sense: the flat coastal plains abutting the wall of the mountains. Drew describes the verandah as “a transitional interval” (10). Like any threshold the verandah offers choices and gives access to either the interior or the exterior world (both in a literal and a figurative sense). But there is an inherent anachronism in the architecture. As Drew himself points out, 70% of the Australian population lives in what he describes as the eastern beach zone. This means, according to Drew’s metaphor, that most people live on the verandah. If I were to use an architectural metaphor I would liken the continent to a medieval monastery in which the inhabited space – dormitory, refectory, church, and so on – enclosed a garden, and the transition between the two spaces was mediated by a covered walkway or cloister. Within this metaphor the populous coast encloses the outback and the mountains act as a transitional space between the two. 63

The Great Escarpment, where the tablelands drop away in steep easterly slopes, along with the cliff wall to the west, sharply delineate the Mountains in both a physical and metaphorical sense. Because of the strong visual demarcation

63 Of course, this metaphor contains obvious anomalies as well. Much of the coast of Australia is unpopulated and, despite the many farms and sheep or cattle stations beyond the mountains, the greater part of the interior bears little resemblance to an artificially cultivated garden.
the Mountains have been described as a discrete country. Marion Halligan, in her novel *Lovers' Knots* (1992), considers the Mountains so distinct that an alert watcher might perceive the transition from one space to another. Jade, a law student active in women's rights, travels regularly from the city to the Mountains in order to visit her young son. She muses, "the train journey from the city on the plain to the Mountains seems like a voyage from one world to another, as though at one point a fissure opens between two orders of reality, so that were she to look up from her book at precisely the right moment she would see the quick dart of the train as it negotiated that passage" (161). In Sumner Locke Elliott's novel *Edens Lost* (1970) Angus Weekes also feels that moment of change but it occurs for him in the darkness of a tunnel. His is a temporal shift; when he emerges from the dark he has left the past behind and "crossed into the strange country" (23).

Francis Adams wrote, in his book *The Australians: A Social Sketch* (1893), "Well Australia, the actual Australia, the Australia of the Australians, is made up of two parts" (10). He called the coastal strip, that "ribbon of organised settlement and civilisation," the Pacific Slope (10). The land west of the Great Divide he nominated the Eastern Interior. Only in these two spaces, he claimed, were the "articulate expression of the community" to be found (11). The people who lived in the Eastern Interior were, he thought, already quite distinct from those who lived on the Pacific Slope. Although they still shared many characteristics he felt that in one hundred years the man of the sea-slope would be far removed from the bush-man. Adams attributed the difference between the two landscapes, and the people produced by each, to moisture or its lack. He suggested
two European regional models as a comparison, the social equivalent of comparing the Australian mountains to the Alps or the Pyrenees. He writes:

In France we recognise under the common name of Frenchman two types which would seem to have but little in common—the dry, neurotic man of the Nord and the voluble, adipose man of the Midi. In Spain, where a sub-tropical sea-slope leads up to a high interior plateau, and thus makes the parallel with Australia curiously complete, the soft and sensuous Andalusian is supplemented by the stern and melancholy Castilian in our national concept of the Spaniard. Australia has really only known two generations of her children, but already the intense character of the inland climate has begun to differentiate them. (12)

The perfect contrast between bush and city was exemplified for Adams in “Banjo” Paterson’s poem, “Clancy of the Overflow”. He quoted the poem in full. It was almost literally his last word on the subject. Much less well-known but with a similar theme is Henry Lawson’s poem “Over the Ranges and Into the West”.

Both poems contrast city and bush – to the city’s detriment – but Lawson also acknowledges, in the title and as a refrain throughout the poem, that the Mountains are the intervening space between two distinct landscapes. In the final lines of “Over the Ranges and Into the West” Lawson uses water, or rather its lack, as a metaphor. Drought may spread financial ruin, he concedes, but this preferable to the “dread drought of life” found in the city (96).

Suzanne Falkiner’s The Writer’s Landscape (1992), a study on the place of landscape in Australian literature, consists of two volumes: Wilderness and Settlement. When she interviewed Falkiner, Rosemary Sorenson asked how this division took place. Falkiner replied:

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64 See Appendix 3.
65 This distinction of three landscapes is also noted elsewhere. The Illustrated Sydney News noted in 1879 “The surface of New South Wales may be divided into three parts - the Coast district, the Table Lands, and the Plains of the interior” (“Chief Geographical Features” 15).
Passage: Initiation

It formed itself. I started writing the book with a couple of mental headings: wilderness, pastoral images, the coast and so forth. I collected material and made notes and let it fall into its own pattern and there was a distinct division between urban and country, bush or wilderness writing. (8 – 9)

The harsh drought-ridden interior is familiar in Australian literature. Falkiner found it was associated, particularly before the 1970s, with a corresponding aridity of emotion. Sensuality and eroticism belonged to the coast. Falkiner wrote, “The thing that surprised me the most was this incredible dichotomy where the bush writing was so totally sexless and passionless and so male, in the bush myth way, and every single example I had of... love scenes... were all in this one folder... labelled “The Coast” (9).

Frank Moorhouse makes this connection between the passionless bush and the sensual coast explicit in his short story “Across the Plains, Over the Mountains and Down to the Sea”. The narrator of the story remembers a trip he took in the early stages of his relationship with a woman named Cindy. They had gone inland to attend the launch of a book written by a friend. The country is unbearably hot, “a raging ‘inland’ heat during the day and like the heat of hot coals at night” (14). After the launch the man plans their return: “We will rise early at daylight and drive to the sea, across the plains, over the mountains, and down to the sea” (14). The journey becomes a metaphor for his retreat from a “hot, dusty and choking marriage” to the new relationship with Cindy who represents “the clean free sea” (13). They make love in the shower, under water, retaining the link to a fluid, littoral sensuality even inland. Cindy tastes of “salt sea juices” but the narrator is a “parched river bed” (14). In this story both the man and the woman are in a liminal state. Cindy is barely out of adolescence, she is “coming alive out of
Initiation

childhood”. The narrator is “coming alive out of [the] numbness of an anaesthetised marriage” (13). He describes the journey to the coast as “a passing through” (15). It acts, for him at least, as a rite of passage (he discovers that Cindy doesn’t recall the trip.) Lawson and Moorhouse may be heading in opposite directions but each recognises two distinct literary landscape traditions and also that these landscapes are separated by the Mountains.

The Mountains are strangely constituted, a mixture of wilderness and urban sprawl, a city within a national park, liminal. They could even be seen as a kind of tertium quid: “a third thing resulting from the combination of two things, but different from both” (Brewer 1089). In his book The Forest of Symbols (1967), Victor Turner discusses rites de passage. Passage rites negotiate the transition from one state to another, for example from single to married or initiand to initiate. Turner agrees with Arnold Van Gennep that “all rites of transition are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation” (94) but it’s the liminal stage which most engages him. In the liminal stage an initiand is unencumbered by either past or future. In Return to Coolami Susan realises that a new life will start for her once she is beyond the Mountains but it’s her mother who recognises that the time spent there may affect the form of that new life. Susan and Bret are both in dangerously prolonged liminal states: their marriage remains unconsummated and they are “parents” without a child. Their journey to Coolami is a rite of passage in which the three requisite stages – separation, transition and reincorporation – correspond with three landscapes.

66 Turner defines state as “a more inclusive concept than status or office...[which can refer] to any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognised” (94).
Susan muses: "[the road] had always seemed to her to fall naturally and
topographically into three sharp divisions. There was what she always thought of
as the city-side and then, like a vast wall, the mountains. And on the other side of
them the country" (44).

When the party stops for breakfast just past Katoomba, Millicent contrives
some privacy for Bret and Susan because, "cut adrift for the moment from the
externals of their everyday lives they might see each other, savingly, as
individuals unhampered by past happenings" (84). Millicent’s connivance is
apparently unsuccessful; Bret and Susan quarrel. But it’s after this incident that
Bret begins to recognise an emotional lack within himself. Before they leave the
Mountains there is a further incident. The road by which they’re descending is
narrow with “high walls of rock rising on one side of it, [and] unknown depths
falling away on the other” (118). It’s also slippery with rain. Tom loses control of
the car, it skids and then does a 360 degree turn before winding up with the back
wheels in a muddy gutter. They come within a foot of the edge; poised for a
moment, it seems, between life and death. This incident functions as a *mise-en-
abyme* for the liminal stage in the rite of passage. The road is the only possible
negotiation between the rock wall and the abyss. The skid represents the initiand
being cut adrift, without his or her former social status. Victor Turner comments
that initiands are often startled into thinking about “objects, persons, relationships,
and features of their environment they have hitherto taken for granted” (105).
Their brush with death certainly has that effect on all four people in the car; it’s
not only Susan and Bret who begin a new life, Susan’s parents change as well.
Years before, Tom had persuaded Millicent to leave her home – Wondabyne, the property which borders Coolami – to marry him. Ever since he had single-mindedly pursued wealth and success in an attempt to prove to her family, to himself, and to Millicent that she had made the right choice. When Millicent thinks of his life she likens it to a toy train, “the ones that run round and round and round and bluff themselves that they’re getting somewhere” (37). She feels that if someone or something could switch the points and straighten out the tracks for him Tom would be off at full steam. Their close brush with death fulfils this function.

That night when he and Bret are poring over a map Tom begins to follow the road they’ve already travelled on past Coolami and he realises “what a fleabite was the distance they’d come compared with what separated them still from the western boundary of this eastern state! Amazing to think you could still go on, right out of this map into another and right out of that other into a third before you reached the sea!” (205 – 206). In contrast to this immensity he suddenly realises how circumscribed Millicent’s life with him has been. Her domestic circle has extended emotionally only as far as himself and the children, and went no further physically than holiday homes in Wollongong and the Blue Mountains.

Tom has retired and in a sense so has Millicent. She’s accepted that from now on the lives of both her children, but especially Susan’s, can only diverge further from hers. She had thought herself resigned to her life but in the moment of the accident she had discovered a deep desire for adventure. Fortunately Tom has discovered “a road of inconceivable glamour and romance” (205). Millicent recognises that for her and Tom, as much as for Susan and Bart, the journey has
been an interlude between two lives. Although their journey will continue they’ll be charting new space, not only in a physical sense but in a personal one as well.

This is exemplified in one of their final exchanges. Tom asks:

"Like to go on?"
"On? Where?"
He made a vague magnificent gesture.
"Oh, just — on". (316)
Lost

The Blue Mountains comprise what is described popularly as "Tricky Country". Only an expert bushman can afford to wander at random. Amateurs are likely to lose their bearings, owing to the remarkable conformity of the district. Every ridge looks alike to the inexperienced eye, and it is exceedingly difficult for those unaccustomed to the bush to identify the precise spur by which they descended.... If the worst happen [sic], and you find yourself "lost," the first essential is to keep your head. Don't rush heedlessly about. It will exhaust you; and reckless scrambling in the mountains merely is inviting an accident. Build a fire; and possess yourself in patience.

*New Walks and Sights: Katoomba and Leura, Blue Mountains N.S.W.*

Frank Walford
Lost: The Lost Child

The Lost Child

In his essay “Lost, Stolen or Strayed: From the Australian Babes in the Woods to Azaria Chamberlain” Robert Holden suggests that the extensive representations of being lost in the bush – pictorial, in school readers and in popular literature – has raised the experience of “lostness” to the level of an Australian myth (62). He writes:

Australia remains a land of exile, of white usurpers in a devouring landscape which reduces us all to the level of irrational children. And if this is our sequence of reactions to the idea of lost in the bush, generated and reinforced from infant years to adulthood, then its evocative status is assured and myth is its true realm. (62)

Peter Pierce describes “the intense cross-fertilisation between the reported and the imagined tales of children lost in the bush” (Country xxi). One case, in particular, captured the public imagination, perhaps because of the seemingly miraculous survival of the children. On August 12 1864 Isaac, Jane and Frank Duff became lost while looking for broom near their home, a shepherd’s hut on Spring Hill Station in Victoria. Nine days later the children were found alive. The case was widely celebrated, particularly the part played by Jane Duff who was said to have succoured her younger brother from the cold by wrapping him in her dress (or, in some narratives, her cloak). Robert Holden traces the reiteration of this story in paintings and literature, especially children’s stories, including school readers. He notes that the tale of the Duff children was one “shared across generations by Australian children from at least 1868 until the Second World War” (64).
Lost: The Lost Child

Three aspects of this actual case became staples in fictional tales of lost children: the children come from a working class family, they went astray while searching for fruit or flowers and, if there was more than one child, one of them would sacrifice a garment to warm the other. Ethel Turner recognises this first aspect of the lost child narrative in her novel *In the Mist of the Mountains* (1908). The Lomax children are recovering from whooping cough at the family’s holiday home in the Mountains. They ask Anna, the maid, if they can go down into the gully by themselves but are refused permission because “A nice thing it would be for the Judge’s children to be lost down a gully and sleeping out all night” (15). She doesn’t seem concerned about the children’s safety but for their social position. Being lost in a gully is commensurate with being seen barefoot and dusty by the local shopkeepers, a faux pas they’ve already been chided for — it’s beneath their dignity, and that of their father.

Robert Holden describes the lost child narrative as an analogue of the fairy story (59), but of the lost child narratives I’m going to discuss three are literally fairy tales. Unlike the classic fairy tales – those made familiar by Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm and Charles Perrault – which are based on folk tales, the three stories under discussion qualify as fairy tales purely because of the inclusion (almost intrusion) of fairies or elves. As Pierce puts it “Australian tellers of fairy stories in the 1890s, necessarily writing with the Grimms in mind, naturalised the Germanic material earnestly, but often incongruously” (xv). This isn’t to say that there weren’t folktales concerning lost children. Holden mentions the rise of a class of cautionary tales in which parents recounted tales of bunyips, hairy men and ghosts to frighten children into staying close to home and describes it as “the
beginning of indigenous folklore for Australian youth” (61). Undoubtedly oral
tales of lost children were also disseminated in nineteenth century Australia. This
is certainly indicated by the scene in *Such Is Life* (1903) in which a number of lost
child narratives are recounted around a campfire (Collins 232 – 246). After the
first tale is told, the narrator, muses: “personal observation, or trustworthy report,
had made every one of Thompson’s audience familiar with such episodes of new
settlement” (240).

In 1879 a series of fairy stories, written by an author who used the
pseudonym MOTH, was published in the *Australian Town and Country Journal.*
In each of these stories the fairy was associated with a different native plant. In
“The Tale of the Mountain Moss” Johnnie and Ellie, the three year old twins of
Henry Brown (who is a shale miner) and his wife Kate, become lost in the bush
when they go to pick groundberries “for mammie and baby”.\(^67\) Johnnie attempts
to comfort his sister and, as evening approaches he holds her and tries to wrap her
in his “small skirts”. In these factors the story is typical of the lost child narrative
but there are some subtle divergences from the expected outcome (M.O.T.H. 364).

Pierce notes that it is men who search for missing children and that women
remain confined at home.\(^68\) This is the case in “The Tale of the Mountain Moss.”
While “all the men who could be got were out searching,” Kate is “anchored fast
by the necessity of helpless babes” (364). She must stay with the remaining

\(^67\) Although the story doesn’t specify that it’s set in the Blue Mountains others in the series are
located in the area or nearby. Kurrajong in the case of “The Tale of the Sarsparilla” and the banks
of the Nepean in “The Tale of the Clematis”. Also shale-mining was carried out in the Mountains.
I haven’t been able to discover Mt Borroll, the site specified, in any of the atlases I’ve consulted
and it may be a fictional name.

\(^68\) An exception to this trend is found in *Miss Bobbie.* Miss Trent, the governess, and an un-named
friend are part of the search for Bobbie and Issie.
children. The family is located at varying distances from their hut. The youngest child, a baby, is clutched in Kate’s arms. Two girls stand in the doorway, sobbing and holding each other. Two boys stand at the sliprails gazing out at the hills that surround them, occasionally dashing away a tear, while the eldest boy is with his father amongst the search party. These positions are symbolically laden: the baby represents Kate’s maternity which confines her to the home, the girls are poised on the threshold, a liminal space neither in nor out of the house, the younger boys standing at the sliprail are on the boundary of domestic space while the eldest boy has escaped those bounds.

