Australian Elegy: Landscape and Identity

by

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Abstract

With a long, illustrious history from the early Greek pastoral poetry of Theocritus, the elegy remains a prestigious, flexible Western poetic genre: a key space for negotiating individual, communal and national anxieties through memorialization of the dead. An analysis of Australian elegy from the 1820s until the present reveals that settler elegy is of particular importance in view of Australia’s former status as a British colony and as a post-colonial nation. Characterised by the presence of a symbolic association between landscape and the elegized poet, a substantial body of settler elegy is shown to be involved in legitimizing tenure of the land, establishing national agendas, and creating settler Australian identity.

An important subset of Australian poetry, elegy lacks any full-length study, a considerable, oft-noted omission in the critical literature. A priority of the research has been to establish the parameters of the field, seeking out elegy throughout all periods of Australian literary history, and all forms of publication, from newspapers and magazines to single-author collections and anthologies. The primary sources, upon which this thesis is based, number over 1000 poems.

The methodology for this study involves the critical analysis of a range of elegies using postcolonial and feminist theories. Other than a vein of contemporary anti-elegy, a postcolonial perspective identifies a substantial number of colonial and contemporary settler elegies that show a crucial association between elegy and landscape, making clear how discursive regimes of power were and still are often
associated with neo-colonialism. This study examines the pervasiveness of discourses associated with land ownership and identity in elegy through the representation of the putative extinction of Aboriginal peoples in the proleptic elegy; the symbolic connection between burial, land ownership and identity in the bushman elegy; an association between poetic tradition and nationalism in the colonial tombeau; and in the spectral presence of the contemporary elegized poet on the landscape.

Moreover, in its elision of the effects of colonization and its aftermath on Aboriginal peoples, the Australian settler colonial and contemporary elegy presents a landscape in which Aboriginal peoples, their histories and cultures are absent or misrepresented. Indigenous poetry published from the 1960s onwards, discussed in the final chapter of the thesis, responds to this absence in settler landscape elegy through claiming traditional lands, histories and cultures.
Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy 38

Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape 86

Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation 140

Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity 193

Chapter Five: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy 252

Conclusion 312

Notes 322

Bibliography 330

Newspapers 355
Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the settler elegy is of importance in view of Australia’s former position as a British colony and as a post-colonial nation. It is proposed that the presence of a physical and symbolic association between landscape and the elegized poet in a considerable body of settler elegy is involved in legitimizing ownership of the land, establishing national agendas, and generating representations of settler Australian identity. In the larger historical perspective, the elegy has most often been a poem of meditation, usually on love or death, while in the more modern sense of the term the elegy is a short poem, often formal in tone and occasioned by the death of a person. The notion of elegy as providing a public/private space for poets to speak about experiences of absence and loss, both as a lament for the dead and as meditative verse, is central to the genre. Of relevance for this study, the western genre of elegy is a key means by which individuals, communities and nations remember and speak of their dead.

Employing both a postcolonial and a feminist perspective, this thesis examines a number of ways that Australian settler poets have used the genre of elegy since the nineteenth century. The central focus of the thesis is a large group of Australian elegies written between 1820 and the present – termed in this study as ‘landscape elegy’. The legal doctrine of Terra Nullius is intricately bound with the landscape elegy in terms of representation of land ownership evoked within landscape elegy. The white, settler elegies discussed in the first four chapters of the thesis not only express concerns associated with
Introduction

legitimization of land tenure in a settler nation, but with an Australian national identity represented by poets as forged through an association between the elegized dead and the land. This identity with the land not only creates a sense of belonging for the settler, but also importantly underlies discourses concerning experiences on the land, that in turn support a claim to the land.

An imperative of the thesis is to tease out an interaction between the genre of elegy and landscape in order to mark a partnership between death, burial and memorialization, and the Australian landscape as an imagined geographic space involved in the symbolic process of imperial land colonization and land tenure. Through a close analysis of Australian landscape elegy, this thesis describes the ways in which these two influential western forms – the genre of elegy, and ‘landscape’ as a discourse – combine to generate an influential political and discursive field that attempts to establish a symbolic ownership of the land through death and burial: one that is represented in the settler elegy as taking place in the bedrock of the landscape itself – the soil. That the settler landscape elegy is most often represented as enacted by the elegist at the grave, creates a particular white settler narrative that symbolically asserts a right to the land through life, death and burial within the Australian landscape. The elegy acts as a marker in a textual geography that underwrites landscape possession, as well as what Patricia Uppal describes in relation to the elegy of place – in the Canadian context – as a poem that ‘provides a necessary site for the apprehension of local, regional, or national inheritance’ (2009: 185).

Uppal’s comment marks the importance of place in terms of not only inheritance, described above in terms of land tenure, but also in relation to nationalism which is particularly
Introduction

apparent in the colonial settler elegy in nineteenth-century Australia. In *A Transnational Poetics*, Jahan Ramazani argues that ‘the political use of mourning in the service of the nation-state are everywhere to be seen’ (2009: 73). Ramazani states, too, that the modern nation uses public figures and heroes in ‘state-sanctioned elegies’, suggesting that ‘when poetic uses of language are made to serve public mourning, we have the imagined-community in mourning’ (73; 74). The ‘imagined-community’, that Ramazani suggests is served by public mourning, is integral to Benedict Anderson’s early postcolonial text *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991). Anderson’s seminal text, and particularly his concept of ‘imagined communities’, is discussed in this thesis as relevant to nineteenth-century Australian settler nationalism. The lauding of the dead heroes that Anderson locates as an important part of nationalism, play a key role in the Australian context in relation to the way their role is said to contribute to the colony, and later the nation (10). Furthermore, the verse of the colonial poet is shown as a driving force in the project of nationalism in expressing the new nation, its beliefs, and national ethos. Thus, the focus of this study is landscape, identity, and nation, which will be revealed as key concerns of settler poets writing elegy in Australia.

A postcolonial perspective of settler landscape elegies identifies this group of poems as omitting the presence of Aboriginal Australians on the landscape; as well as eliding the impact and repercussions of colonialism on Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Chapter One describes extinction discourse – a rationale employed by western colonial powers to justify a claim to the land – in which the nineteenth-century colonial elegies for a dying-race offer a putative mournful verse that represents the supposed extinction of Aboriginal peoples, whilst simultaneously *emptying* the landscape. In Chapter
Introduction

Two, elegies for the colonial bushman and explorer are analysed as figures that are represented as making a claim to the land through exploration and burial, thus working to engender ownership of the land through white histories and generationalism on the land, as well as to establish a national character honed by association with the land. Chapter Three examines the colonial tombeau – an elegy celebrating the dead poet and the poet's verse. The tombeau is a subgenre of elegy traditionally associated with establishing poetic traditions. In Australia, this is aligned with the creation of a nineteenth-century poetic tradition, which in turn underwrites cultural nationalism and the inception of nation. Chapter Four theorizes the contemporary tombeau as involved in ghosting the dead settler poet within the landscapes and locations of Australia, establishing a poetics of place and a sense of identity between the dead and the living poet and particular, named locations.

While these four chapters are intrinsically associated with anxieties concerning possession of the landscape and national identity inscribed in the elegy through association between the land and the settler dead, Chapter Five, describing contemporary Aboriginal Australian elegies, writes back to representations of an empty landscape in the settler elegies. In bearing witness to the past and the effects of colonization, the Aboriginal elegy is both a protest poetry and a poetics of witness. Furthermore, Aboriginal Australian poets show a concern with reclaiming their long histories in relation to the Australian landscape, established through their habitation of traditional lands.

Rationale

A number of critics have commented that there is a significant and highly visible presence of elegy in Australian poetry. For example, in *The Oxford Literary History of Australia,*
Introduction

Dennis Haskell notes that elegy constitutes a ‘strong and largely unrecognised Australian poetic tradition’, suggesting a number of highly regarded Australian poems are in the genre of elegy (1998: 283). While research for this study has confirmed the presence of a large body of published Australian elegy – often by well-known Australian poets – there is a disproportionately small amount of research accomplished within Australian elegy criticism or theory. While there are several studies of Australian elegy, mainly in literary journals and book chapters, these are generally author-based. That the Australian elegy lacks any full-length study, in spite of its evident importance in Australian literary history, suggests a considerable omission in the critical literature.

In, ‘Vestiges: Narrative and Autobiography in Australian Elegy’, David McCooey proposes that the presence of a large number of Australian elegies is linked to historical factors, in particular to Australia as a post-colonial nation, on the basis that ‘loss is central to three major narratives of Australian history: dispossession of Indigenous people; colonial loss of British commonplaces; loss experienced by post-war migrants’ (2002: 68). An important rationale for this thesis is the lack of previous studies of elegy in relation to the ways it has been used in Australian poetics, in view of Australia’s status as a colonial and neo-colonial settler nation. Representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as absent from the land in settler landscape elegies creates a textual landscape that fails to acknowledge the presence of Aboriginal peoples, thereby omitting their histories and their right to traditional lands. This creates a presence/absence dichotomy that privileges the colonial settler in terms of representing their own history of habitation and generationalism on the land, and thus suggesting a symbolic ownership of the land. Representations of an empty landscape in colonial elegy contribute to discourses that work in much the same way as
Introduction

those critiqued in Edward Said’s seminal text, *Orientalism*, describing the European textual creation of the Orient (1978). Furthermore, they are aligned with the ways in which textuality creates Michel Foucault’s power/knowledge dialectic, in which ‘knowing’ the ‘other’ is a form of power (1980: 52).

Moreover, this study examines the ways in which the elegy is not only involved in a symbolic land tenure, but with furthering nineteenth-century nationalism and an associated national identity, underwriting Federation in 1901. In addition, this thesis draws out a number of ways that concerns associated with land tenure and identity, in relation to both the local and national conceptions of identity and belonging, are continuous, though in different ways, in the contemporary settler elegy. Thus, the central concerns of this thesis: representations of an empty landscape; symbolic ownership of the land; nation and national identity, are of specific relevance to the Australian situation as a settler colony and later as a nation, offering further validation for this study.

While these considerations suggest that there is a need to chart the unexplored field of elegy in a post-colonial nation in terms of politics, race and power structures centred on the land, a further important rationale for this study lies in the masculinized nature of this group of landscape elegy, from which settler female poets are most often excluded. A feminist perspective is adopted to scrutinize this further absence from the landscape of not only female figures within the elegy, but the lack of female poets writing elegy associated with the land, nation, and a national identity. This is an important perspective that will be unravelled further in the introduction, as well as in the first four chapters of settler elegies. This provides an important rationale for this study of elegy through further understanding.
Introduction

of gender inequality within certain subgenres of Australian elegy. Furthermore, the way in which gender inequality has been established through imperial political practices in terms of inclusions and exclusions in textual practices in the form of a hegemonic masculinity, is made visible through this study of landscape elegy.

The research and writing for this thesis also reveals its importance in adding to Australian colonial and contemporary literary studies and literary history – aligned both with Indigenous and non-Indigenous poets. Further rationale for this study lies in the important place of the elegy in poetic histories and poetic traditions, both in nineteenth-century and contemporary Australia. Attending to both periods increases our understanding of the important place of poetry in Australia in terms of history, society, and culture, as well as in relation to cultural nationalism and conceptions of a national identity.

Numerous theoretical and cultural perspectives have provided insights into the ways in which elegy has been theorised, perceived and understood in western poetics. There is an extensive body of contemporary theoretical work on Western elegy, particularly from the United States and England, which has provided the body of criticism for this present work, a large number of which are referred to throughout this study. In *Beyond Consolation: Death, Sexuality and the Changing Face of Elegy*, Melissa Zeiger suggests that elegy has been studied and theorized more often than other poetic genres, thus giving it ‘a more highly privileged poetic status’, particularly so since the 1970s (1997: 1). The importance of this much-used, often written-about, high-status genre provides a further rationale for examining the unexplored field of elegy in Australian poetry.
Introduction

A further justification for this study lies in the fact that there are few postcolonial studies of poetry internationally. It is not until the twenty-first century that works such as Jahan Ramazani’s, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2001); Rajeev Patke’s *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2006); and Ashhok Bery’s text in *Cultural Translation and Postcolonial Poetry* (2007) have begun to focus on poetry in postcolonial studies. In “‘Why Waste Lines on Achilles?’ Tracing Critical Discourses in Postcolonial Poetry through Untimeliness to the Present’, Lucy Van comments that much postcolonial analysis of poetry is focused upon ‘highly literary postcolonial figures’ (2013: 23). A survey of these three invaluable texts for the study of postcolonial poetry, notes that there are only four or five pages that discuss Indigenous Australian poetry and poets. Berry and Ramazani do not consider the postcolonial poetry of Indigenous Australians. While Ramazani does not discuss any settler Australian poets, Berry discusses the poetry of contemporary settler poets, Les Murray and Judith Wright, in terms of nationalistic impulses within their poetry. Rajeev Patke discusses the poetry of the settler poets Charles Harpur, Christopher Brennan and Judith Wright, but while he does discuss Indigenous protest poetry written by Jack Davis of the Noongar people, Kevin Gilbert of the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations, as well as Kath Walker (later named Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal people), these discussions are minimal in length (Patke: 2006: 163-5). There is therefore a need for more work within the field of Aboriginal poetry to gain further understanding of the effects of colonialism; as well as the widespread and complex repercussions of being Aboriginal in a contemporary postcolonial settler Australia. This is a key area which this study attempts to address.

Despite the prolific nature of published Australian elegy since the early years of colonization, there has been no anthology of Australian elegy. A priority of the research has
Introduction

been to establish the parameters of the field, in a search for elegy representing all phases of Australian literary history, as well as many forms of publication, including newspapers and magazines, collections by single-authors, and anthologies. This primary material ranges from the early colonial era to the present. It comprises over 1,000 elegies that offer a wide range of subjects, themes and approaches. Apart from those categories described in this study, other subjects include war deaths, including the Boer War; the World Wars and the Vietnam War; the death of historical figures; elegies written by poets from an immigrant background; the death of loved ones, including parents, grandparents and children, and the self-elegy, an elegy written by the poet about his own death or mortality. Furthermore, a substantial number of elegies associated with the central themes of landscape and identity have been collected, and it is these that form the basis of this study.

In the light of these debates, this study offers an essential space for the negotiation and renegotiation of concerns arising from Australian particularities. Australian poets employ the genre in a settler nation with a history based on colonialism, thus legitimacy, independence, nation, a national character and national poetic traditions are all of great import, and the elegy as an adaptable genre, expresses such concerns and interests through elegizing the dead.

The Genre of Elegy

Critics from the United States and Britain have discussed the ways in which elegy is marked by the anxieties and concerns of the elegist’s cultural situation, noting that the elegy is an adaptable genre for expressing these anxieties. Dennis Kay’s observation, in Melodious
Introduction

*Tears: The English Funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton,* that the elegy is ‘a form without frontiers’ marks the way the boundaries of elegy have continually been challenged, suggesting it is a genre that responds to changing cultural needs, making elegy a premiere poetic site for negotiating and renegotiating the anxieties of a particular individual, community, or nation (1990: 7). In *We Are What We Mourn: Contemporary English-Canadian Elegy,* Patricia Uppal discusses the ways in which English-Canadian elegists in the latter half of the twentieth century symbolically seek out the dead as a means of consolidating a past that is crucial to Canada as a settler nation, as well as in terms of an identity (2009: 13). In David Shaw’s *Elegy and Paradox: Testing the Conventions,* the author discusses elegy as a genre in which the elegist’s anxieties become ‘open sites of fracture and breakdown’, suggesting that elegy is a genre providing a space in which change and anxiety can be expressed (1995: 147). To return to *Beyond Consolation,* Zeiger acknowledges the importance of elegy in recent times, suggesting that ‘it remains an object of lofty poetic ambition’ even in the late twentieth century; and has prompted ‘intensive critical evaluation of the genre in recent times in terms of its literary histories and political implications’ (1997: 1). Furthermore, Zeiger contends that ‘many cultural norms of sexuality, gendered identity, cultural inheritance, and permissible responses to death’, have been challenged and re-negotiated by feminists, as well as many critics (1).

A high-profile western poetic genre with a long and memorable history, the elegy is a preeminent lyric genre with a history dating back to early Greek pastoral elegy. From ancient Greek origins, pastoral is one of the oldest and most influential poetic genres. It was initially associated with fertility or creativity (poetic), ranging from Theocritus’s ‘First Idyll’
to W.B. Yeats’ ‘Shepherd and Goatherd’ (Kennedy: 2008: 4-5). Poetic traditions passed from the dead to the living poet through the writing of elegy, are in evidence from early Greek pastoral elegy. Moreover, that the English tradition claimed and adapted pastoral elegy in important ways (Smith: 1977: ii), is perhaps most notably illustrated, for example, by Spenser’s Shepheardes Calender (1579), Milton’s ‘Lycidas’, on the death of his friend, the poet Edward King (1638), and Shelley’s Adonais (1821), for his friend and fellow-poet John Keats. In Grief and Metre: Elegies for Poets After Auden, Sarah Connolly suggests that from the sixteenth century, English poets ‘seized on many of the pastoral trappings of Greek lament, most often in elegies that were addressed to dead poets’ (2016: 7). Connolly argues that ‘what is being crafted most vigorously in these poems for poets is a poetic tradition itself’ (2). Establishing a national poetic tradition is central to the English tradition of elegy in that it is said to enshrine the character and beliefs of a whole people. The occurrence of tombeaux in the Australian tradition is considerable, thus suggesting a desire to construct a national poetic tradition, one that underlies a powerful nationalistic series of discourses that supports the cultural creation, establishment, and furtherance of nation and a national identity through the Australian tombeau.

In a seminal text of significance to this study, The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats, Peter Sacks discusses the roots of elegy, the ancient myths used in the form, as well as the elegiac motifs and conventions. Sacks interprets the genre of elegy through the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to show the ways in which grief, mourning and consolation play out in a single elegy. Sacks describes the aim of his study as ‘to view the relationship between the language of elegy and the experience of loss as an event or action’ (1). He continues by saying that each elegy will be
regarded as ‘work’, ‘in the sense of working through an impulse or experience – the sense that underlies Freud’s phrase “the work of mourning”’ (1). The elegy has been theorised, particularly in more recent times, as the genre of mourning: one that includes a movement from the expression of sorrow toward consolation, a theory based on Freud’s paper ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ (1990; 1917), a central text for a number of key contemporary authors concerned with an understanding of elegy as a textual mourning practice.  

Freud’s text sets up a tension between successful mourning in which the bereaved works through grief, thus freeing the ego by detaching the libido from the lost person; whilst melancholia is to be caught within a state of unsuccessful mourning in which the bereaved cannot separate from the dead, thus unable to free the ego to continue a healthy life (245; 250).  

However, while Freud’s dichotomy between healthy and unhealthy mourning has been an important theoretical perspective with which theorists of the elegy have agreed - or produced revisionary narratives - this thesis is more interested in the political and social use of the genre. In The Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney, Ramazani argues that while Sacks and other critics have illustrated that most canonical texts ‘had depicted mourning as compensatory’, the response in many twentieth-century elegies is founded more on melancholia which resists the traditional consolatory aspects of the elegy (1994: 2). Ramazani suggests that this is in part due to a redefining of elegy in the light of social and cultural changes in the twentieth century, such as living in an age of mass destruction, religious doubt and modern capitalism (2). Of direct relevance to this thesis, is the large body of contemporary Australian tombeaux discussed in Chapter 4 that illustrates the twentieth-century resistance to the consolatory aspects of the elegy that Ramazani locates in the modern elegy. Australian poets are also shown to employ the anti-tombeau
Introduction

to push against the status quo and strictures of the more official/nationalistic view of Australian poetics.

Inheritance of the Landscape and the Settler Elegy

In *The English Elegy*, Sacks lists many of the conventions of pastoral and English traditional elegy, including the ancient myths of the vegetation deity; the use of repetition and refrains; a list of the virtues of the lost beloved; the procession of mourners; the catalogue of flowers; a vision of sympathetic nature; the movement from grief to consolation; resurrection; as well as notions of contest, rewards and inheritance (1985: 1-37). Many of these conventions shown to be present in Australian settler elegies are discussed in the following chapters as important to the tradition of Australian landscape elegy, particularly in furthering a symbolic right to the land through the dead. An important example of the use of pastoral conventions is found in Sacks’ description of ‘the pathetic fallacy of nature’s lament’, in which the landscape itself is figured in the elegy as mourning the dead (1985: 21). This is a common feature of early Greek elegy and the English tradition, as well as strongly in evidence in the in Australian settler colonial elegy (21). In this study of landscape elegy, the pathetic fallacy is shown, for example, as profoundly associated with a relationship between the land and the dead that furthers settler representations of an identity between inhabitants of the land, and the landscapes that they live and die within.

Arguably, an important rationale for choosing the elegy lies in the inexorable link between inheritance and mourning at the centre of the genre. Sacks reminds us that the link between mourning and inheritance has been long-lived and profound, that in fact the ‘right
Introduction

to mourn was from earliest times legally connected to the right to inherit’, in early Greek society (37). In Pastoral Elegy in Contemporary British and Irish Poetry, Ian Twiddy states that pastoral elegy is about ‘the establishment of a legacy’ (2012: 1). Furthermore, as Uppal contends in relation to contemporary settler English-Canadian elegies in We Are What We Mourn: The Contemporary English-Canadian Elegy:

... the complex issue surrounding death and mourning in relation to Inheritance, its symbolic if not literal passage from the dead to the living, is implicitly, if not explicitly, evoked, practiced, and challenged in the literary form of the elegy (2009: 7).

With its roots in inheritance through mourning, the Australian landscape elegy is shown as a premier site for matters concerning land ownership through elegizing key figures that come to represent a connection with the land, both in life and in death. Commemoration of the dead poet enacted within the elegy at the grave, and thus on the land, offers the elegist a further opportunity to mourn the dead in association with the Australian landscape. Thus the elegy for the figure of the bushman; the elegized poet in the colonial tombeau; as well as the ghosting of the dead poet in contemporary tombeaux, are implicated in possession of the landscape, through a legacy from the dead.

Female Poets and the Settler Landscape Elegy

Through a feminist perspective, this study proposes that the settler landscape elegy is predominantly a male-dominated genre; that the figures celebrated through the elegy are generally male; and the concerns with landscape, identity and nation are usually associated with the male poet. Research shows limited numbers of published elegies for the colonial
Introduction

bushman, as well as colonial tombeaux, published by women poets during the nineteenth-century. While an examination of a number of nineteenth-century colonial newspapers has brought to light a considerable number of elegies for the bushman and tombeaux for the dead poet, these are almost always written by men for men, with few by women for men, or by male poets for female poets. Moreover, there is an absence of elegies that celebrate women, or women poets in relation to their presence on the land. However, there are several important contemporary tombeaux written by women poets for male poets that thematize male identity in relation to the land, discussed in the contemporary tombeau in Chapter Four. In Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra describe an ‘extreme sexism’ in what they term a ‘Gendered Land’ (1991: 160). Hodge and Mishra, among a large number of commentators, suggest that ‘The typical Australian is a highly gendered construct, which removes all women from the national identity at a stroke’ (164). In ‘A “Lonely Crossing”: Approaching Nineteenth-Century Australian Women’s Poetry’, Ann Vickery discusses this exclusion of women, stating that ‘The sphere of the imagination and lasting immortality was a masculine domain, the latter achieved by immortalizing the epoch-making events of explorers and pioneer experience’ (2002: 33).

In keeping with these comments, this thesis explores the myths and characters associated with nineteenth-century settler land ownership, nationalism, national identity and national poetic traditions in relation to their inscription as male. Moreover, the tombeau is discussed in relation to its status as a predominantly male-dominated subgenre since early Greek elegies that showed a concern with passing on poetic traditions. Underwritten by the
Introduction

Orpheus and Eurydice myth, the return of Eurydice to the underworld has been theorized recently by feminists such as the aforementioned Zeiger, as rendering Orpheus as poet-speaker, thereby relegating Eurydice to poetic silence. In *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet*, Charles Segal claims that ‘if we read through the ancient references to Orpheus we are struck at once by how small a role Eurydice (or her equivalent) plays’ (1989: 155). Segal states, too, that ‘Several twentieth-century century women poets reclaim the myth for the tradition’ (176), a statement that will be discussed with reference to contemporary Australian women’s poetics with the emergence of tombeaux written by female poets. The status of female poets writing elegy associated with the landscape and with national interests, as well as their involvement in the tombeau and poetic traditions, will be discussed in the relevant chapters. Furthermore, an emergent form of the tombeau written by female poets is considered in relation to the contemporary settler tombeau, which will look at the place of women poets in contemporary poetic traditions.

Methodology

This analysis of the landscape elegy uses a postcolonial theoretical perspective to analyse the ways that the subgenre is used in colonial and post-colonial Australian poetics. Analysing Australian landscape elegies through a postcolonial perspective identifies this group of settler poems as inscribing white settler histories onto the landscape through death and burial that works to establish a right to the land. These settler figures and their histories on the land tend to overlay the presence of Aboriginal Australians on the landscape; as well as to elide the fact of colonization and its repercussions for Australia’s First Peoples. Moreover, as briefly touched upon, the proleptic elegy for a dying-race discussed in Chapter One, further empties the landscape of Aboriginal peoples in the
Introduction

nineteenth-century through a poetics informed by extinction discourse. In ‘The Literature of Extinction’, Andrew McCann argues that nation, landscape, and the ‘literature of the soil’ are ‘clearly representations as belonging to the toxic legacy of colonialism’ (2006: 54). McCann describes the tension between ‘poetic affect and extinction’, ‘pointing to the guilt of the poet-as-settler’ in response to colonization (54). The landscape, location for the physical process of colonizing Indigenous peoples and taking possession of the land, is as McCann argues, transformed within poetry into ‘a melancholic, self-fashioning of lyrical poetry out of genocide’ (54). The nineteenth-century dying-race elegy contributes to legitimizing land ownership through representing the Australian landscape as both uninhabited and unowned, thus aligned in influential ways with the legal concept of Terra Nullius – in International law, a land that belongs to no one. Chapter Four, a pivotal chapter in the thesis, discusses the contemporary histories of the settler poet on the landscape, and examines the ways in which this erasure is continuous in the latter decades of the twentieth century, and into the present. Consequently, the use of postcolonial theory in this study asks questions about the ways in which power dynamics between white settler and First Inhabitants represented within the settler landscape elegy, shows the continuation of neo-colonial practices in contemporary Australian poetry. This is implicitly pervasive within the settler elegy, and explicitly pronounced within the Aboriginal poetics of loss in Chapter Five, in which Aboriginal poets describe a contemporary reality that shows First Australians are still often without traditional lands and without sovereignty, and therefore intrinsically a ‘colonized’ people living under settler rule.

This brings to light the highly contested nature of what the term ‘postcolonial’ actually means. In Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction, Leela Gandhi states that the term
Introduction

postcolonial is a highly complex and disputed term, both in its meaning as following on from colonization in its ‘hyphenated form’ of “post-colonialism”; as well as a ‘temporal marker of the decolonizing process’, as opposed to the belief that, ‘the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation’ (1998:3). In The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English, CL Innes remarks that, ‘Indeed, given that indigenous Australian Aborigines and Native Americans have yet to recover their territory and achieve self-government, it has been claimed that countries such as Australia and Canada should be classified as not “post-colonial” but “colonial”’ (2007: 2). In a discussion of postcolonial poetry in ‘Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand’ in the forthcoming The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry, McCooey casts further light on these debates concerning both historical and recent discussion concerning the parameters and complexities of ‘post-colonial studies’, stating that for settler nations:

This questionable status arises because in settler nations such as Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand the colonisers ‘never left’. Rather than being unambiguously ‘postcolonial’ Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand are more meaningfully considered ‘post/colonial’; that is, nations in which postcolonial forces contend with hegemonic colonial legacies or emergent neo-colonial practices (in press for 2017).

As McCooey implies, the term post-colonial is further complicated by the presence of western ‘neo-colonial practices’ within the contemporary global community. As a more recent form of colonization that has evolved since the 1950s, economic control and cultural
Introduction

invasion by the West is arguably ever-present within a globalized world. There has been, and is, a growing disquiet over the continuation of imperialist practices in more insidious forms; one which forms the basis for discussions concerning the validity and the value of a postcolonial perspective in present times. As the term ‘neo-colonial’ suggests, the presence of new forms of ‘colonialism’, as well as the older imperial power structures in place since early colonization, are features of the purportedly post-colonial nation. As McCooey states of contemporary Australia, ‘the deep disadvantages suffered by Indigenous Australians in terms of education, life expectancy, child mortality, health, housing, rates of incarceration, and so on, continue unabated’ (in press for 2017). For example, the continuing high rates of incarceration for Aboriginal Australians since early colonization will be discussed in this thesis in light of a number of elegies concerned with deaths in custody, suggesting that patterns of incarceration since colonial times remain prevalent. Moreover, the issue of land rights, ubiquitous since the First Fleet landed in 1788, is a most pressing problem that will be considered in relation to its effects on the social, cultural, spiritual and community life of Indigenous Australians, both in the past and today.

For Indigenous peoples of Australia these issues are ever-present in their lives. Moreover, this is a situation exacerbated by the fact that postcolonial poetry is generally written in English. Aijaz Ahmed discusses this key issue in postcolonial studies in Theory: Classes, Nations, Literature, in which he mounts an attack on Edward Said and other theorists ‘for their homogenizing of the “Third World” writing, and their concentration on European and European language texts to the neglect of Indigenous language writing’ (1992: 12). Aboriginal writers and poets writing in the language of the invader, find themselves working with styles, genres, the syntax, and the cultural and racial meanings inherent within the
Introduction

English language. Therefore, an imperative of this study is to consider the ways in which Aboriginal poets write within a culture, a belief system and a language not their own. However, this thesis considers ways in which Aboriginal poets write a poetics of decolonization that works to subvert the western context in which they write. Furthermore, Aboriginal poets use features from traditional oral traditions in their poetry through a poetic voice emergent since the 1960s.

The question of a ‘voice’ for the marginalized subject is discussed in ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’, in which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that ‘the subaltern cannot speak’, due to ‘the continuing presence of imperialism and due to historical and ideological dynamics that prevent the margins from having a voice’ (1988: 308). As a part of more recent subaltern studies, in ‘On Subalterns and Other Agencies’, Walter Mignolo states that in living within the knowledge systems of their oppressors, colonized peoples are ‘deprived’ and ‘repressed’ of knowing and understanding their own language, selfhood and therefore unable to be, or to represent themselves (2005: 391). Robert Young encapsulates the position of the colonized person, as ‘the person who is not authorized to speak’; the ‘object’ of the speech of others; in ‘a world that exists for others’ (2003: 1). Offering the perspective of a minority people that puts into question the knowledge systems that underpin, control and shape colonial and contemporary postcolonial representations of Aboriginal peoples, is consequently an important rationale for this study of elegy. In this, it tries to show the important part that contemporary Aboriginal poets play in decolonization; as well as in establishing contemporary selfhoods for formerly silenced poets.
Introduction

While Aboriginal poets work to evade the strictures of neo-colonialism, the settler poet is involved in the project of establishing a settler nation, and a selfhood based on a national identity constructed textually in the settler elegy. The aim of this thesis is to show the contribution that colonial poets make in both symbolic and material ways to Federation in 1901 – thereby establishing a putatively national autonomy from the imperial mother country. There are divisions in thinking as to whether the term ‘post-colonial’ can be applied to settler movements associated with establishing a nation involved in gaining independence from the imperial mother country. A number of postcolonial theorists argue that the term post-colonial cannot be applied in the same way to both the settler/colonizer and the colonized peoples of the world. This thinking assumes that there is a clear division between the settler striving for sovereignty, as compared to the colonized subject shaking free from their colonial oppressor. In *Postcolonial Issues in Australian Literature*, Nathanael O’Reilly suggests that there is ‘a bias within postcolonial studies against scholars who focus on literature from the settler colonies, especially Australia, Canada and New Zealand’ (2010: 30). Further, O’Reilly argues that ‘to exclude Australia from the realm of the postcolonial is to literally and metaphorically narrow the field, limit the breadth and depth of exploration, and privilege a particular way of being postcolonial’ (5-6). However, in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, Elleke Boehmer makes a clear division between literature of the settler and colonized peoples, stating that whilst what she terms ‘colonialist literature’ ‘was informed by theories concerning the superiority of European cultures of empire’, ‘Postcolonial Literature formed part of the process of overhaul’ (1995: 3). This thesis aims to tease out Boehmer’s two central but quite different circumstances of Australian postcolonial writings evident within Australian elegy: one in which settler poets sought autonomy from the mother country through working to
Introduction

establish a nation and an identity; the other, in which contemporary Indigenous poets write back to make evident what Boehmer describes as the ‘myths of power, the race classification, the imagery of subordination’, in order for colonized peoples ‘to take their place forcibly or otherwise as historical subjects’ (3).

Landscape, Identity and Nation in Nineteenth-Century Australia

In *Landscape and Power*, WJT Mitchell proposes that landscape is comparable to an ideology, contending that it is not simply about what landscape is, but also about ‘what it does’ and ‘how it works as a cultural practice’ (2002: 1). Further, Mitchell argues that landscape ‘doesn’t merely signify or symbolize power relations, it is an instrument of cultural power’ (1-2). Mitchell reasons that:

the semiotic features of landscape, and the historical narratives they generate, are tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism, which conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ into a ‘natural’ space in a progress that is itself narrated as ‘natural’ (17).

As the field in which legitimization, identity and the formation of nation plays out, Australian landscape can be described as a discourse in which imaginative acts of ownership and belonging take place. In *Imagined Landscapes: Geovisualizing Australian Spatial Narratives*, Jane Stadler and Peta Mitchell argue that representations of landscape are not merely ‘a background against which narrative action plays out’ but ‘they generate symbolism and produce cultural meaning’ (2016: 2). Moreover, in keeping with a central focus on the ideological status of narratives associated with the Australian landscape in this
Introduction

thesis, in ‘Cinematic Geographies of Australia: The Mapped View in Charles Chavell’s *Jedda* and Baz Luhrmann’s *Australia*, Stadler and Mitchell state:

Representations of space and place are always ideological, always implicated in some forms of nation-building or identity-formation, and considering ‘imagined’, fictive representations, or mythic Geographies allows us to see the ways in which representations of space and place are intimately bound up in the nexus of power-knowledge (29).

The knowledge systems, nation-building and identity-formation that Stadler and Mitchell locate in spatial, geophysical representations, are salient themes in this post-colonial study of Australian settler elegy. A reciprocal, symbolic relationship between the land and the elegized figures interacting with the landscape, forms the basis of what becomes a durable Australian identity shaped by the hardships and the experiences, in what has been evoked in settler poetics as an alien and intractable landscape. The nature and the physical qualities of the landscape are represented as unique to the Southern continent and come to separate the colonies both geographically, and in spirit, from the imperial mother country in the trajectory towards Federation.

Stadler and Mitchell point out the value of geocriticism and geovizualization as ‘modes of narrative analyses’, that ‘reveal the complex imbrication of a locale, and its community, and its connections to evolving historical understanding of regional and national identity’ (2016: 4). The elegized bushmen, explorers, and poets that are represented on the land present a particular settler history, whilst obscuring other figures and histories, and in the process, create identities associated with life and death on the land. This overlaying of settler
Introduction

histories creates a tension between the presence of Aboriginal peoples and their histories on the land, with those of the settler, who in engendering a past with the land conceal the histories of Australia’s First Peoples.

While a postcolonial theorizing of landscape suggests it is a site of cultural and political power in Australia, the traditional English tombeau is also shown to be a of cultural and political importance. Long associated with the creation of poetic histories and national poetic traditions, the nineteenth-century settler tombeau is shown as a powerful poetic space in relation to nation-formation. Lawrence Lipking’s seminal text describing both the history and the parameters of the tombeau, The Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers, is a key to understanding the colonial Australian tombeau and the creation of nineteenth-century national poetic traditions. Lipking describes the ‘moment of passage, when the legacy or soul of the poet’s work is transmitted to the next generation’; thus describing poets as ‘carriers of literary history’ (1981: Viv; 160). What is important for colonial Australia in terms of literary nationalism, is that a poetic tradition is also represented as reflecting the principles, the ethos and the national sensibilities of the nation. Thus, importantly, a poetic tradition passes down these principles to the next generation through inheritance, a most important passage in terms of nationalism, a national identity, and the emergence of a colonial society into a fully-fledged nation.

Moreover, the tombeau shows an historical association with colonization, mapping and land ownership in the English tradition of elegy. Perhaps the best-known English elegy is Milton’s ‘Lycidas’, which marks the important place of the tombeau in terms of these imperial projects. In ‘The Genius of the Shore: Lycidas, Adamastor, and the Poetics of
Introduction

Nationalism’, Lipking discusses Milton’s pastoral elegy, arguing, ‘When Milton appointed Lycidas “the Genius of the Shore”, he was staking a claim for his nation as well as his poem’ (1996: 205). Lipking puts forward the idea that in ‘Lycidas’, Milton ‘blends personal grief with a sense of how much the country has lost’, in terms of English ‘territorial interests’, in relation to Ireland (205). Lipking argues that Milton places King as ‘The spirit who guards the coast’; a spirit who will ‘cast a long shadow of British influence across the Irish sea’ (205). The Australian settler landscape elegy continues this tradition in terms of territorial concerns and anxieties about nation inherent within the colonial tombeau. While four hundred years apart, the ‘mapping’ that Lipking places at the centre of Milton’s concerns in ‘Lycidas’, will be shown as not only visible in the colonial tombeau, but also apparent in a postcolonial reading of the contemporary settler Australian landscape elegy in Chapter Four.

Postcolonial Ghosts

Mapping associated with land tenure is proposed as no more powerfully seen than in the contemporary tombeau, which is theorised in this study through the postcolonial ghost. It is argued that there is a powerful spectral presence in many of the tombeaux, in which the dead poet haunts the places he or she once inhabited, leaving a trace of the past and a sense of the poet’s continuing manifestation and influence in these locations. The dead poet is powerfully inscribed onto the landscape or location making the spectral presence of the poet a part of the fabric of place; therefore, it is suggested that the contemporary poet becomes a mythic figure and the poet and the poet’s verse circumscribed by place.
Introduction

There is a great deal of theorizing associated with the spectral presence of postcolonial ghosts that describes the repressed ghosts of those dispossessed through colonizing and neo-colonial practices, particularly through the numerous deaths as a direct result of this suppression. However, in this study the white settler ghost is theorised in terms of what Cynthia Sugars terms as a ‘nationalist post-colonial imperative’ (2003: 5). In ‘Haunted by (a Lack of) Postcolonial Ghosts: Settlers Nationalism in Jane Urquhart’s Away’, Sugars theorizes Canadian settler ghosts, stating that, ‘these “ghostings” of Canada often take place as an imperializing act – one that settles the land with dislocated spirits’ (5). Rather than ‘dislocated spirits’, the spectral presence of the settler poet ghost in the Australian tombeau is described here as being an ‘imperializing act’, involved in creating a continuing presence on the land. It is one that this study explores in terms of mapping the particularities of place in relation to a symbolic land ownership and an identity with the landscape inscribed through the presence of the settler-poet ghost in contemporary tombeaux.

