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Land and Heritage

CITIZENSHIP IS INTRINSICALLY about land and territory. In its literal meaning, ‘citizen’ denotes an inhabitant of a defined area—a city—that later was extended to cover a broader territory. What citizens have in common is the fact that they symbolically share the same land. Over time they come to know that land; it becomes a place that has distinctive features that are named and recognised. And over a longer time an attachment is formed to its natural and man-made elements. Equally and vitally important for citizenship, alongside that attachment to the land, is an allegiance to those who live there. At the core of political membership is a willingness to care for and defend the land and its inhabitants. That attachment and allegiance endows citizenship with a transcendent and spiritual quality that at times of heightened sensibility can be described as religious and sacred.

This chapter explores the complex and multifaceted ways in which territory provides the political foundation for citizenship by reflecting economic, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of settlement. The elusive quality that is the symbolic heart of citizenship cannot be readily defined. For this reason, songs, painting and writings that depict the land are significant because they can help to represent and articulate the values held in common that cumulatively define a country’s cultural heritage. Folk songs and ballads in the colonial era did this. Later, some Australian artists and writers more self-consciously worked at capturing the ordinary and everyday quality of the vernacular in the particular settings with which they were familiar, so as to capture what is unique and special about living in Australia and what it means to be Australian. The physical character of Australia’s natural landscape was so different from the European that its very distinctiveness was soon elevated to symbolise a cultural colonial unity. However, the territorial foundations of Australian citizenship are not unproblematic. British colonisation of the continent and appropriation of its

land from the indigenous inhabitants raises issues of reconciliation with their descendants. Economic exploitation of the land, at the heart of nation-building, raises issues of environmental conservation and protection. The unity of the land, across vastly different territory, is also problematic. Although nothing quite as dramatic as America's civil war has disturbed Australian unity, the federation has experienced the tension of regional competition and a rural–urban divide that has been of continuing significance.

Colonisation and Settler Societies

The British, in imperial mode, authorised establishment of multiple colonies to stave off the threat of French possession. Australia thus became the only continent to be settled by a single colonial power. Each of the separate colonies—some established as penal settlements, others the result of entrepreneurship—had a different ethos that would be capitalised on as self-government was granted and that would act as a catalyst to friendly intercolonial rivalry. Nonetheless, a century after the first settlement, their British origins and a nationalist sentiment to 'build a better Britain' meant there was sufficient family resemblance to make federation achievable and desirable.

One of the strongest common features of these settler societies was the importance people attached to acquiring land. The political economy of nineteenth-century liberalism emphasised self-sufficiency and independence. Most settlers who were not convicts had risked a long and expensive sea voyage to obtain land. The men of capital in the 1830s hoped to enhance their capital and improve their prospects by investing in vast tracts of land. The gold seekers and assisted passage immigrants, many living in crowded towns and cities, wanted to throw off the yoke of servitude and become property holders. Still others came from rural areas and, having been evicted from their small tenant holdings in Scotland and Ireland, desired the security of owning land.

But the land was different from anything they had known. Everything about the natural environment of the Australian continent was exotic to the British and Europeans who colonised it. It was literally New Heaven and New Earth. The novel constellations excited astronomers and navigators. The seasons were inverted so that the calendar feast days that traditionally celebrated autumn and spring now fell in the opposite seasons. The fashions of the cooler northern hemisphere, so slavishly followed, made preposterous claims on the wearer amidst Australian heat. The flora and fauna, including deadly venomous snakes, yielded whole new taxonomies. Coastlines were harsh and the surf dangerous. Inland, the country itself was

unyielding. Its vast distances were terrifying and its lack of water and vegetation rendered it inhospitable. Sunburn and sunstroke were the scourge of daily outdoor toil. Those who settled in the hinterland encountered droughts, bushfires and then floods. Methods of house building, husbandry and agriculture all had to be changed and adapted to local conditions. The country of Australia proved as unpredictable as it was harsh. In the isolation of bush, settlers had to battle and make do, and desperation made friends of strangers.

The urban environment, although preferred, was no more accommodating. Immigration was largely uncontrolled and, in an unregulated economy, conditions were often chaotic with poorly developed infrastructure that made travel and communication difficult. Metropolitan dwellings were carved out of bushland, with people conscious of forming a built environment from a natural one. Because of limited opportunities for those with professional training and clerical skills in cities, people turned to setting up small businesses, moving from one place to another in search of a steady living. Labouring jobs were usually casual and contractual and when out of work in the city, most would go up-country, sometimes sending for their family if more permanent prospects eventuated. The strange landscape and the perils that colonial settlers endured, singly and collectively, gave momentum to a nationalist spirit and sentiment. Folk songs and ballads bore testimony to the experience of settling in a strange land. There were the songs of the convicts in exile, songs about 'the new chums' arriving during the gold rushes and, above all, songs about the bush. The first migrants saw themselves as pioneers and styled their colonisation as settlement, excusing the invasion of the lands of the indigenous inhabitants as a mission of civilisation.

Invasion and Dispossession

The land was officially defined as *terra nullius*—land belonging to no one. The indigenous inhabitants, who were hunters and gatherers, were seen as occupiers of Crown land rather than as rightful owners. The treaties negotiated by private entrepreneurs with the indigenous inhabitants for possession of their land in Port Phillip were declared invalid. The ethnocentric assumptions of the colonists rendered the intimate ties of the Aboriginal people to their land incomprehensible. The invaders for the most part entertained a wilful ignorance of the extent to which the indigenous inhabitants' survival depended upon sustenance from, and conservation of, particular tracts of land. These defined territories contained sites that were sacred and consecrated and gave meaning to the social fabric of kin and clan relations.

There was no one war of invasion, but wars were fought on many frontiers,¹ as Europeans quarried, mined and farmed the land and sea. Defeated and demoralised, the indigenous people were resettled in protectorates and reserves. The desperate were assimilated, as urban and pastoral fringe-dwellers, within the mainstream economy on disadvantageous terms. Only a century later was there a renewed struggle for recognition of the primacy of the land for indigenous inhabitants and of the sorrow that accompanied its loss.

