# Writing an Alternative Australia:
# Women and National Discourse in Nineteenth-Century
# Literature

Eingereicht bei

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Ort/Datum     Potsdam, den 30.08.2007

# Danksagung

Diese Arbeit wäre nicht entstanden, wenn es die Hilfe, den Zuspruch und die Ermunterung folgender Personen nicht gegeben hätte:

Hr. Prof. Dr. Drexler danke ich für die Hilfe bei der Ausarbeitung der Arbeit, insbesondere des theoretischen Teils.

Fr. Dr. Kinsky-Ehritt danke ich für die Unterstützung bei der Formulierung der Fragestellung und der folgenden Ausarbeitung der Arbeit, sowie der alles beeinflussenden anfänglichen Anregung und Ermutigung mich im Rahmen der Magisterarbeit mit diesem Thema zu beschäftigen.

Frau Anja Correll möchte ich für ihre liebenswerte und freundschaftliche Unterstützung und Ermunterung während der Entstehungszeit dieser Arbeit danken.

Mein ganz besonderer Dank gilt Herrn Darren Camilleri, ohne den und dessen Familie es diese Arbeit und mein Interesse an der australischen Gesellschaft nicht gäbe. Er stand mir nicht nur als Freund zur Seite, sondern auch als kritischer und hilfsbereiter Korrekturleser.

Bei meinem Großvater, August Przywara, bedanke ich mich für die liebevolle Hilfe in der Anfangsphase dieser Arbeit. Ohne ihn hätte mich das leere weiße Blatt ein Weilchen länger angestarrt.

Zuletzt möchte ich meinen Eltern, Mariette und Berthold Honka, für ein sorgenfreies Studium danken.

# Acknowledgements

This work would have been impossible without the continuous support and encouragement of following individuals:

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Peter Drexler for his support and assistance in developing the research question and gaining a better understanding of the theoretical part.

Dr. Andrea Kinsky-Ehritt has initially encouraged me to pursue this topic and offered great assistance in the development of the thesis.

I would also like to thank Ms Anja Correll for her caring friendship and encouragement throughout the phases of writing.

I owe many thanks to Mr Darren Camilleri and his family who installed in me my interest in Australian society; without them this thesis would not exist. I am not only grateful for his valuable friendship but also his precise and critical proofreading of the whole work.

My final thanks go to my family. My grand-father, August Przywara, was the igniting help at the start. Without his initial care the pages would have remained white for a much longer time. My parents, Mariette and Berthold Honka, I thank for their support throughout the years of my studies.

**Writing an Alternative Australia: Literature, Gender, and the Construction of National Identity in Colonial Australia**

Das heutige Australien ist eine heterogene Gesellschaft, welche sich mit dem Vermächtnis der Vergangenheit – der Auslöschung und Unterdrückung der Ureinwohner – aber auch mit andauernden Immigrationswellen beschäftigen muss. Aktuelle Stimmen in den australischen Literatur-, Kultur- und Geschichtswissenschaften betonen die Prominenz der Identitätsdebatte und weisen auf die Notwendigkeit einer aufgeschlossenen und einschließenden Herangehensweise an das Thema. Vor diesem Hintergrund erinnern uns die Stimmen der drei in dieser Arbeit behandelten Schriftstellerinnen daran, dass es nicht nur eine Version von nationaler Identität gibt. Die Pluralität einer Gesellschaft spiegelt sich in ihren Texten wieder, dies war der Fall im neunzehnten Jahrhundert und ist es heute noch.

So befasst sich die vorliegende Arbeit mit der Entstehung nationaler Identität im Australien des späten neunzehnten Jahrhunderts. Es wird von der Prämisse ausgegangen, dass nationale Identität nicht durch politische Entscheidungen determiniert wird, sondern ein kulturelles Konstrukt, basierend auf textlichen Diskurs, darstellt. Dieser ist nicht einheitlich, sondern mannigfaltig, spiegelt somit verschiedene Auffassungen unterschiedlicher Urheber über nationale Identität wider. Ziel der Arbeit ist es anhand der Texte australischer Schriftstellerinnen aufzuzeigen, dass neben einer dominanten Version der australischen Identität, divergierende Versionen existierten, die eine flexiblere Einschätzung des australischen Charakters erlaubt, einen größeren Personenkreis in den Rang des „Australiers" zugelassen und die dominante Version hinterfragt hätten.

Die Zeitschrift *Bulletin* wurde in den 1890ern als Sprachrohr der radikalen Nationalisten etabliert. Diese forderten eine Loslösung der australischen Kolonien von deren Mutterland England und riefen dazu auf, Australien durch australische Augen zu beschreiben. Dem Aufruf folgten Schriftsteller, Maler und Künstler und konzentrierten ihren Blick auf die für sie typische australische Landschaft, den „Busch". Schriftsteller, allen voran Henry Lawson, glorifizierten die Landschaft und ihre Bewohner; Pioniere und Siedler wurden zu Nationalhelden stilisiert. Der australische „bushman" - unabhängig, kumpelhaft und losgelöst von häuslichen und familiären Verpflichtungen - wurde zum „typischen" Australier. Die australische Nation wurde mit männlichen Charaktereigenschaften assoziiert und es entstand eine Version der zukünftigen Nation, die

Frauen und die Australischen Ureinwohner als Nicht-Australisch propagierte, somit von dem Prozess der Nationsbildung ausschloss.          Nichtsdestotrotz verfassten australische Schriftstellerinnen Essays, Romane und Kurzgeschichten, die alternative Versionen zur vorherrschenden und zukünftigen australischen Nation anboten. In dieser Arbeit finden Louisa Lawson, Barbara Baynton und Tasma Beachtung. Letztere ignoriert den australischen Busch und bietet einen Einblick in den urbanen Kosmos einer sich konsolidierenden Nation, die, obwohl tausende Meilen von ihrem Mutterland entfernt, nach Anerkennung und Vergleich mit diesem durstet. Lawson und Baynton, hingegen, präsentieren den Busch als einen rechtlosen Raum, der vor allem unter seinen weiblichen Bewohnern emotionale und physische Opfer fordert.

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# Introduction: Sketching History

Just as cultural studies are preoccupied with the questions of nation and national identity, so are cultural productions. Books on "identity" fill the bookstore shelves and film festivals, such as the recent Berlinale, present a growing number of movies dealing with the complex set of issues headed by the term "identity." Australian cultural studies as well as cultural productions from Australia comply with this current trend. Australia's identity is discussed, negotiated, fought, and contested among filmmakers, artists, intellectuals, and the general public. The diversity of the debate is fed by and reflected in numerous recent novels, such as Kate Jennings' *Snake* (1996) or Thea Astley's *Drylands* (1999) and films like *The Home Song Stories* (2006) or *The Proposition* (2006). The latter two provide examples in which Chinese, Aboriginal, and colonial influences form the notion of and the discussion on Australian identity. Both movies reflect main directions in the current discussions. *The Home Song Stories* deploys a Chinese immigrant woman, who tries to settle down with her two children in 1970s Melbourne, to reflect upon the situation of women and immigrants in Australian society. *The Proposition* arranges Aborigines[1] and colonial men within a matrix of violence and British law to discuss the development of the Australian nation. Kate Jennings' *Snake* offers a contemporary discussion on gender, gender politics, and bush life in the nineteenth century, while *Drylands* discusses the narrow-mindedness and bigotry of a Queensland country town which eventually give rise to the exclusive racist political agenda of "One Nation," which excludes all voices deemed different from the discourse on national identity. These movies and books support Susan Sheridan's opinion that the "[l]ate-nineteenth-century discourse on race difference is one of the axes on which Australian cultural nationalism has been constructed. The other axis is gender difference" (122).

It is the Australian national identity which is at the centre of my thesis. More precisely, the connection between the concepts of nation and gender as entrenched at the end of the nineteenth century and culturally constructed and expressed in the literature of this period. The central concern of my thesis is with the forms of national consciousness that emerged in the late nineteenth century among Australia's male and female settlers in opposition to their "mother country," Indigenous communities and also in opposition to women and men, respectively. I concentrate on white women writer's presentations of

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[1] The terms "Aborigine/Aboriginal" are rejected by many contemporary Indigenous people, who prefer to call themselves with a word meaning "people" in their respective languages. For want of an appropriate collective term, "Aborigine/Aboriginal" is used throughout the work to denote Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders.

colonial life, with an emphasis on bush-life and Anglo-Australian relations as portrayed in popular short stories and novels written by Australian women in the late nineteenth century. This era is believed to have inaugurated a national consciousness which found its political manifestation in the federation of the six self-governing colonies into one nation-state in 1901. The previous decade, the 1890s, is described by Schaffer as follows: "The 1890s. The phrase resonates with meaning for Australians" (*Henry Lawson* 199).

In order to uncover the relations which prevailed between white male settlers, Indigenous Australians and women, I address the questions from different standpoints. I draw on theories of nationalism and postcolonialism and take into account standpoints grounded in feminism. Australian identity has always been an important, if not the most important topic, and contested area in Australian cultural studies. The cultural critic Kobena Mercer reminds us that, "One thing at least is clear - identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (43). Judging by the Australian discussion on identity, it seems that it has always been in crisis. This may be traced back to the nineteenth-century version of the white, masculine, and "matey" Australian which was re-enacted on several occasions throughout the twentieth century, such as Australia Day, the Bicentenary, or ANZAC Day, although it does not account for multicultural, gendered, and Aboriginal experiences of Australia. Its prevalence, however, can be accounted for by turning to Benedict Anderson who defined the nation as an "imagined community" which "is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7).

I claim that discourses of the nation operated in such a way as to exclude women and Aboriginal people from the discussion, hence excluding them from the nation building process. Australian women, however, were actively involved in the process of nation building. Through highly acclaimed and lively literary works, women produced knowledge by trying to make sense of themselves in their new environments. Often, their writing served as a bridge between Britain and Australia and formed a way of representing themselves and their new environments to an international audience. Some writing was inflicted with concrete vision as to how the emerging nation was supposed to look like.

The three women authors highlighted in this work are Louisa Lawson, Barbara Baynton, and Jessie Couvreur. The latter, who published under the pseudonym Tasma, depicted urban Australian life in colonial times and offered an alternative version of Australia in terms of topic and geography. Setting her first novel, *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*, in bourgeois, suburban Melbourne and dealing with topics of heredity and the institution of

marriage, Tasma offered a social and political approach to Australia. On the other hand, Barbary Baynton was well acquainted with bush life which she made the topic of her well-known short-story collection *Bush Studies*. Her depiction of bush life, fed by terror and violence, is diametrically opposed to the then dominant versions of bush which presented the bush as the bearer of the heroic, mateship valuing Australian man. Baynton's bush is not only an alternative version, but also a damning comment on Australian society at the end of the nineteenth century. Louisa Lawson's essay "The Australian Bush-Woman" presents a feminist comment by one of the leading figures of the Women Movement on the state of colonial Australia. The presentation of this material leads me to argue that women offered material which could have been used to narrate some alternative version of Australia into being.

Many contemporary essays on Australian cultural studies employ the bushman ethos as a conceptual framework to account for the Australian debate on national identity. They employ the bushman ethos as a concept against which other versions of Australian identity were created. However, the growing concern for Aboriginal issues, which takes into account Aboriginal presence as a contemporary and historical influence on the formation of national identity, pushes the bushman ethos to the margins of the debate; a welcome move away from the ethnocentric view on Australian history. It is not the white man's characteristics acquired through the hard battle with the land which should be taken to define the national character but the white man's treatment of Indigenous people throughout the founding period. This treatment is mostly characterised through the use of violence. Violence against Aborigines, violence against women, and violence as employed in making the land suitable to man's use, which Kay Schaffer identifies as raping the land (*Women and the Bush* 84), constitute crucial ingredients in the founding years of Australia. Accounts of physical and emotional violence against women, with occasional deadly consequences, can be found in Barbara Baynton's short stories. I believe that the current preoccupation of cultural studies with Indigenous issues rightly relegates the bushman to the margins of the national identity debate and creates the colonial Australian man as an actor devoid of any heroic characteristics. Sad or threatening as it may seem to many contemporary Australians, who take their pride from identifying generally with the bushman, this development moves the nation's consciousness towards issues which, if addressed intellectually and politically, will contribute to a more honest and inclusive discussion of Australia's origins. I employ the bushman as a point of departure against whom I will discuss alternative versions of colonial identity as presented by

colonial women writers. Their accounts will support the relegation of the bushman and the characteristics he stands for to the margins of the debate on national identity.

In contemporary Australia, Aboriginal issues now form the main axis on which Australian identity is debated and negotiated. Additionally, the notion of land has been crucial in the construction of a cultural identity. Aboriginal tribes, as the original possessors of the Australian land with a spiritual connection to it, and invading white settlers, who subjugated the land to their use, form the two main groups in the contest over the land. It is at this point that my thinking as a cultural geographer comes into practise, adding a geographic dimension to the historical and literary approach. In the beginning of white settlement land was regarded as an empty space, which was soon filled with European ways of living, thinking, and seeing. It was acted upon and regarded as an influence on the Australian psyche. I want to find out whether and how land, as colonial/colonised space, was represented and perceived in Barbara Baynton's and Tasma's work and how their approach to land differed from dominant version.

Before proceeding with a historical outline, it is necessary to address Aboriginal issues in the nineteenth century. It is without doubt that Australia was founded on genocide, destroying many Aboriginal societies and that the history of genocidal practices[2] continues well into the twenty-first century (Watson 174). As long as Aboriginal people have to live their lives according to European customs and within European structures imposed on them, Australia cannot call itself postcolonial or even just. White women settlers carry a double burden. While the early feminist approaches portrayed women as more humane towards Aborigines than men, white women, nevertheless, hold a contested position as women within patriarchal structures and women as settler-invader. I share Jackie Huggins' view that European women participated in the colonisation process, thus they actively took part in genocidal actions against Aboriginal people (14). Although some of women's literature suggests a high degree of empathy, understanding, interest, and a bonding along the gender axis which was stronger than racial differences, colonial women were still the helpmates of their husbands, often treating Aboriginal servants worse than their animals.[3] Laura Donaldson identifies women's position along the gender as well as race axis in the context of colonial enterprise as an important constellation in nineteenth-century and contemporary discourse, she suggests: "Precisely *because* of their contradictory social positioning, the differences

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[2] These practices not only encompass physical extinction of Aborigines, certainly nobody in today's Australia kills Aboriginal people. But institutional and cultural genocide can be spoken of when groups if Indigenous people are forced to comply to structures, such as law or government, imposed by the coloniser.
[3] For a detailed description see accounts of Aboriginal servants working on stations in Jackie Huggins' *Sister Girl.*

within themselves, the women of colonial Australia illuminate some of the most complex historical and theoretical issues of the imperialist project" (70). It is at this intersection that this work tries to shed some light on the complex "historical and theoretical issues." If nations are imagined and constructed communities, I want to set out and imagine for myself a different course of the nineteenth century in colonial Australia. I want to re-imagine and re-construct women's participation towards nation formation and national identity. I want to present the whole picture, male and female inputs, male and female worlds of activity, creativity and experience, echoing historian Marilyn Lake that it is time to move on beyond gender segregated research to think in terms of one world and one history which is constituted of different fragments; Lake concludes, "For just as women's history cannot be fruitfully written without reference to men, neither can men's history be properly written without reference to men's relation with women" (116).

As a woman of European heritage, I can claim a certain distance to Australian discourses but, as a student of Geography and English Studies at a German University, I am socialised by and into Western European thought and cannot claim a distance to European and American discourses on culture, ethnicity, and gender. Although trying to be objective, intellectually multidimensional, and open, I will never be an Aboriginal woman nor will I ever understand what makes Aboriginality. With this in mind, I have decided against following up the axis of race as a central element in constructing a national identity in the nineteenth century. This historical approach would also overstretch the scope of this work. However, in order to present a complete picture as possible of current debates on national identity, I will take into account Aboriginal issues and Aboriginal opinions.

The remainder of my introduction gives a comprehensive outline of the major events in Australia's history which are essential for the understanding of my work. As with many historical events, the event of Australia's foundation has at least two versions. One emphasises the landing of the First Fleet in Port Jackson in 1788 as the founding moment, the other dates many thousand years back to a time when the vast continent was inhabited by Indigenous peoples, later to be known as Aborigines, with a distinct culture and a deep connection to the land (Mcintyre 1).

Historians today widely discuss the reasons for the decision of the British government in 1786 to dispose British criminals to the most remote corner on the globe and to found the penal settlement of New South Wales. Was the colony to be a strategic and commercial base or solely a dumping-ground for British criminals? Was it part of a grand imperial plan or mere

improvisation, or even coincidence? The reasons must have been convincing, for on 26 January 1788, the First Fleet of eleven ships arrived in Port Jackson, carrying officers, marines, and 736 convicts, of whom men outnumbered women by three to one. Upon its arrival, Captain Arthur Phillip hoisted the British flag and declared the colony and, in fact, the whole, yet unknown continent, British possession. But, the British were not the first Europeans to see the Australian continent. In 1642, Abel Tasman discovered Van Diemen's Land, which was later renamed Tasmania, and two years later parts of Australia's west coast, could be found as "New Holland" on maps. The most lasting European encounter with Australia, however, was Captain Cook's landing in 1770. Together with the botanist Joseph Banks, Cook explored and commented on the unknown continent, claimed the entire eastern coast for the British Crown and called it New South Wales, for its environment reminded him of the landscape of South Wales on the British Isles (Mcintyre 30).

Cook not only encountered foreign and unknown terrain, but also peoples whom he had not seen previously. His account of Aborigines reflected the view born during the European Enlightenment of the "noble savage:"

> From what I have said of the Natives of New Holland, they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon earth, but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturb'd by the Inequality of Condition; the Earth and Sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life. (qtd. in Macintyre 29)

As Captain Cook pointed out, Aborigines were dependent on the use of land and sea for their survival. This dependency did not lead Captain Cook to acknowledge some kind of Aboriginal possession of the land. On the contrary, he declared the land not belonging to anyone and settled it under the "terra nullius" doctrine for the British Crown.[4] Australia, as it came to be called, was British possession. Captain Cook was celebrated as the founding figure in Australian white history, even though his fame is slowly fading in the course of growing postcolonial awareness. In Aboriginal oral narratives, Captain Cook is portrayed as an intruder, violently disrupting the many thousands years of Aboriginal life and culture. Lacking Aboriginal evidence from the early years of European settlement, we cannot say how Aboriginal people experienced the European invasion. However, we can estimate that the

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[4] This doctrine was eventually overturned as late as 1992 with the High Court of Australia Mabo decision which is a legal recognition of Aboriginal ownership of the traditional land at the time of European settlement.

violation of sacred sites, the destruction of the environment and the Aboriginal habitat, the extinction of thousands of people through diseases and murder, and the European determination to replace one culture with another have left traumatic memories which influence the present and will also influence the future (Mcintyre 30-35).

The early years of European settlement were hard and difficult. Food shortages were experienced throughout since crops were difficult to grow, and ships with food supplies did not reach the colony. A second settlement was established at Norfolk Island in 1790, where, according to Captain Cook's reports, an abundance of the precious materials timber and flax grew which were in high demand by the British Navy for masts, ropes, and sailcloth. The hastiness of the establishment of the second settlement at Norfolk Island supports the economic reasons for colonising Australia. In 1803, the settlements of Van Diemen's Land, near present-day Hobart and Port Phillip Bay, near present-day Melbourne, were established. Van Diemen's Land experienced the most brutal aspects of its history in the first fifty years of its settlement. Not only was it the site of ferocious secondary punishment, but also the site of the violent extinction of Aboriginal people who called the island their home sixty thousand years prior to European invasion. When transportation to Van Diemen's Land ceased in 1855, the colony renamed itself Tasmania in order to cast off the dark traits of the penal past. 1829 saw the establishment of the fourth settlement in the west at Swan River, which is today known as Western Australia; 1836 was the year of the establishment of South Australia, the first and only convict-free colony. By the time the gold rush swapped the south-east of the continent in the early 1850s, the colony of Victoria with its capital Melbourne was politically founded; Melbourne itself was established in the early 1830s as an illegal trading post but was officially recognised by the colonial government in 1836 (Mcintyre 109-111).

The early decades of colonial life were witness to a nation being established. Convicts, as well as a growing number of free immigrants, carved the colony into existence. Clearing and farming the land, and the introduction of social and technical infrastructure were the main preoccupations of the convicts, who mostly came from the British working and under-class, and the members of the ruling class, who modelled their behaviour as well as the institutions on the British model. British textile industries were in urgent need of wool, which was provided by the Australian market. In fact, by the 1850s half of Britain's imported wool was delivered from Australia. The wool industry was established as the main generator of national wealth (Mcintyre 40-42). The gold rush marked Victoria's development into a populous and prosperous colony. It saw a great influx of people from Britain, but also immigrants from America, Germany, France, Italy, and China. Forty thousand Chinese gold-diggers made up

the greatest number of foreigners on the gold fields and in the whole of Australia for the subsequent century. Despite a multinational reality on the diggings, their presence was subject to racially motivated violence on the gold-fields, and their distinctive appearance, language and customs led to hostility in towns; major race riots occurring in 1857 Victoria and 1861 in New South Wales. Black Australia was violently turned white in the first fifty years of white settlement and the upsurge of racism on the gold diggings ensured that it remained white. It manifested Australia's claim to whiteness and invested the emerging nationalism with a new element, that of racism (Hodges 8). The gold diggings were also a masculine place; most of the adventurers and fortune seeking individuals were men. The colony of Victoria grew from 80 000 people in 1851 to half a million in 1861. The gold rush strengthened the middle-class and brought about social and cultural changes through the foundation of universities, museums, and public libraries. It manifested itself in the public arena through the erection of fine and representative buildings in the city centres. The cities expanded with the introduction of tramways which made it possible for affluent Melbournians or Sydneysiders to reside in palace-like houses in lofty suburbs.

The next three decades leading up to the 1880s were marked by a time of prosperity and social and economic development in all colonies; this period is portrayed in Tasma's novel *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill.* The construction of roads, railways, and the telegraph system enabled the colonies to foster economic links with one another but also with the Empire. News, people, and goods were subject to faster movement and exchange. The depression of 1890 brought a halt to this progress; wool prices declined and several major banks collapsed. A severe seven-year drought starting in 1895 brought great suffering over the pastoral and agricultural industries with high rates of unemployment and subsequent strikes. A rise of socialist parties and a growing nationalism were observed in this strained atmosphere. By the 1890s most of Australia's population was Australian-born with a growing number of Australians engaging in the production of art and literature which was geared towards the local market. The "Heidelberg School" of painting with its most popular representatives Frederick McCubbin and Tom Roberts, as well as the writers of the *Bulletin* like Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson, and Francis Furphy, were said to present Australia as it was really like through genuine Australian eyes; the *Bulletin* was established as the voice of the radical and nationalist young Australians who longed for an independent Australian nation. A national legend, hailing a set of virtues associated with the itinerant male worker of the bush, emerged and exercised a powerful hold on subsequent generations. Simultaneously, in the midst of the depression new industries appeared, such as the local publishing industry,

which enabled national and international spread of literary productions. One such production was the first Australian feminist magazine the *Dawn*, founded by the feminist Louisa Lawson during the emerging Women Movement. Its calls for female suffrage were heard in subsequent years. In 1901 the colonies of Australia united to form the Commonwealth of Australia granting women the right to vote in federal matters. According to historians,[5] by this time the "typical" Australian was associated with the pioneer, the gold-digger, or the bushman; three masculine concepts which made it difficult for female, Aboriginal, and immigrant Australians to associate with their own history and the history of their country.

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[5] Most notably Richard White, Vance Palmer, and Russell Ward.

# Theoretical Background

As apparent in the introduction, this work is positioned at the intersection between cultural, historical, literary, and - marginally - geographical studies. It is beyond the scope of this work to account for the multitude of theoretical concepts and methodologies which are employed in the particular disciplines. However, it is possible to identify a limited number of concepts which build the theoretical background of this work. These concepts are frequently debated in and draw from cultural and postcolonial studies but they are also recurrently utilised in everyday speech. Popular terms, due to frequent usage, are allocated various meanings by different schools of thought or are imprecisely used in everyday speech. This work is preoccupied with textual productions of women expressing a certain version of nation and national identity in a newly emerging settler nation. It is therefore essential to define the meanings of these terms as used in the context of this work. The recurring terms which form the theoretical skeleton are: nation, national identity, gender, culture, cultural productions, and settler nation.

## 1      Nation and National Identity

Despite its omnipresent usage in cultural, political, historical, and postcolonial studies, Paul James identifies the nation as "the one most untheorised concept of the world" (2). Benedict Anderson adds: "It is hard to think of any political phenomenon which remains so puzzling and about which there is less analytical consensus. No widely accepted definition exists" (*Mapping the Nation* 1). But while "proper" theory is lacking, cultural critics have provided a range of understandings of nation and national identity which nourished cultural studies and which inform the theoretical background of this work. The cultural critic Homi K. Bhabha edited the influential book *Nation and Narration* in 1990 and called his introductory essay "Narrating the Nation." This phrase also signifies the theoretical approach taken in this work. Written and fictional - i.e. imagined - accounts of people's lives, such as short stories, essays, poems, and novels, all present different versions and different readings of human experience. Literary works are products of certain times and mirror the writer's reflections of historical and social circumstances. Narratives, as cultural representations of social life, also offer different versions of social conditions. The multitude of narratives, as manifestations of

people's knowledge, therefore, constitute "the nation's 'coming into being' as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social *life* rather than the discipline of social *polity* […]" (Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* 2). The centrality of narrations in the formation of nation and national identity is exemplified in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. He states, "that Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which – it came into being" (*Imagined Communities* 19). Thus, nation and national identity as collective phenomena, are not informed by political decisions and processes but rather by the literal creation and recreation of human existence. Following this idea, Anthony D. Smith argues "that we cannot understand nations and nationalism simply as an ideology or form of politics but must treat them as cultural phenomena as well" (*National Identity* vii). Benedict Anderson understands the nation as "an imagined community" and imagination is fed by narration. Engaging with narratives enables people who have not met previously and who live large distances apart to feel an abstract connection to each other and to the places and landscapes encountered in their countries (Anderson 6).