Timeline of the Contemporary Tombeau

While there are a considerable number of tombeaux published from the 1970s onwards, there appears to be something of a decline appearing after the late nineteenth-century colonial tombeaux associated with an Australian poetic tradition leading up to Federation in 1901. Various reasons for a general decline in poetry after 1910 have been suggested by a number of commentators. For example, in ““New Words Come Tripping Slowly”: Popular Culture and Modernity, 1890-1950’, Peter Kirkpatrick discusses the decreasing popularity of poetry from the late colonial period, up until which time publication of poetry in newspapers made the colonial poem a popular form – one enjoyed by many sections of the
population (2009: 199). Kirkpatrick attributes this decline in published poetry to changes in mass communication, particularly to the advent of radio and the electronic reproduction of sound, when ‘lyrical poetry was increasingly consumed in the form of popular song’: a trend which he argues, ‘continues unabated to this day’ (199-200; 213). Declining by degrees into the middle of the twentieth-century, Kirkpatrick suggests that, ‘throughout the English-speaking world, poetry moved from being broadly popular to an unpopular high-brow art form’ (199). Poetry as belonging to high culture is discussed by Dennis Haskell in ‘Scribbling on the Fringes: Post-1950 Australian Poetry’, as a movement from poetry as a popular and accessible art form, to conceptions of Australian poetry as ‘highbrow’ due to Australian poets so often being studied in schools and universities, thus increasingly becoming associated with an academic readership (2009; 455). Haskell suggests, too, that ‘at the end of the great war, modernism had jerked the English poetic tradition to a halt’ (458); thus affecting Australian poetics due to the prevalence and popularity of English poetry by an Australian readership.

My own research has found relatively few tombeaux after 1910 and before the beginning of the 1960s. Presumably, this is partly associated with the changing nature of the elegy according to the differing needs of time and place. On this premise, it is suggested that by the first decade of the twentieth century the gradual upsurge in published tombeaux culminating in the last decades of the nineteenth century, appears to have declined, due perhaps to less of a drive for a national poetic tradition once Federation had been accomplished. However, there is an increase in elegies collected during the period of the two Great Wars and the Vietnam War – particularly the First World War, due to those lost in war. This observation suggests that the use of the tombeau for the creation of national
Introduction

literary tradition may play a lesser role, or is less often published in times of war and increased national and personal loss, where the onus on nation and nationalism is associated with a national war-time solidarity. Moreover, it can perhaps be suggested that questions of landscape ownership and a national identity shaped by the land in late nineteenth-century Australia, are replaced by a different set of representations of the landscape, those now associated with the war effort.

Haskell also notes that the late 60s and 70s were a ‘period of great activity and of great experiment in Australian poetry’ (2009: 460). The rise in tombeaux from the 1970s can in part be attributed to this rise in poetic activity, as well as with a general upsurge in published poetry, due to both material and cultural factors. These include: the formation of the Australian Council and an increase in government funding; an associated state-sanctioned interest in ‘Australian’ literature; the rise of poetry magazines and small presses; changes in printing technologies; as well as the appearance of small presses and self-publishing (Haskell: 1998: 265-85; McCooey: 2000: 158-182).

**Literary Nationalism and the Australian Settler Elegy**

The settler landscape elegy – both in colonial and contemporary poetics – is part of the broader field of literary nationalism, which often represents the chosen myths of settler reality and histories through presenting the views of the powerful in terms of national agendas in their choice of literary texts published. The many newspapers in nineteenth-century Australia provided an important site for political opinion, thus this study includes numerous poems published in a wide variety of newspapers as part of this paradigm,
particularl so in the pro-nationalist newspapers in the two decades leading up to Federation. In *Dark Side of the Dream*, Hodge and Mishra state that texts elected for publication to represent colonial Australia were chosen primarily on their fit for nationalistic purposes and the creation of national identities (1991: x). Moreover, it is not just publication, as no doubt minority positions were sometimes published, but it is the dissemination, canonisation, republication that is important in canonization of a text. Hodge and Mishra state that a ‘colonial pre-Australia’ represents a view of history that is successfully able to construct the essential Australia, not as a continuation of a colonial enterprise but as ‘a radical break’: one that swerves around colonial history in its trajectory from the ancient to the recent (5). The invasion, suppression and systematic ideological and actual decimation of a people must be hidden from a poetics of nation that claims itself worthy of nationhood, and thus of a place in the world as a civilized nation. The following analysis of the settler landscape elegy shows it to be profoundly involved in the way that settler narratives of land, nation and national identity are represented as fact, and the ways in which poetry not only upholds power structures, but is implicated in producing the discourses that underlie them.

In *National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of Australian Narrative*, Graeme Turner explores the way that narratives are created by the culture they are a part of and from which they are produced, illustrating how the meanings they generate and the values they expound are an enunciation of the discourses that underwrite the culture (1993: 1). The idea of a text having a ‘value’, operates to colonize and to privilege certain kinds of discourses, as well as certain people and groups (6). Moreover, Turner sees narrative as a ‘symbolic resolution to social contradictions’, thus arguing that national myth ‘serves to
override and silence the less powerful voices in the culture’ (vii). The narrative of Australian settler history omnipresent in the landscape elegy is discussed in terms of its articulation by the powerful white, settler culture in which women and Aboriginal poetic voices are relatively unheard, at least until more recent times.

Contemporary Aboriginal Elegy: Loss and Renewal

However, whilst the first published Aboriginal poetry does not appear until the 1960s, Aboriginal people have been writing in English since the early years of colonization. In ‘When They Write What We Read: Unsettling Indigenous Australian Life-Writing’, Michele Grossman suggests that ‘Indigenous textual intervention stretches back to the earliest reaches of colonial history in Australia’ – a topic to be discussed in a later chapter (2009: 221). However, it is 1966 when Kath Walker’s (Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal people) We Are Going, heralds the first Aboriginal poetry published in Australia. Aboriginal Australian poets write a verse that claims a poetic voice of protest in which to write back to representations of their absence on the land and the omission of colonization and its aftermath on Aboriginal peoples. This thesis works to show the ways in which Aboriginal Australian poets reclaim past histories. In ‘Post-colonial Critical Theories’, Stephen Slemon articulates the ‘paramount importance of postcolonial theory’, arguing that its value lies in the project of understanding the colonized peoples as genuinely ‘historical subjects of their own histories, and not as passive figures in the burgeoning history of others’ (2001: 111). Presented in this study as a collection of aesthetic, political, social and historical documents, these elegies contribute in crucial ways to the presence of Aboriginal histories and Aboriginal selfhoods. In acts of decolonisation, the Aboriginal elegy works to unravel imperialist representations
of Aboriginal peoples in settler elegies, and within poetry, literature and culture more generally.

In an analysis of Indigenous poets and performance in ‘Engaging the Public Intimacy of Whiteness: The Indigenous Protest Poetry of Romaine Moreton’, Anne Brewster discusses the way in which ‘Indigenous protest writing engages non-Indigenous audiences’, (2008: 57). Brewster differentiates between an Indigenous and non-Indigenous readership in terms of forms of address. Brewster’s discussion in relation to the white ‘target’ audience, who hold power over Indigenous affairs, describes the political motivation at the centre of this form of address in Aboriginal postcolonial poetics. In response, these elegies are described as autobiographical documents in terms of inherited and ongoing trauma expressed by many of the poets writing Aboriginal elegy. In ‘Australian Aboriginal Memoir and Memory: A Stolen Generation Trauma Narrative’, Justine Seran’s account of trauma ‘takes into account collective, historical, and inherited trauma’, suggesting that the ‘reflexive practice of autobiographical writing contributes to the decolonization of the Indigenous self and forms an act of individual survival and cultural survivance’ (2015: 661).

A significant number of Indigenous critics are cited in Chapter Five of this thesis. The term ‘protest poetry’ ascribed by many Aboriginal poets, within and of their poetry, has a focus on identifying and describing the effects of colonialism, its contemporary aftermath, the loss of traditional lands, languages and cultures. For my own discussion of Indigenous elegy, critiques by Indigenous commentators cast a powerful light on the ways in which to read the deeply-held issues expressed within Aboriginal poetry. This is not only in terms of a critique of colonisation and its aftermath, but these texts offer a postcolonial perspective of
Introduction

the present reality for Indigenous peoples in Australia. Commentaries of contemporary Aboriginal poetry from Aboriginal poets, academics and writers are therefore the central, and essential ‘voice’ in the final chapter of this thesis.

While Pan-Aboriginal concerns are expressed within these elegies, this study acknowledges the many groups, communities, cultures and separate claims to traditional lands of Australia’s First Peoples. While Aboriginal elegies are often for a single individual, they are profoundly concerned with the particular community from which the elegized person or peoples came. Moreover, in mourning the dead, Aboriginal elegy simultaneously mourns the loss of traditional lands, cultures and the ways in which colonisation and its short and long-term repercussions affect Indigenous communities in the present. There is a pressing need, therefore, for further analysis of Aboriginal elegies, particularly so in light of the continuation of dispossession and social and cultural inequities in present-day contemporary Australia. In speaking of the concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in *The Strength of Us as Women: Black Women Speak*, Kerry-Reid Gilbert charts a number of these repercussions and the fourth-world conditions of many present-day Aboriginal people:

Sovereignty, black deaths in custody, stolen children, native title, human rights are all burning issues to us. We are still fighting for justice we are still fighting for justice, recognition and acknowledgment. Justice! People ask why, how? Justice in the form of sovereignty (2000: 11).

Chapter Outlines
Introduction

Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

This discussion proposes that the elegy for a dying-race is a textual space within which claiming the landscape is justified due to the putative extinction of the Indigenous Aboriginal population in nineteenth-century Australia. Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution is described as the nineteenth-century rationale based on scientific ‘fact’, placing extinction discourse at the centre of nineteenth-century proleptic elegy (1859; 1871). This chapter discusses representations of the Aboriginal race in the proleptic elegy as a people who have remained static in relation to progress; particularly in relation to western agriculture; as well as in representations of peoples lacking a presence on the land. Moreover, representations of Aboriginal people as savages; as child-like; as inhabitants of a lost Eden; as well as the inevitability of their extinction due to the alleged death of the whole of the Tasmanian Aboriginal race in the 1870s, are presented in these elegies as rationale for the demise of Aboriginal peoples. These representations of the status and mien of Aboriginal peoples are described in counterpoint to the white settler in terms of an imperialistic rationale for land colonization attributed to the settler’s reputedly more highly evolved status; the representation of the white race as God’s chosen people; and as purveyors of enlightenment in what is portrayed as a dark continent. A common title for a number of dying-race elegies is ‘the dying chief’, and this is discussed as a political metaphor, that through the combination of emotion and western, scientific belief, influences white perceptions of Aboriginality.

Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape
Introduction

Analysis in this chapter is based on a large group of generic elegies for bushmen and explorers, published for the most part in colonial newspapers throughout the nineteenth-century. Focusing on a series of myths concerning masculine figures associated with a purely masculinised settler legitimacy, the exclusion of female and Aboriginal figures on the land are considered in this chapter. The journeys of bushmen, explorers and stockmen are considered in relation to these elegies, as well the ways in which their life and death create a history on the land. Conventions from pastoral elegy support a symbolic ownership of the continent through inheritance from the dead, passed on through mourning and celebration of the bushman. These figures provide a geographical and symbolic endorsement through exploration and habitation of the land; their graves represented as religious symbol, and actual demarcation of land ownership. The bushman elegy is discussed as increasingly underwriting a national figure associated with the drive towards nation; the reputed qualities, characteristics and beliefs of the bushman said to be honed from the landscape as crucible, are represented as symbolic of the quintessential nineteenth-century Australian, as the embodiment of the fledgling nation emerging from the imperial centre.

Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

The colonial tombeau is discussed in relation to national poetic agendas and poetic identities in a nineteenth-century search for a white, male, poetic ‘voice of Australia’, through which to represent a developing nation and a people. The figure of the poet/druid as the ‘voice’ of the people is discussed as a national figurehead; the poet’s wisdom described as underlying the principles of the emerging nation. This chapter traces an early nineteenth-century desire for a poetic tradition in the colonies expressed by poets in a generic tombeau, as precursor to the tombeau proper. Furthermore, this chapter
Introduction

importantly details a colonial poetic tradition established through the two nationalist poets, Charles Harpur and Henry Kendall, culminating in the last two decades of the century. This latter-century poetic tradition is quite distinct from the bush ballad tradition of the late nineteenth century ascribed by later commentators to poets such as Henry Lawson. The national, imperial drive at the heart of the subgenre of the traditional tombeau is considered in relation to its key role in cultural nationalism in nineteenth-century settler Australia.

Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity.

The contemporary tombeaux to be discussed are those published in single-author poetry collections and anthologies between 1970 and 2010. Chapter Four offers varying interests and perspectives of the contemporary settler poet present within the contemporary landscape tombeau. These include, poetic traditions, regionalism, and nationalism, as well as a continued concern with the question of landscape and identity. The chapter explores settler landscape tombeau in terms of what is described as the poet’s continued interest in legitimizing tenure of the land: one engendered through elegizing the dead poet and the poet’s verse within named and described Australian landscapes and locations. It is suggested that this concern arises from an unsettled sense of land ownership which is symptomatic of the colonized settler aligned with continuing imperialistic concerns with a symbolic sense of land ownership. Discussions explore the idea of the elegist as ghosting the elegized poet onto the landscape – rural, urban, and coastal – overlaying the colonial past and the presence of Aboriginal Australians on the land with settler experiences, habitation and histories. This chapter also discusses the emergence of the female tombeaux
Introduction

and its place in Australian poetics. Moreover, tombeau written by contemporary women poets, as well as a large vein of anti-elegy, and meta-elegy challenge the masculinist nature of the tombeau, and thus official Australian poetic traditions.

Chapter Five: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

Chapter Five is the counterpoint to discussions of the settler elegies in the four previous chapters. This chapter considers elegies written by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, published from the 1960s until the present, forming a body of poetry that responds to representations of Aboriginality by settler poets. The focus is a collection of elegies that both mourn and bear witness to the fact and effects, both short and long-term, of colonization upon Australian Aboriginal peoples. This chapter includes a two-part analysis: the first, ‘A Poetry of Loss’ considers issues, including the loss of traditional lands, which are expressed in Aboriginal elegy as lying at the heart of Aboriginal life and selfhood. These elegies mourn the loss of languages and cultures; write of massacres, incarceration, and deaths in custody; while elegies mourning the loss to families due to the Stolen Generation through the removal of children are described as a deeply traumatic experiences that create a break in Aboriginal families, cultures and communities. However, the second part of the analysis ‘A Poetry of Renewal’ describes the presence of pre-colonial, colonial and contemporary cultures enacted on the land, inscribed within the elegy. Features from Aboriginal oral cultures are an area of enquiry in this chapter, in which oral traditions are traced in the poetry of a number of Aboriginal Australian poets. These elegies are shown to be a powerful textual means of decolonization through the re-claiming and continuance of Aboriginal cultures which are crucial to a sense of identity and selfhood. This sense of identity is discussed in terms of a new wave of Aboriginal women poets who
Introduction
demonstrate a matrilineal line: one that expresses the many strengths, the cultural
tenacity, and the solidarity expressed by many contemporary Aboriginal women.

While the landscape as a means of defining self is one which is explored in both settler
Australian and Aboriginal Australian elegy through memorialising the dead and their place
within the land in life and death, the settler elegy is shown in this study as making a claim
for the land, whilst the Aboriginal poetics of loss and renewal is involved in reclaiming the
traditional lands of Australia’s First Peoples.
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism (Walter Benjamin: 1940: 256).

They are lost, they are gone, they are sunk in the grave,
Lie cold on the mountain, or deep in the wave;
Their bones may grow white on a desolate shore;
But the land that once knew them, shall know them no more.

Ah! Ill-fated children; the bosom may bleed;
But what can avail you? Your doom is decreed;
You perish and die when the stranger draws near.
As the harvest sinks when the locusts appear
(EC Dunn).

Introduction

This analysis discusses the subgenre of settler colonial landscape elegy that ostensibly mourns the dying-out of Aboriginal peoples in nineteenth-century Australia. The dying-race elegy contains a powerful imperialistic trope for the management of the Indigenous population in colonial Australia: one that will be shown to also have repercussions in contemporary Australia. The proleptic elegy is part of a widely disseminated and highly influential series of discourses, particularly in view of the many dying-race elegies published in colonial newspapers that circulate notions of the extinction of the
‘Aborigine’ in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Australia.\(^1\) In *Dark Vanishings: Discourses on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930*, Patrick Brantlinger states that the duel ideologies of racism and imperialism inherent in the proleptic elegy, ‘is found wherever and whenever Europeans and white Americans encountered indigenous peoples’ (2003: 1). A number of authors have discussed the presence of the colonial poem elegizing the dying Australian Aboriginal race as on the edge of extinction. For example, in *Dark Side of the Dream: Australia and the Postcolonial Mind*, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra discuss the poetry written for the dying Aboriginal person as serving an important ideological functions for the imperial state (1999: 2). The authors argue that such sentiments, ‘predicted the desired end to the “Aboriginal problem” while expressing a regret that absolved the feeling person from complicity or responsibility’ (2). In ‘The Literature of Extinction’, Andrew McCann states that colonial writers transformed the landscape into ‘a melancholic, self-fashioning of lyrical poetry out of genocide’ (2006: 54). McCann points out that the trope of the doomed-race was not only implicated in ‘territorial appropriation’, but formed the beginnings of a national poetics based on the landscape through ‘a pathos-laden meditation on the fate of Australia’s original inhabitants’ (54; 51-2). The following analysis extends these discussions describing in detail the ways in which the imperialistic trope in the dying-race elegy supports McCann’s view that these poems are important in appropriating the land, and in doing so, dealing with what Hodge and Mishra term the ‘Aboriginal problem’. This analysis of extinction discourse placed at the centre of the dying-race elegy is based on an extensive collection of nineteenth-century poems that hold an important place in disseminating tropes and representations of racial evolution, savagery and notions of a lost Eden.
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

In expressing grief for a putatively vanished people, Dunn’s proleptic elegy, in the epigraph above, heralds many of the themes explored in this group of poems, elegizing what colonial Australia represented as the inevitable extinction of the Aboriginal race. In *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880-1939*, Russell McGregor examines Australia’s history of textual representation of what he terms the ‘doomed race theory’ (1997). The doomed race theory is described as an idea that ‘took root in Australia in the early decades of the nineteenth century, flourishing in the latter years and into the early twentieth century’ (1997: ix). Published in the *Port Phillip Herald* (7.7.1843), Dunn’s ‘Lament for the Native’ clearly reflects McGregor’s doomed race theory, when Dunn writes of the Aboriginal race as already ‘lost’ and ‘gone’. The line ‘The land that once knew them, shall know them no more’, is not only a common trope in colonial landscape elegy positioning the Aborigine as reaching a state of extinction, but brings to the fore the timely issue of the now empty landscape. This is expressed in Dunn’s poem as ‘the desolate shore’, now regretfully containing only the bleached bones of the Aboriginal person who once inhabited the land.

Dunn’s poem is characterized by a crucial feature present in many of the dying-race elegies: while expressing concern for the plight of the dying Aboriginal population, these elegies combine deep regret with extinction discourse and the inevitability of the death of a whole race. This doubling of extinction discourse and regret is apparent in the ‘Lubra’ by Mrs. JA Bode (Ettie E. Ayliffe), who writes of an awareness of colonization in terms of the loss of land and hunting, acknowledging, too, colonizing processes in the metaphor of the ‘eagle’ hunting the Aboriginal ‘prey’, and the pervading presence of ‘gun smoke’ (Jordan and Pierce: 1990: 398-9). While in ‘The Lament of the Lubra’, the socialist poet Mary Gilmore
takes a philosophical and moral stance lamenting the loss of a pristine land and a people in, ‘What have we left of the long, long years / The untouched forests and the vanished tribes?’ (1930: 34-50). Apostrophizing the sadness of a bereft Aboriginal mother, Gilmore’s epilogue expresses a ‘dream of justice’ for what has been lost (1930: 34-5). While each of these poets express the destructive forces of colonization and the desperate plight of the Aboriginal population, these and other similar well-meaning and obviously heart-felt elegies also herald the doom of first Inhabitants in the same way as those with more overt extinction ideologies. Written in the past tense, Bode’s elegy suggests Aboriginal peoples are already extinct; while Gilmore’s poem expounds extinction discourse in ‘the vanished tribes’. Both, are underwritten by the inevitability of the death of a race, however innocently, perpetuating extinction discourse and thus an ensuing empty landscape.

However, Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, an early nineteenth-century poet; as well as the more recent mid twentieth-century poet Judith Wright, are examples of two women poets who wrote elegy that not only spoke of the horrors perpetrated through colonization, but in focusing on particular historical examples wrote a postcolonial poetics. ‘The Aboriginal Mother (from Myall’s Creek)’, the eponymous poem in The Aboriginal Mother, is a critique of colonization by Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, first published in The Australian (13.12.1838). Dunlop’s elegy attests to the Myall Creek massacre through the persona of an Indigenous mother, witness to the massacre. Concluding her elegy Dunlop writes, ‘To tell how hands in friendship pledged / Piled high the fatal pire / to tell, to tell the gloomy ridge / and the stockmen’s human fire’. In an elegy first published in 1946 Judith Wright too makes plain genocidal crimes documenting the actions and repercussions of colonization on Aboriginal peoples. In ‘Rewriting the Landscape: Judith Wright’s Fragile Land and Haunted Self’, Sandra
Brunet discusses an important part of Wright’s work that addresses the unwritten history and the dispossession of Aboriginal people alongside Wright’s own family history as pastoralists (*The Generation of Men* and *Cry for the Dead*: 1959; 1981). Elegies such as ‘Nigger’s Leap, New England’ are, as Brunet writes, ‘an acknowledgment of the unspoken, “other” history, which unlike the bodies of the dead, must not be blanketed and forgotten’ (1998: 67). ‘Nigger’s Leap, New England’ describes the massacre at ‘Darkie Point’: the poem a stark testimony to imperial suppression in a postcolonial critique evoking the Indigenous dead in the lines, ‘Make a cold quilt across the bone and skull / that screamed falling in flesh from the lipped cliff / and then went silent waiting for the flies’ (1991: 15). However, until the publication of Australian Aboriginal elegy from the 1960s, the elegy has rarely born witness to the Indigenous dead as a result of colonization in such clear and powerful terms as expressed by Dunlop and Wright.

While on one level the aforementioned settler elegies by Dunn, Bode and Gilmore are here described as an emotional response to the death of a whole race, such elegies are also clearly complicit in furthering imperialistic discourses concerning the discourse of extinction. These anxieties are implicit within the dying-race elegy in that they work to offer a panacea for the colonists who occupy a land not their own; a concern still omnipresent in contemporary settler landscape elegies. This subgenre of elegy can be considered as important documentation written by the white, settler poet in terms of the ways in which they sought to lay claim to the land through the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. In ‘Settler Colonies’, Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson discuss this displacement as, ‘physical, geographical, spiritual, cultural, and symbolic’, of which the latter three terms are particularly visible within the elegy for a dying race, contributing in
powerful ways not only to the textual, but to the actual dispossession of a whole people (2005: 362). The authors point out that postcolonial studies are ‘crucial’ to an analysis of the ways in which discourse and textuality has played out within narratives of land ownership in settler societies (362). Thus, this postcolonial analysis of the subgenre of elegy clearly locates imperialistic and nationalistic concerns at play within nineteenth-century Australian landscape elegy in terms of land ownership.

In *Dark Side of the Dream* Hodge and Mishra argue that literature is a ‘social and political fact’, as such it plays an important role in offering particular versions of history (1999: ix; 20). As a nineteenth-century colonial subgenre the dying-race elegy creates representations of ‘Aboriginalism’, not only in terms of a dying race, but also in representing an allegedly archaic people devoid of either culture or history. These depictions also reduce the Aboriginal ‘other’ to silence, a strategy clearly omnipresent in the colonial dying-race elegy. This is underwritten by what Hodge and Mishra describe as ‘...a discursive regime prescribing who can speak about what in what way....and with what authority’ (74; 26). Further, textual representations of the death of a whole people is a means to solve the problem of Aboriginal ownership of the land, while expressing regret that absolves the feeling person from complicity’ (42). Speaking *for* and *about* Aboriginal peoples and the re-writing of histories that omit the colonizing process and its repercussions are prevalent discourses in this subgenre of colonial elegy. Further, the dissipation of guilt concerning colonization, as well as the creation of an empty land without original inhabitants, cultures or histories, are all crucial to the success of the dying-race elegy in terms of heralding in settler landscape ownership. This constellation of concerns of the nineteenth-century
settler colony will be discussed as clearly pervasive within this important subgenre of poetry.

In *Dark Vanishings*, Brantlinger describes the most lethal aspect of ‘extinction discourse’, as being the *inevitability* of the death of a whole race (2003: 1). Brantlinger suggests extinction discourse relies on three factors: the belief that there are a ‘chosen’ people, while others not ‘chosen’ are unable to rise on the evolutionary ladder; secondly, the belief that reaching a state of civilization is God-given or based on the immutable laws of Nature; thirdly, the idea, rooted in biological essentialism, that ‘white’ and ‘brown’ races are different, which in Darwinian terms is based on notions of ‘fitness’ and ‘unfitness’ to survive and to adapt to a changing world (190). Apparent in many dying-race elegies, Dunn’s proleptic elegy is characterized by the three factors that Brantlinger suggests are typical of extinction discourse. Dunn’s ‘Your doom is decreed’ implies an act ordained by God or a higher power; while ‘Ill-fated children’ inscribes notions of a lost Eden and of a people racially and culturally underdeveloped; finally, the irrevocable extinction of the Aborigine is implicit in the metaphor ‘when the locusts appear,’ signifying notions of biological essentialism as a lesser race is superseded by a superior one.

Elegies for a dying-race were prominent for nearly a century after the publication of Dunn’s poem marking the dying-race elegy as a successful and durable site for representations of McGregor’s doomed-race theory. The power of enacting the death of a people, a tribe or the ‘last’ Aborigine in elegy lies in its ability to empty the landscape of an Indigenous presence. Colonial land ownership until relatively recently has been implicitly based on the notion of a land not owned (the later ‘legal’ concept of *Terra Nullius*); which claimed that
inhabitants lacked sovereignty because they did not use or dwell on the land in a way that implied dominion (to Europeans). Brantlinger cites Henry Reynolds’ discussion of the term as carrying a double meaning – “both a country without sovereignty recognized by European authorities and a territory where nobody owns any land at all” – is, as Brantlinger argues, the same as saying that Aborigines were not present on the land at all (2003: 118: citing Reynolds: 1992: 12). The myth of the empty landscape as a rationale for colonization and land ownership is omnipresent in the dying-race elegy which is highly influential in terms of symbolic possession of the land through putatively ‘mourning’ the passing of First Inhabitants from the colonial landscape.

Sorrowful musings for a dying-race suppressed the violent truths of colonization, giving credence to the worthiness of colonial sentiments, while contributing to founding a nation. Of this, Brantlinger observes:

...extinction discourse often takes the form of Proleptic elegy, sentimentally or mournfully expressing, even in its most humane versions, the confidence of self-fulfilling prophecy, according to which new, white colonies and nations arise as savagery and wilderness recede. Proleptic elegy is thus funereal and epic’s corollary – like epic, a nation-founding genre (2003: 3).

Brantlinger establishes the powerful link between colonial nationalism and proleptic elegy suggesting ‘The national mourning involved in Proleptic elegy... is always also, whether explicitly or not, nationalist celebration’ (189). The death of the Indigenous population ensured the emergence of a new nation-state: one now entirely owned by the colony creating a racially unified concept of themselves; one unsullied by violence to the
Indigenous population who through extinction discourse simply ‘died out’ due to natural causes.

In the light of Michel Foucault’s power/knowledge dialectic concerning the linking of power and knowledge, in which each augments the other, negative representations of Indigenous peoples were created by an interweaving of discursive regimes of knowledge about the state, worthiness and demise of the original inhabitants as owners of the land. The dying-race elegy is thus considered in view of Foucault’s theories concerning knowledge and the power derived and maintained from describing or knowing what the other is. Foucault’s theory of the relationship between knowledge and power underlies the way discourses about what Aborigines are said to be are used to empty the landscape and symbolically legitimize white land ownership. In this, Foucault recognizes knowledge as based less on information gained through cognizance and growing awareness as customarily thought, than as being intricately implicated with dominant power regimes:

…the genealogy of knowledge needs to be analyzed, not in terms of types of consciousness, modes of perception and forms of ideology, but in terms of tactics and strategies of power (1980: 77).

In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Foucault discusses the intricate and reciprocal link between power and knowledge. Foucault claims that, ‘the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge, and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power’, creating a dichotomy that works to support and enhance each other (1980: 52). The author argues, ‘It is not possible for power to be exercised without
knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engage power’; ‘the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information’ (52; 51).

Foucault’s proposal concerning the way knowledge systems are implicated in power structures is implicit in the dying-race discourse as underwritten by Darwin’s theories of racial evolution. As a feature of nineteenth-century western knowledge systems, the assumption is that the Aboriginal races are low on the evolutionary scale due to evolutionary stasis and therefore unable to survive the spread of white civilization. It is in this way that Aboriginal peoples are said to lack the qualities to compete in a modern age. Foucault’s Power/Knowledge dialectic and the ways in which each perpetuates the other underlies the ways that knowledge is used to exercise power over the subordinate (Aboriginal peoples) by the powerful (the colonizer), termed by Foucault as ‘the subject who knows.’ A double-action that underlies a suppression of knowledge systems associated with the less powerful is replaced with the knowledge systems of the powerful, then used to maintain current power relations (Foucault: 1980: 72). Moreover, enforced by many practices, institutions, texts and teachings, the colony disseminated and upheld a western knowledge system played out as universal truths marking truth, knowledge and power as intimately connected (72; 74). In a textual system analogous with Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) – with its binary between Occident/Orient – so too, the dying-race elegy creates a binary between Indigenous and non-Indigenous; between white settler and the Aboriginal race; and between the powerful who speak and the powerless, who are relegated to silence.
In *Imagined Destinies*, McGregor states that it was ‘the entanglement of the idea of progress with the concept of race that lent credibility to the prediction of inevitable extinction’, for the so-called primitive races (1997: ix). Importantly, McGregor argues, ‘the cultivation of the soil was the necessary badge of civilization’ (2). Cultivation is an essential activity in McGregor’s ‘Stage Theory’ based on assumptions that societies followed a biological sequence concerning development of the races: firstly, that of savagery characterized by hunting; secondly, barbarism characterized by nomadic pastoralism; and, the highest form, civilization distinguished by agriculture and commerce (2). That the land was seen as neither cultivated nor owned by Australia’s First Peoples was rationalized as placing them low on the evolutionary Stage Theory. This marked the race as uncivilized, lacking both agricultural and commercial endeavour in a system that stressed the notion of the superiority of one type of society over another (2).

The suppression of the histories of Aboriginal peoples is discussed in relation to the Aboriginal elegy in more detail in Chapter Five, however, it is exemplified in this present discussion in the light of recent studies that detail the presence of agriculture and agricultural techniques in pre-colonial Indigenous societies. In Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident* (see too, the earlier Bill Gammage’s *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* 2011), Pascoe offers evidence from a study of the diaries and journals of explorers and settlers, suggesting that ‘the economy and agriculture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had been grossly undervalued’ (2014: 11). Pascoe’s research ‘revealed a much more complicated Aboriginal economy than the hunter-gatherer life-style’, described by colonists (11). Settler records, for example noted the presence of ‘dams and wells, planting, irrigation and harvesting seed, preserving the surplus
and storing it'; as well as naming the landscape and using the land to erect cemeteries (12). This retrieval of the pre-colonial histories of Aboriginal people is at variance with imperialistic representations of a people who do not use the land in any meaningful way; or, of depictions of Indigenous people as savages or children of nature without religion or culture, circulating in nineteenth-century Australia. These representations exemplify the suppression of Indigenous histories and knowledge system as clearly at work within the dying-race elegy. Crucially, the suppression of such histories had been used to inaugurate the land as empty through *Terra Nullius*; the doctrine of which was used not only to legally underpin imperialistic ownership of the land; but to support the Darwinian rationale of an undeveloped race that cannot survive in the wake of a more superior one.

Extinction discourse in nineteenth-century Australia is crucially underwritten by Darwin’s theory of evolution. In *Imagined Destinies*, McGregor explores the importance of evolutionary ideas justifying what he terms ‘the doomed race theory’ remarking that while Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, said little of the evolution of humanity in itself, Darwin’s *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1859; 1871) showed that human evolution too, was a process of development (1997: 31). As McGregor points out, progressing over time, Europeans had long been seen to be at the zenith of the racial evolutionary scale (2-3). In light of these scientific-based belief systems, the Aboriginal person was seen as ‘the archetypal primitive man’, in which the ‘evolutionary synthesis of race with progress’, added to the expectation of their demise (x; 30; 21). McGregor states that ‘a race still remaining in the Stone Age’ after ‘untold millennia’, demonstrated an unfitness to evolve based on evolutionary science. By ‘linking together physical, mental,
moral and cultural advancement under a single bio-social law’, nineteenth-century society believed ‘the doom of the Aboriginal was sealed’ (59).

Further, to return to *Dark Vanishings*, Brantlinger describes discursive formations associated with extinction theory and its profound links with imperialism and nation formation as informed by scientific rationale (2003: 3). Nineteenth-century scientific thinking represented Indigenous populations throughout the world positioned as a lesser racial other and therefore bound to extinction due to the allegedly more developed white race (164). The doom of primitive races due to ‘fatal impact’ engendered a vast literature on the subject in nineteenth-century, western knowledge systems and can be appreciated in the numerous references, for example, to texts on the subject referenced in Darwin’s later work, *The Descent of Man* (1871). Here, Darwin unequivocally writes that the races of man ‘ought to be classed as distinct species’; that the success of nations is based on the ‘grade of civilization’, certain species replaced by, ‘… other modified or improved species’ (1971: 329). In ‘Settler Post-Colonialism and Australian Literary Theory’, Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson note that, that the term ‘dying race’ ‘enabled a narrative of ethical indigenization in which the “settler” simply assumed the place of the dying indigene’ without ‘the designation “invader”’ (2010: 30; 31). Johnston and Lawson cogently point out in ‘Settler Colonies’, that ‘the indigenized settler is the figure that is ready to step in when the native “dies out”’ (2005; 364). The dying-race discourse based on science thus ‘enabled a narrative of ethical indigenization’, which both eradicated the need for an admission of violence or the term ‘invader’, whilst inheriting the now, empty land (364).
This sense of the settler becoming *indigene* in the wake of the disappearance of Australia’s First Peoples both provokes and provides for the inheritance of the land ‘after’ the death of the former inhabitants. Arguably, the genre of elegy is the fundamental locus of inheritance – the cornerstone of this dissertation in terms of the union between elegy and ownership of the landscape. Elegy is thus an obvious generic choice when matters of inheritance/ownership are under scrutiny. As mentioned in the introduction – and of reoccurring importance in this thesis – in *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, Peter Sacks states, ‘in Greece the right to mourn was from earliest times legally connected to the right to inherit’ (1985: 37). The original Indigenous inhabitants are both duly remembered and putatively mourned in a number of the dying-race elegies, as part of traditional elegy. In keeping with this observation, Sacks continues:

Furthermore, the ancient law prevented anyone from inheriting *unless* he mourned. In its earliest structures, as also in successive adaptions of the eclogue form, the elegy clarifies and dramatizes this experience of the true heir (37).

The dying-race elegy claims the land from the former inhabitants and rightful owners through mourning, memory and inheritance; impulses at the centre of the genre. Thus, in keeping with inheritance integral to the dying-race discourse is the proviso that the settler population become the rightful owners of the now empty land.

Notions of a superior white race superseding an inferior race are, as noted above, clearly imperialistic discourses. To this point, Brantlinger argues in *Dark Vanishings*, that extinction discourse represents ‘a specific branch of the duel ideologies of imperialism and racism’
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

(2003:1). The author further suggests that extinction discourse as well as other ideas about race and imperialism form ‘a powerful interconnection of ideas hegemonic for colonists everywhere’:

A remarkable feature of extinction discourse is its uniformity across other ideological fault lines; whatever their disagreements, humanitarians, missionaries, scientists, government officials, explorers, colonists, soldiers, journalists, novelists and poets were in basic agreement about the inevitable disappearance of some or all primitive races (1-2).

White, western novelists and poets have been part of an interconnected and self-supporting regime of discourses creating a vast literature to the doom of what has been termed the ‘primitive races’ (4). As Brantlinger suggests, many nineteenth-century writers in South Africa, North America and elsewhere have written elegy to the last of a dying race and proleptic elegy mourning the ‘last’ Indigene provides the beginning of the emerging nation’s white literature (118). As analysis of this sub-genre shows, the elegy for the dying ‘indigene’ was also a space for writing about the Australian landscape from the perspective of the settler; as well as situating the Indigenous Aborigine as a part of white histories of the landscape, now passed.

Nineteenth-century Australian newspapers were a potent means of disseminating a poetry replete with imperialistic ideologies and Darwinian discourses concerning Australian Aboriginal peoples. In ‘The Grave in the Bush’, Elizabeth Webby states that traditional elegy with its long and illustrious European history became established as a popular writing form
in a colonial society (1994:30). In ‘Writers, Printers, Readers: The Production of Australian Literature before 1855’, Elizabeth Webby also notes that by 1855, thousands of original poems had been published in newspapers in a colony lacking the means and equipment for printing books (1988: 114; 119). The fundamental importance of the oft-named ‘poets’ corner’ in newspapers became an influential medium for the spread of political ideas. The numerous elegies for a dying-race published in the many nineteenth-century newspapers provided a justification for land ownership delivered to the colonial reader. It cannot be stressed enough that the often-emotional tone of these poems, complete with metaphor and symbol, offered a condensed and powerful means of influencing the nineteenth-century newspaper reader.

A critical feature of the colonial dying-race landscape elegy is the presence of political metaphors that advance extinction discourse. Used to shape our view of social reality, metaphor is a combination of logic and emotion. The dying race hypothesis based around theories of evolution and survival of the fittest were understood by many as irrefutable facts and together with emotional images and/or musings of the last dying Aboriginal person, create a persuasive meld of logic and emotion. It is proposed that the often-used ‘the last of his tribe’ (the dying chief is another example of this type of nineteenth-century metaphor containing extinction discourse) be considered as a key political metaphor. This particular metaphor works by explaining how things are in order to advance settler discourses concerning the status and mien of the Aboriginal race, associated tenure of the land, and the elision of truths about the colonizing process. In Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis, Charteris-Black develops a view of metaphor in political communication as able to manipulate truth and influence our perception of social reality; exploring its
potential as a powerful ‘ideological weapon’ (2004: 23). Further, in ‘Metaphor and Political Communication’, Charteris-Black suggests metaphor functions covertly to communicate ideologies due to ‘a potential to integrate conscious ideology with less conscious myth’ (2009: 103). It does so by transforming the conscious ideologies or set of values which operate through cognition into metaphor, which then operates through emotion: in this way the political myth is born (102). Metaphor functions through ‘unconscious acceptance’ rather than ‘critical reflection,’ limiting the need for what the writer calls the ‘conscious cognition’ required for evaluating more openly-stated ideologies (99-100). Myth depends on symbol and metaphor, both serving a discursive function through a narrative-based interpretation operating on emotive levels; particularly with regard to feelings of sadness, happiness and fear; emotions forming the basis of much human feeling (100-101).

