The double sunrise: a novel and an accompanying exegesis, Australian national identity and The double sunrise

Lynne Leonhardt

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The Double Sunrise

A novel and an accompanying exegesis

Australian National Identity and ‘The Double Sunrise’

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Thesis submitted for the award of
PhD (Writing)

Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences
Edith Cowan University
April 2007
The creative component
the novel ‘The Double Sunrise’

has been omitted from this version of the thesis
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
Abstract

This thesis comprises a historical novel entitled ‘The Double Sunrise’ and an exegesis entitled ‘Australian National Identity and “The Double Sunrise”’. The novel contains three books. The narrative starts in Book I through the perspective of twelve-year-old, fatherless Virginia. The introductory scene, set in 1957, depicts the girl’s consciousness and self-consciousness at the wedding of her mother, Valerie, a former English war-bride and war-widow, to her second husband Noel. When the newly married couple leave for their honeymoon, Virginia is left in the care of her aunt, Attie, (her father’s twin sister) who lives on a farm in the south west of Western Australia. From here, the story-line reverts to a time six months earlier when Virginia was previously left in the care of Attie during her mother’s return to England with her Australian lover for a holiday. The girl’s experiences on the farm and the friendships she forms with Attie, Mr Penworthy, her music teacher and Dieter, a German refugee who works on the farm, enrich her life and provide an awakening of womanhood and a wider family identity. The book closes on Christmas Day as Virginia learns of her mother’s marriage plans and imminent return journey to Australia with Noel.

Book II skips back to January 1945 with the war-bride’s arrival in Australia with baby Virginia ahead of her husband, Jasper, an Australian bomber pilot based in Lincolnshire. This narrative, describing the isolation and loneliness of women’s life on the farm as they await Jasper’s return, is told through two perspectives: that of Valerie and her sister-in-law Attie, who is managing the farm while Jasper is at war. Following the announcement of victory at the end of Book II, the story narrative picks up in 1963, with a return to Virginia’s perspective in Book III. While the girl is waiting to start a musical career at university, she is involved in a burning accident with her little half-sister, Dorothy. When the child dies, Valerie is grief-stricken and Virginia is so traumatised that she can no longer play the piano. Her later meeting with Theo, a young student of Dutch-Indonesian parentage provides love and consolation, helping her towards recovery. The remainder of the story involves Virginia’s reactions to her mother’s tragic death, Theo’s proposal to her following his
national service call-up and the unfolding mystery of Jasper's whereabouts and her imminent journey to solve it.

The exegesis, which provides a cultural, historical and literary context for my novel, is structured around two elements: the first consists of an explanation of the creative process and a detailing of memorabilia which inspired me to write 'The Double Sunrise'; the second undertakes an exploration of constructions of Australian national identity until the 1960s through the discourses of myth, war, place, gender and race, and the journey.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

I also grant permission for the Library at Edith Cowan University to make duplicate copies of my thesis as required.

Lynne Leonhardt
Acknowledgments

This project has been completed under the wise counsel and encouragement of my supervisor, Associate Professor Richard Rossiter, whose support inspired me throughout. I am also appreciative of the contribution made by my Associate Supervisor, Dr Ffion Murphy, particularly in the earlier stages of my project. Over the three-year course fellow writers, Amanda Curtin and Robyn Mundy, have provided generous assistance and I am indebted to them for their support, mentorship and insightful reading of my novel. Other members of the Edith Cowan Postgraduate Writing Group who have contributed to critical discussions of my work are Karen Williams, Ann Morgan, Helen Smith, Maureen-Helen, and Vahri McKenzie.

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‘The Double Sunrise’

‘The Double Sunrise’ is a work of fiction. In writing my novel, I have drawn upon material from a variety of historical sources.
The staff at the RAAF Heritage Museum at Bullcreek and The Australian War Museum in Canberra, and Ms Tinny Lenthen, Librarian at the Sydney Jewish Museum all provided assistance with research questions regarding World War II. In a number of cases I was able to draw from personal war correspondence on public display at the RAAF Heritage Museum for turn of phrase.

My appreciation also goes to the late David (Paddy) Dwyer for kindly providing background information and volunteering copies of war documentation to be used as templates for correspondence in my novel.

Prior to the publication of her book, A Landscape for Learning, in 2006, Gillian Lilleyman answered numerous questions regarding the history of the grounds of the University of Western Australia and the foreshore at Crawley Bay.

Of the many miscellaneous on-line versions of the Ganesh legend, I drew primarily from the one published by http://hindumythslegends.pbwiki.com/Stories%20from%20Hindu%20Mythology.htm because it fitted the context of my story.

In researching versions of popular vintage music, I sourced numerous websites. The lyrics for ‘Pack up Your Troubles’ can be found in http://firstworldwar.com/audio/packuppyourtoubles.htm.

‘I’ve been floating down the old Green River’ is a song known to me since early childhood. A ‘78 RPM’ words and music version can be sourced from http://turtleservices.com/oldgreen.htm.

'Going Over the Sea' is a traditional song. A common version of the lyrics can be found at http://peterandellen.com/lyrics/si4v2_side2.htm.

The BBC website, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/newswatch/history/noflash/html/1940s.stm, tells how Beethoven's 5th (The Victory) Symphony was cleverly utilized during the BBC's 'V for Victory campaign' as a means of raising public morale and galvanizing the Allied effort against the Germans. The dramatic rhythm of the first four notes, 'dit-dit-dit-daaah', spelt out 'V' for 'victory' in Morse code and was incorporated as the call sign of all the BBC's European services mocking the nationalism intended by the symphony's German composer.

News reports covering specific dates and events, such as the dropping of bombs on both Dresden and Nagasaki, and Churchill's victory speech, were sourced from online BBC archives. Similarly, for Australian celebratory broadcast of the Japanese surrender, I drew from ABC online archives.
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Introduction

There are two distinct strands to this exegesis. The first concerns an exploration of what inspired me to write my novel. The second, and primary aim of the exegesis, is to explore, from a current critical standpoint, constructions of Australian national identity until the 1960s as a social context for ‘The Double Sunrise’.

One of the most significant influences on my creative process was a trunk of memorabilia I had inherited dating back to the First World War and before. These personal objects aroused my interest, making me consider war, immigration, gender and identity within a wider public domain. They also provided physical and historical reference points from which to make observations about the changing nature of our society.

During the creative process, I encountered numerous challenges. These, I have endeavoured to explain further in ‘Mapping the Territory’, within an outline of the evolutionary aspects of point of view, voice, and narrative structure. The shifting nature of creativity shows, however, how the oppositional forces which continued to confront me throughout my writing process, ultimately helped to generate what is hopefully a more complex, satisfying result than would otherwise have been the case.

My analysis of Australian national identity reveals that it is a social construction with various manifestations. I discuss these under the headings of The Australian Male Heroic Tradition, The Australian Female Tradition, Character and Place, and The Journey with reference to a number of historical narratives. Over the years the Australian male heroic tradition has dominated national narratives and influenced perceptions of national identity. Taking this as my starting point, I study critical understandings of Australian male legends within a dichotomy of the city and the bush. It is from these legends that a stereotypical Australian image has been created (and imposed upon?) our society. The responses of youth to societal myths are of
special interest in my argument because in a modern world it is through youth and
demonstrations of youth culture that society changes.

Reflections on the Australian male heroic tradition created a need to research a
 corresponding Australian female tradition. My first objective was to look at female
gender constructions within a dominant male cultural ideology followed by a study of
women’s literary responses to the First World War highlighting the gaps and silences
in official history and popular remembrances of the Anzacs. In the years following
the First World War, Australian society underwent considerable transformation. In
Changing Gender Roles 1920s-1940s, I present a historical overview of the socio-
economic and political circumstances of the interwar period and World War II which
affected Australia’s changing sexual climate. The inter-war emergence of mass
culture had a dramatic effect on gender identity as did women’s homefront
participation in the Second World War alongside a foreign allied presence. My
research shows that the diversity of male/female relationships formed during the war
years continued to influence post-war notions of identity despite nationalist revival.

In Place and Character, I talk about the growing connections between self and the
land in West Australian literature and the search for identity within alternative myths.
Regional particularities of place now play an important part in the way we define
ourselves. The beach, with its contradictory characteristics, features heavily in locally
written novels, and is often crucial in defining personal and societal characteristics. In
a national literary swing away from traditional binary methods of definition, local
authors reveal the complexity of identity and the ever-changing nature in which it is
perceived.

In my final section, I analyse different notions of the ‘journey’ in relation to changing
perceptions of national identity and how these have been reflected in Australian
literature. Specific reference is made to the ideological traffic of the 1960s. This
includes youth’s resistance to and rejection of the cultural and political values of the
‘Australian way of life’ and its involvement in the Vietnam War. Responses were
often expressed in the popular journeying away from Australia by the younger
generation of the 1960s in search of alternative identities. Immigration figures predominantly in notions of the journey and undoubtedly drives much of the changing nature of our society. However, the subject is only touched upon in relation to ‘The Double Sunrise’ because we are all, to some extent, immigrants of this nation.

Throughout the exegesis, I make detailed reference to selected West Australian fiction writers in order to locate my novel in a particular literary context. It is hard to say whether works such as Tim Winton’s Cloudstreet and Robert Drewe’s Sharknet, which I had read prior to writing the novel, had any influence on my novel. My thesis proposal of 2004 reveals that plot, town and country settings, and the themes of war, loss and identity had been well established before my reading of Joan London’s Gilgamesh and Brenda Walker’s Wing of Night in late 2005. These two works, however, in their commonality with my interests, provided inspirational reading during the latter part of my creative process. As with Randolph Stow’s The Merry-go-Round in the Sea, a novel which I did not read until after completing ‘The Double Sunrise’, they proved invaluable as comparative material for my exegesis. Two non-fiction works which greatly assisted my research for the novel were Margaret Geddes’ Blood, Sweat and Tears: Australia’s WWII remembered by the men and women who lived it and Carol Fallows’ Love & War: Stories of War Brides from the Great War to Vietnam. The abundance and variety of oral accounts offered by both authors brought colour and life to the factual framework of the war years and it is possible that faint echoes of these voices may be found in my characters. On the Homefront, a text which could have provided me with a wealth of local homefront detail, did not, unfortunately, come to my attention until after I had written the novel. With the exception of Blood Sweat & Tears, these texts will be discussed in more detail through the exegesis.
The Creative Process

Memorabilia

In endeavouring to engage in an analysis to my creative process, I had at my disposal an overwhelming mass of material – a proposal, old disbanded files, journals, scraps of paper, but also the immaterial that which had been erased or never documented – all the thinking not expressed on paper. One of my first steps involved looking at the proposal I had submitted in June 2004. The introduction supplied was brief, its significance vague:

My English grandmother migrated to Australia in 1912 at the age of nineteen. She lived in the south west of West Australia for nearly eighty years without ever seeing her homeland again. After her death, I inherited heirlooms and a trunk full of letters and memorabilia. Most potent of all was my grandmother’s thick auburn plait which I found wrapped in her wedding dress. This tangible object embodied physical and symbolic links between the past and the present. The find was evocative, presenting the idea of memory as a focus for my thesis.

Earlier drafts of the proposal, however, presented a more detailed summary of the contents of the trunk. In retrospect, I can see now how many of these items were significant for the way in which they drove my inspiration and influenced the course of my research. In a section entitled ‘Objects’ of her thesis “Place and Form” in “The Albanian”, Donna Mazza acknowledges the value of objects as having long been invested with the power of being able to transport a sense of the other place and other time to which they belong in the present. The souvenir is an example which brings a tangible sense of elsewhere back home. Amanda Bishop discovers the significance of souvenirs, as objects which trigger reverie, ‘refer back to the moment’ and are ‘signifiers of place’ (2003, p. 266).
For Maria Jacketti, even

the things we take for granted, household objects, the junk artefacts of our
lives are extremely absorbent ... hold time, emotions, events, extinct music ...
Sometimes they chatter, moan, weep, curse, or holler like the unascended
dead ... and ... keep me up at night trying to find forms to fit their stories

Familiar objects in the trunk triggered memories of my own childhood and
‘Grasswood’, the property where my grandparents once lived. Many items
transported me into other times and places. Collectively, these dormant ‘object-seeds’
(1997, p. 1) sprouted and were cultivated. A 1912 ticket of passage from England to
Australia belonging to my grandmother and bundles of ancient Christmas cards and
letters from the Old Country conveyed notions of ‘journey’, ‘identity’ and
‘belonging’ faced by the immigrant. Wedding photos of my grandparents taken after
the outbreak of World War I with my grandfather, a member of the Tenth Light
Horse, in full uniform, made me consider more deeply the cost of romantic and
familial love in the name of duty or patriotism and the terrible human sacrifices
causd by war. Postcards which my grandfather had written to my grandmother
during the war, conversely, evoked little in this regard. Comprising a minimum of
words often written with stoic humour, they revealed nothing of the losses and
trauma, the grief suffered during these years; nothing of a family’s waiting. Perhaps it
was this absence of information that may have motivated me to research and write
about the ways in which the untold burdens of war pass through generations.

‘The Double Sunrise’ is not an autobiographical account. Characters and plot are
fictional, presenting life as it could have been in the historical and cultural context of
Australia during 1940s–1960s. The elemental source from which conscious and
unconscious ideas have germinated has undoubtedly been the memorabilia, the object
‘most potent of all’ being my grandmother’s thick auburn plait.
Mapping the Territory

The difficulty in ‘Mapping the Territory’ of the creative experience and of ‘that kind of writing we call creative’ is the subject of discussion in a chapter of Kevin Brophy’s book *Creativity* (1998, p. 11). Brophy claims that:

The notion of creativity throws up a number of oppositions which highlight the way its presence shifts under our gaze or slips through our fingers or the way it takes us by surprise despite and because of our maps. Spontaneity or planning, original or copy, art or craft, new or old, uncanny or familiar, play or work, self-expression or chance, Dionysian or Platonic, personal or impersonal are only some of the oppositions that come into play when we approach a creative task (or approach a task creatively) (p. 11).

Because of the multifaceted nature of creativity, the following discussion is limited to selected chronological highlights in regard to voice, point of view, tense and narrative structure demonstrating the impact of a number of oppositions on the process and product of writing.

The initial idea of memory as a focus for my thesis appears to have been primarily linked to structural plans to create a retrospective first person narration in the present tense. From a contemporary setting, the sixty-year-old protagonist, (Virginia) would undertake physical and psychological journeys in claiming the inheritance left to her by her childless aunt. Her return to the family property after years of absence would provoke a flood of memories. A secondary first-person narration from the aunt would counterpoint the protagonist’s narration in the form of old journal entries covering the 1940s through to the early 1950s. Readings of these excerpts in the fragmented form of a back-story would interrupt the flow of the protagonist’s memories, temporarily bringing her back to the present.

The narrative plan appeared complex but feasible. The first-person voice was already well established in previous writing where it had provided energy and intimacy to the
voice of the twelve-year-old protagonist and was sustainable through periodic flashbacks into memory. The subjective voice also had the advantage of being able to convey the processes of memory and self-discovery with more authority. Tony Macris claims that first person narration has a contemporary cultural relevance, one that is ‘more in harmony with the identity politics and poststructuralist methodologies of the post-war period than omniscient narration’ (2002, p. 69). But there were obvious limitations that I had to consider. In *Creating Fiction: A Writer’s Companion*, Leebron & Levy outline some of the shortcomings of the first person narrative. While it

attracts some writers for the endless potential of subjectivity, for the promise that the narrator is the sole creator of the fictive world … a difficult challenge … is to allow as much as possible of a relatively objective reality to emerge. The first-person narrator needs to be visible in neutral light, in some way, for the reader to share in the narrator’s experience and to be affected by it (1995, pp. 221-222).

The challenge of positioning the reader in my case was compounded because of the secondary first-person narrative voice planned. There was also the potential difficulty in developing and sustaining the main voice throughout the novel because of the extensive time-span of the story. For, ‘to stay within a single character for the length of a story,’ warns Leebron and Levy, ‘is to expose yourself to inconsistencies in voice that can mean inconsistencies in character’ (p. 221). Yet, in striving for realism, it was also important to incorporate necessary change in the protagonist’s voice for the suggestion of youth developing into maturity, ‘that sense of journeying … towards the make-or-break point’ of the story (Kinross-Smith, 1994, p. 96). Other challenging questions presented themselves in this regard: Should the mature voice intrude on that of the young narrator? Stylistically, would the writing reflect the changing nature of the girl’s observations and perceptions? Although these questions remained unanswered early in the creative process, I was confident I could address them by experimenting, if necessary, with other narrative voices and styles as the novel progressed.
Initial attempts at rewriting the earlier accounts of the young protagonist were promptly shelved in favour of a chronological plot-driven approach to writing which better suited my preoccupations with time-line constructions and contextual research for the back-story. Inevitably this began to impact on narrative voice. The more research I carried out on the Second World War years, the more my back-story developed: too broad for the aunt's simple diary entries in the first person originally intended, too broad even to be told through dialogue. Even with adjustments to the time-line, the protagonist would have been too young to retain memories of the events she had witnessed. She would have had first to discover the information second-hand. The art of 'embedding' one story within another, in which the first person narrative becomes a framing device' (Macris, 2002, pp. 69-70), as perfected by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* would only have brought further complications. 'Characters, narrators and events ... do not really exist,' Brian Moon reminds us, 'they are fabricated or constructed by writers and readers. As part of the technical apparatus of fictional narrative, point of view helps us to do this work of fabrication' (2001, p. 95). Focalising events through divergent limited third person points of view rather than a single omniscient third person perspective was a device that I knew would add dimension to my characters. It would enable me to portray the personal effects of war on each of these women and position the reader to make composite character constructions because of the women's individual observations and comments on each other. The problem of how to integrate the new third person points of view individually and collectively as a back-story, however, remained a setback, forcing me to re-evaluate my original plans for a subjective narration for Virginia.