According to Bhabha, nations come into being and represent themselves through long and continuous narratives (1). As the Australian cultural critic Graeme Turner states "[Nations] take the form of never-ending stories" (*Nation, Culture, Text* 74). Hence, literary productions provide the material from which meanings are extracted to imagine a version or versions of a nation. A crucial influence on Bhabha's and Anderson's understandings of nation was exercised through the lecture "What is a nation?" by the French philosopher Ernest Renan which he delivered at the Sorbonne in March 1882. He postulated that "the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things" (qtd. in Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 11). The "things" individuals share, such as religion, race, language, or belonging to a dynasty, are all traits which characterise individuals but they do not pressure nations into being; as Renan puts it, they "invite people to unite, but [do] not force them to do so" (qtd. in Anderson, *Imagined Commnities* 16). Further, common experiences of suffering, hope, enjoyment, of sharing a past, and of having a vision for the future bind people together; Renan identifies shared suffering as the most binding element. Suffering, among other influences, can be found in the formation of the Australian nation, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Land exercises an important role in the creation of nations and the formation of national identities. It constitutes a binding element between the individual and the abstract notion of the nation by providing the play ground on and against which identity is negotiated.

Anthony Smith identifies land, the well-defined territory, as an important element in the creation of nations. The territory has been acquired over time and is now possessed and owned. It is the place where heroes fought and myths are situated. The "homeland" in which rivers, lakes, mountains, and cities are worshiped and elevated. All these peculiarities make the land unique and enable people to identify with it. The land, upon a nation is defined, also sets the frame for inclusion and exclusion. It identifies members and imposes rights and duties upon them in exchange for belonging to the nation. It excludes people from those rights and duties thus from being members of a particular national community; it states who is "in" and who is "out" (Smith, *National Identity* 11).

When nations are narrated into being, when they are constructed along cultural lines, it must follow that also "[n]ational identity is a cultural construction" (Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 8). Anthony D. Smith identifies national identity in the contemporary world as a global condition and an explosive force which exhibits different features in different parts of the world (*National Identity* x); he defines national identity as follows:

> What we mean by 'national' identity involves some sense of political community, however tenuous. A political community in turn implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community. It also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they *feel* they belong. (9, emphasis added)

This quote resonates Anderson's understanding of nation and also addresses the emotional aspect of belonging to an entity and identifying with it. Smith further identifies the following elements as the fundamental features of national identity: a historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories; a common, mass public culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, and a common economy with territorial mobility for members (*National Identity* 14). From these features it follows that national identity is not only abstract but also complex. Smith emphasises that national identity is "fundamentally multidimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element, even by particular factions of nationalists, nor can it be swiftly induced in a population by artificial means" (*National Identity* 17). This multidimensional approach to national identity negates one-dimensional readings of nations. By attesting and calling for a multifaceted reading of national identity, it represents the theoretical backbone of this work.

National identity, as a collective phenomenon, not only serves to bind people, who have not met previously, together; it also serves specific needs of groups or individuals. Although Smith's approach to national identity is contemporary, it can be applied to explain the formative period in Australian history. The emergence of a national identity brings about the "national," the individual who identifies with the values constructed as the national identity. This, according to Smith, is achieved through standardised public mass education (*National Identity* 17). Without a compulsory and public education system in the nineteenth century, other forms of education were popular. People turned to journals, books, magazines, and newspapers in order receive information and form an opinion. Shared values were transported not via the education system but via lively discourses and frequent publications in journals of the time, such as the *Bulletin* and the *Dawn.* Smith further adds:

> A sense of national identity provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world, through the prism of collective personality and its distinctive culture. It is through a shared, unique culture that we are enabled to know 'who we are' in the contemporary world. By rediscovering that culture we 'rediscover' ourselves, the 'authentic self', or so it has appeared to many divided and disoriented individuals who have had to contend with the vast changes and uncertainties of the modern world. (*National Identity* 17)

This quote further reinforces the adaptability of Smith's thoughts to nineteenth-century Australia. Immigrants, ex-convicts, and Australian-born men and women not only knew about a different, i.e. British, reality; most of them had first-hand experiences of it. Immigrants and ex-convicts were born on the other side of the world; those born in the colony grew up with the knowledge of distant relatives and stories from abroad. This duality introduces a need for definition and location of the individual in the world. In the Australian context, this need was taken up by the radical nationalists of the late nineteenth century who proclaimed Australians with a collective personality and distinct culture, which they located in the character of the roaming worker in the bush. In the same space and context was the "authentic self" to be found which offered consolation to the "divided and disoriented individual." One does not have to be a psychologist to imagine the degree of disorientation among colonial people who found themselves - some voluntarily, others forced - sixteen thousand miles from what they previously called home.

Anderson emphasises the fact that people feel that their membership to the nation is "natural" and not chosen (Yuval-Davis 15). It is suggested here that there is no inborn feeling of belonging to a cultural entity, i.e. to a nation. Just as a child is not born with a specific

language, it is not born with a specific national identity. However, as the linguist Noam Chomsky stipulated in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1967), a child is born with a universal grammar, i.e. a set of rules organising language, which enables any language to dock on to, presuming the child is exposed to this particular language. Following this line of argument, it is proposed that individuals have an inborn longing for belonging. But what they belong to is learned and constructed over years of exposure and imitation. Just like the German language is acquired, so is German national identity; (the same can be applied to all other languages and cultures). Languages can be learned, they can also be forgotten; they can be loved and hated. Languages serve to make ourselves understood, to position us among others; they help us to make sense of ourselves and others. The same applies to national identities.  Just as languages experience attrition, so do national identities. Both are fluid concepts, both innate and learned. National identity is a form of cultural identity. Stuart Hall tells us that "cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories". He adds:

> But, like everything which is historical, they [cultural identities] undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essential past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past … identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 394)

## 2      Literature, Gender, and the Idea of the Australian Nation

The "narratives of the past" are the focus of discussion in the following paragraph. They inform the nation which is a cultural construct consisting of cultural discourses. Discourse is understood as presented by Foucault, as a system of statements within which the world can be known. Reality, i.e. the world, is not "out there," rather, the world is created through discourse. Within the boundaries of this discourse, writers and readers come to an understanding of themselves, of their relation to one another and of their place in the world (Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts* 71). Discourse is also a manifestation of power relations regarding the production and distribution of knowledge. Those with power control "what is known and the way it is known" (Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts* 72). Literature, symbols, rituals, art, etc. form the stages upon which the discourse is carried out. The discourse on

national identity takes place in the public sphere; it is an issue of politics, literature, societies, and associations.

Women's exclusive location in the private sphere in the nineteenth century, both within literary productions and the political and social world, excluded them from the public sphere, therefore from participation in the discourse on national identity. They were deprived from any power in shaping the discourse and therefore the national identity (Yuval-Davis 5). The position taken in this work is that gender does affect the nature of national relations, that whether an individual is male or female will determine his or her involvement in national processes. Anthias and Yuval-Davis identify following types of female involvement in the national project: as biological reproducers of the nation, as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups, as central participants in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture, as signifiers of national difference – as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction, and transformation of national categories and, finally, as participants in national, economic, political, and military struggles (Walby 237). This multitude of roles presents different levels of women's engagement in the national project and it will be the aim of subsequent chapters to portray various levels of women's participation and experience.

Before proceeding with a discussion of female production of literary works and their engagement in the discussion on national identity, the term "gender" has to be explained as applied throughout this work. In the 1970s, English sociologist Ann Oakley established the distinction between "sex" as a natural, unchangeable, given and "gender" as a multitude of learned attitudes. "Sex" was associated with nature, while "gender" was allocated to the sphere of culture. In the 1980s this distinction was challenged by Australian feminists, who saw both "sex" and "gender" as subject to change. The gendered experiences of men and women, the feminine as well as the masculine, found entry into historical analysis. Furthermore, on the political level, feminists around the world started to challenge the public/private division which allocated women to the domestic sphere, thus making them politically irrelevant. "The personal is political" was the major slogan of the times giving importance to power relations in the private sphere. "Gender" is not used politically in this work, it is rather an indicator for different ways of seeing and experiencing the world. It is not used exclusively to account for women's experiences; men have gender, too (Magarey, *Passions* 11). Men and women perceive the world differently in their roles and capacities as men and women and give rise to different representations of their perceived realities. Bringing together both ways of seeing, thinking, and acting brings us closer to a whole picture of

historical as well as current accounts of the world we live in. The post-structuralist or post-modernist notion that gender does not exist is refused. Women are as diverse as men and men are as diverse as women. There is not one category of "woman." Women experience the world very differently from one another as well as very similar. This multitude of experiences is mirrored in the many definitions and discussions of "feminism:" "Post-structuralist feminism," "Post-modern feminism," "Postcolonial feminism" as well as the emergence of "third-wave" feminism at the end of the twentieth century (Magarey, *Passions* 12). So, even if diverse, Magarey proposes a definition of "feminism" which gives credit to the diversity encountered within feminist discourse. She says:

> Feminism is an amorphous, shifting collection of ideas, theories and programs of action based on an apprehension that however differently being female is inflicted in different circumstances, some women, from time to time, make common cause to organise and campaign around a specific sex-based grievance or vision, or to celebrate women's creativity and energy. (*Passions* 12)

This work contributes to the celebration of "women's creativity and energy" and in doing so makes "common cause" with other women, i.e. other female researchers. Additionally, the following definition is drawn on:

> […] feminism involves a sense of and concern with women's oppression, an interest and engagement in addressing, altering, or reforming it, and a concern about women's claims to full citizenship and to recognition of their social, economic, cultural, and political participation. (*Australian Feminism* x)

Hence, while refusing to follow a certain strand in feminism, this work is positioned within a broad and flexible framework of feminist ideas. It starts from the assumption that in the time span investigated women faced oppression on various societal levels, which resulted in women's exclusion from societal developments. It assumes that if women had not been oppressed over the course of history, the Australian nation and the idea of Australianness would have developed differently. Ignorance of women's literary productions and their social activities is a form of oppression which is explained, addressed, and attempted to reverse in the course of this work. The literary production of national character implies agency.[6] Some individuals act as the producers of literature and, consequently, produce a version of national identity, while others are excluded or positioned at the margins. Edward Said pointed out that

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[6] Agency is understood as the ability to perform or initiate an action. Whether an act is carried out freely or determined by the ways an individual's identity has been constructed is the occupation of contemporary postcolonial theory. (Ashcroft et al. 8)

"culture is a system of discriminations and evaluations […] it also means that culture is a system of exclusion" (11). In the Australian context, many women writers of the nineteenth century were excluded from the discourse on the nation due to the stark influences exercised by the *Bulletin* school of the 1890s on history and literary criticism. Benedict Anderson states that "until recently theoretical writing on nationalism ignored, overlooked, or marginalised the issue of gender" (*Mapping the Nation* 12). It is the aim of the subsequent chapters to place those marginalised producers of national identity at the centre of the debate by exploring their contribution to the production of culture and the influences they exercised upon nation and national identity. With this in mind, Anthias' and Yuval-Davis' contemporary approach to gender and nation can be applied to a historical analysis of gender representation and gender relations and how those shaped the notion of nation and national identity. Although women's writing was relegated to the margins, and women lacked basic human and political rights, they nevertheless participated in "the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture," albeit in varying ways. Additionally, women served as "as signifiers of national difference" (Walby 237). At the end of the nineteenth century, the emergence of the Women Movement with the propagation of the "New Woman" presented a gendered experience of colonial life which was diametrically opposed to the model of masculinity and femininity propagated in literature and politics. The "New Woman" was to be found in articles written by women with titles such as "Is Marriage a Failure?" The "New Woman" rode a bicycle, smoke cigarettes, dressed rationally, and was concerned about the double standard of sexual morality. She engaged in political activities and was to be found among the members of various Women Associations. She was publicly active and outspoken; the writer Catherine Spence proclaimed confidently "I am a New Woman, and I know it," (qtd. in Magarey, *Passions* 43) while another writer, Rosa Praed, similarly attested: "I am a new woman, and I know it. I mean an awakened woman […]" (qtd. in Spender 180). These different levels of experience influence "the construction, reproduction and transformation of national categories" (Walby 237). Women at the end of the nineteenth century did participate in national, economic, and political struggles as writers, politicians, workers, and activists giving expression to their interests and needs.

"Literature" is understood as a set of texts, arising from certain social and political circumstances at a specific time, which mirror these times and circumstances in which they were produced. In this way, these texts offer reflections on the Australian "character" at a given time. They offer different versions of, or comments on, the social and political facts

they depict. Women in the Australian literary tradition have been constituted as "the Other"[7] against whom the masculine version of the "typical" male Australian could be established. According to Hodge and Vishra "[h]e encodes a class, race and gender identity which classifies women, Aborigines and new immigrants as "unAustralian", a potent fact which is immediately recognised by all those who are subjected to this symbolic annihilation" (xv).

The foundations for this masculine version of Australianness are said to have developed in the literature of the late nineteenth century; a literature written, published, edited, and read by and for men. At the same time, women writers, editors, and readers were occupied with presenting a different version of the young settler nation. Their version presented Australian women as independent and strong and offered reconciliatory attempts at bridging the gap between the old and the new world. Feminist analysis is thus drawn upon to contest the "legendary" nineties as well as to account for women's contribution towards nation building.

## 3 Mateship, Settler, and Settler Colony

The concept of "mateship," linked to Australian national identity, is a recurrent concern in Australian literature. In fact, it has been elevated to a key ingredient of the national identity in various discourses on the subject.[8] The word "mate" denotes a close friend or habitual companion who is the main company of the man in the bush. The concept "mateship" indicates a whole set of values and behaviour between men of the bush, based on equality and fellowship. Historical origins of the concept can be assigned to the pioneers and their experiences on the vast and unknown continent where only solidarity among the newly arrived secured survival, as well as to the Eureka stockade of 1854.[9] Subsequent literary

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[7] Feminist theory, influenced by Simone de Beauvoir, has identified how male dominated societies treat and construct women as the Other in relation to men. "Man" represents the neutral and the positive; he is seen to designate humanity in general, whereas "woman" is the minority, representing the negative (Simons 141-143). In post-colonial theory, the term "other", with a small "o", is used to designate the colonised others who are identified on grounds of their difference to the centre. The mastery of these others is anticipated by the coloniser. The "Other", with a capital "O", can be seen as the imperial discourse or the empire itself. The colonised subject arrives at his/her own identity in opposition to the empire; is its "Other". Both "others" are prominent in the formation of an identity. The other is the excluded and marginalised subject of the colonising Other (Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts* 169-172). To avoid confusion, I will use the term with a capital "O" as applied in feminist theory.

[8] See *The Australian Legend*, *Inventing Australia*, and Manning Clark's *A History of Australia*.

[9] In the Eureka Stockade gold-diggers protested against the police force who collected a monthly licence fee from the miners. When gold became harder to extract miners joined together to protest against the unjust and too

manifestations of the mate as an Australian hero, as was the case in the pages of the *Bulletin*, contributed to the elevation of this figure to a national hero and his and his mates' characteristics were associated with national characteristics. Masculinity, as understood in the late nineteenth century, was cemented as one prominent trait of the new Australian. The exclusive nature of the concept was contested by feminist, Aboriginal and postcolonial scholars in the last three decades of the twentieth century.

The terms "settler" and "settler colony" are appropriated from a postcolonial perspective. According to the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, a settler is "one who settles in a country; a colonist. […] Generally: One who settles in a place as a resident" (qtd. in Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts* 210). It is the European migrant leaving his mother country for the colony with the intention to remain who is regarded as the colonist in colonial discourse. Critics have identified the settler as a "settler-invader" to emphasise the cruel impact of the settler on the colonised population. A settler colony is characterised through the occupation of land by European colonists who overwhelmingly dispossessed and conquered the Indigenous population and transplanted a European civilisation with its political, social, and cultural institutions and manners of European style. The white settler/invader forms the majority population and dominates the Indigenous population through armed conflict or political institutions. The settler carries out the power of the colonising mother country but at the same time experiences discrimination himself as a colonial subject. This duality of being colonised as well as the coloniser forges a new distinct identity which grows from the engagement with the new environment and opposition from the mother country and the native population. Critics engage on different levels with these cultures; some stress their guilty nature (Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts* 210-212). The complex nature of this discussion will be presented in the chapter "Contemporary Discourses on Australian National Identity." White British settlers did not simply arrive in Australia; Captain Cook did not "discover" Australia, rather he paved the way for subsequent invaders. Today, for the Aboriginal community, Captain Cook constitutes the figure of an invader. According to Kossew, white women were assigned various roles in the colonising process: maternal imperialist, pioneer woman, settler-invader woman, white woman. Further, she acknowledges that while this terminology is manifold it fails to capture women's position in the web of racial and gendered realities in the nineteenth century. Kossew suggests the term "unsettled woman" or "unsettling woman" to denote her complex position (7). Colonial settler-women were not only oppressed but also oppressors. Their

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high fee. Fifty gold-diggers were killed in the protest, which eventually secured the minors a right to vote and lowered the fee. The Eureka Stockade is remembered as a success for democratic reform.

realities as settler-women were different from settler-men as well as different from the realities of Aboriginal women with whom they created a shared history of suffering. Robin Visel reminds us of the white woman's dual position in the colonising process in that "although she [the woman coloniser] too is oppressed by white men and patriarchal structures, she shares in the power and guilt of the colonist" (qtd. in Kossew 9). An alternative reading of the "unsettled" as well as "unsettling" woman is presented in Barbara Baynton's short story "Squeaker's Mate," in which the "unsettling practice" and "unsettled nature" of the woman stems from her location in the bush society and her position to her husband. The story will be discussed at detail in the chapter "Barbara Baynton's Bush Horrors in 'Squeaker's Mate.'"

# Contemporary Discourses on Australian National Identity

This work is occupied with the emergence of a national identity over the course of the nineteenth century with respect to the agents who were involved in this process and those who were excluded from it. Before proceeding to the historical dimension, the current state of debate on the Australian nation and its identity is presented. The problems and tensions these discussions identify will show the necessity to go back to the time when the nation was founded and grapple with the complexities, tensions, and problems encountered in colonial discourse in order to identify possible sources for Australia's contemporary problematic approach to national identity. This chapter begins by looking at one "official" version of Australian identity, i.e. the version presented in the authoritative *Oxford's Companion to Australian History*. This definition is taken as a starting point for further exploration of the varying discourses and views that emerged in the last decades in various academic fields. The multitude of discourses reflects the multidimensional approach taken to national identity; it exemplifies that national identity is not a one-dimensional, static construct but rather open and subject to ongoing negotiation and contestation by the various groups which make up the collectivity of the nation. Cultural, postcolonial, historical, and feminist studies are drawn upon to present the diverse engagement with contemporary Australian identity. The divisions between the fields are not clear cut since disciplines borrow from one another and are bound by similar theoretical approaches. This chapter also highlights Aboriginal presence and influence on past and present Australia and acknowledges the necessity to include Aboriginal voices to the notion of Australian identity.

## 1    The Oxford Companion to Australian History

The current edition of *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* presents the Australian character as something attained and renegotiated, something that is derived from the past but still to be discovered. It states that colonial Australians defined themselves in relation to Britain. Paradoxically, shearers, swagmen, and also swagwomen,[10] three distinctively Australian concepts, are singled out as having played a key role in the

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[10] I did not come across this term during my research for this paper, except in the Oxford Companion. To me, it constitutes a half-hearted and naïve attempt to include female agency into the formative period by assigning women a role they most likely did not fulfil.

development of the Australian national identity. These colonial figures are said to represent the egalitarian and democratic aspect of the Australian character. They are celebrated in the works of colonial artists such as the painter Tom Roberts and the poet Henry Lawson. Additionally, the 1950s historian Russell Ward is mentioned who attributed the emergence of mateship, i.e. the great loyalty and camaraderie among shearers, to the poor working conditions in the shearing sheds of the Australian outback. It strikes as surprising that after decades of distinguished and multifaceted academic enterprise, the contemporary definition of national identity promotes a male-oriented and bush-positioned version of what it means to be Australian.

## 2       Australian Cultural Studies on Australianness

Cultural studies present a coherent, though diverse, discipline which "takes as its object the study of how individuals make sense of, and sometimes modify, their position in society" (Probyn 56). But the term is also used to refer to a range of progressive theories which are found among postcolonial, feminist, or Aboriginal studies. Current debates in Australian cultural studies present a different understanding of and a different approach to national identity than the one presented in *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*. According to the cultural critic Graeme Turner, "the category 'nation' is fundamental in a great number of cultural essays, […] [It] is crucially active - powerfully overdetermining but also available for intervention and strategic mobilisation" (*Nation, Culture, Text* 74).

Australia as a political unit has existed for just over one century. Nation formation is not finished but an ongoing process; the Australian nation not a fixed but a fluid entity. National identity and the state of the nation are constantly discussed, challenged, and re-negotiated, it is permanently in the process of being imagined; i.e. written about, interpreted, and discussed. As mentioned above, cultural essays on nation and identity are written from different perspectives, reflecting the various approaches one can take towards the discussion, serving varying needs but above all mirroring the many existing groups which live in Australia, whose members give "Australianness" a multifaceted dimension but who have struggled over times to "become" and "feel" Australian. Among these members are Indigenous people, immigrants from all parts of the world, and women.

Political decisions and the political climate are important factors influencing the nature of the nation. During the Whitlam government in the early 1970s, Australia, as one of the first

countries in the world, established multiculturalism as official state policy. From the 1980s onwards, ethnic communities were encouraged to attend to their cultures, to nurture them and not to assimilate to the dominant anglocentric culture as was required of them on their arrival in Australia after World War II. Among others, literary productions in languages other than English as well as studies in Aboriginal history and women's issues were encouraged, resulting in critiques of Australia's mono-cultural and masculine nature. In the early 1990s the then Prime Minister Paul Keating even went so far as to announce Australia as belonging to Asia, which did not provoke any form of public outrage. In his "Creative Nation" speech of 1994, however, Keating attributed Australians with exceptional skills and spurred a form of nationalism which defined itself on Anglocentricism and resembled the excluding and narrow-minded nationalism of the 1950s. The comeback of Keating's "*Anglo*-nationalism" provided the politician Pauline Hanson and her nationalist and racist "One Nation" party to catch on racist feelings present in the Australian public, making her a rival for Prime Minister John Howard in the 1998 elections. At the end of the twentieth century the word "multiculturalism" was lacking from government policies and was somehow relegated to the margins of academic debates. The same can be observed with attempts on reconciliation with Aborigines. Reconciliatory policies which were positively tackled under Paul Keating had been strictly abandoned by John Howard (Wimmer 10-12).

What do cultural studies make of the tensions which emerge when it comes down to nationalism and national identity? What explanations do they offer? After the rise of "One Nation" and the Liberal-National coalition under Howard in the mid-1990s, the cultural critic Graeme Turner felt the need to reassess his book *Making it National*[11] in order to account for contemporary versions of nationalism in Australian society. In "*Making it National* Reconsidered," he borrowed from postcolonial literary studies the notion of "hybridity" to account for a critique of singular versions of nationalism promoted by nationalist politicians and to support multicultural constitutions of national identity which are based on difference and which undeniably constitute contemporary Australian culture. The notion of hybridity, thus challenges Eurocentric notions of nation by celebrating differences within a nation and accounting contradictions, ambivalences, and contrasts as the founding elements of new nations. But outside postcolonial literary studies, i.e. in Australia, where the simple version of national identity survives, it is impossible for the concept of hybridity to operate as a nation forming device. This is exemplified by Turner through contrasting and comparing the

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[11] Graeme Turner *Making it National* Reconsidered: The Uses of Nationalism in Contemporary Australia, in *Australian Nationalism Reconsidered*, p. 18-28.

political agendas and visions of the Prime Ministers Howard and Keating. Keating saw nationalism as a political strategy for legitimising governmental policies, not as a historically attained set of values worth preserving. National identity was created by different groups to serve a governmental vision of Australia. This opportunistic understanding offered previously marginalised groups the opportunity to take part in the nation formation process. Aborigines, women, and immigrant groups experienced many benefits allocated towards the persuasion of their interest and rights; multiculturalism, ethnic, and cultural diversity came to represent Keating's version of the "postmodern republic." On the contrary, John Howard offered a more traditional view on Australia wanting to make Australians feel "comfortable and relaxed" (qtd. in Turner, *Reconsidered* 25) about themselves. This implies that Australians felt uneasy prior to the 1996 elections due to the liberal and encouraging attitudes and policies geared towards Aborigines, immigrants, and women. Howard identified and consequently used for his benefit a feeling of anxiety, of loss of stability, among the Australian public. He addressed it in his conservative and nostalgic vision, in which only homogeneity and the return to simple and "honest" values could return stability and a feeling of ease and relaxation (Turner, *Reconsidered* 21-25). Graeme Turner concludes on the current state of Australian nationalism:

> Howard's nationalism has put the tape on rewind, back to a time when national identity was singular, when homogeneity was the agreed objective of immigration policy, and when Australians could all be comfortable and relaxed about who they were. But this attempt to reactivate the consensus of the past inevitably reproduces the exclusions which made it possible. As a result, no-one seems comfortable and relaxed about national identity at the moment. (*Reconsidered* 26)

Turner calls for an ongoing preoccupation with the hybrid elements in Australian society at present to create or re-create a multifaceted version of Australian identity in place of an exclusive and nationalistic past and present.