In her essay “The Journey’s End: Women’s Mobility and Confinement” Sue Rowley contends that, in the nineteenth century, a woman’s journey to maturity was imagined as a movement from exterior space to interior space and suggests that the recurring theme of the lost child (particularly girls) in Australian literature and paintings is related to this notion. For Rowley women were only able to enter a nationalist discourse in a maternal role: “it is as a mother that women enter the narratives of national identity” (76). Those females who are unable to complete that journey – the lost child, the ghostly sweetheart, or the disfigured, and therefore unmarriageable, woman – are doomed to a perpetual immaturity, they are “trapped in time and space” (83). This notion reflects the perception of the lost as being in stasis. Denied motherhood, these females are correspondingly debarred from inclusion within the quest for nationhood. But if a woman remains within the bounds of domesticity she can make a difference. Although Kate is unable to join the search party she is instrumental in the discovery of the children. It is she, anxiously peering out into the bush, who sees
the flash of Ellie’s white apron in the distance. She shouts a frantic cooee but the twins are too far away to hear her. The search party, however, is between the mother and the lost children so when they reply to her they are close enough to the children for the twins to hear them. If, as Robert Scheckter claims in his essay “The Lost Child in Australian Fiction,” children are identified with the future of the country then Kate has successfully entered the nationalist discourse in her role as mother (69).

Johnnie and Ellie were guided up the ridge by Mossa, the fairy of the mountain moss, who found them in a valley. Although MOTH aligns each of her fairies with an Australian native plant there seem nothing indigenous about them. Mossa is described as “a wee, graceful fellow... with a green satin robe, a green velvet cap, and green baize shoes. His face was like porcelain and his hair was as yellow as a sunbeam” (364). Pierce describes the imposition of such sprites on the bush as an attempt to enchant familiar Australian landscapes, “to people them with the elves and fairies that had called Europe home” (Country 60). Although these imports appear to sit uneasily in such rugged terrain more than one site in the Mountains is named Fairy Dell.69 During the rescue Mossa calls out to the twins to encourage them as he entices them up the slope to the ridgeline, and urges them, for reasons which are unclear, to pick the mountain moss as they go even though it hurts him when they do so. He leads them safely to the top of the slope but his life is sapped by the loss of so much of his moss and he dies. There seems no reason for Mossa to encourage them to pluck the moss, particularly

69 The Upper Blue Mountains Geographical Encyclopedia (Fox) lists a Fairy Bower, two Fairy Dells, three Fairy Falls as well as a Fairy Glen, a grotto and a pool.
when it depletes his life-force so profoundly. It seems to be a mere device to account for his death. But why is it necessary for the fairy to die?

Many lost child narratives contain a suggestion of sacrifice. In his examination of Joseph Furphy, *The Life and Opinions of Tom Collins* (1991), Julian Croft describes,

> A pessimism that expresses itself in the folk belief that in the centre of white Australian society lies a vacuum which with regularity but unpredictability takes its tithe of the lives of the young. The vacuum is just that — an absence; it is not malign, nor vengeful, nor understandable, but merely a vacuum into which children disappear. “Lost in the bush” is the trope which may be seen in countless stories, poems, and pictures, and the “bush” whatever that might be, is the power which consumes the future generation (Croft qtd. in Pierce *Country* 91).

However, in this case, the role of sacrifice is willingly taken up by Mossa and the children are saved. Such salvation is atypical of fictional lost child narratives but it may reflect the conventions of the fairy tale. Jack Zipes notes in *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (1988) that, in the classic fairy tale, the family is broken up only to be recreated in a form which exalts bourgeois ideals. While “The Tale of the Mountain Moss” can’t be included amongst the classic fairy tales it shares with them a desire to promote middle-class values. Unlike families in the classic fairy tales the Browns already embody many of these standards. Henry Brown had been a drunkard but had taken the pledge two years previously and, in order to avoid temptation, had brought his family to the Mountains. There they: “had no rent, no taxes, no doctor’s bills, no wood, no water, for which to pay. And above all, no publican gathered into his bloated purse the food and raiment of the woman and children” (364). The Browns are thrifty, temperate and hardworking. In order to emphasise this the
abandonment of everyday domestic tasks is employed as an indication of the potential tragedy which has overtaken the family: “The dirty dishes stood on the table unheeded. The cream was in the churn. The potatoes stood half peeled. The fowls were under the table. The pig was squealing in the sty. Outside the clothes were soddening and staining in dirty soapsuds” (M.O.T.H. 364). In this case in order for the bourgeois ideal to be upheld, and for virtue to be rewarded, the family must be brought back together as it was rather than reconstructed in a new form.

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Atha Westbury’s Australian Fairy Tales, published in 1897, includes two stories set in the Blue Mountains which involve lost children: “Wonderland” and “Two Giants”. In “Wonderland” Westbury mounts her readers on the “wings of fancy” (which are, fortunately, “perfectly safe, and warranted free from accidents” [251]) and takes them to the Blue Mountains. She describes the glens, dells and ravines of the Blue Mountains as haunted by creatures who are both beautiful and grotesque, and “stranger than any painter dreamed”. Even the artefacts of culture are monstrous. The Western train is “like a huge serpent... whose hot breath takes weird shapes” and the trees in the ravines are monstrous (251). The impression given is that the bush has a dark and dangerous underbelly. This device is typical of lost child narratives. As Robert Scheckter writes: “the landscape seems supportive and benevolent. Barely beneath the surface, however, lie connotations of extremity and horror” (66).

Within this deceptive landscape a woman “is wringing her hands, and calling and weeping by turns, as she runs to and fro among the chaos of the
undergrowth” (251). She’s the wife of a charcoal-burner who is, presumably, working in the bush. Their two girls, Winnie and Edith, are missing. At this point the fantastic elements of the story begin to appear. The mother’s frantic coo-ees summon the fairy Love. Like Mossa, Love seems imposed on the landscape. When he first appears he has taken on the form of a mountain goat, an introduced species rather than an indigenous animal. Later he assumes the aspect of a man and arms himself with a sword. (The accompanying illustration shows Love dressed in the accoutrements of an ancient Greek warrior.) Love tells the mother he is “the guardian spirit of this glen, which my race have occupied since the Flood” and that her daughters have been abducted by Croak and Gloom, two inhabitants of a dark subterranean world: for “here on this mountain are two kingdoms; the one on the surface called Love; the other, beneath the surface, termed Hate” (253). Westbury makes what has previously been a metaphor literal. The menace that lies beneath the surface beauty of the bush becomes a place to which you can travel. This brings to mind Bachelard’s description of the cellar as the unconscious of the house. In “Wonderland” Hate is the unconscious of the Mountains.

Echoing Robert Scheckter, Pierce suggests that “the travails and sometimes the deaths of children are emblematic... of the forfeiting of part of the national future” (Country 6). But he also considers lost children to be representative “of an anxiety that Australia will never truly welcome European settlement” (6). Both these notions are evident in “Wonderland”. In M.O.T.H.’s “The Tale of the Mountains Moss” the mother was instrumental in the rescue of the twins although she didn’t leave the clearing which bounded her home. In
“Wonderland” the mother is more daring. She accompanies Love to the kingdom of Hate in order to rescue her daughters. When the two enter Cavernous Hall, where the children are being held, Gloom snatches up the two girls. If children represent the nation’s future then it seems the prospects are grim. Love confronts Croak and Gloom and demands the return of the children. Croak replies: “Let the race of this mortal give us back our stolen treasures. They have invaded our domain, and have rifled it of some of its richest treasures... We have seen them change our dim regions into a wilderness” (257–258). In other words the children are being held hostage because of the invasion and despoiling of Croak and Gloom’s world. According to Pierce, the abduction of children is atypical of nineteenth century lost child narratives. The bush is generally perceived as seductive and children are lured away from their homes by the forbidden landscape. That the girls are abducted for the reasons stated does seem to indicate an anxiety about the validity of the European presence in Australia. In Freudian terms that which is repressed re-emerges as anxiety.

In his essay “The Uncanny” Freud supplies a number of definitions of the words *heimlich* and *unheimlich* (translated as canny and uncanny). In particular Freud notes that *heimlich*, which has the primary definition of “homely” or known, also encompasses that which is “concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others” — in short, the unknown (*SE* 17: 223). Freud describes the term as ambivalent. Winnie and Edith’s mother experiences the uncanny when she discovers that beneath her home lies an entire kingdom which is both unknown to her and inimical.
Lost: The Lost Child

Freud suggests that the “uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through a process of repression” (SE 17: 241). In this context it’s notable that Aborigines are missing from all three of these fairy tales. Peter Pierce notes the inclusion, in many lost child narratives, of the figure of the native tracker and suggests that “here, potentially, was a most potent image of reconciliation between black and white Australians” (xii–xiii). Robert Holden suggests that “the stance attributed to the Aborigine in lost in the bush stories is one of the very few in nineteenth century literature which partakes of the heroic” (63). Historically, Aboriginal men, both local and from other districts, were regularly employed in seeking out lost travellers in the Blue Mountains. Billy Lynch was a noted local tracker with “a good record of lost folk found” and he had assisted in “tracking bushrangers or other malefactors for Her Majesty’s Government” (E.D.H. 1230). The Mountaineer, the local newspaper, notes several occasions when native trackers assisted search parties in the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century. That Aborigines are absent from these stories might seem to be a consequence of the genre – fairy tales aren’t realistic – but despite their fantastic elements they almost always begin in an everyday social context. This seems to be another example of Aborigines being edited from Blue Mountains texts, even within a genre in which Aborigines are generally valorised. It could also be seen as a projection of guilt. Westbury attributes to her

70 In 1895 a man named Loften disappeared from his bush camp. An unnamed Aboriginal man, described only as an experienced black tracker from Dubbo, assisted police and volunteers in a wide-ranging search that went on for many days (“Missing Resident”). When a man named Barton went missing in 1900 the police called in Albert Barlow who was sent from the Sydney to search the “ravines and valleys of the Grose” (“Missing Man”).

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beleaguered indigenous race a desire to hijack the national future in the persons of
Winnie and Edith.

With the future of the country held in the hands of the inhabitants of Hate a
happy outcome seems in doubt but once again the mother saves the day. As
Love battles the legions of Hate the mother and children escape and are magically
transported back to their home. Unlike the figure of the mother in many lost child
narratives Winnie and Edith’s mother leaves her domestic space in order to seek
out her children, and yet this story validates Sue Rowley’s notion that women
could only enter the discussion of nationhood in a maternal role. Love contends
with Hate but the mother and Love are closely linked, in fact, they go “hand in
hand” (257) and so, in the end it’s mother/love which saves the children.

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In “Two Giants”, far from being seduced by the bush Harry Pocker is
reluctant to enter it, even to fetch a doctor for his seriously ill father. Despite its
inclusion in a collection entitled Australian Fairy Tales this story has no
conventional supernatural element. Instead a natural phenomenon is employed:
fog is personified as a voracious shape-shifting giant. As previously noted, parents
used cautionary tales about supernatural beings to discourage children from
wandering into the bush (Holden 60). Harry’s mother has taken a slightly different
approach. Harry doesn’t attend school. Instead she has taught him from “the open
page of Nature,” but this instruction has taken the form of fanciful tales
concerning the speech of the creeks and the trees, who bend their heads to each
other and converse, of the ultimate destination of the clouds, and the motive of the
thick mists which come “to kill the flowers and enfold the highest spurs as with a
winding sheet” (177). While the notion of trees and water conversing is unthreatening the same can’t be said of the language concerning the lethal shroud-like mists. Robert Holden suggests that, in lost child narratives, “the landscape of the imagination becomes as significant as, perhaps more significant than the physical landscape” (61) and this is the case in “Two Giants”. Once again Westbury depicts the dark underbelly of the bush. The landscape is predatory: the limbs of gum trees are likened to “gigantic birds of prey” (177) and the fog is hostile to people. It hides the sheep from Harry; it once lured his father into the river and Possum the family dog over a cliff.

In these circumstances it’s hardly surprising that Harry is reluctant leave the bounds of the domestic circle even to fetch a doctor for his desperately ill father. Yet his mother is shocked when he refuses to make the four-mile trek to Ridgeford, the nearest town. When she questions him he replies simply, “Did you not show me the Giant Fog which haunts our valley?” (178). His mother is briefly taken aback by the way in which her fanciful tales have rebounded on her but she quickly recovers. She doesn’t attempt to recant, instead she devises a new story with a more potent giant:

I remember Giant Fog; but, Harry, I know a giant far more powerful than he. Go to the settlement for the doctor, and I will give you a letter to my giant, and he will surely help you even if Fog were to meet you on the way. (178)

This giant’s name is “Duty.” Armed with a talisman – a sheet of paper with the giant’s name printed on it pinned to his coat – and accompanied by Possum, Harry makes his way to Ridgeford and help.

The doctor agrees to see Mr Podder and Harry sets off back home. On his return from the township fog envelops him. He becomes lost, tumbles off a cliff.
and injures his head. John Scheckter notes the prevalence within lost child narratives for death to come about due to a fall rather than starvation or exposure. He suggests that the child must be active in his or her own destruction and that “often the head is injured in the fall, signifying perhaps that mental attitudes brought to the land contribute to the child’s downfall” (68). Harry’s insistence on trying to reach home even though he’s disoriented by the fog falls into this category. Having ensured that his father will receive medical aid there seems little reason for Harry to continue into the fog but even when Possum tries to impede him he perseveres in his attempt to reach home. It’s at this point that he falls from the cliff. Fortunately Possum is able to lead the doctor and Harry’s mother to the child. Pierce describes a liminal moment in the discovery of lost children which is exemplified in Frederick McCubbin’s painting “Found” (1892). In this work a man cradles the strayed child: “The girl seems to be asleep, but of course she may be dead. This is the terrible crisis and uncertainty at so many of the moments of discovery in lost child narratives. Dead, the child will often be said to appear as if asleep” (55). Harry is found alive but he remains in a liminal state, poised between life and death, for many weeks. Eventually he does begin to recover.

This story once again raises the notion of sacrifice, but it seems that Harry is a potential offering to “Duty” rather than the victim of some capricious geographical vortex. When Harry’s mother sends him into the bush it may seem as if she is merely another in a long line of wicked stepmothers. (As Jack Zipes notes “who else is the stepmother/witch but the real mother of the children?” [121].) But the task is set without malicious intent and the reason is pressing. Moreover, her argument is located within a familiar context: it’s the child’s duty
to preserve the father(land) even at the risk of his own life. Rather than forfeiting part of the national future Harry’s potential loss is seen as necessary to ensure the well-being of the country.

This story could also be read as a rendering of the Oedipal conflict although it’s unlikely that Westbury consciously intended this. Harry’s initial refusal to fetch the doctor could be seen as an enactment of the desire to kill his father and thereby keep his mother to himself. “Giant Fog” is representative of the father and the fear of his vengeance. When Harry walks into the fog he is, like Oedipus, “blinded,” a symbolic castration.

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In April 1899 the family of Marcus Clark, the emporium owner, were staying at their holiday home at Mount York (Clark was in Melbourne on business). The house had extensive views over Mount Victoria Pass and Hartley Valley and was scarcely twenty-five metres from a one hundred metre high cliff. While attempting to follow his older brother and sister to a cave in the rock face six-year-old Byron Clark fell from this precipice to a ledge thirty metres below. Byron’s stepmother and the governess climbed down the cliff to where the boy lay but he was dead. Between them the two women managed to carry his body to the top of the cliff. The family never returned to the house at Mount York and several years later it burned to the ground. Around 1908 Marcus Clark had a large white cross erected where the house had once stood in memory of his son (Clark 120 – 123).

In Marie Bjelke Petersen’s novel *The Moon Minstrel* (1927) the white cross at Mount York is employed as a symbol of redemption. *The Moon Minstrel*
is an unremarkable love story that follows the relationship between Myrta Lost and Brett Lade. Myrta is a foundling who was raised by the Blegg family in the remote Tasmanian mining community of Ruby Lode. When Brett remarks on her unusual name she replies: “it fits me exactly. You see... I began my little stunt as a baby by being lost. Mrs Blegg found me under a myrtle tree; she took me in and called me, Myrta Lost” (34). No one is sure how Myrta came to be under the tree but Mrs Blegg suspects that some bones found at the bottom of a nearby gorge belonged to the child’s mother. She can recall a woman, a stranger with a baby, who stayed at Redlands, the closest township.

Peter Pierce makes a distinction between nineteenth century lost child narratives and those of the twentieth century. He entitled the second section of *The Country of Lost Children* “In the Twentieth Century: The Child Abandoned.” Where once the lost child was lured away by a seductive and deceptive landscape, in the twentieth century lost children are more likely to be discards: abused, abandoned, abducted or aborted. Pierce concentrated on the latter half of the century but notes there are earlier instances of discarded children. One example he discusses is Barcroft Boake’s poem “Deserted: As Seen at Devlin’s Siding,” in which a mother makes her way to a remote location where she abandons her baby. Mrs Blegg believes that Myrta’s mother slipped and fell into the gorge. She doesn’t speculate on why a stranger would tramp sixteen miles along a rough bush track (there was no road from Redlands then) with a baby, nor why, having done so, she would place the child under a tree and go for a stroll in the dark. Despite Mrs Blegg’s charitable suggestion that an accident has taken place, it seems likely that, like the mother at Devlin’s Siding, Myrta’s parent intended to abandon her
child in the most desolate spot she could find. Walking off the cliff may have been an accident or she may have taken her own life. Pierce writes:

We are coming to a starker place where an accounting is made for each loss and blame falls – not indifferently on the Australian bush – but on the people who wish themselves free of their children, and of the burdens of a succeeding generation. (71)

In the case of Myrta’s mother, whether her death was deliberate or accidental, the accounting is settled very swiftly. If she had intended to return to society with her reputation untarnished her hopes were swiftly and comprehensively dashed.