Macris cautions against the problem of the first-person narrator 'never being able to shift the attention away from him or her self: with the narrator doomed to be the hero in every scene,' so that 'before long the writer is sick of the sound of the main character's voice' (2002, p. 67). Somehow I had to 'diversify the narrative and break out of this prison house of subjectivity' (2002, p. 67), and redress the imbalance of the 'hero and witness modes' described by Macris (2002, p. 68). In practice, the main story did not 'turn around' when rewritten into third person, as suggested in theory by
Leebron & Levy in their writing strategies for experimenting with voice. Nor did the new point of view leave me without ‘impression’ which might have made it ‘worth examining the nature of the reality’ created by the original first-person voice (1995, p. 222). Rather, the third-person voice did not sound true to me. The early childhood scenes I created for Virginia only complicated my ideas of a retrospective narration. Events which had happened prior to the 1950s accounts of the young protagonist were problematic to narrate in episodic form presenting what Macris would describe as a ‘kaleidoscope of subjectivities’ (2002, p. 71). Sequencing of these events was held together merely by the fact that they had ‘happened to the same person rather than by a considered development of the story’s dramatic structure’ (2002, p. 70). In her paper ‘Dangerous Dreaming: Myths of Creativity’, Marcelle Freiman discusses how ‘creativity functions within a discourse of previous knowledge’ and can therefore be ‘regarded as a process rather than a flash of intensity or inspiration’ which, ‘seen in terms of gestation and evolution, requires time’ (2003, p. 10). After eighteen months, Virginia’s narrative was still being unconsciously constructed through the same language associations of name, voice and tense used in my first version, disabling creation of alternatives.

A number of fresh ideas arose in the course of my research, helping me to break my impasse. While exploring Perth in the 1960s, my interest began to centre on the Vietnam War and its potential impact on my characters. Incorporating a theme of three generations of women affected by three wars would unify the story but it would undoubtedly disrupt my intended plot and time-line and possibly my idea of having a retrospective beginning. Yet ‘the very best form of writing,’ claims Michael, is one that drives the reader backwards, not forwards, in his endorsement of a ‘circularity’ of plotting (2002, p. 24). Experimenting with starting points and tenses, I formulated the following scene of the twenty-one year-old protagonist driving down to her aunt’s farm and her sense of home-coming:

I didn’t mind making the three-hour journey down to the farm. I promised Attie I’d stay the weekend. There were questions I wanted to ask her. Answers I needed to know. I was amazed driving along how everything had
changed. All of the old signs and reference points seemed to have gone. Older homes had been demolished and replaced by brash dwellings of salmon brick. Even the road was not how I remembered it, widened now and rerouted with progress (Leonhardt, 2005b).

This journey was to be a time of reckoning for the protagonist, yet it was also one for me as the author. Attie’s ‘answers’ could provide only limited details on family history and identity. In the introduction of her writers’ guide, *Plotting & Editing*, Sherry-Anne Jacobs explains how the writing process is one of continual learning, of flexibility and open-mindedness (2005, p. i). ‘Never treat your early ideas as if they’re set in concrete,’ she advises (2005, p. 13). Somehow I had to distance myself from the voice of my first version and explore ways of repositioning myself as the writer and look more objectively at my subjective narration.

Brophy talks about the ‘the writer (that figure against whom the student-writer measures him or herself)’ as ‘creator’ and its ‘disputed presence’ in the ‘oppositions personal or impersonal, original or copy, conscious or unconscious’ (1998, p. 10), citing Michel Foucault’s views on the notion of the personal originator in *The Order of Things*:

But this thin surface of the original ... is populated entirely by those complex mediations formed and laid down as sediment in their own history by labor, life and language so that ... what man is reviving without knowing it, is all the intermediaries of a time that governs him almost to infinity (1970, p. 335).

Signs of the ‘mediated self’ can be seen in my attempts at objectification. Concentrating on episodes I had created for the older teenage protagonist and her boyfriend, I experimented with names. Finally, I changed the name Orielle to Virginia to see the effect on the narrative. While the character didn’t alter, her new name instantly brought forth new associations for me and changed the light in which I saw her as a character. Furthermore, these minimal adjustments allowed me to escape my narrative mindset. From then on, I was able to rewrite the main story into the third
person while still keeping the protagonist’s point of view. Macris describes how ‘many novels take third person internal perspective as the model for the point-of-view schema of their story’ (2002, p. 73). Despite having previously read his cited works (James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Henry James’ *What Maisie Knew*) which use the third person restricted vision of a single character, ‘recording all events as filtered through their consciousness’ (2002, p. 75), I had up until this point been unwilling to acknowledge how well-suited the technique was in narrating the consciousness and self-consciousness of youth. The flexibility of the new narrative immediately freed me of other structural constraints that had been hampering my progress. As retrospective narration was no longer one of my requirements, I was able to experiment with tenses and new starting point and ending options.

Sherry-Anne Jacobs says that ‘it is usual to start a novel at a crisis or turning point, an exciting or significant event that will have major repercussions for at least one of the main characters’ (2005, p. 23). Potentially, the wedding scene could fulfil these functions as well as initiating the thematic cycle of love and war within the plot. In addition, its descriptive and cinematic elements had the capacity to capture reader interest within the first few paragraphs even when transposed into the past tense:

The photographer fussed, dipping and ducking around his tripod. He flicked the cloak away from his head with a flourish and assembled his subjects into a variety of poses. Guests wandered uneasily about. Bystanders in the street stopped and stared. Virginia stood by herself pulling at her fingers. If only she could slip away unnoticed (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 3).

Despite having established a new tense and starting point, it was some time before I was able to recreate an overall structure for the novel. Yet, practice and theory both suggest that progress can occur unobserved and irrespective of the writer’s state of mind. There was what Andrew Taylor would call ‘a ghost-like element’ about this stage of my writing, one which defied ‘simplification’ (1999, ¶ 36). Citing George Wallas in *The Art of Thought*, Taylor draws on Hermann von Helmholtz’s
terminology to describe the continual and often protracted succession of conscious and unconscious phases of thought-process when investigating an idea. After a lengthy ‘preparation’ period of ‘hard, conscious, systematic, and fruitless analysis of a problem’ (qtd in Wallas, 1927, p. 81), I had entered the phase of thinking known as ‘incubation’ which ‘follows a researcher’s “saturation” in an idea or a problem which had been “investigated” … in all directions’ (Taylor, 1999, ¶ 36). Having reached ‘saturation’ point, I put my project on hold in order to take a family holiday in Sri Lanka. Shortly before doing so, however, I attended a national writing conference Alchemy: Blending Research and Creativity in Perth. A statement by Jeremy Fisher in his plenary address ‘The Professional Author: Researching Creativity and Reality’, was to prove prophetic. ‘Research,’ he said, ‘is often as much a product of serendipity as it is hard work, and that sometimes one can lead to the other’ (2006, ¶ 1). During my holiday, a sequence of unplanned incidents transpired which unlocked my writing impasse and provided a major breakthrough in my work.

The first was a revelation, a conscious reckoning of reference points, experienced one evening in Galle on the south coast of Sri Lanka. While enjoying panoramic sunset views of the Indian Ocean from the cliff face terrace of the Lighthouse Hotel one evening, I found myself positioned in such a way that I was, metaphorically and physically, looking back on Australia, looking back on my work. In ascribing to a ‘further side’ for the writer than that of the Freudian ‘outsider’ (2003, ¶ 7), Marcelle Freimann upholds Walter Benjamin’s ‘warning for transformation from unconscious dreaming to consciousness and social functioning by creating a necessary rupture between the dream and the daylight’ (2003, ¶ 5). As daylight diminished and the sunset, my ‘dreaming’ ruptured, opening my mind into a new state of writer consciousness. Structural ideas flashed before me in existing patterns of three. My story was about physical and psychological journeys marked by patterns of arrival and departure. These journeys were linked to three countries: Australia, Sri Lanka (or Ceylon as it was previously known) and England. From the cliff top terrace, I could draw an imaginary triangle between these three geographical points. Ceylon, historically, had been a main port of call for travellers between England and Australia up until the 1960s. The detachment of being in the ‘further place’ described by
Freimann (2003, ¶ 7), away from home and project, allowed me to keep moving through this figurative triangle on my own writing journey. The image in the revelation was so strong and vivid that it immediately inspired me to exploit the three-patterned analogies through plot structure. An intertextual model potentially lay at my fingertips in the form of Annabelle Smith’s *A New Map of the Universe* which I had taken with me as holiday reading. This four-book novel, comprising two back-stories framed either side by an outer contemporary story, was particularly relevant. The first post-war back-story in the form of Book II co-incidentally concerned a fatherless child and his depressed mother. What struck me at that precise moment was the ease with which Smith had located the back-story without any prior introduction. By reducing this four-book structure to three, I had a prospective template for my novel. Within minutes I experienced yet another revelation when sighting an historical cue. Floodlit on the rocks next to the Lighthouse Hotel was a commemorative plaque. Its inscription paid tribute to the World War II pilots of the Catalina Flying boats who, as part of the Perth to England mail run, flew non-stop without radio navigation between Perth and Ceylon, having been guided solely by the adjacent lighthouse to the RAF airfield some fifteen kilometres inland at Lake Koggala. The mail-run provided by these planes was a chain of journeys within the points of my geographical triangle. What I had experienced was the Helmholtz ‘illumination’ described above by Taylor (1996, ¶ 36). Following my return to Australia, I researched the history of the two different Catalina bases which operated in Crawley, discovering valuable data that enriched my story. Not only were Catalinas used for a supply line flying through all points of my story’s geographical triangle, but they were also directly linked to the University of Western Australia, the campus at which Virginia and her boyfriend, Theo, study. In addition, both Catalina bases provided an uncanny link with the river and Crawley Bay which is where the lovers first meet, and later the location of Valerie’s death. A further link could be drawn to Virginia’s missing father, Jasper. The Catalinas offered a feasible basis for his dream of returning to Perth via Ceylon. Collaboratively, the three fortuitous, successive but spontaneous experiences outlined above had a dramatic impact on my work.
within weeks I was implementing the three-book structure of my novel with the back-story centred as Book II. The thematic triple configuration strengthened when I applied it to voice and point of view. Macris discusses the problems of how to shift point of view when using variable third person narration, warning of abrupt changes which can 'deaden the 'identification effect', the bond the reader forms with the focal character' (2002, p. 75). Integrating multiple voices individually in block form in the back-story meant interrupting the chronological flow for the reader who already had to face an overall lack of linearity in the sequence of the Books. The most effective way was to alternate all three viewpoints chronologically in chapter form in what Sherry-Anne Jacobs would describe as the 'herringbone' structure of plotting (2005, p. 12), whilst establishing a necessary 'code' which the reader could 'learn' (Macris, 2002, p. 75). But, even in the preliminary stages of constructing the viewpoints, I could see that the constantly changing focus could potentially prove just as confusing for the reader as those in block form. To simplify the narrative, I abandoned Audrey’s viewpoint, continuing an alternation of interior monologue and stream of consciousness with the other two viewpoints. In describing how these modernist literary forms differ in their attempt to render the functioning of both thought and the expression of unspoken thought, Macris cites Nathalie Sarraute’s The Planetarium, describing how Sarraute ‘gives us access to the obsessive workings of her characters’ minds’ and how ‘her characters’ thoughts tend to be grounded in specific events and situations’ and narrated with immediacy (2002, p. 76). Audrey’s view could more effectively be heard as dialogue, her actions seen through the point of view of the other two women. Rewritten, the following passage enabled me to introduce Attie’s point of view concurrent with that of her mother:

Attie sighed in irritation ...
'I know exactly what you’re going through, Valerie dear.' Audrey’s voice was soft and clear. It had lightened, taken on a dulcet creamy tone, her words rippling like that endless string of pearls she used to wear. Many times as a small child, Attie had climbed into her mother’s lap, scooped the long ropes falling against the folds of muslin and sat fondling the beads one by one in her little hand. Infinity pearls they called them back in the twenties but these days
nobody seemed to wear them any more. Attie knew that any moment now Valerie would feel the light touch of Audrey’s hand on her shoulder as the two women sat side by side outside on the chaise-longue. Audrey was trying to comfort her, going on and on about her own run of misfortunes over the years for hadn’t she herself once been a war bride all alone in a new country? (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 71).

Similarly, Audrey could be seen through Valerie’s eyes, the combined observations of the two radically different viewpoints of Attie and Valerie enabling the reader to build a balanced perspective of Audrey’s character.

‘Come, dear, I’ll give you a Cook’s Tour.’ Audrey took Valerie by the arm, nattering non-stop, as she showed her this or that. Audrey’s romantic attempts at gardening seemed futile. Valerie observed the way her mother-in-law pottered about, crumbling dead blooms she’d broken off in her hand before absent-mindedly casting them to the wind. Fat wrens no doubt fed off them. But, Audrey explained, those seeds that hadn’t withered or been taken, might still be waiting in the soil for their time to ripen (p. 87).

The simplified narrative of two rotating points of view in Book II was also expedient. When framed by Virginia’s point of view in Book I and III, it still provided an overall three voice narrative for the novel which was consistent with metaphorical patterns of three.

New research from my holiday enabled me to enrich the narrative by including additional historical detail in Book I. This helped me to set up important connections between the three books and readdress my original idea of memory as a focus for my novel. An opening passage from the beginning of the first version which depicts the child’s first night at Attie’s farm following her mother’s departure for England reads simply as:
The blurry blue light flickers for a moment as Attie turns down the lamp. A little puff of black smoke clouds the curved glass, expelling a whiff of burnt kerosene around the room.

I'll turn out the light soon, Attie says.

When she has left, I open the old Saratoga. It is a compound of canvas and bound by buff leather stays. Inside are my godmother's childhood treasures. Mostly books, a few toys, and a fat-cheeked china doll which stares back above its calico body. Its rose-bud mouth forms a small dark hole revealing two tiny white teeth. I poke my finger into the rigid hole to see if she bites. Just testing, I momentarily enter into the darkness of another world (Leonhardt, 2000, p. 3).

In the final version of ‘The Double Sunrise’, the added historical detail on the trunk introduces immediate notions of ‘journey’ and ‘identity’ within the foundations of a geographical triangle:

‘Just call me Attie,’ she said. ‘Aunty Attie sounds absolutely ghastly.’

The blurry blue flame flickered for a moment as she turned down the lamp. A puff of black smoke clouded the glass, expelling a whiff of burnt kerosene around the room. When she had gone, Virginia sat on the bed, looking around the spartan room. At the foot of the iron bed was an old saratoga, a compound of canvas bound by buff leather stays. Tattered P & O stickers remained on the lid. In faded ink, *MISS ADELINE CAMILLA PARTRIDGE, COLOMBO-FREMANTLE* was barely decipherable as shadows unfolded across the room (p. 9).

Later in Book I, I was able to reinforce the family’s link with Ceylon symbolically by borrowing from myth. Reference to the Hindu god Ganesh transports both Virginia and the reader of the novel into an oriental culture. While the legend of Ganesh tells of the divine transformation of the elephant prince, it alludes through allegory to the timeless notion that ‘women must wait’ (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 30). The universal
truth offered by myths and legends extends beyond their detail, 'beyond remembering quite how or why,' explains Marion Halligan in *Storykeepers* (2001, p. 3):

Constant telling has shaped them into a firm form which has the weight, not exactly of truth ... but of received wisdom. Of that paradoxical and ambiguous recounting that allows us to perceive not their truth but truths about our human nature (2001, p. 4).

In 'The Double Sunrise', recurrent suggestions of elephants, the 'miniature' given to Virginia by her aunt (p.30), and the 'jade elephants' on Attie's hearth (p.14) draw on traditional associations with 'memory'. Such suggestions help to demonstrate the power of memory, not only of nostalgia but also of trauma and grief. Thinking of different ways in which the past keeps intruding on our lives may have encouraged me to explore new ways in which to express memory and exploit it as a writing technique. Without the shadow of a retrospective narrative, I could access memory as a device more easily. Many passages in early drafts involved the use of key words such as *I remember* to initiate a memory shift and change of tense. One such example below depicts part of a scene in which the protagonist recalls her first date with her boyfriend:

'What happened?' were his very first words to me. I wasn't sure what he meant. I remember looking down in disgust at the paper tissue I had been unconsciously but systematically shredding into my lap (Leonhardt, 2005c).