Further, Charteris-Black comments on the mythic dimension of metaphor that make it persuasive as a bearer of discourse (2009: 98). Charteris-Black evokes Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* describing the ability of myth to make things appear natural and to ‘purify’; to make innocent and present things as ‘a statement of fact’ (98: quoting Barthes: 1993: 143). McGregor argues that this is because emotionally-laden narrative – rather than logic – used in metaphor and myth can render destructive acts as natural and innocent (11). Not only does ‘the last of his tribe’ embody imperial desires to represent an empty landscape, but backed by social Darwinism with its seemingly logical and irrefutable scientific theories based on biological essentialism, this metaphor transform the fact of colonization with its myriad of ills into a natural process.
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

**Nineteenth-Century Settler Elegies for a Dying-Race**

In *White Man Got No Dreaming*, W. E. H Stanner describes prevailing views in colonial Australia as stereotyping the Aborigine whilst marking their lower evolutionary status:

> They were visions of Caliban, of the noble Savage, of the Comic Savage, of the relic of progress, of Primordial or Protozoan Man, of the Last of His Tribe, of the Ward in Chancery, and of the Reluctant European (1979: 151).

Viewed in the light of extinction discourse, a number of Stanner’s stereotypical representations are considered in this chapter. Firstly, representations of the Aboriginal people as savage are discussed as informed by perceptions that they did not own the land in any civilized or meaningful way. Secondly, the chapter includes an analysis of poems by the influential nationalist poets, Charles Harpur, Henry Kendall and Adam Lindsay Gordon. These poems will be shown to represent Aboriginal peoples as both lacking a human presence on the landscape and simultaneously present as a group of murdering savages without culture or society; their apparent absence however, will be discussed as ghosted onto the landscape through language. Thirdly, notions of the ‘noble savage’ and of a ‘lost Eden’ are considered in relation to first Inhabitants as represented from a time now past; or as ‘children’ of nature whose natural demise is inevitable, thus underwriting their inability to survive in the wake of the more highly evolved white race. Aligned with this, the final discussion centres on the use of the metaphor, ‘The Last of His Tribe’, analysing the power of this trope – thus of language and poetry as a political locus – arguing that they are highly significant metaphors for supporting a dying race discourse in colonial Australia. In these dying-race elegies, the last inevitable death of the tribe is imagined, articulated and
mourned; the demise of the Aboriginal race symbolically enacted, leaving the landscape empty.

McGregor states that the establishment of the doomed-race theory in Australia occurred around 1830, consolidating after 1870 until its decline during the 1930s (1997: ix; 14). These dates are coterminous with the collection forming the primary basis of this chapter. The presence of earlier elegies to a dying-race published from the 1820s as well as a marked increase in frequency of elegies published in Australia from the 1870s and 1880s, reaching its highest point in the 1890s, clearly mirrors McGregor’s assessment. A rise in proleptic elegy in the years immediately preceding Federation in 1901 supports the key role of elegy in the doomed race theory as it is centred around imperial postcolonial interests not only in legitimizing land ownership, but also associated with the late nineteenth-century project of nationalism.

The following analysis of the dying-race elegy initially discusses the theories and language of evolutionary science in terms such as ‘extinction’ and ‘missing link’. Such a presence in a number of colonial elegies verifies the fact that mid-to-late nineteenth-century Australia was well-aware of theories associated with Darwin and theories of racial extinction (as well theories that pre-date Darwin in ‘Pre-Darwinian Theories’ as described in Brantlinger’s Dark Vanishings). In an early poem by HL, ‘The Aborigine’s Complaint’ published in the Port Phillip Gazette (10.8.1844), HL refers to the ‘extinction’ of Aboriginal people in ventriloquist mode, as ‘... and we – we have nought but extinction to hope for / and soon in the forest our race will not range’ (288). In John Hood’s ‘The Death of the Native Chief’ (1885: npg), the poet writes of the dying chief as, “’Tis Darwin’s missing link” (Jordan and Pierce: 1990: 56)
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

335). Similarly, Polemon’s ‘The Last of his Tribe’ published in *The Queenslander* (17.10 1896) represents Aboriginal people as belonging to another era – an abject race all but extinct in the colonies:

A link from ages past and dim
A chieftain of the long gone by –

With shiv’ring form begrimed with dirt,
With tottering gait, and semi-nude,
He clamours for the time-worn shirt,
And begs the scanty scraps of food (npg).

James Brunton Stephens’ eponymous poem from *The Black Gin and Other Poems* (1873) is a poetry collection published toward the high point of the dying-race elegy in the nineteenth-century. Stephens offers a potent example of representations of the First Australians as a lesser race in Darwinian terms, verifying the way narratives associated with evolution and extinction discourse pervaded colonial thinking. Bringing gender to the fore and exposing the double weight of race and gender, this poem expounds biological essentialism expressing the impossibility of what the poet terms as an Aboriginal ‘gin’, being related to a white woman:

‘Sister of L. E. L...... of Mrs. Stowe, too!
Of E. B. Browning! Harriet Martineau, too!
Do theologians know where fibbers go to?

Of Dear George Eliot, whom I worship daily!
Of Charlotte Brontë! and Joanna Baillie! –
Stephens’ repellent sentiments convey the Aboriginal woman as more animal than human; a ‘brutish’ image described as ‘Thy lineaments are positively bestial!’, questions the woman’s very humanity (3; 2). Such images reflect a common concept in colonial racist ideologies that Stanner describes as ‘simian imagery’, presumably derived from the notion of the evolution of man from ape (1979: 150; 151). The poet’s description of the woman’s inhuman physical features is not only informed by Darwinian Theory, but the poet also excludes her from God’s creation when he asks, ‘Eve’s daughter? With that skull? And that complexion? / What principle of “Natural Selection” / Gave thee with Eve the most remote connection?’ (4). Stephens’ reference to the woman’s ‘skull development’ in ‘Thy facial angle forty-five degrees’ (2), reflects the nineteenth-century pseudo-science of Phrenology associated with scientific ideas (and the development of humankind), as a story of progress grounded in biological essentialism (Wilson: 2001). A deeply troubling repercussion of nineteenth-century phrenological studies in contemporary Australia may be seen in the numerous collections of skulls and body-parts of Aboriginal people still held in museums in Australia, England, Europe and the United States, verifying the ways in which colonial ideologies and actions powerfully affect the present lives of Australia’s First Nation’s People. ³

Publication of ‘To a Black Gin’ in The Queenslander (07.02.1874) demonstrates how ideas of racial inferiority based around the science of the day became part of popular culture circulating in colonial Australia. This can be more fully understood in light of a review of Stephens’ poetry collection The Black Gin and Other Poems in the same newspaper echoing
the opinions of the poet, and, presumably the sentiments of a number of newspaper readers. The editor remarks:

In apostrophizing this abnormal daughter of Eve, no one who has contemplated the poor degraded specimen seen under the influence of civilized society, will be surprised that our author would address her as being ‘most unaesthetically of things terrestrial’ (8).

That this poem was in Stephens’ poetry collection; republished in other collections and at least three more times in newspapers between 1878 and 1932, publication of the poem over a 60-year period suggests circulation to a wide readership. This not only provided the colony with access to the emotions, ideologies and language of racism, but also suggests it retained a vestigial currency well into the twentieth century. Thus settler knowledge systems inscribed within poetry silence Indigenous voices; speaking for them, and about them, the dying-race elegy a powerful tool in shaping a settler image of indigeneity.

‘To a Black Gin’ is a graphic example of the belief that Aboriginal Australians were uncivilized, one which aligned with a growing belief in nineteenth-century colonial Australia that the ‘Aborigine’ could not be civilized. This is a central thesis in McGregor’s Imagined Destinies, which argues that the colonial rationale for the doomed race theory was neither ‘merely a sop for disturbed consciences nor an empirical demographic prediction,’ but a result of a pervasive belief that the Australian Aboriginal peoples lacked the ability to be civilized (1997:18). This sense of ‘giving up’ on Aboriginal Australians is graphically drawn in Charles Thompson’s ‘Blacktown’ published in The Monitor (02.06.1826). Thompson’s poem
describes ‘the deserted Hamlet upon the New Richmond Road’, once a project to teach the
‘s skills’ of European agriculture to Aboriginal people. Part of a project to civilize the young
Aboriginal person instigated by Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales, this elegiac
poem gives voice to a missionary zeal to ‘civilize’ and ‘to raise’ the ‘Aborigine’ ‘from the
dust...t’illume his unenlighten’d state’ (31; 32). In regretful mode the poet describes the
way ‘man’s proudest, noblest project fades’ (31; 33), as Thompson’s poem elegizes the
failure of the Aboriginal race to transcend their reputedly natural state:

I’ll-fated hamlet! From each tottering shed,
Thy sable inmates, p’rhaps, for ever (sic) fled.
(Poor, restless wand’rers of the woody plain!
The skies their covert – nature their domain.)
Seek with the birds, the casual dole of heav’n,
Pleas’d with their lot – content with what is giv’n;
Time was, and recent memory speaks it true,
When round each little cot, a garden grew;
A field whose culture serv’d a two-fold part –
Food, and instruction in the rural art ...
(Jordan and Pierce: 1990: 31).

That agricultural endeavour forms the basis of the project in Thompson’s elegizing of a
failed hamlet, shores up McGregor’s notion of nineteenth-century Australia’s belief that
agriculture is a prerequisite for civilization and survival. In expressing the belief that, ‘The
will is theirs – th’ ability denied’, this line is a clear example of McGregor’s thesis that the
colonist believed Aboriginal people could not be civilized; like ‘the birds’ they were content
with living as things of the wild (33). Stephens’ and Thompson’s poems encode Foucault’s
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

Power/Knowledge formula describing what Indigenous people are and in this way, through this ‘knowledge’, gain ‘power’ by speaking of Aboriginal people as having reached a lower evolutionary stasis.

Paradoxically, a single elegy can also represent the landscape as devoid of Indigenous people while simultaneously representing the land as inhabited by savages. In a two-fold action the landscape that is empty and belongs to no-one is emptied once again by extinction discourse through the image of the savage, who, unable to ascend the evolutionary ladder, is doomed to extinction. Crucially, this doubling of presence and absence unfolds in proleptic elegy through representations of the landscape as emptied of a people who actually live on and from the land; form social groups made up of families, hierarchies and social rules; create traditions and cultures and possess spiritual beliefs. As Brantlinger states, Indigenous peoples were seen as ‘devoid of customs, beliefs, values, reason, and even language’ (2003: 118). To early commentators ‘they were already non-existent’, with nothing of ‘economic value’, and represented as lacking in two of the mainstays of European civilization: agricultural techniques and organized means of warfare (118). They were, in all, seen in keeping with Darwinian Theory and the numerous anthropological accounts of the Indigene, who unlike more highly evolved species of man, were unable to move up the scale from their position of savagery (168).

An analysis of elegies by the nationalist poets Charles Harpur and Henry Kendall reveal the dichotomy of a non-presence and of a savage-presence of Indigenous people on the land. Essential to understanding the impact of the poetry of Harpur and Kendall is the frequency with which they were published in newspapers. Widely read, they were arguably the two
most important and well-known colonial poets of their day. In *The Poetical Works of Charles Harpur*, Elizabeth Perkins suggests that when newspapers provided the primary forum for political ideas in nineteenth-century Australia, ‘Harpur’s poetry was the clearest and most comprehensive literary expression of the social forces before the eighteen-nineties’ (1984: xii; xiii). The importance of Harper’s contribution to ‘nation-building’, particularly in relation to mythologizing and taking possession of the land is discussed by Elizabeth Webby in *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*, in which Webby comments on, ‘the vital part poetry and poets’ such as Harpur played in the social and political realms of colonial Australia (2000: 60). Arguably, in the dual representation of an empty landscape and the presence of a race steeped in savagery, Harpur’s poetry is clearly implicated in the project of land ownership and nation-building as informed by Darwin’s theories. Represented as unworthy to survive as a race due to their inherent savagery renders the land free for symbolic habitation by the colony, providing a space for nationalistic myth to flourish, while simultaneously masking the destructive nature of colonization.

Harpur’s ‘The Creek of the Four Graves’ was first published in three parts in the *Weekly Register of Politics, Facts and Literature*. Harper’s poem presenting the tale of five settler/explorers crossing uninhabited land, ‘Into the wilderness’ (Sladen: 1888: 190). In the manner of an Arthurian tale, the poem belongs to the epic, a genre deeply associated with national discourse and myth-making. In emulating the genre based on the Arthurian legend of the bravery of King Arthur’s knights of the round table, Harpur seeks to create a mythic past for the new colony in which the settler is depicted as both a brave and exemplary character. ‘The Creek of the Four Graves’ expresses a Romantic, white colonial
sense of the landscape; in describing the land as ‘those new Apennines’, Harpur seeks to align and replace the old-world landscapes with those of the new. The poem presents a domain that belongs to Nature: one totally untouched by man, described as ‘wilder grew / The scene each moment – and wilder’; sentiments that both seek to romanticize the fraught journeys of the explorers, while rendering the land as uninhabited (190). As yet untraveled, untouched, and unnamed, Harpur writes of the ‘pathless’ and of ‘the perilous wilderness’; of ‘unknown mountains’ and ‘the windings’ of an unnamed ‘creek’, the tone and the language of the poem engendering the land as empty (190). The silence expressed in ‘The echoes of the solitary place’; and, the sense of the explorers as alone with nature is marked in the lines, ‘they seemed / To hang like mighty pictures of themselves / in the still chambers of some vaster world’ (192). Here, the emptiness and silence evoked in the elegy is part of a paradox creating tension between non-habitation of the land which is central to the poem expressed in travelling ‘Into the wilderness’, and the later knowledge of its habitation by Aboriginal people.

While the land is thus represented as empty, half way through the 27th stanza of the poem the explorer who stands ‘on his lone watch’ hears ‘a bough crack loudly in a neighbouring break’, followed by ‘crack upon crack’, as the camp is attacked by a wild band of ‘Aborigines’:

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O heaven! have hell’s worst fiends burst howling up
Into the death-doom’d world? Or whence, if not
From diabolical rage could surge a yell
So horrible as that which now affrights
The shuddering dark! Beings as fell are near!
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Yea, being in their dread inherited hate
Awful, vengeful as hell’s worst fiends, are come
In vengeance! For behold from the long grass
And nearer brakes arise the bounding forms
Of painted savages, full in the light
Thrown outward by the fire, that roused and lapped
The rounding darkness with its ruddy tongues ... (194-5).

The figure of the ‘Aborigine’ is luridly drawn as a painted savage, particularly in the description of death blows inflicted upon the white explorers:

The first fell blow dealt down on each by three
Of the most stalwart of their pitiless foes;
But once again, and yet again rose up,
Rose to his knees, under the crushing strokes
Of huge clubbed nulla-nullas, till his own
Warm blood was blinding him (195).

Savages appear out of nowhere in the dead of night, heinously murder innocent settlers and then melt back into the night after tracking ‘their prey’; the one escaped white explorer hunted as an animal (197). Portrayed without humanity and with rudimentary language as, ‘Wild men whose wild speech no word for mercy hath’, they are marked as inhuman with crude beliefs expressed in ‘Some old mysterious fable of their race / That brooded o’er the valley and the creek’ (196; 198). These representations not only work to reduce Aboriginal people to savages but suggest their past culture and existence taints the land, pervading the valley and the creek. Further, in reducing their cultural practices and very existence to
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

legend, Harpur’s poem narrates their extinction, and, as white settler poet is privy to recount the old legends of his land.

Placed within a discursive framework of history, myths of exploration and origins, discourses inherent in poems such as Harpur’s create emotions such as fear and loathing, narrated as accounts of white bravery and innocence in the face of Indigenous cruelty and barbarism. Moreover, literary influences and the distribution of poems across Australia in newspapers lends itself to a downward transmission of representations of the Aboriginal Australian as savage. Webby suggests that Charles Harpur – now seen as the leading poet of the times – influenced the work of the younger Henry Kendall and Adam Lindsay Gordon (2000: 58; 59). On a closer examination of the poetry of Kendall in relationship to that of Harpur, literary influence and ‘borrowings’ are quite apparent. Representations of savagery in Kendall’s ‘The Glen of Arrawatta’ (1869), reflect a transmission of ideas, language and images from Harpur’s earlier poem ‘The Creek of the Four Graves’. Kendall’s ‘The Glen of Arrawatta’ – formally Kendall’s ‘The Glen of the White Man’s Grave’ – takes its narrative of a man murdered by Aboriginal people from another of Harpur’s poems, ‘The Glen of the Whiteman’s Grave’, published in The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser (01.07.1846). However, scenes and images associated with the murder of the white man in Kendall’s elegy are highly reminiscent of the ‘savages’ in Harpur’s ‘The Creek of the Four Graves’, suggesting a significant downward transmission not only of narratives, but of figures and discourses that are now present in Kendall’s later elegy:

Thereafter grew the wind; and chafing depths
In distant waters sent a troubled cry
Across the slumb’rous Forest; and the chill
Of coming rain was on the sleeper’s brow,
When flat as reptiles hutteth in the scrub
A deadly crescent crawled to where he lay –
A band of fierce fantastic savages
That, starting naked round the faded fire,
With sudden spears and swift terrific yells,
Came bounding widely at the white man’s head,
And faced him, staring like a dream of hell!

Here let me pass! I would not stay to tell
Of hopeless struggles under crushing blows;
Of how the surging fiends with thickening strokes
Howled round the Stranger till they drained his strength
(Reed: 1966: 128).

Kendall’s description of the attack is similar to Harpur’s original 1846 version. The attack takes place in the dead of night while the victims ‘sleep’ amid the ‘terrific yells’, as the ‘band of fierce fantastic savages’ jump ‘naked round the faded fire’ (128). The descriptive ‘crushing blows’ and ‘thickening strokes’ as they hack their victims to death, vividly recalls Harpur’s earlier poem. In this, Harpur writes of ‘those terrific cries...in the darkness’ as the ‘painted savages’ bound ‘full in the light / Thrown outward by the fire...the first fell blow’ under the ‘crushing strokes / of huge clubbed nulla-nullas’ (194-5). Further, infernal imagery – presented tangentially in the fires – is powerfully drawn in both Harpur’s and Kendall’s poems in ‘hell’ and ‘fiends’. Kendal speaks of the attackers as ‘like a dream of hell,’ with the biblical imagery of the serpent as ‘flat as reptiles hutteth in the scrub’ and as ‘surging fiends’; while Harpur alludes to them as acting ‘From diabolical rage’ and ‘vengeful as hell’s worst fiends’ (194; 195). Kendall’s often-published poem appeared in The Empire in
1865 and in booklet form in the same year as ‘The Glen of the White Man’s Grave’. It was then re-titled ‘The Glen of Arrawatta’ in *The Australian* in 1866; also present in Kendall’s second poetry collection *Leaves from Australian Forests* in 1869; and, reprinted in *The Bulletin* in 1903, thus marking the poem with a wide Australian readership both geographically and across time. Borrowing and frequent republication marks the way narratives, images and ultimately the discourses they harbour can be perpetuated through poetry. They create stereotypes that tend to become knowledge creating widely-accepted views about the ways in which a race is perceived, and, as will be touched on later in this analysis of the dying-race elegy, remain remarkably durable in contemporary postcolonial Australia.

While these epic-making poems represent Aboriginal people as savages, there is an anomaly in both Harpur’s and Kendall’s accounts of the attack in terms of allusions to the attackers as coming, ‘in vengeance!’; and, as ‘vengeful’ and acting ‘in vengeance’, respectively. Both mark subliminal slips of language that speak of retribution for ills committed against Aboriginal people, not made explicit within the elegy. This speaks of the repressed guilt that Johnston and Lawson suggest, and, as the dying-race elegy confirms, is also at the heart of the proleptic elegy.

This sense of the veiled or subliminal in relation to colonization often surfaces in colonial elegy: seen in the dual representation of a presence and non-presence of the Aborigine on the landscape as ghosted in language. Though in a different way to Harpur’s and Kendall’s poem, this anomaly is apparent in Adam Lindsay Gordon’s ‘The Sick Stockrider’. Published in the *Empire* (29.01.1870) Gordon presents a landscape ostensibly devoid of an Indigenous
presence. While threaded with English and Scottish place names that clearly seek to possess the landscape, such as ‘Glen Lomond’ and ‘Carricksford’, there is however a subliminal and eerie presence of a people and language not spoken of that rises in the elegy in phrases such as ‘The dawn at the upper Wandinong’, ‘Moorabinda’, ‘Cooraminta’ and ‘to the Southward lay “Katawa”’. While overlaid by a Celtic renaming that bespeaks only a white presence on the land, the poem adds texture and a touch of the Romantic, long-gone past to Gordon’s epic poem. A tale of white settlement, death and subsequent ownership of the land through memorialization of the Stockrider, the tenor and musicality of Aboriginal place names traces older histories. In doing so the poet opens the text to the ghosting of an Indigenous presence through language that the narrative of the poem overtly denies. In ‘Original Sin, or the Last of the First Ancestors’, Cynthia Sugars’ draws on James Clifford’s thesis describing this ghosting as “...a rhetoric of presence” (2005: 157 citing Clifford: 1986: 100). Sugars’ subsequent discussion of the extinction of the Beothuk people of Newfoundland – an Algonquian-speaking group of hunter-gatherers – describes the mournful lamentations toward the Beothuk as being more concerned with the extinct people as, ‘lost object ... rather than the event of their loss’ (156). In the imaginings of origins, the contemporary white, settler nation seeks to enfold a more distant past. A former presence on the land is not only pervasive in Gordon’s elegy, but is a ghostly feature in a number of dying-race elegies yet to be discussed.

In situating the white settler in a landscape that ghosts an Aborigine past, Gordon draws on the presence of Indigenous people in an epic poem of white national beginnings. In ‘The Literature of Extinction,’ McCann describes the ‘appropriation’ of the landscape for a national literature and the use of the Indigenous past to enrich and romanticize white
writing. So too, in situating the white settler in a landscape that draws on the long Aboriginal past, the settler poet bypasses recent settler and Indigenous history with its actual displacement and death of the Indigenous population. In order to appropriate the landscape for a national literature, McCann states that a national identification with the land must be devoid of any association with colonization (2006: 50). This suppression is powerfully marked in Gordon’s elegy for a dying stockman in which the land gestures towards an Indigenous presence in its place names, yet clearly omits signs of the colonizing process on the Indigenous populations. The tone of pathos on the death of a white stockrider who spends a life driving cattle across a land he and his compatriots have made their own, conceals the reality of colonization. The destruction caused by established droving trails; as well as subsequent effects on the Aboriginal population caused by imperialism through loss of culture, land, food, and the advent of disease, border wars and death, are all omitted in Gordon’s poem. In lines such as ‘To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard / with a running fire of stockwhips (sic) and a fiery run of hooves’, Brian Elliott remarks in Colonial Poets: Adam Lindsay Gordon, that the fencing, cattle yards, camps, the roaming cattle and the musters, mask colonization and its aftermath in Gordon’s elegy (1973: 84). McCann’s suggestion discussed in the introduction, that ‘the literature of the soil’ belong to ‘the toxic legacy of colonialism’, are clearly in evidence in poems such as Gordon’s ‘The Sick Stockrider’, and those of Harpur and Kendall described above, as examples found in Australian colonial literature (2006: 54).

As the frontier trope in Gordon’s poem works to elide colonization, so too the trope of a lost Eden works to mask the truths of colonization by suggesting the death of the Aboriginal race is a natural occurrence. Aboriginal peoples are characterized as belonging to a past
era: one in which the discourse of the noble savage is associated with an inability to survive in the new world order. In *Dark Vanishings*, Brantlinger describes the metaphor of the ‘noble savage’ as part of a duel ideology that describes ‘savagery, [as] the ghostly twin of the noble savage’ (2003: 2-3). Both images foretell the demise of a people who are in a Darwinian sense out of time; cannot keep pace with the new world; as well as to predict the death of the race as inevitable in the wake of a more evolved species. The anonymous ‘The Native’s Lament’ published in *The Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser* (5.5.1826), is one such example that marks the doomed race theory as already well-established in Australian elegy in the early nineteenth century. Narrated by a fictional Aboriginal person, the poet describes the life of the dying man figured as noble savage and lost heir to a receding Eden, in a changing world brought by the white man:

Oh! dearer to us, is our rude hollow tree,
Where heart joins to heart with a pulse warm and free,
Or our dew-covered sod, with no canopy o’er it,
But the star-spangled sky, - we can lay and adore it!
Or if worn with fatigue, when the bright sun forsakes us,
We lay down and sleep, till he rises and wakes us!

Our wants are but few, and our feelings are warm,
We fear not the sun, and we fear not the storm;
We are fierce to our foes, to our loves we are fond,
Let us live and be free – life has nothing beyond.
(Webby and Butters: 1993: 72-3).

Depicting the Indigenous population as once heir to an idyllic existence in the natural world, the poet characterizes a people whose lives, animal-like, are shaped wholly by day and
night: rising when the sun ‘wakes us’ and sleeping when ‘the bright sun forsakes us’, creates
a simplistic ontological belief system (72). Represented as innocent and child-like, in ‘our
wants are but few’; desiring nothing beyond to ‘Live and be free’; the image of a lost Eden
inhabited by a noble savage is represented in ‘proudly I stand’ (73). Without fear and
possessing a two-dimensional philosophy based on a love/hate dichotomy, the noble
savage is characterized as being ‘fierce to our foes, to our loves we are fond’ (70). In the
line ‘where heart joins to heart with a pulse warm and free’, the tone of the poem
represents Aboriginal Australians as living the idyllic and uncomplicated existence of a
simple, free-spirited people, stripping Indigenous peoples of their long, rich history and
culture (72). The ‘Native’s Lament’ is an example of the ways in which many of these elegies
engage in a pan-Aboriginalism that elides the difference between the numerous Aboriginal
nations existing in Australia prior to colonization – as well as in the present. Conflating the
many separate groups, each with its own culture, not only creates a single Aboriginal
‘culture’ that obscures the complexity of Indigenous social cultural formations, but also
takes no account of the social and cultural changes naturally occurring over the millennia.
Representing a simplistic and unitary culture serves the rationale of an imperial project that
seeks to replace Indigenous culture with a modern, white-man’s society that is fast-paced,
complex and demanding. ‘The Native’s Lament’ graphically and emotionally implies a
people who are unable to survive the advent of a putatively complex culture. Underwritten
by Darwin’s theory in *The Descent of Man*, an inferior race inevitably superseded by a
superior race, must ‘Away to the mountains’ as part of the natural order of things, as
civilization pushes Aboriginal people back to the fringes and extinction. The trope of a lost
Eden and notions of a guileless race pushed from the land is an example of the twofold aim
of proleptic discourse as discussed by Johnston and Lawson in ‘Settler Colonies’, suggesting
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

it both obscures the ‘real’ political aims of the discourse, whilst achieving ‘whiteness’ by an ‘erasure of Indigenous communities’ (2005: 362).

In keeping with representations of Aboriginal societies as savage in comparison to the civilized white society, politically-motivated racial and cultural binary oppositions are apparent in these elegies through representations of a civilized/uncivilized; white/black dichotomy. Another aspect of this dichotomy is that as children of nature their survival or death as a race is directed by Nature. This view is evident in a number of elegies expressing the belief that the death of the race is a natural occurrence; one in the final analysis beyond science or humankind’s understanding, but simply ordained by Nature or God. In John Hood’s ‘The Death of the Native Chief’, the poet writes:

Mardun, the child of nature is no more,
    The Geni of the woods shall sing,
And tell the Native Chieftain’s life is o’er.
    Anon a leafy shroud to bring,
The night-wind whispering through every tree
    With sad and doleful breath,
Shall mourn with nature’s threnody
    The Native Chieftain’s death (1885: 335).

Couched in the language and spirit of the Romantic poets, the romanticizing of the natural world is expressed throughout the elegy, particularly in the lines ‘Mardun, the child of nature is no more / The geni of the wood shall sing’. As a ‘child of nature’ – not heir to the new world – it is ‘Nature’ expressed as sentient being that must ‘tell the Native Chieftain’s life is o’er’. In personifying nature, it is nature’s decree that the life of the race must pass,
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

thus engendering a belief that the natural unfolding of the extinction of a lesser race is driven by nature. The land is in this way symbolically emptied, the sense of colonial guilt appeased through the philosophical sentiment and the language within the elegy.

In ‘Henry Kendall’s “Aboriginal Man”: Autochthony and Extinction in the Settler Colony’, McCann observes that the image of the empty landscape haunted by the last Aborigine is a central figure in a ‘budding colonial cannon’ (2010: 53-4). The image of a vacant land with the last Aboriginal figure growing fainter and fainter is powerfully represented in the colonial dying-race landscape elegy by the commonly used metaphor ‘the last of his tribe’. The power of this metaphor lies in a shared understanding of its meaning and the knowledge systems that underwrite it within the settler colonial population in nineteenth-century Australia. It is in this understanding of the ways in which language takes on particular meanings in different historical eras – one that can be used repeatedly in different contexts – that makes ‘the last of his tribe’ so powerful a phrase in colonial Australia; the metaphor informed by the social and political milieu of the day. Further, through emotion this metaphor transforms political discourse into the realm of the natural and the mythic, a covert and potent means of disguising extinction discourse in the dying-race elegy.

Emotion created through the apostrophized words and feelings of the last Aborigine is consolidated by being aligned with a particular field of knowledge: in this case the doomed race theory informed by social Darwinism seeking to establish the demise of the Aborigine as a natural occurrence. ‘The last of his tribe’ gestures towards extinction discourse through the anthropological terms ‘tribe’, a word commonly used in The Descent of Man and in nineteenth-century discussions of the inevitable demise of Stone Age man. The emotion of
loss created by apostrophizing the feelings of the dying man is paired with anthropological language evoked in the word ‘tribe’, underwriting an inability to survive in the wake of the highly evolved white race; thus fact and emotion are combined. In the aforementioned *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*, Charteris-Black argues that this makes for a persuasive meld of fact and emotion that characterizes the power of metaphor as a bearer of hidden discourses (2009: 97). The discursive function of metaphor is ‘to explain’; while its mythic dimensions’ mark ‘the inevitability of events’ (101). The natural demise of a race reportedly unable to evolve and survive in the modern world does not need to be stated, but by using the metaphor, ‘the last of his tribe’, meaning is evoked by inference, and, as Charteris-Black states in his analysis of metaphor, ‘the listener/reader partakes of the meaning’ (104-5). In this, the metaphor is understood in the light of social beliefs; knowledge systems and already extant discourses in currency. In a sense, nothing has been spoken of or considered in terms of a logical process, but a tacit agreement about meaning has been expressed through the use of the metaphor that suggests the death of a race is part of a naturalistic occurrence explained by Darwinian science. Working at a subliminal level beneath the surface of reason, the metaphor ‘the last of his tribe’ marks the power of language and of poetry in covertly delivering discourses, while simultaneously rendering them as innocent.

Henry Kendall’s influential ‘The Last of his Tribe’ published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (30.09.1864; also called ‘Uloola’), describes a lone man as ‘he sits in the ashes’ remembering his lost country, culture and the lost race of people he was once heir to:

*Uloola, behold him! The thunder that breaks*
On top of the rocks with rain,
And the wind which drives up with the salt of the lakes,
Have made him a hunter again:
A hunter and fisher again.

For his eyes have been full with a smouldering thought;
But he dreams of the hunts of yore,
And of foes that he fought, and of fights that he fought
With those who will battle no more
Who will go to the battle no more (8).

Published in *The Queenslander* (28.01.1888), David Flanagan emulates what he terms as ‘Kendall’s fine poem’. In Flanagan’s ‘The Last of his Tribe’ white onlookers sadly watch the death of the last Aboriginal man as his soul departs, as expressed in ‘the flight of his wandering soul’. In a ‘smoothing the pillow trope’ that belies the undercurrent of colonization, ‘they tenderly bent over his languishing head’, stating that ‘the watchers knew as the smile died away / that the old man’s spirit had fled’; thus ““the last of his tribe was dead”’. Another example is ‘The Last of his Tribe’ by E C Morrice published in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* (11.02.1888):

The last of his tribe, his hair was white;
Weary his step, and dim his sight.
And his heart was long buried in the grave
With the bygone days and the bygone brave (28).

Extinction discourse is again expressed in ‘The Last of his Tribe’ by Polemon, published in *The Queenslander* (17.10.1896):
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

Can they who doomed his race to die –
Defenceless mild and fearless brave –
Refuse the tear, subject the sigh,
Whilst closing o’er the last lone grave (37).

These are a few of a considerable number of elegies representing the last, dying Aboriginal using the metaphor ‘the last of his tribe’. Published in newspapers between 1830 and 1930 – with examples published up until the latter decades of the twentieth century – their prevalence suggests an extremely tenacious cultural myth. Central to colonial imperialistic enterprise, these elegies exemplify the ways in which imperial discourses continue into contemporary society, and thus ways of thinking about Aboriginal people. A poem, ‘The Bush Poet (Not “The Last of his Tribe”)’ appeared anonymously in The Boomerang (11.7.1891) parodying the dying-race elegy at the high point of publication. In writing, ‘He sits on his bunk with his chin on his knees’, a parody is evoked concerning the many bush poets of the time musing over their own poem for a dying-race. This clearly proposes that a large number of dying-race elegies were published in the last decade of the nineteenth century, so much so that their presence in colonial newspapers became one of derision. Thus the image of ‘the last of his tribe’ as a symbol for a disappearing race was published and re-published in newspapers, creating a potent metaphor that represented an almost entirely vacant landscape, the last of its inhabitants growing fainter. The Aboriginal ‘problem’ that Hodge and Mishra have established as a postcolonial anxiety to be dealt with in colonial Australia, has been neatly eradicated allowing for a new beginning untainted by questions of land ownership and/or colonial guilt.
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

**Truganini: The ‘Last’ of the Tasmanian Aboriginal People**

A number of nineteenth-century settler elegies confirm the putative extinction of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population as a ‘real’ event that is a part of the history of the colony. These elegies make the inevitable move from the ‘last of his tribe’ to ‘the last of the race’, establishing the Darwinian notion of the inevitability and fulfilment of the disappearance of the inferior ‘stone age’ race engendered in the doomed-race imperial discourse. Originally published in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (08.02.1859) by Samuel Bennett (‘Beta’) the ‘Lament of the Last Tasmanian Aborigine’ presents the last Tasmanian as narrator of her own death: ‘Last of my race – nor one is left / To close my eyes – of all bereft / In this my dying hour’. Bennett’s elegy was judiciously republished in *The Australian Town and Country Journal* (10. 06.1876) at the time of the death of allegedly the last Tasmanian Aborigine, Truganini.7 In *Imagined Destinies*, McGregor states that conceptions of race during this period did not include ‘half-bloods’; pointing out that a small population of mixed heritage Aboriginal people still lived in Bass Strait after 1876, but that no attempts were made to conceal this fact (1997: 50). Further, in *Dark Vanishings*, Brantlinger states, that a 1975 census suggests that there were approximately 2,000 ‘mixed-race’ Aboriginal people living in Bass Strait during this period (2003: 129.) Excluding Aboriginal people with a mixed-heritage from the population made it possible to speak of the extinction of the Tasmanian Indigenous population on the death of Truganini. Brantlinger suggests that Tasmanian genocide was well publicized and seemingly clear-cut, stating ‘It served as the key example for Darwin when he turned to the issue of the extinction of primitive races in the *Descent of Man* (2003: 14). In this, Darwin writes, ‘the chief cause of extinction’ is ‘the competition of tribe with tribe, and race with race’; extinction is in most cases the result of
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

‘conquering tribes’ (1871: 228). Omnipresent in colonial elegy as it unfolded from the 1820s, the doomed race theory now comes to pass in Tasmania with the death of Truganini, giving added impetus to the notion of the inevitable extinction Aboriginal peoples on the mainland.

In further elegy for Truganini, ‘Trucaninni’s Dirge’ published in 1876 by “R.A.” (Gee: 2004), it is the death of Truganini, a real person, the last of her tribe, ‘the queen of the dead tribes’, that unfolds. What has been based on scientific theory now allegedly becomes a reality: a measurable, knowable, provable fact. The self-fulfilling prophecy of a people destined to become extinct at the centre of extinction discourse is represented as a historical fact. This inevitability is suggested in ‘Trucaninni’s Dirge’ by the epigraph: “And the place thereof shall know them no more” (Psalm 103, v. 16), expressing the settler colonial belief that the extinction of the Palawa Indigenous Tasmanian is acknowledged or even ordained by God. It acts together with the image of ‘the last, lone child of Tasmania’s wild’ who ‘Lies passing away in death’:

Never, no never! Alas! For ever
They have faded from river and shore;
Yea! Have passed like a dream or a summer-dried stream,
And their place shall know them no more! ....

My days are passed, and I die, the last
Of the tribes! So let me rest
In my long lost home, where they loved to roam,
Where the hills lay face the dying west (27).
A postcolonial analysis of the genocidal act marked by the near decimation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population over a period of fifty years is a dire example of the way that extinction discourse was not merely textual, but a practice in the nineteenth-century colony. The potent repercussions for Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples in the twenty-first century is profound due to these colonial discourses that sought to represent a race as extinct. Signified as truths within textuality, history, myth and a people’s consciousness, the durability of these myths affects the lives of Aboriginal peoples, today. In ‘Settler Colonies’, Johnston and Lawson describe the attempted genocide of the Tasmanian Aboriginal in the 1870s, as intended, in that, “... genocide” accurately describes the intention but not the achievement...’, borne out by the survival of many modern-day Tasmania Aboriginal people (2005: 364). The authors point out for contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples, ‘The extraordinary difficulties they have had in proclaiming their “Indigenous authenticity”’, which, ‘testifies to the vigour and persistence of these colonist historical discourses’ (364).

Johnston and Lawson reason that these discourses ‘erased the claims of indigenous peoples to “full” indigeneity and therefore to the rights to land ownership and cultural priority that flowed from that’ (364). Thus Tasmanian Aborigines were either killed in a genocidal act or dispossessed and made invisible due to Darwinian theories concerning ‘mixed blood’. The aftermath of this for Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples in the twenty first century is discussed in The Roving Party: Extinction Discourse in the Literature of Tasmania, in which Rohan David Wilson argues that extinction discourse continues to shape the features of a modern literature about Tasmania (2009). Wilson quotes a recent comment made by Michael Mansell, the well-known Tasmanian Palawan leader, who states, “We are the only race of
people I know of on earth, the Tasmanian Aborigines, who have to daily justify our existence” (260, quoting Mansell: 2002: 8).

While ‘Trucaninni’s Dirge’ speaks of the death of the last Aboriginal Australian in the present tense, a number of elegies for a dying-race consign the whole race to the distant past. To return to ‘The Aborigines: An Australian Legend’ by R.W, the poet asks:

Where are they now? –Tread lightly
through the glade;
their bones are strewed below the busy street;
the horse’s ringing hoof treads on the dead –
A people’s grave is here beneath our feet (1874: 8)

‘Tread lightly’ is a cliché found in the English elegiac tradition expressing a sense of reverence for the dead – and for the resting place of the dead. Buried beneath the place now occupied by the living colonial settler, the phrase is deeply ironic, establishing not only the death of the Aboriginal race but a claim to the land for the white population remaining. ‘The Aborigines’ for all its pathos represents a race long-dead and a white population thriving on the land above their graves, a land once belonging to the Aboriginal race in what is now described as a busy colonial city. Similarly, John Hood’s ‘The Death of the Native Chief’ (1885) is an historical narrative of White/Aboriginal interaction from the initial sighting of the First Fleet imagined in the poem as: ‘each listener stopped to hear the
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

wondrous tale / How he had seen a white-winged vessel sail’; to the final Aboriginal death
as the narrator remembers a people and culture now totally vanished:

His dark form bends beneath his weight of woes
(So soon to lie within death’s mortal throes)! More than his weight of years, sunk in his eye,
A vision passes o’er his mind of years gone by. Miarum’s light now glows upon the hill,
Where many a mia-mia flecks the grassy plain. Once more he feels the pulse of boyhood thrill.
And hears the long, long co-ee o’er again;
With stealthy step waylays the kangaroo,
Or spears with skilful hand the cockatoo:
O’er the smooth waters of the lake to glide,
Or steer his light Korong across the tide
To snare the wildfowl by the river’s brink,
Or stoop in summer time its waves to drink
(Jordan and Pierce: 1990: 333-4).