## 3      Aboriginal Voices on Australianness

One essential way to hybridise the discourse is to include Aboriginal voices. As already mentioned, race plays an important part in the discourse on Australian national identity. Throughout the nineteenth century Indigenous people formed the black "Other"

against which the white version of national identity was created. Jackie Huggins'[12] collection of articles in *Sister Girl*, in which she shares her opinions on mainstream feminism and in particular on white historians' writing of Indigenous history, provides input for including Aboriginal voices into the discourse on Australian national identity. Huggins' views represent how an Aboriginal woman sees herself and her wider community in Australia at the end of the twentieth century, rather than how others see her and her community. The collection, comprising sixteen essays written in the late 1980s and early 1990s, reflects the various types of injustices which Aborigines had to suffer under white domination. *Sister Girl* refrains from making explicit comments on Australian national identity, but from the recollection and stories it is possible to extract an understanding and a vision of the Australian nation which is placed here as a representation of Aboriginal voices.

As a historian and Aboriginal activist, Huggins believes in history's influence on contemporary lives. When she states that "we are all products of history" (2), she prompts Australians to take responsibility for what happened in the past since the past constitutes all aspects of present-day life. In Australia, all organisations governing people's lives, such as law, church, government, etc. were established under the white ideology of colonisation and were modelled on western European ideas and British institutions. A European way of thinking and acting was first introduced and then imposed on a culture, which lived under very different organising principles in the time prior to white invasion. Land was taken away, Aboriginal people were taken as slaves, and tribes were made extinct, also the course of life changed for all Aborigines who were no longer able to continue living according to their traditions. They lost their traditional lands and were forced to work for the invader (Huggins 7). Through this, Aborigines also "contributed" to the establishment of white settlements. They worked as stockman, shearers, butchers, servants, housemaids, but also as members of the police force.[13] Aboriginal men were present in the bush carrying out tasks equal to the white bushman. Similarly, Aboriginal women often took on arduous work as shepherds or stockmen themselves or worked as domestic servants. Although life in the bush for whites was only possible through the subjugation and exploitation of Aboriginal labour, at the time of Huggins' writings no white history credited Aborigines with any form of contribution (Huggins 2). Furthermore, Aboriginal women were subject to sexual harassment and

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[12] Jackie Huggins, a member of the Bidjara and Birri Gubba Juru people, is an Aboriginal activist, historian, and cultural educator. She is also the Deputy Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit at the University of Queensland.

[13] This is impressively depicted in the movie *The Proposition* where the British-governed police force of a township in rural Queensland employs two Aboriginal men in order to deal with other Aborigines and to help with orientation in the outback.

exploitation of their bodies. They were in high demand by the European bushman as employees for they "would work all day in the saddle and all night in the swag" (Huggins 15). Many explorers were not only attracted to the bush by adventure and money but also by Aboriginal women; the explorer was soon to be known as the "sexplorer" (Huggins 15). Huggins further reports that the history of subjection, exploitation, and destruction of Aborigines and their culture did not cease with the nineteenth century coming to an end, but gave way for new policies and practices. Whole tribes were pushed off their traditional lands and placed onto missions or government reserves. Here, they were isolated and cut off from their culture and forced into a European lifestyle which pretended to serve Aboriginal communities but only  made it easier for officials to control and survey Aborigines. The fragmentation of Aboriginal culture made it impossible for Aboriginal people to continue with the oral tradition, the passing on of their culture and history from one generation to the next in the midst of close-knit communities. Communities were separated and the land on which Aboriginal history took place was no loner available (Huggins 38-39). Aboriginal men and women were in a position of complete powerelessness since all institutions were controlled by white men. Aboriginal women carried a double burden; they were exploited on the grounds of their gender and race; white men believed in their superiority over both women and black people. This led many white feminists to establish a bond between black and white women based on their shared experience of oppression and exploitation. Rosa Praed's character Mrs. Vallancy, in the novel *Policy and Passion* (1881), observes a common subjugation of white and Aboriginal women to the patriarchal order, she says: "After all, we white women are no better off than the lubras;[14] we are sold like them, and then we have to walk behind our lords and bear their burdens" (31). However, according to Jackie Huggins, any form of white women's identification with Aboriginal women only exemplifies the ignorance of the white woman with regard to her role in the colonising process. Despite patriarchal structures dominating white women's lives in colonial Australia, Huggins states:

> Australia was colonised on a racially imperialistic base and not on a sexually imperialistic base. White racial imperialist ideology granted all white women, however victimised by sexist oppression, the right to assume the role of oppressor in relation to Black men and Black women.(2)

White women's history of seeing themselves as the oppressed blinded women's visions for their own oppressing actions towards Aboriginal men and women. This, however, began to

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[14] Lubras: colonial term denoting Aboriginal women.

change in the 1990s. White feminism, as a white cultural product with an ideology grounded in western European ideas, contributed to the oppression of black women by applying white, middle-class values onto its research and onto Aboriginal women's lives. It will not be able to accommodate Aboriginal women's experiences of sexism until the inherent racism of white feminists is encountered and dealt with. In discussing racism, Huggins refers to the structures which "serve white women's needs but do not acknowledge Aboriginal women's needs. The discourse and the institutions are designed by whites for whites, blacks are excluded" (36).

What do these claims put forward by Jackie Huggins mean for modern Australia and its understanding of its own identity? First, it has to be acknowledged that Aboriginal people form a distinctive cultural group whose traditions are bound to die out if no measures are taken to acknowledge their distinct culture through recording oral histories and making "oral literature" known to a wider public. Then, it has to be recognised that Aborigines do have a close connection to their land and that it is land which strongly influences their identity. Hence, they have a right to ownership of their traditional land. Assimilation, as a widely-used policy for integrating Aboriginal people to the mainstream, has to be rejected as it does not account for the uniqueness and independence of Aboriginality with its capacity to enrich the whole society. Assimilation, which in the past has been carried out as the state policy regarding the treatment of Aborigines, must be categorically rejected as it forms "an act of genocide, far worse than any protection policies, far worse" (Huggins 139). Australia as a nation needs healing; it has to come to terms with its genocidal past. A growing number of publications deal with oppressions endured by Aborigines; many white historians tackle the topic in non-biased ways. The High Court Mabo decision has granted Aboriginal tribes ownership rights to their traditional lands. The introduction of the National Sorry Day with growing participation numbers suggest a growing interest and a growing willingness to ask for forgiveness thus, as Huggins hopefully proclaims, "[t]he healing has begun" (140).

## 4 Postcolonial Approaches to Australianness

One publication which contributes to "the healing" is *Dark Side of the Dream* by the postcolonial scholars Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, in which the authors tackle the complex issues of modern Australia. They aim to construct a national identity on the grounds of its unjust imperial foundation whose beneficiaries, i.e. white Australians, have not yet referred to this injustice or proposed an alternative version for their legitimacy which accounts for black

suffering and the genocidal nature of Australian policies and actions throughout the last 200 years (x). They take into account textual productions by Aborigines or texts dealing with Aborigines. Their theoretical approach is postcolonial, assuming that European imperial aggression inaugurated processes which continue to affect present-day culture. This reflects Jackie Huggins' claim put forward in the previous paragraph. Present-day tensions can only be resolved through the inclusion of Aboriginal writers and how they see the world and how they account for their place in contemporary Australia. The postcolonial development in literature and culture helps to grapple with the complex issues constituting the complexities of the Australian identity. Although Aboriginal issues do not form the main axis of this work, academic treatment of Aboriginal issues and national identity reveals much about the prevailing stereotypes and dominant opinions present in Australian society which are important for the understanding of contemporary Australia. Hodge and Mishra identify the complexities of the Australian stereotype as

> the so-called "typical Australian," and the "typical" space that he occupies, the Australian Bush, or "outback." This figure is a Caucasian adult male, an itinerant rural worker of no fixed address. His values and forms of language and thought are widely claimed to represent Australian authenticity, as a touchstone of Australian identity. In this capacity he has been used as a yard-stick of Australianness in literature and other arts, as though truly Australian literature should be written by, for and about his character. (xv)

Postcolonial research identifies a male figure constructed in the nineteenth century, enshrined with a certain set of values, to present a figure for the nations' identification well into the twenty-first century. This male figure, which is located in the outback - beyond any sign of urbanised civilisation - is paradoxically understood as being "typical" for modern Australians. This, despite the fact that 85% of the population live in urban centres and only a small percentage of Australians ever "went bush." Classifying this male figure as Australian, disqualifies everything and everyone which he does not represent as "unAustralian;" hence women, Aborigines, new migrants (particularly Southern and Eastern European migrants after WWII and Asian migrants from the 1970s onward) are reduced to the "Other." This Australian male figure flees from women, the city and from intimate relationships; he escapes organised work and the nuclear family - both institutions on which a society stands - to find refuge in the bush. He does not so much love the bush for its nature but for its solitude and the possibility it offers for escape and anonymity (Hodge and Mishra xvi). Hodge and Mishra further define "the schizoid consciousness […] as the primary marker of Australianness" (16).

This means that Australians today, as the descendents of a colonial power, are aware of their illegitimate occupation of the land, which they need to resolve with its original owners. Within this complex situation, they have searched for ways to legitimise their existence in the country and have found the "typical Australian" who occupies the "typical" Australian space, the bush. He works the land, he makes it liveable and fertile; consequently, he is eligible to the land. The postcolonial approach revealed that what came to stand for the typical Australian characteristics in the course of the twentieth century is the result of the nation's awareness of its illegitimate seizing of the land. In order to resolve, document, and explore the contradictions present in modern Australian social life, Aboriginal Australian writing as well as writing on Aboriginal Australians have to be included (Hodge and Mishra x-xvi).

## 5 Feminist Approaches to National Identity

This work is concerned with nineteenth-century literature, particularly literature produced by women. Australian feminist theorists and writers addressed the issues of colonial women's dual position in a range of studies; the editors of *Creating a Nation* attest that "[t]he creation of nations has traditionally been seen as men's business. In the fomenting of revolutions, the forging of new political orders and the fashioning of national identities, men have positioned themselves as the main players" (1). Australia is no exception. For this reason, cross-disciplinary studies, such as *Creating a Nation* or *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, have addressed the issues of nation, gender, and national identity in colonial Australia. Patricia Grimshaw further points out that "[…] gender is integral to the processes that comprise the history of Australia" (1). The "typical" Australian is understood in terms of masculine characteristics and values. Gender, as stated in the introduction, presents the second "Other" and the second axis on which Australian identity is negotiated. Feminism offers another discourse which takes nation and the role of women in the construction of the nation into consideration. Australian feminist cultural critics, motivated by the emergence of "second-wave" feminism[15] from the 1960s onwards, were "soon dissatisfied with a theory of women's exclusion from the making of Australian culture" (Magarey, Rowley and Sheridan xvi). Through much scholary endeavour they uncovered the gender bias

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[15] Second-wave feminism was heavily influenced by Simone de Beauvoir. In her work *The Second Sex* she demonstrates that men view women different from themselves and reduce them to the category of "other." Women are not regarded as autonomous individuals but are always seen in male terms.

of national discourse and worked accurately to make exclusions based on gender visible. The most influential books of the second-wave feminists were *The Real Matilda* by Miriam Dixson and *Damned Whores and God's Police* by Anne Summers. Both books identify women's exclusion from the participation in Australian society. Yuval-Davis accounts for it as follows: "Much of the explanation of women's oppression has been related to their location in a different social sphere from that of man: the public/private divide and the natural/civilized domains" (5). Australian women challenged this division and women's exclusion from the public sphere with the emergence of the Women Movement, also called First-Wave Feminism, which encompassed the suffrage movement. Australian literary women demanded entry into the discourse on the nation by producing numerous novels dealing exclusively with the topics of bush, colonial life, British-Australian relations, as well as issues of femininity and masculinity. They asked questions about the nature of the colony and the characteristics of the "ideal" colonist. Their concerns were not only political in nature. As Susan Magarey points out, "Australia's suffrage movement was not only about citizenship but also about the double sex moral which prevailed in colonial Australia and under which women had to suffer" (*Passions* 2). Women's early involvement, their independent appearance and courageous articulation of issues challenged the dichotomy of public/private and enabled women to position themselves at various points along the public/private continuum. The term continuum is proposed here because no reality is solely bipolar. Every dichotomous construct leaves space for engagement in between the two extreme positions. Women's activities in the late nineteenth century clearly point to a growing flexibility of this dichotomy. They not only challenged their position at one extreme (private), but successfully positioned themselves along various points towards the other pole (public) and also right at this pole. Important public figures at their time were the various women writers, the founding members of the *Dawn*, and members of various Women Suffrage Leagues in the different colonies.

In the 1980s, women studies, next to Aboriginal and multicultural studies, were part of a hybridisation of Australian nation formation narratives. Women studies not only contested but also refigured the myths of the 1890s as attested by Kay Ferres:

> The legend of the 1890s has cast a long shadow. The Australian national character it celebrated was specifically masculine: nomadic, independent, anti-authoritarian and fiercely loyal to his mates. Those values were explicitly set against the dismal experience of urban life and domesticity. The careworn wives of Henry Lawson's

stories are idealised: longsuffering and resigned to neglect. Idealisation is one side of the coin; the other is outright hostility [to women]. (qtd. in Kossew 21)

The feminist historian Marilyn Lake proclaimed in her influential article "The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculine Context" that gender is a central category in all historical analysis due to the fact that men, who are socialised into masculinity, are pursuing their masculine interests as well as the interests of their class and race. She identified the 1890s as the decade of a contest between men and women for the control of the national culture which she termed "one of the greatest political struggles in Australian history" (116). The *Bulletin* exemplified the most influential carrier and distributor of the Australian Legend, which, as mentioned above, proclaimed a particular model of masculinity as the national type. Urban and domestic male behaviour suffered exclusion and was deemed unheroic and unmanly, even exposed to mockery and pity. Only the "Lone Hand," the model of the free-roaming worker of the bush with no societal ties as propagated in the texts of the democratic nationalists, constituted the "real" man and the "real" Australian. Women suffered severely from this worship and artificial elevation; they experienced mockery, exclusion from the public sphere, abandonment, and even crude violence. Violence against wives and women was seen as "natural." As one resident in McCalman's study on Richmond remembers: "It was quite common for men to bash up their wives and the strange thing was, if you were to kick a dog another man would kick you. But if you were having an argument with your wife nobody would interfere" (24). Rape was identified as a common occurrence in a colonial woman's reality (Spongberg 263).

The representation of women in the bush was already refigured in women's narratives in the period of the 1890s as will be shown in the works by Barbara Baynton and Louisa Lawson. Also, Tasma's representation of urban and domestic life as a cornerstone in the development of Australian identity will be assessed. However, dealing with white colonial women writers does anchor around the following statement by feminist historian Ann Curthoys. With regard to feminist approaches to history and national identity, she reminds us that:

Feminist investigations of national identity in Australia and similar societies will find the history of dispossession, exploitation, racism, and segregation to be fundamental, not peripheral, to their project. In doing so, they will need to revise an assumption which lies at the heart of much feminist scholarship – the historical innocence of women. (174)

# The Significance of Land in the Making of the National Identity

Kay Schaffer assigns the bush a crucial role in the construction of the Australian identity; she says, "The bush [is] the terrain on which national identity is constructed" (*Women and the Bush* xiii). Graeme Turner adds: "In both film and fiction, […], the texts seem to invite us to accept that the land is central to a distinctively Australian meaning" (*National Fictions* 30). The Australian continent, especially the bush, was elevated by white Australians to the status of shaping the Australian identity, it was also assigned a major input on story by many film makers,[16] and films, as forms of text, influence the construction of national identity. However, geographical accounts of the relationship between land and the forging of an identity have long been missing. Cultural geographers and historians started to fill the gap with works such as *The Law of the Land, Frontier Conflict, Contested Territories,* or *Text, Theory and Space*, in which people's relation to the land informs cultural identities.

The land of the Australian continent is invested with Aboriginal story. According to the Aboriginal spiritual concept of Dreaming, ancestral beings travelled over the land interacting with one another and also the ground they journeyed. They connected distant places, left their marks, and established frameworks for relationships between people and the land. The world had been given a shape. At the end of their journey, exhausted as they were, they laid down to rest at sacred sites from which they either travelled on to other sites or remained to exercise their influence on past, present, and future. Geographic space thus, embodies a crucial concept in Aboriginal Dreaming and forms an area of continuing validation for Aboriginal identity. The European invasion of 1788, scientifically and intellectually prepared by earlier explorations, notably by Captain James Cook and the botanist Joseph Banks, exhibited a different approach to land. According to European ways, land was the object being acted upon; land was the object of man's use. It was systematically divided into sections serving various purposes under different terms of ownership. Agriculture, industry, housing, technical and social infrastructure, and recreation, were all performed and positioned on the land. Hence, land in European thought and practice does not constitute the host on whose terms social relations are lived, but an object of use, an entity to be subdued. As this term suggests, in European contexts, land was systematically used for agricultural and housing purposes. Land was owned, worked, and acted upon.

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[16] The landscape features prominently in the following movies: *Priscilla, the Queen of the Desert, Picknick at Hanging Rock, We of the Never-Never, Walkabout*, or *Wolf Creek.*

But how did the perception of land, place, and space shape the cultural identity in the settler society of Australia? The bush, the original and unique Australian landscape, played and still plays an important role in the development, definition, and re-enactment of national identity. It was allocated this role by Russell Ward in his book *The Australian Legend*. Henry Lawson, in his short story "The Bush Undertaker," identified the bush as the home of eccentric minds (248) and was said to have given the bush its capital "B." For Barbara Baynton it was a horrid, brutal, and lonesome place and for Louisa Lawson a space ingrained with dangers for women due to its isolation and lawlessness. In Tasma's literal and personal life, the bush was marginal and relegated to a status of the city's dangerous "Other." Kay Schaffer offers a deconstructive reading of the Australian literary tradition in her book *Women and the Bush*. She identifies the land as the context for the "typical" male Australian whose relation to the land establishes Australia's uniqueness in opposition to England. In the dominant narratives, the land of Australia, with its many peculiarities, is reduced to one single notion, that of the bush. This notion is further characterised by the absent woman. The relationships men forge with one another as well as with the bush are only possible at the expense of woman's physical presence. The feminine is present, but only metaphorically as in Vance Palmer's description of the bush as a "cruel mother" (Palmer 20), a brutal and harsh enemy to be fought (Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 61). This preoccupation and fixation in the national imaginary of new settlers is explained by Trigger and Griffiths, who state that "[…] the challenge of building an identity in relation to land, its topography and species has loomed large for immigrants who have become settlers, and ultimately citizens, of relatively young multicultural nations" (2). Australia's unique landscape with its barren and hostile connotations but also beautiful and exceptional characteristics found entry into the white national psyche, as the contest over the ownership of Uluru demonstrates. Trigger and Griffiths further note that "[…] there was uproar in Australia because the process of 'handing back' ownership of Uluru to traditional Aboriginal groups ignored the fact that 'the Rock' is a deeply valued part of the [white] Australian psyche" (3).

One of the devices used by early settlers to construct the land as a meaningful entity was cartography. As a colonial enterprise, cartography made the spread of European power visible. Under the guise of objectivity, it divided the world into "power zones" and gave the world shape through European eyes. The North was established as the civilised and intellectual centre of the world, the South was imagined as an exotic, distant place of the uncivilised. The production of maps reassured the colonial power in its achievements and manifested a euro-centric view of the world for centuries to come (Schlögel 83). Cartography

prior to white settlement established mental pictures of the Australian continent as an empty space. Later cartographic witnesses reinforced the notion of emptiness and mystery and infused the Australian continent with the notion of not belonging to anyone. Thus, the regions were not only empty, they were ready to be taken by the first individuals to make claims upon it. The path for dispossession of Indigenous peoples was opened (Carter xx). Cartography, thus tells a certain story of the land it presents. Colonial geographers communicated via the maps and sketches they produced; their vision of the continent was not objective per se, but rather a construction (Schlögel 90). Their story is only one of the many possible stories informed by being located at a certain time in history and told by certain people. A contemporary voice mirroring colonial perspectives on land is the poem "The View from Mt Buggery" by Marc O'Connor. All the place-names occurring in the following poem can be found within the Snowy Mountains region in south-eastern Australia, one of the first regions on the Australian continent to be settled by Europeans. The following words reverberate the hopelessness and hardships as experienced by the first settlers:

> The Faithful Massacre,
>
> Darkies Leap,
>
> Mount Dispersal,
>
> Hells Window,
>
> Valley of Destruction,
>
> Square Head Jinny,
>
> Mt Exhaustion, Mt Disappointment, Disappointment Spur,
>
> The Devils Elbow, The Bastards Neck, The Pimple,
>
> Terrible Hollow, The Devils Staircase,
>
> The Viking, The Razor, Mt Despair,
>
> Mount Blowhard, Growlers Creek, Dungey track, Mt Freezeout,
>
> Mount Mistake, Tear-Arse, Mt Misery,
>
> Dry Hill, Horrible Gap
>
> - How we loved the land! (1-14)

This poem is a contemporary reminiscent voice of the shattered hopes early settlers encountered in settling the land. The glorious accounts of a promised land inflected with hope did not match the settlers' actual experiences. The poem, in successively listing place names which excel one another in negativity and hopelessness, further suggests that settlers' relation to the land was not as glorious and heroic, as it came to be understood in the lines of the *Bulletin,* but dangerous, disastrous, even life-threatening.

# Myths Constituting the Australian Nation

This chapter offers an outline of the major myths which accompanied Australia's development from a penal settlement to a nation-state. Australia, a landscape distinctively different from Britain's rolling hills and green pastures, was soon speckled with British and European names, echoing those of English towns, rivers, ranges, and popular figures. Those place names formed a collectivity of reminiscences of a distant life. The knowledge of distant Britain was not only reflected in place names but also in the multitude of individual's personal experience. Otto Bauer states that "[k]nowledge of foreign life is the precondition of all national consciousness" (61). The aim of this chapter, then, is to illuminate the path taken in relation to the "knowledge of foreign life" and trace the emergence of the national identity in the nineteenth century in its historical as well as psychological context in order to understand the foundations of Australian national identity. This chapter also explores different cultural discourses about the national character taken up in various myths and legends. Thus, the content of the myth will be presented as well as its function in the construction of a national identity.

## 1      Dominant Colonial Versions of National Identity

The emergence of national aspirations in Europe in the nineteenth century fuelled the desire to identify oneself in opposition to others. Nations did not exist in a vacuum, but rather in the context of other nations. As Spillman points out, "new nations" compared themselves with other nations, they needed to be recognized by other nations (64). This growing awareness of "otherness," of being different, coupled with the emerging importance of literature in manifesting this "otherness," inform the framework and background of Australia's emerging nationalism. Australia did not face an independence movement as did many European countries; rather, it experienced the urge and necessity to paint a picture of itself in relation to its "mother country." Australia's search for a national identity began with the invasion of the Australian continent by the British in 1788 and its further conquest. The many aspect of the history of white settlement offer the material for the emergence of an Australian identity. In the course of settling Australia, traits emerged which are believed to represent the "real" Australian.

At the beginning of the classic *Inventing Australia* Richard White states that "there is no "real" Australia waiting to be uncovered; a national identity is an invention" (viii). It is the product of certain ideas prevailing at certain times. White attributes three major forces in having influenced the emergence of the Australian identity in colonial times. These are: modern western European ideas regarding the nation and national identity, the intelligentsia consisting of writers, artists, historians, and critics as being responsible for the definition of the national identity and, finally, social groups with economic power who chose certain versions of national identity to foster their economic and social power. Since these three factors are constantly changing, the notion of national identity is not fixed but also subject to constant change and negotiation. This means that the construct of national identity is always questioned, fractured, and redefined (White 10). The process of creating and fostering a national identity requires actors who are in a position of power to influence the course of questioning, fracturing, and redefining. Due to asymmetrical power structures established in Australia, certain actors were excluded from the process of contributing to the negotiation on national identity. In the Australian negotiation process, the emergence of the bush myth with its central protagonist, the bushman-as-hero, plays a crucial role. It takes its ingredients from the experiences white settlers gathered when settling, i.e. fighting and then taming, the land, and from the experiences as a convict colony.

The nineteenth century possesses many important founding moments for the colonies which, in 1901, ceased to be colonies in order to become one vast nation-state. Until Federation, Australia had no formal existence; the colonies were separate entities owing their allegiance to Britain. Colonial people regarded themselves as both belonging to a colony, then calling themselves Victorians or Tasmanians, as well as belonging to the newly emerging construct Australia and calling themselves "Australians." Some colonial individuals felt closer to Britain, others regarded themselves as Australians and wanted to shake off their British ties as soon and vehemently as possible. The writer Miles Franklin, born Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin, for example, addressed her readership in the introduction to her book *My Brilliant Career,* written in 1899, as "My Dear Fellow Australians, […]" (ix); the main character, Sybylla, concludes at the end of the novel, "I am proud that I am an Australian, […] a daughter of the Southern cross, a child of the mighty bush, […] a part of the bone and muscle of my nation" (253). Rosa Praed also confidently addressed her fellow country people as Australians while acknowledging a divide between both worlds which she wished to overcome through literary means. She introduced her novel *Policy and Passion* by saying: "But it is to the British public that I, an Australian, address myself, with the hope that I may in

some slight degree aid in bridging over the gulf which divides the Old World from the Young" (4). Other writers tried to make sense of their place between those two worlds. It is at this intersection that Tasma's novel *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill* is situated.

The search for identity and the urge to position oneself within the British Empire gave rise to the radical nationalist movement at the end of the nineteenth century which found its most fierce expression in the literary productions of the time. The late nineteenth century saw the national character emerging and manifesting and the elevation of certain authors to the status of national idols. Hodge and Mishra offer the following explanation: "The Australian obsession with legitimacy, which stems from the unlawful seizing of the continent, has elevated certain writers to the status of national heroes whose existence proves Australian right for existence" (x). As mentioned in the theoretical section, nation formation builds upon hardships and difficulties overcome by heroes; national identity takes its ingredients from characteristics found within those heroes. It gives people ancestors to be proud of, role-models to strive after, and great founding moments to celebrate. Ernest Renan postulated in 1882, "the nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion […] A heroic past, great men, glory […] this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea" (19). Australia did not see a war of independence; no superior power had to be fought. The warlike moments in Australia's young history are found in armed conflicts with Aborigines. Crimes against Aborigines were hardly ever followed up, punishments were scarce. Black Australia was brutally and violently turned white making Australia "a nation founded on genocide" (Barta 238). Battles with Aborigines were not constructed as hardships and struggles overcome by the great white soldier settlers. No images portray the Aboriginal as on equal terms when it comes to dominance over land; the land is not won "rightly" from warlike and barbarous "savages" as in other settler societies.[17] Aboriginal people were portrayed as too primitive and apathetic to have fought for their land. Accordingly, "the primal battle by which the pioneer male established both his masculinity and his right to Aboriginal land was through the rough battle with the land itself" (Kociumbas 84). This battle proved fruitful in the emergence of different myths which were believed to give rise to a unique Australian national character. These myths are still powerful as instances of contestation in the positioning of individuals in contemporary Australia; Kossew judges the situation of women writers with regard to the legend-making 1890s as follows:

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[17] The treatment of Australian and American Indigenous people by British settlers in the colonising process is compared in *Genocide and Settler Society* by Dirk A. Moses.