Once the final structure had been established I was able to transform many of these shifts into present day narrative. Rewritten in the final copy of Book III of 'The Double Sunrise', the passage appears as:

'What happened?' he asked her within five minutes of sitting down.
He nodded at her hands.
Virginia looked down in disgust at the paper tissue she'd been unconsciously shredding in her lap (p.185).
Conversely, the present day narrative gave me the flexibility to integrate and express some of the early childhood scenes simply through one memory rather than filtered through a series of memories. Below is the passage in its former state:

Mummy’s hand is cold and dry as she leads me through the high iron gates. The tower on top of the roof looks way out over the treetops of the park across the road. I am wearing a little straw boater, short brown socks and brown lace-up shoes that I will have to polish each day. I’ll be the youngest girl here but Mummy says the older girls will look after me. She holds me by the shoulders and her mouth says ‘mmmw’ to my cheek (Leonhardt, 2005a).

When resurrected through memory during a time of extreme physical and emotional pain for Virginia, the scene below acquired more poignancy:

She remembered her mother’s hand, cold and dry, as she led her through the high iron gates of the school, and the oversize hat and brown lace-up shoes that she’d had to polish each day. She’d be the youngest but the older girls would look after her. Then her mother held her by the shoulders while her mouth said ‘mmmmm’ to her cheek. (‘The Double Sunrise’, p.174).

More protracted shifts of memory were better suited to the flexibility of a shifting past tense than a constant present tense, facilitating the construction of a sense of character, time and place. Telling Audrey’s death through childhood memory rather than as it actually happened resulted in her early introduction in the novel via Virginia as the child lies reminiscing between her grandmother’s lavender-scented sheets (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 33). By establishing strong family links between Books I and II, Audrey’s characterisation was then given further depth through the dual viewpoints of Attie and Valerie. Here, childhood memories again feature within a shifting past tense to give perspective to an earlier period, this time through Attie:

How could she forget the glory of her mother’s hair? It had once shone like the English penny her father gave her when he came back from the war. Only
the other day, Audrey had told Attie that her beautiful hair had given her strength while Charlie was away. She had promised herself she would not cut it until he came home (p. 139).

The three stands of a plait are emblematic of strength, a symbol reinforced by the strong triple thematic representation throughout the novel. How ironic to think that for much of the creative process I had been literally going around in circles in my efforts to establish a structure that could adequately express memory and a sense of circularity of plot in my novel. Despite attempts at ‘mapping the territory’, my writing experience shows that creativity works within and outside the realms of intent. For much of the time, the interdependency of the technical aspects of writing seemed to be my only constancy alongside the unpredictable and mysterious nature of creativity subject as it was to so many contradictions. The over-riding triple formation that eventually evolved was to extend in many unforeseeable ways, to the three wars, the three countries and the three narrative voices and three-book structure of my story, and the way these multiple ideas have been woven together. It can even be found in the symbolic cutting of the plait. Often a private gesture that extends publicly to the cutting of ties with the past, it signals a sense of hope and the changing attitudes of a modern world. Audrey cuts her hair to forget about the war years and to cope with her shell-shocked husband. Shedding ‘her shackles’ (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 238), Virginia also cuts her hair, ‘geometric style’ in the shape of her forthcoming journey (p. 239), subverting traditional gendered notions of the ‘hero’ and breaking the cycled belief that ‘women must wait’. 
Australian National Identity

Australian national identity is a broad subject. Its elusiveness continues to attract much debate. Richard White, in *Inventing Australia* argues that national identity is a construct that serves a number of social functions (White, 1996, p. 23). The manifestations of national identity are found in the discourses of myth, war, nature and place, race and gender, and the journey. A discussion on these discourses is enhanced by noting Michel Foucault’s reminder that:

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power ... Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (1972, pp. 100-101).

1. The Australian Male Heroic Tradition

The moral separation of town and country values has, over the course of the last century, been implanted in our national psyche. Robert Drewe sees its endurance as 'part of a populist myth ... driven by literary imaginings' (2002, p. 28). Drewe explains that 'In literary-geographic terms, we’ve been led or chosen to believe that the city is crude, unstable, post-modern’ as against the ‘stable, comfy, modernist ... ’ notions of the country (2002, p. 28). Securely embodied in the rural side of this dichotomy has been the identity of the Australian man.

This is an observation that was offered decades earlier by Judith Wright in ‘The Growth and Meaning of “The Bush”’. In associating racial and gendered attitudes of the Australian male to early bush folklore, Wright commented:
This country-versus-city opposition has always been a deeply-involved problem in Australia ... The choice has always been more an emotional than a rational matter; it has gone deep into our character. Perhaps the most noticeable thing about it is that it seemed almost a matter of morals, a choice between Virtue (the bush) and Vice (the City) (1965, p. 51).

The Bushman

Against the puritanic notion of virtue constituted by ‘hard work, abstemiousness, monastic loneliness’ associated with the ‘strict solitudes of the bush’, was the awaiting vice of the bushman’s bi-annual visit to the city where drink and women, the ‘devilish temptations of civilization’, robbed him of his hard-won money (1965, p. 51). It is from the cyclical habit of the bushman’s subsequent return to the outback for ‘repentance and reformation’, says Wright, that the bush has acquired its moral face acting as ‘a kind of conscience for Australians’ (1965, p. 53).

As a woman born into a wealthy pastoralist dynasty in 1915, Judith Wright was led to believe early in life that ‘Feminine destiny’ lay ‘Inside, while Outside was a male domain’ (1999, p. 52). Wright was quick to reject this notion, modelling herself on Miles Franklin’s Sybylla in My Brilliant Career. ‘To be free like Sybylla’, however, meant that she had to leave behind the bush and ‘all the houses of the pastoral ascendancy’ of her family (Wright, 1999, p. 57). Despite creating a destiny beyond cultural expectations of the time, Wright still found it difficult to reconcile her spiritual and familial connections with the land. Writing so passionately about it throughout her life, she continually expressed her deep unease over her ancestors’ appropriation of the land and the fate of its original people.

Other writers have, over the years, continued to analyse and challenge the moral assumptions which have driven the bush myth and influenced perceptions of Australian character and values. According to Rosemary Campbell, the ‘Australian male heroic tradition’ is ‘one of this country’s most successful inventions’ for the various ways in which its ‘figures’ and ‘qualities’ keep reappearing in celebration
(1989, p. 1). From Ned Kelly, The Man from Snowy River, the nomadic bushman to the Anzac, each of these ‘figures’ can be seen to form part of a whole image projected by the gatekeepers of national identity.

In the 1950s, Russel Ward traced this heroic figure back to the folklore of ballad and yarn among the convict settlers and itinerant workers of the pastoral frontier and its ethos of collectivism and egalitarianism in their battle against the loneliness and hardship of bush life. The male of the ‘Australian Legend’ was a ‘practical man, rough and ready in his manners’, intolerant of ‘affectation in others’, a ‘great improviser, ever willing to “have a go”’, yet he was also an ‘independent’ man, a cynic and a ‘stoic’, a gambler and a drinker who believed that ‘Jack was as good as his master’ and that if any relationship was to be valued it was mateship (1996, pp. 179-180). This ‘stereotype, though often absurdly romanticised and exaggerated,’ Ward claimed, ‘often modifies current events by colouring men’s ideas of how they ought “typically” to behave’ (1996, p. 179). For Ward, the image was not simply a ‘figment of the imagination of poets’ but rather a ‘people’s idea of itself’, one that was ‘connected with reality through past experiences’ in the bush (1996, p. 179). Its emergence he described as being a progressive one:

From the beginning ... outback manners and mores, working upwards from the lowest strata of society and outwards from the interior, subtly influenced those of the whole population (1996, p. 189).

This largely ‘unconscious process recorded in folklore and to some extent in popular speech’, Ward explained, was ‘largely unreflected in formal literature’ until the end of the nineteenth century when the ‘occupation of the interior had been completed’ and at a time of national retrospection (1996, p. 189).

However, Graeme Davison reminds us of the fundamental weakness of folk history – a genre of which Ward’s book is a superior example – derives from its assumption that popular values may be
abstracted from creative literature without direct reference to the ideas and special situation of those who created it. We are required to look beyond the mediating author to divine the conscience collective (1996, p. 192).

Richard White argues that Ward’s nationalist portrayal of Australian identity through an idealised composite picture of masculinity based on the heroic bushman was simply a city-born myth which arose out of conscious cultural constructions by a small radical, anti-imperialist movement of Sydney-based writers, poets and painters in the 1880s during the country’s quest for nationhood (White, 1996, pp. 37-40). Distance from the bush gave rise to a Utopian dream. Embodied in this entirely white, Anglo-Celtic male image of national identity was the pioneer and the bushman, whose qualities of stoicism, independence, honesty and wholesomeness and an egalitarianism bore little relationship or relevance to the vast majority of Australia’s urban-based population of the time let alone the nation’s female component.

‘In such stereotypes intimacy was presented as a strain,’ says Joy Damousi, summing it up in History on the Couch (2003, p. 27). For such a man, a woman was presumed of little consequence other than as a waiting spouse who kept the home fires burning until his return. On the few occasions when woman’s presence was depicted, it was of a perfunctory nature, such as the anonymous figure of Henry Lawson’s ‘The Drover’s Wife’, a woman personified solely through her husband’s occupation.

John Hirst, on the other hand, sees Lawson’s description of women as a ‘powerful contribution to the pioneer legend’ (1996, p. 211). He claims that ‘The Drover’s Wife’, like all of Lawson’s bush women are ‘heroines’ because, as the poet insists ‘time and again, the bush is no place for women’ (1996, p. 211).

In contrast to the privileged pastoral upbringing of his contemporary, Banjo Paterson, Lawson was brought up on a poor selection. However, most of their work was written in the city. Graeme Davison points out that Lawson’s ‘marginal urban situation’ is clearly established in ‘Faces in the Street’, a poem which ‘attests so poignantly to his legacy of loneliness’:
My window-sill is level with the faces in the street —
Drifting past, drifting past,
To the beat of weary feet —
While I sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street

The appalling 1880s socio-economic urban context, and the ensuing crash in the 1890s, says Davison, ‘might almost suffice to explain the value-structure, if not the mythological setting, of the bush legend’ (1996, p. 203). The strengthening labour movement, with its ideological framework, was also a motivating force behind the creation of the bush legend.

While Davison believes that the 1890s have been ‘rightly interpreted by Ward, Vance Palmer and others as a watershed of an “Australian Legend”’, he maintains it was not ‘the transmission to the city of values nurtured on the bush frontier, so much as the projection onto the outback of values revered by an alienated urban intelligentsia’ (1996, p. 203).

John Hirst claims that the Australian legend is not the only national legend, as Ward would have us believe, preferring instead, to uphold a more democratic legend inclusive of landowners, explorers and those in more general aspects of service in the pioneering of the land (1996, p. 224). ‘Ward claimed with very little analysis that Lawson and Paterson embodied the legend which he had described; what they embodied,’ says Hirst, ‘was a great deal more complex and varied’ (1996, p. 224).

From the diversity of critical perspectives above, it can be concluded that Australia’s legendary literary symbols embody a mythical moral universe based around the land. Each legend can be seen as a contribution to an ongoing tradition of trying to define Australian character by its relationship to the land.
The Anzac Legend

Mythic narratives have an explanatory function in connecting the past to the present, providing a historical rationale for the existence of our society as it is now. This argument is put forward by Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton in their book, *Memory & History* (1994, p. 2). They state that:

> It is through the simplified and selective narratives of collective myths that historical events are rendered emotionally comprehensible and memorable. Mythic narratives are thus the wellspring of nationalism and they are constantly mobilised to serve differing ideological and political interests (1994, p. 2).

Central to the construction of myths has been the experience of war, providing a critical motivation for its legitimacy and perpetuation through various cultural practices. In her book *Women and War*, Jean Bethke Elshtain describes war as a ‘structure of experience’ with the ‘discourse of militarism’ as a dominant means by which gendered identity in the Western world has been controlled and understood. ‘War seduces us in part,’ says Elshtain, ‘because we continue to locate ourselves inside its prototypical emblems and identities’ (1987, p. 3). Jacqueline Manuel points to the ‘long and proud tradition’ in Western literature that attests to ... a valorisation of the heroic figure of conquest: from Hector, Odysseus, and Achilles to Napoleon, Nelson and beyond to modern figures like Montgomery and Patton. Our inherited myths and legends are corpulent with militaristic successes and the glorification of the “virtues” of bravery and strength in battle, particularly the battle for a woman or women whether it be Helen of Troy or “Mother England” (1996, p. 1).

The legend that Australians acquired after the landing of Gallipoli, says John Hirst, was ‘more powerful than either those of the bushmen or the pioneers’; yet clearly, the digger was seen to embody aspects of both (1996, p. 220). The image of the bronzed
heroic Anzac defining the nation through the virtues of mateship, egalitarianism and stoicism was both an emotive and appealing one. City/country oppositions provided the underlying force by which the diggers could distinguish themselves from Englishmen.

During the First World War, Australians were actively ‘encouraged’ to celebrate ‘settlement and development’ in conjunction with the Anzac thereby associating fighting wars with rural morality and masculinity. Writers of the time, such as Mary Grant Bruce and John Butler Cooper, were quick to meld the heroism of the bush into that of military action in their literary fiction. Government moves were made to educate society directly in this regard through schools as well as specifically organised public gatherings. More direct language was used for recruitment. War posters initiated by the government to increase enlistment numbers and to strengthen war resolve manipulated popular ideals such as bush images for propaganda. The illustration below shows how the use of the clichéd bush-call Coo-ee exploits language as an emotive catch-cry of appeal, a visual and aural code whose immediacy signifies the transformation of old myth into new.

Recruiting by ‘patriots’ was either through moral force or persuasion: “Persuasion” involved appealing to the individual’s sense of what was right and wrong to do in the circumstances; “force” involved accusation, confrontation and guilt” (Anzac Day
Organisation Committee of Qld., 2001, 13). Comparative illustrations such as the one below questioned the self-image and social conscience of women who placed familial love over patriotism and the male heroic tradition.

An understanding of the multiple functions of language reveals how the Anzac myth was enhanced and developed both during and after the course of the war. Legend became immortalised through the ‘truth’ of the written word of C.E.W. Bean’s first hand accounts of the Turkish battlefront, later chronicled and published in his first two volumes of The Official History of Australia in the World War. Objectifying his presence throughout events by the distancing device of a third person narrative, Bean concludes the first phase of the Anzac story by upholding ‘The unsurpassable heroism’ of the Australian soldiers (1939, p. 605). Searching for ‘the dominant motive that impelled them’ to endure in the face of failure (1939, p. 606), he identified their ‘mettle’:

To be the sort of man who would give way when his mates were trusting to this firmness; … who would fail when the line, the whole force, and the allied cause, required his endurance; to have made it necessary for another unit to do his own unit’s work; to live the rest of his life haunted by the knowledge that he had set his hand to a soldier’s task and had lacked the grit to carry it through – that was the prospect which these men could not face. Life was very
dear, but life was not worth living unless they could be true to their idea of
Australian manhood (1939, p. 607).

Robin Gerster, in his book, *Big-Noting*, critiques the superficiality and integrity of
many war writers, including Bean, in their unbalanced portrait of the Australian
warrior both in the First and in the Second World Wars. He also reveals the underside
of propaganda and how ‘The war writer’s ambition to make “art” out of historical
military events is often subverted by the temptation to manipulate them for the
propagation of political, cultural or philosophical doctrine’ (1987, p. ix). Gerster
blames the lack of a ‘national tradition of battle literature’ on which Australian war
writers could draw for their cultivation of a ‘fresh, home-grown heroic image’. Their
simultaneous exploitation of ‘an imported one from antiquity’ portrayed the Anzacs
as ‘a new vigorous race ... grown strong through generations in the bush’ whilst also
having ‘somehow atavistically inherited the transcendent qualities of the heroes of the
legendary Trojan battlefield so tantalizingly close to Gallipoli itself’ (1987, p. 2).

Although, as Gerster points out, the ‘obvious military and geographical connections
linking the stories of Troy and Anzac are not exploited by Bean in the *Official
History* (1987, p. 67), there are sufficient Homeric allusions to inspire other writers’
claims that the Anzac story is the ‘Australian Iliad (1987, p. 63). Gerster points to the
example of Cooper’s novel *Coo-oo-ee!* in which

The troops were the virile expression of the young nation ... Hereafter some
Australian Homer will tell the story in an Iliad that will reveal the tale of the
siege of Troy ... (1987, p. 62).

While sociologist John Carroll believes that the Gallipoli story is worthy of its Iliad
claim, his preferred philosophical perspective in *The Blessed Country: Australian
Dreaming 1901-2001* upholds the essential idea of the myth and its ethical value to
society in terms of what is conjured, understood and celebrated collectively as a
national archetypal ‘character’ over the correctness of historical fact. What concerns
Carroll is not the existence of such myth as much as its ‘one-dimensional telling’ and the portrayal of the hero’s ‘aloneness’ (2001, ¶ 51). He asks:

Where are the other stories of tragic suffering, of Passion, of the metamorphosis out of fallen worldliness, of love, of the gaining of poise of spirit? Where are the mothers, where are other trajectories of vocation, of fate, even stories of evil? Women are absent. There is not nearly enough authoritative mythos here to explain security of being (2001, ¶ 51).