Here, the vacant land and the extinction of Australia’s First Peoples is represented as an
inevitable event setting Stone-Age man with his ‘boomerang’ and ‘stone axe’ in the
anthropological past. Hood’s poem not only represents Aboriginal people and their culture
as bygone, but sets them far enough in the past to be idealized in white society by historical
descriptions and legends of the way they once allegedly were. This is represented in their
use of the spear in hunting and most particularly in the cultural icons that ‘ornament’ the
white colonial home, in, ‘no more across the distant hills he’ll roam / His boomerang, stone
axe, and long Gweeon / Now serve to ornament the squatter’s home’ (334).
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

The city-dweller constructing a modern urban existence above the bones of the Aboriginal race and the settler squattocracies’ inhabiting the land are expressed as part of the new world built on the dispossession and death of a race. RW and Hood’s elegies evoke Iain Twiddy’s statement in *Pastoral Elegy in Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, that the elegy ‘must record change’ and show a sense of progress beyond those dead (2012: 31). Inheritance of the land is established; so too, the advancement of a putatively superior race. In keeping with Benedict Anderson’s claim that nations are represented as ‘looming out of a memorial past’, the elegy for a dying race establishes a new nation and history from the bones of the past (Sugars: 2005: 169, citing Anderson: 11-12). Hood’s elegy in particular represents a land now free for tenure by the colonizers; the land emptied of Indigenous peoples is marked in the ‘distant hills’; the Aboriginal race a memory and the squatter’s home represented in a landscape inhabited only by the white race in the form of the ‘squatter’ himself. Hood’s poem confirms the power of the dying-race elegy in executing extinction discourse, as the elegy ‘remembers’ a race and a culture now inexorably absent from the land. As Sugars suggest, the vanished race and culture is ‘embodied in the land, and vice versa’: the land embodied within them and within the new society and nation, both evoked as rising out of the long-dead annals of time (58).

Hood’s poem expresses another important and omnipresent theme common to the dying-race elegy expressed by the settler poet: that of a passionate sense of the land. This is marked in the tone, language and musicality in Hood’s lines, “Mongst the black rocks across the long lagoon / Past where through reedy swamps the night-winds raves / Where pipes the black swan to the Regent Moon’ (1990: 334). It is revealing that this sense of the loveliness and idealization of the new continent found in a number of dying-race elegies is
not shared in the colonial elegies to the Bushman, discussed in the next chapter. In these, the landscape is often represented as wild, untamed and inhospitable as is fitting a frontier trope in a group of elegies that works to tame and possess the empty landscape through exploration and settlement.

In a similar vein to Hood’s elegy, a strong feeling for the land is also represented in ‘Trucaninni’s Dirge’ (1876) by “R.A.”, as the colonial poet imagines the pain the last, dying Tasmanian Aboriginal feels at the loss of her land:

Ah! Never again o’er hill and plain
Shall Trucaninni rove,
With swift firm tread of the wilderness bred
Whose home is the forest grove.

By Tamar’s banks, where the bearded ranks
Of the bright green rushes bend,
Shall her bark canoe the swan pursue,
Or her arms the swift spear send –

No more, no more –ah! Never once more,
Shall the feet of my people skim
O’er the tufted grass, up the mountain pass,
Or the bush tracks greenly dim (26).

The poem turns repeatedly to details of the loss of land for Hood’s Trucaninni, while the loss of Trucaninni’s people, culture and her loved ones are either passed over briefly or omitted altogether. These omissions, so often found within this group of elegies not only erect a silence around the presence of Indigenous cultures and societies but reaffirm the
way in which many of the elegies in this chapter – as well as the thesis as a whole – dwell on the features of the landscape and the associated question of settler identity. This not only suggests underlying anxieties associated with a sense of lack in relation to the land so far discussed, but also a powerfully wrought sense of the land in the colonial and postcolonial settler imagination in terms of establishing a sense of identity through, and with the land. An identification centred on the land bespeaks a national identity, one inscribed around the settler/landscape elegy throughout this dissertation. The combination of postcolonial aspiration and postcolonial remorse lies at the heart of the elegy for a dying-race. In ‘Original Sin, or the Last of the First Ancestors: Michael Crummey’s River Thieves’, Cynthia Sugars writes:

Both postcolonial desire and postcolonial guilt involve an obsession with origins: one speaks to the quest for the primordial roots of identity, the other for the foundational, if traumatic roots of the nation (2005: 154).

The material presence of the land and its enduring place in the white, colonial imagination in terms of its importance to the national identity of the settler population is enacted initially through establishing a land emptied of the Indigene; a landscape now reputedly inherited by the nineteenth-century colonial poet and reader through the writing and reading of the elegy.

In the service of land acquisition this imperial subgenre has been shown in this chapter to diminish Aboriginal peoples to lesser beings depicted as savages, as children, as ghosted onto the landscape, as extinct, and, finally, as a nostalgic white settler memory.
Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

Representations associated with a dying-race merge to form an interconnecting and potent set of discourses underwritten by Science in the form of Darwin’s theories of human evolution, concerning what nineteenth-century Aboriginal people are and are not. A powerful covert partnership exists between the landscape emptied through extinction discourse and the masking of colonization which renders the death of a whole race as a natural process in the service of the physical, symbolic and psychic ownership of the continent, in nineteenth-century Australia. The dying-race elegy is only one of a number of durable and interlocking colonial poetic subgenres to be discussed in the following chapters that not only legitimize colonial domination but have contributed to an unremitting continuation of discourses that marginalize and disempower Aboriginal Australians in contemporary Australia.
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

No pilgrims leave, no holy-days are kept
for those who died of landscape. Who can find
even, the camp-sites where the saints last slept?
Out there their place is, where the charts are gapped,
unreachable, unmapped, and mainly in the mind.
(Stow: 1969: 54)

Introduction

A covert partnership exists between the dying-race elegy and a group of elegies written for bushman who reputedly died exploring and taking possession of the nineteenth-century colonial landscape. The two representations – the dying indigene and the death and burial of the settler bushman – offer a series of interconnecting discourses within the colonial elegy endorsing ownership of the continent and of nation-building in postcolonial nineteenth-century Australia. Published throughout the nineteenth century, elegies for bushmen confirm the vital contribution this subgenre of elegy makes to a key male bush figure that came to symbolize the essence of an Australian character, represented as establishing a legitimate claim to the land. In spite of the importance of the bush figure in colonial poetics the bushman elegy continues to lack even a summary discussion. This is a considerable oversight in view of the importance of the bushman in contributing to the following: creating postcolonial settler histories; demonstrating possession of the land through exploration, habitation, death and burial; engendering nation formation, particularly through the creation of a national identity underwritten by the figure of the
bushman; and creating legitimacy through a settler generationalism on the land. Analysis of this subgenre of settler landscape elegy adds to our knowledge of nineteenth-century cultural politics and the ways in which elegy – and thus the dead – are implicated in establishing legitimacy and nation in an imperialistic, postcolonial Australia.

The importance of the bush figure in art, literature and poetry has most often been ascribed to the pro-nationalist movement of the 1880s and 90s, associated in much of the literature with *The Bulletin* magazine (established 1880). However, my analysis supports the existence of a much earlier verse tradition of elegies for bushmen in evidence from the 1820s, published in many newspapers of the day. The following discussion confirms that the latter apotheosis ascribed to the 1890s has much earlier roots in terms of a number of characteristics and interests that form a continuum within this subgenre throughout much of the nineteenth century. Settler anxieties associated with landscape and identity are evident in bushman elegies published from as early as the 1820s; while through the middle years of the nineteenth century, the elegies of Harpur, Gordon and Kendall are discussed as concerned with nation, legitimacy, and a national ethos centred on the land. Finally, those published in the latter decades of the century suggest a heightened involvement in a state-sanctioned project of nationalism, evidenced by a large number of poems showcasing the bushman appearing in newspapers and magazines.

The degree to which the male bush hero is represented as a quintessential national figure in the 1880s and 90s has become a much-discussed issue in the last four decades.¹ Russell Ward’s earlier argument in ‘The Australian Legend Re-Visited’, suggests that during the 1880s and 1890s, ‘The bush ethos was romanticised, popularised and spread throughout

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the society at the time by the new nationalist writers of The Bulletin school like Henry Lawson, A.B. Paterson and Joseph Furphy’ (1978: 183). In ‘Sydney and the Bush: An Urban Context for the Australian Legend’, Graeme Davison argues that it was not bush values per se that were incorporated into an urban vision of the Australian qualities reflected in the early bushman, but the projection onto the outback of values revered by an alienated suburbia (1978: 208). An alternative view by John Docker in The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890, disagrees with what he terms as ‘the feminist legend of the Nineties’; that ‘the male bohemians of The Bulletin were preoccupied with a nationalism that eulogised the bushman as ideal citizen’ (1991: 240). Docker remarks too, that the writers of The Bulletin would be surprised that latter twentieth-century commentators were ascribing such importance to the bush in the 1890s (1991: 43). While Ward, Davison and Docker all contribute in important ways to our understanding of the complex bush figure, analysis of the bushmen elegies – in light of the numerous publications in newspapers not only during the 80s and 90s but throughout much of the century – supports the importance of the bushman in nineteenth-century colonial culture. Entwined with the landscape, as well as with a symbolic characterization of the bushman as early explorer, this sub-genre of elegy supports conceptions of the bush figure as associated with a national identity underwritten by representations of their experiences and death in the landscape.

While analysis of the bushman elegy adds to our understanding of nineteenth-century colonial settler poetry, the following discussion also examines the ways in which the genre of elegy provides a valuable poetic space for authenticating land ownership and national identity through death, burial and memorialization. The issue of genre is important because
in the more formal sense the elegy is a poem occasioned by the death of a person; while the bushman elegy is clearly more generic in that it elegizes a type and not an individual. In *By Mourning Tongues: Studies in English Elegy*, Eric Smith discusses ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ by Thomas Gray (1750), as a poem elegizing the figure of the lower class English agricultural worker arguing that although not traditional elegy in the fullest sense, it ‘touches’ the tradition of pastoral elegy ‘at many points’ (1977: 40-1). Moreover, taking a cultural rather than a generic perspective Webby states that Gray’s poem was widely read in colonial Australia, noting that a sense of the poem may have pervaded early poets who wrote poems about graves (1994: 40-1). This suggests the poem may have been implicated in providing a model for elegizing the Australian bushmen, who like the apostrophized yeoman in Gray’s poem, although for different reasons, shared hardships on the land and were connected through death and burial.

While the bushman elegy is common to nineteenth and early twentieth-century Australia (with a number of examples still published in the latter decades of the twentieth century), a generic perspective recognizes the use of traditional concerns and generic conventions from tradition of elegy, as discussed in the introduction. These include: the praising of the bushman, figuring a procession of the mourners, spiritual transcendence, and, the placing of the dead at a distance from the living, all of which suggest a connection to both the pastoral elegy and the later English tradition. In *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, Sacks discusses traditional conventions within elegy stating that a number of these are often associated with the ceremonial structure of the elegy. These structures are connected to the performative nature of the genre (and by association with funeral conventions), that in turn draw attention to the mourner, and by implication the needs of
the mourner (1985: 19). These genre conventions are particularly important to this analysis in that the elegy, as Sacks reminds us, is for the living; the conventions listed above associated with supporting the needs of the living though memorializing the dead, with an accompanying movement into the future for those who remain (37). Traditional conventions mentioned above are used in the bushman elegy to promote a number of the key concerns of the nineteenth-century colony. These include the creation of a sense of history and generationalism through the dead bushman; as well as establishing legitimacy through the bushman in terms of claiming the landscape through inheritance. Further concerns involve memorializing and lauding an exemplary bush character honed by the land, who comes to underwrite a national character associated with nation-formation. Moreover, the convention of setting the dead and the grave apart from the living in order to – in the words of Sacks – ‘ensure a sense of progress and egress’ (19), can be applied to this group of elegies in relation to the emerging future nation.

Elizabeth Webby’s discussion of the grave in the bush is important in thematically laying some of the groundwork for themes in this analysis of the bushman elegy. In ‘The Grave in the Bush’ Webby notes that from the early colonial period the grave in the bush was one of the omnipresent images created in Australian literature (1994: 30). Webby argues that the image of the bush grave in Australian literature and art ‘usually functions as an indication of ownership of the land or the desire for such legitimacy’ (30). Writing of the importance of the grave in terms of naming, pilgrimage, story-telling and the heroism of the bushman in the early part of the century, Webby points out that poems before the 1850s are prominent in terms of the image of the grave in the bush; that motifs and themes from earlier poems are present in the late nineteenth century in terms of nation-building (30). Richard D.
Jordan’s and Peter Pierce’s anthology of colonial poetry, *The Poets’ Discovery: Nineteenth-Century Australia in Verse*, also attest to the large and significant number of Australian poets who wrote poems about burial in the bush (1990: 2). Like Webby, the authors describe poems which speak of burial in the bush, as ‘elegies to the frontiersmen of early Australia’, providing ‘a cultural heritage that has not been widely acknowledged and has formed the seeds of a national myth that has remained durable and useful to the project of nationalism’ (2). Of importance, too, is Ian Reid’s ‘Marking the Unmarked: An Epitaphic Occupation in Nineteenth-Century Australian Poetry’, in which the author makes a similar observation noting that in Douglas Sladen’s, *A Century of Australian Song* – an anthology published to mark the centenary of settlement in Australia – a significant number of Australian poems can be termed elegiac and that ‘burial places recur obsessively as a topos’ (Reid: 2002: 7; Sladen: 1888). Reid notes there is a focus on the ‘lonely grave’, lying unmarked and without memorial in an alien landscape, often itself unknown and unnamed (7).

The power and plausibility of the bushman and the bush grave in nineteenth-century Australia is located in the meld of fact and fiction in these figures. Lone burials in an often harsh landscape are based in part on actual deaths reported in newspapers of the time. In Yvonne and Kevin Coate’s research for *More Lonely Graves of Western Australia*, the authors list approximately 7,000 such graves in Western Australia, stating this is just a small number of those originally present, many earlier graves covered by wind-blown sand (2000: viii). While most Australians are urban-based by the last decades of the nineteenth-century, numerous reports of graves were published in newspapers of the time. A number of descriptions of the graves and the remains of the dead in newspaper reports are identified
in the following analysis of elegy, such as the bleached, white skeleton, evidence of dingoes eating the corpse, and, the lone figure lying dead, gradually covered by sand in a vast wilderness. In *Australian Ways of Death: A Social and Cultural History*, Pat Jalland’s study of death in Australia, chronicles the reality of the bush deaths, stating the death of the heroic bushman was a dominant cultural image:

The prototypical death of the bushman took a variety of forms, always masculine, usually heroic and sometimes violent. Images of colonial deaths in art and literature are dominated by deaths of explorers, bushman and gold diggers, who, supposedly, died valiant deaths from thirst and exposure (2002: 244).

However, Jalland adds that when studied on an individual basis, the bushman deaths ‘often seemed pathetic or unnecessary rather than heroic’ (252). Jalland suggests, too, that not only the bush deaths but the mateship was a ‘misconception’; in fact, ‘In older age and fragile health, numerous swagman, shepherds, vagrants, and worn-out bushman were solitary hermits out of necessity, not choice’ (252).

Nevertheless, the grave is an iconic image in nineteenth-century postcolonial poetics with the ‘heroic’ bushman represented as traversing the wilds of the continent to explore and claim the untamed (and putatively unowned) land. Thus the elegy is a potent means of peopling the landscape with a mythic figure: one associated with settler legitimacy through exploration, habitation and experience of the land through the triad of life, death, and burial. As a historical type offering a geographical and symbolic endorsement of the history of the white settler on the land, the bushman’s grave – as well as the grave of the explorer
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

– are both symbol and physical demarcation of land ownership through burial within the landscape. In Landscape and Power, Mitchell describes landscapes as ‘textual systems’, and of significance for this discussion of colonial Australia, ‘an international Global phenomenon, intimately bound up with imperialism’ (2002: 9). Furthermore, Mitchell argues that landscape is ‘a focus for the formation of identity’; creating ‘a process by which subjective identities are formed’ (2002: 1-2). In Text, Theory, Space: Land, Literature and History in South Africa and Australia, Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner and Sarah Nuttall also describe landscape as dynamic, arguing, ‘it serves to create and naturalize the identities inscribed upon it; and so simultaneously hides and makes evident social and historical formations’ (1996: 1). The Australian bushman is inscribed onto the landscape through praise for his bravery, extolled for his journeys and his habitation of the harsh landscape, and lauded for his mapping of a putatively unmarked territory. While conversely, a number of events and figures are judiciously elided from the landscape in the settler elegy to the bushman, including, colonization, its aftermath and the presence of Aboriginal people on the land; as well as the presence of women and other non-white immigrants. Darian-Smith et al contend that an important part of transforming space into place is through ‘the cultural process of imagining, seeing, historicizing and remembering’ (1). All of which are engendered through the figure of the elegized bushman, who above all creates a past on which to build future legitimacy through the process of memory and its corollary, inheritance – again, two important concerns and activities of the genre of elegy.

As central to the genre of elegy, the role of inheritance will be considered, together with the ways it may be used to legitimate land ownership in the bushman elegy – as it did in the
elegy for a dying-race. In *The English Elegy*, Sacks brings to light an important consideration for this present discussion, describing the elegist as one who ‘erects’ or ‘inherits’ his legacy from the dead (1985: 32). Though Sacks speaks more pointedly of poetic succession when he states that the poet must ‘wrest his inheritance from the dead’ (37), the crucial link between elegies, the bush figure and inheritance is one that is central to this subgenre. Sacks’ statement that ‘in its earliest conflictual structures, as also in successive adaptations of the eclogue form, the elegy clarifies and dramatizes this emergence of the true heir’, is clearly enacted by the poet in the elegy for the bushman in terms of inheriting the land (37). Retrospectively, these elegies not only build a past and a connection with the land but ultimately a claim to ownership, legitimized through inheritance and enacted in the writing of the elegy. Central to both the traditional and the contemporary elegy the praising of the dead has been, and is, an important convention. Sacks describes a link between the eclogue (a short poem often akin to pastoral poetry) as both closely aligned with mourning rites, as well as ‘lending itself to the presentation of contest’ (36). One of the implications of elegiac contest is the notion of who of the mourners, in their praising of the dead, is unsurpassed. Sacks statement that ‘the winners exemplify and seem to immortalize the qualities of the deceased, or at least those virtues deemed important for the community’s survival’, underwrites an association between the bushman and his exemplary character lauded within the elegy, the survival of the community assured due to those qualities (36). The inheritance of ‘virtues’ extolled in the elegy for the bushman is a central motif of this subgenre of elegy. Not only associated with the fine qualities that represent the bushman as deserving of inheriting the land, the qualities lauded within the elegy are used to enrich the community of the survivors. A key feature of the bushman elegy is the way in which the poet attributes qualities to the bushman; shaped by the land these qualities of toughness,
mateship, egalitarianism and resourcefulness enhance survival for those living in a rugged landscape. For white settler colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada the question of origins becomes crucial. How the dead and the past are remembered, and their legacy to subsequent generations, becomes of fundamental importance to nationalism in settler communities lacking a history and traditions. This is illustrated in terms of the Canadian context in Patricia Uppal’s *We Are What We Mourn: The Contemporary English-Canadian Elegy* (2009). Uppal argues that Canadian elegies symbolically seek out the dead to interact with the community as a means of consolidating a past that is crucial to Canada as a settler nation. Uppal contends of English-Canadian elegists that:

> They wish not only to remember the past, and memorialize it, but to Recover the past and use it to create a future. The dead are sought out By the living to interact once again with their communities. Consequently, the metaphors of consolation in these English-Canadian elegies present a past that can be interpolated into the present and future …. The living’s relationship with the dead is dynamic and kinetic, challenging the boundaries between them and the experience of time. (13)

Uppal’s proposal that the elegy is a site for examining the past, one that serves to strengthen the ties and thus the future of a community is a central premise in the present discussion: the elegized bushmen serving to create and re-create a white settler past on the landscape becoming foundational for a future.

The relevance of the bush figure as a cultural symbol of settler colonial Australia can be understood more clearly in light of Benedict Anderson’s seminal postcolonial text *Imagined
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

Communities: The Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1991). Anderson’s text is of particular relevance to the nineteenth-century bushman elegy because of the importance of these elegies in relation to an emergent nationalism. Anderson argues that the nation as ‘an imagined political community’ is shaped by culture, a key element in the way that communities imagine themselves and the ways in which they style themselves in order to be distinguished from other nations (1991: 4; 6). Anderson’s sense of an ‘imagined community’ is exemplified in the textual figure of the bushman who is attributed with particular experiences in terms of a history with the landscapes of the colony. The bushman provides a durable figure associated with Australia’s past, and, an Australian spirit underwriting a national character and ethos leading up to Federation. Thus the bushman becomes a representation of all that is considered to be essentially ‘Australian’. His character as declaration of the principles of the evolving nation help to establish the essence of Anderson’s ‘imagined community’.

The elegy for the bushman and colonial women poets

In The Penguin Book of Australian Ballads, Philip Butterss’ and Elizabeth Webby encapsulate the symbolic importance of the bush figure stating, ‘The celebration of the broad-shouldered bushmen was a centre-piece in a romantic representation of White Australia’s past’ (1993: xxv). In light of Butters’ and Webby’s statement, and, considering Anderson’s sense of ‘nation-ness’ as founded on culture, it is crucial to consider which groups are represented in this particular, widespread cultural icon – to ask the questions: who speaks; who holds the power; whose interests are served? Settler colonies founded on imperialism and white-male power – though as settler postcolonial nations ultimately seeking
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

separation from the imperial centre – are in a position to create the figures and icons that best serve their interest, thus rendering less powerful groups silent, or invisible. Analysis of this group of elegy reveals that women are almost non-existent, either as bush figures or poets. This amounts to the exclusion of women from having played a part in the exploration, founding and national impetus expressed in the nineteenth-century bushman elegy. In this way, the histories of nineteenth-century women on the land are both denied and omitted.

In *Women in the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, Kay Schaffer explores the ways cultural attitudes in relation to women have been ‘shaped by the dominant myth of the bush, mateship and man’s relation to the land’ (1988: xi). Schaffer suggests that the place of women in the bush is ‘scarcely registered’, either as figures who shaped perceptions of the land, in social and political matters, or indeed as writers (28). Further, Schaffer argues that the relationship of man to the bush ‘is established through the displacement of women’ (xiv); a situation clearly supported in the bushman elegy. When we consider that the bush myth is concerned not only with origins and possession of the landscape, but also national beginnings and national identity, to exclude women in such an account is to ‘displace’ women from crucially important areas in the political, social and philosophical arena of the nineteenth-century colony. Schaffer points out that ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ in the narrative of nationalism and the bush ethos serve to establish processes concerning ‘who has a right to speak, to be spoken about, what data will be received and what repressed’, in a controlled discursive field that presents the interests of the powerful (33-4; 43). The powerful here is clearly a white, Anglo-Celtic heterosexual
colonial male whose narratives form important aspect not only of the colonial past, but also of a new nation’s beginnings.

The exclusion of women is also evident in the lack of published elegies recounting and praising the experiences of women in the bush. Moreover, the sub-genre of poetry about men is also a genre of poetry written by men. Elegies for bushmen written by women are virtually non-existent and while there may well have been any number written, few are found to be extant in my own research. A rare exception is Mary Hannay Fott’s ‘Where the Pelican Builds’, published in The Bulletin (12.3.1881). Presumably, this poem was published due to a number of characteristics Fott’s elegy shared with the figure of the bushman. Fott’s bushman is represented as heroic, male explorer described as, ‘No drought they dreaded, no flood they feared’ in the quest for new pastures, ‘wide and green’ in the deserts of the west (Jordan and Pierce: 1990: 203-4).

In ‘A “Lonely Crossing”: Approaching Nineteenth-Century Australian Women’s Poetry’, Ann Vickery explores the problems ‘encountered in not only locating “poetical remains”’, but the overall difficulties of setting a framework that takes into account the cultural and social situation for women at the time; as well as the positions from which women wrote (2002: 33). Vickery assesses that women’s poetry from this period was expected to focus on family; in their role as mother figure; and, as ‘moral arbiters of a burgeoning society’ (33). Vickery points out that ‘while women’s nineteenth-century poetry was a rich and unfairly underrated field’, it did go some way towards representing a ‘shifting relation to gender authorship, and the emerging Australian nation’ (33; 52). However, the author’s rationale that ‘the epoch-making events of explorers or the pioneer experience’ was strictly limited
to the realm of the male poet, wholeheartedly supports my own findings in terms of a lack of female authorship or visibility in relation to the bushman elegy (33). The imaginative act of landscape ownership; as well as an imagined nation in Anderson’s terms, were clearly considered a male bastion beyond the scope of women poets. Vickery’s comment, that women were excluded ‘from visions of a national literature as promoted by contemporaries like Charles Harpur, Henry Kendall and Adam Lindsay Gordon,’ will be shown to equally apply to the bushman elegy (33). Moreover, these three colonial poets are described as nation-making, not only the previous chapter, but also in this chapter, and the following chapter discussing the colonial tombeau.

In keeping with Anderson who points out that national identity is formed regardless of inequalities that may prevail beneath the surface (7), Butterss and Webby claim that the figure of the bushman was a masculinised myth that ‘often obscured nasty truths’, serving to underwrite the inequality and exploitation the romantic figure of the bushman masked (1993: xxv). Represented in literature, poetry and art as symbolic of an Australian character, the bushman retrospectively served to reconfigure the past. In doing so the men of the bush provided a romantic alternative untainted by a convict past, British masters or the violent displacement of Aborigines. In the wider discursive sphere of constructing a sense of cultural cohesion and of ‘nation-ness’, Anderson expresses the importance of the place of the dead in nationalism, suggesting ‘...the deaths that structure the nation’s biography are of a special kind’; that, ‘violent deaths’ in particular must be ‘remembered/forgotten as “our own”’ (1991: 206). The deaths of Aboriginal people due to the colonizing process, and the deaths of convicts were often ‘violent deaths’; whilst the somewhat illusory deaths of the bushmen in the service of representing a people and a continent, are those
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

‘remembered’ and lauded. This discussion describes the crucial place of the bush grave as underwriting Anderson’s sense of ‘nation-ness’: the death and the burial place of the bushman, a powerful and enduring symbolic figure.

I argue that the landscape settler elegy for the bushman provides a poetic space in which to express a number of anxieties, as well as imperialistic and national agendas in nineteenth-century Australia. Gravitating around the landscape, legitimacy and identity, these include: fear of loss of burial and mourning rites; the alien nature of the landscape; a profound sense of a lack of identity in relation to the colonial landscape; engendering past histories; the exemplary character of the immortalized bushman shaped in the crucible of the land; the bush figure as representative of an official claim to the landscape, dying in order to settle the alien land; and, the myth of the bushman as precursor to a modern nation-state. While anxieties and concerns of the nineteenth-century colony, including nationalism, land ownership and identity are in evidence in much earlier elegy, an Australian character condensed within the bush figure became increasingly evident within the elegies from the 1880s onwards in the concerted drive towards establishing nation.

Fears for Survival and Loss of Burial Rites

The bushman elegy is a poetic space for expressing anxieties felt by the immigrant in the context of survival in the colony. Cultural displacement from the homeland, fear of exile in an alien landscape, as well as lack of burial rights are shown to have vested interest in the figure of the bushman from the early part of the century. An untitled elegy published in *The Sydney Monitor and Community Advocate* (8.5.1830), elegizes the occupant of a solitary grave:
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

What poor wanderer’ neath this mound does lie
With not a stone to tell his humble name....
For all that’s left of him is here interr’d
To rest in sleep, which here shall wake no more
(JMN: npg).

This early elegy brings together a number of reoccurring images and concepts common to the bush elegy in evidence throughout much of the century. These include the hardship and loneliness of the bushman’s life expressed in the elegy as ‘poor wanderer’; the bushman as associated with ‘humbleness’, underwriting the bravery and modesty that in later poems came to symbolize a particular Australian national character. Moreover, the unmarked grave with ‘not a stone’, is precursor to the bushman elegy in representing a claim to what has been described above by Webby, Jordan and Pierce, and, Reid as a presence in the often unnamed and unmarked land (1994; 1990; 2002).

Evident within this subgenre are a number of fears associated with exile and loss of culture for the immigrant and the colonial-born Australian, particularly in relation to death and a lack of burial rites and memorialisation. In Australian Ways of Death, Jalland examines the loss of cultural practices associated with burial, mourning and commemoration that affected immigrants. That there was a loss of Christian beliefs and the infrastructure upon which these rites were founded; as well as isolation in the vast non-urban areas of the continent inevitably meant that burial and mourning were often no longer supported by social conventions (2002: 3-7). The elegies discussed here map the loss of cultural practices for settlers, particularly in rural areas, while also providing a crucial space in colonial
Australia for mourning, memorializing and remembering the dead in the wake of cultural displacement. Published in the *Colonial Times* in 1826, Mary Leman Grimstone’s ‘On Visiting the Cemetery at Hobart Town’, summarizes the loss of mourning rites as the poet decries the graveyard as ‘neglected, naked, and unkind!’ asking, ‘Where is the decent order that should keep’ for ‘England’s sad exiles, this wild spot / The sad conclusion of their mournful lot’ (JP: 1990: 130-1).

This discussion points to the crucial importance of the elegy as enacted not for the dead, but for the living. Elegy as written to fulfil the needs of the living has been much discussed from the time of Samuel Taylor Coleridge who commented that, ‘Elegy is a form of poetry... but always and exclusively with reference to the poet’ (Kennedy: 2008: 4, citing Coleridge). The significant number of elegies that speak of the lack of burial, commemoration and memorial rites suggest that colonial elegy provided a site for an all-too-real material reality: fear of a lack of religious ceremony after death, and, that the immigrant’s own life be forgotten or pass without commemoration in the new land. An important early elegy discussed in a number of respects in the following analysis, is that of George F. Pickering’s ‘The Bushman’s Grave’ published in *The Atlas* (21.2.1846). Pickering bemoans the lack of a priest to observe religious ceremonies and to pray over the dying man in the lines, ‘the strong man in his agony had died / With none to smooth his passage to the tomb / Religion’s final office denied’ (JP: 63). The poet also conveys the fear of being ‘forgotten’: to be buried without the presence of mourners, loved-ones to weep at the graveside, or those who will remember the dead:

‘We die and are forgotten!’ oh! how true
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

These words unto the Wilderness apply.

Affection – kindred cannot prompt the few

Who coldly gaze upon his humble bier

To breathe a prayer, and scarce a passing sigh;

Much less the sterling tribute of a ‘tear’,

Marks the soul’s entrance on Eternity (63).

This same ignominy is expressed 30 years later by Earnest Favenc in ‘Dead in the Queensland Bush’ in The Australian Sketcher (30.9.1871). Again, death and burial without the presence of mourners or loved ones at the graveside is articulated as, ‘Poor, lost, and forgotten, no mourner’s wail / Was heard when you parted, no face grew pale / With weeping and watching to tell the tale’ (JP: 195-6). In ‘Down on the sand, in a careless heap’, the poet represents the man as both forgotten and lacking memorial, the unnamed body without a face, unburied (196). The publication of these elegies over a fifty-year period by JMN, Grimstone, Pickering and Favenc express a fear of being ‘lost and forgotten’ after death, suggesting these elegies are as much about a concern for the living as the dead. For Favenc as explorer charting the wilds of Northern Queensland, his elegy holds the shadow of a self-elegy in the possibility his own life may end in this way.

The bushman elegy also provides a site for settlers to express their relationship – often of fear – to the alien landscape. It was an unfamiliar landscape, not only in terms of geography, but lacked the history, the myths and the metaphors of a community with established interactions between nature and inhabitant; between death and the soil; or indeed the mourning rites to succour the living community. Responses to the landscape were numerous, such as JMN’s epigraph for his elegy discussed previously, ‘on observing a
solitary grave in an unsheltered part of the bush, on the sea coast’. This elegy records the emptiness in ‘the silence of the landscape, save the splashing wave’, echoing near the lone bush grave. The evocation of a silent land without any form of life is a motif of many of these elegies in which Indigenous people are represented as completely absent, creating an empty landscape in which the bushman is described as the only living person. In this way, representations of a dying-race and the presence of the solitary bushman on the landscape combine two powerful discourses concerning an uninhabited land waiting to be claimed by the settler explorer.

This silence across the land is also evoked in an early elegy, ‘A Memory of a Friend who was Buried in the Wilds of the Colony’ by CB published in *The Weekly Register of Politics, Facts and General Literature* (2.8.1845). The poet writes of the isolation of the bush grave, remarking ‘In such a place no sound was heard / To break the stillness of its solitude’, the white man’s presence represented by the grave establishes the dead man’s connection to the land (55). ‘The Solitary Bushman’, by an anonymous poet, published in *The Atlas* (12.4.1845), expresses the ‘mute solitude’ of the ‘trackless’ wilderness in which the bushman lives, works and finally dies alone; the tall, deep forests, named by the poet as ‘a living tomb’ (233). In a catalogue of absences, Richard Henry Horne’s anti-pastoral poem from *The South Seas Sisters* published in *The Leader* (27.10.1866) also expresses fears concerning life and death in the new land:

O, Solitude! O, voiceless crowd of tree
O, hopeless wilderness without one fruit,
Or herb, or graceful flower! – O, pathless maze
Of maddening monotony, all glare,
Or else unspeakable sadness of blank shade...

And when the glossy leanness darkly stalked
From tangled lair, ‘twas but to hunt for prey
In earth-holes, undergrowth, or lonely creek,
But ne’er to look Above! – O, Solitude!
Thou had’st an empire then without a soul,
As though nor earth, nor heaven, possessed a God. (8-9)

Many elegies represent a similar bleak vision of the empty, godless land as the setting for the graves of the stockman and bushman, their graves in one sense can be read as a metaphor for the impossibility of successfully colonizing the continent. In George E. Loyau’s ‘The Desert’ published in *The Bunyip* (8.6.1877), the poet marks the common blend of myth and fact underwriting the bushman myth in the poem’s prologue, as ‘circumstances here described are not all together imaginary’. Based on three settlers who left the Maranoa for Cooper’s Creek seeking runs for their cattle, the explorers became lost in a huge sandy plain in which two died and one escaped to return home (JP: 373-375). Loyau describes the landscape as a place where nothing lives, ‘A waste like a great eternity!’ one synonymous with death itself:

There found we not a tree, or a single blade of grass,
   Or flowers with balmy breath;
   There the icy hand of Death
   Was seen in every mound
   Of the curs’d rotten ground;

The sand shone bright as glass – dazzling, burning glass,
Nought else but sand around,
In the horrid wast was found (373).

The language evokes the land as cursed – a land where death awaits the unsuspecting traveller. The Gothicism of Marion Miller Knowles’ ‘The Acheron River, Dividing Range’ portrays not only the presence of death but the eeriness of the landscape – so often described in Australian literature and poetry – expressed in ‘Long lines of trees, like skeletons, gaunt arms fling open wide / Out from the glowering shadows might a headless horseman ride’ (JP: 349). An important elegy to be discussed in a number of respects is Barcroft Boake’s ‘From the Far West’ published in *The Sydney Mail* (14.2.1891). Boake describes the death of a man in the bush without mourners, his death marked only by, ‘His requiem sung by an insect host’, where ‘Watching’ they too are personified as heralding oncoming death (JP: 117). As in JMN’s ‘birds of prey’ that, ‘float o’er his lonely grave’ and Horne’s poem describing a land ‘darkly stalked’ by unfamiliar beasts, Boake’s elegy is characterized by a commonly-found sense of alienation that extends to the animals that inhabit the land. The ‘snap’ and ‘snarl’ of the dingoes and the ‘crying’ of the crows are the only incantations for the dead in a landscape marked solely by the solitary grave:

Gaunt, slinking dingoes snap and snarl,
   Watching his slowly-ebbing breath;
     Crows are flying,
       Hoarsely crying
   Burial service o’er the dying –
     Foul harbingers of Death (JP: 118).
Spanning much of the nineteenth century, JMN’s, BB’s, Horne’s, Loyau’s, Knowles’ and Boake’s poems express a sense of fear associated with living in an unknown land. Death is depicted figuratively as part of the landscape in which Boake’s stockman sees his oncoming death written in the burning sun, when ‘...gazing up at the brazen sky / Reads, his death-warrant there’ (JP: 117).

As noted by Coates et al in More Lonely Graves, descriptions in Boake’s elegy ‘From the Far West’ recall late nineteenth-century newspaper accounts of the bones of the dead bushman in the lines ‘Full many a man has perished there / Whose bones gleam white from the waste of sand (118). Further, in acknowledging the unsung hero, ‘Who left no name / On the scroll of fame’, Boake lauds the dead man as deserving recognition for his exploits in the far-reaches of the uncharted continent. As Boake suggests, the dead bushman is worthy of praise yet unrecorded in the histories of man’s exploits, save in the elegy in its important role as record and celebration of the bravery of the bush figure. However, seen in the light of both Coates’ and Jalland’s discussion of the dead bush figure often being lone men dwelling outside of society, poems such as ‘The Land of the “Terrible Rite”’ by Bernard O’Dowd published in Tocsin (4.11.1897), offer a less romanticised view of bush deaths. Of the bushman O’Dowd writes:

And ’mid its wilderness, lo!
Its bands of wifeless men migrate,
With heavy swags of wearing woe
And souring billies full of hate,

Down parched gullies of Defeat,
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

By salt-pan stretches of Despair
To goads of endless thirst and heat,
On aimless tramps to God-Knows-Where
(JP: 293).

Poems such as this highlight the tension discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to Darian-Smith et al, between the reality of the deaths of itinerant bushman and the way poets such as Boake engender their journeys as praiseworthy and of importance. In much the same way as former discussions of metaphor in terms of the blend of science and emotion in the dying-race elegy, the intricate weaving of myth and material reality in the figure of the bushman, together with his experiences and death on the land – real and imagined – create a myth of powerful proportions in the nineteenth-century colony.