Claiming the Land

Colonial citizen-subjects, confirmed in the beliefs of white supremacy, saw themselves as solitary pioneers in uncivilised land. The vast open spaces aroused terrors of 'the Unknown' and 'the Other'. Real and imagined dangers led to folk stories and mythologies created around 'the Lost Child'. The glimpsed presence of the indigenous inhabitants, dispossessed of their lands, generated fears that bred the 'Captivity Narrative'.² And in outlying areas, settlers feared reprisals.

The European colonisers were confronting a great Unknown. Colonial authorities, keen to assess the economic possibilities of the land, commissioned or encouraged a succession of expeditions. With Britain a sea-going imperial power, it is not surprising that the coast of the continent was mapped in the earliest years of colonisation by George Bass and Matthew Flinders. This allowed subsequent sites to be selected as colonies for purposes of securing possession of the continent. However, the hinterland and the vast interior took some sixty years to be surveyed and what was revealed was not the desired and fabled inland sea, but desert. Coastal bush yielded to scrub and then wasteland.

Some explorers perished in the course of their quest, overcome by the harsh reality of inland wilderness. Their endeavours symbolised the Australian colonisation project and their efforts were seen as the apotheosis of the pioneering ideal. Explorers, often ill-fated in their sojourn through a wild and savage landscape, were the earliest heroes and their memory became enshrined in the colonial imagination.

The truth of the land, its wildness and savageness, was hard to absorb for those who had come with hopes of a land endowed with rich soil that would yield agricultural plenty. The account of the British buccaneer William Dampier, who had twice essayed the north-west coast of the continent and found it barren, was ignored. So was the cautionary summary of the great naturalist, Charles Darwin, who, on his visit to the colony of New

South Wales in 1836 during his epic voyage in the *Beagle*, wrote in his journal entry for 20 January:

The rapid prosperity and future prospects of this colony are to me . . . very puzzling. The two main exports are wool and whale-oil, and to both of these productions there is a limit. The country is totally unfit for canals, therefore there is a not very distant point, beyond which the land-carriage of wool will not repay the expense of shearing and tending sheep. Pasture everywhere is so thin that settlers have already pushed far into the interior: moreover, the country further inland becomes extremely poor. Agriculture, on account of the droughts, can never succeed on an extended scale: therefore, so far as I can see, Australia must ultimately depend upon being the centre of commerce for the southern hemisphere, and perhaps on her future manufactories . . . I formerly imagined that Australia would rise to be as grand and powerful a country as North America, but now it appears to me that such future grandeur is rather problematical.³

Darwin was right. Immigrants who had once rushed inland to try their luck at the goldfields came to turn their back on it. By the 1870s immigrants were settling in regional towns and the coastal cities. Australia soon became a nation of city dwellers and coastal dwellers with the great inland not forgotten, but enshrined as the mythical heart of the nation. For some, the landscape was appraised with scientific detachment, while others sought to tame it through Europeanisation. Colonials eventually came to revere its severity and embrace it as their own.

New discoveries

The scientific eye was keenly observant of the distinctiveness of the new habitat. It was due to scientists and field naturalists that the Australian colonies became known and recognised in their own right for their exotic flora and fauna. An educated elite took pride in establishing their own collections and publicising their observations. This was scientific progress and advancement in the grand Enlightenment tradition. After all, the colony itself could trace its foundations to the Royal Society's expedition to watch the transit of Venus in the South Sea. This had resulted in Lieutenant James Cook's alighting on the continent and Sir Joseph Banks' subsequently recommending 'Botany Bay' as a destination suitable for colonisation. The early colonists carried on the tradition of scientific observation. They discovered such curious creatures as an 'amphibious mole' (the platypus), the 'native bear' (the koala), and 'the flightless bird that resembles an ostrich' (the emu). Curious scientists came to the colony to see for themselves. John Lewin, a British naturalist and engraver, published a book on its insects

(1805) and one on its birds (1808). Ferdinand Bauer, the botanist who accompanied Matthew Flinders on his circumnavigation of the continent, published a volume on native flora (1813). John Gould, the British zoologist, toured the colonies with his wife, Elizabeth, and studied its bird life. The Enlightenment project was at its height. Ordinary colonial citizens, as they carved out their domesticated settlements along multiple frontiers, came face to face with their natural terrain, and the autodidact tradition nurtured the amateur naturalist. Gentility and refinement encouraged leisurely pursuits in natural surroundings away from the degeneracy and fetid airs of the cities, and gentlefolk recorded their observations in naturalist diaries and illuminated sketches.⁴

The comforts of home

Nonetheless, most of the British settlers were homesick for more familiar creatures and plants. Sir Joseph Banks himself was responsible for setting up a network of horticultural establishments throughout the Empire, with a view to experimenting with the acclimatisation of European plants. The Botanical Garden in Sydney was commenced in 1821 and Hobart's twenty years later—where blackberry cuttings were to take root amid local jubilation. Melbourne established its Zoological Society in 1857 to introduce foreign fauna into the country and in 1862 set up its own Victorian Acclimatisation Society. This body soon released sparrows, canaries, thrushes, skylarks and partridges into its southern skies, and their songs were reported to delight homesick settlers. Foxes and rabbits were to follow.

The Agricultural Societies, similar to those in Britain, were founded to augment knowledge about practices of husbandry and agriculture in new climatic conditions. European beasts and crops were introduced and ultimately led to a pastoralist economy that boasted prodigious exports of wool, quarter horses, grain, and (following refrigeration) frozen meats to European markets. Old habits died hard among the gentry, who continued hunting for pleasure, as *The Australasian Sketcher* noted:

From the earliest times the chase has been pursued with keenness and ardour by Victorian sportsmen. Before any packs of hounds were kept, a favourite amusement amongst the squatters was to hunt the kangaroos and wild dogs, or dingoes . . .⁵

Engineers developed machinery to assist with planting and harvesting of crops in circumstances where rural labour was expensive and hard to attract. In farm gardens and the growing suburbs, horticultural societies were founded to propagate the familiar and loved blooms of English gardens:

roses, violets, honeysuckle and the primrose. It was the Australian Percy Grainger who penned the melody that taught successive generations of Australian schoolchildren to delight in 'An English Country Garden'.