One of the striking aspects of contemporary Australian women's writing is its ongoing preoccupation with contesting stereotypical gender roles that gathered momentum in the 1890s when discourses of new nationhood constructed a legend of Australian national character that was 'specifically masculine: nomadic, independent, anti-authoritarian and fiercely loyal to his mates'. (24)

## 2  Agents of National Maturity: Captain Cook, Convicts, Pioneers, and Gold-diggers

The next paragraphs aim to outline the main actors who contributed to the emergence of the legend and its exclusive stand towards Aboriginal Australians and settler-women. Captain Cook constitutes the starting point for white Australia's discourse on national identity. While exploring Australia's eastern coastline in 1770, he identified the continent as empty and not belonging to anyone. He was accompanied by the botanist Joseph Banks, whose records were used a decade later to decide on the transportation of British convicts to the new colonies after the American colonies gained their independence in 1776. The records were positive, recounting of exotic flora and fauna, peaceful natives and fertile lands. The first impressions of Australia emerged within frameworks of British ideas by people socialised in Britain. Australia's flora and fauna gave rise to many wonders as well as amusement - Australia, on the whole, was odd. Reverend Sydney Smith commented, "in this remote part of the earth, Nature (having made horses, oxen, ducks, geese, oaks, elms, and all regular productions for the rest of the world) seems determined to have a bit of a play, and to amuse herself as she pleases" (qtd. in White 9). Despite all oddities, in 1788 the first cargo of ships set out on a long and arduous voyage to dispose of the first group of convicts. The continent was seen as "Terra Nullius" (literally, "land of no-one") from the first moment of entry; a white page that could be filled with foreign words. And words soon followed; Australia was written into existence and its existence was justified on grounds of the written word.

Australia was not only odd but also harsh, making it hard for the first settlers to sustain themselves. Transportation of convicts to the colonies commenced with the First Fleet in 1788 and did not end until half a century later. Male and female convicts from Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales, in addition to British officers, thus presented the first white inhabitants of the Australian landmass. Sustaining life in the first colony, New South Wales, was arduous,

the positive recollections of Cook and Banks could be perceived as a mere mockery. When transportation of convicts became common practice, a new image of Australia was created to be circulated among the British: Australia as "Hell upon Earth", a place of terror. This image, based on the brutality of the convict system and fed by accounts of floggings, chain-gangs, and overall immorality, was used to deter crime in Britain; leaflets were published under such titles as "The Horrors of Transportation," "The Suffering Convict," or "Dreadful Sufferings of the Unhappy Captives" to reinforce the brutal image of Botany Bay (White 18). But when growing numbers of free immigrants sailed to Australian shores, providing labour in the expanding wool industry and other industry branches, the harsh image of the penal system gave way to an image of Australia as a country full of economic potential for every industrious and adventurous man. Even the convict experienced some degree of absolution; he was no longer regarded as utterly criminal and deprived but rather as the victim of a brutal and inhumane system. On top of that, the second generation Australian was believed to refrain from criminal activities and contribute to the development of Australia in a peaceful and industrious way. In this hopeful and positive lookout on the future, the environment and not inheritance was given credit in shaping of characters. This idea constituted a modern approach to heredity. It was now believed that the "[…] land of convicts and kangaroos is beginning to rise into a very fine and flourishing settlement" (qtd. in White 27). By the 1850s, Australia was a vast sheep-run providing half of Britain's wool. Transportation to New South Wales ceased in 1840 and to Tasmania in 1853; an economically striving colony which introduced assisted immigration could no longer be used to deter crime in Britain. On the contrary, many poor British committed minor criminal acts in the hope of being sent out to the colonies. Nevertheless, the convict period introduced many behavioural aspects into Australian society which are believed to be still visible today, such as Australian's anti-authoritarianism (Ward 40).

The violent aspect of the convict system remained with Australians throughout the nineteenth century. Individuals organised in gangs, known as bushrangers, who practised the law of the gun and experienced fierce physical punishment through the police, were widely known in colonial Australia. Their anti-authoritarian world view was said to mirror convict traits. Miriam Dixson claims in *The Real Matilda* that colonial women were ignored in the discourse on national identity for two reasons. First, one of the most visible characteristics of the convict era was its "womanlessness." The sex ratio in the first fifty years of settlement displayed a gross inequality with men outnumbering women which eventually led to women's obliteration. Second, she identifies the colonial convict man, lacking in self-esteem, as the

central problem. He imposed his own feeling of inadequacy and low self-esteem onto the woman by treating her worse than he was treated, thus pushing her to the margins of society, where she easily could be assigned the whore stereotype (Dixson 120-124). In *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Anne Summers proved that the whore stigma not only misrepresented the conditions of women's lives but also served a colonial purpose in keeping the workers content and happy. Dixson cites Thompson regarding the emergence and function of prostitution:

> Prostitution […] is most likely to occur in societies with an unbalanced sex ratio. It arises from a sense of the inequality of the sexes, and is often a logical accompaniment of patriarchal societies. The male who patronises prostitution tends to develop a depreciating attitude towards women and an exaggerated sense of self-importance. (134)

Lucy Frost and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart in *Convict Letters* relegate the prostitute stereotype to the margins and call for further analysis of the role convict women played in shaping Australian society and national identity. Since convict women were among the first white settlers to see Australia, they have influenced and experienced the formative period from a very distinctive standing in society and it is worthwhile to look deeper at the experiences of those women (1-5).

Contrary to the violent aspects and the convict heritage of Australian history, a legend emerged which hailed the white settler and his successful efforts in taming the land to his use. Identified as the "pioneer legend" by historian John Hirst, it stresses the importance of the newcomer whose aim it was to settle the land. Hirst comments: "The pioneer legend, by proclaiming the settlement of the land as the chief theme in Australia's history, found it easy not to mention the convicts at all" (*The Pioneer Legend* 30). The legend celebrated white man's heroic efforts at overcoming the obstacles of a dry, barren, and hostile country. A.G. Stephens, the editor of the literary part of the *Bulletin*, identified pioneering as "necessarily a stage of hard struggle, often of individual defeat, and the shadow of Tragedy lowers heavily over men who are fighting in a doubtful battle" (5). Through hard work, an enduring spirit, and a courageous outlook, the white man established and managed to sustain himself and his family on the dry land. Pioneers constituted a group of settlers who courageously succeeded to establish themselves by overcoming different hardships. They managed to cultivate hostile land and live off it; they contributed to the formation of Australia's economy through engagement in the pastoral economy. Stephens emphasised the hardships faced by the pioneer

male in cultivating the barren land. Even if the outcome of this battle was unknown, the pioneer nevertheless engaged in it, not only for himself but for future generations of Australians. This made him a hero worthy of admiration and gratitude and put on Australians the obligation not to question the world the pioneers established. The legend contains a degree of immunity and is presented as not being available for scrutiny (Hirst 15). In addition to the hardships faced by the pioneer, the legend entails a second element, that of Australia's distinctively beautiful environment, which compensates the pioneer. Stephens' comment exemplifies the duality which informs the late nineteenth century legend: the hardships overcome by resourceful men versus the unique beauties of the land. He states:

> Yet there are not wanting adumbrations of the Beauty of Australia - glimpses of the secret enchantment in which this strange, feline land - half-fierce, half caressing - holds those who have listened to the gum-trees' whispered spells or drunk the magic philter of landscapes flooded with Nature's opiate-tints. (5)

The legend was created and celebrated in the 1880s and 1890s by writers like Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson and many others whose literary productions established the "Bulletin School." They fed and fostered the view of their editor, A.G. Stephens. According to Hirst, "Pioneers as settlers and national heroes were the creation of [those] poets and writers" (*The Pioneer Legend* 15). In times of growing nationalism, those writers gave Australia a past to be proud of by elevating the man who made Australia liveable - but at the same time the man who raped the land - to the status of a national hero. The legend has a radical implication in that it credits the ordinary man with the capacity to "make" a nation through hard work and an enduring spirit. It also contains conservative and nostalgic features as it attest the past superior to the present (*The Pioneer Legend* 25). Women, according to Hirst, also took part in pioneering; he confronts feminist scholars by stating:

> Feminists may object that too often they [women] are seen merely as helpmates for men, but their complaint that women have been omitted altogether from Australian history is not true of the popular history fostered by the pioneer legend. There are pioneer-women gardens and memorials in Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. In the celebration of state and national anniversaries, pioneer women have been honoured in special ceremonies and commemorative histories. (29)

The existence of memorial gardens does not reject other historian's claims that women were merely helpmates. Further, it does not make women active participants in the taming of the land, nor does it attribute them a special role. It solely acknowledges women's presence among the pioneers. Miriam Dixson describes the pioneering situation for women as both,

positive and negative. As positive she identifies women's exchange of the stiff English ways for the more unconstrained character of pioneering life as well as women's enjoyment of working as governesses for less pretentious families, whose existence is attributed to the decrease of class as a stratifying element in colonial society. This eventually enabled women to engage in a variety of activities which were formerly denied to them (Dixson 181). Additionally, Dixson states that pioneering entailed hard toil by both, man and woman, and thus provided a source for fellowship between husband and wife which presented some degree of equality (Dixson 181). These positive elements present one side of female pioneering experiences. The other picture describes a pioneering reality, characterised by women's intellectual and physical isolation, which posed a thread to their well-being. This isolation exposed women to a number of dangers. For once, in the case of a problematic pregnancy or an illness, help was too distant to be turned to on time; many women and children died from inadequate or lacking help. Also, their relative isolation meant that women did not form associations as was the case in towns, where they could be of help to one another. The lack of organised representations also meant that women did not enter the public sphere. Thus, their problems were not perceived but also not traceable for subsequent generations of scholars. It is therefore very difficult to reconstruct women's contribution to pioneering. Henry Lawson acknowledges women's isolation as part of the pioneering experience in a part of his poem "How the Land Was Won" (1899):

> The white girl-wife in the hut alone,
>
> The man on the boundless run,
>
> The miseries suffered, unvoiced, unknown-
>
> And that's how the land was won. (45-48)

What is clear though, is that regardless of their gender, the role of pioneers needs to be critically approached and re-read within contemporary postcolonial frameworks, especially with regard to "how the land was won." As early as 1938, Xavier Herbert, in his novel *Capricornia*, confronted the pioneer legend through explicit descriptions of the pioneer as the enemy of the Indigenous inhabitants, as destroyer of the environment and ruthless exploiter of the land. These themes are taken up and further developed in *Genocide and Settler Society*. Gender, in these accounts, is treated subservient to race, thus, women are presented as men's helpmates in the colonising process which constituted the dispossession and extermination of Indigenous peoples.

Finally, the gold-digger of the 1850s presents a distinct male figure which is invested with national importance. Again, Henry Lawson plays a crucial part in the emergence and consolidation of this legend by according heroic status not to the first explorers of Australia, but to the diggers of the gold-fields; he proclaims that "[t]hese [the gold-diggers] were the men who gave our country birth" (qtd. in Hirst, *The Pioneer Legend* 19). The 1860s and 1870s saw a consolidation of the Australian society in terms of culture, politics, and economy. After the gold rushes of the 1850s, societal wealth was exhibited through great public buildings as well as many great private mansions in the flourishing cities of Melbourne and Sydney. The emergence of a colonial middle class was based on the wealth generated by the diggers on the gold fields. From the time of the first gold finds in Victoria in 1851, adventure and gold-seeking men from all parts of the world arrived in Australia, further fostering the imbalance of sexes in the colonies. "Mateship and the anti-authoritarian outlook were the two ingredients of the bushman ethos taken over by the diggers. [Further] the presence of the Chinese injected a new element, that of racism, into the developing ethos" (Hodges 10).

## 3      Contesting the Masculine Bushman Legend

The emergence of the bushman myth constitutes a major step in Australia's identity formation. The experiences of the pioneers and diggers, their battles with the land, and the profits they gained from the land, their economic success and their self-perception as "having made the country," combined with the literary reflection of these processes, fed the most enduring of all legends – the bushman legend. The supremacy, endurance, and dominance of this legend exemplifies the success of turning a "non-heroic" past, which lacks great dates, into a founding past to be proud of.  This version of the "typical" Australian as the pastoral, anti-authoritarian, mateship valuing bushman was formulated and enacted against an array of other possible versions: the stories of black, female, and urban aspects of Australia. None of these found entry into the dominant discourse on identity although these different versions had the capacity to contribute to a more diverse version of Australianness.

The pioneer and the gold-digger both engaged in working the land. The pioneer established agriculture and pastoralism, he managed to raise cattle and grow crops for his own use and for economic profit. The digger extracted precious metal from the land, on which he built both his own and the nation's economic success. Both groups engaged with the land, they worked the land. But not until the bushman myth emerged was the land elevated to the

most important constituent of the Australian national identity. According to Russell Ward, the bush has shaped the Australian character and the bushman stands for the "typical" Australian. He is anti-authoritarian, physically strong, enduring, and resourceful. These traits stem from convicts, ex-convicts, and native-born people (of convict origin) who suffered from the brutal prison system and the overall harsh life in the colonies and in the bush. Those sufferings gave rise to vicious behaviour but at the same time created a collectivist anti-authoritarian morality, and brought out physical endurance, and resourcefulness in the men of the bush. Additionally, Ward identifies another group, the Celts, as having exerted a strong influence on the development of a national identity. The 1840s saw three times as many Irish in New South Wales as on the British Isles, and more than half of the assisted immigrants arriving in the colony were Irish. The Irish were known for their strong antipathy towards British rule which they exhibited publicly. This anti-British feeling is said to have spurted the emergence of nationalism in Australia by weakening attachments to England and the whole Empire (Ward 35-49).

When the Blue Mountains were crossed in 1813, settlement of the interior began and land was opened for cultivation. Large properties were created employing many casual hands who travelled from one station to another in search of work. This semi-nomadic group was made up of proletarian men who roamed the country. They encountered extreme loneliness, hardships and hazardous conditions. In the face of absent women and absent organisations, those bushmen turned to their fellow men for company and help. "Mateship" became essential for staying sane and surviving these lone and hazardous conditions in the vast and open spaces. Many bush songs and stories hint to the spiritual position mateship held among bushmen (Ward 170). With the emergence of railway and communication technology in the second half of the nineteenth century the bush was brought within vicinity of the city. What had been an experience of a brave few, could now be experienced by the adventurous many and turned into songs and stories by literary men. The rise of print-capitalism and the emergence of the writer as a profession helped in distributing the ideas about mateship to a wider audience. The mateship concept could now be applied to the lives of men in the city; the urban was invested with ideas and habits of the bush.

Russell Ward's *The Australian Legend* was regarded as the most influential book on Australian history, without being a history book at all. He established the existence of the "typical" Australian through a close reading of what he believed were the most important texts from the end of the nineteenth century. By trying to trace the emergence of the Australian self-image, Ward located in the male pastoral workers of the outback the origins of

what he called the "typical Australian," despite the fact that the "typical" Australian did not inhabit the bush and was not employed in the pastoral industry. In Ward's analysis Aborigines and women, both as protagonists in and producers of cultural productions, are absent from the category of Australian and thus from the notion of constituting the Australian nation.

At the end of the nineteenth century, especially in the 1890s, a sense of Australian nationalism emerged and it was desired to create distinct national symbols which depicted "real" Australia. Thus, literature of the late nineteenth century - Ward's main focus - glorified the landscape and the worker on it; Australia defined itself in terms of its geographical position and its scenery. This is visible in the literature of the 1890s as well as in the paintings of the "Heidelberg School."[18] Writers of the radical *Bulletin* celebrated life in the bush, glorified Australia's unique flora and fauna, and assigned the bushman the status of a national hero. These writers were praised for having founded Australia's literary tradition. In the introduction to *The Bulletin Story Book*, published in 1901, A.G. Stephens states:

> The literary work which is Australian in spirit, as well as in scene or incident, is only beginning to be written […]Yet, without a deliberate choice, a few examples of Australian work — of work which could not have been conceived or written anywhere but in Australia — have naturally included themselves in the following pages. (4)

This statement affirms the emergence of a national literature which is based on specific Australian conditions. The specific bush experience was said to give rise to values like individualism and mateship and the celebration of proletarian traits. These values soon became associated with the Australian character at large. This attempt to create this distinctively national culture in literature and art was carried out by a generation of artists who were Australian born. They felt confident and at ease in their home environments and felt the urge to promote a unique picture of Australia which was explicitly different from the images portraying England and Victorian issues. With the emergence of the artist as a full-time profession in the 1890s, writers managed to live off their earnings. Hence, the more they wrote, the more could be distributed to a wider audience; providing the writer with a solid earning. Additionally, the idealisation of the bush worker (sheep shearer, squatter[19]) fits into the economic frame of the Empire. England needed raw materials and it was the shearer and the squatter who provided wool for the Empire. For that reason, they featured prominently in the literature (White 103).

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[18] The painters Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder are said to be the founders and representatives of the Heidelberg School

[19] Squatter: a large-scale sheep farmer.

What is striking about the bushman as national hero myth is its ambivalent relation to the city. Most of the writers lived in Sydney and only ventured into the bush for recreational purposes at weekends. They escaped the hardships of the city both physically and mentally. Some writers went on outback trips to get the outback-colour needed to make their literature appear authentic. The idealisation of landscape and shearers seems to be an emotional refuge from not only the hardships of the city but also from the Victorian values of older generations associated with the cities. Sydney and Melbourne very much resembled English towns with poverty being visible, especially in the depression of the early 1890s; many writers were not content in this environment. Banjo Paterson's poem "Clancy of the Overflow" idealises the bush and the bushman by comparing him, i.e. Clancy, to city people, who live unhappy lives because they are trapped in the cities' noisy, dirty, cramped, and dark surroundings.

When the colonies federated, the bushman found his way into the literary and popular imagination as a cultural hero upon whom many Australians "tended to model their attitudes to life" (Turner, *Making it National* 5). Australian topics, Australian landscapes, and Australian manners were discussed by literary men as well as women who were Australian-born and whose intention was to install a pride in being Australian. The literary and artistic productions contributed towards cultural independence from Britain for the bushman cultivated ways and habits impossible for the British to copy. Also, Australians did not resemble their British cousins physically, a "new chum" was immediately recognised by the "old hand" as Rosa Praed formulated in *Policy and Passion*:

> Nevertheless, his tall, broadly-built figure, bronzed, highbred face, and soldier-like bearing, had no generic affinity with the lank limbs, the fresh-coloured, supine features, and frank gullibility of the typical *new chum.* (8)

Both, the new chum, who, on arriving in Australia, is striving to become indistinguishable from an Australian as soon as possible, as well as the old hand are gendered constructs, they always refer to men. The bushman ethos established masculinity as a constituent of Australian identity and Russell Ward identifies the "typical" Australian as follows:

> […] the "typical Australian" is a practical *man*, rough and ready in *his* manners […]. *He* is a great improviser, […] *he* normally feels no impulse to work hard without good cause. *He* swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion. […] *He* is […] sceptical about the value of religion and of intellectual and cultural pursuits generally. […] *He* is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority […]. Yet *he* is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to *his* mates through thick and thin. (1-2, emphasis added)

Women as constituting and contributing to national identity and the formation of the Australian nation were not included into the discussion until the 1960s and 1970s. According to the bushman ethos, men were temporarily employed as swagmen or drovers,[20] moving from one station to the other in search of work. The open space of the bush presented the terrain on which the male, i.e. Australian, character was formed and performed. On the contrary, in the wideness of the bush, women were relegated to the domestic sphere, just as they were in cities, and were thus deprived of the opportunity to conquer the land and become heroines. But within the domestic space women in the bush fought many hardships which accompanied their lives. Bushwomen experienced the miseries and joys of living in the bush which shaped their identities and which can also be called on to inform the Australian character.  It was Barbara Baynton who presented an alternative version of the bush. In her bush, women escape the domestic sphere; they are presented as industrious, resourceful, intelligent, and able whereas men are ignorant, lazy, and childish. However, bush society was asymmetrically structured, giving men the power to oppress women. Australia's power structures as a whole were also asymmetrical for they managed to silence powerful female literary voices. It is a paradox that the experiences of a few out in the bush were turned into national characteristics which even today, with Australia being one of the most urbanised countries in the world, influences the Australian self-image. The myth of the bushman as the typical Australian survives to this day and it does not acknowledge the existence of women in the bush, its mateship-ingredient even "[leaves] out of account the whole relationship with woman" (Judith Wright qtd. in Dixson 77).

The legend exhibits some weak points: its emergence in the cities renders the legend as one imagined version of life in the nineteenth century and not, as Russell Ward put it, *the* Australian life par excellence. Additionally, it creates an exclusively masculine conception of the bush. While the bush is depicted as what constitutes Australia, the masculine characteristics come to stand for the national character.

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[20] Swagman: a temporary worker who travels from farm to far in search for work only carrying his few belongings wrapped in a piece of cloth (the swag); drover: a person who drives cattle over long distances

# 4      Henry Lawson's Woman in the Bush

The previous paragraphs have shown the influence assigned to Henry Lawson by literary critics and historians as the shaper of the Australian Tradition[21] and Australian identity. "Australia is Lawson writ large," stipulated Manning Clark (qtd. in Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 40)*,* even exaggerating that "there is not a word in *all* his [Lawson's] work which is not instantly recognised by his readers as honest Australian. […] he is the *first* articulate voice of the *real* Australian" (qtd. in Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 112). The man who gave the bush its capital "B" was turned into the sole authentic voice of Australia, while the place of his poems and short stories, the bush, was established as the "true" Australia (Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 112). Today it seems that "One of the unfairest representations has been the canonisation of Henry Lawson as national icon − a load too heavy for a single writer to bear" (Australian Short Fiction 40). Still, Lawson looms large over the national imagination, his stories still being used as a point of departure for contemporary analysis of colonial society.

Kay Schaffer in *Women and the Bush* offers a deconstructive reading of the Australian Tradition and Henry Lawson's place therein. She reveals that woman and the land both serve a similar function in the fiction of Lawson. Both present dilemmas for the bushman, which he must fight. The land's harshness has to be overcome to survive; woman's presence has to be negated for the sake of a free-roaming, male society (Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 19). Consequently, the bushman per se would not exist if it were not for the bush and the woman to relate to. The bushman only exists in an opposing relation to women; women are the "Others" against whom the masculine version of the bushman is inaugurated. But women do not constitute an independent position, their status within bush society is solely determined by men. This is indicated by the titles of Lawson's stories such as "The Drover's Wife," "The Selector's Daughter," "The Shanty-Keeper's Wife," to name a few. Women are wives and daughters, they become men's appendixes; they are their property. In Lawson's fiction, the female character frequently goes mad in the bush, as does Maggie in "Babies in the Bush" and the young girl in "The Selector's Daughter" (*Women and the Bush* 118). The dichotomy of the heroic bushman on the one hand and the mad women on the other establishes the bush

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[21] The term is used by some writers and critics to refer to attitudes about the national identity perceived as "typically" Australian. It contains mateship, the bush, and egalitarianism and emerges in the speeches of politicians, movies, images and in the press (Schaffer 5).

as "no place for a woman,"[22] Mateship saves men from going mad, women are excluded from the role of mates; they cannot be mates, thus, they have no mates. Consequently, women cannot expect help from anyone in the bush. Women do not roam the wilderness but are confined to their households and occupied with running their houses and minding their children, or alternatively, they go mad.

Although Lawson constructs the bush as "no place for a woman," his story "The Drover's Wife" has for a long time been praised for giving an accurate and authentic picture of the colonial bushwoman. It was, and continues to be, used in textbooks to give generations of Australians an idea of what life in the bush was "really" like for women and how well they coped in times of absent husbands and venomous snakes. Lawson's bushwoman was understood as a symbol of hope. She was constructed by Lawson in such a way as to "represent the dream of the perfect mother, powerful yet capable of being subdued and mastered without a struggle" ( Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 169).

"The Drover's Wife" begins with a description of the ragged little hut in which the bushwoman, her mostly absent husband and their four little children live. Then there is "Bush all round; bush with no horizon, for the country is flat. No ranges in the distance" (59), the nearest sign of civilisation, a shanty, i.e. a colonial pub, is nineteen miles away. The bushwoman is described as a gaunt but sun-browned woman who loves her children but does not have the time to show it. She is solely referred to as "The drover's wife" or bushwoman; her individuality is indifferent while the dog is referred to by his name, "Alligator." The husband, a drover and ex-squatter, has been away with his sheep for six months and she has not heard from him since. The wife is used to it; once he was away for 18 months. During the many times of his absence, she had to watch one child dying, she fought a bushfire, she fought a flood, she fought 'the pleuro',[23] she fought crows and eagles and a mad bullock. She also had to fight off a man as he intruded on her house demanding food and a place to stay overnight; she managed to scare him away with the help of her dog.[24] If she finds some free time, she entertains herself by reading the "Young Ladies' Journal" and sewing. When her husband happens to be present and has sufficient money, he treats her with a trip to the city. This bushwoman is portrayed as a woman who encounters hardships bravely and does not let drawbacks break her spirits. When, in the middle of the night, she runs out of candles and goes to fetch some wood, she discovers that the wood-heap is empty; it was built hollow by a

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[22] This phrase is a title of one of Henry Lawson's short stories.