In his newspaper article ‘History of Forgetting’, Denis Glover argues that the ‘infamous hero-worshipping’ and ‘dreams of glory and adventure’ penned by correspondents such as Bean were merely a means of fulfilling a public expectation, and that ‘while the Australians at Gallipoli were a tough and brave lot, they weren’t nearly as heroic as the Australian people believed’ (2005, p. 1). This is substantiated by Bean’s later admission that if he had reported ‘the true side to war … the tender Australian public … would howl him “out of existence”’ (Fewster, 1983, p. 159). In offering some explanation for the motivating forces behind his historical narrative, Bean exposes the private and public domains of the writer. However, Bean’s ‘vulnerability to enterprising Pressmen’ might, says Denis Winter, ‘surprise those who choose to think of him as the creator of “the Anzac Myth”’ (1992, p. 235). For what is revealed in Bean’s criticism of the prevailing views of John Monash (former Commander of the Australian Corps) in 1930 is a considerable review of his own original ones. In a letter to Gavin Long, Bean insisted that ‘the Australian soldiers’ were not, as Monash continued to imply, ‘titans, demi-gods or supermen, but just Australian citizens …’ (Qtd. in Winter, 1992, p. 236). Many of the stories in Bean’s notebooks support this, and while some ‘capture unobtrusive heroism and self-sacrifice’, most of them, claims Winter, ‘show the Diggers, in and out of the line, for what they were — ordinary Australians caught up in an extraordinary situation’ (1992, p. 237).

Whatever Bean’s justifications for the inaccuracies in his Official History, one may deduce that the Anzac myth has arisen out of forces far greater than the interpretation
of one individual. The hegemony of cultural discourse and its credibility have depended upon the mass media as a major institutional source for the transmission of the stereotypical.

Most post-modern historians now generally accept the feminist view that a manifesto of gender apartheid and gender dualism emanating from the dominant discourse of nineteenth-century nationalism helped to propel the male heroic legend into the First World War. As the qualities espoused in the bushman were easily translated into the heroic, mythologized image of the Australian digger sacrificing himself on foreign soil for the mother country, so, similarly, the absence of women from the image was automatically decoded into a mythical-style Penelope waiting for her warrior to return.

Because of an ongoing need to define the nation through war, writers tended to mislead the people they endeavoured to define by selective methods of forgetting in their creation of the Anzac legend. The legendary egalitarian ethos of the Anzac ironically conflicts with many other discriminatory aspects of remembrance besides the marginalisation of women. The feats and monumental losses suffered on the battlefields of the Western Front, for instance, were largely ignored in favour of the glorification of the ANZAC campaign in the Turkish peninsula, itself the site and origin of ancient war myths and heroes. More recent study shows how historical fact has been largely overshadowed by the Gallipoli story, which, with its archetypal allusions to Achilles, has dominated most forms of remembrance of war in Australia.

Modern critics continue in their attempts to write the forgotten back into history, particularly women, Aborigines, those of non-Anglo-Celtic origins, and men who stayed behind. And, as Sarah Buttsworth points out, the many New Zealanders who fought beside their Australian counterpart as Anzacs, yet ‘rarely receive more than a passing mention, overshadowed by a construction of Anzac that defines “Australian Manhood”’ (2003, p. 130). The paradox of the comparative mythologies of the two countries regarding the same events should not pass unnoticed, says Buttsworth, though more substantively through the distinction that ‘while the warrior in Australia
is coded “white” in Australia, in New Zealand, warrior traditions from Maori population have been incorporated into soldier identity’ (2003, p. 130).

Les Carlyon blames the vagaries of popular memory rather than the political shaping of a dominant discourse for this oversight. In an article entitled ‘The Fallen Generation’, Tony Stephens looks at Carlyon’s newly released book The Great War in which the author points to the lack of logic to the way the war has been viewed through popular memory and the injustice of what is forgotten through that process. In terms of casualties, the death rate alone on the Western Front was five times higher than Gallipoli. Yet Carlyon claims that:

Gallipoli … has an aura and Fromelles does not. Gallipoli was a defeat and Mont St Quentin an unlikely victory, but Mont St Quentin never lodged in the nation’s consciousness. Simpson, the man with the donkey, was lionised and Percy Black, crucified on the wire at Bullecourt, was not. Folklore took over the war (Stephens, 2006, ¶ 13).

In seeking to redress the balance of historical significance from Gallipoli to the battlefields of the Western Front, Carlyon concedes that ‘The hardest myths to change are foundation myths. Gallipoli is a foundation myth, just as Ned Kelly is. People can repeat that Kelly was a bank robber and murderer but the myth won’t change’ (Stephens, ¶ 12). Nonetheless, ‘the very fact that the Anzac story is not historically true may be its influence,’ says K. Dowden in Myths & Mythology. If myth has a ‘power that transcends inaccuracy’, it ‘may even depend on it’ (1992, p. 3).

Despite the disparities between World War I and World War II and the cultural influences that resulted, nationalist myth has continued to prevail in the way that war experiences have been popularly remembered and/or celebrated. Hamilton describes how in West Australia, the process of memory ‘nourishing’ and ‘shaping history’, is a continuing one, pointing to the 1980s when Hank Nelson and the journalist Tim Bowden made a series of radio programmes which brought oral histories of POWs to
a wide public audience for the first time (1994, p. 21). These private stories cast new meanings on the public remembrance of war and national identity. 'For many soldiers it was living – and dying – in captivity that made World War II different from World War I,' says Nelson, 'but the prisoners have received no permanent place in Australian history' (qtd. in Hamilton, 1994, p. 22). Despite their overwhelming losses against those of other servicemen and women,

Their story is not immediately recalled on celebratory occasions ... Where the horror, stoicism and gallantry of Gallipoli has become part of a common tradition shared by all Australians, the ex-prisoners are granted just the horror. All ex-prisoners are aware of the gap between their own memories and popular knowledge' (qtd. in Hamilton, 1994, p. 22).

Since the broadcast of Nelson's series, more and more oral accounts have been forthcoming. Others have preferred the written word to make public personal experience across Australia. Russell Savage's autobiography A Guest of the Emperor, published nearly fifty years after the war, details his horrific experiences as a Japanese Prisoner of War, while defending the reticence common to others. 'Every soldier has his own personal wars to fight, both mentally and physically, and his experiences are also very personal,' says Savage, and, 'Although groups of men share identical experiences, the ongoing effects on individuals can be very different. Among POWs this is particularly so'(1995, p. ix).

One of the revelations of Henk Nelson's series was that many veterans felt they could not share their experiences because no one would understand the magnitude of their suffering, only perhaps those who had endured similar fates (Hamilton, 1994, p. 22). This is a conviction which is played out in Randolph Stow's Merry-Go-Round in the Sea. It is through the memories of Rick's brief but crucial Prisoner of War experiences in Asia that war is ultimately portrayed not as heroic but traumatic.

Savage's comment that 'Books recounting war experiences usually finish with the end of that war, or that particular episode, as it is difficult to go on and bridge the
chasm leading to ordinary life' (1995, p. 130), is to some extent a reflection on societal expectations of the time which nurtured attitudes of stoicism and denial rather than the expression and public acknowledgement of trauma as a part of the reality of war experience. Since the late sixties, this chasm has become the focus of considerable discourse, including the literary novel. Brenda Walker’s *The Wing of Night* and ‘The Double Sunrise’ also reveal different aspects of war experience which challenge the Anzac Legend and elements of the Australian male heroic tradition. The inability of the government, the public, and indeed the RSL, to recognise the sacrifices made by Prisoners of War in the Second World War and those Australians serving in Vietnam because they did not consider their role as ‘heroic’ in comparison to that of the Anzac was redeemed to some extent by gestures of remembrance in the Millennium Celebrations. Only now have many veterans been able to talk about the trauma of war. In many cases, the silence and the silencing of our past has been addressed by the creation of fictional voices. For those who, up until recently, have been unable to articulate their experiences, fiction has provided a means by which public representations of psychological (and physical) trauma have helped to unleash some of their private suffering.

**Youth and Lost Youth**

Remembrance of war inevitably draws attention to youth and lost youth. The young, in comparison to other sections of society, made a disproportionate contribution to both the First and the Second World Wars. Most were forced to grow up in a hurry through necessity, sacrificing their youth for their country. While Charles Bean’s constant reference to the soldiers of the AIF as ‘boys’ may be an acknowledgement of the disproportionate representation of youth in those who served in the war, the term’s appeal to collective sentiment and ownership has no doubt helped to sustain the Anzac myth.

Popular understandings of the sacrifice of youth to war are invariably bound up with the Australian male heroic tradition, the mythology of which is instilled in youth from
an early age. Novels written since the 1960s have, to some extent, helped to
demythologize the Anzac through the various perspectives of youth. Tim Winton’s
Morton in Cloudstreet unashamedly tells the reader: ‘I stuff my essay on “The Brave
Anzacs at Gallipoli” into me bag and mum stuffs in a bag of vegemite sangers’ (1991,
p. 135). Here, the irreverence of youth undermines the relevance and the glorification
of the Anzac, a point raised by Salhia Ben-Messahel in Mind the Country; the boy,
‘As part of the younger generation ... does not relate to the historical event’ because
he is ‘concerned by his personal history’, rather than the nation’s (2006, p. 170). In
the World War Two homefront setting of Randolph Stow’s The Merry-Go-Round in
the Sea, the Anzac male myth is imposed upon Rob Coram at school through the rote
learning of patriotic songs and rhyme, ideology which is indirectly but consistently
reinforced at home through old nationalist bush ideals and traditions. Once again,
myth is seen to hold subjective rather than collective understandings for the young.
The classroom recitation of the ode is lost on Donny Webb by the lack of meaning
betrayed in his ‘sing-song voice’ (1972, p. 87). But for young Rob, the words bring to
mind the horrible prospect of the death of his personal hero, Rick, rather than the
nobility and immortality of national heroism. Nidhi Bagat points out the irony of
Donny’s muddled words ‘They shall grow not old’ (Stow, 1972, p. 87), which are a
reality for the twenty-nine-year-old Rick (Bhagat, 1993, p. 84). ‘I want to be young
before I’m old’, is the explanation offered to Rob as to why Rick wants to leave
Australia (Stow, 1972, p. 273). Bhagat expands further how

Rick’s experiences have made him a misfit and he has become emotionally as
well as physically sterile. On the one hand he tries hard to recapture the lost
youth and on the other he has outgrown life in Australia which he finds
mundane ... he cannot accept or forget the past which taints the present (1993,
p. 85).

Notions of youth, in context with the remembrance of war, also bring to mind the
succeeding generation of children and adolescents whose loss of a parent or sibling is
later manifested in feelings of alienation from society. It is relevant, therefore, in
defining a context for ‘The Double Sunrise’ to consider youth culture and various
sub-cultures in the 1950s and the rising counterculture of the 1960s. As Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts argue:

Sub-cultures ... must first be related to the ‘parent cultures’ of which they are a subset. But sub-cultures must also be analysed in terms of their relation to the dominant culture – the overall disposition of cultural power in the society as a whole (1976, p. 13).

Responses by youth culture can be viewed both as a social product of losses incurred during the Second World War as much as a rebellion against the values of post-war nationalism. The creation of youth culture is also associated with Tanya Luckins’ theory on the legacy of loss through ‘generational memory’ as expressed in its ‘continuity and rupture and conflict’ as ‘one generation either adapts or rejects a previous generation’s public, collective and popular memories’ which form the bases of our societal myths (2004, p. 237). In Book III of ‘The Double Sunrise’, the responses of Virginia and Theo to war and national service are coloured by their own personal circumstances. The lives of both have been irrevocably affected by war. Here, private memories, principles and aspirations are seen to dominate over societal expectations and are often expressed in what could be considered a reversal of gender roles for the period. Against Virginia’s heroic journey away from Perth is Theo’s rejection of the Australian male heroic tradition. Not only is this clarified through his rejection of the ‘heroic’ contribution of national service and Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam war but also in the way that he redefines mateship through his ‘feminised’ displays of care and compassion for his war-veteran landlord, Mr Davis.

2. The Australian Female Tradition

It is Sarah Buttsworth’s contention that ‘part of the exclusion of women from an iconography of war, and the failure to create female legends and heroes, fits into an ideology associating women with the “feminine” pursuits of hearth and home’ (2000, ¶ 7). The author claims that the viewing of these pursuits through a polarised
conception of ‘passive and inconsequential’, in contrast to war which is separate, distant from ‘home and a quintessentially masculine endeavour’ emanates from ‘an ideology which so firmly separates the masculine from the feminine, and the huge distances between home and the battlefronts’ (2000, ¶ 6).

Buttsworth refers to the relationship of Australian histories as ‘pre-war’, ‘war’ and ‘post-war’ to exemplify the predominance of war as a “narrative of a nation”’ (2000, ¶ 17). She believes that

It is a narrative structure within whose confines the presence and importance of women are left unspoken, defined and constrained by the constructed frailties of their bodies, and a culture of gender dualism. War and combat dominate the history, historiography, iconography and cinematography of a nation whose geographic distance from battlefields has allowed, and encouraged, a distinction between battlefront and homefront. Twentieth century war stories position women “safely” in the latter, absent from “the action”. The dominance of the war narrative, and this construction of absence, enhances the marginalisation of women from discourses of nation and politics (2000, ¶ 17).

The prevailing culture of gender dualism in Australian history promoted as part of the male heroic tradition is a subject which has been the focus of many Australian feminists, in particular, Kay Schaffer. A phallocentric dichotomy is presented in her claim that the landscape functioned as a metaphor for Woman, a feminine ‘other’, seen in opposition to the image in which Man defined himself. Schaffer’s interpretation is enhanced by a study of the phallocentric language in early nationalist literature which personified the land as feminine, both as woman and avenging mother, something to be ‘possessed, conquered and tamed’ by Man’ (1988, pp. 22-23). According to Schaffer, the land is not only a metaphor for feminine otherness through which man attains a (precarious) identity but also a shifting site of battles – ‘moral, economic, physical, rational and sexual’ (1988, p. 85).
Whether the battlefields have been at home or abroad, Australian historians, until the last few decades, have been reluctant to acknowledge women’s presence in either. Susanna De Vries in her recent book, *Heroic Australian Women in War: Astonishing Tales of Bravery from Gallipoli to Kokoda*, points to research revealing that women’s heroic role was played down by Australia’s official historian of World War I. Acting on instructions from publisher George Robertson to up the mateship and increase the larrikinism, author C.E.W. Bean contrived to make the Great War seem a blokey, all-male affair (2004, p. XI).

Prevailing male opinion of the time deemed women too ‘illogical and hysterical’ to serve as army medical officers or surgeons. ‘If young women were allowed to undertake tertiary education,’ said Professor Balls-Headley of Melbourne University in 1894, ‘the energy needed by the uterus would be diverted to the brain, rendering them infertile’ (Qtd. in De Vries, 2004, p. 72). De Vries relates how, after being turned down by the army, Dr. Elsie Inglis, Dr. Agnes Bennett and Dr. Lilian Cooper paid their own passages to the United Kingdom to run their own all-women hospitals in France, northern Greece and Serbia through the privately-funded Scottish Women’s Hospitals (SWH) organization (2004, p. XIII). De Vries also draws our attention to Olive King, an Australian volunteer ambulance driver, who, after being rejected by the British Army, joined the SWH and took her own ambulance to France and later to Salonika in Greece, where she won five medals for her valour and service’ (2004, p. XIV). Another heroine was Alice Kitchen, who nursed on dangerous and exhausting rescue missions to Galopili aboard hospital ships (2004, p. XVI). Of the total number of 3,000 nurses who served in World War 1, twenty-one paid for their dedication with their lives (2004, p. XV). These are merely a handful of the many Australian women whose service on foreign battlefields in various wars has gone unrecognized.

The silencing of women’s experience of war is also the subject of Tanya Luckins, one of a new generation of scholars whose focus of research is homefront bereavement. Her premise that The Great War is best understood ‘as a matter of shared experiences
and human relationships’ rather than as ‘a matter of identity and becoming Australian’ (2004, p. 14), further critiques the Anzac Legend for its exclusion of the experience of loss suffered during the war from traditions of remembrance. In her book *The Gates of Memory*, Luckins refers to Mnemosyne, ancient Greek goddess of memory and mother of the muses ‘who told her daughters to remember and generate memory’ (2004, p. 237). Luckins claims that the consequences of women’s traditional role as the keepers of generational memory have passed unrecognised in terms of the Great War. ‘Wartime loss left a legacy,’ says Luckins, ‘the way in which its memory permeated the lives of siblings, children and succeeding generations’ (2004, p. 237). This sustains Mnemosyne’s suggestion that ‘memory involves the idea of a “generation”, as the holders of memory are links between the past and future generations’ (2004, p. 237).

Alternative responses on ‘identity’ and wartime bereavement are offered by Joy Damousi in *The Labour of Loss*, through an exploration of the different ways in which mourning and grief affected men and women as well as the gendered dimensions of grief. Luckins, however, takes issue with Damousi’s psychoanalytic approach on how ‘new identity and persona were forged after the experience of grief’ for being ‘at odds with the historicized nature of loss in the Great War’ (2004, p. 13). She argues that Damousi’s

> Use of words such as ‘new’, ‘renewal’ and ‘towards’ shows that her understanding of bereavement depends on a timeless growth model that links bereavement with identity, personal gain and becoming (2004, p. 13).