Landscape and Identity

This sense of living and dying in an unfamiliar landscape is one of a number of features that contributed to a lack of a sense of identity between the immigrant and the new land: the elegies for the bushmen a site for expressing this sense of exile and a loss of homeland. A recurring trope in this sub-genre is of the man’s longing to die and to be buried in the home of his childhood. This motif points to the importance of the link between birthplace and childhood, death and burial as intrinsic to a sense of belonging, thus ascribing the importance of the bush figure in terms of building an identity with the landscape. An early and anonymous version of ‘The Dying Stockman’ expresses this desire using the homing pigeon as a metaphor for return:
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

Oh! Had I the flight of the bronzewing,
Far o’er the plains would I fly,
Straight to the land of my childhood
And there I would lay down and die

This sense of a lack of identity with the soil is an important feature of ‘The Dying Bushman’. Written in rhyming couplets by an unnamed poet and published in The Portland Guardian (3.3. 1846), there is a sense of being a stranger in a strange land expressed as ‘To find, alas! “a stranger’s grave”’ (JP: 62). Conveying a profound lack of identity between immigrant and place is an important trope in these elegies, suggesting that identity in colonial Australia while inseparable from the landscape, was often lacking due to the nature of the terrain and the emotions of the settler in relation to the land. The importance of the homeland of the dying bushman’s father in terms of belonging and its links to generationalism is expressed, thus:

Enchantress! lo, thy ebon wand
Hath lost its magic power,
That lured me from my father land,
In an ill-fated hour;
That showed me in a wanton dream,
Of wealth the golden mine,
And pointing to the gushing stream
Of riches at thy shrine –
Then tempted me beyond the wave,
To find, alas! ‘A stranger’s grave’ (61-2).
Personifying the land, imbuing it with the imagery of English romantic poetry, addressing the land as ‘Enchantress!’, the elegy speaks of a place not known or understood; a land both compelling and destructive. In a similar way ‘Dead in the Bush’ by Denis O’Brien published in *The Queenslander* (27.3.1869), remembers home and those loved-ones left behind in a poem that suggests the popular form of the elegy for the lost child:

> His mother o’er the sea  
> Breaths earnest prayers for him both night and day,  
> She little dreams that he  
> Lies dying, lost and lonely, far away. (3)

Rolf Boldrewood’s ‘The Bushman’s Lullaby’ expresses a lack of identity with the landscape; the elegy describing the dying bushman’s memory of leaving his homeland with its ‘blessed English weather’ as juxtaposed to the ‘wastes of sun-scorched sands’ of the colony:

> We left, when the leafy lanes were green  
> And the trees met overhead,  
> The rippling brooks ran clear and gay,  
> The air was sweet with the scent of hay,  
> How well I remember the very day  
> And the words my mother said! (Sladen: 1888: 546).

The verdant imagery, the clear water and the deep foliage of England contrasts with the reputed aridity of much of the continent; the dying man’s words ‘And, oh God, to see home’ serves to express a powerful yearning for the homeland:
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

No more! No More! Ah! vain the vow,
That, whether rich or poor,
Whatever the years might bring or change,
I would one day stand by the grey old grange,
While the children gathered, all shy and strange,
As I entered the well-known door (546).

The image of the ‘children gathered’ for the immigrant’s homecoming is a symbol of the future in the land of his birth, one from which the dying bushman is forever excluded. These elegies are about loss of homeland and family as much as about settlement in the new land, the solitary grave a metaphor described in Reid’s ‘Marking the Unmarked’, but also a sense of a cultural absence for the loss of past commonalities, of loved-ones and of a land known (2002: 16).

In so powerfully expressing alienation from the landscape, these poems also register a sub-text that speaks of a desire for a more peaceful relationship with the land as part of a new identity. It is in contrast to those emotions centred on the inhospitable land that a number of elegies also represent the image of burial under the shade of a tree, in a land once hostile but by the end of the elegy tamed. This is crucial to notions of an imagined sense of reciprocal acceptance between landscape and inhabitant that is closely aligned with an identity between the settler and the land. In these poems, the elegy enacts the psychological process of the bushman becoming part of the soil in death in a landscape that promises peace. In a later version of ‘The Stockman’s Last Bed’ the anonymous poet represents the dying man as buried in the creek bed where the common elegiac motif of
'tread softly', mentioned in the previous chapter, suggests a sense of a deep and peaceful sleep amidst the ‘fragrance’ of wattle:

And tread softly where wattles  
Their sweet fragrance shed,  
And tall gum trees shadow  
The Stockman’s last bed  
(Sladen: 1888: 545).

The desire to be buried away from ‘the gloom of the scrub down below’, where ‘the dingoes and crows can’t molest me’ presents a threatening setting in a further version of the ‘The Dying Stockman’ by an anonymous poet, published in the *Portland Mirror* (8.7.1885). The elegy simultaneously enacts a movement from an alien landscape to one finally offering peace and acceptance for the dead man who now lies ‘In the shade where the coolabahs grow’, in ‘the shade of the twilight / When the soft winds are whispering low’ (npg). The wattles, the tall gums and the fragrance of the bush become common motifs in these later elegies published in 1885 and 1888 that speak of an identity forged between the landscape and the dead. This relationship is also seen in Harry John White’s ‘The Bushman’s Grave’ published in *Australia, Old Associations, the Bush, and Other Poems* (1888). Much of the poem describes the verdant setting of ‘the bushman’s lone grave’, ‘Where the od’rous sweet wattle wafts fragrant its scent’. Importantly, by naming the Murray, the gum, the gray (sic) pie, the wild duck and the teal, a familiar and known land is described: one that claims ownership through knowledge of the land and the naming process:

Where the Murray flows on thro’ the bush wild and free,
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

In a grassy green bend ‘neath a spreading gum tree
Where the restless gray pie pours forth warbling his note,
And the wild duck and teal on the stream’s bosom float’ (npg).

The ‘bosom’ of the stream suggests succour, the land once harbinger of death, now
described as mother. The peaceful bush grave setting in these elegies emerges as a key
figure in the process of coming to terms with the hitherto frightening images of the land.
They represent a land that is both accommodating and idyllic for habitation in life as well as
in death: a land worthy of ownership; a land accepting of the colonial settler through the
image of the bush grave, one that speaks of a growing sense of identity forged between
man and place within the landscape.

The elegies discussed above that represent a mutual acceptance between the landscape
and man, were all published in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Published in
newspapers, including The Bulletin as well as in Sladen’s patriotic collection A Century of
Australian Song, suggest nationalistic agendas that seek to confirm tenure of the land
through the motif of burial; as well as creating a growing sense of identity between settler
and landscape. Through idealization of the land in terms of the dead bushman as at peace
in the soil; as well as in the following discussion of representations of the land as honing the
character of the bushman, there is a sense of the land and bushman as indivisible. This
absorption of the land in death, and the landscape represented by the poet as becoming a
part of the Australian character in life, is perhaps the ultimate evidence of ownership of the
land. Deeply symbolic, this acceptance between landscape and the bush figure not only
creates a powerful postcolonial claim to the land, but speaks of the crucial place of the bushman elegy in terms of taking possession of the land through the grave in the bush.

The Exemplary Character of the Bushman

The elegy as a textual space for praising the qualities of the dead is a central convention of traditional elegy. As described earlier in relation to Sack’s discussion of the lauding of the dead, these elegies are also crucial to what Sack’s describes as ‘the crucial self-privileging of the survivors’ (1985: 19) The bushman elegy is an ideal site for imbuing the figure of the bushman with fine attributes that may then be transferred to their successors and to the future community. Representations of the land as creating a stalwart, humble, egalitarian and god-fearing character are qualities then used to demonstrate the fine character of the settler and the ensuing nation. The crucial place of the landscape in character formation and the intimate relationship with the soil in life and death lay claim to the land in a way that urban stereotypes could not. A number of elegies seek to represent the fortitude and bravery of the bushmen and give ‘voice’ to their life on the land, registering a particular view of the making of an ‘Australian spirit’ that lends mythic proportions to a history that is vital to a sense of nation. Early elegies for bushman lay strong foundations for later poems that link the bushman, the harsh landscape and a sense of the land shaping the character of the bushman in a powerful tryst that were utilized increasingly in the latter two decades of the nineteenth-century.

Pickering’s ‘The Bushman’s Grave’ mentioned above, describes two qualities the bushmen traditionally possess; their strength and their ability to live alone, expressed as ‘The strong
man in his agony had died / With none to smooth his passage to the tomb’ (JP: 63). The sense of surviving in spite of a lone existence and the ability to die in isolation is further expressed in Pickering’s elegy in these terms:

’Twas evening and they bore the dead man forth
From his lone habitation, and they gave
Mortality unto its parent earth.
It was a desolate and dreary spot
That they had chosen for the Bushman’s Grave,
Oh, more than ever in these wilds forgot,
Where nought save solemn plumes of forest wave (JP: 63).

The solemn pace of the poem in the ‘o’ sounds in ‘bore’ ‘forth’, ‘desolate’, ‘chosen’, ‘Oh’, ‘forgot’ and ‘nought’, emulate the slow step of the burial procession. Death and burial in the bush are central to the mid-century poet Henry Kendall’s oeuvre. Of these, ‘On the Paroo’ first published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (14.9.1866), tells a nation-making tale of ‘Our kinsman’ who, ‘started for the lone Paroo’ after ‘thirty rainless months had left the pools / And grass as dry as ashes’ (Reed: 1966: 119). Kendall speaks of his kinsman as hardy and brave, and not easily vanquished, in the lines:

But never drought had broke them: never flood
Had quenched them: they with mighty youth and health,
And thews and sinews knotted like the trees –
*They*, like the children of the native woods,
Could stem the strenuous waters, or outlive
The crimson days and dull dead nights of thirst... (119).
This sense of endurance, as well as the notion that they could survive the harshest conditions the land could offer, attests to their mettle; particularly so as the settlers were ‘All murdered by blacks’ and did not die due to the inhospitable terrain. Further, in aligning the men with the ‘native woods’, and, their bodies with the trees, Kendall creates a figure that is both part of, impervious to, and honed by the harsh landscape (118). The graves of the brave are proof of the steadfast character of the dead, to be viewed by those who follow in their footsteps in the future, expressed in ‘...you may see their graves – you who have toiled / And tripped, and thirsted, like these men of ours’ (120). ‘Ours’ and ‘Kinsman’ speak of the legacy these men leave both in terms of character and landscape in the familiar motif of the ‘bleaching bones’, the remains of the dead making claim to the land through their graves, their bones and their acts of heroism (120).

Similarly, in ‘Alone’ published in The Australasian (30.6.1888), George Essex Evans’ account of the death of a stockman’s horse and all his companions tells of the horror of a man left alone to die in the wilderness; his ‘comrades’ strewn like those killed in battle suggests the men are at ‘war’ with the landscape, their deaths depicted as heroes on a battlefield:

The hour draws nigh when though shalt die,
   Alone within the wilderness!
Thro’ shimmering grasses on I ride
   Across the yellow plain.
My comrades one by one have died,
   And I alone remain.
They sickened one by one, and died,
   The stout of heart, the strong of hand;
Some lie upon the dark hillside,
And some upon the sand (JP: 215)

The bushman’s strength and fortitude evoked by Kendall in ‘On the Paroo’ is mirrored by Evans in the lines ‘The stout of heart, the strong of hand’; as well as ‘We forced our way’, ‘Thro scrub or plain, or mountain cleft’, these descriptions creating a character with the courage to survive and to risk all in order to explore and possess the land. In Rolf Boldrewood’s ‘The Bushman’s Lullaby’, the poet represents the hardship of the men who died in the bush and the way that they battled against the environment, in ‘We have striven and toiled and fought it out/Under the hard blue skies’ (Sladen: 1888: 547). Published in Sladen’s nationalistic *A Century of Australian Song*, this publication, as Reid noted earlier in this discussion, contains a number of elegies that present the bushman’s grave, showing itself as a collection important for mythologizing the bushman in the years immediately preceding Federation. Edward Dyson’s poem ‘Struck it at Last’ published in *The Bulletin* (23.4.1892), is an elegy to the generic figure Geordie who spent his life in the outback mining for gold. Geordie encapsulates features of the bush myth, his physical description and exploits underwriting the hardships of life in the outback in the line, ‘He was almost blind and wasted / With the wear of many years’. The staunchness of his character and an ability to suffer without complaint is inherent in the line, ‘If he sorrowed o’er his fate, he / let no mortal see his grief’ (JP: 347-9). Published in the final two decades of the century before Federation, White’s, Boldrewood’s and Dyson’s elegies serve to foreground the bush character as carving out a place on the land depicting a spirit and a character worthy of representing the land, the colony, and the future nation.
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

This survival is often represented as founded on the homosocial relationships between men of the outback, the solidarity and friendship between men of the bush central to their continued existence on the land. Adam Lindsay Gordon’s ‘The Sick Stockrider’ poignantly represents the male companion Ned caring for the dying stockman:

HOLD HARD, Ned! Lift me down once more, and lay me in
the shade;
Old man, you’ve had your work cut out to guide
Both horses, and to hold me in the saddle when I sway’d
All through the hot, slow, sleepy, silent ride (JP: 312).

The dying man describes Ned and himself as ‘boon’ companions in a life that ‘if I had to live again’, ‘I should live the same life over’; a life of freedom and adventure spent in the company of men in which the dying man faced, ‘THE WORST AS TRUE AS STEEL’ (312). In Gordon’s poem, the figure of the companion lifting the dying man from his saddle and the lauding of the stockmen’s shared life is the model for many later elegies for the stockman. First published in the Ovens and Murray Advertiser (28.8.1873), the anonymous ‘Careless Jim’ is a tale of the past told by one of four men who rode together with a much older bushman who taught his young companions the ways of the bush. Told in the future, the narrator, the last survivor, tells how he returned many years later to the grave, saying ‘But I alone, sir, knew the spot / (For my mates are sleeping too)’, establishing a history of two generations of bushman and the mateship and life of freedom they shared on the land (Sladen: 549). In keeping with Gordon’s elegy that looks back to the heyday of the bushman, the narrator writes, ‘there were four of us all young and wild / You know what the times were then’, creating a history of stockman on the land that underwrites
generationalism and a right to land tenure through death and memorialization (548). Boldrewood’s ‘The Bushman’s Lullaby’ is also clearly derivative of the sentiments (and actual words) of Gordon’s elegy. The close relationship of the men is expressed in ‘Lift me down to the creek-bed Jack’; their camaraderie in a life of freedom and adventure conveyed in the lines:

We didn’t think it would be like this
Last week as we rode together;
True mates we’ve been in this fair land
For many a day since Devon’s Strand
(Sladen: 1888: 545).

These elegies contribute to, and empower, the masculinised bush myth, one ostensibly placing the bushman outside of society and cultural conventions, representing instead a romantic view of a freewheeling existence on the land. The stockrider and his ‘boon’ companion lay claim to the land through a life of freedom and adventure, one providing a romantic trope obscuring the truth of penal beginnings; the fact and results of colonization; the hardship of colonial life both in urban and outback areas; and, the omission of the presence of women in the bush.

The myth of mateship is one of a number of elements that serve to obscure the roles of women on the land in nineteenth and twentieth-century representations of the bush culture in colonial Australia. In Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business, Jalland notes that social roles associated with death and dying were formally performed by women both in Britain and urbanized
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

Australia (2007: 7). In keeping with Jalland’s discussion, these elegies ascribe social roles to the figure of the male companion in bush mythology, formally held by women (11). In accompanying the dying man to his death and burying him, the companion comes to represent a key figure that stands in for the alleged absence of women on the land. This not only works to exclude women from the bush myth as discussed by Schaffer and Vickery earlier, but works to further decrease the role of women in matters of death and burial, again omitting them from the mythologies associated with exploration and imagining nation deeply inscribed as masculine within the bushman elegy.

While masculine comradeship and solidarity are represented as crucial to the survival of the men of the outback, it is in relation to the issue of transcendence that the bushman is most powerfully represented as a figure of worth. Transcendence is a key convention of traditional elegy – one that will be more fully discussed in terms of the English tradition in Chapter Four – expressing the longing for some kind of redemption or resurrection for the dead. Transcendence is a feature of numerous elegies for the bushman in keeping with Christian beliefs inexorably woven with the notion of reward in death for a life well-lived. This is particularly significant in these elegies because the bushman – so often portrayed as deserving of God’s grace – is marked as worthy in the eyes of God. In turn, this worthiness implicitly judges the homosocial tenor of an existence placed outside of mainstream colonial society as befitting a nation and God’s grace. The spiritual transcendence of the dead bushman in the anonymous elegy ‘The Dying Bushman’ (1846) discussed above, represents the integrity and the spiritual reward of the dead man. The dying man hears ‘the sound of rushing wings’ as the ‘shades’, ‘that must be holy things’, come to take him to
heaven, described as ‘An embassy of love they come / To lead me to the Spirit’s home’ (JP: 62). Earnest Favenc’s poem, ‘Dead in the Bush’, expresses the bushman’s transcendence when even ‘Death’ itself felt ‘great pity’ for the soul of the dead man who ‘passed to grace’:

He arose: and his face was an angel’s face.
He bent his head: in a moment’s space
The soul of that sleeper had passed to grace;
Death kissed him there where he lay. (JP: 196)

Alfred T. Chandler’s ‘A Bush Idyll’, describes a station hand discovering the bushman lying at peace in death, his spiritual transcendence assured:

But there ’neath the starlight the tired bushman dreamed
Such beautiful dreams in which mingled a moan,
But ere the pale dawn o’er the dusky hill gleamed
His spirit had passed to the silent unknown! (Sladen: 1888: 115)

A further poem, ‘The Mountain Grave’ by Henry Parkes encapsulates a sense of the integrity and humbleness often ascribed to the bushman’s character as making him worthy of God’s grace:

Fit resting-place for him whose soul
Was gentleness itself, who trod
His humble path in fear of God,
And sought no higher earthly goal
(Sladen: 1888: 371).
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

As the foregoing discussion show, elegies written for the bushman represent a character that is tenacious, hardy, strong, brave, willing to fight, loyal, loved by his mates, humble, God-fearing and worthy of heaven, thus providing a powerful representation of the value of the Australian bush character formed in the crucible of the landscape: one endorsing a character worthy to possess the land; as well as to represent the nation in terms of an Australian ethos.

Possessing the Landscape through Exploration

While the bushman has been discussed as exemplary figure involved in exploration, naming and claiming the land, the explorer is the initial purveyor of land conquest – officially involved in mapping and possession of the uncharted colony. Playing a crucial role in demonstrating ownership of the land, the explorer as a key nineteenth-century figure is well represented in colonial elegy. In ‘The Mythology of Exploration: Australian Explorer’s Journals’, Paul Genoni reminds us that explorers are the earliest ‘intrusion into the appropriation of the land’; as such they ‘purvey the land for the Empire’ (2009: 326). Further, the explorer continues to be important in the postcolonial search for national identity, both in the past and in present-day Australia (327). Figures such as Burke and Wills who died exploring the continent are part of the fabric of history and of legitimating ownership through exploration and death on the land. In researching the journals of the explorer, Genoni discusses the initial intrusions they left on the land:

...the subtler acts of possession as expeditions left their mark on the land and on the native people they encountered. Camps were made and left, flags raised, places named, trees
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

marked, seeds planted...companions buried... (223).

An important early elegy is Barron Field’s ‘Sonnet on Visiting the Spot where Captain Cook and Sir Joseph Banks First Landed in Botany Bay’ published in the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (22.3.1822). This elegy marks the crucial role of burial and of the grave in possession of the new continent, moreover, burial of the explorers who first landed on Australian soil:

HERE fix the tablet. This must be the place
Where our Columbus of the South did land...Close at hand
Is the clear stream, from which his vent’rous band
Refresh’d their ship; and thence a little space
Lies Sutherland, their shipmate, for the sound
Of Christian burial better did proclaim
Possession, than the flag, in England’s name (JP: 77).

The imperialistic tenor of the poem expressed in ‘Of Christian burial better did proclaim’, suggests that the power of God surpasses territorial claims made by British colonialism through the erection of the nation’s flag. The importance of the grave of the explorer over suggests that blood and hence burial in the soil legitimizes a claim to the land more powerfully than the symbol of the British imperial flag.

Similarly, Henry Kendall expresses the importance of the grave of early explorers in ‘Sutherland’s Grave’, an elegy for the first white man buried in Australia who sailed on the First Fleet, first published in *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (8.8.1863). Kendall represents the land as wild and untamed, described as ‘the wailful sea /
vext of winds and many thunders, seeking rest unceasingly’; ‘the haggard sky’ and ‘Ooze-filled forelands burnt and blackened’ (Reed: 1966: 117-118). However, tellingly, Kendall’s setting of Sutherland’s grave is described in idyllic terms, the repetition of vowels and consonants in ‘Sleeping shores and glassy bays of green and gold and amethyst!’ create a tonal sense of harmony (117). These lines mark the grave of this early Australian explorer as creating a civilizing influence on the land; an important notion underwritten in many elegies commemorating both bushman and explorers, the grave a symbol of civilization in an otherwise wild terrain. Analogous with the description of Indigenous people as uncivilized in the dying-race elegy, the civilizing influence of the bushman and the explorer on the land became important motifs in establishing a legitimate presence. Paradoxically, this is of course not the case as a sense of the imperial right of place inscribed within Kendall’s poem masks the process of colonization and its dire aftermath.

While the graves of the explorer and the bushman mark out territory in the imperial settlement, Webby points out that there is an emphasis on storytelling as nation-building in burial poems such as Harpur’s ‘The Creek of the Four Graves’ and Gordon’s ‘The Sick Stockrider’ (1994:35). In ‘Imagination, Madness and Nation in Australian Bush Mythology’, Sue Rowley points out that an Australian bush mythology was engendered through these explorers in relation to the landscape, the journey serving ‘as the central imaginative device for nation formation’ (1996: 135). As a nation-making elegy first published in 1853, Harpur’s ‘The Creek of the Four Graves’, discussed in chapter One, reflects a much earlier interest in creating a history of exploration in order to shore up land ownership. Harpur’s tale tells of the expansionist journey of five men who, ‘Into the wilderness went forth to seek / New Streams and wider pastures for his fast / Increasing flocks and herds’. The poet is clearly
concerned with a fictional account of the mapping and naming of the land that underwrites possession and nation. Harpur writes:

\[
\text{... O’er mountain routes,} \\
\text{And over wild wolds clouded up with brush,} \\
\text{Or cut with marshes perilously deep, –} \\
\text{So went they forth at dawn: at eve the sun,} \\
\text{That rose behind them as they journeyed out,} \\
\text{Was firing with his nether rim a range} \\
\text{Of unknown mountains, that like ramparts towered} \\
\text{Full in their front; and his last glances fell} \\
\text{Into the gloomy forest’s eastern glades} \\
\text{In golden gleam’s, like to the angel’s sword,} \\
\text{And flashed upon the windings of a creek} \\
\text{(Sladen: 1880: 190).}
\]

The poem speaks of a perilous quest into the unknown, the men described under a setting sun ‘Like a great company of archaeons, crowned / With burning diadems, and tented o’er / With canopies of purple and gold.’ Imagery in the lines, ‘Into the gloomy forest’s eastern glades / In golden gleams, like to the angel’s sword’, seek to authenticate the exploration and ownership of the land. Lines such as these imbue the poem with a righteousness that suggests the bringing of light – dispelling the darkness of ignorance – backed by the might of the sword of God’s angel (190). In Charles Harpur: Selected Poetry and Prose, Michael Ackland discusses Harpur’s belief that the rising sun dispels the darkness each morning – thus God’s ‘creation of order from chaos’ – and a daily example of ‘His promise that regenerative light will triumph over the forces of darkness’ (1986: 4-5). Harpur’s poem suggests a tension between the gloom of the forest, the dark space where the uncivilized
dwell, and the ‘gleam’ of the angel’s sword which will enact the movement from darkness to light, as part of God’s great plan.

Harpur well knew the power of the grave in terms of national capital and land ownership. In ‘The Dream by the Fountain’, Harpur’s ‘Lo ‘tis the land of the grave of thy father’ expresses this knowledge in terms of burial in the soil, through which history and generationalism legitimize land ownership and nation (Perkins: 1984: 266). In the ‘Four grassy mounds … beside the creek’, an instance of bravery, strength and endurance is narrated. Recounting one of numerous such moments in Australia’s history of white settlement, ‘the windings of a nameless creek’ becomes ‘The Creek of the Four Graves’, thus mapped and named by the valour of the settler/explorer (198). The poem’s power lies in the way that it empties the land filling it with the history of the white Australian bushman, claiming the soil through burial, marking the land with boundary stones (in this instance grassy mounds), described by Benedict Anderson in other postcolonial contexts as markers for ‘demarking sovereignty’ (1991: 171-2). Harpur’s elegy – as all those written for the explorer and the bushman – becomes a boundary stone mapping and claiming an imaginative landscape through memorialization and textuality.

An important motif present within this group of elegy expresses the sub-genre’s most potent national symbol: that of the coming together of the explorer as a religious figure and the grave as religious icon. Randolph Stow’s mid-twentieth-century poem ‘The Singing Bones’, captures the iconic sense of the bush grave in this chapter’s epigraph in the lines ‘those that died of landscape’; the saintly status of the bushman expressed in the lines, ‘Out there / its sand-enshrined lay saints lie piece by piece’ (1988: 285). Stow’s figuring of
‘saints’ is deeply ironic in view of colonization, and, the fabled status of the saintly bushman reputedly dying to explore the continent. However, this sense of the sacred is central to Henry Kendall’s ‘Sutherland’s Grave’ discussed earlier; the poet speaking of the burial site of the explorer as ‘holy ground’. The burial place of the explorer represented as sanctified is an important trope in Australian colonial elegy in which the explorer becomes a ‘saintly’ figure. The hymnal tone of Kendall’s verse creates an anthem to the explorer:

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{There tread gently – gently, pilgrim; there with thoughtful eyes look round;} \\
&\text{Cross thy breast and bless the silence: lo, the place is holy ground!} \\
&\text{Holy ground for ever, stranger! All the quiet silver lights.} \\
&\text{Dropping from the starry heavens through the soft Australian nights –} \\
&\text{Dropping on those lone grave-grasses – come serene, unbroken, clear,} \\
&\text{Like the love of God, the Father, falling, falling, year by year. (Reed: 1996: 118)} \\
\end{align*}\]

The motif of ‘holy ground’ sanctifies a spiritual right to the land through the presence of the grave; as does Harpur’s image of God’s sword in the hands of the angel in ‘The Creek of the Four Graves’. In this way a strong connection between explorer, land and grave is created; one in which each imbues the other in a complex trope reifying spiritual and righteous possession of the land.

Kendall’s elegy for Sutherland also points to the gravesite as a place of pilgrimage for future generations. The inheritance of the place of pilgrimage – and thus the land – is assured through future generations that will visit the hallowed ground. In describing the grave of the explorer as ‘Holy ground forever’ and beseeching those in the future to ‘There tread gently – gently’, a continued right to the land is assured. This religious motif is found in
earlier elegies such as R. Lynd’s poem ‘Addressed to the Party Proceedings on the Track of Dr. Leichhardt’, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (3.7.1845), in which the poet suggests the bones of the explorer become both a physical landmark as well as a holy place to which future pilgrims will return:

Ye who prepare with pilgrim feet
   Your long and doubtful path to wend,
If – whitening on the waste – ye meet
   The relic of my murder’d friend –
His bones with rev’rence ye shall bear….

Yet humble minds shall find the grace,
   Devoutly bow’d upon the sod,
To call the blessing round the place
   Which consecrates the soil to God (JP: 60-61).

The dead explorer becomes an instrument ‘which consecrates the soil to God’, his bones a ‘relic,’ the explorer represented as a crucial figure, not only as a ‘Founding Father’ worthy of pilgrimage and worthy to be revered by future generations, but also as a device for legitimizing rightful tenure of the land.

The legacy of the subgenre of the bushman elegy, and particularly those of the explorer in relation to the landscape, is found in revised form in the poetry of Francis Webb. In ‘A Drum for Ben Boyd’, ‘Leichhardt in Theatre’ and ‘Eyre all Alone (From Socrates)’, for example, are concerned with Australia’s explorers, and thus with the early appropriation and history of colonizing the continent (Davidson: 2011; 55-70; 75-101; 265-277). In *The Gimbals of*
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

*Unease: The Poetry of Francis Webb*, Bill Ashcroft says of Webb’s explorer poems that they are in a number of ways about ‘coming to terms with the land, whether as ravening beast or lifeless vista of hopelessness’ (1996: 118); thus sharing a deep disquiet concerning the land with many of the colonial poets writing the elegy for the bushman. Ashcroft writes of Webb’s post-colonial poetry as demonstrating ‘the intrinsic conflict which lies at the base of post-colonial literature (2); a conflict arising from the guilt of the colonizer inhabiting the land of the colonized. Webb’s ‘The End of the Picnic’, meditates on the arrival the *HMS Endeavour* captained by James Cook expressing the antithesis of the sentiments in both Kendall’s elegies for Sutherland and Lynd’s for Leichhardt discussed above (2011: 165).

Reinterpreting the arrival of the *HMS Endeavour*, Webb writes:

> When the humble-headed elder, the sea, gave his wide
> Strenuous arm to a blasphemy, hauling the girth
> And the sail and the black yard
> Of unknown Endeavour towards this holy beach,
> Heaven would be watching. And the two men. And the earth,
> Immaculate, illuminant, out of reach (165).

Webb’s version of Cook’s arrival reverses the defining founding moment, expressing it as both sacrilegious, a violation of the land named as ‘holy’, thus implicitly denigrating representations of the explorer as being of spiritual and religious importance. The figure of the explorer, represented as sanctioned by God in relation to occupying the land in the colonial elegy, now becomes an ominous warning in Webb’s poem in the lines ‘Heaven would be watching’ and ‘Hell lay hove-to / Heaven did not move’. Expressed in Kendall’s and Lynd’s elegies as ‘holy ground’, there is a foreshadowing of heaven’s displeasure in
Webb’s lines and in the poem as a whole. In the ‘longboat, the devil’s totem / cast of and
grew / no god shifted an inch to take a bearing’, suggests that so momentous an occasion,
with such dire consequences should have been acknowledged by ‘god’. Biblical language
associated with heaven and hell, god and the devil suggest a war between good and evil, in
which ‘Cook’s column holds fast’, creating a dark, contradictory response to the myth of
the explorer, as being sanctioned by God.

Webb’s meditation takes place in the present on a ferry, presumably crossing water near to
where The Endeavour landed. While the disjuncture between the past event of the first
arrival of The Endeavour and the present is profound in Webb’s poem in the lines, ‘The
‘myth of a daylight bled / standing in ribbons, over our heads for an hour’, pilgrimage to the
graves of the first explorers was seen as involved in connecting generations across time in
the elegy for the explorer. Situated within the landscape it forges bonds between the past
and the future, people and the land; a key imperative in creating the history of a nation and
its future. Jordan’s and Pierce’s observation concerning the 200 poems and ballads
collected in The Poets’ Discovery is of significance here, the authors pointing out that
nineteenth-century Australian poetry reveals ‘an abiding uncertainty about where Australia
is, where its history has been, what may become of it’ (1990: 186). This confirms the
importance of elegy in its association with inheritance in terms of legacies generated
between the past and the future. Anderson describes this in relation to the project of
nationalism as a flow between past and future in what he terms ‘a secular transformation
of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning’ (1991: 10); arguably making the elegy
for the bushman a key site for shaping histories, together with their connection to the
future.
Anderson’s ‘flow between past and future’ is evident in Adam Lindsay Gordon’s ‘The Sick Stockrider’, a key elegy that looks both backward reflecting earlier colonial concerns, and also forward to the future. The dying stockman mourns the passing of an era in ‘Ay, nearly all our comrades of the old colonial school / Our ancient boon companions, Ned are gone’ (However, with an implicit movement into the future, Gordon’s elegy encompasses the sound of the next generation ‘romping overhead’. The popularity of Gordon’s poem works beyond the attraction of a masculine life of freedom, adventure and mateship on the land: the subtext of the poem creates both a history and a future, the figure of the stockman engendering a sense of continuity across generations, one of the broader foundations upon which the imagined community turns. Most poignantly Gordon’s poem links the future and the past through the ‘sturdy’ children of subsequent generations whose presence ensure a healthy and successful continuance of the community in Sacks’ terms, while the stockman sleeps peacefully within the landscape:

Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle blossoms wave,
With never stone or rail to fence my bed:
Should the sturdy station children pull the bush flowers on my grave
I may chance to hear them romping overhead. (JP: 314)

In Henry Parkes’ ‘The Mountain Grave’, the poet links the past and the future by presenting the bushman as buried in ‘the wilds’. However, the past in the form of the ‘wilderness’ is contrasted to the present and future industrial world. With a civilized / uncivilized, rural / urban dichotomy – similar to the dying-race elegy in which the landscape is emptied of an uncivilized Indigenous presence – the bushman as part of the past is described as ‘The free, wild creatures of the wood’. This is in direct comparison to the future conveyed in the lines:
The railway’s heavy-freighted trains
   Go by, like giant things of life,
   First from the fields of human strife;
   But there the wilderness remains.
(Sladen: 1880: 370)

Parkes’ elegy is a memorial to the past; a song of praise for a fading era, the figure of the beloved bushman laid to rest, ‘With tear-dimmed eyes and hearts like lead / We gently laid him down to sleep’ (370). Buried near the passing trains – an image of modernity – the bushman’s grave will figure in future memory representing a part of colonial history upon which the emerging nation is built; one powerfully inscribed within the elegy through memorialization and inheritance.

In Parkes’ elegy the dead bushman is left for ‘the grave to keep’; separated from the living – a convention central to traditional elegy – by the trains that ‘Go by, like giant things of life’, modernity replaces the ‘old world’ of the bushman. This establishes a demarcation between the dead and the living; the past and the future. Thus, ‘The Mountain Grave’ is less about the past than separating the dead from the living as part of a continued future for the living. This brings to light a concept central to theorizing elegy, one in which Peter Sacks argues, ‘The emphasis on the drama, or “doing” of the elegy is thus part of the self-privileging of the survivors’ (1985: 19). This is particularly marked in the procession of mourners as a feature of traditional English elegy and characteristic of a number of colonial elegies. The procession is a powerful motif that marks the drama of the action of the elegy – in its avowal of the real enactment of the funeral procession – and, as Sacks’ notes, the
procession serves to situate the dead and death at a distance from the living (19). Parkes’
elegy marks the distance separating the living and the dead throughout his elegy, but
particularly in the procession of mourners carrying the dead man to his ‘lone’ grave:

A lonely spot we chose for him –
Along the lonely path that led,
Our footsteps to his lonely bed,
His corse we bore; with eyes all dim. (371)

Death and the corpse are situated at a distance from both the present and the living, the
procession reminiscent of Orpheus’ journey to the underworld and his return to the land of
the living untouched by death itself. This motif is particularly evident in Harry J. White’s
elegy ‘The Bushman’s Grave’, where procession both reveres the dead bushman while
separating the living from the dead. The presence of the grave becomes a landmark for
establishing the possibility of future activities lying on the route of future passing stockmen:

And ‘twas here that his comrades had lain his cold corse,
Whilst a cavalcade followed, of bushman and horse,
And ‘twas here they would stop on the mustering raid,
And their rendezvous make, by the springing fresh blade. (JP: 401)

White’s elegy looks to future mustering forays while the division between the living and the
dead echoes in the language of the dead man’s ‘cold corse’. In a land that is inherited from
the dead, the stockmen of the future meet in a verdant and re-generated tomorrow, ‘by
the springing fresh blade’. The setting of death at a distance followed by a new spring,
central to the Orpheus myth, looks forward to renewed life filling the space that the dead
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

leave behind; the dead ensuring a past that is linked to a vision of the future. In this, the elegy itself is an expression of orphic renewal and the ability of words to replace loss. More practical concerns in earlier elegies such as the loss of burial rites and fears for survival in an alien landscape are replaced in both Parkes’ and White’s later elegies by a sense of pastoral idealization in which memories of the bushman begin to show nostalgia for an authentic Australia, the figure of the bushman taking on more historical and mythic proportions in these later elegies.

Conclusion

In this discussion the historicizing and mythologizing of the bushman is shown as present in early nineteenth-century elegies for the bushman. Concerns with land tenure and nationalistic interests are clearly visible, particularly well-articulated in the mid-century elegies by Harpur, Gordon and Kendall. Further, the elegies published in the 80s and 90s suggest that they are a part of a more concerted nationalist project that sought to exploit the figure of the bushman in an act of collective memory and as a symbol of the history of colonial Australia. In Anderson’s terms this works in the service of making a past that flows into the future project of nationalism, to become an important feature in an essentialist state-sanctioned image of Australia’s past. In A Transnational Poetics Jahan Ramazani notes that, ‘The twinning of elegy and nation is hardly new’, and that mourning and memorialization are entwined with nationalism (2009: 74). So, too in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors, Boehmer discusses nineteenth-century settler Australia’s movement away from the imperial mother country towards Federation, arguing that The Bulletin magazine in idealizing the ‘native-born’, proffers a ‘Bush ethos and sense
of male mateship’; as ‘self-consciously developed images of their country to replace those generated in Europe’ (2003: 109).

As described, a national character shaped by the land was already present in the qualities of the bushman in a number of bushman and explorer elegies from the 1820s onwards. The alleged qualities of the bush figure came to be increasingly used with a more overtly nationalistic overtone in later elegies, thus utilizing a unique Australian character aligned with history and generationalism on the land in the drive towards Federation. Examples discussed earlier in this chapter such as the generic figure of Edward Dyson’s Geordie in ‘Struck it at Last’ published in the pro-national Bulletin in 1892; Barcroft Boake’s the ‘fiercest piker’ in ‘From the Far West’ published in The Sydney Mail in 1891; as well as Boldrewood’s memorialization of the early drover in ‘The Dying Stockman’, published in Sladen’s anthology, served to platform the figure of the men of the outback. Such romanticised figures and their exploits claimed both a character and a past that underwrote the history of the colony. Dyson’s miner, for example, summarizes a number of events and a way of life for the prospector Geordie, who is represented as part of the Eureka uprising, having, ‘Fought and bled with Peter Lalor / And the boys at Ballarat’. While elegies such as Parke’s ‘The Mountain Grave’ and the anonymous ‘Careless Jim’ set the bushman’s grave in the past, thus creating not only a history but a second generation looking back to the figure of the bushman and the image of the grave in the bush.

In the light of the numerous elegies published in many different Australian newspapers, Benedict Anderson’s argument for the importance of print media as a key element of nationalism is powerfully illustrated: the colonial newspaper providing a vital means for re-
presenting the ‘kind’ of imagined community used to reflect a unique and praise-worthy representation of a national type (Anderson: 1991: 25). While newspapers published elegies for the bushman from the early nineteenth century, my research establishes a significant increase in the elegized bush figure, suggesting its consolidation as a symbol of an Australian character through the 70s, increasingly so through the 80s and into the 90s in the decade before Federation. For example, there are a number of poems entitled ‘The Dying Stockman’ published in the last two decades of the century, a few examples being those of E. Colwell ‘The Dying Stockman’, published in The Queenslander (30.09.1882: 425); Horace E. Flower’s ‘Down Where the Coolabah’s Grow’ in The Portland Mirror and Western District Advertiser Guide (08.07.1888: npg); ‘Unnamed’ by E. Mc in The Bulletin (25.04: 1885: 18); as well as Peter Piper’s ‘The Sick Stockrider’ in The Bulletin (20.07.1901:2). Brian Elliott remarks in Colonial Poets: Adam Lindsay Gordon, that ‘Twenty years after his death Gordon was accepted as the authentic voice of Australia’ (1973: 16). Moreover, Elliott argues that his poetry ‘was the poetry of a generation and perfectly expressed the mood of place’ (17); a view supported by the flux of elegy for stockmen that appeared in the latter decades of the century. Importantly too, in these elegies the western usage of the land through the figure of the drover, makes a further powerful claim to the land through the cattle industry. One which suggests an added focus, reflected particularly in later elegies, not only of the bush figure as explorer, but the stockman as part of a history of working the land expressed through death and burial.