Until she was seventeen Myrta had lived all her life at Ruby Lode. She had no conventional schooling but, as she tells Brett, her tutors were the wind, darkness, the sky, the sun, moon and stars (66 – 67). She interprets these natural phenomena through the compositions she plays on her melodeon. She is scornful of education but she believes that an essential piece of knowledge is the ability “to be able to find your way anywhere” (86). This is ironic because Myrta soon becomes lost, not physically but spiritually. She decides that in order to win Brett she must be educated in the normal sense of the word. She takes up on an offer of employment from a theatrical entrepreneur who has seen her play the melodeon and dance. But this means that she must leave the bush, the source of her inspiration, and go overseas. Her theatrical career is very successful and after six years she returns to Australia. While she’s in Sydney her foster-brother Dan contacts her. He’s now employed as a quarryman in the Blue Mountains. She agrees to meet him beneath the white cross erected by Marcus Clark.

Bjelke Petersen retells the story of Byron Clark but with one significant difference: in her version Byron’s body is never recovered. The bush engulfs the child and never gives him up: “Marcus Clark had erected the cross to mark the
spot where his child had disappeared. It was a short tragedy. A straying child. A mis-step and – nothing; not even the body found” (195). It’s possible that Bjelke Petersen believed this version of the story to be true. Or she may have felt that the idea of a child forever lost was more symbolically potent. Peter Pierce suggests that there are three potential outcomes when a child is lost in the bush: the child will be found alive, the child will be found dead, or the child will never be found. Of these three possibilities the final one is the most terrible. “The Tale of the Mountain Moss” describes the need for closure even if this means tragedy. The mother is consumed by:

The horror of it, to sit there waiting... and think of her timid little darlings out in the wild cold bush through all the dark night; to think of them frightened by animals, harmless enough, but bringing all dread to the poor little creatures, and to think of the real dangers of snakes and reptiles. To think of them hungry, or fallen from some of the rocks. Positively, the mother would have felt relief had the little bodies only been carried in. (MOTH 364)

Byron Clark’s death was tragic, the white cross his father raised in remembrance of him is poignant, but neither event has the mythic resonance of a child forever lost in the bush.

The cross becomes a regular rendezvous for Myrta and Dan. Myrta is glad to see her foster-brother after all these years but his feelings for her are more than brotherly. She obsesses him. He becomes enraged when Brett intrudes on one of their meetings. When Dan discovers that Brett is staying at the same hotel as Myrta he becomes even more infuriated. Desperately jealous, he goes to the hotel in order to kill Brett but strangles a stranger by mistake. He is noticed acting suspiciously and quickly becomes the main suspect. Four policemen come to the quarry in order to arrest him. When he sees them Dan climbs the ridge to the north
of the white cross but his attempt at escape is hopeless. The police merely drive up onto the ridge and await him. When he sees there is nowhere to run he throws himself from the cliff by the side of the cross.

![Image: White Cross Near the Top of Mount York, photograph Daily Telegraph 7 Sept. 1964: 24.]

In *The Moon Minstrel* gullies are associated with darkness and with illicit passion. The ravine near which Myrta was found is known as Ghost Gully and it's said to be haunted. It's described as bottomless and the river in its depths is named the Black Serpent, a reference that links it to temptation. Both Myrta's mother and Dan end their lives in gullies and in both cases their fall is a consequence of forbidden desires: there are strong indications in the text that Myrta is illegitimate, and Dan's ardour is incestuous.

Brett and Myrta's romance, particularly in the early stages, is shadowed by the notion of passion as dark and treacherous. Myrta muses that looking into Brett's eyes gives her "the sensation of being near a precipice and being on the point of slipping in" (114). When Brett asks Myrta what she's thinking of she
replies evasively, “Just a nice deep gully” (114). Brett has no trouble interpreting this cryptic remark. He asks if she’s referring to “the gully of the heart?” (116). When she doesn’t reply he continues, “Myrta there is a gully in my breast that is open wide for you – will you – slip into it?” (116). But Myrta declines to fall. She runs away exclaiming how late it is and how angry her father will be. Conversely, the heights are associated with light and spirituality. Myrta describes her music as a kind of searching. Brett asks her if she knows what she’s looking for and she replies, “No. But I think it’s something that is high up among the mountains and not down in the gullies” (69).

Bjelke Petersen’s persistent equation of passion with a fall presents her with a difficulty in resolution. The novel is, after all, a romance but how is she to bring her two characters together when passion appears to be so tainted? She achieves the desired result by returning them both to Ruby Lode where they first met. It’s night-time and there is a forest fire raging. When she meets Brett on the road Myrta indicates that she’s willing to spend the night with him, she’s ready to risk falling. Brett refuses because he wants their relationship to be permanent not just for a “few paltry moments” (281). She agrees to marry him. Their union and the resolution of passion and spirituality is symbolised in the sentence which concludes the chapter, “The flames and the dark had wed” (283). With the promise of abstention followed by marriage passion becomes authorised.

The novel might well have ended at this point but Bjelke Petersen chooses to explore the opposition of the gully/darkness/passion and heights/light/spirituality further. After his leap into the abyss searchers can find no trace of
Dan’s body. Mrs Blegg refuses to accept this claiming that the searchers can’t have looked properly. She suspects that they simply didn’t think Dan important enough to retrieve his body. She exclaims to the postman, who is her main source of information, “They don’t care if he lies rotting out there in the sunlight. They don’t think because he did for that bloke, that he needs a decent burial! But I’ll learn them better” (271). She goes to the Mountains and begins her own search for Dan. He’s her child and he’s lost in the wilderness. She is as unsuccessful as the others who sought out the body. After three weeks she has found no trace of him although she’s searched every inch of the area where his body could have landed. She can’t accept that no fragment of him remains and so she believes that someone has taken the body. But who? Looking up she sees the cross above her. When Myrta first saw the cross all she could think of was mortality. She likened the crosspiece to outspread arms and asked, “Did those arms, open for a world, a universe, only clasp the cold heart of death?” (217). For Mrs Blegg, unlike Myrta, the cross represents life not death. She thinks of it as a living thing, a friend, who has looked over her as she searched for the body of her son. In despair at not finding Dan’s body, and in sudden consciousness of the “gruesomeness of his crime” she almost despairs (287). The cross gives her hope. She realises that although the cross is set in the earth it’s surrounded by sky: “From a world of green, she glanced up into a world of dazzling blue. The green was beneath the cross, the blue above” (287). Even from the abyss it’s visible. She imagines that Dan who, in his hour of need, had fled to the cross has been translated, his battered body raised on high. The cross becomes “a great white gate” (288), a

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71In this instance the notion “child” is used in the sense of a descendent rather than an indication of youth.
threshold between earth and heaven, a point of access for her son who would
otherwise have been “left an outcast in the deep” (287).
Where the Bodies are Buried

The Mountains’ reputation for swallowing people up extends beyond those who are lost to those who are deliberately concealed. In an article in the Sunday Telegraph in 1993 entitled “Blue Mountains – Sydney’s Killing Fields” Phillip Koch described the area as “scattered with corpses” (8). He briefly outlined several unsolved murder cases located in the Mountains and quoted local police sergeant Chris Hiley: “There would be a lot of bodies out there yet to be found” (8). The notion of consumption is given literal form in James Tucker’s novel Ralph Rashleigh. While making their way through the Mountains Philip Foxley and his band of bushrangers lure an overseer named Huggins into the bush. When they reach a suitably isolated spot Huggins is killed by tying him to a nest of ants which are, “of immense size, upwards of one and a half inches long, of blue and green colours, and the most fierce and virulently biting insects in the bush” (170). By the next day all that remains of the body is the skeleton with only a little flesh left on it, mainly around the head. Foxley exclaims, “ Them’s the little boys for polishing a bone. In a few hours there won’t be a morsel of Huggins left but his bare skeleton” (173).

Allied with this notion of consumption is a perception of the mountains as a vast illicit cemetery. The author Kylie Tennant discovered this in the early 1970s when she was searching for a new home – preferably rather isolated – and had decided on an old apple orchard at Blackheath. While acknowledging the
considerable drawbacks of the property,” 72 Tennant was unaccountably drawn to it. So much so that even the discovery of the body of a murdered woman on the boundary of the orchard didn’t deter her from purchasing Cliff View. Instead, the incident inspired her final, unfinished novel. The work was entitled “Murder Mountain” and was set in the fictional Blue Mountains town of Beaulieu (ms 7574). Tennant was notorious for the thorough research she did for her novels. She tried to experience the everyday lifestyle of her characters as comprehensively as possible. While researching The Battlers (1941) she spent three months travelling on the road in a horse drawn van, moving from town to town in company with the travellers, who accepted her as one of their own. By the end of this time she was ill and malnourished. In preparation for writing her novel Tell Morning This (1968) she contrived to be arrested and spent a week in Long Bay Gaol. Before writing The Honey Flow (1956) she joined a group of itinerant beekeepers and followed the blossom. But for once Tennant didn’t have to travel to research a book; the information was under her nose. She wrote, in some biographical notes, “No detective has the abilities of a middle aged farmers [sic] wife. If you saw three people on the corner by the post office they would be discussing our murder and ranging over the life histories of any promising suspect” (ms 7574).

The manuscript begins, predictably enough, with the burial of a murder victim, Angela Folis, who worked at a local clinic and had managed to “get herself disliked in just three weeks” (ms 7574). Her body isn’t concealed by the

72 Tennant wrote: “Inside there was a smell of damp mouldy wood and ashes. The house was painted in peeling blue paint with red gables. The weatherboard was ancient and crumbled. The laundry was falling down”. Nancy Phelan suggested they name it Cold Comfort (Kyle Tennant Papers ms 7574).
murderer but by others who want to cover up the crime for their own reasons. The manuscript includes more fragments: the burgling of a weekender, a glimpse at the clinic, and a description of two men, one of them a poet, driving from the city to Beaulieu but Tennant died before the book was completed (in fact it was scarcely begun). There is, however, a strong sense of place, the landscape is important. Two perceptions dominate: the threat of the bush, and its proximity to the towns. This is made clear in the manuscript: “Just beyond the row of little houses, if you go to the end of the backyard with its rotary clothes line you will be looking, over the sagging back fence into an unimaginable depth of cliffs going down like a pit of hell” (ms 7574). This strongly recalls Atha Westbury’s kingdom of Hate: the unknown, the concealed that exists within the familiar. In short, the uncanny. This local liminality echoes the juxtaposition of Sydney and the Mountains and is, for Tennant, one of the reasons the area is seen as a gangsters’ graveyard: immediacy makes it convenient for such purposes. She wrote: “All over the Blue Mountains there are bodies – it’s a kind of rubbish dump for people from the city – criminals and villains and so forth. First place they think of to dump a body... somewhere handy with trees and bush” (ms 7574). There is more at work here than propinquity. Her own experience has coloured her opinion, but there’s also a perceived congruence between landscape and tragedy.

In her novel Play With Knives (1990) Jennifer Maiden touches on this subject. A husband and wife discuss a series of local murders and comment on how incongruous it seems that their suburb could be the site of such deeds. Instead they recall a more suitable location nearby:
Lost: Where the Bodies are Buried

"I had a childhood terror of the Blue Mountains and of bushwalking because of all the murderers who buried their victims there."

I nodded. I agreed it seemed more suitable in that picturesque elevated bush. One already smelled tragedy in its bellbird haunted trails and waterfalls and florid Autumn gullies: not in the dry and scaly patches of nature which remained in areas like ours. (86)

There was a notorious series of homicides committed during the 1890s known as the Blue Mountains Murders. These events are regularly reprised in popular anthologies of Australian crime. In 1896 Frank Butler placed notices in various Sydney newspapers advertising for a mate to go gold prospecting. A number of men applied and, over a period of months, three were selected to accompany Butler, each at different times. All of the men were taken to a remote location, killed and robbed. The bodies were buried where they died: two in the Mountains and one (the first victim) near Parkes. Butler's crimes were eventually discovered. The police learned that he had left the country aboard the barque Swanhilda, using the name and papers of his last victim, Captain Lee Weller. The Swanhilda was headed for San Francisco. Two detectives were sent by steamer to the United States. They arrived prior to the barque and, with the assistance of US officials, arrested Butler. After a protracted legal process Butler was extradited to NSW where he was tried, convicted and executed.

73 Frank Butler was one of a number of aliases used by the murderer. His name was actually Richard Ashe. However, he was tried under the name of Butler and that is how I've chosen to nominate him.

74 There is a persistent but, as far as I can tell, unsubstantiated belief that Butler had the victims dig their own graves. He would indicate a likely spot to find gold and, when the mate had dug a sufficiently deep hole, shoot them and fill it in. See figure over page.
Figure 18: "The Glenbrook Mining Boom", cartoon by Hop, Bulletin 19 Dec. 1896: 15.
There was strong contemporary interest in the case with extensive newspaper coverage of the investigation and trial. Examination of this reportage demonstrates three notions of the Mountains. Firstly that it’s a place that consumes the unwary. Before their bodies were unearthed, the *Bulletin* described the victims of murderer Frank Butler as being “swallowed up” (“Glenbrook Mystery”). The tone is ironic but it’s clear it’s enunciating a commonly held perception. The *Nepean Times* wrote of the hunt for the bodies, “Search may be made in the vicinity [the Blue Mountains] for months without result, although perhaps only a few yards from the object of the search (“Mountain Tragedy” 3). Secondly, that the Mountains are a secret charnel house. The *Sydney Mail* suggested that “with care a whole cemetery of bodies could be buried [in the Mountains] and no one walking over them would be a whit the wiser” (“Mountain Mystery” 1259).

The *Bulletin* described a country overtaken by Butler hysteria:

it would seem, from the statement of the oldest inhabitant (as set forth in the evening papers), that Butler has lately been seen in almost every part of Australia, and that, in each case, he was along with a mate who has since gone a-missing. Every man who hasn’t been seen lately is now understood to have been buried by Butler, and there is a general desire to dig up all N.S.W. in search of the victim (“Glenbrook Murderer” 11).

But the whole of NSW wasn’t dug up. The investigation centred on the Mountains, even though one of Butler’s victims was thought to have been killed on the plains beyond. His body was eventually discovered near Parkes, but not as part of an organised search: the makeshift grave was accidentally uncovered by a man and his son who were out rabbiting. Robert Travers, in his book *Murder in the Blue Mountains* (1972), remarks that the search out west was desultory
compared with “the scouring of the Blue Mountains”, in which hundreds of
people were involved (71). This may have reflected a burgeoning disbelief in the
number of sightings of Butler and the growing list of his putative victims, as well
as the difficulty of searching such a large area. But it may also have been due to
the perceived correspondence between place and event.

Which brings us to the final notion, that the landscape is suited to (perhaps
even conducive of) tragic and violent events. When the body of Robert Preston,
Butler’s second victim, was found buried in a shallow grave near Linden the

*Nepean Times* described the site as,

admiringly... fitted for a crime such as that which has been
committed. On the eastern side the cliffs, running straight up to a
height of 70ft. or 80ft., frowned down on a strickling [sic] stream
hidden by bracken and other fern growing on either bank in wild
profusion, while on the other side the land, though much more
broken, allowing in places of comparatively easy access, was still
of a wild and forbidding nature. Such a spot would not be visited
once in twelve months by man. (“Mountain Tragedy” 5)

The *Sydney Mail* noted that while most people thought of the Mountains as “an
exceedingly pleasant refuge from the heat of the plains and a home of the
picturesque Butler apparently looked on them with other eyes, and saw in their
rocky fastnesses meet scene for crime and its concealment” (“Notes” 1237). The
*Mail*’s caveat, that most people see the Mountains as a refuge and that only a
murderer such as Butler would see them with “other eyes,” is undercut by their
reference to the picturesque. Proponents of the picturesque admired remote and
rugged terrain such as that described above in the *Nepean Times*: wild, broken,
forbidding; but the picturesque is also associated with the Gothic – a genre replete
with murder, violence and secrecy – and the sublime, an aesthetic that exalts
terror. Even the name most often used to denote the crimes – the Blue Mountains
Murders – is indicative of the association between place and event. So strong is this perception of the Mountains that it continues to influence community attitudes today. There was a local outcry in 1991 when it was believed that the gravesite of Lee Weller, Butler’s third victim, might be disturbed by land development. Col Allison noted that “several sacred sites of the former Dharruk Aborigines [sic] and a World War II bomb shelter” were also under threat, but it was Weller’s erstwhile grave which captured the headline: “Save our murder site, say mountains locals” (9). This wasn’t due to the possible desecration of the grave – the body had long ago been disinterred – but because it was perceived as the site of primary cultural significance.