A growing appreciation

For all the accumulated scientific knowledge and enthusiasm for British ways, the colonial-born eventually started to acclimatise themselves to all that they saw around them, and to appreciate the natural landscape. By the 1860s, as land settlement accelerated, colonial poets gave expression to a sentiment of attachment to that landscape, not despite its wild and savage character, but because of it. Significant publications were Henry Kendall's *Poems and Songs* (1862) and *Leaves from Australian Forests* (1869), Charles Harpur's *A Poet's Home* (1862), and Adam Lindsay Gordon's *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhyme* (1870).

The Australian colonial poets gave voice to the common settler experience of loneliness and melancholia amidst a strange, grim and even grotesque and menacing landscape that required endurance and strength to survive. They also saw beauty in some aspects of the native bushland and there was a nascent affection for native birds and flowers. Henry Kendall's 'Bell-Birds', kindling memories of treasured and well-watered fern gullies, became loved for its lyricism:

*By channels of coolness the echoes are calling,
And down the dim gorges I hear the creek falling:
It lives in the mountain where moss and the sedges
Touch with their beauty the banks and the ledges.
Through breaks of the cedar and sycamore bowers
Struggles the light that is love to the flowers;
And, softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing,
The notes of the bell-birds are running and ringing.⁶*

Because of the vast open spaces and sparse bushland, the immense sky took on unique significance. In the night skies, the Southern Cross became an emblem of freedom in Australia. Dawn and dusk were special times of reverence, reminders of natural beauty in days of loneliness and a time for pause when weeks and years seemed indistinguishable and unremarkable except for their cumulative toil. Not surprisingly, James Cuthbertson's 'The Australian Sunrise' became widely popular.

*The Morning Star paled slowly, the Cross hung low to the sea,
And down the shadowy reaches the tide came swirling free,
The lustrous purple blackness of the soft Australian night
Waned in the grey awakening that heralded the light;*

*Still in the dying darkness, still in the forest dim,
The pearly dew of morning clung to each giant limb,
Till the sun came up from the ocean, red with the cold sea mist,
And smote on the limestone ridges, and the shining tree-tops kissed;*

*Then the fiery Scorpion vanished, the magpie's note was heard,
And the wind in the sheoak wavered and the honeysuckles stirred;
The airy golden vapour rose from the river breast,
The kingfisher came darting out of his crannied nest,
And the bulrushes and reed-beds put off their sallow grey
And burnt with cloudy crimson at the dawning of the day.⁷*

Both these poems were set in coastland or hinterland. There was also appreciation for aspects of the bush that had hitherto been overlooked, especially the wattle and the ubiquitous gum. Brian Elliott in his study, *The Landscape of Australian Poetry*, writes:

The wattle was a comparatively easy symbol to accept; it had a spectacular flowering, it marked the advent of spring (such a spring as could be discerned where monotony reigned), and it was intoxicatingly perfumed. Gum trees had always been the villains of the landscape: they were shapeless, dull in colour, evergreen, erratic in their flowering, and (the blossoms at any rate) lacking in sweet perfume. But here again, brave spirits began to appear, ready to see good even in the gums.⁸

It was the balladists who gave voice to the experience of what it meant to live up bush, in scrubland and amidst the vast, open and inhospitable spaces with their eerie isolation. This was the testing ground for those who could make a go of it, and a knowledge of its ways distinguished the dinky-di Australian from the 'new chum'. It was also a great levelling experience. The balladists' tone was one of irreverence for superfluous refinement of manners, and of respect for stoicism in the face of hardship and suffering. It was this relationship to the land that was at the heart of what it meant to be an Australian. Brian Elliott, commenting on the whole tradition of balladists, writes:

The main, if undefined, objective of all the balladists . . . was to expand upon the descriptive motives of poetry. Landscape, environment, the spirit of place, always remained primary with them . . . All their visionary experience proceeded from and returned to the landscape . . . the landscape masters and moulds its inhabitants, and the human characters are put in, therefore, to give life to the landscape image but seldom to steal interest from it.⁹

The trope of the bush was at the core of the nationalist movement, led by the Australian Natives' Association. Modelled on the British fraternal societies, it sought to cultivate attachment and affiliation to Australian soil

and to build, through federation, a polity that would invigorate and address issues of Australian nationhood. Founded in 1871 in the colony of Victoria, where local patriotism soon inspired a fervour for federation, it spread, branch by branch, throughout each of the colonies. The Australian Natives' Association continued the fraternal societies' tradition of mutualism, but it utilised indigenous cultural forms rather than British ones. It also aimed to be as inclusive as possible, with aspirations to universal membership by young native Australians. The symbols that were chosen to represent this were appropriated from Aboriginal culture. The artefacts and customs of a race that was considered to be reaching extinction were adopted as the mastheads of a new cultural identity. Thus meetings were considered as corroborees and boomerangs were taken on as insignia of membership of a brotherhood. The Australian Natives' Association promoted environmentalism and was an early advocate for conservation of natural bushland. It also fostered expression of a sense of place and supported the writing and recitation of local and folk poetry.

Celebrating the Land

The bush was eventually to have its own press. *The Bulletin*, established in the 1890s, was a literary magazine based in Sydney. Known as 'the bushman's bible', it was dedicated to promoting the Australian bush ballad and was notorious for its strident nationalism. Joseph Furphy, in a letter accompanying a manuscript forwarded to *The Bulletin's* editor for his consideration, famously declared: 'I have just finished writing a full-sized novel: title *Such is Life*, scene, Riverina and Northern Vict.; temper, democratic; bias, offensively Australian.'