Importantly, a number of elegies of the 80s and 90s were republished many times in a large number of different newspapers, marking their wide and frequent dissemination in the colony. Examples such as Boake’s ‘Where the Dead Men Lie’ was published six times in
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

several years (three times in *The Bulletin*). While Boldrewood’s ‘The Bushman’s Lullaby’ appeared eight times in different newspapers between 1887 and 1895, before it was published in Sladen’s important nation-making collection in 1888. In response to Docker’s suggestion that the bush figure was not of importance to late nineteenth-century nationalism, many newspapers showcased the bushman as an iconic Australian character, suggesting that the qualities of mateship, bravery and egalitarianism first enshrined in Gordon’s poem were highly valued by not only *The Bulletin*, but numerous other newspapers (1991: 240). Further, while this discussion is supported by Ward’s assessment of the bush figure in terms of its importance to nationalism in the 80s and 90s, the figure has a much longer history in Australian poetics, and, the bush myth is by no means only founded on the poetry of ‘bush’ balladists such as Lawson, Paterson and Furphy, as Ward suggests (1978:183). Thus, my analysis of the bushman elegy has revised our understanding of nineteenth-century literary history in terms of the extended time-frame and the diverse ways in which the nineteenth-century bush figure has been used in nineteenth-century poetics.

Furthermore, the importance of the dead bushman and his grave reflects Anderson’s statement that ‘No more arresting emblem’ of the modern culture of nationalism is expressed than in the cenotaphs and the tombs of the Unknown Soldier’ (1991: 9). Clearly equivalent to the national tomb of the Unknown Soldier, it is powerfully symbolized in Australian colonial culture by the unmarked grave of the explorer, bushman and stockman memorialized in elegy. Akin to the unnamed grave of the soldier who died for nation, the grave of the bushman is also ‘saturated with ghostly national imagining’, a dynamic site in which the land and the dead, history and the future are engendered through
memorialization in the elegy (10). The power of the bush figure lay too in its ability to obscure colonization, and to focus landscape ownership, nation and identity on a white, Anglo Saxon male, thus omitting women, aboriginal peoples, and non-white immigrants. The numerous appearances of the bushman published in newspapers of the nineteenth century – particularly in the two decades before Federation – suggest an image produced through white male power structures created and endorsed through male poets, newspaper owners and editors of the time. Though important in the drive towards a national and cultural independence from the imperial centre, the elegy for the bushman is still arguably implicated in imperialistic discourse associated with exercising cultural power.

While the bush figure became utilized as a key national figure in the project of nationalism in a bid for autonomy from the imperial centre, the representation of a white male figure as central to the narratives and discourses of land ownership share similarities with imperial practices of land acquisition. In Prosthetic Gods: Travel, Representation and Colonial Governance, Robert Dixon suggests ‘that the effects of colonial culture are related to but not reducible to the period of colonial governance, which they may both precede and succeed’ (2001: 4). This is an important consideration because Dixon’s statement that imperialism does not cease to be at a particular point in a postcolonial nation’s history can be applied to the bushman elegy. While this group of elegy is associated with nineteenth-century settler anxieties concerning landscape, there is an emphasis on validating settler landscape ownership implicit if not clearly stated in many of the elegies for much of the century, marking these elegies as a continuation of imperialistic land acquisition, albeit with differing centres of power. This goes to the heart of debates in postcolonial theory, that nationalism – either in settler nations, or those putatively vacated by the colonizing nation
Chapter Two: The Bushman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

– does not shake off imperialism by becoming supposedly independent from the imperialist centre. As Dixon argues, ‘The terms “colonial” and “postcolonial” as they are normally used in postcolonial theory have no particular historical validity’ (4). This continuation of imperial practices in more contemporary times is considered in greater detail in Chapter Five in discussions of contemporary Aboriginal protest poetry.

In important ways the power of the bushman as a cultural text is embedded in the use of the genre of elegy – and thus the dead. As Uppal contends for the English-Canadian elegy, ‘The elegy enacts the ritual of inheritance for a new generation’, so too the form of the elegy enables the figure of the Australian bushman to inherit the land through death in a way that legitimates ownership through inheritance (2009: 119). Through memorialization across generations, the genre of elegy creates a history of land ownership in a colony with a limited history of occupation; while the entwining of the land and the bushman in praise of his fine character bequeathed from the land, further enacts settler legitimacy. The dying-race and the bushman elegies work in tandem and with the same aims: they both create and people particular types of landscapes with the dead in order to best serve the interests of the white settler colony. Most profoundly, the landscape elegy for the bushman makes innocent the political and cultural sub-texts which are both occluded and subsumed within the memorialization of both the dying-race and the dead bushman.
The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

I have followed her, clambering over the cliffs,
By the chasms and moon-haunted verges
I know she is fair as the angels are fair,
For have I not caught a faint glimpse of her there,
A glimpse of her face and her glittering hair,
And a hand with the Harp of Australia?
(Kendall: 1862: Reed: 1966: 3).

Introduction

The following analysis discusses the nineteenth-century settler landscape tombeau. A postcolonial perspective appraises the colonial tombeau examining the ways in which elegy continues to be a genre involved in legitimizing land ownership; nationalism; and, establishing representations of a national identity. Tombeau is a subgenre of elegy in which the living poet memorializes both the dead poet and the poet’s verse. In traditional elegy the tombeau is associated with the establishment of a national poetic tradition passed down through a lineage of poets. The poetic tradition is established through the writing of the tombeau for the dead poet, in which the place of the elegized poet within the poetic tradition is inherited by the elegist. The establishment of a poetic tradition is underwritten by the high poetic calling of the elegist in terms of representing the land and nation in his or her verse. The following discussion considers the ways in which the colonial settler
subgenre of tombeau is involved in creating an Australian poetic tradition, one that seeks to represent the quality and cultural acumen of the colonies and the ensuing nation.

In reflecting the beliefs and attitudes of a people and a nation, conceptions of a settler national identity located within the work of the poets is of key importance in relation to the developing nation. Successive elegists establish a lineage of poets through the writing of the tombeau, thus a poetic tradition by way of poetic inheritance through memorializing the dead poet and his verse is created. In this way, the elegist becomes representative of, and, successor to the important place that the dead poet formally held within the national poetic tradition. Furthermore, the poetic tradition of the Australian colonies was believed to be an expression of the cultural independence from the imperial centre; one involved in demonstrating a cultural maturity as evidence of its worth as a self-determining nation.

The tombeau shares a number of important features with those described in the dying-race and the bushman elegy in terms of legitimizing land ownership. I argue that the colonial tombeau seeks to create a national orientated poetics passed from the dead to the living settler poet imbued by and as an expression of the landscape. A postcolonial perspective recognizes that an important feature of expressing a sense of, and of being a part of the landscape in the landscape elegy lies in articulating a spiritual connection to the land; one that speaks of both a knowledge of the land, as well as an identity with the land. Colonization and the histories of Indigenous peoples on the land, both in physical and spiritual terms, is overwritten in palimpsest mode by the white, settler poetic search for the heart and soul of the continent. The tombeau represents a landscape emptied of a pre-colonial, colonial and nineteenth-century Indigenous past replaced by a poet that is
represented as springing naturally from the land, suggesting a spiritual relationship with the land that speaks of symbolic ownership.

The Australian colonial tombeau is characteristically focused on the grave of the dead poet in a similar way to that of the bushman elegy: thus the lauding of the dead poet’s verse and the exemplary attributes ascribed to the dead poet are situated at the burial site. This suggests a concern with a symbolic gesturing towards authenticating the presence of not only an Australian poetry of place, but of land ownership through the figure of the poet’s grave as marker of a spiritual and material presence on the landscape. Conceptualizing commemoration of the dead poet at the graveside by enacting the elegiac moment in the landscape is of political importance. While the nineteenth-century tombeau inscribes a spiritual right to the land through the poet capturing the ‘voice’ of the colonial landscape in poetry, the verse of the settler poet and his wisdom as expressed within many of the tombeau, imbues the nation and its people with archetypal qualities. These qualities are then incorporated into the ensuing national identity creating a series of qualities emanating from the poet and the tradition.

The tombeau as a political/textual affirmation of nation is an important component of nineteenth-century colonial poetry. In *Nation and Narration*, Homi Bhabha description of nation ‘as living in the locality of culture’ (1990: 292), is no more clearly seen than in the tombeau in its creation of a poetic tradition said to enshrine a nation and its people. Bhabha’s statement that ‘the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west’, through the combination of ‘political thought and literary language’, is thus exemplified in the creation of a national poetic tradition created through the writing of the tombeau (1-2).
Nineteenth-century tombeaux are plentiful, however, an increase in published tombeaux in the latter decades of the century suggests the importance of this subgenre to nationalism and national identity, much the same way as in the two previous chapters. The collection of tombeaux on which the following discussion is based provides the first primary source for the critical analysis of tombeau published between 1830 and 1901; thus this first study of colonial tombeau offers a unique opportunity to enhance our understanding of nineteenth-century Australian poetics and its place in conceptualizing self, community and nation. In general, this study is an important addition to Australian Literary Studies, particularly in terms of the way that the tombeau as a poetic form is utilized for national, political and imperialistic concerns.

Knowledge of the origin and meaning of the word ‘tombeau’ is critical to an understanding of the ways in which the subgenre works in terms of its connection with the grave; as memorial; in the establishment of literary traditions; and in relation to poetic careers. The French word Tombeau suggests two meanings: that of a place for the dead to lie but also as memorial (in the form of headstone, edifice or an inscription) commemorating the person laid to rest. Both meanings are explicit within the settler Australian colonial tombeau: the dead poet and his verse celebrated through memorialization of the poet at the site of the poet’s burial place. The word ‘tombeau’ comes from the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé, who uses the term in a number of his elegies for poets. For example, ‘Funeral Libation (At Gautier’s Tomb)’ – a tombeau for the French poet Pierre Jules Théophile Gautier – is one of a number of poems by Mallarmé set at the site of the tomb of the dead poet:
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

Since I myself entombed you in porphyry.
The rite decrees our hands must quench the torch
Against the iron mass of your tomb’s porch:
None at this simple ceremony should forget,
Those chosen to sing the absence of the poet,
That this monument encloses him entire.
Were it not that his art’s glory, full of fire
Till the dark communal moment all of ash,
Returns as proud evening’s glow lights the glass,
To the fires of the pure mortal sun!

Mallarmé’s tombeau not only points to the elegist’s verse as memorial, but focusses on the finality of the entombment in terms of the ensuing poetic silence of the dead poet. Gautier’s poetic ‘glory’ survives the dead poet but it is Mallarmé the poet and elegist, ‘chosen to sing the absence of the poet,’ who symbolically silences, or speaks in the place of the dead poet through the writing of the tombeau.

Lawrence Lipking brings the term ‘tombeau’ into theoretical currency in his book, The Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers. Following Mallarmé, Lipking acknowledges the part that the living poet plays both in memorialization and in marking the dead poet’s silence through the writing of the tombeau, when he remarks that ‘The tomb of the poet is built by other poets, their verses take him in’ (1981: 139-40). Lipking discusses the tombeau as implicated in poetic careers and literary histories, suggesting the interests of the dead and the living poet do not necessarily follow the same path. Whilst tribute must be paid to the dead, the living poet ultimately ‘must look to his own art’ and his own career as a poet (1981:139). In the discussion of Harpur’s and Kendall’s tombeaux in particular, the
importance of each poet as being the ‘voice of Australia’ is central to the oeuvre of both poets.; thus the colonial tombeau is also concerned with personal poetic careers, as well as the desire to be the ‘voice’ of an emergent national poetic tradition. In his own search for the muse in ‘The Harp of Australia’ in ‘I have followed her clambering over the cliffs / By the chasms and moon-haunted verges’, Kendall aspires to be national poet within a national poetic tradition: one expressed through and by the landscape (Reid: 1966: 3).

The term tombeau is not in general currency, which is perhaps a surprising omission from major literary dictionaries such as *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* (2012), as well as many theoretical discussions of the subgenre.¹ Lipking’s seminal work on the tombeau is of significance: omitting to use the word ‘tombeau’, which is specifically concerned with establishing literary tradition, tends to conflate this important traditional subgenre with the varied and complex field of elegy in general. The explicit use of the term is central to this discussion as a poetic lineage establishes a national poetic tradition through its literal enactment of the passing of what Lipking terms – ‘the mantel’ – from the dead to the living poet at the graveside on Australian soil. Enacted in the landscape through the tombeau, the passing of the mantel and the ensuing poetic tradition becomes deeply and symbolically associated with the land through the grave.

Elegies for poets have their beginnings in the earliest pastoral tradition in terms of the figure of the poet/shepherd who is associated with commemoration of the dead poet; the subsequent initiation of the elegist into poetry; and thus the establishment of the existing poetic tradition. Moreover, through the continuing use of traditional conventions of elegy, this lineage with pastoral elegy is not only continuous with Australian colonial tombeaux
but also with the contemporary settler landscape tombeau in the following chapter. In *Melodious Tears: The English Funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton*, Dennis Kay suggests that the earliest Greek ‘pastoral elegy was an expression of poetic traditions’ (1990: 29). Later adopted into the English tradition through poems such as Spenser’s ‘Astrophel’ (1595) and Milton’s ‘Lycidas’ (1638), it become increasingly associated with notions of poetic careers, poetic succession and the continuance of an English literary tradition passed down from one poet to another through the death of each living poet’s predecessor. In discussing the tombeau, Lipking suggests:

> A long chain of tombeaux stretches generation through generations from the ancients to the present, preserving a vital record of what poets inherit (1981: 161).

Lipking suggests that, ‘A history of poetry could be strung together, in fact, from *tombeaux* alone’, suggesting that some longer works ‘can summon up the whole of a culture, a history, a career, a myth of creation’ (162).

Lipking’s proposition underwrites the importance of the tombeau in relation to myth, history, culture and a nation’s identity; as well as to the ways in which poetic traditions play a central role in their making. Lipking points out that ‘.... poets are the carriers of literary history’, and, as such ‘hold the past within them’ (162). In this light it is germane that the need for a useable past on which to build a future nation is central to the colonial tombeau: one clearly expressed in a poetics centred on the land and on the poet’s grave. Lipking remarks in relation to the tombeau, that in ‘no other human activity, it seems, are ancestors so continually present’ (161). This sense of the past on which to build a future in
an emerging nation, is one which makes the tombeau so powerful a subgenre. Paradoxically, Lipking’s discussion of this prestigious genre as being the cornerstone of the English poetic tradition positions the use of the genre in the nineteenth-century British colony to gain independence from the mother country, as a continuation of imperial literary practices.

**Nineteenth-century women poets and the tombeau**

As part of culture, poetry is used to support and disseminate the ideas, beliefs and interests of the powerful. However, women are absent from the subgenre of colonial tombeau in similar ways to those that Schaffer and Vickery suggest for the omission of women poets from the narratives and political involvement with the bush figure. Not only are they excluded from being a part of national polity, expressed solely by male poets in the colonial tombeau, but omitted from any place or expression in colonial Australia’s national literary traditions and literary histories. The profound qualities that are shown in the following discussion as ascribed to the male poet through the tombeau – such as spirituality, wisdom, sagacity and leadership – are also denied colonial women poets; thus curtailing the power of women in terms of the part they played in society and culture, and in matters of nation.

In ‘Denaturalizing Cultural Nationalisms: Multicultural Readings of Australia’, Sneja Gunew evokes Edward’ Said’s rationale, that “culture is a system of discussions and evaluations” as well as “a system of exclusions” (1999: 100 citing Said: 1984: 11). Gunew points out that ‘scarcely any women, or writers from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds figure in the construction of the public sphere’ (107). While Gunew’s comment is a general statement
inclusive of twentieth-century Australian writing, the exclusion of women and non-Anglo-Celtic writers from the ‘public sphere’ has its roots in nineteenth-century imperialism, of which the tombeau is a most important example. A number of recent commentators have reclaimed women’s nineteenth-century histories in a number of writing genres. For example, in *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan contest discursive representations of the period that the 1890s was marked by a unity, one that has depended upon ‘the exclusion of women and the repression of the feminine’ (1993: xvi). However, while they argue that women are participants in cultural production, they also state that women are ‘silenced in privileged discourses of national culture’ (xvi).

A long history of the exclusion of women poets from the nation-making subgenre in the English tradition is noted by Celeste Schenck in ‘Feminism and Deconstruction: Reconstructing the Elegy’, describing elegy as ‘a resolutely patriarchal genre’ (2007: 86). In *Beyond Consolation*, Melissa Zeiger writes of the history of traditional elegy, that ‘women as characters and authors are systematically written out of the picture’ (5). Zeiger discusses the ‘political reading’ of elegy by the work of feminist scholars – who are often the most critical of the genre of elegy due to its patriarchal nature. In summarizing the work of two important feminist commentators, the aforementioned Celeste Schenck, and Juliana Schiesari, Zeiger sums up their understanding of elegy as ‘a site of male bonding, power production, and authorial self-identification, and to the privileging of male melancholia and concomitant appropriation of mourning by a melancholic male poet and cultural hero’ (1997: 5). In ‘Elegy as Political Experience in Women’s Poetry: Akhmatova, Levertov, Forché’, Carole Stone suggests the early western text Hesiod’s *Theogony*, is an example of
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

the way that ‘The elegy traditionally centres on men, women appearing only as attending nymphs or as the muse who inspired the poem’ (1991:84). Further, the author notes that ‘an example of the role of nymphs in elegy can be seen in Milton’s ‘Lycidas’, in which Milton asks, “Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep I Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?”’ (84). Stone also observes that the muses ‘inspire song rather than creating it’, which as the following discussion of colonial tombeaux show, is precisely the role of the female muse, particularly in both Harpur’s and Kendall’s search for the poetic voice of Australia (84). In That Shining Band: A Study of Australian Verse Tradition, Michael Ackland sums it up when he says that women poets were ‘never as a privileged quester in his [Kendall’s] “shining band” of poets in pursuit of the fabulous Australian grail’ (1994: 12). Represented as muse, ‘the female figure re-emerges as a spirit form or local muse’, part of ‘an enriching exchange between settler and landscape’ (11-12).

As a settler society founded on imperialism, setting the poet and poetry – and the tombeau – within the material and tangible landscape authenticates the poet and the poet’s work as being intrinsically Australian. Nations founded on colonization, such as New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and Australia lack an established national poetics to which older nations such as England can make claim. In Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors, Elleke Boehmer suggests that by stressing the landscape, the colonial poet differentiates the colony or former colony from the mother country (1995: 213). To revisit ‘Denaturalizing Cultural Nationalisms’, Gunew states that, ‘The Narrative of “Australia”, as it pertains to cultural and literary histories is dominated by a cluster of organic images’, that stress ‘the uniqueness of the landscape’, and, whose “roots” grow in the land and differentiate it from the parent culture’ (99). Situating a tradition of poet and poetry within
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

the Australian landscape is to make a claim for difference and particularity, arguably the first step towards a cultural individualism. This not only demonstrates ‘place’ as difference, but also elevates the colony to that of a reputedly cultured and civilized community with its own particular brand of poetry arising from, and expression of the natural landscapes of Australia.

The high poetic status of tombeau, with its links to poetic traditions as credentials for ‘civilized society’, is not a surprising choice for a settler society founded on colonization and a penal system. Both come with an unenviable and short-lived history to draw on with regard to national cohesion, national pride and nation-building origins. The existence of an authentic local literature and poetry said to capture the character and place of a people, is a narrative central to settler colonies and to perceptions of nationalism, one underpinning the construction of a said national identity. The perceived lack of a literary and poetic history has been much discussed by nineteenth and twentieth-century Australian commentators. In the introduction to The Penguin Book of Australian Verse, Harry Heseltine notes that Charles Harpur in the mid-nineteenth century believed he was ‘born into an Australia “unstoried, artless and unenhanced”’ (1972:29). In The Dark Side of the Dream, this sense of a perceived lack is noted by Hodge and Mishra, remarking that since early colonization there has always been a move towards a discernible national literature, one that visibly displays that the non-Indigenous possess the continent (1997: x). Further, in ‘Critics, Writers, Intellectuals: Australian Literature and Criticism’, David Carter suggests that since the 1830s, debates about literature have been said to express the presence of civilization and culture and to express the ‘character’ of a nation (2000: 259).
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

However, in spite of this thinking, a strong presence of a colonial tradition based on verse tributes written by a living poet for a dead poet is observed by Jordan and Pierce in *The Poets’ Discovery: Nineteenth-Century Australia in Verse*. The authors’ note of colonial poets, that:

> One of the most fecund strains of their poetry can be discovered in verse tributes to poetic mentors, living and dead. In a somewhat macabre way a literary tradition was being created (1990: 23).

An increase in tombeaux published across the nineteenth century suggests an interest in the formation of an Australian poetic tradition: one that would assist in proclaiming a cultural separation from the motherland, and a cultural autonomy crucial to the colony and to a national sense of identity. Moreover, the following analysis of the tombeau establishes a drive to implement a national poetic tradition that existed long before the nationalist bush balladists of the 1880 and 90s, as the first notable Australian poetic tradition. Characterized by the grave and the notion of a poet/singer to ‘sing’ the land and represent the nation, these early verse tributes suggest that colonial poets had long been concerned with an Australian poetics, one to which the colonial tombeau is centrally aligned. In *That Shinning Band*, Ackland’s assessment of much earlier nineteenth-century poets as being concerned with an Australian poetics is in keeping with the view in this present discussion (1994:4). Ackland’s text locates and traces an earlier colonial verse tradition in the early decades of the nineteenth century, commenting that poets before the balladists of the 80s and 90s – before the mid-century poets Harpur and Kendall whose oeuvres clearly signal a deep concern with nation-making and poetic traditions ‘sought to make sense of the
position held by the newly colonized realm in the divinely appointed scheme of things’ (4). Poets such as Barron Field, Charles Thompson and William Charles Wentworth expressed the belief that the now silent land could be awoken by a minstrel (4). Ackland argues that these ideas, motifs and often ideologically driven verse ‘marks the beginnings of a recognizably indigenous poetic tradition, upon which future colonial writers would draw for enabling models and precepts’ (43). Ackland states that ‘Successive versifiers...would play a part in developing the implications of these motifs’; and, that by the 1860s these ideas and motifs would be taken up by Kendall who could ‘readily define their attitudes to the goal of a national verse’ (4).

Aligned with Ackland’s research suggesting earlier verse tradition, initial discussions will focus on a group of poems published from the 1830s that describe a symbolic search for the muse of Australia; and, for an imagined future poet to represent the colonies and later the nation. The symbolic search for an Australian muse celebrating the verse of an imagined or desired national poet of worth, and a number of verse tributes written for poets still living – which show many of the hallmarks of the tombeau proper – are suggested as precursor to the later traditional tombeau written for an actual colonial poet, once that poet has died.

Consideration is given to a group of mid-century tombeaux written by Henry Halloran; as well as a key group of tombeaux for poets penned by Kendall for earlier nineteenth-century poets who died between 1865 and 1870. Ackland’s discussion of Kendall’s project in terms of the poet’s founding of a national poetic tradition involving ‘a chosen band of poets dedicated to founding a national literature’; and the author’s subsequent discussion of Kendall’s project, forms one of the important keystones of the following discussion (1992: 152).
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

xii). A collection of tombeaux by Kendall for earlier nineteenth-century poets is considered in the following discussions as working to institute a poetic tradition. Moreover, Kendall’s tombeaux not only place the dead poet and commemoration of his poetry at the grave, but in keeping with the practices of the traditional tombeau the elegist seeks to institute a colonial poetic tradition, of which Kendall is heir. Once the two important poets, Harper and Gordon died, Kendall’s desire to establish an Australian tradition of poetry became viable, of which he would be poetic inheritor.

In addition, tombeaux for Kendall written in the two decades before Federation in 1901 will be discussed. Kendall is represented in these elegies as an Australian bard that is part of a local poetic tradition that goes back to and is continuous with the early and mid-century colonial poet, Charles Harpur. These later verse tributes share a continuum with the earlier nineteenth-century tombeaux in showing that the motif of the poet’s grave continues to be a key feature of late nineteenth-century poetics, still placing poet and commemoration of the poet’s verse in the landscape.

Moreover, there is an increased presence of the piscatorial – a poetics that expresses the coastal boundaries of the emerging nation – that suggests the inclusion of the oceanic as not merely a poetic trope, but a mapping of, and a separation of the borders of the emerging nation from the rest of the world. In addition, consideration of the beliefs and aims held by colonial settlers in the latter decades of the nineteenth century with regard to the role of poetry and the poet leading up to Federation, as well as their place within the emerging nation.
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

The Muse of Australia

The belief that Australia lacked a poetic tradition and the importance of instituting such a tradition is described by Paul Kane in *Australian Poetry: Romanticism and Negativity*, in which Kane argues that Australia’s conception of poetic tradition has been based upon ‘absences and lacunae in literary history’ (1996: 38). Kane discusses what he terms ‘the romantic burden of self-creation’ for a nation with British imperial beginnings and the need for an original poetics of place to underlie an Australian poetic tradition (1996: 48). Kane’s claim for the search for an original poetics of place is apparent in a number of tombeaux that seek the lyre or muse of Australia. In *That Shining Band*, Ackland notes that the search for a poetics of place had been a concern of poets since the early part of the nineteenth-century, which he described as ‘an elusive damsel, a shy spirit of place or a silent lyre’ to be ‘awakened by a poet’ (1994: 4). This search for the muse is central to the oeuvres of both Harpur and Kendal, in a desire to find the elusive muse so that the poet can express a sense of the land and thus create a verse to represent Australia. Written in Harpur’s teens, ‘To the Lyre of Australia’, express his own search for a poetic voice in which to capture the spirit of the land:

And though he who thy cords now would master, may never
Evince in his verse all the rapture of tone,
Yet – yet should Australia smile on the endeavour,
The glory so won by the Bard were her own
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

There is a twofold aim in Harpur’s poem evokes Lipking’s description of the tombeau as associated with national poetic traditions and poetic careers, through which Harpur the premier poet would ‘sing’ the land and the nation through his poetry:

With the green forest around me, above her blue sky,
I lap in her measure some national dream;
And I find that our songs, though unstudied are high,
When the glory of future Australia’s the theme:
And ever thy lay to her son’s and her daughters,
Should breathe of the land where the evergreen grows –
To men’s souls like the strong wind that swelleth the waters
To the heart like a spring breeze that opens the rose.

In ‘Literary Culture 1851-1914: Founding a Tradition’, Perkins suggests of Harpur, that ‘In everything he wrote he was consciously adding to the tradition of Australian Literature and intellectual culture’; a premise we can see throughout his oeuvre, from his earliest teenage-poem ‘The Lyre of Australia’ (1998: 59).

Harpur’s poem marks the continuing quest centred on the landscape in figuring the national character and the spirit of a people expressed in the lines ‘her son’s and her daughters / should breathe of the land’ (59). A poem that is rich in metaphor in lines such as ‘the spring breeze that opens the rose,’ expresses the idea that through the landscape and the poet’s evocation of the land, the people of the colony would develop a national ethos expressing the heart and soul of the growing nation. In Studies in Australian Literary History, Brian Kiernan notes that the Wordworthian ‘correspondence between man’s
higher nature and permanent natural forms’, is central to the poetics of Harpur (1997: 40). As a trope of romanticism, this sense of the landscape and man’s nature as being inexorably interrelated is not only a characteristic found in Harpur’s poetry, but as future discussions show, an important feature of the nineteenth-century tombeau.

The search for the muse to underlie a national poet is perhaps best epitomized by this chapter’s epigraph from Henry Kendall’s, ‘The Muse of Australia’. This highly nationalistic poem in which Kendall expresses the search for the ‘poetic’ voice of Australia in order to sing the nation, was published a number of times in newspapers between 1862 and 1903; as well as in Sladen’s anthology and several of Kendall’s poetry collections (Reid: 1966: 3). This expresses the profound importance of a poetic voice in which to express the emerging nation. The fundamental association between the muse and the landscape, and the poet’s calling-up of the muse, is in itself a traditional early Greek and English convention of elegy, particularly of the pastoral elegy. For Kendall to discover ‘the sweet voice / So full with the music of fountains’, permits the poet both to express the beauty of the land and the poetry of the singer/poet. The last lines of the poem sanctify the search for the muse as the poet ‘wept in the dark for a glorious face / And a hand with the Harp of Australia’ (3). There is a suggestion in the poem that to find the muse is to find the glory of God, thus too, the chosen poet will become a light in the darkness. The harp – associated with the Greek muse of poetry – and, later as Christian icon aligned with the angelic and the heavenly, possess both mythical and western religious overtones. In That Shining Band, Ackland suggests Kendall’s main poetic concerns were with an ‘enduring dream of a high literary calling which involves an arduous wedding of human effort with divine purpose’ (1994: 3). With ‘glorious face’, and, associated with God and the divine, the muse will direct the poet in his
‘divine purpose’ toward a national literature that will, as Ackland states of Kendall’s intent, ‘render articulate a silent, brooding continent’; and, help realize its ‘rich potential’ (3; 7).

However, in terms of marking white tenure of the land through poetry and constructing a white, colonial poet to express the connection between poet and landscape, Kendall’s poem has an under song inexorably linked to symbolic land ownership. Sentiments such as, ‘Oh when will you meet with the soul of your choice’, as well as ‘Who will lead you down here from the mountains,’ suggest the landscape will be implicated in choosing its own singer/poet to represent the land (3). Moreover, the poet is not associated with colonization of the land but is represented as springing naturally from the land. Though the muse is expressed as female and the land as the home of Indigenous Australians for millennia, the poet called up by the land is neither female, nor Indigenous. In anthropomorphizing the landscape and suggesting that it choose its own white poet to sing the land there an unconscious desire for the sanctioning of white ownership of the land by the landscape itself – as if the land itself could endorse the presence of the white, settler poet, as well as goals, beliefs and ideals. The suggestion of an emotional, spiritual and textual sanctioning of a white settler presence on the land expressed as subtext in the search for the muse, obscures the violent displacement of Indigenous peoples from their own land. It marks a potent nether-side to the colonial tombeau in its articulation of the political, imperialist, and nationalistic value of the sub-genre for the settler nation. With this focus in mind, poems such as Kendall’s ‘The Muse of Australia’ and Harpur’s ‘The Lyre of Australia’ not only work to germinate the beginnings of an Australian poetics, but also lay claim to the landscape symbolically through the emergence of a white Australian poet engendered by a complicity with the land through poetry.
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

**The Generic Tombeau for an Imagined National Poet**

The search for the muse of Australia in order to institute a national poetics is also evident in what this analysis terms, ‘generic tombeau’. Through the poet imagining the burial and burial place of a ‘great’ future poet to represent and express a sense of the land and its people, the poet’s grave becomes a national icon that represents the future possibility of such a national poet. Henry Halloran writes the three earliest-known generic tombeaux for an imaginary poet/muse, ‘The Poet’ published in *The Sydney Gazette* (18.10.1831); ‘The Minstrel’s Grave’ (1833: 8-10) also in the *Gazette*; and, ‘The Poet’s Grave’ published in *The Colonist* (15.6.1839). In ‘The Poet’s Grave’ Halloran describes the resting place of the dead poet, thus:

> The warrior may rest in his trophied gloom,
> Thee statesman in abbey old;
> But the poet shall have a brighter tomb,
> In the green bank’s flowering mould….

> And birds shall build, and flowers shall grow;
> And sunbeams shall scatter their light,
> On the bank, which the poet now rests below
> And the bright stars shall gleam all night (npg).

Not only does Halloran place the poet’s value in society above that of the soldier and the statesman, but, in what is highly reminiscent of English Romantic poetry, the poet’s grave is situated within an idyllic landscape. The grave set within the natural world, rather than the ‘gloom’ of the church or the cenotaph, establishes a powerful connection between the poet and the landscape. Furthermore, the poet’s grave is illuminated by the sun and the stars,
thus positioning the poet above other important national figures. In Halloran’s generic
tombeau, the gift of flowers bequeathed to the dead poet – a convention of traditional
elegy associated with the laurel leaf as representation/replacement of the dead in early
Greek elegy – is the gift not of man, but of the land; a land where flowers ‘shall grow’ on
the poet’s grave.\(^2\) While nature marks the poet as an important figure, the elegist
celebrates his goodness and humility. This theme is present in many later tombeaux as
associated with the wisdom and goodness of the poet, and his spiritual guidance of the
people through his exemplary life and the tenor of his verse. This is expressed by Halloran
in the lines, ‘He cared not for power, he cared not for gold / and loathed both the tyrant
and the slave’. It is not only the poet’s fine poetic voice but his fine qualities that make him
an exemplary figure in society: one who reflects the civilized nature of a people
underwritten by democracy and equality. The profound influence of the poet’s verse on the
living poet is also expressed, suggesting the poet is both wise man and philosopher, his
exemplary teachings ‘Like pearls’, ‘deep in the temple of my heart’, marks the dead poet’s
influence on Halloran, through which not only poetic tradition, but qualities, are inherited.

James Lionel Michael expresses similar sentiments to those of Halloran in his generic
Michael’s writes of the important place of the poet and his verse in society, as ‘At length
some listened to his song / and set the singer up on high / and he became a beacon – set /
to warn the world where danger lay’ (1857: 126-8). The poet’s voice is a light that others
can steer by; his voice a legacy that brings wisdom to future generations:

Phoenix-like, spreading glowing wings
Out of the ashes of his tomb,
To die no more, – supreme, divine;
A teacher of the future years,
A voice for ever in men’s ears,
A light forever in the gloom (128).

These sensibilities in both Halloran’s and Michael’s generic tombeaux are also evident in Harpur’s ‘The Poet’ and ‘The Poet’s Burial’, suggesting a transmission of ideas and motifs between poets (Perkins: 1984: 365; 60). In ‘The Poet’, Harpur writes of the important theme of the link between God and poet – again taking up the theme from Halloran’s, Michael’s and Kendall’s poems discussed above – and the exemplary nature of the poet who acts as a beacon to light the way of the ignorant. Of the link between poetry and God’s divinity, Harpur writes ‘The Seraphs hymn!’: ‘Who through his every living line / Doth, elevated, elevate / And throw into the Mind’s estate / A ray divine’ (356). In an important second generic tombeau, ‘The Poet’s Burial’, Harpur’s poet, named ‘Druid’, is not merely touched by a divine spark but is figured as holy man. The use of the word ‘Druid’ is not accidental if we assume that Harpur refers to the Celtic Druid/Poet; known as not only educated but as a spiritual leader of his people, thus a political/legal figure that is aligned with nation. To evoke such a figure is to suggest that a future Australia will be a society of civilized and educated people succoured by the wisdom and spiritual guidance of the poet.

A further theme inscribed within Harpur’s ‘The Poet’s Burial’ is the expression of loss registered by the landscape at the death of the poet:

Bury him – bury him in a time-hewn cave,
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

On some lone Cape, where the perpetual wave,
For ever rising in the wind’s long roar,
Beats a long dirge upon the sounding shore.
Lay earthly heads beneath the crowded sod –
But his was haloed with the fire of God! (60).

This sense of Nature mourning the dead poet is a traditional elegiac convention found in the earliest Greek pastoral elegies; as well as adopted into the English tradition in poems such as John Milton’s ‘Lycidas’ (1637) and Shelley’s Adonais (1821). For example, in Henry Alford’s nineteenth-century translation of the early Greek Elegy, The Epitaph of Bion: From Moschus, the landscape mourns the loss of a great man and poet, thus:

Dolefully sound, ye groves and Dorian waters,
Lament, ye rivers, our beloved Bion;
Mourn, all ye plants, and whisper low, ye forests;
Ye flowers, breathe sadly from your drooping petals (1929: 126).

Harpur, as many colonial elegists, writes of the loss of the poet to the natural world in his tombeau, as ‘For ever (sic) rising in the wind’s long roar,’ which ‘Beats a long dirge upon the sounding shore’ (1984: 60). ‘Long’, ‘Roar’ and ‘sounding shore’ create a sigh; while the sound of the waves pounding on the beach beats a deep lament for the poet. This elegiac convention works especially well for colonial tombeau in view of its project of instituting the dead poet, his poetry and the poet’s wisdom as arising from and as part of the landscape. While the landscape aligns with the poet through the muse, the land also
mourns the passing of the poet which suggests a powerful bond between poet and the land that speaks of legitimate habitation and an identity honed through the land.

In Ian Twiddy’s study of the pastoral elegy, *Pastoral Elegy in Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, the author ‘aims to demonstrate the multiplicity of ways in which the traditional form has been adapted’, noting that ‘Pastoral has always been a flexible mode’ (2012: 1). Twiddy also contends that the Pastoral is about expressing aims and creating legacies (1). Situating the tombeau, and passing the mantle at the graveside, establishes an Australian poetic tradition enacted on the land. Again, the significance of inheritance associated with the elegy as a form, establishes the subgenre of tombeau as a premier site for enacting concerns associated with establishing a legacy.

Representations of Australia as being the home of a free and liberal people are enshrined in the poetry of Harpur. These precepts of an emergent modern democracy are expressed in ‘The Poet’s Burial’, Harpur writing of the poet as greater than the ‘powerful’ and ‘Freedom’s pilgrim to the last’. For Harpur, the poet’s heart is his ‘great law and gospel’; the poet’s life an important undertaking of which ‘when his mission underneath the skies / Is ended’, the poet’s words will part of a sense of freedom and democracy that underpins the new land and the new nation (60). Halloran’s earlier evocation of the poet as representing the new world order in ‘The Poet’s Grave’ (1839), is shared by Harpur in terms of ideals credited to the national bard. In keeping with this credo of freedom heralded by the ‘currency lads’ in the new colonies, Ackland suggests that the poetry of Harpur can be said to ‘embody a fully-fledged program for republican verse’ (1994: 41). This becomes significant in later discussions in relation to values associated with the project of Federation as expressed within Harpur’s poetry. Further, Ackland discusses Harpur’s view of the poet’s
place in the colonies and the growing nation as, ‘emulating and energized by godhead’; a visionary poet that encompassed ‘intimations of eternal presence in the Australian now; one that no longer looked back to an ‘Old World’ past, but to a modern future (1994: 42-3). This is apparent in Harpur’s generic tombeau envisioning the death of a future great Australian poet who is both wise and godly and who, ‘haloed with fire’, is chosen by God to represent the land and Australia in verse.

The poems discussed so far can be viewed as antecedent to the tombeau proper, and as such, part of a nineteenth-century poetic tradition, suggested for example in the transmission of ideas and motifs shared by Halloran, Michell and Harpur in their dedications to ‘future’ Australian poets. These also include the poems by Harpur and Kendall seeking a muse or lyre of Australia within the landscape; as well as verse tributes to living poets such as those by Kendall written to honour Harpur before his death, analyzed later in this discussion. However, in spite of the beginnings of an Australian-orientated poetry in evidence, there was a continuing belief in the absence of poetic traditions and worthy poets as the search for the muse and the generic tombeau suggest. In the aforementioned *Australian Poetry*, Kane’s assessment of the tension between romanticism and negativity that he traces at the heart of Australian poetics, suggests that the ‘drive for cultural autonomy and originality intersects with the ideology of romanticism and becomes a strong force in Australian literary history’ (1996: 2). Moreover, Kane offers two important considerations of Australian poetry in relation to this discussion: firstly, that in romanticism ‘nature functions as a point of coherence, a stable base for a superstructure of cultural (and political) imaginings; secondly, that in colonial Australia the landscape is felt to be ‘foreign and unassimilable’ (11; 12). Thus a tension between the two views and a subsequent
difficulty in seeing nature in the colonies as a stable and benevolent entity is partially responsible for what Kane describes as a prevailing ‘absence of native romanticism’ (19). Disquiet due to what was seen as the alien landscape, yet a desire to become part of that landscape in terms of identity, is central to not only the colonial tombeau, but also to the elegy for the bushman. This tension between an unfamiliar landscape and a yearning for belonging is a reoccurring feature in the colonial elegy, stressed in this thesis as a whole.