These perceptions of the Mountains, individually and together, produce a feeling of uncanniness associated with the area. It would be easy to conclude that the first two of these notions – that the landscape devours; that it’s a mausoleum – produce the third, that it’s a site of violence and tragedy. Instead, I see these three ideas as closely allied, percolating through one another, much as the terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich* do, intensifying the cumulative effect rather than dominating or engendering one another. This effect is seen clearly in two perceptions of this case that seem at first sight to be contradictory but which can be reconciled through Freud’s notions of the uncanny.

The remoteness and inaccessibility of Preston’s grave was emphasised in contemporary reportage. Even the clergyman who officiated at his funeral took his text from Psalm 10, verse 8 “In secret places doth he murder the innocent” (Travers 62). This accords with one of the definitions of *heimlich* which Freud cites (and that I’ve already noted): “concealed, kept from sight, so that others do
not get to know of or about it, withheld from others” (*SE* 17: 223). In contrast, the site of Lee Weller’s grave was almost public. It was located near a buggy track and a walking trail and was close to a popular swimming hole. The *Mail* notes the coolness and audacity Butler showed in concealing his third victim in “so exposed a place in open daylight” (“Mountains Mystery” 1261). Despite its more public location Weller’s grave lay concealed even longer than Preston’s. Nevertheless, whether secreted in a remote gully or hidden in plain sight, like the incriminating document in “The Purloined Letter,” Butler’s victims were eventually discovered. The secret, the unknown, is revealed but Freud’s understanding of the uncanny encompasses revelation as well. He cites a definition of *unheimlich* which depends for its meaning on the ambivalence of the term *heimlich*. It is “the name for everything that ought to have remained... secret and hidden but has come to light” (*SE* 17: 224).

The *Mail* describes the detection of the bodies as an example “of the old proverb, that ‘murder will out’ (“Notes” 1237). It continues, “the futility of the cleverest murderer’s precautions, no matter how apparently well calculated, is always in the long run borne home” (“Notes” 1237). There’s a strong emphasis on observation in the accounts of the unearthing of Butler’s victims. The *Nepean Times* states that during the search “nothing escaped notice” (“Mountains Tragedy” 3). Numerous witnesses recall seeing and sometimes conversing with either Butler or his victims. The two men who discovered the bodies are both credited with superior powers of perception. Constable Delaney, who found the body of Robert Preston, was alerted by a few clumps of clay subsoil that lay on the surface. The body of Lee Weller was discovered by J.J. Woods, a resident of
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Glenbrook. Like Delaney, he discerned the site when he noticed a small anomaly in the landscape: a few dead saplings were lying in an unnatural manner. The *Sydney Mail* described it as “a careful and systematic search by a man who thoroughly knew the country” (“Mountain Mystery” 1261).

The *Bulletin* took a different tack. They maintained a satirical tone throughout the investigation and prosecution. Rather than repeat the circumstances of the case – both facts and conjecture were stated and re-stated in other journals – the *Bulletin* analysed and questioned its reportage. It offers a neat rebuttal of the *Mail*’s aphorism:

It is a rather stupid maxim all the same, and rests on no visible evidence whatever. All the public really knows is that the murders it knows of do come out; the murders it doesn’t know of naturally don’t, because if they did come out it would know of them. (“The Discovery” 7)

These notions of secrecy and revelation might seem to be mutually exclusive but turn out to be two faces of the uncanny. Like the terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, they are ambivalent, they filter through each other, so that in the end whether there are secrets still remaining in the Mountains or not becomes inconsequential, only the feeling of uncanniness remains.
"The Blue Heart, the Deadly Valley"

Dorothy Porter’s verse novel, *What a Piece of Work*, is set in the 1960s and tells the story of Dr Peter Cyren, a psychiatrist, who is made Superintendent of Callan Park Psychiatric Hospital. Cyren begins his appointment determined to heal the damaged minds in his care, or at least to ensure that his charges are treated humanely. He inaugurates his appointment with hubristic relish, boasting to his lover, Fay:

Give me five years  
I won’t rest  
until there’s not a sad  
or sorry mind  
I can’t fix. (49)

He treats the patients with care and tries to ensure that they’re treated with dignity. He brings light to the dark wards. Cyren has the support of Fay and Monica, his ex-wife, but his relationship with the staff at Callan Park is antagonistic at first because of their callous treatment of the patients. He discovers one of the attendants and a nurse trying to feed a severely disabled boy:

"Why doesn’t someone  
just wring this fucking vegetable’s neck?"  
Harry says to Sister  
and slaps the thrashing boy  
across his mouth  
oozing with mess

"Why doesn’t someone  
teach you fucking vegetables"  
I roar  
from behind them  
“how to feed a handicapped child?" (67)
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The title of this chapter – “Gold” – seems appropriate for this period in Cyren’s life. He’s successful, innovative and humane. What a Piece of Work is rich with Jungian symbolism – the mandala, the Tree of Life, the anima – but this is most clearly demonstrated in the structure of the novel which employs the stages of the alchemical process. Each chapter is associated with a colour or symbolic animal – gold, red, silver, the peacock’s tail, white, the dragon and black\textsuperscript{25} – but this is alchemy inverted. The end result is black, the nigredo or prima materia with which the alchemist begins, that which he wishes to change and purify. Porter prefaced the novel with two quotes which clarify her use of these terms. The first is taken from the Dictionary of Alchemy by Mark Haeffner: “Latin alchemists nearly always commence with the nigredo, the dark, black stage of melancholy, death and mortification.” (Jung associates the nigredo with difficulty and grief [Psychology and Alchemy 273].) The second quote is from Jung’s Mysterium Coniunctionis: “For it was clear to the more astute alchemists that the prima materia of the art was man himself.” What a Piece of Work is, therefore, the story of Peter Cyren’s dissolution.

It’s widely understood that alchemists desired to turn base metal into gold and alchemy is often cited as the precursor of chemistry but this insistence on alchemy as a protoscience has obscured its philosophical dimension. Jung argues that “from its earliest days alchemy had a double face: on the one hand the practical chemical work in the laboratory, on the other a psychological process, in part consciously psychic, in part unconsciously projected and seen in the various

\textsuperscript{25}Jung notes, of the alchemic transformation, that there are “numberless directions for its accomplishment” and “hardly two authors are of the same opinion regarding the exact course of the process and the sequence of its stages” (Psychology and Alchemy 228).
transformations of matter" (*Psychology and Alchemy* 270). He allies the alchemical process with the individuation process. The process of individuation refers to the pursuit of wholeness in which the various facets of the psyche (in particular unconscious material which must be revealed to the conscious) are integrated in order to foster the self. In her biography of Jung, Barbara Hannah describes individuation as "the general term that Jung gave to the process of getting to know the totality of the psyche, and to yielding the central place to the "self" instead of usurping it with the ego" (130). Individuation is a continuing process rather than an end point towards which one strives. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1973) Jung describes it as a "circumambulation of the self" (196). The self is the sum of the psyche but, at the same time, it is also the ultimate potential each person possesses. It is unknowable except through its symbolic productions such as drawings or dreams. In his later work, Jung allies the symbolism of alchemy with dream symbolism.

Despite the plenitude of the Jungian symbolism in *What a Piece of Work* there is a conflicting psychiatric discourse evident in the text. Cyren never explicitly names his own psychiatric affiliation, although he does mention presenting a paper to the Jung society and much of the alchemical metaphor is uttered in his voice, but he is critical of Freudian psychoanalysis. One of the reasons he left his wife Monica, he claims, was because she was a Freudian. This statement is presented as a flippant aside but his rejection of Freudian analysis may, in fact, constitute a necessary (for him) rejection of a central thesis of Freudianism: the Oedipus complex. Cyren has violated Freud's ultimate taboo. When he was fourteen years old he and his mother engaged in a sexual
relationship. They were holidaying in the Blue Mountains at the time. He remembers it as:

our holiday together
in the mountains

our secret honeymoon
our nights
tearing each other
open
and those afternoons
in the sweet valley air. (190)

The Oedipus complex posits that the mother is the first object of desire for the child and the father is perceived as a threat to the relationship between mother and child and is, therefore, the focus of the child’s rage and hate. Freud suggested in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1958) that “it is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first murderous wish against our father” (364). The child’s desire to harm the father, to kill him, is controlled by the child’s fear of the father, who is, of course, bigger and stronger. This fear relates specifically to the fear of castration. His abandonment of the mother is necessary for the boy’s successful incorporation into society. As Madelon Sprengnether puts it in *The Spectral Mother* (1990): “For Freud, the incest taboo is upheld by the father and his threat of castration, while the son’s renunciation of his mother prepares him for the sacrifices and sublimations that civilization requires” (4). The denial of the mother is a rite of passage which eventually gives the child access to his place in the adult world.

According to Freud, Cyren should fear his father’s revenge and, in the poem “Glorious Blue Mountains Afternoon,” Cyren obliquely acknowledges this. He recalls one hazy afternoon when he sat on the verandah his gaze fixed on an
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old ginger cat so that he won’t stare at his mother. His attempt at distance is thwarted by the allure of her voice:

Her voice murmuring
in my heart and throat
like a sweet deadly stream.

I remember
so clearly
her gurgling laugh

when the cat stretched
and jumped away
from us
his balls were spectacular
his balls were enormous. (194 – 195)

This memory indicates that he knows what’s at stake. Yet he’s unperturbed. Even as a child Cyren perceives his father as negligible. He has turned the tables on him. He recalls an incident from his childhood, his father listening to “a Bradman double century” on the wireless while he and his mother sit together in the kitchen, dissecting their acquaintance (119). It was the only time he remembered his father being happy, his perky face a pale echo of Bradman’s triumph. But the poem is entitled “My out-for-a-duck dad” and Cyren’s father is characterised as “an out of form/ vice-captain” whose son smashes right through his stumps. It’s a symbolic castration. If Peter Cyren fears anyone it isn’t his father. It’s his mother who haunts his nights:

Oh, Mother, please.
don’t break in
tonight

let me shiver shiver
shiver myself
to sleep

undisturbed. (186)
Sprengnether argues that Freud’s adoption of the Oedipus complex represents a profound rejection of the passive which he allies with the feminine. Femininity is submissive; masculinity aggressive. She writes: “in the process of formulating the Oedipus complex Freud set the parameters for his subsequent treatment of the mother by establishing her position as object rather than subject — the passive recipient of the son’s libidinal urges” (2). The mother is not seen as sexually importunate, indeed this possibility is resolutely ignored.

In the poem “The Magpie” Cyren constructs the incestuous relationship with his mother in those terms. He feels responsible for the initial seduction and sees himself as the aggressor:

Maybe it was the dragonfly
with its lapis lazuli tail
flickering iridescent
on a hot rock

or maybe I was jealous
of the magpie
that swooped down
to warble at my mother’s feet

whatever it was
I made the first move

the day was perfect

and I was perfect too
as only a young male
perfect in his hairless skin
can be

“Mother” I gurgled
iridescently naked
on my hot rock
“wanta swim?
I’m going right in.”

She looked at me
without a word
and forgot the bird. (206 – 207)

Freud’s own experience demonstrated that women could, and did, sexually abuse children in their care but Freud was able to ascribe this abuse to mother-surrogates – nurses and governesses – thereby retaining an idealised vision of maternity. His own sexual awakening was due to his nurse, whom he described as his “teacher in sexual matters” (qtd in Sprengnether 36). He also found examples in the case histories of his patients. In his essay “Further Remarks on the Neuro-psychoses of Defence” Freud noted that “foremost amongst those guilty of abuses like these, with their momentous consequences, are nursemaids, governesses and domestic servants, to whose care children are only too thoughtlessly entrusted; teachers, moreover, figure with regrettable frequency” (SE 3: 164).

An editorial note reveals that it was often the father who was the transgressor in those cases but that Freud had deliberately suppressed this. Freud found this knowledge so disturbing that in the end he rejected the seduction theory – which postulated that hysteria was inevitably the result of traumatic sexual incidents in childhood – in favour of the Oedipus complex. The introduction to this essay, in the standard edition, noted that Freud disclosed, in a letter to his friend Fliess, that “for some months it had been dawning on him that it was hardly credible that perverse acts against children were so general — especially since in every case it was the father who had to be held responsible…. This opened the door to the discovery of infantile sexuality and of the Oedipus complex” (SE: 3: 160).

His reluctance to implicate the father in sexual abuse would have been even greater in relation to the figure of the mother. Freud idealised his relationship
with his own mother and, in his essay “Femininity,” described the bond between mother and son in superlative terms; “a mother is only brought unlimited satisfaction by her relationship to a son; this is altogether the most perfect, the most free from ambivalence of all human relationships” (SE 22: 133).

Sprengnether argues that in addition to idealising the mother, the Oedipus complex presents her as castrated, rendered impotent. This strategy allowed Freud to avoid: “a direct confrontation with issues of maternal power (seduction, aggression, betrayal) [while idealizing] the mother’s devotion to her child, at the same time that he conceives of her as castrated and hence inferior or worthy of masculine contempt. Both strategies seem designed to obscure her relative strength and importance vis-à-vis that of an infant” (Sprengnether 3).

As “The Magpie” demonstrates, Cyren sees himself as the sexual aggressor in his relationship with his mother but another poem – “Mother Gives me a Bath” – reveals that his mother took advantage of routine hygiene practice to touch him and to observe him in an inappropriate way (as Freud’s mother-surrogates did to their charges):

Mother wouldn’t let me
lock the bathroom door

you might drown, she said,
you might go down the plughole
where I’ll never find you

find me
Mother always did

she’d wash
every nook and cranny

Mother wouldn’t let me
lock the bathroom door
she'd watch me piss  
she'd watch me poo  
her eyes bright  
as new pennies. (187)

Sprengnether argues that when he embraced the Oedipus complex, Freud pushed the figure of the pre-Oedipal mother into the margins of his psychoanalytic theory. The father-son relation was seen as the more potent despite the primary nature of the relationship between mother and infant. Yet he could not entirely exclude her: “the figure of the mother is not altogether banished from Freud’s work. She appears in the interstices of his argument, a persistent, though suppressed presence” (2). In Sprengnether’s terms the mother becomes spectral. She outlines the etymology of the word:

Derived from the latin [sic] verb specere, to see, to look at, ‘specter’ is related to ‘spectacle,’ ‘speculation’ and ‘suspicion,’ while its immediate source is the Latin spectrum, meaning, simply, an appearance. In English a specter is a ghost, a phantom, any object of fear or dread. Freud’s representations of the preoedipal mother evoke all of these associations. (5)

At a pivotal point in the narrative Cyren takes Fay to the Blue Mountains. Their ultimate destination is the Megalong Valley, the site of his childhood seduction. The Mountains are a haunted site in Porter’s work. In her verse novel The Monkey’s Mask (1994) she writes, “The Mountains are so used/ to horrors// ghosts shiver in the bush” and she speaks of “all that haunted sandstone” (175). In her young adult novel The Witch Number (1993) the Megalong Valley is oppressive and disorienting. It’s largely populated by the members of a religious cult and is associated with deformity and secret rituals. Cyren thinks of the Megalong as his “mind’s most haunted hotel” (105). He’s not sure why he takes Fay there. He wants her to understand what this place means to him, its
significance – “I want Fay/ to take this in// ‘My childhood’” – but he won’t, or can’t, tell her what happened there (104). Inevitably the horror this place holds for him is unperceived by her. She traverses a landscape which is inimical to him without hurt:

“Let’s explore”
she says
and pushes a vine
bristling with thorns
out of her way
with her bare hand. (105)

Where she sees beauty he sees decay, and he feels trapped both by the stark cliffs that box the valley in and by his memories of when he “was a boy/ tremulous with the blackest/ secret in the world,” but that secret remains unspoken (201). After Cyren and Fay return from the Mountains there seems to be an unmistakable downward shift in Cyren’s life.