Luckins claims that Damousi’s emphasis on the popular association of the Anzac legend with an event that identifies the ‘birth of Australia’ arising out of death marks her work as a continuation of the nationalist interest ... [yet] ... is also a contribution to ... writing women back into Australian history ... (Luckins, 2004, p. 13).
Both Damousi and Luckins, however, are united in their acknowledgement of the extensive and long-standing effects of suffering experienced by women and their families for their lost ones. It is ‘especially important’, claims Luckins,

to try to comprehend the profound consequences of experiencing loss without a body … that would otherwise have helped those at home clarify, accept and grieve over a death. There could always be a nagging thought that a loved one was not dead but wandering around Europe, dazed but alive. The lack of bodies [due to distance of battlefields from the homefront] also meant the loss of funerals, burial rites and any number of other social practices associated with death. Finally it meant the absence of grave sites to be visited and tended (2004, p. 15).

As Jacqueline Manuel puts it,

war concentrates death and bereavement in an unparalleled way. Paradoxically, though, it robs the bereaved loved ones at home of the supporting rituals and comforting rites of mourning that are so crucial in our attempts to make death meaningful and to assuage our grief. Suddenly the established, reliable patterns of grieving are stripped away by war’ (1996, ¶ 14).

Not only did women have to endure the horrible waiting during the Great War, but when news came of a loss, they ‘personally and as a community, had to redefine and reconstruct their context for mourning’ (1996, ¶ 17).

When one considers the horrific losses sustained on the battlefield, the effects on communities at home must have been enormous even without taking into account the impact of those soldiers who died after the war as a consequence of resulting trauma. As Manuel says, ‘barely would there have been an Australian family that was not depleted by the war’ (1996, p. 2). Only through specific and recent study of writers
like Damousi can war widowhood now be classified as a historically dynamic subjective category of war trauma.

Women's Literary Responses to the First World War

Readings from the texts of Damousi, Luckins and Manuel have particular relevance to Brenda Walker's The Wing of Night. Hers is a novel which undertakes depictions of both battlefield and homefront influenced by her understandings of her own family’s war experiences as well as those of others acquired through extensive scholarly research. Through the portrayal of Elizabeth Zettler and her ‘unlikely’ friend Bonnie, Walker shows how ‘For the women at home on the other side of the world, a shadow of apparently random death becomes a daily reality ... in the cruel purgatory of waiting’ (Manuel, 1996, ¶ 17). Walker’s alternation of settings from the desolate coastal ridges of the Turkish battlefield to the lush farming region in the south west of West Australia facilitates a swinging focus on male and female points of view, a psychological exposé which demonstrates how loss, grief and suffering are universal human experiences that affect the mind, irrespective of gender.

Gallipoli authority, Harvey Broadbent, is quoted by reporter Jane Sullivan as saying that The Wing of Night is ‘a testament to the other side of the Anzac experience’. In Sullivan’s words, ‘Walker’s men are not the square-jawed Chesty Bond heroes of legend, the women are not what you might expect either, and they leave a legacy that she describes as ‘the bright emptiness that lasts for a long, long time after a war’ (2005, ¶ 8).

The action, colour and excitement in the initial pages depicting the loading of the troops and their horses onto the ship bound for the Middle East have a cinematic quality reminiscent of Peter Weir’s Gallipoli. When reminded of how Weir drew on Bean’s history to ‘strong and convincing effect’ (Winter, 1992, p. 14), one can see how Walker has, in the initial pages, deployed the expectation of popular myth purely in order that it should later be dispelled. Walker’s rewriting of history through narrative, then, has a twofold purpose. Her illumination of the interiority of men who
are so traumatised by war that they hallucinate and cry for their mothers upsets not only legend but Bean’s official historicised account of ‘Australian manhood’ of the time by challenging nationalist notions based on the assumption of the impenetrability of the male exterior seen in opposition to the penetrability and exclusion of its female ‘other’. Finely balancing her portrayal of the breadth of war suffering, Walker also details the daily farm-work and waiting, the grief and endurance of women on the homefront which has been silenced in remembrances of the Great War.

In the past, it has been the male perspective through the various poems, diaries and the letters home from the front which, in Manuel’s words, ‘have commanded the literary limelight’ (1996, ¶ 9). Her study of Australian civilian women’s poetry shows that women were also able to address the themes of the loss and pain of war through writing. Several thematic trends began to emerge from the wide range of poems collated for Manuel’s study. While some women poets of the time were romantically nationalist in their earlier poetry, others, like Mary Gilmour in her poem ‘War’, turned to realism to express their bitterness and disillusionment in their profound personal and individual loss:

He died a hero’s death,
They said,
When they came to tell me
My boy was dead;
But out in the street
A dead dog lies;
Flies in his mouth,
Ants in his eyes (1932, pp. 10-102).

In citing Gilmour, Manuel points to the ‘simple rhythms, unadorned language, sombre tone, ironic and bitter mood, and the unsettling linking of the dog’s unremarkable and insignificant death and the death of the speaker’s son’ which ‘contribute to the bleak futility and subversive flavour of this poem’ (1996, ¶ 32). The
reliance of women writers during the war on ‘identifiably Australian landscapes in imagery and in metaphor’ (1996, ¶ 13), is also a feature decades later in Walker’s *The Wing of Night*. In this case, however, Walker has portrayed not only female but also male characters’ emotional connection with nature and the land and the consolation it provides them in their daily struggle with loss and grief. Memory passages portraying male interiority depict not only the Anzacs’ love for women, but also a relationship with the Australian bush that is one of peace and unity as against the barrenness of surrounding Turkish battle landscape. In Colonel Brazier’s drifting thoughts of home, Walker describes how he

was thinking about a saying they had around the farms in the south-west.

*You’ll always have hills. You won’t always have sons.*

The ground was sodden and ferny around the river, and after the trees were ringbarked deep glossy pasture sprang up (2005, p. 25).

In Brazier’s imagination, the hilly landscape, its beauty, lush from cultivation by his ancestors, offers comfort and constancy against the realities of war and the claim that ‘*You won’t always have sons*’ (2005, p. 25). The representation of nature as consoling and ‘feminine’ rather than the threatening oppositional force projected by Australian bush folklore supports the phallocentric dichotomy put forward by Schaffer. For the Anzac, women’s presence is predominantly found in symbolic representations of the land as ‘mother’. Images of nature, in its untilled state, provide the wounded Joe Tully with metaphors for hope and stability as he convalesces. When he is first hallucinating on board the hospital ship, childhood images of the Blackwood River and the surrounding wildlife reappear in fine detail. The strength of river current and the ducks, who ‘were used to this liquid instability, this slight tipping from side to side; they kept their balance’, reassures Joe against fragmented memories of his mad mother, herself a war widow (2005, p. 35). Yet, later, following his return to Australia, the landscape ironically eludes him. Inescapable flashbacks of the battlefield persist in his inner landscape, their horrifying detail consuming his sense of identity and eventually his sanity:
In the small tunnel of darkness he remembered the black cold of Anzac Cove at night. Not the faces of the men, not the conversations or the orders, just the cold. The feeling was bigger and closer than memory. Under his loose worn clothes he felt the breath of that unhealthy cold. His eyes hurt (2005, p. 148).

The reality that Joe is finally home, back in the beauty of the south-west bush with a woman he loves, is constantly over-shadowed by a much closer mental reality of the horror and desolation of the battlefield reappearing as ‘black drifts in his memory’ (2005, p. 150).

As isolation becomes a major physical and mental preoccupation with the women who are left behind on the homefront, the natural world intrudes on their inner landscape as well:

ALL OVER the south-west, soldiers’ wives were learning to sleep alone. Sleeping themselves back into the nights before their weddings, or waking in hot sheets to the clicking of crickets. They were afraid of wandering swagmen, afraid of rape and robbery (2005, p. 41).

The portrayal of women’s fear of the bush, a common feature within the discourse of the Australian tradition, adds tension to the narrative. In particular, the plight of the isolated wife in the bush brings to mind the disturbing story of Barbara Baynton’s ‘The Chosen Vessel’ in which the bushman’s wife is killed by a swagman. Yet Walker also reveals a contradictory side to her women, a dark and active one seen only in man’s absence and at night:

They listened to insects and the sound of hot wind in fencing wire. When they slept they dreamed of quickly forgotten things: urgent words which made no sense and unknown men with very dark or very pale skin. Is it faithlessness, if it happens in a dream? Women lay alone in empty farmhouses and frogs sang in the ferneries under water tanks (2005, p. 41).
Women’s dreams in Walker’s novel know no bounds, especially in terms of race and colour, countering the old binary bases of exclusion and discrimination that historically have defined gendered identity. Yet, clearly, dreams are what keep Elizabeth alive in the form of memories of her love for her husband, Louis as well as her innate need to nurture. Solace and company can only be found symbolically in a sick crow which she takes ‘onto her lap, as she had seen Bonnie hold her favourite chickens, soothing them like kittens’, bathing him ‘to drown the lice’ (2005, p. 73).

While both Australian men and women are consoled by the imagery of birds in Walker’s novel it is Elizabeth’s pathetic relationship with the crow which predominates both in its customary foreboding suggestion of death as well as in its incongruous personification of a sick child.

The bird as a metaphor of consolation is also seen in Mary Gilmore’s commemorative poem ‘Gallipoli’ published in ‘Everylady’s Journal’ in September, 1919.

O Memory, so like the little lark that runs
To nest among the graves of far Gallipoli
O cover thou thy griefs as tenderly (Qtd. in Luckins, 2004, p. 207).

Luckins’ reference to Gilmore’s poem illustrates the shifting focus after the war from the experience of grief to memory of the dead. Of the body of written response from women at the time, however, it was poetry, she claims, which was able best ‘to enunciate these processes of memory’ (2004, p. 206). It ‘cut across class, creed and politics’, offsetting ‘geographical remoteness through appeals to the personal, made through a subtle but effective linking of nature, time, loss and the self’ (2004, p. 206). Luckins goes on to explain how ‘Organic metaphors … helped to maintain intimacy in spite of the memory of mass death’ (2004, p. 207). They tended to
replace religious imagery or metaphors; spring and flowers and birds, which suggested rebirth and regeneration, were secular alternatives that swept away sectarian differences (2004, p. 207).

Walker describes _The Wing of Night_ as a story ‘about a baby coming out of the wreckage of war and about a woman’s determination to hold that baby safe’ (Laurie, 2005, p. 1). The small ray of hope conferred by this statement suggests a positioning on loss and grief that sits better beside the gendered exploration in _The Labour of Loss_ than perhaps the other texts cited. Damousi’s idea of ‘becoming’ is reflected in the birth of Elizabeth’s baby as a symbolic ‘part of the process of renewal, a necessary part of moving towards a life without the deceased’ (1999, pp. 3, 5).

Although, ‘history’ may ‘suggest’ that ‘it is not possible to protect your children as if you were a bird drawing your wing in the night’ (Laurie, 2005, p. 1), the human spirit can only rally against the face of such a reality by creating whatever models of hope it can. From the distant position of relative peace and post-modern times, it is easy to point out the stupidity and blunders of the Great War, to deconstruct and criticize the racial and gendered injustices of the surrounding traditions, but when one thinks again of the overwhelming casualties, and what had to be faced in the years following the Great War, it is perhaps not surprising that history turned to myth.

**Changing Gender Roles: 1920s-1940s**

As industrialisation and urbanisation progressed hand in hand, the subsequent increase in secondary industries continued to draw population to the cities from rural regions. The ‘man’s domain’ was no longer the bush; it was the city and the city larrikin that was more commonly romanticised by C. J. Dennis in works such as _Songs of a Sentimental Bloke_ and _The Moods of Ginger Mick_. The old heroic bush image under which servicemen of the Great War had been raised and had fought portrayed in Dennis’ _Digger Smith_ was also inconsistent with the realities and uncertainties they subsequently encountered in post-war civilian life. Community
morale was low as a result of a 'lost generation'. Australia had been depleted of the prime of its manhood. 'Of the 416,809 who entered the services during the war, 331,781 had taken the field,' recorded Clark (1986, p. 188). 'Of these 59,342 were killed and 152,171 thousand servicemen returned injured or incapacitated through shell-shock. 'The cost of war,' according to Clark,

was assessed at 364 million pounds; and between 1919 and the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the consequential cost in pensions, repatriation, care of the wounded, interest on war debts, and aids to returned soldiers was about another 270 million pounds (1986, p. 188).

The legacies of such devastating human and financial loss only widened the disparity between reality and the heroic myth that had been 'born' out of loss. For most, the entitlements of repatriation were slow in coming. In The Last Shilling, Lloyd and Rees detail the priority government placed on 'farms for heroes' (Lloyd & Rees, 1994, p. 43). As 'Land settlement was an important factor in AIF recruitment campaigns', the government continued post-war with the mentality that prosperity could be restored primarily through development of the land (1994, p. 45). The issuing of land, as the main concession, presided over other forms of repatriation, such as the pressing needs for housing and medical attention. Government propaganda was boosted in an effort to counter soldiers' indifference, their lack of rural experience and motivation to take up land entitlements (Lloyd & Rees, 1994, pp. 44-45). In Joan London's Gilgamesh we learn how 'Frank joined a government scheme to open up the wilds of south-West Australia ... The Scheme was called Group Settlement' (2001, p. 7). State pilot projects, such as the one set up under the initiative of the Premier, Sir James Mitchell, to place unemployed men on the land, included 15,000 migrants (Bolton, ¶ 6). However, 'the migrants and their Australian foremen were often poorly chosen and lacked the skills and resources to clear hardwood timber and succeed as dairy farmers,' says Bolton (¶ 10). 'By 1924, 42 per cent of the British settlers had already walked off the groups; but the scheme continued ... so that, at much human cost, a dairying industry was established in the South-West' (¶ 10). The scheme's overall failure as repatriation was further cemented
during the Depression years when banks increasingly foreclosed on settlers' land as many of the remaining few could no longer repay their loans. Other people, however, were quick to capitalise when the bush lost the romantic appeal that had been fostered by the government in the name of repatriation. In *Gilgamesh*, it is the nearby hotel, The Sea House, which procures the land from the Clark family for a pittance. On the other hand, it is the immigrant family of the Partridges in 'The Double Sunrise', who, at the end of the Depression, buy abandoned settler land 'as cheap as chips' and are fortunate enough to make a go of it (p. 72).

In *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity*, Rosemary Campbell relates how men were further disillusioned and demoralised as womenfolk 'began to challenge with increasing assertiveness the oppressive social and cultural conditioning that bound their expectations and opportunities' (1989, p. 17), even though such liberating ideals were themselves bound by racial exclusion. The model of White Australia, which had been an integral part of the Anzac Legend, thrived in post-war culture in the 1920s and 1930s. Although providing common ground across political parties, it continued to be 'flogged' by The Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, along with the promotion of capitalism as a means of ensuring national safety in its fight against the rise of communism (Clark, 1986, p. 191). Between the years 1923 and 1928, the government boosted production and distribution in industry to offset the rural slump and, in an attempt to safeguard and sustain the whiteness of society, encouraged British immigration (1986, pp. 194-196).

The debilitating effects of the Depression, however, only further rendered the bush legend as inappropriate and untenable. Clark tells how, 'early in 1929 sharp falls in the prices of wool and wheat, the withdrawal of English capital, and the fall in export prices by fifty per cent, began a severe financial crisis' (1986, p. 198). The collapse of primary industries further depleted rural regions of their populations. Conversely, secondary industries rose dramatically with the movement of a burgeoning rural labour-force to the cities.
Alcoholism became a major problem throughout society. As Campbell puts it ‘the more frequent experience of unemployment had robbed many of their self-sufficiency and thus their sense of control’ (1989, p. 18). Increasingly, men had to suffer and were diminished further as unprecedented numbers of women began taking over as family breadwinners. Yet ‘by 1933 nearly one-third of bread-winners were unemployed’ (Clark, 1986, p. 191).

One of the benefits of industrialisation and urbanisation was the wealth of information and entertainment stimulated by mass culture (Clark, 1986, p. 203). The unheralded amount of entertainment and information during the inter-war period had a major impact on society, bringing, in Clark’s words, ‘all hearts and minds under the same influences ... in a country whose past had already imposed certain uniformities and conformities of behaviour on its people’ (1986, p. 204). In conjunction with the ‘face of urban modernity’ was a changing sexual climate; new national images for men and women emerged defining man ‘not by his indifference to women’, as they had in the past, ‘but by his relationship with them’ (Campbell, 1989, p. 19).

One of the most influential and accessible sources for the advancement of feminist ideals was the *Australian Women’s Weekly*. Articles in 1936, such as ‘New Era Has Dawned For Maiden Aunts: Why Our Bachelor Girls are Not in Hurry to Marry’, which challenged the sexual *status quo*, however, attracted only considerable resentment from men (1989, pp. 24-26). Australian work places and institutions, continuing to uphold anachronistic images of national identity, did little to accommodate women’s advances. This is supported in Book II of ‘The Double Sunrise’, providing the reader with some insight into Attie’s single status. While reflecting retrospectively on her time as a teacher in poor West Australian bush schools, Attie laments the gendered inequities of the workplace:

How could she change the shape of their lives when there was no course to change her own? Teaching was a worthy vocation, despite her father’s disapproval. Yet it was hardly one that gave a woman any power or independence. Given the same work and conditions, she’d earned only a
fraction of the salary of her male equivalents. For five years she'd been relegated to the social isolation of dreary little mill towns, always been at the mercy of a local billet and strict departmental constraints. Forget about romance. For a woman teacher, marriage was a crime that was rewarded by dismissal (p. 81).