The Bulletin nurtured many talents, among them Mary Gilmore, Henry Lawson and 'Banjo' Patterson, who became the best-known and best-loved bush balladists because they articulated what was experienced and felt by colonial Australians. The purpose of this balladry was to celebrate the land, to own it and value it. It was an expression of colonial settlement—what it meant to be an Australian in the Australian landscape. And although many Australians were already ensconced in regional towns or the coastline cities, the bush still was part of firsthand experience, or memory of firsthand experience. Most had at some stage lived in the country or had travelled up country in search of work, to stay with friends or relatives or to play sport.

The stoicism of the colonial bushland experience is nicely captured by the spare lines of Mary Gilmore in her poem, *Never Admit the Pain*:

*Cover thy wound, fold down
Its curtained place.
Silence is still a crown
Courage a grace.*

Banjo Patterson evoked the spirit of the land in his impressionistic bush ballad, 'Clancy of the Overflow':

*And the bush has friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,
And at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.¹⁰*

And in 'On Kiley's Run':

*The roving breezes come and go
On Kiley's run,
The sleepy river murmurs low,
And far away one dimly sees,
Beyond the stretch of forest trees—
Beyond the foothills dusk and dun—
The ranges sleeping in the sun
On Kiley's run.¹¹*

Federation yielded its share of poets, official and otherwise, just as the centenary of the colony of New South Wales and the jubilee of Victoria had done. What was perhaps even more important was the printing, following the turn of the twentieth century, of a number of Australian anthologies, such as Bertram Stevens's *Golden Treasury of Australian Verse* (1906) and Hansen and McLachlan's *An Austral Garden of Verse* (1912), which focused on local poets and their celebration of the land. The most famous poem of all, 'My Country', was written by Dorothea Mackellar, when as a homesick Australian she gave pen to thoughts of home from abroad. The lines testify deep patriotic attachment to a country that is harsh and inhospitable:

*I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea
Her beauty and her terror—
The wide brown land for me!*

The uniqueness of the experience is summed up in the final stanza:

*An opal-hearted country,
A wilful lavish land—
All you who have not loved her,*

*You will not understand—
Though Earth holds many splendours,
Wherever I may die,
I know to what brown country
My homing thoughts will fly.¹²*

Symbols from the land

The colonies as they became self-governing, and then the states, adopted coats of arms that reflected, together with insignia of British affiliation, indigenous features of the landscape and settlement. Victoria's, for example, depicted the Southern Cross, and Western Australia's a black swan and kangaroo paw flowers. This was also true of their respective flags. In addition, they selected floral and faunal emblems that underlined the fact of the polities having taken root in exotic lands that were home to unique and special species. New South Wales, for example, adopted the waratah as its floral emblem and the platypus and kookaburra as faunal emblems. The Northern Territory adopted the wedge-tailed eagle and the red kangaroo and Sturt's Desert Rose. Queensland adopted a sapphire as a state gem and South Australia the opal.

When the Commonwealth government was inaugurated, similar insignia were devised that employed elements of Australia's natural landscape. Its coat of arms includes the kangaroo and emu. Its floral emblem, the Golden Wattle, with its green and yellow, is the most popular, well-known and well-loved national symbol. Australians wear the Green and the Gold.

There was a whole history of popular sentiment for the wattle. Its numerous species were to be found across its breadth of the continent and each was the cause of delight for native colonials. In 1880 *The Australasian Sketcher* noted:

Young Australians are not acquainted, like their English cousins, with the pleasures of 'going a-Maying'; instead of that they go 'blossom-gathering'. To a genuine Australian there is no pleasanter recollection of youth than that of a day spent out in the woods among the sweet scented wattles and lightwood tress, and returning at sundown laden with heavy branches of the beautiful bloom.¹³

From the 1870s the Australian Natives' Association promoted the wattle as a national emblem, and from 1889 the Adelaide-based Wattle Blossom League pledged its support for the promotion of patriotic sentiment. A decade later, Archibald Campbell formed a Wattle Club in Victoria with the thought of instituting a Wattle Day to foster patriotism. This idea was taken up by New South Wales, which in 1901 declared the first day of

spring, 1 September, Wattle Day. Victoria followed in 1910 and South Australia in 1911.

Figures in the landscape

If the wattle was the emblem of the land, the wanderer rather than the settler became the legendary icon of the figure in the landscape. This reflected the social reality of colonial political economy. People moved between colonies as word of a gold discovery or the start of a new industry was rumoured, promising material advancement. Within a given colony, fortune seekers rushed from one region to another as different goldfields were uncovered and as new settlements were established. Labourers were a highly mobile workforce whose experience went beyond the local and gave them a real sense of Australia as a whole.

The agrarian basis of the Australian economy supported commercial travellers, itinerant workers and, in hard times, vagabonds. The societies that grew up in farming and pastoral districts across the colonies sponsored field days and agricultural shows that attracted commercial salesmen of agricultural machinery.

Showmen traversed a well-known circuit, up and down the northern coast.¹⁴ Cane-cutters and shearers formed part of a band of itinerants. Such an existence was depicted in Ray Lawler's play *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (1957) and the film *Sunday Too Far Away* (1975). When times were really tough, particularly in the depressions of the 1890s and the 1930s, there was another horde of itinerants who took to the roads and were said 'to be on the wallaby'. These were swagmen and sometimes swagwomen, or sundowners, who took to the road in search of a night's board and lodging at a homestead in return for casual work. Such an existence was depicted in D'Arcy Niland's novel *The Shiralee* (1955). The fierce independence and the threat of lawlessness of the swaggie was immortalised in 'Waltzing Matilda' (1895), Australia's unofficial national song:

*Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong,
Under the shade of a coolibah tree,
And he sang as he watched and waited 'til his billy boiled,
Who'll come a-waltzing matilda with me?
Waltzing Matilda,
Waltzing Matilda,
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?
And he sang as he watched and waited 'til his billy boiled,
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?*¹⁵

Bullock drivers, shepherds, overlanders as well as swagmen, stockmen, shearers and sundowners were itinerants of no fixed abode. They, like the

explorers, knew the secrets of the land—back of Barcoo, beyond the Black Stump—and its terrors, symbolised by the bunyip. Their campfire signalled a restless and adventurous way of life that was the counterpoint to the suburban existence of the settled order.