When he first knew Fay he quoted Paracelsus to her: “‘the physician’s calling/ consists of nothing/ but compassion for others’” (87). But Cyren’s own compassion quickly begins to reveal cracks. In his early days at Callan Park he claims to love the inmates “to distraction” but he thinks of his private patients, whom he sees as spoilt and snivelling, with contempt (19). He muses of one patient “Would a week in Callan Park/ cure this spoilt bitch// Play it again, Samantha/ You’re my whining goldmine” (55). He threatens another patient with electric shock therapy in order to make him talk (115). Tamara is another one of his private patients. She’s a heroin addict and, despite considerable wealth, works as a stripper. She’s chronically depressed and self-destructive yet, ignoring the Hippocratic oath, Cyren begins a damaging sexual relationship with her. He questions his attitude towards his private patients, asking why he gives himself the
“latitude to use them” (150) and hazards that it’s because they don’t really need
him unlike his “filthy mob/ at Callan Park” (149).

He befriends two of the patients from Callan Park, in particular — Frank
and Penny-Jenny. Penny-Jenny is a forty-five year old woman who was
institutionalised because she has Downes Syndrome. She is starved for affection
and Cyren’s consideration delights her. He and Fay take her on an outing to a
coffee lounge where she gobbles up the bowl of sugar. She gives Cyren little gifts
— tokens from cereal packets and the like. When he is ill and depressed she
cheers him up when she visits him in his office dressed in a swimsuit and full of
artless enthusiasm:

    Her blubber bursting
    out of a faded blue cozzie

    she pirouettes ecstatically
    for me

    “Ballawinna! Ballawinna!”

    I tickle her stubby neck

    and her body heat
    shoots up my arm

    she makes me
    almost better. (98)

Penny-Jenny is constructed as an innocent, childlike figure. The potency of this
symbolic representation becomes clear later in the novel when she is linked
tragically with the “Red Man” who, in alchemical lore, is placed in opposition to
the “White Woman”.

While Cyren’s relationship with Penny-Jenny is characterised by
simplicity his friendship with Frank is more complex. Frank is a poet who hates
women and communists and who visits "the Land of the Dead/ tussling with Dante/ over the true colour/ of the soul" (74). Cyren envies him his soaring expression; he loves "the aroma/ of the creative mind" (5). He thinks of Frank as a mate and notes the familiarity of their association:

Lighting a trembling man’s cigarette
    can be an act of delicate intimacy

    holding his hand steady
    his eyes and yours
    on the flaring match
    between you.

    I light Frank’s cigarette
    aware of the tingle
    in my fingers
    as I help him. (66)

The deterioration of his relationship with Frank indicates his disengagement from his public patients. In the early days he cradles Frank’s head tenderly in his hands, whispering endearments to him as he recovers from ECT. Fay calls him “Doctor Kiss-and-cuddle” but she’s dismayed when she finds out that the patients aren’t given any anaesthetic before shock therapy (88). This was common practice but Cyren feels sufficiently uncomfortable about it to react with defensive anger when Fay says she can smell the gel used to conduct the current on his hands; that she can smell the fear. He asks himself:

Why was I so bloody stupid
to tell you
we don’t use anaesthetic

it’s expensive
and not necessary
most of them
don’t know what day
it is

and we hold them
gently
it’s just a flash
just a sting
then they’re out of it
they haven’t a clue

all right, afterwards,
you ache all over
and, believe me, complain

but they’re not
lambs to the slaughter
they’re mental patients

suffering, like their minds
are permanently
on a hot plate
and this treatment
mysteriously,
can drag them back
from cliff edges
you couldn’t begin
to imagine.

So, Fay, don’t sniff
round me
like I’m Doctor Mengele

these hands are clean. (145–146)

This is an oblique reference to Pilate washing his hands of the blood of Jesus and is one of several instances in which Frank is linked with Christ. Cyren refers ironically to Frank having stigmata and speaking in tongues. When he confesses Tamara’s death to Frank he sees a faint halo around his head. “The trick/ of a cheap bulb,” he rationalises. Yet he still desires an absolution that Frank can’t give him (245). For Jung, Christ, like Buddha, represented an embodiment of the self but whereas Buddha overcame the world through rational insight Christ did so as a foredoomed sacrifice (Memories, Dreams, Reflections 279).
By the end of the novel Frank is no longer held gently or whispered awake. Instead Cyren allows him to be left lying in his own urine after a bout of ECT while Harry, the attendant, has his lunch. Neglect develops into active cruelty. After his next bout of shock therapy Cyren leaves him shrieking and in pain “for a good long while” before he sends the sister in to give him a shot of glucose (266). His final betrayal of Frank is simply to abandon him. He leaves Callan Park in order to go into private practice – that “tall dark stranger// that most persistent/ of seducers” – full time (275). All Frank’s privileges are taken from him. He can no longer write, no longer sit in the garden, or smoke. He has no books and is secured in a locked ward. Cyren admits, “it will, I know/ kill him” but “these things/ happen” (268).

The account of Cyren’s moral disintegration incorporates several images of fire. In alchemical terms fire is a metaphor for change, it was an essential part of the alchemists’ process of transformation: fire as a catalyst is a recurring motif. In his early days at Callan Park Cyren comments “my neat suit hides/ the smoke of my busy smelter”, but fire is also associated for him with the death of those who are beloved (24). He recalls deliberately burning his hand on the stove the night his mother “stopped loving him” as he howled her name, his pain, “crooning her dead” (192 – 193).

Penny-Jenny also meets a fiery end. She’s incinerated in a fire at Callan Park in which a dozen people die. She probably started the fire with a cigarette lighter purloined from Cyren. In the poem “For Penny-Jenny” he desperately tries to distance himself from the tragedy:
I didn’t lock the doors.
I wasn’t there.

I didn’t give you nice long sleep pills.
I wasn’t there.

I didn’t play with matches.
I wasn’t there.

I didn’t fill your room with hot, hot, hot.
Bad black smoke. Your mouth a greedy fish.

I didn’t jump on the roof.
I wasn’t the Red Man who jumped on top of you.

I couldn’t pull him off.
I couldn’t pull him off.
I wasn’t there. (232)

For a moment he believes that this can be a turning point for him; that good can come from this tragedy: “I will burn my old life down!/ Peter, you’re all ash/

Peter, You’re all brand new” (234). He goes to Fay and confesses all expecting absolution but she can’t forgive him for his relationship with Tamara and throws him out. He flees from her to Tamara but is overwhelmed by her self-destructiveness. Kissing her vomit-stained mouth he tucks her up into bed and leaves, vowing never to return. Tamara, like his mother, kills herself. Continuing the metaphor of fire she’s cremated:

She’s gone up
in a puff of discreet
crematorium
smoke

I smell her going
in this muggy afternoon air. (247)

Tamara leaves a note blaming Cyren but she also leaves him all her money. Cyren decides to keep it despite his ex-wife Monica’s protestations and her ultimate
rejection of him. At this stage Cyren’s moral decline is complete: he has reached black, the nigredo, or, as Jung writes, “the horrible darkness of our mind” (Psychology and Alchemy 273). He suddenly realises he is alone: “There’s no one I can rely on/ or ring/ for the midday brandy/ of a warm laugh” (255). All is now truly in ashes.

Two strong images of bushfire are associated with the Megalong Valley. In “Water Tanks” Cyren recalls revealing to his mother his fantasy of floating safely in the clear liquid of a water tank as a bushfire blazed around it. His mother points out the inherent danger of his fancy: “You’d be boiled alive/ like a lobster/ in a pot/ you’d never get out” (197). The statement is both literally and metaphorically true. This is a situation from which he can’t escape although he imagines freeing himself from the past. When he takes Fay to the Megalong she admires an old building: “That lovely old tea room/ Fay says dreamily/ could be made of driftwood” (106). Cyren’s response is curt – for him the building is irresistibly associated with his mother – “The next big fire/ should finish it off” (107). The “should” represents his desire to obliterate this place rather than a prediction of a likely event.

Soon after their return from the Mountains Fay gave Cyren a bunch of roses, an act which enraged him for reasons which she had no way of understanding. The roses were Blue Moons which reminded him of his mother. He didn’t show his anger openly nor did he reject Fay’s gift but instead of putting the flowers in a vase or even tossing them out, he destroys them, employing a calculated inversion of the usual care given to such a bouquet: “I stick them/ in a bucket/ and drown them/ upside down” (116). The roses are linked with a
perverse sexuality that he wants to deny: “These fragrant sirens/ are not going to
sing me/ onto that old rock” (116). He has begun to associate Fay with his mother,
partly because of the roses, but also because she was situated within a place that
was so haunted for him. This process had begun while they were in the Megalong
Valley. He pictures Fay immured in the landscape, decaying, becoming one with
it. He watched her in the late afternoon sunlight, letting her words drift by him as
he imagined her

mouldering
in the sandy earth
of this valley’s
abandoned cemetery.

Keep talking, Fay
while I strip
your innocent face
to knowing bones. (108)

This is how he thinks of his mother who killed herself when she was forty
years old. Unlike Tamara she didn’t leave a note but Cyren believes she
committed suicide because of their relationship. Although he can recall how lush
her body was during her life now, when she comes to him at night, when she
wakes or keeps him from sleep, Cyren’s mother is strongly associated with death,
burial and the dissolution of the body. She is his “ash mother” (239) and the
skeleton woman whose “every warm bone” he can count (118). In the poem
“Mummy’s Curse” Cyren’s nightmares are filled with:

a smell of old bandages

there’s something
very old
and dead
shuffling about
in my head. (128)
Yet Fay is simply too nice – idealistic, compassionate, loyal – for him to sustain this identification. In the poem “Mysterium Conjunctionis” Cyren demands “Pick me my mystical wife/ Doctor Jung// Pick me my eternal queen” (257). The chemical marriage or coniunctio was a constant theme in alchemical texts. It was the bringing together of opposites, either in confrontation or attraction. Often the opposites masculine/feminine are represented as the King and Queen or as the Red Man (a title Cyren rejects in “For Penny-Jenny”) and the White Woman. In the poem “Mysterium Conjunctionis” Cyren rejects Jung’s supposed choice of mystical wife – Fay “fresh and milky/ as baby’s breath” – and demands that he make another choice (257).

Pick again.

Now you’re talking
Doctor Jung.

At last.
The real thing.

Let me take Tamara’s charred little hand
in mine

let us float up
the aisle
together. (258)

Cyren doesn’t crave a bridal, or the adornment of innocent white. He wants to be that ancient harbinger of death a carrion-crow, the raven that feeds on the battle-field, to “flap in all feathered black glory/ and peck out/ [his bride’s]… eyes” (257). Tamara is both lover and the figure of death.

In his essay “The Theme of the Three Caskets” Freud examines the scene from *The Merchant of Venice* in which Bassanio has to chose between three
caskets — one of gold, one of silver and one of lead. He notes that the situation is inspired by a tale in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a medieval collection of anonymous stories, and describes it as an ancient theme. Freud argues that the symbolism in myths is analogous with dream symbolism and that, therefore, the three caskets represent women:

If what we were concerned with were a dream, it would occur to us at once that caskets are also women, symbols of what is essential in woman, and therefore of a woman herself — like coffers, boxes, cases, baskets, and so on. If we boldly assume that there are symbolic substitutions of the same kind in myths as well... we see that the theme is a human one, *a man's choice between three women.* (SE 12: 292)

Freud describes several other tales in which a man must choose between three women and notes in each instance that the chosen woman is linked, even if only symbolically, with death. In each case, he claims, the three women are avatars of the Parcae, or Fates. The third woman, the one who is always chosen, is Atropos, the ineluctable, who severs the thread of life.

Having made the connection between the third sister and the goddess of death Freud then raises the question of other tales in which the third woman is the goddess of love such as the judgement of Paris. He also notes contradictions in the tales he has already examined. Portia, who is represented by the lead casket which Freud links with death through a symbolic analysis in which lead = silence = death, is also "the fairest and wisest of women" (SE 12: 298). Cordelia, who represents death through her own demise, is also Lear's only loyal and loving daughter. Freud reconciles this conflict by arguing that people rejected the inevitable fate laid out for them in the tale of the Fates and substituted love for...
death. This change was facilitated by what Freud described as “an ancient ambivalence” (SE 12: 299):

The Goddess of Love herself, who now took the place of the Goddess of Death, had once been identical with her. Even the Greek Aphrodite had not wholly relinquished her connection with the underworld, although she had long surrendered her chthonic role to other divine figures, to Persephone, or to the tri-form Artemis-Hecate. The great mother-goddesses of the oriental peoples, however, all seem to have been both creators and destroyers — both goddesses of life and fertility and goddesses of death. Thus the replacement by a wishful opposite in our theme harks back to a primaeval identity. (SE 12: 299)

Freud notes that this double aspect of love and death lends an uncanny resonance to the figure of the third woman. In his essay on the uncanny, which Sprengnether suggests seems to expand on certain aspects of the ideas found in “The Theme of the Three Casks,” Freud describes the mother as quintessentially uncanny, a figure both of desire and terror. Some men, he writes: “feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the former Heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning” (SE 17: 245).

Cyren’s fantasy of floating in a water tank clearly represents a return to the safety of the womb. In the context of the poem the Megalong Valley is associated with a feminine sexuality that has ensnared him:

Trapping me forever
In this cleft
Of raw sandstone cliffs
And wisps of rainforest
Clinging
To the valley’s soft and secret parts
Like pubic hair (106)
In "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" Freud describes a man very much like Cyren, someone whose: "libido has remained attached to the mother for so long, even after the onset of puberty, that the maternal characteristics remain stamped on the love-objects that are chosen later, and all these turn into easily recognisable mother-surrogates" (SE 11: 169). Freud illustrates his description with a visceral metaphor. He compares the way in which such a man is moulded by his relationship with his mother to "the way in which the skull of a newly born child is shaped: ... after a protracted labour it always takes the form of a cast of the narrow part of the mother's pelvis" (SE 11: 169). Cyren associated Fay with his mother but he couldn't sustain the likeness. His relationship with Tamara mirrors that union to a greater degree. It's an inversion of his mother's betrayal. He is the one who abuses a position of trust, seducing a patient in his care. Then Tamara, like his mother, kills herself bequeathing him a tainted and corrupting inheritance.

Freud ends "The Theme of the Three Caskets" with a final analogy. The three women of the stories represent, he suggests, "the three inevitable relations that a man has with a woman" – mother, lover and destroyer – or, more specifically, that they are: "the three forms taken by the mother in the course of a man's life — the mother herself, the beloved one who is chosen after her pattern, and lastly the Mother Earth who receives him once more" (SE 12: 301). A correspondence is made in What a Piece of Work between place and Cyren's mother/lover/destroyer. He describes the Megalong Valley as "the blue heart/ the

76In The Interpretation of Dreams Freud relates mother earth or motherland to the Oedipal mother. He relates several instances from antiquity in which the subject's dream of sleeping with his mother was interpreted as a need to return to the mother country (n522 – 523).
deadly valley/ of my mystery" (103). Heart is representative of love and of the kernel of a matter, the central part, and is here allied with death. This landscape—his mother earth—has, like his actual mother, irrevocably shaped him.
Revenant

Henry Lawson lived in the Mountains for a time as a young man when his work was just beginning to be published. He was employed by his father in painting houses at Mount Victoria. Lawson wrote that his father “built most of the town—save the few houses that were there during the coaching days” (Lawson, Autobiographical 200). At this time Lawson made friends with a group of young men he dubbed the Mountains Push. This group included Jack Jones and Arthur Parker. In his memoir of Lawson, published in Henry Lawson by His Mates (1931), Arthur Parker wrote of the influence the Mountains had on his friend.

Henry loved the beauty of the gullies and ranges. It has been said that he had no eye for the wonders of nature, but I know differently... He enjoyed beautiful scenery in a quiet way. He was more interested in other things afterwards. But he had time to feel and appreciate it too, in those days. (Bertha Lawson 18 – 19)

It was a time when Lawson was experimenting with various genres and the Mountains affected, to some extent, the form of that experimentation. Lawson wrote several melancholy ballads about the ghostliness of abandoned buildings: “Golden Gully”, “The Old Stone Chimney” and “The Cherry Tree Inn”; and also essayed lyric poetry, “The Blue Mountains” and “Rain in the Blue Mountains”.

As well, Lawson experimented with the Gothic, most notably in his poem “The Ghost at the Second Bridge” and a short story entitled “The Third Murder”. Both of these were inspired by local legends, told to him by his friends Jack Jones and Arthur Parker. “The Ghost at the Second Bridge” tells of an encounter between two young men and the “Woman in Black” who haunts Victoria Pass. (The bridge is actually a causeway between two hills.)
In the poem the two young men pause at an inn at the bottom of the Pass and another customer bets them that they will see the ghost that night. As they drive up the Pass in their cart Jones describes the apparition to his companion:

“She’ll cross the midnight road in haste
   And vanish down the track;
   Her long black hair hangs to her waist
   And she is dressed in black;
   Her face is white, a dull dead white –
   Her eyes are opened wide –
   She never looks to left or right,
   Or turns to either side.” (167)

The narrator of the poem avows his disbelief in ghosts and yet he wishes that Johnny would stop talking about the “woman in black” because the time and place are “historically favourable for a ghost” (167). In his essay “The Uncanny” Sigmund Freud defines the circumstances which produce a perception of uncanniness. He concludes that “an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed” (SE 17: 249). Freud gives several examples of surmounted beliefs including the notion that the dead can return. Few adults, he argues, give credence to the existence of ghosts. However, if an incident occurs which seems to confirm their reality, unless a person has entirely rid himself or herself of such a belief, there will be a moment of acceptance: “So the dead do live on and appear on the scene of their former activities!” (SE 17: 248).