[23] "The pleuro" is the abbreviation for "contagious bovine pleuropneumonia"; a contagious disease of livestock.

[24] Incidents like this do not always pass off peacefully. Swagmen and bushrangers were known to use violence against women and rape women while their husbands were absent.

"stray blackfellow." Lawson depicts the bushwoman in this situation of hopelessness as follows:

> She is hurt now, and tears spring to her eyes as she sits down again by the table. She snatches up a handkerchief to wipe the tears away, but pokes her eyes with her bare fingers instead. The handkerchief is full of holes, and she finds that she has put her thumb through one and her forefinger through another. This makes her laugh suddenly, to the surprise of the dog. (67)

Lawson's bushwoman can cope with this disappointing situation, she is presented as a tough woman, whose spirits cannot be broken. However, it clearly depends on the situation because when "occasionally a bushman in the horrors, or a villainous-looking sundowner, comes [he] scares the life out of her" (65) and she fears a tragic outcome. At sundown, she discovers a snake and the whole night is spent watching the children and searching for the snake. Finally, near daylight of the next day, she succeeds in killing it, again with the help of the dog. When her little son sees her crying, while the snake is burning in the fire, he cries out "Mother, I won't never go drovin'; blast me if I do!" (69).

The story presents a courageous woman who manages to kill a venomous snake in the course of one night with only the help of her dog. This toughness, resourcefulness, and endurance, even in the face of drawbacks, make the bushwoman for Lawson and subsequent critics an admirable figure of the bush. Kay Schaffer, however, suggests a re-reading of "The Drover's Wife" which revolves around the dichotomy of presence and absence. This dichotomy was encountered in the bush by nineteenth-century explorers and settlers: presence was longed for where absence was encountered (*Women and the Bush* 132). It is this dichotomy which can be found as a main organizing principle in "The Drover's Wife." While the house is empty of the man, the woman takes over his position. The wood-heap is empty of wood, the snake hides in the empty hole. The snake and the woman fill empty spaces; but while at the end the snake is killed, one wonders what will happen to the woman. In the man's absence, the woman takes over his roles and fights all threats heroically. She even resembles him in appearance when she puts on his trousers and "acts in a masculine role as a pioneering hero" (*Women and the Bush* 134). Her feminine needs as a wife and mother are few in number, dressing up herself and the children for Sunday walks, reading, and sewing. She is portrayed as being contented with what she has. However, the reader rather experiences a feeling of unresolved tension. This tension stems from the depiction of the women as both hero and victim. She fights the fire but would have died if four bushmen did not help her; she saves the hut from the flood but loses the dam; she dresses in overalls and looks like her

husband. When her arms are blackened, she is mistaken by the baby as a "blackfellow;" she rides nineteen miles for assistance carrying her dead baby. She is constructed to serve all roles: man, maternal woman, "blackfellow," hero, and victim (*Women and the Bush* 135). The only role she does not seem to fulfil, contradictory to the title, is that of a wife. Henry Lawson seems to show that marriage, as a reciprocal institution, does not exist in the bush. The wife of the drover is constructed to play out a multitude of roles but not the one as a wife. This suggests that there is no relation between man and woman in the bush.

The literary tradition is informed by the struggle and search for a national identity against the Otherness of the bush; everything which is encountered in the bush is labelled as "Other:" woman, "blackfellow," and snake (*Women and the Bush* 136). The drover's wife, with her identity as wife, stays in the domestic sphere where from time to time she has to carry out roles and duties of the man but is spatially tied to the home. This construction of a national model of femininity serves well for the man, who is free to roam the wilderness and engages in childlike, "matey" behaviour while his home and his children are looked after and dinner is ready on his return despite "[him forgetting] sometimes that he is married" (63). The location of the bushwoman inside the house, her confinement in the hut, despite the bush being all around, relegates the woman to the domestic sphere and restrains her from the participation with the land. Kossew notices with regard to the Australian bushwoman as presented by Henry Lawson that "such characterisation and confinement to the realm of the domestic rather than the public sphere profoundly alienated women from the discourse of nation" (24).

Henry Lawson writes from within the school of Democratic Nationalism, he not only produces fiction for entertainment purposes but invests in his characters traits to represent the Australian character. He offers role models to strive after. Men are supposed to receive their adventurous and egalitarian qualities in the struggle with the land, which of course ends with men mastering the bush. "To go bush" comes to stand for acquiring local colour; becoming Australian. Women on the other hand, though portrayed in a positive light at first reading as industrious, brave, and tough, only come to fill a vacant position in the bush. They only function as substitutes for men. Thus, in the Australian Tradition as represented by Henry Lawson and the like, women do not represent any interests of their own or exhibit their own and independent strengths. Rather they represent the strengths and interests of the (masculine) national character. It is only when men are absent and cannot display the desired (national) characteristics that women come to fill this vacant space. They become "a component of the masculine economy at the expense of their difference and uniqueness" (Schaffer, *Women and*

*the Bush* 138). The elevation of stories such as "The Drover's Wife" to national narratives and individuals like Henry Lawson to national heroes invests the discourse on national identity with masculine traits at the expense of the feminine. One century later, Marilyn Lake identifies Australian women as feeling "oppressed by national mythologies and histories, by a national culture that insulted them, with the 'nation' and 'women' seemingly mutually exclusive categories" (qtd. in Kosssew 24).

Although alternative versions were known at the time of their publication, they did not fit into the heroic version of the Australian literary tradition established upon Henry Lawson's back. Some of these muted voices - Louisa Lawson, Barbara Baynton, and Tasma - and their versions of Australia and Australianness will be presented in the following chapter.

# Women's Literature and the Construction of National Identity

This work is positioned within a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, it gives credit to literary colonial productions by white women writers to imagine a different, more inclusive version of Australia. On the other, it treats Aboriginal issues at the margins of the analysis. Ghassan Hage reminds us: "It should be noted that whatever traces of colonial confidences existed in Australia are built on genocidal practices, and so remain haunted by these constitutive deeds" (52). While the theoretical approach of this work gives credit to Aboriginal issues and identifies both settler-men as well as settler-women as invaders and executives of imperial power, it, nevertheless, accredits the importance of gender relations in colonial Australia as having influenced society. Cultural, social, biological, and religious genocidal practices dominated the nineteenth century, and women undoubtedly participated in the colonial enterprise. However, there constituted diverging voices with respect to gender as well as race which are worth noting. They presented a diverse and informed picture of Australia and for that they are worth remembering and worth being included into the discourse on nation formation. Dale Spender constitutes that "In any appraisal of the Australian continent, its people, its place an appreciation of the writing of its women is essential" (xxiii). In the following paragraphs three different women writers will be presented who engaged in the discussion on the nation in three different genres: essay, short story, and novel. Before turning to their work and their lives, a brief positioning of their place within Australian literature will be presented. Susan Sheridan, in *Along the Faultlines,* seeks to explore the faultlines where tensions between "sex," "race" and "nation" become visible and it will be the aim of the following chapters to particularly explore the tensions between "sex" and "nation."

## 1    Louisa Lawson, Barbara Baynton, and Tasma in the Literary Tradition

As discussed in the introduction, literature is a witness and a means to explore the contradictions inherent in any society. Some texts can be read against others to reveal inconsistencies inherent in social life. This approach is taken towards the analysis of Tasma's novel *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill,* Barbara Baynton's short story "Squeaker's Mate," and

Louisa Lawson's essay "The Australian Bush-Woman." The emergence of Australian literature and Australian literary criticism will be briefly sketched, for it is literary criticism that shapes the discourse on literature, which includes and excludes cultural productions and comments on past, present, and future developments.

The emergence of Australian literature was commented upon by different critics who varied in their assumptions regarding the function of literature in making the national character. According to H.M. Green in *A History of Australian Literature*, Australian literature as a whole lacked "serious and systematic criticism" (ix); he defined the criticism so far as having been scrappy and unimaginative and continued that there was no Australian tradition except for literary remnants of the 1890s. He defined Australia as a "young and swiftly developing community" whose many emerging writers had an urge to create rather than criticise national developments (ix). Barbara Baynton's portrayals of the horrors in the bush are not regarded as criticism of bush society, but rather earn the status of inventions. Green implies that Baynton intentionally emphasised the miserable and grim nature of the bush to gain more effect. The reasons for her short stories not living up to the status of masterpieces are to be found in "the accumulation […] of so many horrors that they come gradually to appear invented and unnatural; and a straining of the style to intensify the effect" (561). For Green, too many horrors cannot be "real." "Squeaker's Mate" is not as "real and human" as Henry Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" (562). Green mutes Baynton's opinion and her literary voice by assessing her views as inventions which cannot contribute to a national tradition.

A similar practice is found with regard to Tasma. On the one hand, her cosmopolitan lifestyle was assessed positively through injecting intellectuality into Australian literature. However, on the other hand, her absence from Australia and her reliance on her memory in the creation of her novels made her an unreliable author. Her Australian memory was neither detailed nor vivid, she was not able to perceive the emergence of the type of a "real Australian" (Green 253) and was thus, not in the position to engage in the discussion on the emerging nation. The overwhelmingly positive press from London after the publication of her work found its recipients in Australia but they soon either forgot about Tasma or her work was relegated behind bookshelves and out of literary editions. Interestingly, Tasma as well as many other colonial women writers, found entry into the very first edition of Australian literature, which was published in 1896, but experienced exclusion in following collections on Australian literature. If included, the assessment of her work was humble as Geoffrey Dutton in *The Literature of Australia* suggests:

She lacks the energy and originality of mind […], and always keeps the discussion within the frame of the story. There is enough created life in her fiction to make her of interest to the literary historian, but yet too little to make her of more than passing interest. There is nothing really distinctive about her work: she seems to have done all that she could do within the confines of the romance. (159)

Tasma's intellectual achievement in the judgment of Australian-English relations and her informed assessment of colonial life in Australia through the presentation of social relations is ignored. Rather, she is relegated to the domain of the romance, which "appealed most strongly to women" (159) and was, according to the critic, devoid of any skill and distinctiveness worth mentioning.

Louisa Lawson, a poet, writer, and publisher of the first Australian feminist magazine, the *Dawn*, is ignored in Green's history. Twenty years after Green's publication, Leonie Kramer assessed Australian literature and Australian literary criticism in *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*. Barbara Baynton's short stories are judged in a more positive manner. Baynton is praised for presenting the bush as a place of oppression and danger for the vulnerable, which are exclusively women. According to Green, the male characters in Baynton's stories are "warmly affectionate", "stoically patient," and "unexpectedly tender" (561) and they experience unjust portrayal by their creator. Kramer corrects Green's assumption: "The dread derives not from apprehensiveness of the bush, but from the sudden ugly attention of various threatening figures who inhabit the bush" (75). Although she retains from explicitly assigning these "figures" a gender, reading *Bush Studies* reveals that there are no other figures in the bush than men who threaten women's existence. In 1986 Kenneth Goodwin published a book under the same title as Green's work. In his *A History of Australian Literature*, Goodwin identified the contrasts of gloom and hope, colonialism and nationalism, and land and language as the main informants of Australian literature of the first century of settlement (1). While the land informed Australia's uniqueness in opposition to Britain; the English language bound the colonists to British values. According to Graeme Turner, individuals in Australian fiction and film are characterized as convicts, bushmen, or mates who are defeated or face death in the face of an alienated environment. He agrees with Goodwin's analysis by identifying the concept of "defeat" as one major constituent of Australian national identity (*National Fictions* 71). Women's experiences in the bush are exemplary of the contrast between gloom and hope, and the lives of the writers discussed is reminiscent of the contrast between colonialism and nationalism, as portrayed in tasma's fiction.

The latest volume on Australian literature was published in 2000 by Elizabeth Webby. It gives the reader a comprehensive overview of what is understood as Australian literature at the end of the twentieth century. In terms of colonial literature, Webby identifies colonial writers as primarily supplying the English market with accounts of the colony up to the point when the *Bulletin* becomes a successful magazine and mouthpiece of mostly Australian-born writers. Those writers built up on the stories and accounts of earlier settlers and explorers, who, after the gold rush had died down, ventured further into the continent, establishing the notions of "outback" and the "Never Never." The lack of publishing houses and rejection of many locally produced novels meant that writers had to trust on publication in Britain (Webby, *Australian Literature* 53). This experience was equally shared by male and female writers.

## 2        Alternative Versions of National Identity

The making of the Australian nation and its identity seemed quite uniform in the histories of the early twentieth century. Historians and histories agreed upon the male itinerant worker of the outback as the "typical" Australian. This previously uncontested agreement was refuted by the feminist historians of *Creating a Nation*, who claim that "The process of creating a nation […] always involves conflict in the encounter between diversity and the incitement to national uniformity" (2). The conflict produced in the process of nation creation was not a conflict between equals. Rather, it inevitably contained the suppression of some voices by more powerful agents. The elevation of certain traits, acts, and individuals to the status of national heroes and national characteristics rendered others irrelevant and thus non-Australian. With regard to women writers, as representatives of diversity, the editors of *Debutante Nation* claim:

> feminist cultural critics who exhumed the works of women writers to counteract patriarchal representations of women were soon dissatisfied with a theory of women's exclusion from the making of Australian culture. It became clear that women's work formed a kind of female subculture, silenced in privileged discourse of national culture […]. (xvi)

Feminist academics of the 1960s and 1970s challenged the silencing of women's voices by deconstructing the cultural figure of the bushman as the "typical" Australian and writing formerly excluded groups, mostly women, back into history and national consciousness. The

academics of the second-wave feminism produced alternative versions of Australian history, which are now part of the mainstream, claiming authority over topics previously believed to be male domains. The male version of Australian identity with its rigorous exclusion of women and women's experiences in the formation of the Australian nation became topics of contest and scrutiny within the academia from the 1960s onwards.

The 1890s did not present a unified "school" of national literature; rather they presented a decade of debate and continuous argument. The nationalist movement did not only preoccupy itself with the realities and experiences of the bush but also with life in the growing cities and the values, which developed among the emerging bourgeoisie (Docker 22). In particular, the 1890s saw an influx of women into educational institutions, growing participation in the workforce, and a decline in the marriage and birth rates. The emergence of the New Women presented a challenge to the Australian as bushman; as the "Lone Hand." Women writers like Tasma and Louisa Lawson, who were financially independent, presented and engaged in contemporary political and social issues.

Another aspect of a colonial woman's reality can be traced in the work and the lives of Rosa Praed and Tasma. Both shared a sense of estrangement and dislocation while they found themselves positioned between the old and the new world. Their upbringing installed in them the knowledge of more than one culture. This dualistic position is reflected in their writing. These women writers, among others, also experienced many varying and contradicting feelings during their lives: belonging, alienation, uniqueness, superiority, victims of and executer of oppression. In Australia, women belonged to the group of the white coloniser, the invader who believed himself superior to the colonised. Women are reported to have been brutal and ruthless masters towards their Indigenous male and female servants (Huggins 14). At the same time, their identities as women forced them to endure hardships not known to men; divorce was difficult to obtain, life in the bush was for many maddening, lonely, and arduous. In the dominant literary tradition, women were mostly spoken for by men and remained, just like the bush, the Other against whom men positioned themselves as heroes of the new country. In this opposition, male settlers were portrayed as the founding fathers of the new country and Henry Lawson was titled the "founding father" of Australian literature. But along the lines of the bushman's experiences was a range of bushwomen who differed in their outlook and experience from their husbands. They were not silent, but silenced, and it is the aim of the following paragraphs to redeem some of the previous silence. Due to feminist, historical, and literary research much is known about living conditions of settler women in the

nineteenth century and the unknown "Other" had been given a voice to speak to us from the past.

## 3    Louisa Lawson: "The Australian Bush-Woman"

Louisa Lawson (1848-1920) presents a public as well as literary figure whose feminist essays are enlightening to read, even for today's readers, for they are reflective of a witty and intelligent mind and courageous woman. Louisa was the mother of Henry Lawson and publisher of his first stories in the *Republican.* A writer, poet, publisher, editor, and founder of the female magazine the *Dawn,* she was a pioneer of the Woman Movement in Australia, acclaimed as the "mother of women's suffrage." As a journalist, she contributed to the shaping and distribution of feminist ideas via the *Dawn*, which ran from 1888 to 1905. In 1883, Lawson and her husband separated after 17 years of marriage, which they spent on the goldfields and a selection.[25] She moved to Sydney where she lived in poor conditions, managing to provide for herself and her children. Life in Sydney was not easy for her but the city provided the only place a woman could live without male support. Her biography makes it clear that she knew about the varying conditions in which women at the end of the nineteenth century lived in many parts of Australia from first-hand experience. In 1887, she founded the short-lived *Republican* which a year later gave way to the *Dawn*, Australia's feminist answer to the widely distributed *Bulletin.* She regarded the *Dawn* as a mouthpiece for women's concerns. In the first edition of the *Dawn* Louisa proclaims:

"WOMAN is not uncompleted man, but diverse," says Tennyson, and being diverse why should she not have her journal in which her divergent hopes, aims and opinions may have representation. Every eccentricity of belief, and every variety of bias in mankind allies itself with a printing-machine, and gets its singularities bruited about in type, but where is the printing ink champion of mankind's better half? […] Here then is DAWN, the Australian Woman's journal and mouthpiece - a phonograph to wind up audibly the whispers, pleadings and demands of the sisterhood. Here we will give publicity to women's wrongs, will fight their battles, assist to repair what evils we can, and give advice to the best of our ability. (4)

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[25] The term "selection" denotes a piece of land, suitable for small-scale farming, which was acquired under the Land Selection Act between 1860 and 1890.

In the *Dawn*, Lawson addressed topics ranging from marriage to nutrition, clothing to politics. The wide range of topics was not only reflective of her broad interests but also suggestive of many areas of women's lives in need of change. In the essay "Spurious Women," she urged women to take off their corsets for they restricted them not only in their movement and breathing but were also damaging to their health and psyche. In the essay "Tea and Bread-and-Butter," she urged women to have a balanced and proper diet, to eat enough so they are mentally and physically strong. Her main concern seemed to have been with the future children of the future country, for only strong and healthy women can bear strong and healthy offspring which were to become the foundation of the new nation. In "Unhappy Love Matches," she urged women to be cautious of marriage, even if founded on love. Although Lawson rejected the family model as the sole option for women, she, nevertheless, engaged in the discussion on the nature of the future nation by offering a certain model of woman. According to her, the future Australian woman is to be healthy, independent, united with other women, and equally equipped with political rights, i.e. the vote.

In "The Australian Bush-Woman," written in 1889, Lawson presents her version of a bushwoman's[26] reality and her vision for the future Australia. She makes dangers in the bush for women subject of her essay. Essay-writing in Australia had not been very popular in the beginnings of white settlement. The novel, short story, and diaries were more apt to convey settler's fears, hopes, and anticipation in the first decades of settlement, giving rise to a great body of reflective literary productions (Salusinszky 2). Salusinszky proposes that the essay serves a different purpose: "While the essay may employ narrative, or indeed description or argument, among its strategies, merely telling a story can never be its aim – which is, usually quite explicitly, to convey a new understanding" (2). This statement serves as the approach to Louisa Lawson's "The Australian Bush-Woman." Lawson did not only reflect on the current state of women in Australia. Amongst other social issues, she urged for a new understanding, a new role of women within the boundaries of the newly emerging nation. Her claims were not preoccupied with the past, but with the present as a starting point for the future. Her accounts of the hardships faced by the bushwoman are taken as a point of departure for the discussion of the future Australia and the future Australian. For that reason, Lawson can be included in the ranks of commentators on and creators of a new Australia.

Lawson begins "The Australia Bush-Woman" with the numerical statement, that in 1887 there are 417,000 women in the colony of New South Wales, which she recognises as

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[26] I use the term "bushwoman" without hyphenation as proposed in the Macquarie Dictionary.

"417,000 different kinds of women" (35), a modern approach echoing modern feminists' calls to acknowledge the category woman as diverse. She then roughly distinguishes women as city women, country women, and bushwomen and follows with a detailed portrayal of the latter at the end of the nineteenth century, whom she identifies as "a race apart" (35). Lawson offers the following definition of a bushwoman:

> For by bush-women I mean not the wives of settlers in accessible country, near a railroad or town, but the wives of boundary-riders, shepherds, 'cockatoo' settlers in the far 'back country;' women who share almost on equal terms with men the rough life and the isolation which belong to civilization's utmost fringe. (35)

These experiences give rise to a certain type of woman, who cannot be found anywhere else in Australia. Her physique is "starveling" compared with the plump city woman; her energy, despite the heat, enduring. She is "able to do, and almost always doing, the work of a strong man" (36). Louisa Lawson, as other writers of the 1890s, credits the bush with giving rise to a certain type of woman: self-neglectful, generous, modest, enduring, tough, and eager to learn about the world. The bush gives rise to positive characteristics in women: generosity, modesty, resourcefulness, and hospitality. However, these characteristics do not help to overcome one of the most harmful elements in the bush: isolation. While the bush inflicts women with positive traits, it also renders their existence in bush society nearly impossible. In face of emergency, the woman is bound to help herself, not always successfully as Lawson recalls: "In one case the husband, with the customary indifferent, indolent, non-interfering habit, left his [pregnant] wife to ride alone to the midwife. She became ill on the way, and was never seen alive again" (37).

In addition to isolation as a life-threatening fact, the indifferent and unhelpful husband is introduced. Lawson distinguishes between men in the bush with respect to their nationality. If he is Australian-born, he is likely to be neglectful and indolent, chatting away with his mates while the woman is left to do all the work. If the man is foreign-born,[27] he is likely to be brutal. In an area of "no law, no public opinion to interfere, […] the wife is at the man's mercy [and] there is a vast deal of the vilest treatment" (38). Lawson criticises men's brutality and the absence of law which make women vulnerable and subject to violence by their husbands. She identifies the cruelties and hardships as experienced women in the bush, and offers a critique on the nature of the contemporary Australian in the bush.

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[27] Lawson identifies English, Germans, and Scandinavians as distinct nationalities in the bush.

Her major accomplishment is the introduction of the category "female" into the debate on the national identity. According to her, the bush not only gives rise to a typical male Australian but also a typical female Australian. She is resourceful, generous, and modest but overall leads a sad life for she suffers isolation and the exposure to the brutality and neglect of her husband. Lawson's depiction of the bushwoman anticipates Barbara Baynton's discussion of the bushwoman and her critique of bush society which is organised according to the economic resourcefulness of its members. Lawson clearly shows that as long as a woman can work and keep her criticism to herself, she is able to hold a position in bush society, even if it is a rather low position. In the case of sickness or pregnancy, incidents where a woman's productivity is on hold, she is neglected. In case of extreme neglect she faces death.

The bush is constructed as a dangerous place for women on two grounds: man's brutality and isolation. The latter hinders women to access the law, to organise and help each other. In addition to Henry Lawson's "bush all round," which brings hardships upon the woman, Louisa Lawson identifies the husband, who belongs to the woman's immediate and intimate sphere, as the inaugurator of danger. Consequently, the "outside" as well as the "inside" have to be feared by bushwomen. Danger is to be found in the space allocated to women, the domestic sphere, and it follows that no place in the bush is safe for women. Louisa Lawson would not be the political and engaged voice she is known for today, if she did not offer an answer to the bushwoman's plights. She inflicts the daughters of the bushwomen, the coming Australian women, with the duty and ability to change Australia into a fairer place for women through the means of education and, finally and inevitably, suffrage. She concludes her essay:

> They are the stuff that a fine race is made of – these daughters of bush-women. […] these girls, quick, capable and active, will be ready to step into their [the bush-women's] places, and the iron strength of character, the patience, endurance and self-repression which the bush-women practised and developed, passing to a generation more enlightened and progressive, will give us a race of splendid women, fit to obtain what their mothers never dreamed of – women's right. (39)

These last words of her short story exhibit her main concern – suffrage – and her version of a national character which is to be found in the women of the emerging nation. Louisa believed in progress and the Darwinist notion of race, but located the future nation's positive and desired traits, its "iron strength of character" and "endurance" in the women – the pioneer women, the bushwomen – who also "braved the bush" and made Australia into a prosperous and progressive place (Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 138). In this hazardous and insecure

space, women did contribute in the country's development and are praised by Louisa Lawson in her poem "The Women of the Bush" as follows:

> Ah how I bless the pioneers
>
> The women lost to fame,
>
> Who braved the bush for strenuous years
>
> To make Australia's name. (qtd. in Lake, *Getting Equal* 22)

Just like her son, Louisa speaks to an audience of interested and informed readers. Whereas Henry was widely published in the radical mouthpiece of the democratic nationalists, the *Bulletin*, Louisa published herself and similar voices in her feminist journal the *Dawn*. Its wide distribution guaranteed her a large readership and displayed a broad national and international interest in women's issues. The following chapter will further address in detail what I termed the alternative versions of the bush; it will concentrate on Barbara Baynton and her short story "Squekaer's Mate," and offer an analysis of Tasma's life and her most successful novel, *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*.