Concurrent with the emergence of female rights and liberties was the democratic sexualisation of woman. In ‘Freedom, Fear and the Family’, Grimshaw et al. remark on how femininity had been radically redefined, by ‘modern cultural forms of advertising and cinema as a matter of sexual attractiveness – available to all – rather than a matter of gentility’ (1994, p. 262).

Drusilla Modjeska, in Exiles at Home, explains that while Australian women writers of the inter-war period responded ‘to the development of mass culture’, they saw ‘their work as a cultural form in opposition with mass culture’ (1981, p. 252). There is no doubt, however, that both literature and art helped to advance the cause of feminism during this time. In the 1930s, ‘Women were producing the best fiction of the period,’ claims Modjeska (1981, p. 1). In her political analysis, she points to Katharine Susannah Prichard’s ‘preoccupation with the early pioneering community and the effects of capitalism on an Australian mateship tradition’, claiming that much of the dramatic tension ... stems from competing influences of a Marxism that was drawing on a realist tradition, and a romanticism derived from a more poetic genre of fiction. As a Marxist she was dramatizing not only the social and industrial condition in which White – and Black – Australians lived and worked, but also the motive force for these conditions ... She had already seen that the revolutionary potential of realism lay in its attack on capitalist society, the alienation and dehumanisation of individualism (1981, p. 135).

The ‘novels of protest’ by Australian women writers of the 1920s were not only about social but domestic conflict both of which, Modjeska maintains, are the consequence...

Of equal significance is Modjeska’s supposition that women had found a voice, even though that voice would only reach a limited audience for a limited time. Despite its creed of equality and social justice, the folklore of Trade Unionism was fuelled by notions of white masculinity and ‘mateship’.

The shifting inter-war period features in the setting of the first part of Joan London’s novel, *Gilgamesh*. Picking up from a time when Brenda Walker left off with *The Wing of Night*, London portrays a story of love and war, exploring different aspects of identity. The soldiers of the Great War to whom we are introduced in the first page of London’s novel, like those already described in *The Wing of Night*, are far from the heroic god-like figures of manhood promoted in the Anzac legend. Rather, London’s warriors are ‘patched up, jumpy, bitter’ men, who ‘tottered and prowled like ancient temperamental guests’ in their English convalescent hospital in the days before Armistice (2001, p. 3). While the insomniac Frank ‘craves isolation’, his room-mate ‘wept like a baby in his sleep’ (2001, p. 3), behaviour displayed by ordinary men who are wounded in body and/or mind.

Like *The Wing of Night* and ‘The Double Sunrise’, *Gilgamesh* draws on rural south-west West Australian settings, and, in all three novels, the land and the bush image play an important part in perceptions of identity. In portraying the mental and physical hardships and degradation suffered by the Clark family, London exposes the irony and folly of government compensation in the form of Group Settlement Schemes and its supremacy over other due forms of entitlement. It is the unsuitability
of Frank, a former schoolteacher, and his English war bride, Ada, to pioneer the land and their alienation and displacement which are major factors in their failure to survive settler life. But, from the diversity of backgrounds of those comprising Frank’s settler group (2001, p. 7), it is implied that most had little association with the land. Yet government policy of the time persisted in identifying legendary heroism and masculinity with pioneering and the land.

Mostly, it is through her portrayal of the Clark’s daughter, Edith, that Joan London succeeds in dispelling the image that heroism is exclusively the province of the white Anglo-Celtic male. Edith knows, that, unlike her cousin Leopold and his friend Aram, who come from the other side of the world to visit, women have ‘no freedom to go adventuring’ (2001, p. 54). Yet, as Elizabeth Webby points out, ‘that is exactly what Edith does’ (2002, p. 184), inspired by alternative images of heroism in the two boys’ story of Gilgamesh. Even then, London’s travelling heroine ends up, not in England, as the destination of a quest one might expect in a young woman, but the unlikely state of Armenia, to confront Aram with his son. ‘As well as demonstrating that women, too, can travel and be heroes, Gilgamesh offers subtle insights into varieties of love,’ says Webby,

whether the infatuation seen in the stories of the unlikely couplings of Frank and Ada and Edith and Aram, the comradely love demonstrated by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, Leopold and Aram, or the love of a mother for her child (2002, p. 185).

On the Homefront

The gender issues of the inter-war period were brought to a head by a particular combination of circumstances during World War II, says Campbell (1989, p. 191). ‘Rather than consolidating and perpetuating the existing images of national identity, as happened in World War I, there was instead a questioning and redefining of them’ (1989, p. 191).
Even though the legendary heroic identities of the pioneer, the bushman and the
Anzac were ‘rooted in circumstance’ and had long had ‘long been absent from the
experience of most’ men, they were strongly promoted as a ‘tool of propaganda’ to
encourage Australians to help fight for the Mother Country (1989, p. 191).

Community reaction to the outbreak of war was varied, however, not least because of
the impact of changing gender roles. Women, responding to new images of ‘value
and respect’ (1989, p. 191), indicated their immediate willingness to play an active
and more public role than they had in the previous war. For many, the ‘exchange of
weeping for weapons, balaclavas for bayonets’, was viewed as a chance to prove their
equal, full citizenship (Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath, & Quartly, 1994, p. 225). Female
enthusiasm for enlistment could be seen in contrast to existing male apathy. For many
young men, the army provided a certain means of stability and regular pay in a
climate of high unemployment. Others simply sought thrills or prestige in the Royal
Australian Air Force. In general, though, the patriotism that had been aroused in the
previous war was substituted with a prevailing cynicism and sense of alienation
among young men.

Japan’s sudden entry into the war in December, 1941, changed the situation, causing
Australia’s commitment to escalate dramatically as national defence became a
priority. Faced with a shortage of male recruits ‘the government succumbed to
women’s pressure’ and established official auxiliaries (1994, p. 225). All available
men and women were marshalled into the war effort against custom. After Singapore
had fallen to the Japanese, most Australian troops fought from homefront bases. As
air raids on various Australian towns and cities rapidly transformed the homefront
into a combat zone, gender tension increased. Civil dislocation opened social and
economic opportunities for women, causing much resentment among men. Between
mid 1942 to mid 1943 women’s participation in the workforce jumped by 25 per cent,
filling vacancies in manual areas as aircraft mechanics, agriculture, factories and bus
drivers as well as clerical positions in the banking, insurance and the government
sectors which had previously been denied them. These jobs, however, were only for
the duration of the war and women were told they would be rightfully returned to
men. More women were persuaded to join the auxiliary services to free men for

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combat. In July 1942 the Australian Women's Land Army was formed to meet the shortfall of farm labour which had been streamed into the armed forces. Girls aged between 16 and 18, considered too young for full-time employment, were enlisted. The Menzies government, following the example of Britain, also introduced conscription of all women who were single or married without children, a move which was vigorously enforced.

The employment of women in such numbers and the independence it created for them only served to fuel more social unrest. Women's fight for economic and social equality soon became a political issue. Australia, unlike the United States and Britain did not legislate for equal pay. Some trade unions voted to reject women workers altogether while employers wished to preserve the cheapness of women's labour for exploitation. Both feared the long-term implications of the war-time changes and what they saw as women's expropriation of the male domain (1994, p. 259).

Women's sexuality also became a political issue in their fight for equal rights. Australia's dependence on the presence of a powerful foreign force on home territory exacerbated the situation of sexual tension. The en-masse arrival of foreign servicemen between the years 1942-1945, further disrupted civilian and service life. By early May, 1942, the number of American troops in Australia had reached 400,000 (Buckley, p. 26) and during the course of the war, an estimated 1,000,000 passed through the country. American men were given better pay and more freedom than their Australian counterparts and their fresh stylish image and appreciative attitudes to women placed them more competitively as prospective suitors. The sight of women on the arms of American servicemen dented the morale of men both serving and working on the homefront, challenging their sense of national identity. Up until now, society had been led to believe that heroism was an exclusively Australian male characteristic. In her book *Love and War*, Carol Fallows reveals how the changing sexual dynamics also affected those men serving on foreign soil:
In this war it was not just the girls at home worrying about their boys overseas meeting local girls – the boys overseas also worried about their girls back home and the American ‘invaders’ (2002, p. 19).

Public reaction continued to be fuelled by double standards and the ‘insularity of Australians’ showed itself in the ‘moralistic preaching ... in the press and community’ (2002, p. 19). The Australian male had clearly lost the monopoly of social control. The heroic image of masculinity had been redirected to the Americans, both sexually and as knights in shining armour, ‘arrogating to themselves the starring role in the Pacific war, while Australian soldiers were left with the inglorious mopping-up operations in their wake’ (Grimshaw et al., 1994, p. 264).

Rosemary Campbell explains how male disempowerment deepened with the change of emphasis in what was required of a serviceman in a city or suburban environment on the homefront as opposed to a ‘rough and ready’ battlefield abroad (1989, p. 192). Much tension and confusion arose as ‘men fulfilling the expectation of the bush and the digger traditions were angered to find that this role was largely irrelevant in life at home’ (1989, p. 192), in the face of a newly imported allied image.

Regardless of homefront hostility between American and Australian men, the image of the Australian war hero continued to be bolstered and validated by what Gerster refers to as ‘a new crop of publicists’ (1987, p. 172). Ingrained in their belief was the idea that the ‘feats of national soldiery of The Second A.I.F’ would endure to shape men’s responses to succeeding conflicts on fresh arenas and further ‘demonstrate that Anzac was no pejorative “myth” at all’ (1987, p. 172).

It is difficult to understand why women writers of fiction were slow to represent the enormous changes to gendered roles during the Second World War. West Australian author, Molly Skinner, ‘who had served with the nursing services in the Great War, an experience which had formed the basis of her 1918 novel Letters to a V.A.D’, continued to uphold the tradition of boisterous larrikinism in male characterisations in her light-hearted novel WX – Corporal Smith set in Libya during the Second World
War (Gerster, 1987, p. 216). No real hero transpires, (man or woman) with background fighting a distant consideration; the scuffles Skinner writes about concern more the frivolity of mess life, the superficial world between battlefield and homefront. Skinner’s scenario presents a dramatic contrast to that in *Come in Spinner*. Here, Dymphna Cusack and Florence James’ social realism exposes the wartime reality of inner-city life on the homefront for a group of women drawn together through work and economic expediency. While one of Cusack and James’ ‘heroines argues that women were as much casualties of the war as the men who actually fought it’ (Gerster, 1987, p. 187), and for matters of ‘class’ and ‘nationalism’, the novel’s ‘primary social dichotomy’ is, as Modjeska points out, ‘between the sexes’ (1981, p. 227). Gerster’s citing of the following passage illustrates how women had ‘to cope with transformed domestic circumstances’ while their men were away and were ‘vilified’ if they did not ‘correspond with the ideal of Penelope waiting chastely for her wandering warrior to return’ (1987, p. 187):

> When men get into the services they just shelve all their personal responsibilities and women have to take them on. We’ve got to manage on less money, bring our kids up without any help, and we’re expected to put up with the loneliness and having no social life and all the rest of it. You complain about me going out with other men, but I’d take a bet on it that if I ever discovered that Jack had been out with other women, you’d advise me to overlook it – even if he’d been unfaithful – because he’s a soldier (Cusack & James, 1951, p. 213).

Views of sexual morality were another ongoing social issue coloured by propagandists during the war years. In criticising the ‘two-faced prudishness of many heroes of Australian War Fiction’, Gerster’s comments how

> Promiscuity is perfectly reasonable for the serving soldier; indeed, his combatant status is assumed to include a *carte blanche* in that area. But the same in women is plain moral turpitude and vile treachery (1987, p. 187).
And despite the bilateral nature of promiscuity, women were blamed for the rising incidence of venereal disease. A chapter in *On the Homefront* by Sara Buttsworth relates how women could even be detained if suspected of harbouring disease and, upon their refusal to be tested, were often sentenced to prison (2000, p. 69). Women's sexuality as a national issue is given some depth in *Freedom, Fear and the Family*. The sexually active woman,' says Grimshaw et al., 'was portrayed as a symbol and cause of the social and moral chaos unleashed by the war, in the same way that the economically active woman had been perceived during the depression' (1994, p. 262). But the repression of societal morality could also be seen in the stigma attached to the status of simply being a single woman. Merely through her economic independence, she was often seen to be 'beyond the boundaries of controllable femininity ... both the “saviour” and the bane of the nation' (Buttsworth, 1996, p. 59).

In general, the divisions in the social fabric across the nation appear to have been more inflamed in the towns and cities, particularly in Cusack and James’ bars where ‘A bloke felt like a bloody foreigner in his own country’ (1951, p. 307). The population of West Australia at the beginning of the war was about half a million, nearly a third of whom were under the age of twenty-one. Just over half of the total population lived in rural areas. Perth’s suburbia was small and contained with various surrounding outposts but when the Japanese entered the war, it was radically transformed almost overnight to cater for the thousands of American, English and Dutch personnel who descended upon the state, swelling its male population and unsettling communities. But as with other states, it was the ‘confident self-sufficiency, rather than dominant numbers, that distinguished the Americans from other nationalities’ (McCarthy, 1996, p. 121), and challenged prevailing perceptions of national identity.

Because of the vastness of West Australia, the social impact of foreign troops on the state was noticeable in the towns closest to service bases rather than small inland rural towns where distance only reinforced insularity. In the town near ‘Grasswood’ in ‘The Double Sunrise’, nothing seems to happen, and Valerie quickly notices the
strange Australian social phenomenon of sexual segregation. Women, she finds, contrary to English custom, are not allowed into the male sacrosanctity of Australian hotel bars. Sitting in the tea-rooms, she ‘wanted to scream out, tell them that she was bored, bored, bored, bloody fed up to the teeth with nothing to look forward to but more of the same old thing week in week out’ (p. 115).

Social and institutional barriers, however, did not stop women’s active involvement in the war. Like the men of West Australian, women in this state led the nation with enlistments during World War II (Buttsworth, 1996, p. 57). Increased enlistments overall may have added to other factors, such as the size of the state, its demographics and geographical relationship to the nation, in increasing people’s sense of dislocation and isolation. Despite the huge en-masse presence of foreign troops and prominent signs of defence, the fear of an imminent Japanese invasion was a continual burden, felt throughout the entire state, even as far south as the South West and the population centres of Perth, Fremantle, Bunbury and Albany (1996, p. 114). For countrywomen and their families, the continual dread was just as real and widespread, for, unlike those in the big regional towns and city, they were isolated not only from lines of defence but in many cases communication. In another chapter of On the Homefront, ‘Families and Children in Wartime West Australia’, Penelope Hetherington tells of school closures in country districts because of the countless farming families who left their individual farms to live either in Perth or in country towns with extended families rather than be alone while their men were away at war (1996, p. 94).

A representation of rural life during the last year of the Second World War is given in Book II of ‘The Double Sunrise’ portraying something of women’s hardship and loneliness as they await Jasper’s return. In an overlapping time-frame to Gilgamesh, the novel describes a period on the homefront when Joan London’s heroine, Edith, is on the other side of the world, trapped and isolated in war-torn Europe. Although men overwhelmingly outnumbered women on the homefront during these years, they are noticeable by their absence in Book II of ‘The Double Sunrise’, particularly through Valerie’s English immigrant perspective. When they do appear, they are often
presented in a way that challenges traditional perceptions of masculinity. Jasper remains a mysterious character throughout the novel and his letters tell the reader little. Valerie, from her work at the Wickerton base, knows full well of the daily traumas of a fighter-pilot, telling Virginia later in the book that Jasper was a ‘hero’ (p.156), yet in her recent memories, she tends to visualise the private figure of her husband, his vulnerability, either naked or with a stutter. The significance of Colin Carter’s recitation of ‘The Man from Snowy River’ is beyond Valerie’s British comprehension, but for old Anzacs like Bruce Sutherland, the bush legend embodies the public spirit of Australian nationalism and masculinity: ‘something patriotic for us old war heroes, and something to remember our boys by’ (p.103). Only later, is the Anzac’s tough stoicism undermined when Valerie notices Colin’s drunken tears ‘trickling down the wrinkles in his face’ (p.105).

A different interpretation of heroism emerges when the narrative swings to Attie’s perspective. Here, we witness a woman’s courage to remain on her family’s property and manage the farm alone while her brother is at war. Rather than passively keeping the ‘home fires burning’, Attie’s active participation in helping to feed the troops is remarkable in that it stands against both the trend of social reality described above as well as out-dated gendered expectations of the Australian male heroic tradition.