The travellers of Australia, like the vagabonds and the gypsies of Europe, unsettled and challenged the more predictable life of the landed citizen. The radical political tradition was grounded in ballads and writings that depicted and roused the loyalty of the many itinerants forced to earn a living on the run, from job to job, from town to town, from station to station. It was the plight of many writers and journalists who then documented the lot of the unemployed, as well as rural labourers and bush workers. It bred a fierce alternative patriotism born of an intimacy with the land so strong it formed an identity and destiny of the kind that Henry Lawson wrote so passionately about in his essay 'The Romance of the Swag':

The Australian swag was born of Australia and no other land—of the Great Lone Land of magnificent distances and bright heat; the land of Self-reliance, and Never-give-in, and Help-your mate. The grave of many of the world's tragedies and comedies—royal and otherwise. The land where a man out of employment might shoulder his swag in Adelaide and take the track, and years later walk into a hut on the Gulf, or never be heard of any more, or a body be found in the Bush and buried by the mounted police, or never found and never buried—what does it matter?

The land I love above all others—not because it was kind to me, but because I was born on Australian soil, and because of the foreign father who died at his work in the ranks of Australian pioneers, and because of many things. Australia! my country! Her very name is music to me. God bless Australia! for the sake of the great hearts of the heart of her! God keep her clear of the old-world shams and social lies and mockery, and callous commercialism, and sordid shame! And heaven send that, if ever in my time her sons are called upon to fight for her young life and honour, I die with the first ranks of them and be buried in Australian ground.¹⁶

When war came, Lawson volunteered to spill blood on foreign soil. Rejected as unfit, he penned patriotic verse in support of the war effort. His fellow bush balladist, 'Banjo' Patterson, became a war correspondent. C. E. W. Bean, journalist, whose collection of writings, *On the Wool Track* (1910), was already a classic of outback life, became Australia's official war historian. Bean was wounded in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, where Australian troops fought against all odds. He reported on and helped compile the soldiers' own account of their efforts, *The Anzac Book* (1916), which depicted Australian heroism in war and created a legendary status for Australian soldiers and the Australian people.

This resonated on the home front. Soldiers had not fought and died on home ground, but those who remained at home made it their priority to

find Australian soil to be declared a sacred place,¹⁷ consecrated in remembrance of their heroism. Lone Pine was commemorated in solitary plantings and the naming and renaming of fields on countless rural properties. Country shires planted memorial avenues of trees. Towns and cities throughout Australia erected war memorials to locals who had defended the cause of those communities. Governments did the same. The Victorian Shrine of Remembrance, in Melbourne, bears the following inscription:

*Let all Men know that this is Holy ground
This shrine established in the hearts of men as on the solid earth
commemorates a people's fortitude and sacrifice
Ye that come after give remembrance.*

The National War Memorial in Canberra, which includes the tomb of an unknown serviceman, bears the following stirring dedication:

*Here is the spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the
record that they themselves made.*

An essential component of the patriotism, made physically manifest in shrines throughout Australia, was attachment to the land. That same sentiment inspired efforts to look after soldiers on their return to Australia. In Australia there was a unique emphasis placed on offering repatriated servicemen the opportunity of acquiring their own land, given that it was a country that they had honoured and fought for.

Closer Settlement and Urbanisation

Governments, from a defence perspective, were also keen to encourage what they referred to as closer settlement. Soldier Settlement schemes were adopted in most of the states with the thought of settling more people on the land, creating a densely populated state of many small family farms. Over 37 000 Australian soldiers were repatriated in this way. British soldiers were also encouraged with the British Empire immigration schemes of the 1920s. Much of the land was not fertile enough to provide a living on a small acreage and many of the small farms failed.¹⁸ Their failure was investigated in 1943 by the Rural Reconstruction Commission set up by the Commonwealth Ministry for Post-War Reconstruction. In consequence, later soldier settlement schemes, established as part of repatriation for soldiers who had served in World War II, were pursued with some success.¹⁹ But the land itself was not suited to small holdings, particularly in marginal country.

Australian soil and climatic conditions are not suitable for intensive agriculture, except along the coast and its immediate and adjacent hinterland.

In marginal areas, droughts often spoiled agricultural returns. At the turn of the century, hopes were placed in irrigation for making dry lands fertile. This met with limited success, and the productivity of agricultural industry was also enhanced by the use of artesian water. But irrespective of economic returns, rural existence was austere and the needs of those living on family farms and remote outback stations were very different from those of the political majority who lived in towns and cities. The Country Party was formed in the 1920s in order to bring 'countrymindedness' to city folks' attention.²⁰ Through forming a coalition with the Liberal Party, the Country Party had remarkable success in winning political attention at a national and regional level.

By the late 1970s rising costs and lowered commodity prices were starting to put the squeeze on farming, and with the return of neoliberalism in the 1980s free trade destroyed many family farms. Despite the farmers' rallies of the early 1980s and the crisis of the 1990s, the reality of urban-based constituencies has meant that rural and regional Australia continues to be hollowed out. Technocratic elites have continued to talk up the promise of harnessing opportunities through communication technologies.²¹ Governments have responded to the rural crisis in piecemeal ways that have not properly addressed the process of rural restructuring. The outcome is that some regional centres are getting larger as they attract both business development and the poor of the metropolitan areas, who can no longer cope with inflated housing prices and rising rentals. This regional urbanisation is being touted as the success story of neoliberalism.²² Many smaller rural towns are in decline, however, and much of rural Australia is in poverty²³ and suffering.²⁴

The charm of the small country town and its amenity to rural families are being discounted. The sheer struggle for survival in the outback regions is largely ignored,²⁵ and its heritage forgotten. Affluent individuals and families travel abroad rather than tour the hinterlands. Overworked professionals and executives have used their newfound wealth to buy week-enders and hobby farms, but their commuting lifestyle is often more a status symbol than an effort to adopt the role of stewardship and more serious investment in the land.