The site is also uncanny. To the right of the road lies Hartley Vale with its “homely beauty” but on the left the “mighty walls of Mount Victoria rise” (this refers to the topographical feature rather than the village). The road is a liminal
space between Hartley Vale (*heimlich*) and the sublime Mount Victoria (*unheimlich*). As Gelder and Jacobs note,

> An “uncanny” experience may occur when one’s home is rendered, somehow and in some sense, unfamiliar; one has the experience, in other words, of being in place and “out of place” simultaneously. This simultaneity is important to stress since, in Freud’s terms, it is not simply the unfamiliar in itself which generates the anxiety of the uncanny; it is specifically the combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar – the way the one seems always to inhabit the other. (23)

The road becomes the venue for another liminal figure; the ghost, caught, as such spectres are, between life and death. As Eugenia C. DeLamotte puts it in *Perils of the Night* (1990) ghosts “defy both physical boundaries and the boundaries whereby daylight reason distinguishes one thing from another. The tomb cannot contain them; they cross the border between the living and the dead; notoriously they walk...” (21). In this case, instead of crossing the road before them, the spirit’s appearance goes unnoticed until they turn around to see the ghostly woman with her hands laid on the tailboard, her eyes fixed on them, her expression pleading for aid. Implicit in the notion of haunting is the suggestion of injustice, of a wrong to be righted. But whatever help the ghost desires she is disappointed. Jack lashes the horse and when it jibs both men leap down and flee from both cart and ghost.

“The Ghost at the Second Bridge” is popularly supposed to refer to the ghost of Caroline Collits a nineteenth century murder victim. The crime took place in 1842. Early on the morning of the fourth of January as the Penrith to Hartley Mail was descending Victoria Pass the horses jibbed at the sight of some

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clothing on the road. The driver, Matthew Wall, pulled up his team and examined the garments. He recognised them as belonging to John Walsh, a Sawyer.
Following the trail of clothes – trousers, shirt, waistcoat, neckerchief, boots – he discovered the body of a woman a little off the road in the bush. She had horrific head injuries, apparently inflicted with a rock that lay nearby, and she’d been raped. The driver knew her: she was Caroline Collits, the sister-in-law of John Walsh. Walsh was arrested. This is the story that was told at his trial.

On the night of the third, Walsh, Caroline and her husband William had visited Joseph Jagger’s inn at Hartley. The two men had drunk brandy but Caroline only had syrup (variously described as lemon or clove). Walsh had two glasses and appeared to be drunk. Jagger refused to serve him any more liquor and Caroline coaxed him away from the inn. The three of them set off to walk up Victoria Pass to Gardener’s Inn at Blackheath where Maria Walsh, who was Caroline’s younger sister, was waiting. It was a moonless night.

Caroline had left William two or three months previously and gone to live with Walsh and Maria. William had tried to persuade her to return to him many times and had been greeted with abuse and violence from Walsh. Walsh was also abusive to Caroline when he was drinking and had turned her out of the house. William didn’t know why Caroline had left him but he blamed Walsh and Maria. He had refused to give Maria five head of cattle and he thought this was the root of the animosity between them.

After they had walked about a mile Walsh had suddenly attacked William, knocking him to the ground. Caroline had flown to her husband’s protection, grabbing Walsh by the arm. She had shouted to William to run, that Walsh would
kill him. William fled, leaving Caroline behind. Two hours later Walsh arrived at
Gardener’s Inn alone and clad in nothing but a borrowed shirt which he had
cadged from a soldier at the stockade on the way. William demanded to know
where his wife was. Walsh claimed that a band of armed men had taken Caroline
from him by force, that they’d stripped him naked and he had fled. He accused
Joseph Jagger’s son. His face was bleeding slightly from a wound which he
claimed was from a blow from a pistol but which most witnesses described as
being more like a scratch. No one went to Caroline’s aid; not her husband, or her
sister, or the soldiers to whom Walsh had told his tale. It was morning before
Walsh and William went in search of Caroline. They met Wall, the coach driver,
on the road and he immediately accused Walsh of the murder and told William to
give him in charge (“Murder” n. pag.). Walsh was brought to trial, convicted,
sentenced to death and executed.

Collits is certainly a prime candidate for spectrality but there is no clear
link made with Collits either in the poem or in the biographical notes concerning
its genesis written by Lawson’s informants, Arthur Parker and Jack Jones (who
appears in the poem as Johny Jones). Jones’s parents were residents of the
Hartley district in the 1840s and would almost certainly have known of the
murder, which was a matter of notoriety for years afterwards. In 1912 Michael
Long, a resident of the Penrith district, recalled the incident in print. He was
reminiscing about a boyhood trip he had taken across the Mountains in 1851. One
of his strongest recollections was of passing the spot where Collits was murdered
or, as the newspaper put it, the site of the “ghastly sordid tragedy” (Freame n.
pag.).
In his notes to *Henry Lawson: Collected Verse* (1967) Colin Roderick offers two separate explanations for the appearance of the ghost from two different sources. Gertrude O’Connor described the apparition as a woman in white who crossed the road in front of travellers and was only seen on moonlit nights. She explained that the phenomenon was caused by the juxtaposition of two trees:

> Two trees viewed at a certain point outlined a female figure. White clouds behind filled up this one open space in the foliage, and deep scrub around and the moon shining upon it from behind the traveller heightened the effect. When driving towards the tree the road diverged enough to give the impression of a woman crossing the road. By the time the trees were reached the change in the position of the trees spoilt the contours and gave the impression of the spirit dissolving in thin air. The whole thing was so realistic that it often frightened horses. Of course it only appeared at certain times, which made the whole thing more weird. (439)

Arthur Parker offered a different solution to the mystery and an enhanced version of the manifestation:

> A woman in black crossed the road at night, followed by a hearse drawn by four black horses. She came from the Camel’s Back Ridge and disappeared into the bush. Some said that it was the branch of a tree that looked like a woman; but recently a friend told me that he often met and talked with the ghost, or rather, the ghost’s originator. The story had been spread to keep certain people from a certain spot. Many of us firmly believed it. (439)

The stories differ in their detail, but they make it clear that the manifestation was widely discussed in the area. Yet there is no indication of who the ghost had been in life. Certainly Caroline Collits is never mentioned. Within the poem the only mention of a woman’s murder is “and here a teamster killed his wife” although it does continue “and here a dozen others had been murdered right enough” (167). Later works further obscure the ghost’s provenance; Lawson recycled the story in two sketches, “The Spooks of Long Gully” and “The Hairy
Man". In these pieces, which are located outside the Mountains, the victim is described respectively as a carrier’s wife and a hawker’s wife. While it’s unclear whether the ghost is intended to be that of Caroline Collits there are strong resemblances in the way in which she and the "woman in black" are represented textually.

"We’ve made a mash," the narrator of the poem exclaims jokingly in a vain attempt to appear braver than he is. His companion responds in kind:

"She’s mashed," said Jack, "I do not doubt.
But ‘tis a lonely place;
And then you see it might turn out
A breach of promise case." (168)

The ghost is characterised as sexually importunate, accosting strange men on the road. Within this context the phrase “she never looks to left or right or turns to either side” gives an impression of obsession, even sexual obsession. The ghost’s eyes glisten as if they perceive a dearly desired object, and her gaze is fixed on the narrator. But the text also intimates that such an interest may be fiscal rather than physical, that a meeting in such a lonely place may result in a “breach of promise case”. In an article published in the 27 April 1842 edition of the *Sydney Herald*, Caroline is characterised as promiscuous and avaricious. She and her sister Maria were said to have

borne very loose characters which is fully established by the fact that both before and after Walsh had married the younger sister Caroline cohabited with him and had in fact been for a considerable time living with him, under the same roof with her sister. ("Murder" n. pag.)

William’s evidence at the trial contradicts this. He told that court that Caroline had left to go and live with her sister three or four months before the murder, long after Maria’s marriage. During the trial William told the court that he thought
Caroline had had sexual relations with Walsh but there was no proof of this. Despite the *Herald*’s efforts to make the arrangement seem improper surely it wasn’t unusual for a woman to live with her married sister. There is another possible explanation for Caroline going to live with her sister. Maria was having her first child. At the time Caroline went to live with her Maria would have been three or four months pregnant. Walsh was a violent man; Caroline might well have felt her sister needed whatever help and protection she could provide. Her defence of William demonstrates that she was capable of such a selfless act. If she hadn’t physically restrained Walsh and shouted to her husband to run he might well have been the victim rather than she. Strangely, Caroline’s championing of William, which led to her death, is given little prominence by contemporary commentators. It might be expected that some scorn would be directed at a husband who abandoned his wife in such a manner but there were mitigating circumstances in William’s case. The *Sydney Herald* described him as a person of “weak mind” (“Mount Victoria Murder”); his own father was even more forthright. In February of 1839 Pierce Collits had placed an advertisement in the *Australian*: “This is to caution any person from giving trust or credit to my son, William Collits, who I proclaim to be an Idiot” (Collits n. pag.). The *Herald* uses this revelation to implicitly question Caroline’s motives for marrying William who, they write, was “possessed at the time of their marriage of a considerable number of cattle, but is generally regarded as a person of weak mind” (Mount Victoria Murder”). The inference is that she persuaded a simple man into marriage in order to get her hands on his capital, in this case, livestock.
Lawson gives some indication, in the poem, that the ghost is that of a young woman. In the fifth stanza she is called the “Girl in black” and her description includes the line, “Her long black hair hangs to her waist,” a style more appropriate to a girl than an older woman (although it’s possible that this reference is meant to produce an image of dishevelment due to a violent struggle). At the time of her death Caroline Collits was no more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, her sister Maria was even younger. This means that both Caroline and Maria were probably no more than fourteen at the time of their respective marriages.

John Walsh had twice previously been accused of murder. In both cases he was acquitted. Why would a family allow their child to marry a man with such a history? The answer is heartbreakingly simple: Caroline and Maria were the daughters of William and Mary James (see “Twenty Mile Hollow” 169). The James family knew all too well that a person could be accused and even convicted of a crime they hadn’t committed. Her parents’ case had not been forgotten and it was used by the press as an indictment of Caroline. The Sydney Herald acknowledged that most of their readers were already aware of the case and its outcome. Nevertheless, they clearly felt that the narrative wasn’t complete. The purpose of their article “The Mount Victoria Murder” was to explain why the murder had taken place. In Discipline and Punish Michel Foucault suggests that in the nineteenth century criminal penalties no longer addressed the body but the soul. In these circumstances it was insufficient to establish that a crime had been committed and who had perpetrated it, it was also necessary to find out why it had happened. “Where did it originate in the author himself? Instincts, unconscious,
environment, heredity?” (15). But in this case the blame for the crime seems to fall on the victim. Her environment and heredity are examined much more closely than Walsh’s, and are found wanting, as are her morals.

The Herald’s explanation of Caroline’s murder centres on alcoholism. So intent are they on the evils of intemperance that agency becomes blurred:

The perpetration of this crime appears to have been marked with circumstances of peculiar atrocity, such as we believe have seldom been met with in the annals of crime; and as the history of the case is fraught with unanswerable arguments in favour of the cause of temperance, we have collected the most material of them in the following brief sketch. (“Mt Victoria Murder” n. pag.)

In this account there seems to be no human agent, instead intemperance provoked the crime. The Herald also recounts a misleading and inaccurate version of Mary James’s death and her husband’s trial. The time frame given is incorrect. Mary, who is described as a “notorious drunkard,” is said to have hung herself six months before her daughter’s death rather than six years previously. This has the effect of making Mary’s influence seem much more immediate than it actually was. William James is described as being “so much in liquor, that he could not prevent her from destroying herself.” This is contradicted by evidence given at his trial. It was never suggested that James was inebriated when his wife died. The article then states “he was taken up on suspicion of being a party to her death; but after lying about six months in gaol, was discharged” (Mount Victoria Murder n. pag.”). Again, this statement skews events, ignoring James’s two trials and the lengthy legal debate about the validity of his conviction, in particular, the quashing of that conviction.

In contrast the biographical information concerning John Walsh is brief and dispassionate: “[he] appears to be a native of Ireland, from which he was
transported to this colony in 1833, for seven years; he is about thirty years of age ("Mount Victoria Murder n. pag."). The article then describes Walsh’s two previous trials for murder. The Herald displays uneasiness about the two previous acquittals. It’s strongly inferred that he was guilty of those crimes. In 1836 he had been arrested, along with a man named John Hennessey, in connection with the death of John Crate, a shepherd. Walsh was accused of the homicide and Hennessey was accused of incitement to murder. The evidence against both of the men was circumstantial. Hennessey had previously been heard to threaten Crate and Walsh had absconded from his workgang on the day of the murder. Walsh told John Cunningham, the man who apprehended him, that “he feared something wrong would happen him [sic] if I brought him in, he feared he would be hanged before six months” ("Patrick alias John Walsh” n. pag.). A witness claimed that a stick found near the body was identical to one which Walsh had on the morning of the murder but even if the man was correct in his identification there was nothing to link the stick with the crime. There was no blood evident on it and, in any case, it was believed that the weapon used to kill Crate was a tomahawk. The case came before Sir James Dowling who directed the jury to acquit both prisoners.

In 1839 Walsh was accused of the murder of a woman and her young son. This was, like Caroline’s death, an extremely brutal crime. The victims were battered to death with a stick, which was left lying near the bodies. A keg of rum and some tobacco were stolen from their hut. Walsh later took another man to where these items were concealed. His story was that he’d been told of the hiding place by bushrangers who had committed both the murder and the robbery. His clothes were somewhat bloodstained when he was arrested and he explained this
by saying that the bushrangers had given the garments to him. The article notes the similarity between Walsh’s defence in his 1839 trial and that which he used unsuccessfully in the Caroline Collits case (Mount Victoria Murder” n. pag.). Foucault contends that during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries the emphasis in crime prevention moved from public punishment as a deterrent to the dissemination of the notion that criminals would be apprehended. The knowledge that Walsh had been tried for murder twice previously and not been convicted would have profoundly challenged this idea. As Foucault puts it, “nothing so weakens the machinery of the law than the hope of going unpunished” (96).

Despite these factors the Herald never exhibits the moral indignation towards Walsh that it directs at Caroline. It could be argued that knowledge of her personal and family history, inaccurate as it was, influenced the tone of the article. But even before any details were known about Caroline or her family, the newspapers were ambivalent in their description of her. In the initial report of her murder the crime is described as a “dreadful act” and the wounds inflicted on Caroline as “most barbaric violence”, but even in this first brief outline of her death there is a disturbing element in the description of the victim. The article states “the body presented a most revolting spectacle” (“Hartley” n. pag.) The language suggests that Caroline, the body, is somehow responsible for her condition: she makes a spectacle of herself. Further, she revolts.

Death is often seen as redemptive. In Bjelke Petersen’s The Moon Minstrel, for example, the prospect of salvation for Dan Blegg is inherent in the symbolism of the white cross but, while a murderer, apparently even in death, enjoys the possibility of redemption, this grace seems, at times, to be denied to the
victim. When Walsh was convicted the judge recommended that he “make peace with his Maker, as he could no longer be allowed to remain on this earth, but must soon appear before that dread tribunal where all his crimes would be found registered against him” (“Murder” n. pag.). Foucault noted that public execution “occurs exactly at the juncture between the judgement of men and the judgement of God… [that] it is one’s soul that one must save” (46). But Caroline, like the “woman in black”, had no such opportunity. There is no heaven for Lawson’s ghost. She is tethered to the site of her death, endlessly and hopelessly appealing for some unspecified aid. And there is no indication that society expected any better for Caroline, who was damned by gossip and innuendo. Some fifty-five years later, while reporting on the case of Frank Butler, the Bulletin poured scorn on the notion that the murderer is redeemed while the victim, who had no opportunity for repentance, is damned. They denounced Butler’s “pathetic, parsonically-conveyed” repentance which, as they pointed out, was dependent on the death of his victims: “Had that worthy fallen overboard 15 years ago he would have been damned – because he did not slip gracefully through a parson’s hands. Now, although a murderer, he is in heaven. The parson let him in” (“Murderer” 7).