In Bean’s Official History, it is the Homeric allusion which has sustained the Anzac myth, even that which is ‘inadvertent … the author’s passing reference to a soldier whose surname is “Troy”’ (Gerster, 1987, p. 67). My own passing reference to the name ‘Troy’ in ‘The Double Sunrise’ shows how deeply embedded legend is in the writer’s psyche. However, the allusion to ‘Troy’ was not a fully conscious one at the time of writing. The reference in an Australian context suggests the universal significance of such legends. The ‘Troy’, in this case, is neither city, nor soldier, despite the fact that the name ‘Troy’ means ‘soldier’; he, ‘Troy’, is a horse, not god-like or wooden, in the ancient Trojan or even the Colditz sense, but real. Attie remembers how the Clydesdale had ‘done all the hard work for them. Pulling out stumps, helping clear the land and carting fruit’, in their battle to cultivate a farm (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 99). Troy had been their saviour, but his death means that
Attie must manage the farm single-handed. Her dependence on the horse is reminiscent of that of the Light Horse in which ‘man and horse formed a strong single unit’ on the battlefield with ‘mounts’ regarded by the Australians ‘as compeers rather than mere conveyances’ (Gerster, 1987, p. 109). The ironic association of the name ‘Troy’ in context with ‘waiting’, and an ‘Ode-like’ ‘setting of the sun’ helps draw attention to the largely unrecognized role played by women in wartime in providing essential agricultural labour and management that helped to feed the nation and its troops. It is noteworthy, here, to mention that those ‘already working on farms were not permitted to join the Australian Women’s Land Army, thus missing out on any recognition or the few benefits it provided’ (Buttsworth, 1996, p. 67).

Attie’s choice to stay on the farm, however, supports Gail Reekie’s conclusion in a following chapter, ‘Shunted Back to the Kitchen’ that women’s responses to war work were not solely decided by government propaganda, as is often indicated by both traditional and feminist historians (1996, p. 90). For many women, war work was welcomed simply as an opportunity for adventure and to gain freedom from their families. To enlist in the services meant opportunities to travel and be trained in new skills and satisfying jobs (1996, p. 57). ‘Monocausal explanations, are eschewed by Reekie,’ explains editor, Jenny Gregory, in her Preface (1996, p. xii); ‘class, age and marital status were just as significant in determining women’s responses to war work.’ Yet Reekie stresses that the three years of Australian women’s involvement in war did not change the prevailing ideological view that a woman’s place was in the home (1996, p. 88). Post-war demobilization, as a result, was able to proceed smoothly. Reekie’s study shows, that contrary to common belief, ‘few middle-class married women wished to remain in the work force’ at the end of the war ‘because there was little incentive for them to do so’ (1996, p. 90). Married women were reluctant to ‘retain the double burden of low-paid, unskilled labour and unpaid domestic labour unless it was economically unavoidable’ (1996, p. 90). Reekie clarifies the situation further by adding that the ‘impact of propaganda on women’s mobilization, the prescription that married women should stay at home only influenced women’s life choices where it coincided with their personal and economic situation’ (1996, p. 89). That most inevitably chose to do so, however, further
reinforced societal expectations and government policy for the ensuing years. The fact remains that the suburban dream, with its notions of marriage, security and rebirth, presented itself as a convincing ideal to a vulnerable society, an ultimate alternative to the death and destruction to which most men and women had largely become accustomed in some form or another (1996, p. 89). While the suburban dream has materialised in the opening wedding scene of 'The Double Sunrise', it is always challenged to some extent by Attie’s ‘single’ status. Retaining her independence on the farm, Attie only marries years after her partnership with Dieter has been forged, at the end of the story when least expected.

War Brides

The beginning of a new life in a new country was an attractive proposition for young war brides. ‘Many had come from places devastated by war and from a dangerous life where each moment was a bonus,’ says Carol Fallows (2002, p. 161). Her research on the emotional and sociological impact of immigration on war brides and the important part they played in providing wartime relationships and support for overseas servicemen has been taken from oral accounts of a cross-section of war brides from The Great War to Vietnam. The lack of mention or recognition in so many history books of the thousands of war brides who immigrated to Australia is remarked upon by Fallows as ‘puzzling’ (2002, p. x). It is especially so, says Fallows, when one considers the terms in which they were described by the Department of Repatriation: ‘What better immigrants could be imagined than those who had been “hand-picked”’, declares the Annual Report of 1947-48 (Qtd. in Fallows, 2002, p. ix). ‘A few, it is true, were unhappily chosen, but the large majority were excellent types and an acquisition to Australia’ (2002, p. ix). It is clear, as Fallows suggests, that the transporting of dependents to Australia was handled in an ‘ad hoc fashion; as in the case of the First World War, the Australian government forgot to plan for these immigrants’ (2002, p. xii). Other sources confirm this. ‘During World War II the shipping of dependants began when the war was at its height,’ explain Lloyd and Rees (1994, p. 294). Only ‘Later it was recognised as unfortunate that young wives
had been brought to a strange country while their husbands were still on active service’ (1994, p. 295). According to *The Last Shilling*, the same Annual Report cited above states that, due to the housing shortage, most war brides ‘were left with no alternative but to live with “in-laws”’ and often ‘misunderstandings and disagreements … resulted in estrangement between husband and wife’ (Lloyd & Rees, 1994, p. 295). Apart from the many happy war bride accounts offered by Fallows, evidence shows that many women were disappointed, having arrived with high expectations as a result of the over-advertising of Australia by Australian soldiers in England (2002, p. 164). Some war brides encountered further anxiety when faced with the prospect of meeting their new in-laws (2002, p. 166). Countless relate the difficulties of relationships in the first years on arrival. One bride tells of her encounter with one of the ‘urban myths about “dirty Poms”’ when she met her mother-in-law’ (2002, p. 167). Most suffered a culture shock and ongoing problems in the transformation to their new life; ‘few of the women had any idea of the society in which they were about to make their home and it seems few had even thought about it before they arrived’ (2002, p. 173).

Valerie, in ‘The Double Sunrise’ is ‘a city girl born and bred’ (p.13), and it is this sense of identity, coupled with her Englishness and upbringing which intensifies her rural isolation. Like London’s war bride, Ada, in *Gilgamesh*, Valerie cannot relate to the foreignness of the landscape. Nor can she abide what in her experience are the deprivations and loneliness of West Australian rural life or its boring, restrictive culture. Later, in Book III of ‘The Double Sunrise’, it is implied that Valerie’s sense of displacement and alienation is compounded by the unresolved issue of Jasper’s presumed death and the accompanying loss that can never really be fully expressed. In a review of Damousi’s *Living with the Aftermath*, and the psychological effects of war-widowhood, Knox makes the point that ‘While the men these women survived were dignified, lauded and commemorated, their wives were not – if anything, they were made more marginal by the figural centrality of their husbands to national memory’ (2001, ¶ 4). There was also a tendency for war widows to contain or ‘hide (even from themselves) their grief, a response shaped by the high modernist denial of death and dissolution of mourning rituals and supports,’ for that was what society
expected, ‘but even that stoicism was itself imbricated with mourning, acting as a kind of inverse barometer of grief’ (2001, ¶ 5). For women who continued to live in doubt as to their husband’s status and whereabouts, (in terms of those servicemen whom the Ministry had deemed as ‘missing in action, presumed dead’), the suffering and guilt of never being able to grieve fully would have been long and considerable.

The term ‘war brides’ includes those women who immigrated to Australia as well as the many Australian women who emigrated after the war to the United States to marry American servicemen or personnel. In a chapter of On the Homefront entitled ‘Yanks in West Australia’, Anthony Barker illustrates the impact of male/female relationships, mentioning that of the 12,000 Australian war brides, the 1,000 from West Australia was disproportionately high in terms of its population of 467,000 (1996, p. 127). But, as Campbell points out ‘the development of thousands of relationships between American men and Australian women unexpectedly altered the sexual status quo’ (1989, p. 192). The exodus to the United States of an extraordinary number of war brides ‘dealt a body blow to the Australian male presumption of a monopoly of sexual power’ (1989, p. 192).

The impact that diverse relationships and overseas relocations had on notions of Australian identity, particularly in West Australia, should not be underestimated. The huge influx of American combat troops and support personnel, while causing only short-term disruption, had a major impact on the mentality of both Australian men and women. Overall movement between nations, of men and women, civilians and those in service was significant, over the long term, in changing concepts of national identity and cultural tolerance (Barker, 1996, p. 127). Furthermore, the inclusion of thousands of black American service personnel in positions of authority in the US forces in ‘white’ Australia, ‘provided a powerful counterbalance to the assumptions governing current popular attitudes to racial differences’ (Campbell, 1989, p. 193).
3. Character & Place

In his essay, ‘Reading the Landscape’, Richard Rossiter identifies a trend in West Australian literature towards closer connections between character and landscape than has traditionally been portrayed in the past. ‘The physical environment, nature,’ is named by Rossiter as one of ‘the most prevalent and persistent sites of the “other”’ in Australian culture (2003, p. 130).

Rossiter notes a shift from a ‘classificatory response’ to a ‘more modern feeling for nature’ after the 1920s in which ‘interiority plays a crucial role’ in establishing identity (Rossiter, 2003, pp. 139-140). In The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea, Eden functions as the mythical framework behind the narrative and the quest for identity of both Rob, and his alter-ego, Rick. But against the nostalgic wash of arcadia depicted through Rob’s sensual experience of the landscape is what Veronica Brady refers to as culture’s ‘loss of memory, its displacement in time as well as space, which is a feature of colonial society’ (Brady, 1988, p. 61). Crucial to Rob’s spiritual enlightenment is his experience in ‘The Hand Cave’, where ‘he felt the cold rock under his hand, where a dead boy’s hand had once rested. Time and change had removed this child from his country, and his world was not one world, but had in it camps of the dispossessed’ (Stow, 1972, p. 56). The boy’s concept of nature and culture as unified and unchanging symbolised by the constancy of the merry-go-round is established from the first paragraph of the novel. Its disruption, however, is a progressive one, slowly undermining the ideal of paradise. Throughout the novel, changing Edenic images are evoked in the form of successive and protected homestead gardens seen through the sensory experiences of young Rob. When the boy strays and becomes physically lost, he must endure his loss alone. Implicit in the child’s plight is a reverberation of Australia’s Myth of the Lost Child, a collective construct of many colonial and early post-colonial Australian texts. The ‘innocent encounter with a natural environment, which is by turns benign and nurturing, malevolent and hostile,’ is one that has become a ‘cultural emblem’ in its symbolism of a young nation (Gerster & Basset, 1991, p. 160). But Stow’s account is
subversive. Its perspective is always through that of an active child who questions his family’s entitlement to possession of the land.

Bhagat alerts us to Laurie Hergenhan’s discussion on the use of the pastoral mode in post-1960 novels which portray Australian childhood memories of war and their review and repudiation of ‘Anzac male myths of a national coming of age’ (1985, p. 248). In his article, Hergenhan alludes to Northrop Frye’s ideological connection between war and the pastoral mode in the works of British writers of the twenties and thirties and that of the Nationalist celebration of the landscape in Australian bush myths (Bhagat, 1993, p. 84). Here, ‘war belongs to the demonic world’ and, by extending the Edenic association, a ‘contrasting model world [of pastoral] by which demonism is measured’ (Hergenhan, 1985, p. 250). In The Merry-Go-Round and the Sea, war is essentially portrayed through Rick’s understanding of its trauma (1985, p. 251). But Rick is between worlds. His sense of belonging is neither found in society’s heroic understanding of man and war, nor in its mythical embodiment of the land.

Poetic descriptions of the landscape around Geraldton establish the identity of characters ‘through their sense of belonging — or not belonging — to this place’ (Rossiter, 2003, p. 147). The Eden of innocent childhood belonging to Rob is juxtaposed with Rick’s adult world in which the conflict of inner and outer landscapes is so tortuous and complex it cannot be resolved. Despite attempts to conform to Australian values, Rick realises he belongs to neither land nor culture because his identity has been changed irrevocably by his experiences of war and imprisonment. The disturbing sketches he makes, however, cannot expunge the images from his memory; rather, it is through words that Rick is able to articulate his turmoil more clearly. ‘War is a different country,’ he writes. ‘It doesn’t matter which side you were on ... if you fought a war you became a citizen of another, extra nation, not on the map’ (1972, p. 165), otherwise known as the ‘demonic’ world.

Kathryn Burns claims that Edenic landscapes are always to some extent internal as well as external (2005, p. 90). Like The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea, ‘The Double Sunrise’ appeals to the nostalgia of childhood in which Eden exists only through the
suggestion of memory and what has been lost. Its understanding of loss extends, not only to the loss of childhood, but, in this case, to the loss of a father, for while Rob Coram’s is emotionally or psychologically absent, Virginia’s has never, within her memory, been corporeally present. The opening wedding scene of ‘The Double Sunrise’ casts the reader back to Perth, 1957, into the immediate realms of adolescence and self-consciousness, signifying a time crucial to the way in which Virginia defines herself and her relationship to the world a few months short of her thirteenth birthday. This scene symbolises the essence of the suburban dream of Australian post-war society. Structured around ‘building homes and educating heroes’ (Fallows, 2002, p. 24), this vision was originally fashioned for the returned serviceman through popular slogans promoting ‘The Australian Way of Life’. Marriage, in the 1950s, was once again the social order influencing constructions of female identity as it had before the war. As a fatherless child, Virginia has never fitted neatly into culture’s prescriptive image of this way of life. The wedding music immediately rouses an image in the girl’s mind: ‘Over and over the music-box played as the china figurine danced in time’ (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 3), having delighted her time and again as a miniature world of unconditional certainty. It is an image reminiscent of the merry-go-round in Stow’s novel, which ‘adults had grasped and pulled to send ... spinning’(Stow, 1972, p. 1). But for Virginia, the ideal that marriage is a woman’s chief destiny is subconsciously disturbed. The happy bridal image is offset by surrounding images of discordance and imperfection: a ‘broken rainbow’ of confetti, the ‘scuffed white shoe’ disturbs the eye; the off-key cellist disrupts the sense of unity being imposed upon the beholder (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 3-6). Collectively, these images mark a separation of self and the outer world for Virginia and of nature and culture correlating with the destruction of the Edenic landscape of childhood as described by Burns (2005, p. 89). Here, ‘the child’s sense of timelessness, which finds parallel in Eden’s static paradise,’ is simultaneously broken ‘in a progression from innocence to experience’ (2005, p. 90), illustrated by Virginia’s growing awareness of time and space and the metaphoric significance of the natural world to her understanding of self. Virginia resists change, ‘kicking’ at the fallen autumn leaves which symbolize her loss and separation (‘The Double Sunrise’, p. 5). The anger she feels is of displacement, not unlike that of Rob, in *The Merry-
Go-Round in the Sea, who 'raged against the town, feeling dispossessed, feeling exiled from the country where he knew his body belonged' (1972, p. 69). But the wedding is also a time of consciousness. 'Squinting,' Virginia sees the river which 'glimmered deep and blue against the orange of the tiled roofs, defining their angles into a kind of pattern' ('The Double Sunrise', p. 5). The river delineates the edge of the suburb, establishing the crucial relationships of land and water in her search for identity throughout the novel.

The night-time scene-shift from the wedding and suburban Perth to the contrasting bush setting of the South West is as abrupt as the nature of Virginia’s separation from her mother symbolised by the girl’s memory of the departing ship breaking the coloured streamers as it sails for England (p.19). Physically, emotionally and spiritually, the girl is between worlds. The divided childhood landscape of town and country is like that presented in The Merry-Go-Round and the Sea, but in Stow’s novel, ‘the complexities of identity are explored ‘when place is apprehended at a sensory level but not formulated in language’ (Rossiter, 2003, p. 147). In ‘The Double Sunrise’, words often come into play. ‘Grasswood’ is a misnomer, for the Partridge family property is only lush and green for part of the year, as the reader finds out later. Through Arcadian suggestion, the name embraces yet also contradicts colonial notions of the Australian bush.

A Littoral Society: Conflicting Myths

We invaders have never taken to living inland;
we hate to leave the beaches (Wright, 1999, p. 79).

The littoral nature of Australian, and indeed West Australian society, is remarked upon by Kathryn Burns for its ‘powerful psychological and symbolic impact for coming-of-age narratives, as the setting positions characters on an edge between two states; land and sea, innocence and experience’ (2005, p. 92).
Binary elements and their relevance to identity is a subject that is further explored by Ben-Messahel in a study of Winton’s work. The relationship of ‘margin’ and ‘centre’ to character is seen to involve a ‘frontier’ between the outside world and the inside world, which resurfaces through ‘the intimate or rather innate relationship between humans and the environment’ (2006, p. 123).

Over the years, Perth beaches and the Swan River have provided alternative ideals to the romanticism of the bush in West Australian novels in the (retrospective) depiction of youth and identity in the post-war years. While the coastal environment presents as an ‘unconventional’ Eden, displaying numerous contradictions, it is its features of ‘openness, space and freedom’ which embody its appeal (Burns, 2005, p.930).

Sometimes the Arcadian nature of the beach myth is eroded by circumstance. We are told by Buttsworth, that during the Second World War ‘beaches in Perth were garbed in barbed wire’, due to the constant threat of coastal invasion (1996, p. 56). Yet Tom Hungerford remembers the day the war ended when he could picture

the surf ... booming in ... the long, smooth, glass-green of it sloping down under the spindrift rainbows curled back from the crests by the land-breeze ... listening to it, and watching the spider, I got that feeling that often came over me while we were at the beach shack – a numbing sort of isolation, of being somewhere outside the envelope of the world listening ... (1996, p. 33).