## 4      Barbara Baynton: Bush Horrors in "Squeaker's Mate"

Barbara Baynton's bush is a nightmare. Women are raped, killed, or crippled by their husbands and other men of the bush. Schaffer, in *Women and the Bush*, writes: "Baynton's writings shake up, disturb and deflate masculine values" (149). While Louisa Lawson identifies men and the isolation of the bush as threatening to women's lives, Barbara Baynton goes further: she explicitly shows us how women suffer from indolent husbands, how their humanity and dignity is taken away and broken by the men of the bush. The collection of her short stories, *Bush Studies*, comprises six stories. Together with the 1907 published novel *Human Toll* it constitutes her only literary output. Her literary reputation, however, mostly rests on *Bush Studies*, in which she portrays the difficulties of bush life experienced by women. She portrays isolation and terror of life in the rural districts of Australia. Women in the bush are presented as vulnerable, weak, and sexually exploited characters; as innocent victims of men's behaviour in the bush, but also as strong, intelligent, and more suitable for bush life than men, who are depicted as cruel, vulgar, brutal, and selfish. All situations are set in the midst of a hostile and barren bush. The bush is not romantically portrayed as the "nurse and tutor of eccentric minds, the home of the weird, and of much that is different from things in other lands" (248), as praised by Henry Lawson in the short story "The Bush Undertaker,"

nor is it credited with giving rise to an egalitarian society. On the contrary, Baynton sees the bush as the breeder of cruelty without a single trace of heroism. She thus refuses and negates the received version of the bush to be found in *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (65). Baynton contradicts what A. A. Philips called a "robust nationalism" in Australia's fiction of the 1890s (*Australian Tradition* 72). She refuses to portray her male characters as heroic, and does not follow A. G. Stephen who proclaims: "Let us look at our country and its fauna and flora, its trees and streams and mountains, through clear Australian eyes, not through bias-bleared English spectacles; and there is no more beautiful country in the world" (6). She refuses to comply with this imperative, her bush is not beautiful, and therefore is termed "the dissident voice from the bush" by A. A. Philips, quite a contrary label to that given to Henry Lawson being "Australia writ large" in Manning Clark's estimation (both qtd. in Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 148). The label "dissident" exposes dominant power structures in the assessment of Australia's literary tradition. It reveals who decides who is "in" and who is "out," whose are understood as portraying a desired version of Australia and whose words do not find recognition. The reason for her dissidence is not to be found in her literary skills, but in her one-dimensional portrayal of men and women in bush society. All male characters are negatively constructed as cruel and ignorant perpetrators and women are shown as the innocent victims of men's cruelty. In doing so, Baynton refuses to romanticise bush life. A closer reading of the story "Squeaker's Mate" will demonstrate Baynton's own version of late nineteenth-century Australia, women's status and men's role in rural Australian life. Her most discussed story is probably "The Chosen Vessel," which is often constructed as an alternative depiction of woman to Henry Lawson's "The Drover's Wife," both stories are contrasted and de-constructed in Schaffer's *Women and the Bush*.

Before proceeding with an analysis of Baynton's story, a brief outline of her life is presented since her literary work is said to have many autobiographical traces. It is not easy for biographers to reconstruct Baynton's life as she distributed various versions of herself. Her grandson, Henry B. Gullett, explains in the foreword to *Bush Studies*:

> She was a highly imaginative woman with no strict regard for truth. She told her children many conflicting stories of her early years and of her parents, and it rather seems as if the truth to her was what she chose to believe it ought to be at any given moment, and of course it would vary with her moods. (5)

This inconsistency in the accounts of her own life was used by various critics, such as H. M. Green mentioned above, to construct Barbara Baynton as an untrustworthy writer, whose

description of the bush must have stemmed from her highly imaginative mind and attention seeking personality. Despite the uncertainties regarding her origin, it is recorded how and where Barbara Baynton spent her childhood and how she experienced her first marriage. She was born on 4 June 1857 as the seventh child of Elizabeth and John Lawrence in the village of Scone, 400 kilometres north of Sydney in New South Wales. Baynton later claimed that captain Lawrence Robert Kilpatrick and not John Lawrence was her father. Her childhood was uneventful; life in the outback was hard and dull, so she took refuge in the literary works of Dickens and, above all, the Russian novelists Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Tolstoy. In 1880, she married the selector Alexander Frater, with whom she moved to the Coonamble district where she led a life as a selector's wife,[28] bearing two sons and a daughter, and experiencing the hardships of the bush. When her husband ran off with a house servant in 1887, Baynton left with her children for Sydney, just like Louisa Lawson did, where she managed to obtain a divorce. After the divorce was granted, she married 70-year-old Thomas Baynton, a retired surgeon, who was affluent and well established in a circle of literary and academic friends. Finally, financially secure and stimulated by an educated circle of friends in Sydney, she started writing short stories and was published for the first time in 1896 in the *Bulletin.* Her short story "The Chosen Vessel," reprinted as "The Tramp," saw some major changes prior to its publication, for its version of the cruel bushman ran counter to the dominant version presented in the journal. Unable to find a publisher in Australia, Baynton sailed to London, where *Bush Studies* was published by Duckworth & Co in 1902 and was followed by positive reviews. After her return to Sydney in 1903, her husband died, leaving her a wealthy businesswoman. She invested in the stock exchange and furthered her trade with antiques. When she returned to London, she married Lord Headley and lived in England for a few years but eventually returned again to Australia and died in Melbourne in 1929 (Clarke, *Tasma* 266-268).

Although her literary work is mostly inspired by the experiences of her childhood and youth, the whole outline of her life presents Barbara Baynton as a strong-minded and independent woman. She obtained a divorce at a time when divorce was an arduous and reputation-damaging option for women, moved with her two children to Sydney and managed to establish a new life for all of them. The societal developments which Baynton experienced in the times of her childhood, youth, and early married life are seen as crucial in the development of the Australian nation. H.B. Gullett notes: "For these were the years when

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[28] The term "selector" denotes a person who selected land for farming under the governmental Land Selection Act.

through the eyes of our own native-born we first began to see our country in a realistic perspective" (4). Her status as native-born privileges her with the ability to see Australia as it "really" was, her depictions must therefore rank among the "true" and "real" descriptions of Australian colonial life and her literary output adds to a greater understanding of this important period in Australian history. Barbara Baynton's life is characterised through a multitude of experiences ranging from a remote and hard life in the bush to the engagement in literary circles of Sydney and London. Barbara was a mother, wife, businesswoman, and writer. She lived in different worlds, experiencing the dullness of bush life as well as the excitements of her international travels. Today, Barbara Baynton is acclaimed for the presentation of an alternative version of bush life in colonial Australia which suggests a revolt in the writings of the 1890s "against being an Australian" (Phillips, *Baynton's Stories* 31). By refusing to comply with the ascribed version of her contemporaries, she stands out as a solitary, but strong voice in colonial literature. Her stories contribute to a view of the 1890s as a fragmented period which was not as coherent as attested in later decades.

In the subsequent paragraph, Baynton's short story "Squeaker's Mate" is discussed to show Baynton's view on the organisation of bush society and her alternative version of the bush. "Squeaker's Mate" was also subject to revisions prior to its publication in the *Bulletin* by the publisher A. G. Stephens. Elizabeth Webby points out that the revised version of the story shifts the emphasis from the sufferings of the woman, inflicted by her husband, to the husband Squeaker, who is presented as both her attacker as well as defender, making the story less shocking than the original version (*Revisions of "Squeaker's Mate"* 459). The following short summary and the subsequent discussion rest on the original version, which was republished along with Baynton's other stories as *Bush Studies* in 1980.

The married couple, the wife Squeaker's Mate and her husband Squeaker, own a farm in the bush and earn their living from selling honey and wool. Squeaker is the nickname given to the husband by all acquaintances, his real name remains unknown. The wife's name remains Squeaker's Mate until the very last sentences of the story when her real name is revealed. Squeaker's Mate is a true bushwoman and a hard-working and trusted business partner. She knows life in the bush and is economically successful. Squeaker, on the other hand, is an idle, childish, and ignorant loafer. When felling trees, a branch falls on Squeaker's Mate and buries her underneath it. Squeaker manages to drag her out but offers no help to the immobile and injured woman. Ignorant of her situation, he contemplates on the work he might have to do at night if she remains immobile. Red Bob, a passing businessman, who trades

honey with Squeaker's Mate and values her character and her business skills, is concerned with her situation and initiates her removal to their hut. There, a doctor is called, who diagnoses Squeaker's Mate with paralysis due to a broken spine; the shocking message is that she will not be able to walk ever again. She is left having to rely on her husband's help since she has no relations to other women. Squeaker, who always profited form his wife's industriousness and her money, leaves her alone for a weekend. On his return he is drunk and does not refrain from insulting the sick woman. Lazy and drunk, he is not able to earn money and sells sheep, which are, in fact, her property, to the town butchers. Before he leaves for town again, he moves her to another hut at the back of the property, where usually tools are stored. The only companion left is her faithful dog. Returning from town, Squeaker is not by himself but accompanied by a young and pregnant woman, with whom he inhabits the main hut. His new, pregnant mate is not suited for life in the bush and soon realises that her new partner is a show-off rather than someone who can provide for her and her arriving child. Additionally, the new mate is scared by the presence of the cripple in the back hut and refuses to take care of her. While Squeaker is away during a period of drought, the new mate, ignorant of bush life, wastes the remaining water and becomes extremely thirsty. Not knowing how to help herself, she finally crawls in awful fear towards the billy[29] which is located next to the cripple in the back hut. When the new mate is close to the bed, Squeaker's Mate takes a strong grip of the women's hand, holds her tight, and draws her down towards her. The young women feels the sick woman's breath in her face and cannot escape the penetrative gaze. Just in that moment, Squeaker returns home to find the shrieking woman crying for his help. He grabs a pole, punches down on his old mate's arm, and frees the young woman, who, terrified and close to insanity, escapes to the bush. Now Squeaker realises that he is alone again and therefore tries to ingratiate himself by blaming everything on the escaped young woman. He strokes his old mate's arms but the dog attacks him. At this point terrified Squeaker calls his old mate the first time by her proper name, Mary, begging her to call the dog off. But the loyal dog drags Squeaker out of the hut away from the woman.

After the short summary of the plot, a close reading of the text is presented to show how Barbara Baynton displays to the reader the Australian bush and the position of man and woman therein. When the story opens, the wife and husband are on their way to fell trees. Their characterisation starts with the first sentence: "The woman carried the bag with the axe

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[29] "Billy" is the Australian term for a metal pot used for cooking or boiling water in camping.

and maul and wedges; the man had the billy and clean tucker-bags; the cross-cut saw linked them" (54). This first sentence already establishes that the common public/private sphere division does not hold as an organising principle in the bush. The woman is out in the bush, carrying heavy tools. She seems to be the hard-working part of the couple; she is the actor who "carries" the tools, while the man "has" the billy. His action does not entail physical strength. They are both linked by a saw, a tool normally used for cutting, dividing, and separating. The difference in character is further reinforced through their outward appearance. "She was taller than the man, and the equability of her body, contrasting with his indolent slouch, accentuated the difference" (54). She is called Squeaker's Mate by the other men who collectively agree that "she was the best long-haired mate that ever stepped in petticoats" (54). Squeaker's Mate trades successfully in honey and wool. It may be assumed that she is highly skilful, for Louisa Lawson in "The Australian Bush-Woman" acknowledges that surviving in the bush is hard: "They [bush-women] try to keep bees, but the heat starves them out. If they have cattle the drought or the pleuro kills them" (36).

Squeaker's Mate, as the women in Baynton's other stories, lacks her own first name and is only referred to in relation to her husband. We are reminded of Schaffer's analysis of women's position in Henry Lawson's literary work where women did not exist in their own right but only in relation to or as extensions of men. But Squeaker in itself is no proper name but only a nickname, an invented name. Consequently, Squeaker's Mate is not only an invention, but the appendix of an invention. The nickname of Squeaker is most likely deliberately chosen by Baynton to emphasise his small, useless nature, just like the mouse or other small animals that squeak. The sound itself is also associated with small, scared, annoying, and superfluous animals. Further on in the first paragraph, Squeaker's Mate is constructed against other women, the selectors' wives, who address her apparent lack of womanly clothes but this "neither turned nor troubled Squeaker's Mate" (54).

The woman is taller than her husband, she carries all tools and as soon as they arrive at their destination, she immediately calculates what needs to be done and energetically encourages ("Let's tackle it") her husband to join her with the work while he is looking for a shady spot. "Come on," she encourages him a second time, just like an impatient parent, so he comes, joins in some work, but soon stops to gaze at the sun. He decides that it is time for food, but the woman disagrees. Not happy about the objection, he suddenly catches sight of a bee and shouts out excitedly: "There's another bee! Wait, you go on with the axe, an' I'll track 'im" (54). A hint of irony cannot go unnoticed with the reader, who imagines the woman working the tree with the axe, while her husband is running after a bee. After one

page, both characters are sufficiently characterised for the reader to side with the industrious woman, who exhibits all traits associated with a bushman, and feel sorry for her being married to this idle and childish man. This opinion is further reinforced by other bushmen who call her "mate," while depicting Squeaker as "'a nole woman', not because he was hanging round the honey-tins, but after man's fashion to eliminate all virtue" (59). The reversion in the appreciation of gender roles, i.e. calling a useless man "woman" while naming an industrious woman "man," points to the patriarchal structures prevalent in the masculine bush society (Lange 145). "Woman" becomes a derogatory term, while "man" is elevated to a term of praise and approval.[30] The woman continues to fell the tree until suddenly a branch snaps at a joint and buries her underneath. She is unable to move her arms and the upper part of her body. Squeaker, under great physical strain, moves her to the side. He cannot establish for himself whether she is awake or asleep, since she does not react to his questions. The only word she utters after the accident and for the rest of the story is "pipe." She receives her pipe but Squeaker leaves her to herself and the pipe falls out of her mouth burning her arm and her clothes. He is indifferent and starts wondering why she sweats. He has not understood what happened to his wife and continues with ignorant comments. She is vulnerable and her muteness seems to enforce her vulnerability, but when her muteness is juxtaposed with Squeaker's ignorant comments, Squeaker's Mate exhibits a moral superiority and shows her inner strength (Lange 147). She would have many reasons to complain, to lift her voice, and demand care from Squeaker, but she remains silent and endures her misery, knowing Squeaker would not be able to help her anyway. He is portrayed as a lazy, childish, weak, pretentious, stupid, impatient and, above all, highly ignorant and uncaring character. This is confirmed when a third character, the businessman Red Bob, is introduced who becomes "greatly concerned, when he found that Squeaker's mate was "'avin' a sleep out there 'cos a tree fell on her" (58), as Squeaker explains. Baynton uses many points in the text to present Squeaker as an ignorant, mean, and simple-minded husband who is unable to judge his wife's situation properly. The reader starts wondering if Squeaker knows and loves his wife at all. The reader instantly understands that something terrible happened to Mary after the tree fell on her and wonders why her husband misjudges the situation. Squeaker's behaviour is explained as follows:

> Of course it is hard to conceive of anyone as unintelligent as this, but in a country that
> has established a hierarchic order of man, mate, horse, dog, wife, other women, black

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[30] This practice is common in today's Australia, for example at sporting events, such as Australian Rules Football. The audience screams out "You girl" when a player makes a mistake or does not go in hard for the ball.

people – then anything is possible. Squeaker is heir to centuries of convinced faith that woman is object only, a kind of domestic machine, preferably self-mending, without feelings. (qtd. in Lange 148)

So far, Mary has functioned properly, mending the house and taking care of business thus providing for Squeaker on all accounts. He was not used to being responsible for his own life and did not acknowledge how much he owed Mary. As long as everything functioned smoothly there was no reason for him to worry and care. But even the change in circumstances did not bring an end to his self-centredness. After Squeaker confronts her coldly with the fact that she will remain a cripple for the rest of her life, he primarily wants to emphasise the poor situation he suddenly found himself in for he "can't be cookin' an' workin' and doin' everythin'!" (60).

When the doctor is called for and the men gather at the back of the house, their high esteem for Squeaker's Mate is again exhibited. After hearing the diagnosis, however, nobody actively turns towards Mary and offers encouraging words or help in any other way. On the contrary, "[…] without a word of parting, like shadows these men made for their homes" (59). The men's initial sympathy and respect for Squeaker's Mate vanish in the light of her disability and leads us to assume that they only valued her for the sound economic interactions she presented to them. They are reduced to mere shadows which vanish into the night; their characters are without substance. The next day, the women visit Squeaker's Mate. However, their first visit remains their last since "Squeaker's Mate was not a favourite with them – a woman with no leisure for yarning[31] was not likely to be" (59). Squeaker's Mate, who does not comply with the traditional role of a woman is treated with ignorance and even suspicion, even though her skills, and not "yarning," contribute to the survival in the bush. In addition to her dislike of "yarning," her unwomanliness is further fostered through her childlessness. In a time when women on average had eight children (Lake, *Politics of Respectability* 9), childless Squeaker's Mate certainly presented a counter figure to the dominant role model.

Colonial society is organised according to the usefulness of its members. The treatment of crippled Squeaker's Mate by both, men and women, offers a crucial insight into the workings of the colonial bush society. As long as an individual can perform a vital role and contribute to some form of success (business) or entertainment (yarning), he or she is valued among other members. Baynton is critical of the economic approach to humans which

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[31] The term "yarning" means "telling stories" or "gossiping."

she saw as prevailing in the bush (Lange 152). As the story progresses and the first impressions of the characters are reinforced, one wonders whether the portrayal of the bush husband is exaggerated. A look at Louisa Lawson's depiction of the Australian bushman in her essay "The Australian Bush-Woman" backs and reinforces Baynton's portrayal. Lawson states:

> He is not, as a rule, […] brutal to her. He […] is rather indolent and neglectful. He will sit with others talking, while she, a thin rag of a woman, drags two big buckets of water from the creek, for instance, and if he stands by while she chops the wood, he sees no unfitness in the arrangement. (38)

While Lawson's bushman finds himself in chatty company with other bushman, Baynton takes the description of the lazy and useless bushman further by denying Squeaker the existence of mates. Squeaker is not a mate among mates, he does not have mates; he completely relies on the woman and her abilities. A.A. Phillips adds reluctantly: "The central presence of a callous husband in "Squeaker's Mate" may mean only that Barbara Baynton has observed such a situation and thought it worth developing into a story" (*Australian Tradition* 33). It may not mean that the Australian bushman as a rule is callous, neglectful, and deprived of any mates a shown by Baynton.

After Squeaker's Mate learns from her husband that she will stay paralysed for the rest of her life, Squeaker treats her with utmost disrespect. He seems to take strength from her utterly weak situation. Her vulnerable position and the fact that he cannot count on her any longer to toil for him, brings out the insulting and ignorant man in him, who does not have to restrain himself any longer for he has no opposition from her to fear. In addition to the insults she has to endure, he leaves her with hardly any provisions for a whole weekend. Drunk on his return, he continuously insults and threatens her. The longer she is unable to work, the more work piles up. She advises him, though she never addresses him directly, on what can be done by him, still hoping to recover to take care of things herself. But he disrespects all her suggestions and ignores her. "'Sometimes he whistled while she spoke, often swore, generally went out, and when this was inconvenient, dull as he was, he found the 'Go and bite yerself like a snake', would instantly silence her" (61).

Her dog takes to rounding up the sheep in the man's absence. The dog takes over the duties which should be exercised by Squeaker. Eventually, the man sells her sheep to the butcher in town and provides himself with fanciful new clothes, perfume, and new boots. None of the money she would be entitled to is spent to better her situation. He prepares a new bunk for her "in the old hut at the back, which served for tools and other things which

sunlight and rain did not hurt" (62) and promises to replace the old roof, which he never does. She is reluctant at first, refuses to be moved, but after he has slept there a few nights she is willing to compromise. As soon as she is removed out of sight, Squeaker returns from town with a new mate, filling the absence with a younger and pregnant woman, though not pregnant from Squeaker. The introduction of a pregnant woman makes Squeaker's Mate's sexuality a topic of discussion. Since she has no children herself and "was not learned in these matters, though she understood all about an ewe and lamb" (64), it may be inferred that she does not have a sexual relationship with Squeaker. She rather treats him like a child and forgives him his carelessness for "she knew the man, and her tolerance was of the mysteries" (55). Additionally, we may infer that Squeaker's Mate held enough power, stemming from her economic success, to be the one to decide whether she entered into a sexual relationship with Squeaker. However, her name, Mary, as revealed at the end of he story, which is associated with Virgin Mary and her child-like treatment of Squeaker support the assumption that Mary contributed all her energies to the running of the farm (Lange 150). Another reading of her sexuality is presented below.

With the arrival of a new mate, the paralysed woman is no longer referred to as Squeaker's Mate but takes on the identity of a "cripple," "disabled woman" or "sick woman." She no longer has any connection to the man or her house but is positioned outside where tools and animals are kept. This physical disposal of Squeaker's Mate exemplifies that a cripple, no longer able to perform her duties, is not desired and hence not looked after in the bush. If her husband, her lawful protector does not care for his sick wife, and only strives to replace her with a new mate as soon as possible, who else will protect her? The answer is that nobody will help a woman in the bush. Mateship volatilises in the face of real need.

No help can be expected from Squeaker's new mate, who visits the old mate once, but is frightened by her silence and tells herself that she will not repeat her visit ever again. As a town woman, she lacks an understanding of bush life and demands Squeaker to fulfil the role of the supporter. As expected, he fails at most things. It becomes clear that both, the town woman and the crude man, are not suited for a life in the bush and that Squeaker is far away from being the heroic bushman he would like to be. He only survived so far thanks to the skills of his old mate. When he goes away to fetch water, he does not return for a long time and leaves his new mate, who unknowingly wastes the remaining water, to suffer from thirst. She investigates whether the paralysed woman has any water left in her billy and finds a half-full billy next to her bunk. Afraid of the dog and the sick woman's gaze she recedes to the house. When she discovers that the woman's eyes are closed she attempts a second try to get

to the billy. This time she is drawn back by the mere thought of the eyes opening and again recedes to the house. When the dog exits the hut to round the sheep, reminiscent of a husband, and the sick woman is discovered to be lying towards the door, the new mate starts a third attempt. Now she does not have to fear the dog or the woman's gaze. She bends towards the billy when suddenly bony fingers grip her hand, making it impossible for her to free herself. She becomes the victim of the sick woman who draws her down, close to her face and gloats into the fearful eyes, "as a wounded, robbed tigress might hold and look, she held and looked" (70). When Squeaker enters and hears his new mate shriek ("Take me from her!"), he takes a pole and forcefully, aggressively punches down on the sick woman, finally freeing his new mate. The old mate's dog, maddened from the door being closed and the sounds he hears inside, attacks Squeaker who pleads "Call 'im orf, Mary, 'e's eatin' me,…oh corl 'im orf" (71). He tries to find refuge in the old mate's bed, pretending tenderness to rouse her and the dog's sympathy, but the dog's teeth fasten in his hand and pull him back while the woman lies there motionless with a stony face. It is only when his life is at stake that the woman is called by her proper name "Mary." The younger woman runs in terror and insanity into the bush. She turns out to be the second victim of Squeaker's incompetence as a bushman. If he had managed to bring back water on time and take care of his duties, his new mate would not have been forced to look for water in the old mate's place. At the end of the story, it is not clear whether Mary is dead or not. But we might infer that she most likely did not survive the hard strokes inflicted by her husband Squeaker.

Barbara Baynton not only presents her own version of the bush and the position of men and women, she also provides a harsh critique of colonial society. In Baynton's short story, the main character, the bushwoman, is attributed with positive characteristics as physically and emotionally strong, industrious and intelligent while all men are assigned mostly negative characteristics, suggesting incompetence, brutishness, and untrustworthiness. Although the bushwoman is better equipped for a life in the bush, certain conditions, in this case her accident, make her powerless and exhibit the inner workings of the society. Despite the woman's superiority in terms of skill and emotion, the accident renders her inferior to and dependent on the man. She can no longer live her life according to her own conditions, but even prior to the accident, life for the woman in the bush was constrained by patriarchal principles, as Baynton shows. Mary's inferiority and the denial of woman's existence outside the patriarchal order are established through different textual devices in Baynton's short story (Lange 154). As already mentioned, Squeaker's Mate has no proper name throughout the

story. She is called Squeaker's Mate by her husband, by all other men and by all other women; she does not seem to resent it. When the patriarchal order is threatened, i.e. when the dog attacks Squeaker's existence, he calls out Mary's name hoping she will restore order. She does not, so the dog continues his attack until he drags Squeaker out of the hut, away from the woman. The other woman, Squeaker's new mate, is also nameless contrary to the other man who enters the stage called Red Bob. The namelessness of Baynton's female characters reinforces the deconstructive reading by Schaffer which established women's appending existence in the bush.

"Mate" is the key term in the story, as suggested in the title. Mateship was synonymous with loyalty and comradeship among the men of the bush in the face of hardships, but the term mate also denoted sexual partner (Lawson, *Barbara Baynton* 34). Each of these meanings is explored in "Squeaker's Mate." It becomes obvious that the behaviour of the woman is in line with the mateship codex common among men; she is loyal to her husband, she is the one who knows how to do things in the bush, whereas the man is neither loyal nor would he survive without her in the bush. She is the "bushman," she is a "real" mate. Baynton exposes shallowness and exclusiveness of mateship in the bush. First, she shows that not all men are apt to be called mates, Squeaker does not contribute to bush society; he is not a productive member thus, not included among the ranks of mates. Second, by juxtaposing a bushwoman next to the bushman, Baynton shows that the concept does have universal appeal. It can be attributed to both men and women, but it is without effect when a mate suffers. In the face of emergency, mateship is an empty shell.

Sexuality is explored multidimensionally by Baynton. As already mentioned, one reading suggests that Squeaker's Mate rejects sexuality on grounds of her economic independence. Since she does not rely on her husband financially, she does not have to perform sexual duties. On the other hand, Squeaker's quick substitution of the old mate by a new, who, in addition, is young and able to give birth, is indicative of the importance of sexual contacts for Squeaker. His new mate is utterly inexperienced and ignorant of bush life. It follows that he must have chosen her for her ability to be sexually active.