Kane reasons that a loss of a romantic inheritance has resulted in the fact that ‘a strain of romanticism has established itself in the corpus of Australian poetry’, increased by ‘an originary lack’ due to Australia’s beginnings as a British colony lacking an independent poetic tradition (5). Kane suggests that the obsession with origins extends to a need to establish an identity, which is inexorably joined to social and political considerations (35). The obsession with origins that Kane locates within Australian poetry is clearly present in the desire to institute an originary poetics central to the poems discussed thus far, in terms of a search for the muse, and an imagined national poet. As mentioned earlier, there have been themes, motifs and political ideologies (particularly associated with nationalism) in the verse of early nineteenth-century poets as early as the poetry of Wentworth and Thompson, which indicates an Australian poetics of place. However, a central theme in colonial tombeaux is the search for a national poetics and a national poet to express the colonies and the nation: this continues throughout the nineteenth century; as well into the second half of the twentieth century.

The Mid-Century Tombeau of Henry Halloran
The following discussion is of elegists who write commemoration for real poets who have died. Through these tombeaux, two poets – the elegist and the elegized – establish a continuance of poets and poetry that suggests Lipking’s passing on of ‘the poetic mantle’, thus the making of literary traditions and literary histories. Halloran is of importance in furthering early nineteenth-century conceptions of a colonial poetic tradition, one for which he has perhaps not had due recognition. Halloran’s oeuvre shows that he not only wrote tombeaux for an imagined generic poet laureate but also wrote tombeaux proper throughout the nineteenth century. In ‘Literary Cultures 1851-1914: Founding a Cannon’, Elizabeth Perkins suggests that Halloran was a poetic rival of Harpur and Kendall, his poetry both emulated and surpassed by the later poets (1998: 52). However, writing until his death in the late 1890s, Halloran was not only a highly productive and published poet but one of the most prolific writers of the tombeau in colonial poetry. Halloran’s oeuvre includes several tombeaux for the poet George James Macdonald; those for the mid-century poets Harpur and Gordon, as well as for Kendall in the latter part of the century, suggesting a deep interest in poetic traditions.

In ‘Bury the Bard’, his tribute for Macdonald published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (14.2.1852), Halloran writes:

Bury the Bard where the emus graze
At the dawn of day,
Where the crested pigeon her beauty display (sic),
And the Kangaroos stands in wild amaze,
    With her shadow at bay.
Bury him friends, and gently spread,
   And with pity dear,
The earth o’er the Poet’s beloved head:
   And stranger, if though hast a tear to shed,
       Deny it not here (npg)

In choosing the emu, the kangaroo and the crested pigeon as iconic Australian fauna, and in placing the tombeau within the Australian bush, Halloran clearly situates the poet and the poet’s grave – and thus the poet’s verse – within a recognizable Australian space, rather than the more universal and romanticized surroundings of earlier generic graves.

Halloran’s second tombeau, dedicated to ‘My old friend George James Macdonald’, published in The Harp of the Empire (22.1.1852), is one of the earliest colonial tombeaux written in honour of a poet that most clearly signals an interest in a poetic tradition passed from the dead to the living poet. In lauding the dead poet, Halloran recalls details of Macdonald’s own poem, ‘Come to the Lake of Swans’; as well as the influence that his former friend and poetic mentor had on his own conception of poetry. Macdonald’s poem, itself published nearly twenty years earlier in The Colonist (28.05.1835), writes of watching ‘the night-black swans as in grace / full pairs they glide / with their arch’d and snake-like necks, o’er the lake’s / unwrinkled tide’ (60). Halloran’s tombeau recalls the swans suggesting that the dead poet now rests in peace for all time in the Australian landscape, by his own lake of swans:

Where will thy spirit rest, chieftain-born mountain child!
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

By thine own “Lake of Swans” in the Moon’s ivory gleam!
Or dwelling elate by Kahoola-patamba wild –
Wilt though smile through all time, in some heavenly dream? (3).

Halloran’s tombeau both ‘buries’ the poet and commemorates Macdonald’s book of verse *On a Movement of Beethoven and Other Poems of the 1830s*, writing, ‘How with Beethoven’s wild sweetness did’st / thou / fill the stirred heart with a dizzy and wild delight’ (3). In writing of the influence of Macdonald’s verse on his own sense of poetry, Halloran both lauds the poet’s verse, yet buries him as is central to the traditional subgenre of tombeau described by Lipking:

The grave has closed over thee, friend of my early days!
Poet! Whose genius fine-thoughted and free,
Cheered my young hopes and encouraged my boyish lays,
And linked me to verse, as to honey the bee (3).

In this, Halloran remains as the living poet through his memorialization of the now silent poet, Macdonald, as Mallarmé’s tombeaux to Gautier exemplifies. In commemorating Macdonald’s verse and the imprint of his fine ideals on the younger, living poet, the elegist Halloran marks the influence of the dead poet on the living poet. In the final verse Halloran accentuates the space between the living and the dead poet in the lines, ‘Years have passed by since I gazed on that manly brow / Or heard that fine voice in melody deep / But still to my heart do I hold thee, old friend, e’en now / And ever in cherished remembrance shall’,
Thus situating Macdonald as earlier poetic mentor and friend, and Halloran as succeeding poet through his memorialization of the dead poet (3).

Halloran’s poetry was widely published and read from the 1830s until the 1880s. The prolific nature of Halloran’s verse published in many colonial newspapers over a 60-year period suggest he was more extensively read, more popular, and more influential than he may appear from a later date. Halloran stands as a clear example of the vital place of the myriad of colonial newspapers, as discussed at length in earlier chapters, particularly the ‘Poet’s Corner’ as providing a space for political and cultural concerns of the time. For example, Trove lists 217 of Halloran’s poems published in a variety of newspapers; while of the 300 poems written by Kendall in his lifetime, all but about 30 were published in newspapers and periodicals – some several times. Though omitted from the early to mid-century poets that Kendall refers to as ‘that shining band’, one could speculate on the influence of Halloran, not least in the writing of the earlier tombeau but also in the long span of his career and the influence he may have had on other poets. Clearly, as later discussions will establish, his tombeaux for Harpur and Kendall contribute in important ways to establishing an Australian verse tradition.

Kendall’s ‘glorious band’

Kendall’s desire to establish an Australian poetic tradition comes to the fore with the deaths of James Lionel Michael, Charles Harpur and Adam Lindsay Gordon between 1865 and 1870. Kendall now has a number of earlier well-known and often-published nineteenth-century poets to elegize in order to shore up his dream of establishing the presence of an Australian-orientated verse, of which he as elegist will become heir. Kendall’s tombeaux for these early and mid-century poets are again located at the grave. While associated with the
earliest forms of Greek Pastoral elegy, the grave becomes a central feature in the colonial tombeau – and of the Australian elegy – because it authenticates the poet and the poet’s verse as being Australian through its connection to the Australian soil. There are three verse tributes for Michael, including ‘Lines to J.L. Michael’; ‘In memoriam: James Lionel Michael’; and, a third incorporated into a later important tombeau for, ‘The Late Mr. A. L. Gordon: In Memoriam’ (Reed: 1966: 283; 351-2; 371-2)  In ‘Lines to J.L. Michael’ Kendall speaks of the poet as teacher to the younger poet, suggesting his poetic debt to Michael as mentor:

Go on, I shall follow,
’Tis well you should lead;
For teacher, without you,
I shake like a reed.
You are grand, like a column
At the foot of a throne,
And I’m a weak pillar
On wild sands alone.
At your feet I will listen
To all you can say;
For my thoughts, this morning,
Were yours yesterday (283-4).

Here is a sense of tradition, the older poet as teacher – as we have seen with Halloran’s earlier tombeaux for Macdonald – the younger Kendall listening at the feet of the earlier poet, taking in the words and principles of his spiritual and poetic mentor. There is a direct sense of poetic influence from Michael’s poetic thoughts of ‘yesterday’, becoming those of Kendall, ‘this morning’ (283). Giving precedence to the older poet by pledging to ‘follow’
Michaels’ writing, saying “Tis well you should lead”, suggests mentor and mentored, a key theme in Kendall’s tombeau for Michael. However, there is also an ambivalence in Kendall’s tombeau in connection with Michael’s words being those of ‘yesterday’ and Kendall’s, those of ‘this morning’, the choice of terms suggesting what is past, as against what is new, fresh and original. Here, Kendall harkens to the verse of his poet-mentor, yet must speak in his own voice as elegist and ensuing bardic poet following the death of his poetic predecessor.

In Kendall’s second tombeau, ‘In Memoriam: James Lionel Michael’, the elegist sets his tribute to the earlier poet by Michael’s actual grave, ‘a favourite haunt of the poet’, ‘a lovely spot on the north bank of the Clarence River’ (Reed: 1966: 352):

Latter leaves, in Autumn’s breath,
White and sere,
Sanctify the scholar’s death,
Lying here.

Soft surprises of the sun –
Swift, serene –
O’er the mute grave - grasses run:
Gold and green.

Wet and cold hillwinds moan
Let them rave!
Love that takes a tender tone
Lights his grave (352).

A number of aspects of the landscape and the grave interconnect in this elegy. The first is that of the poet as buried in a landscape he ‘often sought’ and ‘loved to stray’, reflecting
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

the dead poet’s real-life presence on the landscape. Further, the poet and the poet’s grave establish a symbolic sense of origins; a possession of the landscape suggested in ‘Let the forms he loved so well / hover near / Shine of hill and shade of dell / Year by year’ (352). Finally, the land itself responds and reifies the poet’s goodness, as, ‘Latter leaves, in autumn’s breath / White and sere / Sanctify the scholar’s death’ and ‘lights his grave’ (352). That the ‘hillwinds moan’ at the loss of the poet to the world personifies the land and takes us back to the search for the muse that Kendall sought in ‘The Muse of Australia’, in which the landscape and the poet are inter-connected.

Published in 1862 and 1863, Kendall wrote two verse tributes to Harpur, before Harpur’s death in 1868. As noted earlier, colonial verse tributes written for the living poet suggest an attempt to institute an Australian poetry and an Australian tradition through the lauding of significant living poets. ‘To Charles Harpur’ published in The Sydney Morning Herald (2.5.1863), speaks of Kendall’s esteem towards Harpur the man and the poet in which Kendall writes, ‘With longing eyes, my friend, to catch / Faint glimpses of your while ideal’. Kendall follows in the footsteps of Harpur in his own search for the muse of Australia, when he writes ‘I’ve never reached her shining place / and only cross at times a gleam / And one might pass a fleeting face / Just on the outside of a Dream’ (Reed: 1966: 284). Kendall’s acknowledgment of Harpur as having found his own poetic muse in lines such as, ‘She knows your step, the maiden true / and ever when she hears your voice / She turns and sits and waits for you’, is even more strongly enunciated in the line, ‘You walk with her from day to day’, suggesting Kendall clearly sees Harpur as his ‘father’ in poetry and that eventually he, Kendall, should reach such an affinity with the muse (284). It is not until 1868 that Harpur dies, thereby allowing Kendall to publish this earlier verse tribute. First
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

published in 1862, a second verse tribute for the living Harper named ‘To CH’, is republished on Harpur’s death. In this tombeau Kendall aligns himself with other poets who look to Harpur as predecessor, each verse beginning with the repetitive refrain, which is a convention of traditional elegy, ‘I would sit at your feet’, suggesting a son who listens at the feet of a father, or wise elder:

I would sit at your feet, for I feel
I am one of a glorious band
That ever will own you and hold you their Chief,
And a Monarch of song in the land
(Reed: 1966: 45).

In this way Kendall sets himself and the ‘glorious band’ of fellow poets as following their poetic leader Harpur, suggesting a verse tradition of which Kendall becomes a part through the writing of the tombeau, thus the younger poet institutes himself as a living presence of poets who look to Harpur as antecedent.

A third tombeau, ‘Charles Harpur’, written by Kendall after Harpur’s death, is published in a number of newspapers including *The Sydney Mail* (11.7.1868). In commemorating the poet’s work, Kendall speaks of the land and of the ways the land has honed Harpur’s poetry; and, the way Harpur’s poetry encompasses the spirit of the land:

Where Harpur lies, the rainy streams,
And wet hill-heads, and hollows weeping
Are swift with wind, and white with gleams,
And horse with sounds of storms unsleeping.
Fit grave it is for one whose song
  Was tuned by tones he caught from torrents,
And filled with mountain-breaths, and strong
  Wild notes of falling forest currents....
Strange words of wind, and rhymes of rain,
  And whispers from the inland fountains,
Are mingled in his various strain
  With leafy breaths of piny mountains (Reid; 1968: 100).

Kendall speaks of Harpur as having captured the muse of Australia, his song imbued with
the ‘torrents’, the ‘mountain-breaths, the ‘forest currents’, the ‘wind’, and the ‘rain’. The
theme of finding the muse of Australia – a poet to sing the land – that has been pivotal in
Kendall’s imagining of an Australian poet/muse comes to fruition in this tombeau. Kendall’s
‘Charles Harpur’ is a classic example of the way the living poet enters the poetic tradition:
celebration of the elegized poet’s verse, followed by a reminder of the lost powers of the
dead poet in Kendall’s reminder that Harpur now ‘of wintry hair and wasted feature’, has
passed and with him ‘The flying forms of unknown powers’ that denote the muse of poetry
within him:

  But now he sleeps, the tired bard,
  The deepest sleep: and lo I proffer
These tender leaves of my regard
  With hands that falter as they offer
(101).
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

‘The tender leaves’, ‘that lo I proffer’ is the offer of the tombeau for the dead Harpur who now is closed within the grave in ‘deepest sleep’, Kendall claiming Harpur’s former place in the tradition with his tombeau that both praises and replaces the dead poet’s poetry with his own. In Kendall’s ‘this singer dead / whose hands attuned the Harp of Australia’, it is the father, the elegized who once ‘attuned’ the harp, but it will be Kendall who will now inherit the harp to ‘attune’ in his own way. Thus, the death of Harpur enables the younger poet to take the position of one who is now presumably blessed by the ‘Muse of Australia’, thus becoming bard of Australia.

Kendall’s tombeau for his dear friend ‘The Late Mr. A. L. Gordon: In Memoriam’, further establishes Kendall as the living poet who in writing the tombeau takes up the lyre to sing the land, thus consolidating a line of poets and an Australian-orientated poetry centred on the landscape:

He passed away; and we who knew him sit
Aghast in darkness, dumb with that great grief,
Whose stature yet we cannot comprehend;
While over yonder churchyard, hearsed with pines,
The nightwind sings its immemorial hymn,
And sobs above a newly-covered grave
(Reed: 1966: 371).

While Kendall writes of Harpur as having found the muse of Australia, he names Gordon as possessing a ‘A shining soul with syllables of fire / Who sang the first great songs these lands can claim / To be their own….’ (371). While later in the tombeau Kendall names Gordon ‘bard’, Kendall is careful to neither establish Gordon as having found the muse, nor
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

equate his own poetry with that of Kendall’s, but speaks of him as singer of ‘the first great songs’. It is problematic to incorporate Gordon’s bush ethos into Harpur’s and Kendall’s desire to voice the nation as a bardic figure of wisdom that represents Australia. However, Kendall still wishes to include the popularized poet and verse synonymous with the bush legend into his ‘shining band’.

Kendall’s tombeau for Gordon is cornerstone to the establishment of a poetic tradition in its bringing together of the four major poets – Michael, Harpur, Gordon and Kendall – that straddled the period from the 1830s until Gordon’s death in 1870. Kendall speaks of himself in his tombeau for Gordon, as ‘I, left alone / the sad disciple of a shining band’, an emotion that Ackland suggests figures Kendall as being ‘desolate witness to their visionary program, whose completion or re-emergence has been postponed to an indefinite and unforeseeable future’ (1994: 4). However, Kendall’s tombeau with its inclusion of Michael, Harpur and Gordon is a most important tombeau, in that it sets out to establish a group of mid-century Australian poets, of whom Kendall sees himself as successor to a poetic lineage of Australian poets:

To Adam Lindsay Gordon, I who laid
Two years ago on Lionel Michael’s grave
A tender leaf of my regard: yea I
Who gulled a garland from the flowers of song
To place where Harpur sleeps: I, left alone,
The sad disciple of a shining band
Now gone, to Adam Lindsay Gordon’s name
I dedicate these lines (37).
In this crucial verse, Kendall lays out the lineage of poets that underwrite the tradition, of which he is now successor. In the final lines Kendall likens himself to one listening back through time to the epic songs of old in, ‘The last of Arthur on the wailing mere’, recalling the long history of western literature and offering a sense of comparable loss to Australian letters through Gordon’s death. While seeking to institute a national Australian poetic tradition, colonial poets still saw themselves in some respects as part of the British colony in terms of poetic tradition. The reference to the Arthurian legend is an example of this, though setting up an Australian poetic tradition, Kendall also draws on British imperialist history and literature by referring to Arthur.

However, Kendall clearly takes up the mantle of the ‘shining band’ through his tombeau for Gordon, particularly so in the poet’s reference to the convention of elegy expressed in the line ‘having wove and proffered this poor wreath’. In his offering of the poem as ‘wreath’, Kendall shows he is conversant with the tradition of elegy in relation to the ‘laurel wreath’, as emblem of the dead poet. In The English Elegy, Sacks describes the laurel wreath as consolation, one that Apollo fashions from Daphne in her transformative state as a laurel bush, that in turn becomes ‘a prize that becomes the prize or sign of poet hood’ (1985: 5). In offering poem as wreath to the dead Gordon, Kendall connects back to traditional tombeau, to poethood and to himself as elegist taking the place of the dead predecessor through the tombeau. However, while these colonial poets stated a desire for an emergent proto-nationalist identity, they were working very much within the conventions of their times. The use of traditional elegiac conventions associated with the English tradition of elegy, for example, and the inclusion of the Arthurian trope exemplifies a continuing influence, as would be expected from the mother country. In spite of this, the tombeau for
Gordon, and those for his poetic mentors Michael and Harpur, hold an important place in Australian poetics, and, are evidence of Kendall’s place as elegist in striving to present a continuing line of Australian poets to represent the new nation.

**Tombeaux for Kendall: Establishing a National Poetic Tradition**

In “To Fresh Woods and Pastures New”? Werner Senn suggests that Kendall ‘transplanted’ the elegy to Australia but that until recently, the tombeau was an unsuccessful form (2002: 127). However, the collection of nineteenth-century tombeaux forming the basis for this discussion shows that rather than dying out, the tombeau shows signs of flourishing during and after Kendall’s tombeaux of the late 1860s and 70s. Thus the tombeau became a popular form in colonial poetry, particularly in the two decades leading up to Federation. A rise in the publication of the tombeaux occurs around the late 1860s with the elegies of Kendall; building during the 1880s and 1890s, and, still present, though dropping off in numbers in the first decade of the twentieth-century. The late nineteenth-century timeline in terms of an increase in publication of tombeau leading up to Federation runs parallel with the elegy for the bushman’s grave, and the elegy for a dying-race. All of which suggest, in keeping with discussions of colonial elegy across the first three chapters of this thesis, that the elegy is connected in important ways to the project of nationalism, land legitimization, and, cultural autonomy from the imperial centre.

As mentioned above, research has revealed a substantial number of tombeau written for Kendall published in the months and years after the poet’s death in 1882; as well as a number for Harpur as predecessor to Kendall in the tradition; and for Gordon, as a member of the mid-century band of poets. These appear in a wide cross-section of newspapers,
periodicals; as well as in a number of published poetry collections. The increase in
tombeaux in newspapers suggests an interest by poets, editors and readers of the day in
earlier poets and a poetry that spoke of not only the landscape, but the philosophy and
attitudes expressed in terms of the sort of poet required to represent a national poetry.
Kendall died in 1882 when the bush balladists were writing a nationalist poetry, as later
commentators have tended to stress. To this point, in That Shinning Band, Ackland notes:

"With the advancing nationhood a desire for Australian Literature increased
and consolidated, in the run up to Federation in 1901.... The political and
literary were seen as inseparable by many, marking the emergence before
Federation of an Australian literary tradition as being tightly bound to
the ballad of the 1880s (1994: 195)."

The significant numbers of tombeaux for Kendall clearly establish that the bush ballad was
not the only form of poetry sought to initiate a national poetry. Colonial tombeaux written
for Kendall collected for the following discussion number well over forty poems, though as
a later discussion tends to establish, there are almost certainly many more still to be
unearthed in newspapers of the period. Some further examples of tombeaux for Kendall,
other than those discussed below, include a number published in The Bulletin, such as
‘Kendall’, published by an unnamed poet, (7.4.1883: 8); ‘A Dead Poet’ by an unnamed poet
(7.4.1883: 8); ‘In Memoriam Henry Kendall’ by C. Wesley Caddy (12.8. 1882: 5); ‘Sonnet: In
Memoriam Henry Kendall’, unnamed (12.8.1882: 2); ‘In Memoriam Henry Kendall’
published in The Leader (26.1882: 2); ‘Kendall’s Grave’ in Cosmos magazine, unnamed,
(31.5.1895: 460); ‘Sonnet: To the Memory of Henry Kendall’ by D. Flanagan in The
Queenslander (3.10.1891); ‘Kendall’s Grave’ by ‘Corinda’ in the Clarence and Richmond
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

*Examiner and New England Advertiser* (31.8.1885: 6); ‘In Memoriam Sonnet: Henry Kendall’ in the *Portland Guardian*, unnamed (29. 8. 1882). While *The Bulletin* features more often in these examples, the instances of tombeaux for Kendall in a number of different newspapers suggests their presence in colonial newspapers was ubiquitous during the latter years of the nineteenth century.

The tombeaux published in the last two decades of the century for Kendall work to institute an ongoing colonial poetic tradition with its roots much earlier in the century, as former discussions have suggested. The tombeaux for Kendall most often celebrates the dead poet at the grave and is therefore set within the landscape in a continuing tradition of graveside elegy that goes back to the 1830s, and to the imagined poet’s grave, as well as Halloran’s early tombeau for Macdonald. Motifs used by Kendall (and earlier poets) are often present in the verse tributes for Kendall, such as, referring to the dead poet as ‘bard’ or ‘muse’; personifying the landscape; bequeathing the laurel wreath to the dead poet as precursor to poethood, and, emulating the mournful and romantic style of Kendall. That these conventional motifs of the elegy, and of the era, are carefully adhered to in the tombeaux for Kendall, suggests that the elegist seeks to connect the earlier poetry of Kendall to both a past and to an ongoing Australian tradition of poetry through these features. They not only speak of the past, but of Kendall’s own poetics, thus they establish earlier nineteenth-century traditional themes and motifs within late-nineteenth-century poetics.

Victor Daley’s ‘Love-Laurel: In Memory of Henry Kendall’, published in the *Freeman’s Journal* (12: 1882: 14-16) is in many ways a traditional tombeau that recalls the important place of the tombeau in literary traditions. It first praises the poet and his poetry in
‘remembering the song-garlands that thou hast wove’ to ‘the Gold-haired Spring’; then it silences the dead poet by reminding us of Kendall’s inability to ‘sing’ from the depth of the grave; and, finally Daley offers his own poem as ‘laurel-wreath’ and himself as poetic successor. Daley speaks directly to the dead Kendall in his grave in hope to find for himself the poetic powers the muse and God infers on the succeeding poet:

Ah! that God once would touch my lips with
song
To pierce, as prayer does heav’n, earth’s breast of
Iron,
So with sweet mouth I might sing to thee
O sweet dead singer buried by the sea
A song, to woo thee as a wooing siren
Out of the silent sleep which seals too long
Thy mouth of melody (14).

The self-doubt of being able to ‘sing’, in ‘Ah! That God would touch my lips with / song’ (much in the way Kendall wrote in his tombeau for Harpur of his own aspirations to find the muse) is an important convention of the tombeau in which the elegist feigns doubt as to his poetic powers of song. In offering his own poem to his predecessor, in ‘lie still, thy songs and dreams are done / down where though sleepest in earth’s secret bosom’, the elegist resigns Kendall to the grave. Moreover, Daley evokes the traditional elegiac symbol of the laurel wreath – a frequent traditional elegiac motif within Kendall’s own tombeaux – the elegist offering his own poem in the lines ‘song shall leap forth where now, O silent master / On thy lone grave beside the sounding sea / I lay this laurel-wreath’ (17). This parallels Kendall’s tombeaux for Harpur in which Kendall takes the place of his predecessor Harpur in
establishing a line of Australian poets, a poetic lineage to which Daley is now aligned through the writing of his tombeau for Kendall.

Important in terms of the delineation of nation, Daley writes, ‘Oh sweet dead singer by the sea’ and of ‘thy lone grave beside the sounding sea’. While Kendall was buried overlooking the sea at Bronte in Sydney, the references to the sea are also underwritten by nationalistic overtones. Given the link between the tombeau and poetic tradition is an important part of imagining and of epitomizing a nation and its people, the presence of the sea in a number of tombeaux for Kendall establishes the boundaries or separation of the Australian nation from the rest of the world. In ‘Littoral Erosion: The Changing Shoreline of Australian Culture’, Andrew Taylor suggests:

A nation’s cultural Identity may share traits with that of many others nations, but what makes it an identity is the fact that in its totality it differs from the rest. Because Identity is constituted by difference, boundaries, borders, dividing lines are crucial in order to distinguish what is within from what is without (1996: 288).

In a similar vein, in ‘Henry Kendall: In Memoriam’, J. G. Witton speaks of a ‘threnody’ of voices, a ‘choir’ of past Australian poets ‘lamenting, murmuring falt’ring from the sea’. It is significant that this oft-published tombeau that seeks to mark an Australian poetic tradition through Harpur, Gordon and Kendall, again, clearly signals the oceanic boundary of nation. An important theme, the piscatorial tombeau continues to map the continent in terms of its boundaries, clearly expressing a separation not only from the rest of the world, but from its status as a colonial offshoot of Britain. Witton’s ‘threnody’ of the voices of earlier poets,
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

speak above and back to the land from the ocean, thus creating a ghostly poetics and a tombeau for the recently dead Kendall. In this way a sense not only of poethood and the presence of dead national poets, but the establishment of a national identity through marking the boundaries of the nation are engendered in Witton’s tombeau.

Witton’s important tombeau for Kendall republished in *The Australian Review*, republished and reviewed in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* later in the year, is an example of the way in which through the praise of previous poets, the tombeau reiterates the poets who are part of the tradition (12.9.1882: 31). Witton, in recalling the poets Harpur, Gordon and Kendall, the three poets writing through the earlier years of the nineteenth century to whom Kendall is aligned through the writing of his own tombeaux, suggests a past community of poets buried in the Australian landscape that ‘memory join’:

To Harpur’s wood notes, Gordon’s vivid strain,
Shall memory join, where thoughts are stars in throng –
Kendall’s melodious melancholy song
Breathing from poet-heart its passion-pain

He sleeps: above him sighs the threnody
From many voices poured upon the air –
Wood-song and brush song and the winds that bear
Lamenting murmuring falt’ring from the sea (31).

Here, the merging of the poetic voices evoked in the ‘threnody’, imagines the many tombeau for the dead Kendall and his verse, joining Kendall to his poetic predecessors, Harpur and Gordon.
Witton’s tone and style recall Kendall’s poetry – a central undertaking of traditional elegy, also featured in Australian colonial tombeaux – in keeping the poetry of the dead poet in view as part of the process of establishing an ongoing tradition. An example is found in Witton’s imitation of Kendall’s descriptive style, such as the ‘murmuring’ and ‘sighing’ of the landscape, a feature of Kendall’s own poetry and lexicon of words. Witton too, recalls the typical tone and mien of the dead poet in speaking of ‘Kendall’s melodious melancholy song / Breathing from poet-heart its passion- pain’ (31).

Halloran wrote two tombeaux for Kendall both titled, ‘A Thought of Henry Kendall’. The first, published in The Australian Town and Country Journal (1.8.1882), speaks of his own presence at the poet’s burial place. Overlooking the ocean, with a backdrop of hills mourning the loss of the poet, Halloran writes:

And then, beyond the fiery cones of hills –
That sing to the wild main in sympathy –
I see in mossy rents the morning rills
That march in midnight thunder to the sea.
While from Kerguelen, on a stormy main
Swept by remorseless winds which scourge the
Pole (28).

A poem with piscatorial overtones, Halloran’s poem personifies the grief of the hills and the sea creating a spiritual bond between the dead poet and nature, as in many of the poems discussed in relation to the central theme of this thesis, landscape and identity. Conventions of early Greek Pastoral elegy identified in this discussion of colonial tombeau,
such as the personification of the grief of the land at the death of the poet, are powerful elegiac tropes for a colonial nation aspiring to establish a sense of the uniqueness of landscape and place in poetry; equally, in representing the establishment of an Australian identity connected to, and, issuing from the land.

In the second verse tribute for Kendall of the same name, Halloran speaks of Kendall’s desire to be muse of Australia:

No more of some intenser thirst
Of fame amidst his countrymen
To be achieved by song and pen
To stand wild hope perchance the first (30).

However, Halloran’s ‘In Memoriam: Charles Harper’ published in *Australian Town and Country Journal* (19.8.1882) reminds the reader of the debt later poets such as Kendall owed Harpur as earlier ‘bard’ of Australian poetry:

Have we not thought: do we forget
The bard who held a forward place?
Or does some new regret efface
All memory of an earlier debt?

Halloran also recalls Harpur’s poetry through evoking the ‘Dora’ poem; its living presence after the poet’s death and its effect on the elegist, expressed in ‘Sweet Dora lives within my soul’. Insisting that Harpur be remembered for the great poet he is, Halloran writes, ‘Thy countrymen may yet awake / And claim, e’en for sweet Dora’s sake / Some bright memorial
near the deep’ (28). Halloran’s tombeau for Harpur recalls the poet whom had been writing verse since the early part of the nineteenth-century, thus establishing Harpur as an early colonial poet to whom all later poets were indebted. In this, Halloran reserves the honour of the first ‘bard’ of Australia for the earlier Harpur, rather than the recently-dead Kendall, in this way helping to establish an earlier verse tradition through Harpur to Kendall.

Two important publications fostering a sense of a century of Australian poetry – these anthologies in themselves a kind of extended tombeau – contribute to establishing a national Australian poetry. These publications are CE Wilton’s *Jubilee Poems* (1887) and Douglas Sladen’s, *A Century of Australian Song* (1888). Both Wilton’s and Sladen’s publications dedicate their collections to Kendall; and in so doing claim a central place for Kendall in Australian colonial poetry. Wilton pledges his *Jubilee Poems* as, ‘Dedicated to the Late Henry Kendall’; the opening poem ‘Dedicatory Preface: to the Late Henry Kendall, Australian Poet’ establishes the earlier poet as forefather:

Now that thy genius’ sun so well has set,  
A humble tribute to thy memory let  
One, who himself a ‘Singer of the Dawn’,  
Would fain thy footsteps follow... (1).

Wilton, as Kendall had so often done evokes the muse in ‘Quickly I write, lest the great Muse depart’, asking for ‘one brief hour’ so that like Kendall, he too ‘may leave a song whose lonely rays / May shine hereafter from our songless days’ (1). In beseeching the muse to touch his poem, Wilton follows Kendall’s search for the muse in which to express the land, and, ‘send a streaming radiance to the skies’. Similarly, Sladen’s introduction to *A
Century of Australian Song writes much of Kendall, particularly of his distinctly Australian poetry, Sladen describing his poetry as ‘Bush-Landscape painting à la Kendall’, acknowledging his importance as the quintessential Australian landscape poet (18; 22). However, Sladen nominates a poetic tradition that begins with Harpur, whom the editor perceives as, ‘the grey forefather of Australian Poets’ (20). In also naming James Lionel Michael as ‘Kendall’s literary father’, Sladen re-establishes the Michael, Harpur, Kendall poetic lineage, as previously discussed (23). Sladen’s collection contains a considerable number of important nation-making poems; a collection that claims a poetic history and a poetic tradition for Australia as an emerging nation: one that begins in earlier decades of the nineteenth-century through Michael, continuing through Harpur, and into the final decades of the century through the tombeaux for Kendall (14).

In recalling earlier poets and their verse, later elegists commemorating Kendall and Harpur establish poetic origins that the elegist builds on in order to make claim to an existing poetic tradition. These poets, and the poetic traditions they are a part of are the carriers of literary history, as described by Lipking (1981: 161). The need for a useable past – historical, cultural, and poetic – on which to build a future nation and national tradition of poetry; as well as a national identity expressed through the tradition, are clearly visible in the settler colonial tombeau. This analysis has discussed the ways in which the verse of the dead poet, and of the living poet established through the writing of the tombeau, provides an ongoing lineage of Australian poets that authenticates the presence of a poetic culture; one which is rooted in the poets of the 1830s; established by 1870; and, continuous throughout the last decades of the nineteenth-century.
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

**Federation and the Role of Poetry**

J. Howlett Ross’ tombeau ‘In Memoriam: Henry Kendall’, speaks of Kendall’s death and the importance of his poetry for future generations:

> The singer is dead. But his mystical song
>   Echoes back from the gloom of the tombs,
>   with words for the weak, and the wise and the strong,
> (Sladen: 1888: 383-4).

Here the poet as teacher and voice of reason for future generations, remains central to romantic conceptions of the poet since the earlier decades of the nineteenth-century, expressed by Howlett Ross as ‘based on the strength of his exquisite soul’. That the poet is filled with godhead and an important and worthy figure in nation and national identity is central to conceptions of a particular kind of nation. The importance of a particular kind of poetic tradition for the ensuing nation in colonial Australia lay in a belief by many, that Federation was a sacred cause. Harpur’s desire to establish the ‘voice’ of Australia is described by Ackland as informed by a visionary ethos, one that been illustrated in the discussion above, as sanctioned by God. Moreover, both Harpur’s and Kendall’s poetics stress not only God’s approval but the role of the poet as teacher, a visionary figure who leads a people on a path towards wisdom and goodness through his example and his verse.

In *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* J. B. Hirst states, ‘It was the making of the nation, apart from anything it might do, that was sacred’ (2000: 15). Further, Hirst argues that many colonists believed that ‘God wanted Australia to be a
Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

Hirst suggests that nineteenth-century proponents of Federation, for example, believed that the fact Australia was separated from the rest of the world by oceans was proof of God’s desire for an Australian nation (14). The reoccurring motif of the ocean expressed in the piscatorial tombeaux for Harpur and Kendall written after 1882, embodies Hirst statement. Further, Hirst argues that ‘Because federation was a sacred cause poetry was considered to be the most appropriate medium to express its rationale and purpose’; further, that the role of poetry was ‘to deal with what was noble, profound, and elevating’ (15). In this light the religious overtones and the belief that a great poet would elevate the people and the nation, positioned the national poetics that Harpur and Kendall envisaged for the future of the colonies as a powerful expression of the requirements of a poet and poetic tradition for the emerging nation. Such a poetics established the identity of a nation based on exemplary character, high ideals, and, a people chosen by God.

Hirst suggests that the project of Federation and thus, the nation, ‘was born in a festival of poetry’, many of these poems, as Hirst notes, were ‘the best guide to the ideas and ideals that inspired the movement’ (15). Harpur’s and Kendall’s vision of a poetics for the nation was a part of this ‘festival of poetry’ in that a number of their visionary ideas were in accord with those principles. However, as Hirst suggests, many of the poets that wrote in this high-minded tone about the new nation, ‘were almost entirely forgotten’ by history in the wake of the bush balladists, such as Henry Lawson (24). While the bush figure and bush poetry came to be seen as representing the nation in a state-sanctioned poetics in the last two decades of the century, the values held as sacred to the project of Federation as marked in Hirst’s discussion were furthered through the poetry of Harpur and Kendall. Thus a poetic
tradition arising from these two important poets would serve to encapsulate those beliefs leading up to Federation.

A tension, then, existed between proponents of the bush verse with its central attention to the relationship between the colonial male, identity and the land, and the earlier tradition expressed in the Harpur/Kendal lineage of a poetics situated on a high moral ground, in which a poetic tradition would express the land and the nation. This tension is further verified by publication of a number of tombeau that mimic the elegy set at the grave of the dead poet, penned in particular by the bush balladists of the 1890s. These poems parody the presumption of high poetic office that earlier poets such as Harpur and Kendall held; and, what some later bush poets saw as their mournful and morbid verse situated at the poet’s grave. Henry Lawson’s ‘Poets of the Tomb’ published in *The Bulletin* (8.10.1892), reflects a rivalry between the two traditions that such a parody suggests existed between poets whose roots were in the earlier landscape/graveside poetry, and that of the bush balladists:

The world has enough of Bards who wish that they were dead,
‘Tis time the people passed a law to knock them on the head,
For would be lovely if their friends could grant the rest they crave –
These bards of ‘tears’ and ‘vanished hopes’, these poets of the grave (10).

Lawson’s poem focuses on the motif of the grave, mocking the way in which poets spoke of the landscape around the grave in lines such as ‘And yet, as long as sheoaks sigh and wattle-blossoms bloom / The world shall hear the drivel of the poets of the tomb’. Lawson’s poem as well as others in the same vein suggest the possibility of further substantial numbers of tombeaux set at the graveside published during the late nineteenth century; as
well as suggesting the clash of two national poetic traditions in the trajectory towards nation in terms of expressing a national ethos and a national identity. The ways in which literary histories are created is an important consideration in terms of the rivalry between the two traditions, suggested above. Lawson, and other bush balladists, were subsequently used/presented as the first purveyors of an Australian national poetry, with Lawson showcased as the quintessential Australian national poet. Of the bush balladists Ackland writes ‘for too long literary historians have focused on the balladists of the 1890s as the first major poetic expression of national identity’ (1994: xi). This chapter has thus added a new perspective to late nineteenth-century national poetics in terms of the presence of a national poetics centred on the grave of the poet as expressed in the tombeau: one which Lawson’s ‘Poets of the Tomb’ mockingly acknowledges.

Conclusion

The cluster of concerns relating to nationalism and land ownership in relation to a settler nation discussed in the introduction to this chapter as identified by Gunew, are constant refrains within the elegy for bushman and the colonial tombeau (1999: 99). Though ostensibly different, particularly in tone, the two subgenres of settler landscape elegy share many similarities of intent that express concerns held in nineteenth-century Australia. These include anxiety concerning land ownership expressed through the use of the elegy underwritten by inheritance and its central attention to the grave and the soil. Further, in order to establish legacy from the dead centred on the graves of the bushman and the poet, the grave becomes an important focus for both figures in terms of inheriting landscape and a poetic tradition, respectively. Secondly, in peopling the land with the archetypal figure of the bushman and the poet establishes fine qualities associated with the
land and its assumed influence in the creation of national identity for an emerging nation. As a corollary to this, in expressing an authentic landscape both subgenres proclaim the unique character of Australia, thus marking separation from the imperial centre that Boehmer’s postcolonial critique suggests is necessary for creating a postcolonial nation (1995: 2213). Finally, the civilizing and ennobling influence of the bushman and the poet give credence to the *rightness* of their presence on the land in a civilized/uncivilized dichotomy ordained by God.