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Lawson’s short story “The Third Murder” also concerns the death by violence of a woman. It’s one of Lawson’s more self-consciously Gothic works. It includes many conventions of the genre: an abandoned building, the accompanying air of desolation, a family retainer who relates the terrible history of the house, and the manuscript found by chance which illuminates the mystery. Eugenia DeLamotte
describes the compilation of certain features such as these as the inventory or list-making approach to Gothic (7). She notes that, in the nineteenth century, American writers who sought to incorporate the Gothic tradition into their work had to do without much of the traditional Gothic material. She argues that American writers struggled to work what they had learned from Gothic romance into a cultural context that, by its very nature, excluded many Gothic materials. [This] prepared the way for an approach to Gothicism other than list-making. American writers... – to the extent that they used the Gothic tradition – were engaged precisely in trying to disentangle the Gothic myth from its Old World conventions in order to free it for use in an American context. (7)

Later Lawson employed a more Australian vernacular and setting in those of his stories that had an uncanny edge – such as “The Bush Undertaker” – but in this early phase of his career he relied more heavily on Gothic conventions.

“The Third Murder” recounts the story of a man who decides to spend the night in a haunted house. Lenton House is isolated, located in “a lonely valley of the Great Dividing Range” and was built by convict labour (119). It has two storeys plus a garret and a series of cellars which housed the prisoners. These have their ceilings filled with loam, “probably for the purpose of deadening sound arising from that quarter” (120). The narrator is told the history of the house by a former caretaker:

A convict master who occupied the house for a brief period had a dispute with his housekeeper, a young English country girl, an assigned servant of his, because, it was averred, she failed to fall in with his wishes in everything. He killed her with a blow on the temple from a nail hammer, and after carrying the body down into the cellar (conveniently unoccupied at times) he burned it there. The legend further states that he had sufficient influence to have the matter hushed up. (120)
DeLamotte argues that gothic architecture embodies the past, that “it contains evidence of specific life histories” (15). The cellars in Lenton House are constructed to deaden sound, to silence the cries of the convict inmates. Similarly, the convict housekeeper is also made mute by the master of the house who destroys both her and her story by hushing up the case. This corresponds with DeLamotte’s suggestion that Gothic structures incorporate not only personal histories but “mammoth social institutions whose power transcends that of any individual” (17). She offers “the church, the courts, the Inquisition, and the family” as examples; Australian colonial society, with its sharp division between the “pure merino” and the convicts is another.78

Although the first murder was covered up

There was no doubt about the second murder, which occurred many years afterwards, when the house was first deserted. A young couple who were out riding one Sunday afternoon took refuge in the building from a thunderstorm. They had a furious quarrel concerning another young man, of whom the lover was jealous, and it ended by the lover stabbing his sweetheart and hiding her body in the cellar. He was hanged. (120)

The narrator persuades a mate to join him in his vigil at Lenton House. They camp in one of the bedrooms. During the night the narrator is awoken by a violent quarrel taking place upstairs that ends with the sound of a blow and of a body falling to the ground. To his horror he then hears the footsteps of a heavily burdened person coming down the stairs. He sees the figure of a man holding the body of a woman who has a “jagged black shape on her temple” and dark blood in her hair (122).

78Roger Therry gives the following definition in his reminiscences: “The term pure merino, a designation given to sheep where there is no cross-blood in the flocks, was applied to mark a class who were not only free and unconvicted but who could boast of having no collateral relationship or distant affinity with those in whose escutcheon there was a blot.” (58)
In Lenton House the layout of the rooms is such that, when the narrator and his mate take up their position in one of the lower bedrooms, they can observe both the stairs to the second floor and the stairs leading to the cellar. It also means their only exit is through the hallway where the man bears his dreadful burden. The windows are barricaded and even the chimney is blocked. Like the heroine of a Gothic romance the narrator is simultaneously cut off from escape and yet vulnerable to intrusion. It's a space of unstable boundaries, both literal and metaphorical. Trapped in the bedroom the narrator is “in deathly terror lest the ghostly apparition should come into the room instead of passing down into the cellars beneath” (122). He passes out.

Despite his avowed scepticism the man has no doubt that what he’s witnessing is supernatural. His only uncertainty concerns which of the two murders is being re-enacted. A clue to the readiness of his belief is given in this statement: “In spite of my aggressive disbelief in the existence of ghosts, I would not sleep alone in a house reputedly haunted” (120). Clearly the narrator of the “The Third Murder” has surmounted, but not completely abandoned, his belief in the return of the dead otherwise he wouldn’t have fainted from terror. However, by the next morning the two men have rationalised what they saw. The narrator’s mate describes an awful nightmare he had of a murder taking place in the room above them and of a body being carried down into the cellar. The narrator exclaims “I also had a terrible dream” and tries to find some meaning in the coincidence but his mate doesn’t want to discuss the matter any further (122).

Some years later the narrator comes across a newspaper account which reveals that the event he witnessed wasn’t an apparition but an actual murder.
During the night, as the two men slept, a couple had taken shelter in one of the upstairs bedrooms. They quarrelled violently during the night and the husband had struck his wife with the butt of his whip and killed her. He took her body down to the cellars meaning to bury her there but when he realised there were other people in the house he fled. Some years later the body was discovered, the man confessed to the murder and was executed.

“The Third Murder” pre-empts, in one sense, Barbara Baynton’s short story “The Chosen Vessel”. In both stories a man who might possibly have saved the female victim doesn’t do so because he believes the woman to be supernatural. In “The Chosen Vessel” Peter Hennessey believes the woman in white running through the bush towards him clasping a baby in her arms and crying out “For Christ’s sake! Christ’s sake! Christ’s sake!” is the Virgin Mary reproaching him for disregarding the local priest and so he spurs his horse away from her (138). It’s not until her body is found that he realises his apparition was a woman fleeing from a murderer. The narrator of “The Third Murder” doesn’t interfere in the quarrel he overhears because he believes it to be a replay of a murder that has already occurred. In The Perils of the Night (1990) DeLamotte writes: “not knowing is a source of terror, but terror is also a source of not knowing” (43). In other words fear compromises judgement. She is referring specifically to the Gothic romances of Anne Radcliffe but her words could apply both to Peter Hennessey and to Lawson’s narrator. DeLamotte suggests that “the essential activity of the Gothic protagonist is interpretation” (24). In both “The Third Murder” and “The Chosen Vessel” the men’s interpretation of events is tragically flawed and contributes to the death of a woman.
In *The Fantastic* (1970) Tzvetan Todorov argues that the fantastic can only exist in a moment of uncertainty. It is situated precariously between two other genres, the marvellous and the uncanny, and is always on the verge of slipping into one or the other. For Todorov,

The fantastic... lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from “reality” as it exists in the common opinion.... If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomenon described, we say that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvellous. (41)

Todorov lists a number of natural explanations commonly employed by writers in order to collapse the moment of uncertainty and reveal the text as uncanny, amongst them are dreams and the influence of drugs (including alcohol).

Generically, both of Lawson’s texts are revealed as uncanny. In “The Ghost at the Second Bridge” the ghost’s manifestation is attributed to drink, “And when we told the tale next day/ They said we were — intoxicated” (168). In “The Third Murder” the apparition is initially attributed to a dream, a dream that both men shared.

Todorov stresses the role of the reader – that is the implicit reader – in determining the genre of the text. If Lawson had finished the story at the point where the men decide they had only been dreaming the reader might well come to a different conclusion concerning its genre. The coincidence of both men dreaming of the same thing, along with their reluctance to discuss this strange event, might have perpetuated the reader’s uncertainty about the text in which case the story would remain fantastic. Equally the reader might have decided that
the coincidence of the dreams was too great, that the apparition was ghostly and therefore the story was marvelous. But the revelation that a third murder occurred renders the story uncanny by both Todorov’s and Freud’s definitions.

Freud offers inexplicable repetition as an example of a situation which evokes a feeling of the uncanny. Repetition represents temporally the unstable spatial borders already noted. As DeLamotte writes:

Devices and images of repetition suggest a double horror of boundedness and boundlessness in both spatial and temporal terms. The same events seem to recur again and again, trapping the protagonist in a single instant of time yet simultaneously evoking the nightmare of eternity. (95)

Freud notes “the repetition of similar experiences in a particular space” (SE 17: 248) and “the repetition... of the same crimes” as instances of the uncanny (SE 17: 234). Over a number of years three women are murdered in the same place by men who should, in some sense, be their protector: master, lover, husband. For this, Lawson offers no rationalisation.

In his biography, Henry Lawson: A Life (1991), Colin Roderick discerns the influence of Poe in many of the works Lawson either produced at this time or which were inspired by people or events in the Mountains. Lawson had borrowed his mother’s copy of Poe’s poems and used to read them by lamplight in his tent at night. (This was in the early 1880s.) Roderick cites several stories (including “The Third Murder”) to illustrate his point and continues: “Poe’s verse captivated him for a time, as “The Legend of Cooyee Gully” and the “The Ghost at the Second Bridge” attested. Poe’s mannerisms were discernible in several of his early poems.... Most notably, “Golden Gully” [which was] ‘composed rapidly in a gully at Mount Victoria on a rainy day,’ betrayed Poe’s influence” (28). The
language in “The Third Murder” is reminiscent of the writing of Poe. Compare, for instance, this extract from Lawson’s story: “My heart seemed to have deserted my body; there was a dreadful sinking in my stomach and my limbs became rigid” (121); with these lines from Poe’s “Ligeia”: “I felt my heart cease to beat, my limbs grow rigid” (443).

Perhaps the most telling example of Poe’s influence is the deaths of the women in “The Third Murder” and “The Ghost at the Second Bridge”. After all, Poe is infamous for his statement that “the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world” (“The Philosophy of Composition”). (Lawson doesn’t comment explicitly on the attractiveness of the murder victims but at least two of the women are portrayed as desirable. It’s intimated that the convict housekeeper is killed because she resisted the advances of her master and the second victim’s lover stabbed her because he was jealous of another man.) In her essay “The ‘Most’ Poetic Topic” Elisabeth Bronfen suggests that “death is... integral to Poe’s notion of poetics” because his work is teleological (61). She quotes from his essay “The Philosophy of Composition”, “only with the denouement constantly in view [can we] give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation” (61). Ultimately, death is the universal fate. Bronfen argues that what may initially appear to be contradictory in Poe’s proposition – specifically the linking of death, with its association of corruption, with feminine beauty – actually reflects a common notion in western culture and one previously considered in “The Blue Heart, the Deadly Valley” (see page 238). She argues that the terms “feminine beauty” and death are identical, recalling Freud’s argument concerning the double-aspected goddess
who was both creator and destroyer in his essay "The Theme of the Three Caskets." She suggests that:

By locating a two-fold substitution – that of beauty for death, that of choice for submission to fate – Freud argues for an ambivalence inherent in the opposition between beauty and death, allowing for a hidden identity between the two, and embedded in this the aporic co-existence of a resistance to and an acknowledgement of death.

(62)

This notion is reflected in the two versions of the ghost story located at the second bridge, which were collected by Colin Roderick. In one the apparition is clothed in white like a bride but in the other she is dressed in black and is accompanied by a hearse drawn by four black horses. Like Psyche, whose wedding was solemnised using funerary rituals and was marked by a day of mourning, the spectre at the second bridge appears as both virgin bride and arrayed in the panoply of death.
Conclusion

As you travel along the Great Western Highway each town and village is heralded by a sign. In the Blue Mountains these markers are qualified by a tag that supposedly defines the site. Woodford is “The Heart of the Mountains,” a description that acknowledges its geographical centrality and also, perhaps, that it’s the site of the oldest existing building on the Mountains. Despite the many authors who have lived here and the numerous texts located in the Mountains Warrimoo, where Dorothy Wall once lived, has the only distinctly literary allusion: it’s “Blinky Bill Territory”.

Many of the designations concern foundational events. Springwood is “The First Mountain Settlement”, a self-explanatory designation. Lawson is the “Original Blue Mountain” and Wentworth Falls is an “Explorers’ Village.” Leura and Blackheath – the “Garden Village” and the “Rhododendron Town” respectively – acknowledge the local focus on tourism and the frontier between the domestic and the wild. The tags are mini narratives which locate the towns and villages within a larger European story.

But not every site is so readily categorised. Bullaburra is the “Blue Sky Village” not because the weather there is any clearer but because this is the translation generally given for Bullaburra, a word from an unidentified Aboriginal

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79 At first Lawson was known simply as Twenty-Four Mile Hollow, then The Swamp or Christmas Swamp. After the construction of the Blue Mountain Hotel it was called Blue Mountain until 1879 when the name was changed to Lawson in honour of the explorer. In the same year Weatherboard became Wentworth Falls and Wascoe’s was changed to Blaxland.
Conclusion

Language. It has a commercial history. The land was subdivided around 1924 by Sir Arthur Rickard and Co. and a railway station was opened in 1925. There are no substantial links to explorers or district pioneers and although Bullaburra is said to be an Aboriginal word it isn’t clearly associated with either the Darug or the Gundungurra peoples. Sir Henry Parkes once owned land there (a connection memorialised by the repetitively named Sir Henry Parkes Park) but although he named his purchase – Coleridge, after the poet – he didn’t utilise or develop the area. Like any site which is inhabited there must be individual stories of place attached to it but there are no larger narratives to situate Bullaburra within the Blue Mountains.

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The Mountains have been the focus of many stories of place. The Irish convicts sought to envisage a passage home and, for them, the Mountains were a vital feature in an imagined geography that enabled return. Because the Mountains were unknown territory the Irish were able to claim them as a transitional space between exile and home. The story was opportunistic. The Irish stories gave Eleanor Dark a starting place from which to consider modes of refuge in which her understanding of the Aboriginal relationship with the land was allied with European notions of liberty.

Stories were used strategically to obscure Aboriginal ties to the land or to deny they had ever occupied the Mountains – or that they had, in some sense, ceded the territory to Europeans. The Aboriginal past was monumentalised, locked into stone in the form of the Three Sisters which were then co-opted as the symbol of the Blue Mountains. The dispute between William James and Thomas
Pembroke emphasised the European insistence on the right to land being related to the way in which it was used. Construction – of a dwelling, of stockyards – is authorised, implicitly denying the validity of other ways of occupying a site.

Impinging upon all these stories, colouring them, is the Mountains’ liminal status. The Mountains are both a passage between the city and the bush – in both geographical and literary terms – and also contain that nexus in miniature within them. Civilisation becomes wilderness in the blink of an eye. This juxtaposition of the homely and the “unhomely” marks the Mountains as an uncanny site.

Freud argues that we get an uncanny feeling when that which has been repressed returns to our consciousness. All the stories Europeans employed to claim the land come back to haunt them. There is an anxiety about our occupation of the land. Lost child narratives represent a potential loss of the national future. Unlike most literary lost child narratives those located within the Mountains generally have a happy ending in which the children are rescued. Yet the Mountains are also represented as an enormous mausoleum, a site in which a thousand horrors might be concealed, a landscape that swallows up the slain, terrible in its beauty.

In Western thought the concepts woman and death are closely allied. As Elisabeth Bronfen puts it, “the conjunction of woman-death-womb-tomb reduces to the ambivalence that the mother’s gift of birth is also the gift of death, that the embrace of the beloved also signifies a loss or dissolution of the self” (67). That we each return to our mother earth is our inevitable fate. As a place of death the Mountains are also possessed by the spirits of the dead. The Blue Mountains are a haunted site for Peter Cyren because of his personal history. Henry Lawson’s
Conclusion

Mountains are more traditionally spectral. Yet each of these of these narratives recognise the way in which ghosts, literal or metaphorical, are tied to a specific place.

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Eve Langley moved to a small hut in Katoomba in the early 1960s. She named it Iona-Lympus. It reveals, I think, something of her hopes for her new home, her expectations of the Mountains. Iona was the name of the island to which St Brendan retired at the end of his life, after his fantastic voyages. Lympus is an obvious contraction of Olympus, the home of the gods. (Langley even headed some of her letters with Iona-Olympus [Langley Papers BMCC].) It seems that Langley hoped the hut would be a place of both retreat and exaltation. In some ways it lived up to her expectations. The beauty of the landscape inspired a lyrical response. On 15 March 1970, she wrote in a loose leaf diary, "It is raining now at 8 and dark, a gentle rain, with a brilliant rich kind of strange browed blue sky over Leura where bright lights sparkle richly... through the luminous mist" (Eve Langley File BMCC).

In 1964 she observed the sesqui-centenary celebrations of the crossing of the Blue Mountains which included a historical pageant. Later in the year the newly launched Poetry Magazine published a poem she had written entitled "Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson" in which she approached the avatars of the three explorers who tell her "like you we/ are one/ with the great Blue Mountains" (22). Langley places herself within the landscape by aligning herself with one of the seminal European stories of foundation in the Mountains.
Conclusion

She had a bus moved to her property which she used for storage. It seems an appropriate choice for a writer who described herself and her work as nomadic. When Hazel de Berg interviewed Langley in 1964 Eve said: “I’m just like a caravan, I’m full of stories like a caravan and like a caravan I am born to wander across all the plains of fantasy. They’re apricot coloured, and my red caravan totters across it on painted wheels, full of stories and poems” (626).