Another textual device to establish Squeaker's Mate's inferiority is comparing the woman to a snake. When she tries to lift herself up, Squeaker utters: "See, yer jes' ther same as a snake w'en ees back's broke, on'y yer don't bite yerself like a snake w'en 'e carnt crawl" (60). He is aware that his verbal abuse "Go and bite yerself like a snake" immediately quietens her. By abusing the defenceless woman he establishes his superiority; by comparing her to a snake he places her into the domain of the sinful Other. It was the snake who tempted

Eve to eat from the apple tree thus inaugurating Adam's condemnation from paradise. We are reminded of Henry Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" in which a snake threatened the existence of the family. Squeaker's comparison thus locates the woman in the same position as the snake: both are regarded as sinful threats to the established order. However, some sense of power still remains with Mary. Her power is established through the effect of her gaze, that is, on the level of the imaginary (Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 166). The imaginary refers to a state of being which is imagined as real but actually arises through fantasies, memories, and images, as established by Lacan. From the moment of the accident her eyes become a recurrent motif. Even if she cannot move any more, "her ever watchful eyes" make Squeaker feel vehemently uneasy, "he would not meet her eyes, and seemingly dreading something, slipped out" (62). Additionally, Squeaker's new mate from their first encounter dreads the sick woman's gaze as well as her silence. Squeaker and the new mate do not know what the sick woman thinks of them, they cannot anticipate what she is going to do, because she does not talk to them and because she cannot do anything. But both are guilt-ridden and thus see the woman's gaze as a threat. When Squeaker is out fetching water, the young woman, although terribly thirsty, thinks of a way to get the billy but gives up for "the dog would not stand that, and besides the handle would rattle, and she might hear and open her eyes" (69). At another attempt to get the billy she does feel safe because "the woman's eyes were still turned to the wall, and so tightly closed she could not possibly see where she was" (70). But while the new mate is approaching the billy, the sick woman snatches her bony fingers at the intruder's hand and pulls her face "so close for the staring eyes to gloat over" (70) that she only "held and looked" (70). It is not clear how long both women remained in this position but it must have been for a sufficient amount of time to trigger a great deal of horror in the younger woman, who after being freed by Squeaker "ran in unreasoning terror" (71) aimlessly and confused through the bush. Through her gaze, the immobile cripple is assigned mystic powers which are so powerful that they can drive people to insanity (Lange 154).

Although the sick woman is not constructed as a witch, she certainly is textually represented as a mysterious character in relation to her husband but also in relation to nature. When Squeaker is too lazy to work and the distracting bee is introduced, the woman cannot see it anywhere, "however, she knew the man, and her tolerance was of the mysteries." After the accident, the men gather outside her hut and discuss the incident and its consequences, and wonder why she had permitted her land to be taken up in Squeaker's name and conclude that this "was also for them among the mysteries." The use of the plural is indicative of more oddities. There are numerous things those men do not understand about the bushwoman.

Therefore, Baynton's construction of her female characters, as well as her own position in the literary tradition, can be read with Julia Kristeva's understanding of woman's role in mind:

> A woman is a perpetual dissident as regards the social and political consensus; she is an exile from power and thus always singular, divided, devilish, a witch […] Women is here to shake up, to disturb, to deflate masculine values, and not espouse them. Her role is to maintain differences by pointing to them, by giving them life, by putting them into play against one another. (qtd. in Schaffer, *Women and the Bush* 169)

And this is what Barbara Baynton and her literary creation, Squeaker's Mate, suggest: when Squeaker's Mate is deprived of her power, grounded in her economic ability, she becomes through muteness and gaze a stoic reminder of man's incapability. Schaffer concludes that "Squeaker's Mate banishes the Henry Lawson's dream of the perfect mother, who, although strong and powerful, is easy to master" (*Women and the Bush* 149).

Baynton's portrayal of women in the bush does not stop at the description of Mary. The introduction of a second woman, a barwoman from town, presents the duality of female experiences in the bush and towns of colonial Australia, as already suggested in Louisa Lawson's essay. Working class women in Australia either experienced their existence as workers, wives, and mothers in the bush or in towns. In the latter, occupation was to be found either in domestic service or in licensed venues. Pubs were crucial in the colonial enterprise. They formed the nucleus of towns and provided settlers with accommodation, food, and the opportunity for social contact. Women's skills were valued for the running of hotels and inns, however, many women were disregarded for engaging in this profession (Kirkby 5-8). Baynton's portrayal of the young woman as a barwoman reflects one of the few opportunities for women to find employment and therefore financial independence. The degree of financial independence must have been varying, for the barwomen was dependent on Squeaker's support after she was left by the father of her child. Soon she comes to realise that Squeaker is not the provider she has hoped for and that she is not suited to the demands of bush life. "Eagerly she counted the days past and to pass. Then back to town. She told no word of that hope to Squeaker, he had no place in her plans for the future" (65). Baynton contrasts two types of women, the town woman with an occupation, who tries to be financially independent, and the bushwoman, who manages a farm and, although under difficult circumstances, earns her own living. The bushwoman manages to survive in the bush, whereas the townwoman is driven to insanity.

A crucial relationship, which Baynton presents, is that between Mary and her dog. Like in Baynton's other story "The Chosen Vessel," the dog is a caring and trusting partner.

The dog takes over the position and the duties of a husband. Unlike Squeaker's dog, who resembles his owner in character and consequently disappears to the bush, Mary's dog remains at her side after the accident. He, unlike Squeaker, realises Mary's tragic illness and does not leave her side. Mary, although sick and "useless," remains his main reference person, ignoring the commands Squeaker utters. "The dog would go if she told him, and by and by she would" (57). Baynton portrays the dog as Mary's true mate, contrasting his affections and loyalty with the disloyalty of Squeaker, the other men and the other women. That way she scoops out the mateship mythos as portrayed by other writers of her period and presents a different, and gloomy, version of the bush in which only an animal can be a true mate. The new woman is observed with suspicion and mistrust by the watchful dog, who finally prevents the new woman from stealing water. She, on the other hand, attributes human qualities to the dog and recognises the deep relation which exists between dog and master; "She rated the dog's intelligence almost human, from many of its actions in omission and commission in connection with this woman [Squeaker's Mate]" (69). At the end of the story, the dog sees through Squeaker's hypocritical behaviour and by attacking him forces him to leave Mary.

Baynton's short story is not only powerful with regard to its description of the horrors encountered in the bush, but also with regard to the role it assigns the bush, the land, itself. Baynton shares with Henry Lawson the idea of the bush as the creator of the Australian psyche. The landscape is not merely the background to the story, the stage on which her characters can act, but an actor in its own right. As Jayaprada suggests, the bush "controls and defines the very lives of the central characters. […] It turns her men savagely cunning and her women into dehumanized figures" (149). The woman is not only influenced by the land, she is constructed as representing the land. Jayaprada further suggests: "The back-broken woman lying crippled in her bed in silent anger becomes the very symbol of the mute endurance of the land itself" (153).

Through Squeaker, Baynton created a version of the Australian bushman, which defeats the dominant myth of the noble bushman as presented in the literature of the 1890s. Her main concerns are to question the bushman ethos present in the bush and to throw some light on male violence towards women. Motherhood and loyalty among members of society are also among her issues. Her story makes clear that there is no trait of solidarity among bush people, despite their gender. The detailed and accurate depiction of Squeaker's violence towards Mary in all its aspects, ranging from emotional to physical, makes this short story "one of the most powerful stories in *Bush Studies"* (qtd. in Lange 152). Violence as the core

theme in the story set in colonial times enforces the view that violence was common practice in Australia's formative times.

## 5       Beyond the Bush Paradigm: Tasma's *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*

While nations are narrated into being, as Homi K. Bhabha suggests (1), one has to observe who narrates and which narrations are taken as imagining the nation. With respect to the image of the Australian nation, Dale Spender assesses Tasma's work as follows: "Were the image of Australia to be drawn from [her] writings rather than those of a few men, the representation of Australia, past and present, would be very different" (143). Barbara Baynton's and Louisa Lawson's challenge of the bush paradigm has already been presented. Both writers not only challenged dominant attitudes towards the bush, but also gender roles prescribed by their male writer colleagues, presenting alternative versions of bush, women, and national identity. So did Tasma, a remarkable figure at the end of the nineteenth century.

Before turning to a close reading and interpretation of *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*, a summary of Tasma's life will provide information which is reflected in her novels. Born 28 October 1848 on the northern outskirts of London, Jessie Catherine Huybers, who in 1877 adopted the pseudonym of Tasma, became one of the most distinguished writers of the late nineteenth century. In fact, she was praised as the Australian Jane Austen by contemporary critics who compared her style to George Eliot and her accurate characterisations to Charles Dickens (Clarke, *Tasma* 366). Born into cosmopolitan and educated surroundings, her Anglo-French mother was a school-teacher committed to the developments in European culture, while her father, a native of Antwerp, was a wine merchant, Jessie experienced early exposure to the world of thought and ideas as well as the multiculturalism of her parents' backgrounds. From her early childhood, Jessie found herself in more than one world. This experience was further nurtured by her family's migration to the Australian colony of Tasmania, which was then known as Van Diemens' Land, in 1852, when Jessie was only four years old. In Tasmania, Jessie enjoyed a refined private education by her mother who brought along three hundred volumes of the greatest French and English novelists and philosophers which installed openness towards learning, intellectual argument, and the arts (Clarke, *Tasma* 367). Bilingualism was not a learned skill of young Jessie but an everyday familiarity and the expression of a psychological and intellectual inhabiting of two worlds.

In 1867, at the age of eighteen, Jessie was acquainted to Charles Forbes Fraser, whose family belonged to the most prominent and affluent families in the colony with a military tradition and conservative political opinions. Shortly after their encounter they married and moved near Kyneton, 85 kilometres north of Melbourne, in the colony of Victoria, where Charles was employed by his brother-in-law in a flour mills. Soon, their divergent interests became apparent, Charles being mostly preoccupied with gambling and horse-racing, and indicated an incompatibility of the marriage which resulted in its termination after five years. The experience of an early unhappy marriage is re-created in some of Tasma's later fiction and provides the basis for her novel *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill* where different constellations of the young characters are tested before all find their suitable partners. Shortly after Jessie left her husband, her mother and four of her younger siblings sailed to London where they engaged in many cultural pursuits before travelling on to Brussels. Nineteen months later, the family moved to Paris where the children furthered their education. After two years in London, Brussels, and Paris, Jessie moved back to Australia trying to continue married life with Charles. But after hearing that he fathered a child in her absence, she moved in with her mother who lived in Melbourne among the newly rich on the South bank of the Yarra River. This prosperous area and its residents are portrayed in the novel *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill.* Determined to earn her own living, Jessie took up writing and her short stories and articles were widely published in Australian periodicals from 1877. Her short stories drew on her experiences in Europe as well as her life in Tasmania and Victoria while her articles touched upon subjects ranging from French art schools to cremation in Victoria. Within an extremely short time, Tasma became successful in her career as a writer and was able to provide for herself financially. After two successful years in Victoria, Tasma sailed to London and then travelled on to meet her family in Paris. London and Paris provided her with intellectual fodder which she passed on in articles on the latest developments in art, politics, literature, and social movements published in Australian magazines. Clarke assesses Tasma's influence on Australia as follows: "Probably neither before nor since have readers in Australia had the opportunity to read so consistently and in such depth about the intellectual life of Europe as they did when Tasma was dispatching her articles to the *Australasian*" (*Tasma* 371).

In Paris and throughout Europe, she became a well-known and highly acclaimed lecturer on Australia and its history, industry, culture, and geography. In 1880, she was invited to give her first public lecture at the Société de Géographie Commerciale de Paris, which turned out to be a huge success. Well attended lectures in Belgium and France followed, providing her with a steady income and leading to an invitation from King Leopold

of Belgium. Additionally, she was named Officier d'Académie by the President of France, an honour rarely given to someone outside France and even more rarely to women. In 1883, she travelled back to Australia for a period of eight months to obtain a divorce form Charles Fraser. It was granted on grounds of Fraser's adultery and desertion. When she returned to Europe in 1885, she married 57-year-old Auguste Couvreur, who was a distinguished and well-known figure in Europe. In the years of her second marriage, Tasma developed her skills in writing novels, and in 1889 her first novel was published which ascended her to "the front rank of Australian storytellers" (Clarke, *Tasma* 374). Although living in Belgium at that time, her novels took her back to settings of her childhood and early womanhood in Australia (Clarke, *Tasma* 372). When her husband died, aged sixty-six in 1893, Tasma took over his post as the London *Times* foreign correspondent contributing on political, social, military, and economical developments in Belgium and later Holland. In addition to this straining and demanding profession, Tasma continued writing and publishing novels. She died another heart attack on 23 October 1897 at the age of forty-nine. What followed was a multitude of obituaries which praised her as an exceptional writer, intelligent journalist, and gifted speaker.

Her fiction, along with other women writers of the nineteenth century, was included in the 1896 publication *Australian Writers*, one of the first critical studies on Australian literature, by Desmond Byrne (Webby, *Australian Literature* 71). However, it did not prevent Tasma as well as other women writers to be relegated to museum status in the course of the following century. Literary contributions which dealt with non-bush, non-convict, and non-heroic topics, such as marriage, love, domestic relationships, and urban surrounds, were devalued and perceived as non-Australian. H. M. Green, in his comprehensive volume, assesses Tasma as un-Australian. He writes about *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*:

> it lacks the powerful dramatic appeal of *For the Term of his Natural Life*,[32] the exciting adventure of *Robbery Under Arms*,[33] and the historic interest of both these novels, as well as the Australianism of Boldrewood and Mrs Praed; indeed except that the story centres in Melbourne there is nothing Australian about it: the setting, the characters, the atmosphere might almost be those of some rich provincial English city. (252)

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[32] A convict novel by Marcus Clarke set in Port Arthur and Norfolk Island, both brutal places of secondary punishment

[33] A bushranging adventure written by Rolf Boldrewood.

This comment ignores the centrality of the economically highly successful colonial character Mr Piper as well as the relations between the colonial and the English family members and devalues Tasma's authority to speak about Australia. Additionally, it reflects the literary critic's biased and narrow understanding of Australianness.  He singles out Clarke's and Boldrewood's novels as worthy of interest. Clarke's *For the Term of his Natural Life*, described as "powerful and dramatic," deals with Australia's convict past and helps to establish the convict as the sinned against and not the sinner thus, cleans Australia of its criminal strain. Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms*, described as "exciting and adventurous," has the bushranger[34] at its centre and inflicts the colonial Australian with the anti-authoritarian characteristics found in the bushranger. Both, bushrangers and male convicts, are identified by Elizabeth Webby as "the early players in both official and popular culture" (*Australian Feminism* 115) who produced a masculine version of Australia. This version was reinforced by critics such as Green who regarded topics such as convictism, as experienced by men, and bushranging, also exclusively male in nature, to be of "historic interest," and representing Australianism. Green also includes Mrs Praed. He certainly refers to her "bush-realism," her portrayal of the bush as harsh, but still beautiful and to be mastered. It follows that the bush, male convicts, and male ex-convicts, present the material on which Australian identity is based. Green's assessment is ignorant of the fine observations Tasma makes on Australia's way to becoming a nation. She can see both worlds and the social difficulties encountered beyond the paradigms of the bush. According to Bennett, "Her stories […] reveal a deep sense of disorientation in the European psyche as it sought to settle the Australian continent"(12). "Disorientation" is not desired by the dominant voices of radical nationalists as it includes the notions of uncertainty and irritation.

The second part of Green's comment excludes Tasma from the rank of exciting, interesting, and "Australian." It negates all that Tasma describes - the Piper mansion, Uncle Piper, George, Laura Lydiat, and Louey as well as their everyday lives and concerns in Melbourne - as Australian. Tasma's story is denied any "historical interest" and, in fact, it is denied any existence in an Australian context. Green locates it "in some rich provincial English city." This assessment renders Tasma's literary skills as well as intellectual ability questionable. However, it is Green's opinion that has to be questioned. Tasma grew up in

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[34] A bushranger is a runaway convict who tries to survive in the bush or, more general, a person who escapes the law by hiding in the bush. He secures his survival through robbery, many times with other bushrangers in gangs. The bushranger is an important figure in Australian folklore as his dislike for authority and police is understood as representative of national characteristics. ( "Bushranger in Australian Literature" in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*)

Tasmania, she associated with the colony throughout her lifetime as her pseudonym suggests, she married a colonial Australian, and lived in Victoria on a station, [35] she lived in Melbourne, received honours from the French geographic society as well as praise from the Belgium King for her lectures on Australia and on cultural and political issues of the day. She was socialised, married, and divorced in Australia thus had lived experiences as an Australian woman and was well equipped to assess and judge Australia's development.

It is reasonable to think that the topics presented in her very first novel were the topics that touched and influenced her most. It is also reasonable to think that her international lifestyle informed her assessment of Australia. The duality of her own existence, her knowledge of both, the English and Australian world, is played out in and between the lines of *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill.* Australia's mother country, England, with its values and morals, presents a dominating opponent, as well as strong nurturer, in Australia's search for a national identity. The conflict, which arises from such a constellation, is accurately and ingeniously presented in Tasma's novel *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill,* published in 1889. This novel is said to be the first Australian novel to portray urban social life thus, presenting an Australia which the majority of colonial people knew and inhabited but found excluded from the ranks of nineteenth-century literature. When the novel was written in the 1880s, one pressing issue of the day was the "Woman Question," which was debated among the women living in the cities of Melbourne, Sydney, and Hobart. A new set of ideals and values came to be associated with women and men, which was opposed to the set of values promoted by the *Bulletin* writers; women were to be independent, politically active, educated and not trapped in unhappy and unsuitable marriages. Tasma's own life experiences, she managed to provide for herself financially, in doing so paved the way for other women writers to come, and the position and portrayal of most of her female characters can be read as an elaboration and presentation of the New Woman ideal.

In *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill,* Tasma presents versions of how a proper colonist in the newly established colony is supposed to look and act like. Her novel, set in the 1850s in a rich suburb of Melbourne, portrays the life of the affluent colonist Mr. Piper and the lives of his newly arrived sister and her family. The tensions between old world and new world, money and heritage, profundity and superficiality are played out in the course of the families' reunion. The questions Tasma asks mirror historical developments. The 1850s are regarded as

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[35] Station: large sheep or cattle farm.

a time of consolidation, of relative stability in the development of the colonies. The first hardships of arriving were overcome and institutions on which Australia should function were introduced. As noted earlier, men were supposed to toil the country whereas women were expected to have positive influences on their husbands as the country's very own "God's police." But the 1850s also saw the gold rush, first in Victoria and later in New South Wales. The colonies experienced a great influx of adventurous and money-seeking men from all over the world, but especially from Great Britain. But also a great number of Chinese made their appearance on the diggings, constituting the first non-white ethnic group in Australia's intensive history of immigration. The gold-diggings, where every man dug for himself, were believed to promote individualistic and selfish behaviour. Many men deserted their homes and wives to try their luck on the diggings (Hughes 562). The city of Melbourne profited from the gold rush in its immediate proximity. Many grand buildings were erected in the city centre while the suburbs grew with deluxe mansions, many resembling European-style palaces. The growing affluence of urban Australians, juxtaposed with the hard conditions at the frontier, offers a picture of Australia worth deeper investigation. The discussion of issues, concerns, and questions of the affluent Australian middle-class in times of relative stability enables one to see the nation through different eyes. Tasma's novel can be regarded as a contribution to the fragmentation of historical discourse on the nation as presenting a female view of the urban middle class. The opposition between England and Australia as well as the opposition between town and country is thoroughly explored in *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*.

The following paragraph deals in detail with Tasma's novel *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill*. Her first novel was immediately highly acclaimed by the critics and the public throughout Europe and a second edition had to be released. The *World* declared it "A capital sample of the novel of character. […] The story is very clever, very natural, full of satire without spite, of knowledge of human nature without cynicism;" while the *Academy* proclaimed it "A work of considerable promise" (both qtd. in Harris viii). Still, Tasma and her literary work had to be uncovered in the late twentieth century. Clarke argues, "Her [Tasma's] sensitivity to the conflicting currents in life which flowed in the colonies is one of the factors which make *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill* a novel deserving attention by Australian's of this century" (*Tasma* 379). Additionally, it provides a witty, interesting, and exciting reading. *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill* belongs to the literary genre "romance" which was preferably used by many female writers and for this reason experienced inferior treatment by the (male) proponents of an Australian literary tradition linked to nationalist and realist writing

(Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines* xii). Contrary to the radical nationalist writing, Tasma deploys a romantic plot to make critical comments on the relationships between the sexes as well as on the manners and values in the newly established colony. *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill* is an elaboration on and analysis of the "deep sense of disorientation" both in emotional as well as social terms. As an educated and wealthy woman "she moved away from the conventions established by other writers of romances set in the Australian colonies, dwelling neither on the challenge of making a new life in the bush nor on sensational aspects of colonial life like the transportation of convicts and bushranging" (Harris vii). On the contrary, her novel depicts the bourgeois milieu of the nouveau riche in the urban surrounds of Melbourne.

*Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill* tells the story of the poor Cavendish family who emigrates to Australia to live with Mrs Cavendish's brother Tom Piper. Mr Cavendish, the impoverished bearer of a great name, clinging to old world privileges, faces the self-made man who made a fortune from butchering while taking all chances open to an industrious and honest man in the colony. The clashes between the values of the old and the new world, as depicted between those two men, form one dominant strand of the plot. The other dominant topic is how the young characters search for the right marriage partner.

The novel opens with the introduction of Reverend Francis Lydiat and the Cavendish family onboard the vessel "Henrietta Maria" heading for Melbourne on the Australian continent. Reverend Lydiat is emigrating to be reconciled with his sister, who left England with their mother when Francis was merely a child. The Cavendishes, as well as other Irish and English families onboard, are leaving their impoverished lives to start afresh in a distant land. In the 1860s, Australia had the reputation of a promising country for the industrious and adventurous. But the Cavnedishes do not have to worry, since Mrs Cavendish's brother, Tom Piper, one of the richest men in the colony, will bear all their costs upon arrival. For them, solely the voyage and the existence of the wealthy relative will better their situation. Diversity is scarce on a month-long ship voyage, so the sisters, good-natured and selfless Margaret and superficial and vain Sara Cavendish, and their mother engage in many conversations revealing the history of their family. Although Mr Cavendish, proud of his genealogical tree, believed to have "lowered himself" when he married a Piper woman, he is contradicted by the narrator:

> the young husband and wife were placed in very similar circumstances. Both were
> poor, both orphans, both acknowledged an elder brother – with the difference that Mr
> Cavendish could say, 'My brother the bishop;' while Mrs Cavendish was constrained

to say, 'My brother the butcher.' The benefits conferred by the bishop, though priceless, no doubt considered from a spiritual point of view, had hardly the solidity of the tokens sent by the butcher. (22)

Mrs Cavendish further recollects her brother's generosity:

[…] one day there wasn't actually enough to eat in the house! So he [Mr Cavendish] went to his brother, the "bishop" […] and he got a loan of fifteen pounds; but I know where our silver teapot went the very same day […]. (27)

Although the bishop lived in a palace and certainly had the means to help, his selfishness is juxtaposed with Mr Piper's financial generosity which eventually helped the Cavendish family to survive. Reverend Lydiat falls in love with the young and beautiful Sara Cavendish who turns him away on grounds of him being poor and not able to offer her the comfortable and luxurious life she thinks herself deserving. She exhibits similar traits to her father who dislikes the idea of "bettering oneself" through dependence on someone from a lower class, on a parvenue, as he condescendingly calls Mr Piper. Mrs Cavendish again defends her brother by responding courageously:

It is true you [Mr Cavendish] may have a crest of your own, and may talk about ancestors who cut people's throats three hundred years ago. It is true my brother Tom can remember no farther back than his father's counter, and that he began his life by 'butchering', but which of you can hold his head the highest now? (49)

This comment is revealing of the attitude prevailing in the colony. A person is not judged by his or her accomplishments in the past, neither by a great name or long ancestry and heredity, but on grounds of individual motivation, persistence, and industriousness. At the end of part one the vessel is within sight of the Australian coastline.

Meanwhile, in part two of the novel, the Pipers and Mr Piper's stepdaughter, independent and with a mind of her own, Laura Lydiat, are introduced. Mr Piper is 65 years of age, authoritative, and a second time widower. He takes his authority from his economic success but loves his little daughter Louey. His mansion, Piper's Hill, with a tower overlooking the bay, is a built manifestation of his economic success and lives up to any old world mansion. From this tower, Mr Piper observes what he had feared: his son George and Laura are a couple. If he was not so far up he would catch George proposing to Laura, who loves George too but rejects on rational and practical grounds. She knows of Mr Piper's dislike for her which, in case of a marriage, would lead to George's disinheritance. Mr Piper, disliking his son's relationship with Laura, intends to marry George off to one of his nieces to keep his wealth in the family. Since he had paid for his sister's family's joint migration, he

expects some form of allegiance. The clash between migrant father and colonial-born George becomes visible. Mr Piper is a simple, industrious, and self-restraint businessman who does not feel appreciated by his lazy and hedonistic son, who, although refined and interested in cultural developments, does not work for his living but rather gambles on horse-races.

Part three of the novel, finally, brings the two families together. Mr Piper, accompanied by his daughter Louey, meets the Cavendishes onboard the ship. Louey instinctively takes to Margaret and dislikes Sara. Mr Cavendish and Mr Piper, on first meeting one another, display superficial politeness and cordiality, however, each of them does not hold the other in high esteem. Mr Piper "in his position of benefactor, […] was hardly prepared to 'stand any nonsense' from Elizabeth's husband, a 'beggar, if you came to that, for all his fine breeding'" (105). Mr Cavendish, although "descending in allowing himself  to accept her [Mrs Cavendish's] brother's – *a ci-devant* butcher's – hospitality, was by no means prepared to quarrel with a well-appointed house and its accessories." He is rather opportunistic in thinking "Besides, wealth was an acknowledged power, even though pork-sausages should have been its alleged first cause" (104). Mr Cavendish meets and greets Mr Piper with the air of an aristocrat. The family is taken in a private carriage to Piper's Hill which, with its magnificent, well kept garden, a driveway, and palace-like tower, does not fail to impress the newcomers. Now that old-world-eyes have seen his wealth, Mr Piper feels fully acknowledged. Soon, all remaining individuals are acquainted, with Sara taking to handsome and wealthy George. Margaret is employed as Louey's governess and Reverend Lydiat finally makes his appearance as Louey's and Laura's brother. All protagonists seem to get used to their new lives, apart from Mr Cavendish, who busies himself pondering over his remarkable ancestors. Soon, the first social happening, the governor's ball, occupies everyone's mind. Mr Piper fits out his whole family and it makes him proud to see the beautiful and richly decorated girls and his sister. Before the ball they all gather in Piper's Hill, where Sara and Reverend Lydiat take a walk in the conservatory. Blinded by her beauty and encouraged through her heavily flirting, he kisses her and thinks them engaged. The ball, however, presents a different picture, as Sara dances and flirts with all men, above all George, who seems to be returning her attention and affection. In the course of one evening, Sara achieved to engage herself to one man, whom she does not want, and make another man, whose wealth is her only interest, fall in love with her. The next morning, having observed the spectacle of the night before, heartbroken Laura accompanies her also heartbroken brother Francis, who is on his way to work in an empty parsonage, to the country town of Barnesbury. Two hurt souls

are trying to find comfort in the countryside. But dry, dusty, and sleepy, Barnesbury seems to elevate their grief. Francis receives a response from Sara calling off the engagement.