In Stow’s *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, the town of Geraldton functions as frontier through Rob’s eyes during the war years. ‘Shabby, barren, built on shifting sandhills jutting out to the sea’ (1972, p. 5), it is depicted mainly in relation to its exposure to hostile elements. Quite often the ocean is seen as complicit with the enemy but in a way that offsets the innocence and vulnerability of character. While Rob later discovers the sea’s charms, swimming, and wallowing in the sensual pleasures of the beach, the far-off image of the merry-go-round continues to serve as a reminder of the constancy of his place as a child in an unchanging adult world.
Robert Drewe, as a six-year-old enjoying his first summer in Perth, remembers being 'conscious for the first time' in his life of 'some sort of meeting of body and spirit and environment ... of perfection' (2002, p. 31). He describes a time in the 1960s 'on the other side of the continent, growing up wedged between the Indian Ocean and the desert' when 'West Australians found it impossible to imagine an Australian culture which did not embrace the ocean and river shores' (2002, p. 30). Drewe's Sharknet and Winton's Cloudstreet display commonality in their use of Edenic images of the Swan River and the West Australian beaches to portray West Australian suburban childhood and adolescence. Both novels, however, reveal the darker side to water, contesting its paradisal qualities. In her paper, 'The Beach as Contested Ground: Cottesloe Beach 1900-1980s', Jane Davis attempts to 'unravel the myth of the beach' by arguing that the 'beach, as with other environments, is not a neutral zone':

There are always arguments over its use, its ownership, its management and the meanings we impose on it ... political, cultural and social factors ... impinge on the environment, influencing the way in which people interact with and reflect on this Australian icon (2006, ¶ 2).

'As with all Edens, at the heart of the paradise is the force that threatens it: the ocean,' explains Kathryn Burns, adding that 'The sea is a traditional symbol of change and the passing of time, and, through its sheer enormity and power, also carries the very real danger of death' (2005, p. 92). Lurking beneath the surface are real sharks which can and do kill people unsuspectingly, as instanced by the disappearance of Abel Johnson's father in Tim Winton's Blueback. Sharks are also 'buried deep' in Robert Drewe's 'collective unconscious' and this is clarified by the title of his memoir (Drewe, 2000, p. 300). After his friend, Richie Male, is lost in the Cottesloe surf, sharks unwittingly emerge in Drewe's imagination in the guise of Requiem sharks for a feature article he is writing. Yet when he finds out the real cause of his friend's death, 'his brain' turns 'the shock around', takes 'it back a stage' and changes 'it into something like retrospective premonition' (2000, p. 306).
Drewe uses 'the ocean ... to represent the unseen, sometimes imagined, threats to the progress of lives that otherwise seem to inhabit the realm of the good and the simple' (Rossiter, 2003, p. 154). But the author's fear of the unexpected predominates throughout his memoir, with the shark serving as a central metaphor. Serial killer, Eric Edgar Cooke, is likened to a shark preying on the safe conservatism of Perth's west suburbia. Society, in turn, is viewed as a predator. The shark metaphor contradicts contemporary local myths portraying both the beach and the river as Edenic playground environments. The serial killer not only lurks around at nighttime through the suburbs but also in the Swan River which serves as his murdering escape route. Like Drewe, Tim Winton uses both the ocean and the river of the urban landscape to represent 'hidden aspects of self and society' (Rossiter, 2003, p. 155).

The importance of the natural elements in shaping character is also illustrated by Ben-Messahel, especially in regard to Winton's juxtaposition of past and present, rural and city settings. In Cloudstreet, the 'association of air, water, and earth directs the life of the Lambs (2006, p. 115). Fish's 'intrinsic communion of the sky and the water' is expressed in his limited vocabulary (2006, p. 115), 'The water. The water. I fly' (Winton, 1991, p. 114), providing a spiritual bond between him and his brother Quick. Yet, as Ben-Messahel points out, 'the geographical division of Perth by the Swan River' also parallels 'the characters' inner division' with the water's 'whirling current, like a maelstrom' highlighting 'the displaced characters' difficulties at placing themselves in the flow of life' (2006, p. 126). According to Burns, Winton's portrayal of the coastal environs often depicts them in a 'state of grace' (2005, p. 93). The sea is also 'loaded with overtones of the religious and sacred, yielding "blessings and miracles" (Land's Edge 39)', says Burns, 'For his characters, it frequently offers renewal, escape and solace' (2005, p. 93).

Contradictory aspects of character and place find resonance in 'The Double Sunrise' in the context of water. As illustrated in the works of Drewe and Winton, the Swan River is a playground which can instantly claim the life of either child or adult without warning. In 'The Double Sunrise', the river can be the site of love, as Virginia discovers, but equally it can be the site of death. Its serpent quality reappears
in her closing image of Perth from the aeroplane window with the ‘Swan River snaking from the dried-out hills through the suburbs and the city to the sea’ (p. 258).

The geographical and cultural isolation of West Australia from Eastern cities brought about by the wide expanse of desert between has no doubt contributed to insularity and conservatism within its society. Conversely this division has made West Australians more conscious of their sense of identity. It has, in Burn’s opinion, provided ‘the distance necessary from busier metropolises to foster an image of utopia’ (2005, p. 90), albeit a retrospective one that is based on ‘a simpler, rural existence, pre-metropolis’ (2005, p. 94). The conflicting manifestations of ‘utopia’ in contemporary West Australian literature, however, suggest that identity is highly complex and cannot be defined in the simplistic way that tradition has demanded.

For West Australian authors, it is often in their expression of particularity of place that the universal is acknowledged by their readers. In discussing her work, Joan London refers to this aspect of her work and her surprise that her place ‘with all the nuances so familiar to a Sand Person – should be understood ... that it was out of the intense focus on “here” that “here” becomes “everywhere”’ (2002, p. 24). If ‘we’ as West Australians are ‘the descendants of adventurous people’, as London suggests (2002, p. 24), our inheritance may help in nourishing our need to escape into writing to define.

4. The Journey

Australian literature has traditionally been marked by comings and goings, patterns of which, until recently, have reflected the origins of our white settler society. Over time these patterns have changed in keeping with the developing multicultural character of our nation. Typically in ‘the nineteenth century,’ says Elizabeth Webby,

the emphasis fell on people coming to Australia, especially from Britain, and often at the end of the novel going back there after having done their time or
made their pile. Towards the end of the century, we begin to find novels where the travel is in the opposite direction, with young Australians, especially young women, making a pilgrimage “home” to England, sometimes never to return (2002, p. 175).

The ‘venerable history’ of ‘the pattern of the journey, the quest’, in Australian literature is also remarked upon by Shirley Walker in an article called ‘Comings and Goings: Literary Journeys’ (2002, p. 42). Whether the quest for identity, ‘for lost love, a missing father, for metaphysical enlightenment, or just the solution to a crime,’ the journey ‘recurs again and again,’ says Walker, ‘usually’ involving ‘a maturation, an all-encompassing discovery’ (2002, p. 42). Her comment that ‘in the past, the trajectory was – in life as well as in literature – away from the drabness of Australian life towards the esteemed “other”, usually the more venerable cultures of England and Europe,’ (2002, p. 86) resonates well with the context of my novel and the other texts cited. Stow’s Rick eventually journeys away from Australia because he could not ‘stand’ the

arrogant mediocrity. The shoddiness and the wowserism and the smug wild-boyos in the bars. And the unspeakable bloody boredom of belonging to a country that keeps up a sort of chorus: Relax, mate, relax, don’t make the pace too hot. Relax, you bastard, before you get clobbered (1972, p. 273).

Rick’s quest for expatriation ‘as an antidote to suburban deadness’ is representative of Stow’s personal quest of the time and manifested through his permanent overseas ‘exile’. It also marks the beginning of an era and a trend outlined by Gerster and Bassett in Seizures of Youth of the journeying away from Australia by other writers and artists in their ‘aesthetic, cultural and even moral reassessment of the suburban ideal’ (Gerster & Bassett, 1991, p. 140).

For some, the distancing of memory only clarifies such a reassessment. Robert Drewe’s memoir, Sharknet, is framed by a return journey between Melbourne and Perth which provides a looking into and a looking out of the morality of West
Australian society in the 1950s and 1960s, again through the eyes of male childhood and youth. But Perth was 'not always a sun-drenched backwater', according to Jenny Gregory in City of Light: A History of Perth since the 1950s (2003, p. 113). In the sixties 'its population increased at a faster rate than other Australian capitals, and the state's economy was on the move' (2003, p. 113). As baby boomers entered adulthood in the late sixties Perth saw a 'demographic shift'; within 'ten years ... almost 55 per cent' of the population 'were under thirty' (2003, p. 131). At the same time, says fellow-historian, Tom Stannage in The People of Perth, the 'revolt of youth began to assume a social content and purpose' (1979, p. 343). The author relates how 'The songs of protest against the wars of old people, against racialism, against poverty in the midst of affluence, came together in the late 1960s in the moratorium marches in Perth against the Vietnam War' (1979, p. 343).

During the post-war period of the 1950s and 1960s, Australian cultural myths were driven largely by fear and ignorance. East and West were pitted against each other and the war in Vietnam was roiling. The situation painted in Seizures of Youth of the 'ideological hothouse of the sixties' (1991, p. 16), describes the cultural journey of Australian youth as part of a wider, more universal trend. Yet Gerster shows that radicalism in Australia was not purely a young male bourgeois prerogative; 'For women, who along with ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups comprised the “inner colonized” ... , the anti-war juggernaut created a historical opportunity' (1991, p. 61). Mothers and women, who knew the reality of personal loss through war and were not prepared to allow it to happen again, rose in unison. Gerster tells how, in 1965, 'Save Our Sons' was formed by mothers opposed to the 'conscription of their sons for the slaughter in Vietnam', a movement which was 'important to the process of making disobedience “respectable”' (1991, pp. 75-76). 'Make Love Not War', although a generic slogan, had a 'feminising' influence on young Australian male attitudes and identity. In many ways, though, the 'women's movement was as much a repudiation of sixties radicalism, which was managed and manipulated largely by males, as a manifestation of it (1991, p. 19). Germaine Greer’s provocative work The Female Eunuch, published in 1970, increased the momentum of emerging feminist ideology. Like most of the characters described above, Greer and her
contemporaries were also trying to escape, looking for a cultural identity beyond that which Australian social-political conservatism prescribed. On his indefinite exile, Clive James explains how ‘before Gough Whitlam came to power, having to return felt like defeat. Afterwards it felt like the natural thing to do’ (James, 1982, p. 173).

Australians in general sought refuge in the distance of the ‘Mother Country’, disrespectful yet often ambivalent to the patriarchal authority they had inherited in their institutions and traditions. In Seizures of Youth, a chapter entitled ‘Arrivals/Departures’ encapsulates how Australia in the 1960s was a decade of transition, of comings and goings, of cultural traffic...arrivals of a cavalcade of foreign celebrities ... departures when young Australians ventured abroad ... a time marked by the quest, in literature, theatre and film, for national identity ... it was a time when Australia lost some of its innocence, a time when it was forced to grow up in some ways but became increasingly dependent in others (1991, p. 103).

Australia’s political alliance with the United States, its compliant ‘All the way with LBJ’ pact in fighting the war on Communism in Vietnam was instrumental in loosening some of the nation’s cultural ties with the Mother Country.

For thousands of young men, however, the tour of duty in Asia was a mandatory one involving the horrors of jungle warfare against the Viet Cong. For other young Australians, male and female, the journey to Asia was one of self-determination, freedom, adventure and enlightenment, whether through overland stopovers en route to the Mother country or simply the embracing of Eastern culture. It is these diverse experiences away from Australian soil which have helped to break down some of society’s Anglo Celtic phobic requirement for a white Australia, along with the entry of another generation of war brides and refugees into the country as part of our cultural journey.
The novels of *Gilgamesh* and ‘The Double Sunrise’ have an overlapping context of time and place, sharing similar themes of journey and identity through female perspectives. While in *Gilgamesh* ‘personal identity is related, in almost every case, to the lack of a father’ (S. Walker, 2002, p. 43), the novel is also described by its author as ‘a story of arrivals and departures. Arrivals of strangers come from elsewhere, to this shore, to make a new life, or to see what they will find, bringing change, and often being regarded with suspicion and hostility’ (London, 2002, p. 24). Migration and identity became more prominent issues in Australia after World War Two. Nonja Peters informs the reader how ‘Over two million immigrants from various parts of Europe came to Australia as a result of voluntary and humanitarian migration agreements’ (1996, p. 257). Most of these would have encountered both the long sea passage as well as the difficult journey of cultural integration, as outlined by Peters, a former child migrant and now historian, in her most recent book entitled *Land of Milk and Honey – but No Gold* (2001).

‘The Double Sunrise’, like *Gilgamesh*, is a novel that portrays immigration and assimilation issues. Its narrative journey, too, is comprised of arrivals and departures, a series of different journeys involving car, train, ship and plane, the last being the quest for a missing father as well as for personal identity and independence. Both novels portray a ‘travelling heroine’ as against Stow’s ‘travelling hero’ in *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, yet all sit within the context of ‘the journey’ and the socio-political aspects of West Australian society, and encompass similar timeframes.

Some people may, like Shirley Walker (2002, p. 44), consider Edith’s journey in *Gilgamesh* ‘improbable’ for the display of female independence so ahead of its time. When one considers the journeys and destinations of other ‘travelling heroines’ of the era in Australian literature, such as the escape and London exile of Nora Porteous in Jessica Anderson’s *Tirra Lirra by the River* and that of Christina Stead’s Teresa Hawkins in *For Love Alone*, Edith’s journey to Armenia with a child during wartime is highly perilous as well as unconventional even by today’s standards. Yet the ‘pattern’ of the journey and the heroic nature of the quest recur later in *Gilgamesh* when taken up by Edith’s son, breaking further with colonial trend. After years of
suffering the stigma of being a dark-skinned, fatherless child in an intolerant and xenophobic culture, the young adult Jim eventually journeys away to find his place in the world as his predecessors have done. But as Walker points out, in his case, the ‘pattern will be broken’ as ‘He will go to Leopold who, having never known a father, will become a surrogate father to Jim’ (2002, p. 43). Edith’s journey, as London describes it, ‘represents the attempt to trace the connection between here and elsewhere, from the outer to the centre, to find our place in the great movements of history, and our legitimacy as players in the great human myths’ (London, 2002).

A glance back at The Wing of Night reveals a story which starts with the loading of troops and horses on a ship, a journey that ends in death and destruction. In addition to the themes of widowhood and the waiting of women is the plight of a child left fatherless by war about to begin a journey; each figures significantly in ‘The Double Sunrise’. Throughout the narrative is the notion of the ‘journey’, in conjunction with that of the ‘bird’, whether it is a wild duck, a migratory albatross or an aeroplane. The nature of the journey is expressed in other ways, yet again through imagery of the natural world: sunrises and sunsets are used to signify life, death, rebirth and the passage of time. The element of hope encapsulated in the title of ‘The Double Sunrise’ and the story’s final image takes on greater significance in its suggestion of a journeying away from traditional methods of defining the country and self through war, and the coming of age, not only of a young West Australian girl in the latter half of the 1960s, but of a nation.

Now however, the ‘cringe involved in the traditional contrast between “home” and “other” has all but disappeared’ (Walker, 2002, p. 42) revealing the ever-changing nature not only of the ‘journey’ but of Australian culture. Today, it is the norm in our multi-cultural society for its people to journey to their ancestral homelands and remote parts of the world in search of their roots or for the young to work abroad. Most eventually return. ‘These days,’ explains Shirley Walker, ‘Australia is now more often seen as a refuge; still a place of departure but more often than not, one to return to for resolution and relief’ (2002, pp. 42-43). This aspect of society can also be seen in the growing phenomenon of many (particularly younger) Australians
wanting to know what part their ancestors played in Australia’s various wars. Gerard Henderson believes that ‘the revival of interest in the Anzacs has been driven by personal stories, not by grand themes,’ as suggested by Dennis Glover in his criticism of young Australians who make the ‘painless pilgrimage to Gallipoli every year’ (Henderson, 2006, p. 17). Regardless of whether they are ‘remembering’ or ‘forgetting’, and to what extent they are influenced by the rise of Neo-Nationalism, young Australians still curiously display an ongoing need to define themselves in relation to war in some form or other.

National identity is never stable. ‘It is continually being fractured, questioned and redefined,’ says Richard White (1996, p. 25). We can ‘never arrive at the “real” Australia. From the attempt of others to get there, we can learn much about the travellers and the journey itself, but nothing about the destination’ (1996, p. 25). Despite the frequency of politically-calculated reminders by our current Prime Minister, John Howard, of what is and what isn’t ‘Australian’, the reality is, White suggests, that neither exists.

Cynics may say that the Australian ‘journey’ has become almost as clichéd as the heroic bushman or Anzac by which Australian society has mostly been codified. For many, journeying simply becomes a return to journeys of the past. But time invariably takes on a moral dimension in which the inadequacies of the past provide a driving force for the future.
References


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