The drift from rural hinterland to the regional and coastal cities is nothing new in Australian life, and has been occurring in one form or another since the mid 1880s. The glamour and more comfortable existence of city life have been a continuing attraction and accelerated the trend. Nonetheless, up until the period of postwar immigration, many Australians had links to family farms and holdings in the country, to which they returned. Teachers, doctors, bankers and stock agents all gave a transfusion of newcomers to country towns and regional centres, which cemented linkages between coastal cities and the rural areas. In the early decades of

the twentieth century, city dwellers, although confirmed in metropolitan ways, regularly turned their gaze inward and worked to improve the amenity of country dwellers. Many still had strong family ties and connections to the country properties of the old landed families. New technologies made possible nursing services, medical services and educational services for the bush. The establishment of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the School of the Air and Kindergarten of the Air attracted world attention for their novelty and ingenuity. The Country Women's Association founded in the 1920s, with its many rural branches, formed an effective lobbying base for families on the land.

The attraction of suburbia

Meanwhile cities mushroomed to become suburban conglomerations. Unlike Europeans, Australians eschewed high-rise apartment living until very recently, and from the late nineteenth century, with the availability of rail services, they wanted to buy a quarter-acre allotment and settle down either in one of the large metropolises or in one of the regional centres. Following the post-World War II commitment to making the rhetoric of egalitarianism a reality, by the early 1970s Australians had one of the highest rates of home ownership in the world. If the English talked about their home as a castle, this was no less true of Australians. Although suburbia was lampooned from the 1950s onwards, the impulse to live in the suburbs was inspired by a utopian vision described by Fishman:

Suburbia . . . must be understood as a utopia in its own right. Its power derived ultimately from the capacity of suburban design to express a complex and compelling vision of the modern family freed from the corruption of the city, restored to harmony with nature, endowed with wealth and independence yet protected by a close-knit, stable community.²⁶

The sheer popularity of the vision despoiled the lived reality, as acre on acre of bushland was cleared to make way for urban sprawl. Suburbia has become the form of city life that many Australians experience, as Fishman points out:

The massive postwar decentralisation of the most vital urban functions has profoundly transformed the basic urban ecology in which suburbia developed over its two-hundred-year history. As a result, the original concept of suburbia as an unspoiled synthesis of city and countryside has lost its meaning. No longer can a purely residential 'bourgeois utopia' define itself in relation to a centralised urban core, for the suburban periphery has become the favoured locale for our most advanced and important enterprises. If anything, suburbia has succeeded too well. It has become what even the greatest advocates of suburban growth never desired—a new form of city.²⁷

Suburban territoriality could also lead to a backyard mentality where the boundaries of concern were the immediate ones of the household domain, possibly the neighbours either side, and at its furthest reach, the local suburb. The good citizen minded his own affairs and let the world go by.²⁸

Continuing changes

A recent demographic study argues that a move to the coastline signals the third major population shift in land settlement in Australia. By the 1880s the population started to drift from the rural hinterlands to the metropolises and, a century later, there is a trend towards a coastal existence made possible by new communications technology. Salt points out that a hundred years ago there were only 300 000 living beside the sea, whereas there are now 3.6 million,²⁹ who represent a 'Third Culture'. The last decade has seen a literature that celebrates Australia's long coastline, with writers like Robert Drewe and Tim Winton exploring the aesthetic of littoral existence. Philip Drew³⁰ and Leone Huntsman³¹ argue that the beach is important in establishing national identity.

Contemporary globalisation is making concepts of the homeland and the domain of what is considered to be home both larger and smaller. There is a renewed appreciation of cosmopolitanism for citizens of 'spaceship earth' who are networked to world cities in a world-system.³² At the same time there has been a resurgence of regionalised particularism, as a mature national vision gives way to embroidering the larger canvas with attention to local detail. Dorothy Hewett's poetic evocation of Western Australian wheatlands and David Malouf's of Brisbane suburbia exemplify this literary localism. It is also attested to by William Robinson's thirty-year obsession with rendering visual representation of the landscape of south-eastern Queensland, and Phillip Hunter's twenty-year focus on painting the plains of the Wimmera in Victoria.

Contemporary globalisation has also made possible a revived interest in international tourism, student travel and career travel. Australia, as we have seen, has an increasing number of temporary visitors, attracted by its isolation, regional diversity, the exotica of its wilderness areas, and also its commercial culture. Gaile McGregor's post-modern account of her tour of Australia, seen as a mosaic of diverse territorial subcultures, encapsulates this attraction.³³ It is an eccentric reading of the land, one which perhaps overstates the case for idiosyncrasy. As Davidson and Spearitt point out in their history of tourism in Australia, the experience of travelling is always one of strangeness, not of belonging.³⁴ Carter, for example, points out how the diaries of the explorers were fragmentary records that formed an oddly

discontinuous narrative.³⁵ A sense of belonging and a sense of place require putting down roots and forming an attachment that is the heart and soul of citizenship, and this requires reverence for the land.

Reverence for the Land

Initial colonisation involved only a superficial relationship with the land as the continent was mapped. The land was surveyed and viewed by colonists as a *tabula rasa*,³⁶ which they named in ways that reflected curiosity about indigenous nomenclature, observance of features of the topography, homage to European ancestry and lapses into personal whimsy and aggrandisement. Settlements were established, but for many decades there was little of the sensibility and reverence for the land that informed the English Romantics between the 1780s and the 1830s or America's Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.³⁷ Poetic sensibility and an affinity for the land and its spiritual and creative aspects were, however, a part of indigenous cultures, and this was gradually recognised through ethnographies.³⁸

The creation and revival of Australian nationalism depended on developing a tradition of artistic representation that showed attachment to, and reverence for, the natural landscape. P. R. Stephenson, writing in the 1930s during a period of revived nationalism, was enthusiastic about articulating a sense of place so as to build the foundations of a national culture.