Back in Melbourne, Christmas offers the next opportunity for Mr Piper to receive gratitude and admiration which he thinks himself deserving. "Mr Piper had prepared the inmates for a *largesse* of some kind by remarking, on Christmas Eve, that the 'Melbourne Father Christmas was worth a dozen of your old skinflints at home;'"(183) providing expensive presents for everyone. Not everyone is happy; Laura has been distant in her letters to George. He knows he acted inexcusably but finds himself in a dilemma. Being financially at his father's mercy, he sees only one way to gain independence. If his horse, Casserole, wins at the upcoming New Year's Day Races, he will directly go up to Barnesbury and marry Laura. However, if Casserole loses, George will remain at his father mercy and will have to marry Sara. On the crucial day, Mr Piper enjoys being seen in public in company of his aristocratic relations. Sara is once again the most beautiful woman around, which does not fail to impresses George. The race ends with Casserole finishing second. Shortly after the race George proposes to Sara to whom this incident comes as a surprise. She is reluctant but agrees. Both are bound by opportunism and determination rather than happiness. Louey, meanwhile, is sent on a visit to Francis and Laura in Barnesbury bringing Laura George's apologies. On their way to the parsonage, they have a terrible accident with their buggy which leaves Francis with a broken arm, Laura with injuries to her arm and head, and Louey altogether badly hurt. After receiving a telegram from Francis, Mr Piper, Margaret, Mrs Cavendish, and George immediately make their way to Barnesbury. "No one seemed to remember Mr Cavendish and Sara" (222). In the event of the catastrophe they turn out to be hollow characters. George even asks Margaret instead of his fiancée, Sara, to accompany them. While the sick are being nursed in Barnesbury, Sara accepts another marriage proposal from the Englishman Mr Hyde whom she would have married on a previous occasion if he was not so poor. However, unexpectedly, he became heir to a baronetcy and returns to ask Sara again. It is all she ever wanted and immediately accepts. In Barnesbury, the sick are recovering, George is happy to receive a letter from Mr Cavendish asking to break off the engagement to Sara. Now he is determined to make Laura his wife.

Only Louey's condition remains critical. Her condition deteriorates and a doctor from Melbourne has to be called upon. Mr Piper is completely changed to a broken, sorrowful man whose infallibility is a shadow of the past. He has visions about the party returning to Melbourne with a small black coffin carrying Louey. Luckily for everyone, the child recovers. She wakes up to find that Margaret and Reverend Lydiat, and Laura and George are engaged.

Reverend Lydiat's love for Margaret grew out of her devoted nursing of Louey and "reformed" Mr Piper finally refrained from his objection to George marrying Laura.

Tasma does not openly criticise colonial society; she rather observes, compares, and judges colonial developments. She employs three different settings to mirror the various spatial experiences made by colonial people: the voyage out to the colonies is set onboard the ship "Henrietta Maria," social relations and social life are played out in the city of Melbourne and, finally, upcountry Barnesbury is reflective of the bygone gold-digging era which brought prosperity upon the colonies. This composition mirrors Tasma's own geographic history. She herself experienced the ship voyage many times, lived in Melbourne as well as Malmsbury (of which Barnesbury seems to be a literary reflection) after her marriage. Susan Sheridan attests Tasma's work an important position in the discourse on colonial society:

> These 'lady novelists' [Tasma, Praed, Cambridge], as they were called, may not have written as outright feminist rebels, but they had plenty to say about the directions that colonial life was taking. It was different from what male writers of the 'bush nationalist' tradition, such as Henry Lawson, were saying, but it was also a part of the cultural production of their times. (*Along the Faultlines* xii)

The different point of view, which Tasma presents to the reader, lies mostly in her presentation and interpretation of Australian-English relations at a time when the Australian national consciousness was said to emerge. The portrayal of England and Australia is positioned within a web of social relations which play out questions regarding all aspects of life in the new colony, such as family ties, love, and marriage. While Tasma assesses her mother country's social and political situation, she paints us a vivid picture of colonial life. She invests the new nation with opposed traits to the old nation but refrains from making an explicit judgement on which way of social organisation is to prefer (Clarke, T*asma* 379). She enforces the importance of family ties and refrains from a masculine hero as exemplary of the newly emerging nation. Rather, "By subverting ideas of rugged individualism and 'the cult of the hero', such women's writing 'foregrounds relatedness and community' instead" (Darian-Smith 6). The central word of the quote above, which I want to take up, is "directions." Australia was not a fixed entity, it did not have a shape; it did not have a name. It was "becoming" through the words of colonial literary women and men who assessed its development and asked the relevant questions. Some writers anticipated what Australia was to look like and inflicted their writings with a high dose of radical nationalism, such as the writers of the *Bulletin*. Other writers again chose a more moderate approach.

Tasma did not see the time being ripe for cutting all ties with the mother country, but rather identified Australia's state and its position in the world in relevance to England. This is best exemplified through the impoverished but noble English family, who emigrates to the colony of Victoria, where they will be sustained by their "nouveau riche" relative Mr Piper. Both heads of the family, Mr Cavendish and Mr Piper, form the axes on which the question of Australia's national situation is played out. The question "How should the proper colonist look like?" is worked out by contrasting those two men and the conventions they stand for. Mr Cavendish is representative of the English class system. He takes his confidence from his ancestors despite the fact that he is not able to sustain his family; whereas Mr Piper represents the impoverished working class individual who, through migration and hard work, managed to better his situation to reach the top ranks of colonial society.

New wealthy families erect mansions, many with a tower on top, to exhibit their wealth and claim social status; the more elaborate the mansion, the more affluent the residents. Even today, Toorak and South Yarra rank among the most affluent suburbs in Melbourne, and many properties resemble Piper's Hill. Although the affluent bourgeoisie is presented, it soon becomes clear that in the new environment of colonial Australia English stratification cannot be applied, i.e. in a place with hardly any past the English class system based on heredity is anticipated to fail. For some, this is a blessing and opportunity, as in the case of the poor Irish family onboard the "Henrietta Maria," who seek to improve their lives in the colony. The Irish family is introduced as follows:

> […] the M'Brides, Irish, improvident, and impoverished. 'And it's in Australia they'll make their fortune, sire!' is Mrs M'Bride's unvarying hopeful assertion. This fund of hope is common to the tribe of M'Bride, being, in fact, the only thing Mr M'Bride will have to bequeath them. (3)

For others again, the lack of reassuring social stratification poses a threat. Sara, for instance, a young woman firmly embedded in the old world's hierarchical thinking, loathes and fears the consequences of her family's financial dependence on a man inferior in social status. She tells her sister Margaret:

> You don't seem to understand the least bit how hard it is to go to a new country and find yourself dragged down by a whole heap of vulgar relations. I suppose there *are* some people worth knowing in Melbourne - but you'll see! We'll be swallowed up in the Piper set. I shall be *accaparéed* by the cousin. And papa - oh, won't he hate it! Papa'll have to toady to Uncle Piper, and pretend to be enraptured with his fine things

> all day long. […] All those self-made people are bumptious and stuck-up. They wouldn't care for their money if they couldn't make a display with it. (18)

The clash of both value systems is established: Mr Piper is rich but without breeding, Mr Cavendish is with heritage but poor. The fact that Sara and her family survived in England on the money sent by her "bumptious and stuck-up" uncle is beyond her comprehension. Sara Cavendish and her father form one line of thought. They represent the impoverished English aristocracy, which, devoid of money, clings to its ways and manners as a stratifying and distinguishing feature. According to their view, the world is out of order. Those who should be rich find themselves in the midst of poverty, whereas those who should be poor are surrounded by an abundance of money. She does not regard work and industriousness as preconditions for affluence. She wonders "isn't papa the gentleman and poor, and isn't Uncle Piper the *parvenue* and rich?" (18) Her contempt and despise for Uncle Piper render this statement an exclamation of the injustice in the world.

The relationship between Mr Cavendish and Mr Piper is reminiscent of the English – Australian relationship. Mr Cavendish, belonging to the House of Devonshire takes all his confidence, his identity and his place in the world from this ancestral line. He believes he lowered himself when he married Elizabeth Piper and refuses to acknowledge his family's dependence on Mr Piper's financial generosity; Mr Cavendish is ignorant of this when he addresses his wife:

> Better ourselves! […] I do wish, Elizabeth, you would make use of more appropriate expressions. A valet "betters" himself"! A chambermaid "betters" herself when she marries the butler. Your brother [i.e. Mr Piper], I am quite willing to concede, has "bettered" himself, taking into consideration the circumstances in which he was left by your unfortunate father. The House of Devonshire can have no motive for bettering itself. Pray remember that! (48)

What ultimately counts for Mr Cavendish is the connection to a heroic past through an ancestral line, which also functions as the only justification for a top rank in society. Mr Piper's high social standing grounded in his wealth generated through butchering refutes this belief. He exclaims: "You call it "bettering ourselves" when you force me to sell my birthright for money? This is what my ancestors fought and died for, I suppose – that I may be transported to a land of upstarts and convicts – this is what you call "bettering ourselves" (50). Additionally, Mr Cavendish's view on Australia might be reflective of the English view of Australia, who thinks of Mr Piper, "He never considers what it is to *me*, at my advanced age […] to leave my country, my kin, my ancestral associations, and die in a country of

convicts and gold-diggers" (47). Australia is not a country of hope and economic promise, but of convicts and diggers.

Social barriers created by birth, which in the old world functioned to exclude, break down in the new world and are replaced by other barriers. In Australia's case, birth is replaced by money and money determines the social position. It follows, that everyone, provided he is ambitious and industrious, can reach the top ranks of colonial society. This assessment of colonial Australia is in line with social developments in the mid-nineteenth century. The colonies attracted migrants with the possibility of economic rise and promised social equality for everyone. Tom Piper is an example of a migrant who managed to acquire wealth and position himself on the top of the social ladder, solely on grounds of his economic success.

Colonial Mr Piper is the central character of the novel. All other characters are situated in response to him. He takes his strength and confidence from his economic position and assesses people on behalf of their economic situation. Consequently, he thinks himself superior to everyone who has not reached economic success, as the following quote suggests: "On principle, he contradicted every one himself, because it stood to reason that people who had not made 'their way in life' could not speak authoritatively like those who had, [especially if] they have 'made their mark' after starting in life with nothing" (53). His perceived superiority solely rests on his money. Mr Piper, as the successful colonist, can be read as representative for the colonies which, after difficult periods of settling down and establishing, enjoy the first merits of economic stability which they are not reluctant to display. This economic success is the basis for their pride and their developing feeling of superiority in relation to the mother country. The more hardships an individual had to overcome on his way to success, the more his value and respect on the colonial ladder of social stratification. Mr Piper, "a man with the home of a West-end magnate and the intonation of a groom" (155), is an honest, simple, and industrious emigrant who earned his money as a butcher. He, as the most affluent person in the colony, did not make his money from pastoral activities or gold diggings, but from a rather unappetising, although necessary, trade.

Harris observes that by allocating the colony's progress onto butchering, Tasma erodes a few elements of the pioneer legend (viii). For once, Mr Piper did not battle with the land to establish himself as a heroic figure who managed to live off the land. Second, raising cattle presents an important element in the growth of Australia's economy and the people involved in it deserve recognition but, cattle without being prepared for consumption is not worth anything . Mr Piper, as the head of the family, is described by Goodwin as a "rich, intolerant

old Australian, […], who is 'coarse and contradictory'" (35). This reduces Mr Piper to a one-dimensional character and ignores the change he underwent throughout the novel. The first time he is mentioned, his character as well as his financial situation, are assessed positively. Reverend Lydiat's mother, Tom Piper's second wife, writes "he is a kind, though a self-made man, and will give me ample means for the education of my little girl" (8). We later learn that Tom Piper really loved his second wife.

Mr Piper is rather a multidimensional figure; liked by some and despised by others. His sister will forever love him for his generosity, which helped the Cavendishes to keep their modest life-style in London. Also his second wife, Reverend Lydiat's, Laura's, and Louey's mother, only spoke positively of him before she passed away. Little Louey loves her father and Margaret Cavendish is convinced Uncle Piper is a good man for all the help he offers. Sara and Mr Cavendish despise Uncle Piper for he has in abundance what they long for, i.e. money and a top position on the social ladder in the absence of appropriate heredity and the manners which accompany it. The positive feelings which Margaret and Mrs Cavendish have towards their relative mostly rest on the financial help he is able to provide. His character is shallow, he is a difficult man who does not accept different opinions. He is not empathetic and loving for the sake of it but rather for the gratitude he thinks himself deserving. The portrayal of Mr Piper as a rich but hollow character criticises the colonial practice of assessing a person's worth solely on his or her economic situation with no regard for emotional and intellectual capacities. Australia, especially after the gold rush, was perceived as a place where money could be made quickly and many European settlers migrated to the colonies solely for this purpose. Emphasis on the generation of wealth quickly reduces the individual to an economic asset and his or her position in society is linked to his or her economic ability. This economic dimension of colonial Australia is discussed in many literary productions of the time and finds its fiercest critique in Barbara Baynton's "Squeaker's Mate." Mr Piper suffers an inferiority complex which reveals uncertainties prevalent in his character. Although he is one of the richest men in the colony, something must be lacking in his life. He lacks the reception of true feelings, the experience of love for love's sake. The only person in the novel who loves him unconditionally is his little daughter Louey. Thus, when she experiences the accident, Mr Piper not only suffers the most, he is haunted by nightmares and death visions and ultimately undergoes a change. He becomes more human.

The relationship between Laura and Mr Piper exemplifies the conflict between intellect and ignorance. Laura is the most refined character in the novel. She is difficult to position within the web of new and old relations. She has no family of her own in Australia;

her mother died when Lydia was a child, leaving her with her stepfather Uncle Piper and her baby half-sister Louey. Uncle Piper cares for her out of duty and no compassion; he promised his second wife at her deathbed to care for Lydia and now he is bound to his promise despite his reluctant feelings towards her. The reasons for his reluctance are to be found in his own low self-esteem. He knows Laura intellectually superior to him and realises that intellectual pursuits are a common preoccupation of Laura and George. Their relationship is not only loving but also intellectually stimulating. The domain of intellect is unattainable for Mr Piper. His exclusion from intellect as well as Laura's and George's relationship makes him jealous and explains why he is reluctant towards both. His mockery and jealousy is best exemplified in the following passage:

> [t]he "jargon" in which George would sometimes talk to Laura – a jargon Mr. Piper nevertheless strained his ears and his mind to their utmost stretch to catch the meaning of – baffled and incredulous of his own interpretation of the drift of it, when he could make out nothing more than this, that George, with what Mr. Piper called "the ball at his feet," didn't hold much by life altogether. He'd "set along with Laura" at the breakfast-table, when they'd nothing to do but to think how they'd enjoy themselves, and "he'd talk" and "she'd talk," and "they'd spout their scraps of poetry, that hadn't an ounce of the sense any good, honest, old rhyme could show[.] (64)

Laura, as the first main female character, serves as a forerunner of women characters in all other Tasma's novels. She is portrayed as an intelligent, culturally, and intellectually interested character, who questions the institution of marriage (Clarke, *Tasma* 367). She does not want to marry George, until he is independent of his father's wealth. At the end of the story, in front of the altar, Margaret detects "the half-perceptible gleam […] in Laura's eyes at being called upon to obey George" (275). What is striking, however, is Laura's lack of ideas concerning her own profession. She is rather conservative compared with Tasma's subsequent female characters in terms of employment and financial independence.

The relationship between George and his father is exemplary of a generational conflict as well as different ideas concerning the way of life. While George is colonial-born, his father will forever remain the immigrant, who has to prove to himself and the world that he has made it. George is portrayed as intelligent but utterly lazy. He is disinclined to work and makes good use of his father's wealth through gambling and horse-racing. This life-style diametrically opposes Mr Piper's attitudes. George is the only colonial-born main adult character in the novel. He is what his father, despite all his wealth and his social position, will never be –  a "real" Australian. George does not have to prove anything to anyone and this

seems to be the main principle as to how he lives his life. It can be assumed that he grew up in sufficient luxury, which enabled him to develop refined manners and an interest in intellectual pursuits and prevented him from the necessity to do physical work. In fact, George is completely reluctant to undertake work of any kind. He lives in his father's house, of his father's money and is mainly interested in horseracing and gambling. His interests, however, become intolerable when his debts reach an exorbitant level. This might explain why he lets a horse race decide upon his future. It seems that he does not fear either outcome. Although he loves Laura and would live comfortably with her off his winnings, he takes more and more to his beautiful cousin, when he realises how the whole society of Melbourne takes to her. Marrying her would make him an envied man in town who can stay in the city and live luxuriously in Piper's Hill.

George's hedonistic way of living contradicts his father's industrious and self-restraint character, and conflicts arise at the intersection where both worldviews meet. Mr Piper's judgement of the younger generation's way of living is reflective of the generational gap; he states: "It's fine times for you youngsters that think the world's nothing than a big playground. Fine times! Fine times!" (62). These two diametrically opposed characters are aptly employed by Tasma to present facets of colonial men. It is believed that Tasma's portrayal of colonial men is reflective of her own experiences (Clarke, *Tasma* 368). One reason for her own marriage break down was her husband's interest in gambling, horse-racing, and drinking. George uses the mateship concept to exemplify the depth and strength of his and Laura's relationship and to get her to agree to marry him. "Don't we know each other through and through? Could we find "mates" if we looked for them all our lives, excepting in each other?" (79). Mateship is remarked upon in a different constellation that in the previously discussed literature. Here, lovers of the opposite sex are referred to as mates, infusing the concept with heterosexuality and love and placing it within urban surrounds. One may infer that mateship was a widely used term to denote a variety of social relations and not exclusive to the men of the bush.

Of the three settings previously identified, the city of Melbourne presents the central place of people's lives, whereas the township of Barnesbury is Melbourne's "Other." Most of the novel is set in Melbourne and the city is presented as a place which shapes people's lives. It provides employment, opportunities for recreation, and enables people to gather together. The social function of the city is exhibited in the various encounters of different people which take place in Piper's Hill as well as on different social occasions such as the governor's "At Home" ball, the New Year's Races, or the Melbourne Cup. However,

the city also functions as the stage on which dimensions of wealth are exhibited and the social positions of the actors are contested. The bush does not play a significant role in people's lives; it does not inform any characters. On the contrary, the bush is situated at the margins as a place for the fallen Englishman like Mr Hyde who "[fell] into extravagances that obliged him to sell out and to look for salvation to the Australian bush" (155). The city's superiority over the bush is further enacted by locating the tragic accident outside the city, not exactly in the bush but in a country town remote from any urban influences.

Tasma's account of Barnesbury presents a detailed portrayal of an Australian township in the middle of the nineteenth century. The township is described as a dry and hot place that has "been brought to a sudden halt in bygone years, and […] never set going again […]" (170). It used to be an economic centre during and shortly after the gold rush, but with the quieting down at the diggings the town lost its function. What remained is the "angry sun" (219) shining down on the "dreary regions of rung gum trees, standing bare in a kind of white-blackness, significant of their life-in-death condition […]" (218). "Life-in-death" is exemplary of Louey's physical state after the accident. For weeks it does not become clear if the little girl will survive. The location of the accident in the township and the following readjustment of the character's worldviews, however, allocate the township a purifying quality. The narrator states that "Whatever furnace of affliction they [the party in Barnesbury] are passing through now, one may be sure at least that it is a purifying one" (250). It is the remoteness of the country town, precisely its "in-death" condition, which forces the characters to solely concentrate on the improvement of the sick and their own emotions. Caring, loving, hoping, and praying become the major preoccupations of all; leaving the irritations and superficialities of city life behind. Again, Tasma turns out to be an occupant of a dual approach. She begins with a negative estimation of Barnesbury, portraying the town as died out and its inhabitants as backwards: "The remark that Voltaire made about the great Russian Empire, when he compared it to a pear that was rotten before it was ripe, might be applied with equal truth to many a Victorian township. […]. Barnesbury is one of these" (169). Laura despises its lack of sophistication and homely comforts in their parsonage, while Francis, more moderate, finds it "rather a pretty place" (171).  However, the more Laura gets used to her life in Barnesbury the more intimate the relationship to her brother becomes. By the time Louey's injuries are healed, all characters are set up with the right partner and Mr Piper is content with the overall situation.

Tasma seems to be fascinated with the economic potentials of the colonies. She inflicts Australia with great opportunities for the industrious while criticising English aristocracy as superficial, its members as lacking in financial independence and skills. Mr Cavendish and Sara, as representatives of the aristocracy, cannot do anything; they would not manage to survive on their own in Australia. Mr Cavendish's general reluctance to work deems him inappropriate for the colony and makes him a hanger-on of his brother-in-law, while Sara follows her father's example in becoming voluntarily dependent on her aristocratic husband. Tasma sees many advantages and potentials in Australia. Everyone is given a chance provided he or she is determined. Mr Piper's determination exceeded that of other colonists and positions him on top of the colonial hierarchy as Tasma points out: "Whatever Mr Piper had been in the past, his dealing had always been honourable, […] his present position, as one of the largest and wealthiest landowners in the colony, and a generous donor to charitable institutions besides, would have sufficed to procure him the consideration of the Australian world" (191). Despite Tasma's fascination with economic opportunities presented to everyone in the colony, Tasma is not obsessed with wealth. The story reveals that neither Mr Piper's nor Mr Cavendish's way of life is regarded as exemplary for the new country. The latter's obsession with the aristocracy and Mr Piper's belief in economic industriousness are rejected by Tasma. Louey's accident functions as a reforming device. The "right" couples find one another; Mr Piper reveals his loving and caring side and, finally, approves of his son George's marriage to Lydia. Whereas Mr Piper, Francis, George, and Laura are reformed by the life-threatening experiences in the township, Sara and her father are as they always used to be: selfish and preoccupied with narrow-minded superficialities. Tasma proves that neither heredity nor sole insistence on economic success but hard work and honest affection are the cornerstones of life in the colonies.

# Conclusion

In this thesis, I have outlined the emergence of the Australian national identity in colonial Australia. National identity is not a politically determined construct but culturally produced through discourse on literary works by female and male writers. The emergence of the dominant bushman myth exhibited enormous strength and influence on subsequent generations and infused the notion of "Australianness" with exclusively male characteristics. It provided a unique geographical space, the bush, on and against which the colonial subject could model his identity. Its dominance rendered non-male and non-bush experiences of Australia as "un-Australian."

A variety of contemporary voices have been presented– postcolonial, Aboriginal, feminist, cultural critics – which see the Australian identity as a prominent topic, not only in the academia but also in everyday culture and politics. Although positioned in different disciplines and influenced by varying histories, these voices share a similar view on Australian society: Australia is a plural society, it is home to millions of different people – women, men, and children, Aboriginal Australians and immigrants, newly arrived and descendents of the first settlers – with millions of different identities which make up one nation. One version of national identity does not account for the multitude of experiences; one version, if applied strictly, renders some voices unheard and oppressed.

This thesis sees itself as a contribution to the "hybridisation" of national discourse. It shows that Australia has been a plural society from the start; that colonial composition was made up of British, German, Scandinavian, Chinese, men and women, and Aboriginal Australians. This fact was ignored and unnoticed as long as the bushman myth dominated the Australian psyche. After exemplifying how the literature of the 1890s and its subsequent criticism constructed the itinerant worker as "the" Australian, literary productions by women were singled out to counteract the dominant version by presenting different opinions on the state of colonial Australia. The writers Louisa Lawson, Barbara Baynton, and Tasma were discussed with regard to their assessment of their mother country. These women did not only present a different picture, they were also gifted writers and lived the ideal of the "New Women:" they obtained divorces, remarried, were politically active, worked for their living and led independent lives. They paved the way for many Australian women to come.

In their literary works they allowed for a dual approach to the bush and the Australian nation. Louisa Lawson credited the bushwoman with heroic traits and described the bush as

both cruel and full of opportunities not known to women in England. She understood women's position in Australian society as oppressed and tried to change politics and culture through the writings in her feminist magazine the *Dawn* and her courageous campaign for women suffrage. Barbara Baynton painted a gloomy picture of the Australian bush and its inhabitants and offered one of the fiercest critiques of bush society. Although the woman is presented as the able and resourceful bushperson, she does not manage to survive in an environment which functions on male rules and only values the economic potential of the individual. Finally, Tasma does not present as outright a critique as Barbara Baynton, however, she also attests the colonies a fascination with wealth which she renders questionable. She offers an informed judgement on colonial developments in the urban surrounds of the city of Melbourne through the comparison of colonial society with the mother country England. Finally, Tasma attests that the colonies had a fascination with wealth which she renders questionable. She offers an informed judgement on colonial developments in the urban surrounds of the city of Melbourne through the comparison of colonial society with the mother country England and demonstrates how uncertainties and irritations emerged in the course of Australia's nation formation.

These three women, as writers, commentators, and political activists, faced exclusion from the dominant literary discourses. Their assessment of colonial society remained unheard for a long time. Now, after much academic excavation, these voices speak to us from the past and remind us that people are diverse, thus nation is diverse. Dominant power structures, the institutions and individuals who decide who can contribute to the discourse on nation, have to be questioned and reassessed, for they mute voices which contribute to a wider, to the "full", and maybe "real" picture of society.

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