Langley kept a diary in which she recorded the minutiae of her life including an almost obsessive accounting of her manuscripts. She named and located them as if she were afraid that her stories would be lost or stolen (Eve Langley File BMCC). There is some suspicion that her death in 1974 may have been violent. The body wasn’t discovered for days afterwards and decomposition and post-mortem damage from scavengers made it difficult to tell what caused her death. Meg Stewart and her father Douglas retrieved many of her papers and these were eventually housed in the Mitchell Library but not all her writings were saved and so the story is incomplete. There are gaps and silences.

After her death the hut was allowed to fall into ruin. I visited the site in 1995. It was immediately recognisable due to the bus out the front. Bush had reclaimed the garden. Langley wrote with delight of the flowers she nurtured – gladioli, salmon pink and golden – but the only trace I could find of exotics was a daisy bush near the front gate. Its white and gold flowers were almost spent. It seemed a haunted spot to me, partly because of the melancholy effect of the ruined buildings but mostly because there were so many of her belongings scattered around. Apart from the papers that the Stewarts rescued no one had
bothered about her effects. The hut and its contents were pillaged by people and the elements.

It was more and less than I’d been expecting. The hut itself was collapsing. The roof dangled from a right-angle of walls, dipping its skirts to the ground in a curtsy, but the chimney stood firm, a rural cliché. Independent of walls or door the threshold was still inviting. Beneath an incendiary ceiling, constructed of flattened kerosene tins, I found an unused typewriter ribbon and three pale ivory-coloured bowls stacked one inside the other.

A trail of Cinderella shoes lead to the derelict bus which was set on brick piers. A few flakes of sky blue paint remained but the weather had revealed a sour yellow-green colour beneath. The canvas roof had rotted, ripped. It hung down, curtaining the windows on one side. Layers of objects covered the floor. Over the years they’d shifted and settled, reducing down like a compost heap: rusty tins, an alarm clock, unidentifiable papers. I picked up a novel. The cover was gone and the pages had been so thoroughly soaked that I couldn’t separate them. It was a solid block of book, locked tighter than a teenager’s diary.

The property was fronted by a crenellated cement fence bisected by a path that ended abruptly, without destination. Once there must have been a house there but no longer. Both the hut and the bus were far from that terminus. Langley marked out a different trail when she lived here. The site was like a palimpsest in which the original text had been inadequately erased. The lines had bled through. In the trees overhead a kookaburra laughed. Its cry was strident and rhythmical as the voice of a race caller and, like a race caller’s commentary, it was used to
position precisely. That’s how the bird marks out its territory. Each note is both claim and challenge: *I am here. This is mine.*
Appendices

The territory of the Gundungurra tribe includes Burrarorang, Katoomba, Picton, Berrima, Taralga and Goulburn, with the intervening country. The Bunan Ceremony of initiation described by me in 1896 applies to the Gundungurra, in common with the Thurrawal and Thoorga tribes. In 1901 I published an elementary grammar of the Gundungurra language. In the present article I am submitting a legendary tale which I obtained from the remnants of the Gundungurra tribe now residing at Burrarorang on the Wollondilly River.

The natives of this tribe believe that in the far past times, which they call the gun-yung-ga-lung, all the present animals were men, or at any rate had human attributes. These legendary personages are spoken of as the Burringillling, in contradistinction to the present race of people. It would appear, however, that the Burringillling folk were much cleverer than the people of the present time. They could make rivers and other geographical features, cleave rocks and perform many similar Herculean labours.

Gu-rang’atch was one of the Burringillling, his form being partly fish and partly reptile. One of his camping places was in a large, deep waterhole or lagoon at what is now the junction of the Wollondilly and Wingeecaribbee [sic] rivers; the waterhole and the country around it being called Mur-rau’-aul in the Gundungurra tongue. Gurangatch used to lie in the shallow water near the bank in the middle of the day to sun himself. One day Mir-ra’-gan the tiger cat, a renowned fisherman, who searched only for the largest kinds of fish, happened to
catch a glimpse of Gurangatch’s eye which shone like a star through the water.

Mirragan tried to spear him but he escaped into the centre of the waterhole, which was of great depth. Mirragan then went into the bush a little way off, and cut a lot of hickory bark, millewa in the native language, and stacked it in heaps under the water at different places around the lagoon, in the hope of making Gurangatch sick, so that he would come to the surface. The poisoned water made Gurangatch very uncomfortable, but the solution was not strong enough to overcome such a large fish as he.

Seething with disappointment, Mirragan went into the bush again to cut more hickory bark to increase the nauseating power of the water, but as soon as Gurangatch saw him going away he suspected what he was after and commenced tearing up the ground along the present valley of the Wollondilly, causing the water in the lagoon to flow after him and bear him along. He went on forming several miles of the river channel, and then he burrowed or tunnelled under the ground for some distance at right angles, coming out again on a high rocky ridge on one side of the valley, where there is now a spring or water catchment, known to the white people as the “Rocky Waterhole”, but it is called by the natives Bir’rim-bun’-nung-a-lai’, because it contains birrimbungungs or sprats. Gurangatch raised his head above this waterhole and shoved out his tongue which flashed like lightning. From this elevated point of observation he saw Mirragan starting from Murrauaul along his trail.

Gurangatch then returned along his burrow or tunnel to the Wollondilly where he had previously left off, and continued making a canal for himself. When he had reached what is now the junction of Guineacor river he turned to the left.
and made a few miles of the channel of that stream. Coming to a very rocky place which was hard to excavate, he changed his mind and turned back to the junction and resumed his former course. He had some difficulty in getting away from this spot and made a long, deep bend or loop in the Wollondilly which almost doubles back upon itself at that place. When Gurangatch got down to where Jock’s Creek now embouchures with the Wollondilly, he turned up Jock’s Creek excavating a watercourse for himself. Being a great magician he could make water flow up hill as easily as downhill. On reaching the source of Jock’s Creek, he burrowed under the range, coming up inside of Wam’-bee-ang caves, which are called Whambayan [sic] by the white people, being a corruption of the aboriginal [sic] name.

We must now return to Mirragan. When he came back to Murrauaul waterhole and saw how Gurangatch had escaped, he followed on down the river after him, going on and on till he overtook him at Wambeeang. Mirragan did not care to go into any of the subterranean passages, therefore he went up on top of the rocks and dug a hole as deep as he could go and then prodded a long pole down as far as it would reach, for the purpose of frightening Gurangatch out of his retreat, much in the same way we poke a kangaroo rat or other creature out of a hollow log. Not succeeding in his purpose with the first hole, he dug another and still another and shoved the long pole down each one as before. There are several weather worn “pot holes” on top of the Wambayan caves still which are said to be those made by Mirragan on that occasion.

When Gurangatch perceived that his enemy was continuing his relentless pursuit, he started off one morning at daylight through his tunnel or burrow and
returned down Jock's Creek till he came out into the Wollondilly again. Some miles farther down was where Mirragen's family resided. When they heard Gurangatch coming and the water roaring after him like a flood, they ran away up the side of the hill in great terror. By that time Mirragen himself appeared upon the scene and his wife began scolding him for having meddled with Gurangatch and besought him to give up the pursuit, but he would not be dissuaded. He went on after Gurangatch and overtook him at what the white people call the "Slippery Rock" but the native name is Woong'-ga-ree. There they fought for a long time, which made the rock smooth and slippery ever since.

Gurangatch at last got away and went downwards, making the water flow after him. Every time that Mirragen overtook him, he hit him with his big club or boondee, and Gurangatch struck Mirragen heavily with his tail. This continued down to what is now the junction of Cox's river, where Gurangatch turned off to the left, digging out the present channel. He went on till he came to Billa'-goo-la Creek, corrupted to "Black Hollow" on our maps, up which he travelled some distance, but turned back, and resumed his course up the Cox to the junction of Ked-oom'-bar Creek, now called Katoomba by the Europeans. He excavated Kedoombbar Creek as far up as where Reedy Creek comes into it and turned up the latter a little way, where he formed a deep waterhole in which he rested for a while.

Gurangatch then journeyed back to the Cox, up which he worked his way for some distance and formed the waterhole Karrangatta. In order to dodge his enemy he burrowed under ground, coming out on Mee'-oo-wun mountain, now written Mou-in, where he made a deep hole or spring, which is even now a
menace to the white man's cattle on account of its narrowness and great depth. Returning to Karrangatta waterhole, he made his way up to the junction of Koonang'-goor-wa, corrupted to Konangaroo, where he and Mirragan had another fierce encounter. Gurangatch journeyed on up the Cox to the present junction there with of Harry's Creek. He then excavated the valley of Harry's Creek till he came to Bin-noo'-mur, the present Jenolan caves, where he had the good fortune to meet with some of his relations.

Gurangatch was weary from his hard work and sore from all the blows he had received during his journey. He suspected that his enemy would still be in pursuit of him and therefore besought his friends to escort him out of his reach. They accordingly took him out of the caves and conducted him over the main range into a deep waterhole, called by the natives Joo-lun-doo.

While this was going on, Mirragan had arrived close to Binnoomur, but was very tired and lay down on a little hill to rest himself. When he revived he searched about the caves and found tracks of where Gurangatch had been staying, and also the tracks of how he had been taken away to Joolundoo by his friends. Mirragan was quite worn out by his prolonged encounter, and when he saw that his quarry had got among his relations, he thought that he also would go and obtain assistance. He then considered that it would be prudent, before he left the spot, to adopt some means of preventing Gurangatch from escaping to his old haunts during his absence. He consequently set to work and built a precipitous wall of rock, Wan'-dak-ma-loi', corrupted by Europeans to Duckmulloy [sic], along the side of the range between the caves and Joolundoo.
Mirragan hurried away to his friends somewhere out westward. On reaching their camp they were eating roasted eels and offered him one. Although he was weary and hungry he answered “No, no, that is too small a thing for me to eat. I am chasing a great big fish and want you to come and help me.” He stated that this great fish was in an extremely deep waterhole and requested them to send the very best divers in the camp. They selected Billagoola the shag, Gool’-a-gwan-gwan the diver, and Gundhareen the black duck and Goonarring the wood duck.

When Mirragan returned to Joolundoo with this contingent, Gundhareen dived into the pool but returned after a while saying he was unable to get down to the bottom. Goonarring then made the attempt but without success. Goolagwangwan was the next to go down and after a considerable time brought a young or small Gurangatch to the surface, saying to Mirragan, “Is this what you have been after?” He replied contemptuously, “No, that is too small; try again.” Goolagwangwan dived down the second time and brought up a larger fish, but Mirragan would not look at it. Billagoola then took his turn at diving and when he got down a long way he observed several fish like those brought up by Goolagwangwan. They were trying to hide a very large fish by covering it with mud on the bottom of the pool. Billagoola tried to get hold of this monster, but its head was jammed into a crevice of the rock and its tail was fast in another crevice on the opposite side, so that he could not shift it. Being a very expert diver and a strong fellow withal, he pulled a huge piece of flesh off the back of Gurangatch and started up again. On reaching the surface, Mirragan exclaimed with delight,
“That is a piece of the fish I was chasing.” When the meat was cooked Mirrgan and his friends had a great feast and returned to their respective homes.

Along the course of the Wollondilly, as well as along the Cox [sic] river, there are big waterholes here and there, which are said by the natives to be Gurangatch’s resting places. The following are some of the holes in the Wollondilly: - Doolagool, Gungga-look, Woonggarree, Goo-rit, Mullindee, Boonbaal, and Gurabulla. In the Cox [sic] river there are: Gaung-gaung, Junbaa, Billagoola, Karangaratta, and several others. Many of the waterholes referred to are believed by the old natives to be inhabited to the present day by descendants of Gurangatch. (Mathews 203-206).
Appendix 2


When you see a blue-tongued lizard sunning itself upon a rock, or winking its beady eyes at you from a bushland path, you say to yourself very wisely, "That's a blue-tongued lizard!" But do we all know just how the great, great, great, great, and so-on grand-father of the species came to get his name? If not, just listen, and I shall tell you.

Long, long years ago, before the white men ever knew that our sunny land, Australia, existed, there lived, way back in what is now the bush of New South Wales, a colony of black people. Now, amongst the men of this tribe there was one, a kind of native wizard, called Walla, and he used to make all sorts of magic, and was considered to be quite an important personage.

Well, one day, when Lulu the lizard was passing Walla’s hut, he suddenly smelt something very nice, and so he poked his head inside the hut, and, finding that Walla was not there, began to sniff around, till he discovered a roughly fashioned bowl full of a blue liquid. Now Lulu was very curious to know just what this tasted like, and, as it had such a nice smell, he put his tongue right into it. But alas! The blue liquid was not so nice in taste as it was in smell, and Lulu drew his tongue hastily back, and, after satisfying himself that there was nothing of further interest in the hut, went on his way.

Arriving home, he went in search of his wife, who, when she appeared, cried out in dismay: "Good gracious, Lulu! What have you done to your tongue? It's all blue, blue as can be!"
Appendix 2

And so it was. Lulu had unknowingly put his tongue into one of Walla’s fast dyes, and, no matter how he scrubbed at it, it still remained blue, and to this very day the many, many descendents [sic] of Lulu have blue tongues.

So next time you see a blue-tongued lizard you can say to yourself, still very wisely; “That’s a blue-tongued lizard, and I know just how he got his name, too!”

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Let others sing praise of their sea-girted isles,
But give me the bush with its limitless miles;
Then it's over the ranges and into the West,
To the scenes of wild boyhood, we love them the best.

We'll ride and we'll ride from the city afar,
To the plains where the cattle and sheep stations are;
Where stockmen ride hard, and the drover starts forth
On his long, lonely journey 'way up in the North.

When your money is low, and your luck has gone down,
There's no place so lone as the streets of a town;
There's nothing but worry, and dread and unrest,
So we'll over the ranges and into the West.

The drought in the West may spread ruin around,
But the dread drought of life in the city is found;
And I'd far sooner tread on the long dusty way,
Where each one you meet says, "Good day, mate, good day."


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University of Western Sydney
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
I declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any previous degree.

Signed……………………
Karen Attard
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Abstract

Lost & Found is a cultural itinerary, or tour, of the Blue Mountains. It’s concerned with the way in which Europeans employed stories to claim land and, conversely, their fears that the land would claim them. The stories I consider are taken from literature and folk legend. The concept of liminality is important to this thesis because the Mountains are a threshold, a demarcation between the city and the bush. Allied with the notion of liminality in the Mountains is that of the uncanny (as defined by Freud) particularly the commingling of the heimlich (homely) and the unheimlich (unhomely).

Lost & Found is divided into four sections. “A Pocket Guide” introduces the terrain to be traversed. It outlines early exploration, including the naming of the Mountains, and the effect these expeditions had on European perceptions of the area. The Mountains were considered a Romantic landscape and the sublime remains an important element in our construction of them. Apparently conflicting (although overlapping) concepts of the Mountains – that they’re a place of solitude and a tourist mecca; a therapeutic locale and a haunt of the dead – are reconciled, to some extent, by theories of the sublime.

The chapters in “Found” centre around the notion of foundation. I look at the way in which Irish convicts adapted folk legend in Australia, incorporating the Mountains in a way that gave them a potential access to home. The Irish stories informed Eleanor Dark’s historical trilogy (The Timeless Land, Storm of Time, and No Barrier). In these novels she explores the themes of liberty and asylum. Many texts excluded Aborigines from the Mountains. They were edited out of
European writings, disinherit[ed in adventure romances, and their traditional stories were overshadowed by European tales purporting to be "authentic" Aboriginal legends. This section finishes with a consideration of the way in which use, within certain parameters, constitutes a claim to land in European thought.

“Passage” links “Lost” and “Found”. It discusses more fully the notion of the Mountains as a liminal space particularly in terms of initiatory rites. Unlike mountains in Europe, the Blue Mountains were defined by passage rather than ascent. In the terms of Deleuze and Guattari they function as a smooth space between two striated spaces.

“Lost” is the converse of “Found”. It explores our fears that the land will consume us. This fear is often expressed in the notion that the bush, beneath a surface beauty, has a dark and dangerous aspect and that it will swallow up the unwary. This idea is present both in the figure of the lost child and in the persistent interment of the bodies of murder victims in the Mountains. It is seen as a landscape that both snares and shapes people. This is evident in the notion of possession – that a certain place can take hold of a person and induce a prescribed response from them – and of haunting, in which a spirit is tied to a specific location.