Australia is a unique country. All countries are unique, but this one is particularly so. Visitors . . . have discerned a spiritual quality of ancient loveliness in our land itself. The flora and fauna are primitive, and for the most part harmless to man, but to the visitor there is another element, of terror, in the Spirit of the Place. The blossoming of the waratah, the song of the lyrebird, typify the spirit of primitive loveliness in our continent; but the wail of the dingo, the gauntness of our tall trees by silent moonlight, can provide a shiver of terror to a newcomer. Against a background of strangeness, of strange beasts and birds and plants, in a human emptiness of three million square miles, our six million white people, of immigrant stock, mainly from Europe, are becoming acclimatised in this environment new to them but geologically so old that Time seems to have stood still here for a million years.³⁹

Stephenson paid particular tribute to landscape artists in evoking consciousness of a defined sense of place.

Landscape artists . . . have had to face Australia, examine it carefully and create, or recreate, the land as art. They came by intuition and of necessity close to the Spirit of the Place, whatever it is, as they submitted themselves, with ease,

colour, and brushes to vigils on lonely hillsides, observing the unorthodox contours of the land, and the light-quality of an atmosphere not previously painted or described in text-books. Landscape painting in oils, by its meditative and quiet technique, is a mystical process, an intuitive process of mind. If there is any such thing as the Spirit of a Place, the landscape artist will be likely to find it first, and to show others what it is.⁴⁰

Experiencing the bush

A new generation of city dwellers was enticed to discover the attractions of the natural bushland. A monthly magazine, *Walkabout*, published by the Australian National Travel Association, appeared in November 1934. The term, denoting a period of nomadic existence or leisurely wandering, nicely captured the focus of the magazine. A bushwalking movement, dating from the 1920s, started to flourish in the 1930s with the aim of exploring urban fringes and the country made accessible by motorways. The Sydney Bush Walkers defined a bushwalker as

'[a] walker, man or woman, who seeks social recreation and education in roadless wilderness or primitive areas or rugged country and carries his or her own personal gear, food rations and share of camp gear; who has a tent for accommodation in order to stay in the bushland environment for as long as possible and who practices bushcraft.'⁴¹

For many this activity was a spiritual retreat whose purpose was to get away from the trappings of conventional modern life and experience a more natural and soulful existence in the wilderness. The continent was by now thoroughly explored, mapped and named, and outdoor pursuits like bushwalking were an attempt to give a personal, experiential dimension to territory and landscape. The wilderness was no longer to be feared or examined, but actively sought for recreational and restorative purposes. This cause was fostered by the Jindyworobak movement, established by Rex Ingamells, who founded the Jindyworobak literary club in Adelaide in 1938 to counter increasing commercialism with a return to and reverence for the Australian bush. The group adopted the term 'Jindyworobak' for its evocation of indigenous culture, and drew on Stephenson's enthusiasm for a sense of place. The Jindyworobaks were artists and writers intent on expressing what it meant to live in the Australian landscape. Like the earlier Australian Natives' Association, the movement appropriated aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture, this time not the cruder, outward forms of ceremony, but rather the mythological and spiritual links with the land.

Australian artists, writers and conservation activists encouraged a romantic sensibility that required embracing the land: seeing, feeling,

touching, hearing, listening to and smelling it. Only in this way could one understand the spirit of the land and come to belong to it. This idea is epitomised in the writings of Archer Russell, a bushwalker whose accounts of his experiences were regularly published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (under the headline 'Our Australia') and Melbourne's *Herald*. Russell's reflections are noteworthy for their sensuous quality and romantic enthusiasm:

There are haunts among the Illawarra and Blue Mountain land of Australia that take on in retrospect an almost sacred significance, standing as symbols for the wild music of our mountain country and the joy of revelling in its beauty . . .

Perhaps you know the mountain-born headwater of the Minnamurra . . .

It is a land of contrasts: of forested plateaux, rimmed by innumerable rivulets and springs; of foamy cascades and bridal-veil waterfalls; of breasts of green pasture curving away over sun-drenched foothills to the green and chocolate mosaic of the coastal plains and the blue seas of the Tasman.

There are in its sanctuaries hill tracks and forest paths which are green enchantments, offering all the delights of mountain tramping; and for the student of native rocks and plants there are grottos and scarps in every gully and on looming hillsides masses of almost untouched wilderness. Some of the trees, particularly the native figs, rise in splendid domes of greenery, their massive trunks clamped to the jungle floor with gigantic roots and buttresses. Red cedars add to the canopy overhead, and ancient cabbage palms and tamarinds, all twined and festooned with twisted liana vines . . .

But there is something else, something even greater and more vital than this, that accounts for the spirit of these hills. What mostly enriches the fountain heads of the Minnamurra and throws over them the pristine charm and music of the wilds is the presence in every bush and grotto of innumerable birds.⁴²

The emphasis is not the careful recording of details of specimens that formed the focus of earlier scientific accounts of field naturalists and explorers, but sheer enjoyment of being in the bush:

I have not thought it necessary to set down in detail the many forms of wild life I met with in these hills, and indeed it would be tedious to do so. I felt no urge to chronicle, and I pursued my path lazily . . . Yet it required little searching to discover birds in the leafage and shadows of the great trees; to reconstruct the departed days when the black man hunted the kangaroo and wallaby among the scarps and rocks; to catch a glimpse of a bandicoot stealing like a shadow among the ferns and logs . . .⁴³

Russell makes the bush as inviting and as restorative to the soul as any garden, and emphasises the spiritual aspects of landscape:

If a man stand in spring on the rough banks of the river he may hear the ventriloquial calls of the orioles rippling among the she-oaks; up yonder, on the high forests of the hills, comes the 'wook, wook' notes of the wonga pigeon; out on

the green pastures, where the foothills curve down to the plains, a crowd of magpies is carolling in the sunshine. It is as if Nature wanted you to feel all that is really beautiful and worthwhile, the special qualities that go to make the onward movement and vital force of life.

Light winds, swirling gently over the nearby trees, bring with them the agreeable tang of leaf and mould. As the hill-path drops down the lower valley the lighter green of the homestead fields brings in a note of contrast, and across the fall of the foothills there winds the grey, white, or reddish tint of a road. It is the road along which I had come, and upon which I had now to return.

But, instead of going away, as it were, I have been trying to tell you of a place I have never left, because I took it along with me, in the inward joy of the heart.⁴⁴

The bushwalkers and their writings nurtured an Australian Romanticism. Russell, reflecting at day's end after a journey through the river groves of the Burragarang, evokes the delight of the tryst with the wilds:

With the smell of trodden leaves, the sound of birds in song, the sight of ancient hills rolling away in vistas of misty purple, it is impossible not to respond to the poetry of this valley. Always one feels a sense of gain when one can go trailing out among the she-oak groves, or up along some mossy mountain path, or down beside the still river pools, where the swallows dip and wheel. For here stands the ancient wilderness; and many will find joy in it and be conscious of its worth.⁴⁵

Bushwalkers like Archer Russell and Myles Dunphy did a great deal to promote conservation.⁴⁶ Aware of the American national parks movement, Dunphy and others campaigned from the 1930s for national parks to be declared in places like the Blue Mountains and the Snowy Mountains for 'appreciative citizens'. Social movements are a long time in the making, and it was a further generation before environmentalism, the World Heritage Convention and action by governments gave state legitimisation to the conservation and preservation of wilderness areas.

Civil Rights and Reconciliation

The most sensitive Australians have always been aware of the profound spiritual attachment of the indigenous inhabitants to a land they occupied for more than fifty thousand years. It defined their kinship groupings and contained sacred sites and dreaming mythology. Their belonging to the land was a far more elemental relationship than the European's possession for economic exploitation. Recognition of enduring Aboriginal land rights has yet to be achieved.

The spiritual ties of the indigenous inhabitants had been largely overlooked by successive generations of Australians. An emotional attachment

to the land was part of their lived experience, reflected in songs, poetry and myth. They were of the land and the land was within them. Conception sites literally gave them their spirit. Mountains, rivers, seas and skies formed 'a speaking land'.⁴⁷ Albert Namatjira and Kath Walker inspired subsequent artists and poets to portray these spiritual ties with the land, giving expressive voice to calls for recognition of traditional guardianship and renewing the spirit of the human rights claims of indigenous Australians.

The colonial project had declared the land to be *terra nullius*, but that understanding has now shifted. Instead, there is a growing recognition that the land is a palimpsest on which can be recorded multiple poetics. Places can be sacred according to indigenous traditions and experience as well as to European traditions and experience, as witnessed in Paul Sinclair's recent account of the River Murray.⁴⁸

Paul Carter has urged the reconciliation of these two conceptions of the land in rebuilding a national citizenship.

As we come to the negotiating table, it will not be enough to right the wrong, to redraft the history books, to rewrite the statute books. Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples will need to find something in common; they will need to find a reason to stay together. Beyond the dictates of economic and political pragmatism, they will need to discover common interests . . .

It will not be enough to express an interest in their traditional wisdom. To legitimate our curiosity, we will need to bring useful knowledge of our own to swap. And this will have to be something other than the latest scientific and technological know-how; it will have to represent a return to certain dreamings which our post-Renaissance history has generally suppressed in the interests of Progress. In particular, we will need to have to hand a different conception of the land and our relationship to it. Until we can overcome our obsession with exclusive ownership, it is not only the others but we who have nowhere defensible to stand. We cannot expect those across the table to furnish us with these concepts; we need to locate them within the neglected counter-traditions of our own culture.⁴⁹

A sense of the land and an attachment to it are inherent in the sentiment of citizenship. The polity and our membership of it are founded on our feeling for the particularity of a stretch of landscape: our belonging to it irrespective of its belonging to us. At least for some Australians there is a renewed sense of their common ground, and a commitment to people on the land. In the Year of the Outback Australians might acknowledge the people who still live on the land, including Aboriginal people. We have writers who articulate the importance of this for all Australians. Eric Rolls, a farmer, conservationist and poet, reminds us that 'The greatest song of the land is the food it produces' and our commitment must be to those who grow the produce that we need and rely on. Les Murray, Australia's greatest

living poet, whose inspiration is the land where he grew up, speaks up for country people and urges the need for a renewal of faith in the land. In his essay 'Some Religious Stuff I Know about Australia', Murray writes:

We have come to the sense, which the Aborigines had before us, that after all human frenzies and efforts there remains the great land. As George Johnston wrote, nothing human has yet happened in Australia, which stands out above the continent itself. We know in our bones that the land is mightier than we are, and its vast indifference can drive us to frenzies of desecration and revenge. We know, deep down, that the land does not finally permit of imported attitudes that would make it simply a resource, a thing.⁵⁰

The poet David Malouf in the sixth of his 1998 Boyer Lectures, 'The Spirit of Play', reminds us that we have a history of tolerance and mutuality, and that we have the power to shape landscape according to our values:

We are makers, among much else, of landscapes. The land under our hands is shaped by the food we eat; by farming methods and ways of preparing and rotating fields; by the ways we hedge or wall or fence them; and by the laws we make for passing them on. We remake the land in our own image so that it comes in time to reflect both the industry and the imagination of its makers, and gives us back, in working land, but also in the idealised version of landscape that is park or garden, an image both of our human nature and our power. Such making is also a rich form of possession.⁵¹