Moreover, as discussed earlier, the Harpur/Kendall poetic lineage and the bush poet tradition are almost totally male-dominated. The landscape and the muse – both represented as feminine – become captured and tamed symbolically by the male poet in the text in both the bushman elegy and the tombeau. Looking forward, in ‘The Rise of “Women’s Poetry” in the 1970s: An Initial Survey into New Australian Poetry, The Women’s Movement, and a Matrix of Revolutions’, Ann Vickery proposes that ‘the 1970s was a watershed decade for women in the poetic field, leading to greater visibility and legitimation than ever before’ (2007: 265). In keeping with Vickery’s assessment it is not until the 1970s that women’s tombeaux starts to become visible in Australian poetics, when a number of women poets discussed in the next chapter on the contemporary settler tombeau, enter the masculinist domain of the tombeau. While the exclusion of women from the tombeau, until the 1970s, omits them from colonial national poetic tradition(s), it also attests to the longevity of writing patterns laid down in colonial Australia. The barring of women from entering literary tradition(s) through the writing of the tombeau has thus remained in place throughout the poetic history of the colony, until the last three decades of the twentieth century.
In the same way as the tombeau and literary traditions have been underwritten by patriarchy, representations of the colonial landscape obscure colonization and its effects. The presence of Indigenous peoples with their intricate and long-lived cultural, social and mythic connections to the land are once again entirely absent from the landscape. Connections with the land that the male poet seeks to engender through the elegy as part of land ownership and identity, is built on the absence of Australia’s First Peoples. Their ‘songs’ are silenced in the colonial tombeau by the voice of the settler poet. The powerful and long-lasting effects of the early history of the colony, as well as the continuing effects of neo-colonialism on Indigenous peoples will be discussed in the final chapter on an Australian Aboriginal poetics of loss.

In suggesting additions to the knowledge of nineteenth-century literary traditions and the forces that drive them, this discussion establishes the importance of the subgenre of tombeau in understanding its varied and complex uses in colonial Australia. It not only establishes the ways in which poetic traditions are utilized in the project of land ownership and national identity through lauding the dead, inheritance and conventions of elegy, but as Lipking observes – and as this discussion has exposed – the tombeau can be described as a nation-making genre par excellence for nineteenth-century colonial Australia.
Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

...built from a rich deposit of myths, memory and obsession...
landscape can be self-consciously designed to express
the virtues of a particular political and social community
(Schama: 1995: 15; 14).

An analysis of the contemporary tombeau from 1970 until the present continues to highlight the prominence of landscape and place in Australian settler tombeaux. The narrative of this group of elegies is less focused on a quest for a national poetic tradition as expression of a national ethos, than that of the colonial tombeau. These tombeaux suggest instead, that while twentieth and twenty-first-century postcolonial tombeaux have a number of differing concerns, there is an enduring attentiveness to Australian landscape and place in the memorialization of the dead poet. The central features of the contemporary tombeau include the presence of named and described localities in which the elegist and elegized poet’s connection to place is clearly of importance. Further, the elegist’s celebration of the dead poet’s verse often includes the representation of specific landscapes and locations that are represented within the verse of the dead poet. In this way, this group of contemporary landscape tombeaux not only establish the lived presence of the elegized poet within Australian locations, but is also intricately woven together with the commemorative aspect of the elegy with reference to the poetry of the elegized poet. I argue that both features – representation of actual landscapes and locations, and the evocation of place ascribed by the elegist as part of the dead poet’s verse – suggest the
continuing importance of the tombeau in expressing the poet’s experience and identity in relation to the land. Not only a memory of the dead, deduced through the elegized poet’s connection and experience of particular land, city and regional scapes, but the tombeau – a poem in Mallarme’s terms, already cryptal – traces the dead poet as textual ghost onto the landscapes and the places inscribed within the tombeau. Moreover, from a postcolonial perspective it is argued that a number of these tombeaux continue to express a settler disquiet concerning land ownership central to previous discussions of colonial elegy, marking the continuation of the Australian elegy as a genre involved in a number of respects with validating both a symbolic and actual ownership of the land.

In ‘The Political Imagination: Postcolonialism and Diaspora in Contemporary Australian Poetry’, Ali Alizadeh and Ann Vickery note that ‘Postcolonial studies as a disciplinary field has long investigated the complex cultural and political relationship between self and place’ (2013: 7). Landscape and place remain highly politicized in contemporary Australia as a settler nation founded on colonization. While both landscape and elegy have been shown in previous discussions as politically and culturally important ideological formations, their combination creating a powerful and durable series of discourses in colonial Australia, analysis of the contemporary tombeau shows that a number of similar concerns and discourses still prevail. WJT Mitchell’s proposition in Landscape and Power, that landscape is comparable to an ideology, and as such is an important tool for the creation of national and social identities, continues to apply in a number of important respects in terms of the contemporary tombeau. Mitchell’s contention that it is not simply about what landscape is, but also about, ‘what it does’ and ‘how’ it works as a cultural practice, remains central to this study, in that landscape does not simply imply power relations, but is ‘an instrument of
cultural power’ (2002:1-2). In keeping with Mitchell’s statements, the contemporary landscape tombeau shows that landscape and place remain central to postcolonial anxieties arising from an unsettled sense of land ownership. This is not only apparent in the frequency with which the tombeau is set in particular geographical and urban locations, and the ways in which the settler poet is central to the landscapes described, but also in the omission of the histories of Aboriginal Australians in these settler accounts of landscape and place. Furthermore, colonization and its aftermath are elided, thereby only elucidating contemporary settler experiences of Australian landscape and place in continuing imperial and nationalistic representations of a landscape that fails to acknowledge the presence and histories of Indigenous Australians.

As Alizadeh’s and Vickery’s comment above suggests, the relationship between people and the places in which they live are central to identity and conceptions of self in relation to place. Therefore, it is suggested that a key feature of the contemporary landscape tombeau is an interest in identity and the way that place and the development of a sense of personal and poetic self-identity impact on the poet and the poet’s work. Alizadeh and Vickery point out that it is not until the twenty-first century that commentators have begun to focus on poetry in postcolonial studies (2013: 7). This positions the following analysis of the contemporary tombeau as of considerable importance in how Australia as a nation sees itself in relation to its colonial history and continuing claim to the land. The following analysis furthers our understanding of the place and complexity of elegy in current poetics, and thus the ways in which the tombeau is used in contemporary settler conceptions of self and place.
Both the high number of elegies for dead poets, and the fact that many of the tombeaux discussed are by and for prominent Australian poets, are clear indications of the high status and the continuing importance of the tombeau in Australian poetics. In “To Fresh Woods and Pastures New?” Modern Australian Elegy and Literary Tradition’, Werner Senn suggests that there is ‘clearly a tradition’ of elegy in contemporary Australian poetry, commenting that there are a number of poets, ‘who engage in various critical and creative ways with this vast and dominant tradition’ (2002: 129; 128). While there are an extensive number of tombeaux published from the 1970s onwards, there appears to be something of a decline in the numbers of tombeaux appearing after the late nineteenth-century colonial tombeaux, discussed in the last chapter. This has been discussed in the introduction, however, to briefly reiterate, a few of the reasons for this decrease have been attributed to a general decline in published poetry due to new forms of media technologies; the advent of popular song; as well as a decrease in published poetry in nineteenth and early twentieth-century newspapers and magazines (Kirkpatrick: 2009: 199-222). The flexibility of elegy, which makes it an important genre for attending to particular anxieties at particular times, has been suggested in the introduction as one possible reason for the apparent decline in published tombeaux after Federation, when arguably, the need for a National poetic tradition was less important. Alternatively, in considering the rise in tombeaux from the 1970s that underwrites this chapter, the substantial increase has been associated with a general upsurge in published poetry generally, due in part to both material and cultural factors (Haskell: 1998: 265-85; McCooey: 2000: 158-182).

However, in spite of the increased publication of tombeaux from the early 1970s, tombeaux published by women are not well represented in contemporary Australian poetry. While
tombeaux written by Gwen Harwood, Rosemary Dobson, Dorothy Hewett, Kath Kenneally, Kate Jennings, Jennifer Maiden, and Jennifer Strauss are discussed later in an account of contemporary women’s tombeaux, numbers published by female poets are quite limited in comparison to the output by male poets. This continuing disparity between the number of tombeaux written by male and female elegists that has prevailed through the history of colonial elegy is considered in the following discussions; as well as a revisionary engagement of female poets with the tradition. Moreover, the following discussion of the female tombeau suggests that landscape and place, and the construction of identity, does not register with the same frequency as that of men writing tombeau.

However, the following analysis of contemporary Australian tombeaux suggests that while the attention to landscape and place in the male tombeau is an important feature of this subgenre, it is not necessarily always overtly aligned with nationalism or national poetic tradition, as in the English tradition – and as discussed in the Australian colonial elegy. In this chapter a case is made for instances of tombeau as implicated in marking the presence of a particular poetic tradition, as one of the defining impulses of the tombeau. The late-twentieth and early twenty-first century settler contemporary tombeau often marks a more personal account of the elegist and elegized poet in relation to the places and landscapes the poet lived in and wrote of, thus offering the poet’s personal experience of specific and recognizable places that are both named and described. In the colonial elegy the poet’s grave is often set within a generic or symbolic landscape, often registering the land as untamed, or unknown. The precise details of the landscape are generally less important (other than perhaps the difficult nature of the landscape), in comparison to the often all-embracing project of nationalism and national poetic traditions. Presumably, the colonial
landscape as an untamed space to be appropriated must first be ‘conquered’ and inhabited—both in real and in textual terms—before the details of place and the lived moment can unfold as narratives of a lived place. Mitchell’s *Landscape and Power* is useful here in its discussion of the difference between a colonial space and a ‘lived place’ (2002). This is a distinction in my own argument, and one that marks a movement between the landscape of *space* of the former three chapters; and the evocation of *place* in the contemporary tombeau. Mitchell points out that landscape is apprehended as image or “sight” and that lived space is not only mediated through images and symbols used by the imagination, but is ‘the province of “inhabitants and users”’, who seek to do more than describe space, but turn place as a *specific* location which is, ‘a practiced place, a site activated by movements, actions, narratives, and signs’ (2002: x).

In relation to Mitchell’s description of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’, the contemporary landscape tombeau includes the local and the particular—cities, towns, rural areas, rivers and seascapes, flora and fauna—thus offering a more eclectic sense of specific places and lived experiences from which the elegist memorializes the elegized poet and verse. Instead of an overarching focus on nationalism, the many positions inhabited by poets in Australian landscape and place are foregrounded and perceptions of nation and a people are perhaps now expressed differently in terms of nation, offering individual experience of specific locations within a particular tombeau. In representing the local and the specific, the contemporary tombeau intersects with the rise of the regional in the 1970s and 1980s in Australian literature. In ‘Nation, Literature, Location’, Philip Mead states that since the 1970s there has been a need for ‘a revised account of nationhood’ to be drafted, suggesting that it is essential to understand the relationship of ‘the imaginary’ in literary texts to the
‘multi-faceted experiences of actual lived places’ (2009: 550; 551). While a large number of tombeaux focus on the local and regional offering a challenge to older monolithic nationalistic paradigms centred around national poetic tradition, regionalism and the local do not necessarily constitute a wholly antithetical stance toward nationalism and nationalistic themes and tropes. Arguably, a lack of more overt nationalistic tendencies suggests, too, that the colonial project has been highly successful and that earlier anxieties and forms of nationalistic rhetoric no longer apply in quite the same way as they did in the colonial tombeau. Thus, the contemporary tombeau is shown as offering a regional discourse that stresses the local above the national, yet simultaneously is still often defined by its relationship to the imperialist centre and to older tropes, ideologies and genres still at least partially associated with nationalism, imperialistic and post-colonial concerns associated with land ownership.

A number of theorists comment on the similarities between a regional and a postcolonial approach, paralleling regionalism as characterized by a moving away from the centre as analogous with the movement of postcolonial literatures. In, ‘Regional Literature in Australia’, Per Henningsgaard comments on the field of literary cultural production which produces what he terms, ‘the power imbalance between regional areas and the cultural centres, between postcolonial societies and the metropolitan’ (2010: 65). In light of this disparity in cultural power, in The Empire Strikes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin equate regionalism in literature as not only characterized by a moving away from the centre, but also a corresponding movement away from the imperialist centre in postcolonial literature:
It has been argued that all postcolonial societies are constituted by their difference from the metropolitan and it is in this relationship that identity both as a distancing from the centre and as a means of self-assertion comes into being (1989: 167).

In spite of an assumption that an interest in the local shares similarities with a postcolonial poetics in its movement away from the center, I argue that nationalistic and neo-colonial impulses found in some of the contemporary tombeau create a continuation, albeit differently expressed, to that of the colonial elegy. Detailed knowledge of the local and specific in some tombeaux speak of habitation of the land creating a past history with the particular place the elegist writes of. Thus a claim through generationalism to the particular landscapes and localities, not only through a history of occupation, but in some cases also through a continuing line of poets, for which particular places are shown to be a part of their life and poetry.

While there are competing interests within this important group of tombeaux as a whole, this can also be the case within a single poem. This has been noted in western postcolonial poetry by Jahan Ramazani in *A Transnational Poetics*, in which the author offers the Irish nationalist Yeats as an example of the ways in which competing impulses in postcolonial poetry can often be found within the same poem. Ramazani states that poetry can be equally ‘put in the service of nationalism, equivocal nationalism, anti-nationalism, transnationalism, and many combinations of these positions’ (2009: 81). This marks one of the central tenets of this thesis, that elegy is a flexible genre tied to the needs of a particular time, place and historical moment. This analysis offers a number of positions as
evident within this group of the tombeaux, as well as a combination of positions, in some instances, that are taken by a particular poet: these include a focus on the local; the national; the transnational; the ahistorical; the anti-elegy, the meta-elegy, the feminist, and various conceptions of what may constitute a local, or an Australian poetic tradition.

The anti-elegy, the meta-elegy and a feminist perspective of the contemporary tombeau offer critiques of the subgenre in relation to continued imperial, nationalistic and masculinist interests evident in some of the poems. These sub-sets of tombeau stress the power structures that are inherent within the tombeau. The anti-elegy/anti tombeau critiques the tombeau for its status as a form for establishing poetic traditions aligned with the status quo; the meta-elegy makes apparent the ways in which the memorialization of the dead poet is textually constructed – laying bare the poetic and political association between memorialization of the dead poet and the landscape in the making of the tombeau; finally, women elegists point to the male power structures that underwrite the tradition, thus marginalizing the female poet from involvement in literary traditions.

**Postcolonial Ghosts**

While competing interests are evident in this group of contemporary tombeaux, the defining features lie in a focus on recent white history, while simultaneously silencing colonial history and overlaying it with contemporary white, settler visions of identity and belonging. Anxieties concerned with inhabiting place and landscape detailed within these tombeaux are further expressed in terms of the ghosting of the elegized settler poet onto the landscapes in which the poet wrote. In *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History,*
Peter Buse and Andrew Stott suggest that ‘where there are disputes over property, we find ghosts, or that where we find ghosts, there are bound to be anxieties about property’ (1999: 5). In Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation, Ken Gelder and Jane M Jacobs discuss the post-colonial condition in relation to a sense of belonging to place in terms of the psyche of a settler nation:

... one’s place is always already another’s place and the issue of possession is never complete, never entirely settled....one can never be completely in possession of place: one is always (dis)possessed, in the sense that neither possession nor dispossession is a fully realisable category (1998: 138).

Gelder and Jacobs statement suggests that in terms of both the dispossessed and the settler, possession of place can never be a ‘fully realisable category’ in a postcolonial nation where the land of the colonized is claimed by the colonizing power. This evokes the authors’ term ‘Unsettled settlement’, as underwritten by disputes concerning land ownership, which they argue is implicated in the presence of ‘the postcolonial uncanny’ in literature and poetry (1998: 23). In Postcolonial Ghosts: Fantômes Post-Coloniaux, Mélanie Joseph-Vilaine and Judith Misrahi-Barak express this condition when they state that ‘In the postcolonial world’, ‘being means being haunted, by colonization and its aftermath, but also by oneself as a postcolonial subject’ (2005: 17). This sense of disquiet is associated with a desire for authenticity in relation to a right to the land engendered by past histories through the figure of the poet/ghost, in a nation in which the psyche of the contemporary settler is faced, more and more often, by the repercussions of colonization and loss of traditional lands upon First Australians.
In *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, María del Pilar and Esther Peeren suggest ‘places are simultaneously living and spectral, containing the experience of the cultural moment as well as the many times that have already transpired and become silent’ (2013: 395). Pilar and Peeren argue that the ability to re-narrate place ‘is dependent on the stories that already occupy it’, and that ‘Spirits or ghosts, then signify the shared memories that render space (structured, disciplined, overseen) habitable as place’ (397). While the contemporary tombeau overlays the landscape with the textual ghost of the dead settler poet who haunts the elegy, these tombeaux not only elide the past event of colonization but also erase the spectre arising from the past who inhabited those places, thus the repressed and unsettled voices of the disinherited are overlaid by a settler textual haunting. The tombeau, a textual space occupied by the figure of the ghost of the dead poet, has then a powerful discursive function in its capacity to silence the voices and the ghosts of the colonial past. In the Australian context, the settler ghost may be thought of in terms of the ‘hauntology’ described in *The Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, in Derrida’s statement that, ‘haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony’ (1994: 37). While Derrida’s statement speaks of the spectral presence of colonized peoples created as a consequence of imperial processes of colonization – the unsettled dead – the settler ghost creates another haunting that obscures the spectral presence of past colonization and present neo-colonialism.

In postcolonial theorizing, postcolonial ghosts are most often the dispossessed. However, the incorporation of the ghostly textual presence of the settler poet who remains within the elegy to haunt the locales and landscapes within which the elegist has set the tombeau,
work to further engender white, settler ownership of the land through their spectral presence on the land. Ghosts are tied to mourning and inheritance, and therefore settler ghosts are aligned with a textual politics of land tenure. In speaking of the elegy in *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, Sacks reminds us that mourning and inheritance has remained closely connected ‘throughout History’ and thus, ‘Few elegies can be fully read without an appreciation of their frequently combative struggles for inheritance’ (1985: 37). Whilst Sacks discusses this in relation to the inheritance of poetic traditions, memorialization of the dead poet in the contemporary landscape tombeau through the ghosting of the poet’s spectral presence onto landscape, speaks of an inheritance of place through a textual haunting.

In ‘First Nations Phantoms & Aboriginal Specters’, Gerry Turcotte reminds us in conjunction with Derrida, that spectrality and the appearance of the ghost can tell us something about the particular place or community they arise in: that there is a special set of circumstances inducing their evocation (2009: 88). In keeping with Turcotte’s suggestion that in the colonial and postcolonial context ‘...this interpellation of the spectral – has a complex role to play in contemporary narratives of belonging’ (89), it is argued that the poet/ghost evoked by the settler elegist plays an important role in creating a sense of belonging and identity for the postcolonial settler. Joseph-Vilaine and Misrahi-Barak claim that not only are postcolonial ghosts, ‘one of the symptoms of the conflicts between Indigenous and settler cultures and people’, but they suggest that ‘In the postcolonial context, where inhabiting a place is perhaps even more of a challenge than elsewhere, the ghost appears as the ideal figure to try and negotiate “homeness”’ (2009: 16). Homeness suggests belonging and this sense of belonging to place is marked in the contemporary settler tombeau in
terms of the textual inscription of the dead poet and verse onto the landscape. This reflects Rabaté’s etymological discussion of haunting, which states that, ‘to haunt’ derives from a close relationship between haunting and inhabiting, that makes the ghost an important site for connecting location to subject (Rabaté: 1993: 52 cited in Joseph-Vilain and Mishra-Barak: 2009: 15-16).

Joseph-Vilaine and Misrahi-Barak suggest that ‘More than elsewhere, perhaps, in the colonial world ghosts ask the fundamental question of heritage: how are history, culture, identity transmitted – or not transmitted – in cultures born from conquest, conflict, and sometimes obliteration?’ (2005: 18). The authors state that ‘the figure of the ghost, used consciously or unconsciously, can be read as a manifestation of the complexity of these issues in the postcolonial world’ (18). The following analysis of the settler tombeau evaluates the question of heritage and the ways in which the tombeau is associated with expressing conceptions of settler histories, cultures, and identities.

**Ghosting the Elegized Poet and Verse onto the Landscape**

In ‘Philip Hodgins (1959-1995)’, Robert Gray’s elegy for Hodgins focuses on the ways in which the poet is inscribed within a particular region through celebration of the poet and of the poet’s verse. The oeuvre of Hodgins, who died from cancer at the age of 39, shows that the elegized poet wrote from personal life experiences, most notably the hardship of farm life; as well as his twelve-year fight with myeloid leukaemia (1997). Gray’s tombeau establishes a strong sense not only of the elegized poet, but of the dead poet’s verse shaped by Hodgins’ personal experience of place. As in many of the tombeaux discussed,
Gray’s celebration of Hodgins’ poetry is a central convention of traditional elegy associated with praise of the dead; one that is common in early Greek poetry, the English tradition, as well as formerly described in the colonial tombeau:

Your funeral recalled for me your poems;
I seemed to feel your touch about it all –
sparse trees nearby, sinuous, stringy gums,
their leaves, rags on barbed wire; the lustrous call
of furious magpies; clay instead of tombs
and low weather, with dry weeds and thistle
that we came wandering over, scattered,
to the coffin, strung above its cavity (1997: 246).

The poem is centred on details of the place of burial – continuous with the tradition of Australian colonial elegy. The hardship of running a small farm holding, due to the sparseness of the landscape – again a feature of colonial elegy – is often expressed in Hodgins’ own anti-pastoral verse, such as that of ‘Shooting the Dogs’, a poem that epitomizes the harshness of farming life in particular areas of Australia. An elegiac poem to lost farm-life, Hodgins describes the shooting of the farm dogs as a necessity, on ‘that final day on the farm’; ‘I buried them behind the tool shed / It was one of the last things I did before / we left’ (1997: 87).

Gray symbolizes Hodgins as gold returned to the earth, ‘At a mullock heap, along the gravel track / out in Victoria, something gold put back’. The vernacular exemplified in, ‘mullock heap’ recalls gold mining in Victoria, a major industry in nineteenth-century Australia, thus marking both a sense of the British colonial past in this area and of the ways in which gold
mining has left its mark on particular settler landscapes and rural histories. Speaking of Hodgins as man and poet, Gray describes Hodgins, thus:

You were as loyal as a classic Roman;
vehement and pure; a believer in style;
stoic, yet glamorous like Wilfred Owen;
the exemplar of an Australian school –
going straight for the pay-dirt of emotion,
laconic, pragmatic and sceptical (247).

The earlier reference to Ramazani’s statement that postcolonial poetics often express a number of varied, and often conflicting interests, is typified in Gray’s poem, which brings to the fore the ways in which the local and the national, the individual experience and nationalistic myth can combine in the contemporary tombeau, thus creating a mesh of competing approaches within a single elegy (2009: 81). It is perhaps surprising of a poem published in 1997 that the bush ethos of the nineteenth-century is so clearly drawn in Gray’s evocation of an ‘Australian school’ of poetry, and in Gray’s characterization of Hodgins the poet. The straight talking, honest, rational realist that Gray ascribes to Hodgins as man and poet are similar characteristics to those attributed to the colonial bushman. Gray’s description of Hodgins and his verse are an example of the durability of the iconic image of the quintessential Australian male character: one closely aligned with a nationalistic ‘spirit’ still in currency at the close of the twentieth century. Here, Gray’s tombeau suggests a nationalistic impulse that runs parallel to his focus on the local. Moreover, Gray’s tombeau, as a feature of his own oeuvre, is part of an anti-pastoral landscape tradition central to that of Hodgins, suggesting an implicit poetic lineage through...
the tombeau. In its focus on the land, on Gray’s description of the landscape, on the grave of Hodgins, and the elegized poet’s anti-pastoral verse, this elegy reflects a profound interest in representing the poet’s experience of a particular place.

In a similar vein, Les Murray’s ‘Blue Roan: For Philip Hodgins’ describes the sparseness of the land where Hodgins is buried, in the lines:

the big blue ranges looked permanent
and the stinging-trees held no hint of drought ....
All the dust for want of winter rains
but down in the creases of the picnic oak

Rather than describing an idyllic and romanticized view of the landscape inherent in more traditional pastoral elegy, Murray, like Gray and Hodgins, writes of the often harsh existence of these communities and the austerity of life on a small farming property, expressed as ‘men who remembered droughttime grass / like three days’ growth on a stark red face’; and ‘in the races and out at home / the pump of morale was primed and bled: “Poor Harry in the street, beer running out his eyes”’ (248). Moreover, Gray and Murray evoke the colonial trope of the harshness and the unforgiving nature of the terrain common to the elegies for bushmen. Murray also echoes Hodgins’ own anti-pastoral aesthetic and therefore buys into a poetic lineage similar to Gray’s, both of which are clearly regional yet at times also covertly in accordance with the creating of poetic traditions as central to the more traditional tombeau. The continuing importance of landscape in these tombeaux suggests that while regionalism may be important in
contemporary perceptions of place, the suggestion of an anti-pastoral poetic tradition can still also be seen as concerned with a national poetics that extends from a colonial landscape poetics that has characterized Australian poetry since early colonial elegy.

A focus on both the local, and a more national-orientated ownership of the land is further elicited in Murray’s tombeau by the naming of specific places in this particular area of NSW. This is seen the poet’s mention of the ‘Wingham Abattoir’, and the Northern Central Line, ‘on the Bulliac line’ – all of which locate the poetry and the poet in a particular farming community. The naming of particularities in Murray’s elegy provide a local map of place that overlays past histories, as well as a careful naming of places that institutes a personal ownership of place: a landscape in which western cattle such as the Blue Roan, western farming methods, and slaughter dominate through the Abattoir and the transport of meat by railway. This works in a similar way to the earlier elegy for the stockman by colonial poets such as Gordon in its elision of the pre-colonial past in terms of land usage, overlaying it with western forms of farming that speak of possession of the land, as well as the history of western farming on the land. Murray and Gray’s tombeau instance the earlier discussion of Mitchell in Landscape and Power, in which the author discusses the way that geographical space becomes place through the details of habitation. (2000: x). Murray’s tombeau is essentially a poem that enacts the lived moment on the landscape, and though local, like Gordon’s ‘The Sick Stockrider’, it presents a landscape that is both masculinized and bereft of Indigenous histories. Gray and Murray implicitly present a male-orientated farming world that excludes the presence of women and those other than the white, male settler, suggesting a continuing absence of women in rural areas, already in evidence in the colonial elegy.
Described as of key importance in both the history and the possession of landscape in previous chapters, naming is concerned with appropriating place. In ““A Land So Inviting and Still Without Inhabitants”: Erasing Koori Culture from (Post)Colonial landscapes’, Tony Birch describes the widespread criticism and fear that ensued at a plan to revert to the Aboriginal names of certain natural features, including the mountain ranges of the Grampians National Park in the western district of Victoria (1996). As Birch writes, the re-naming would create a landscape, ‘that would test the memory and historic identity of the European “settler” society which dominates the region numerically and culturally’ (173). The European response was of wide-spread criticism and a fear that, ‘...the name restoration project would threaten their own history of “pioneer settlement”’. Birch states that a ‘recognition of a Koori past in the area incorporated the reality of a living Koori community’ and ‘the spectre of the squattocracies’ worst nightmare, the possibilities of a land rights claim’ (173). As Birch suggests, ‘To name space is to “name histories” and also to create them’, and while whole areas and even cities have been named with Aboriginal names, this does not pose a threat because in terms of colonization, ‘cultural appropriation’ through naming represented imperial possession. However, the restoration of place names clearly re-instates an Aboriginal history and all that it entails, before, during and after colonization. As Birch suggests, reinstating Aboriginal place names can be understood by some as threatening the British colonial heritage upon which colonization was based, lying as the bedrock of the present (177).

In a similar way to the elegies of Gray and Murray, personal and poetic histories are remembered in a number of tombeaux for David Campbell through evocation of the Monaro, and of Campbell as the ‘Monaro Poet’. This discussion centres on a timeless land
evoked through these tombeau that show similar features to poems such as Gordon’s ‘The Dying Stockman’ and Harpur’s ‘The Greek of the Four Graves’. In keeping with discussion of these important colonial poems in earlier chapters, a number of tombeaux for Campbell are shown to be involved in the representation of an ahistorical ‘ancient’ landscape. Writing a wide range of poetry, Campbell is perhaps best known for his landscape poetry commemorated in the following tombeaux, together with an emphasis on the pastoral verse of the poet set in the south of New South Wales. Poems such as ‘Outback’, ‘The Stockman’ ‘Winter Stock Route’, in Campbell’s Collected Poems attest to his bush ballad roots; while poems such as ‘The Monaro’, ‘The High Plains’ and ‘Perisher’ reflect Campbell’s deep interest in the Pastoral form (1989). Moreover, the many elegies for Campbell often work to bind the elegized poet and his poetry to a particular location.

Alan Gould’s ‘Returns: For David Campbell’ gives the terrain a sense of space and emptiness that mirrors Campbell’s own pastoral verse, drawing iconic images and powerful tropes associated with his landscape poetry:

Regaining the Monaro I
put on the clothes of what is near,
light that is preworldly clear
on fences where blown grasses dry
and a lamb skull’s ransacked eye
regains the Monaro (1992: 59).

Gould’s ‘preworldly clear’ evokes a sense of the Monaro as being unchanged for millennia. Accordingly, the tombeau further draws on the atmosphere of this area in speaking of the night falling over the hills on the elegist’s return to Campbell’s Monaro country, in the lines:
Now cobalt hills like horses’ shy
  towards a darkness children fear
and all these hills will disappear
  and with them the pellucid sky
as time remakes itself and I
  regain the Monaro (59).

In a similar way, rock and stone are reoccurring motifs in a number of elegies for Campbell,
that, like Gould’s poem, elicit a sense of timelessness, as well as a permanency that
transcends the historical moment. Stones, pebbles, and rock formations are in turn a motif
in Campbell’s own verse and in this way the elegist both remembers and celebrates the
dead poet’s verse as a central principle of traditional elegy. For instance, in ‘Pools of Sound:
Remembering David Campbell’, Robert Clark writes of ‘A rough-hewn boulder in a creek’; as
well as writing of Campbell’s poems as being as enduring as stone in the lines ‘brief stones
of thought in colours’. In ‘The stone will polish with our use / to a richness like his dream
and a gold in nuggets needle light / for us who follow him’, combines stone as feature of
the Monaro, of the poetry of Campbell, as well as suggesting living poets will follow his
Skrzynecki writes, ‘I thought of water, running / cold and quickly / over pebbles and crags /
how it bears the scent of bushflowers / and wears away the hardest stone’ (1989: 14).
Similarly, in ‘To David Campbell’, Philip Martin remembers a time that the two poets spent
together, the elegist’s memory of Palerang suggests both his loss at the death of his friend,
as well as a sense of deep time beyond the present in which stone is worn away by water,
in the lines, ‘Staying with you at Palerang, I walked / Alone in the sharp grey morning
through your paddocks / And in the creekbed, picked up a stone, sculpted / By water to the outline of a heart’ (1988: 49).

Not only is a particular place and poetry of place evoked but a powerful sense of the vastness of time and space diminishes the national moment, and the recent history of Australia as a colonial possession, in favour of evoking an unpeopled realm that is deeply colonial in spirit. This is a feature of many colonial bushman elegies in which the bushman lives and dies alone in an ancient and alien landscape, heir to future ownership through experience of a landscape that up until this point is represented as uninhabited and untouched by humankind. The continuities within Australian elegy expressed in the bushman’s grave and the Monaro suggest an erasure of the long history of Aboriginal people in the landscape, a trope associated with imperialistic conceptions of Terra Nullius.

Gwen Harwood’s ‘Springtime, Oyster Cove: To the Memory of James McAuley’, also elides the more recent events and effects of colonialism, evincing instead the timeless quality of a landscape set outside of historical time. A prolific elegist and poet, in this tombeau Harwood evokes a sense of the cyclic quality of the landscape of Bruny Island, off the south east coast of Tasmania. In the lines ‘Springtime returns, old love thought lost / and found by chance / The hillside lapses / from its strict tones of cold to sweetness’, moves from linear to cyclic time (2003: 360). Harwood description of the way that life returns after the winter, as ‘Everything’s occupied with life / thrusting, relentless, fountaining / with sap and hope’; while ‘the sun sinks / ancient and great’, speaks of timelessness and of Harwood’s sense of the primordial nature of the landscape. The tension between death in ‘Death’s soft tongue breaks your bones, in darkness / returns you to the earth you loved, and ‘Springtime
returns’, ‘Everything is occupied with life’, creates a tension between death and ensuing life that reflects the heart of the pastoral form as the poem moves from the death of the elegized poet towards a sense of renewal located in the natural world. In *The English Elegy*, Sacks discusses the vegetation rights of rebirth at the heart of the pastoral form, in which the passing of the seasons and the regeneration of nature is ‘not only to mourn his own image but also to identify that image with nature’s power of regeneration’, thus also concerned with a sense of humankind’s own regeneration (1985: 20).

In a second elegy, ‘A Memory of James McAuley’, Harwood writes of the two poets working together, as ‘We are sitting with mugs of tea / and a shuffled *Quadrant* folder’, setting the *immediate*, against ‘a Devonian brachiopod’, ‘I had chipped from shrouding rock’ (2003: 148). Moreover, the immensity of time in McAuley’s reply ‘“When this was newly made / the earth was already old / but then, for the first time, clothed in green”’, depletes any sense of recent history (148). As in the tombeaux for David Campbell centred on the Monaro, the landscape of Bruny Island remains untouched by a concern with national ‘time’, omits recent history, and is eerily silent in terms of Indigenous pre-colonial history and colonization. Harwood’s elegy evokes a single view of the history of this particular landscape, subsequently making irrelevant the colonial history of Tasmania, particularly as documented in the former discussions of elegies for a dying-race, in which Truganini of the Nuenone people was elegized as the last Tasmanian Aboriginal person dying in the 1870s. Born on Bruny Island (Lunawanna – Alonnah), her father Mangerner, a tribal elder and all members of her close family, as all her people, were casualties of colonization. In *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Ashcroft Griffiths and Tiffin, describes the way in which landscape is appropriated and identity established: ‘The concepts of place and
displacement demonstrates the very complex interaction of language, history and environment in the exploitation of colonized peoples and the importance of space and location in the process of identity' (2000: 177). Through language, the landscape tombeau writes of contemporary settler experiences and histories of lands and places that express a sense of identity with particular landscapes, whilst displacing the past and present histories of Indigenous peoples on the land.

A.D. Hope’s ‘Death of the Poet: In Memoriam: J.P.M.’ (1977), establishes the impact of a particular place on the identity and poetry of the poet, while continuing representation of a particular view of landscape in terms of evoking white histories. Hope’s tombeau focuses on the ways landscape nurtures the imagination and the creativity of the poet, thus contributing to a sense of personal and poetic identity. Situated on an outlying promontory of Tasmania, Mount Wellington rising above the town of Hobart, Hope recalls McAuley’s verse, commenting on the way the poetry of the former poet brought this particular landscape to life for Hope and other readers of McAuley’s poetry:

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the island which your lucid poet’s eye
made living verse; wildflowers and sedge and tree
and creatures of its bushland, shore and sky
took root in poetry (4).
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Poet and landscape are defined and fused through the act of writing poetry as each informs the other: the ‘living verse’ composed from McAuley dwelling in this particular landscape reflects how place is created by ‘the poet’s lucid eye’, and ‘through the poet’s mouth’; as
well as how powerful poetry can be in the re-creation of both actual place, and the places ‘of the heart’.

In a trope common to the early Greek and English tradition of elegy, and to the colonial tombeau, the landscape is personified in Hope’s poem:

Where the great mount’s apocalyptic beast
now guards your bones and watches from the height,
fixing his lion gaze towards the east
for the return of light (4).

Hope’s tombeau recalls the great self-elegy by the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, ‘Under Ben Bulben’ (1939). In this, Yeats describes his own burial and burial plaque, ‘Under bare Ben Bulben’s head / In Drumcliff churchyard, the Irish nationalist, Yeats is laid’. Yeats positions himself as part of the landscape and of the landscape of national Irish poetry. Similarly, Hope’s tombeau is also informed by a nationalistic subtext in relation to the trope of Mount Wellington as guarding the honoured poet’s bones, suggested by its analogy with Yeats great self-elegy.

Hope’s elegy also recalls part of his own childhood spent in Hobart, expressing a debt to McAuley’s poetry for evoking Hope’s home of childhood in the lines ‘It was my island too, my boyhood’s home / My land of similes; from all you gave / This I hold close and cherish’ (4). Here, Hope places himself and McAuley within a known place and a poetry that comes out of and textually recreates a particular place: one that binds both poets – McAuley’s poetry and Hope’s tombeau – to this part of Tasmania. The inscription of place in the
tombeaux by Gray, Murray, Harwood and Hope create a well from which poet and verse spring in a similar way to the central place of the land in the colonial tombeau. In this, both poet and landscape are marked by a profound relationship through the tombeau which again speaks of a desire to express one’s identity as honed from, and as part of, a particular place.

Representing the important influence that this part of Tasmania played in the poetic identity of both McAuley and Hope is in some respects counter-intuitive in terms of a national poetics. Hope’s tombeau can be seen to also challenge a poetics based on national myths of identity. It offers an alternate understanding of the importance of a particular location and the ways in which experience of particular places imbue the individual and their poetry, as well as their sense of identity through a personal contact with particular landscapes. However, even though a focus on the regional can be seen as a distancing from the imperialist centre and national history, it also elides colonial history and the repercussions of colonization. While Mount Wellington is utilized as a trope to oversee the grave of McAuley, the repercussions of colonization are lost to this area. Mount Wellington also overlooks Risdon Cove, site of a massacre of over one hundred Aboriginal people in 1804. The history of colonization and nation and particularly of Tasmania is silenced, thus offering a continuation of what is still clearly an imperialist’s representation of landscape, experience and ownership: one in which the powerful trope of the mythic guarding of the poet’s bones by Mount Wellington comes to represent part of the history of this area. The views of the landscape chosen by the poet in these tombeaux are of course by no means accidental. In _Landscape and Power_, Mitchell states that landscape is not only an instrument of cultural power, but ‘an agent of power that is (or frequently represents itself)
as independent of human intentions’ (2002: 1-2). In representing the landscape in relation to contemporary settler histories, excludes other views associated with colonization by overlaying it with particular settler views, which as Mitchell states of discursive practices associated with landscape ‘is the medium by which the evil is veiled and naturalized’ (29).

In the following discussion a view of the coast of NSW is considered in relation to David Brooks’ ‘The Cormorant: I.M. R.F. Brissenden,’ which describes the beach, ocean and shoreline of NSW. Both Brissenden and Brooks wrote verse cantered on the coast of NSW; Brooks’ description of a beach after the storm, ‘littered with bluebottles / clumps of dark feathers / several great jelly fish / moon-blue and magical,’ recalling Brissenden’s own rich and detailed coastal poetry (1995: 122). Brooks’ recollections of Brissenden are embedded in the coastal waters of NSW and thus firmly attached to place; one that has become synonymous with a contemporary vision of Australian culture and an Australian way of life. Brooks’ elegy evokes this area, in, ‘all afternoon / a ghost moon / low and full over Durras,’ signalling the way in which the coastline, free from the urban sprawl, allows us to view the passage of the moon against an empty and serene skyline (122).

A poem of transformations, Brooks’ tombeau moves from life to death, poet to bird, landscape to the heavens, Brooks fusing the iconic Australian bird – the cormorant – with the spirit of Brissenden. In this way Brooks renders the dead Brissenden metaphorically as part of the landscapes that the dead poet once loved and wrote about. As described in an earlier chapter, this convention lies at the roots of the pastoral elegy itself in the early Greek myth in which Apollo’s Daphne is transformed into a laurel tree. Brissenden is
Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

represented as the cormorant in the lines ‘the large cormorant out on the point’, ‘perched on sea rocks / diving into the blue-black water’:

I feel a cold
Thril of regret
Of recognition

Knowing the black wings,
The slender feet,

Knowing the claws
I had never thought so delicate

Knowing these eyes (184).

These lines not only create a strong sense of Brissenden’s poetry and the poet himself, but the dead poet becomes cormorant, and as such becomes part of place. In the depiction of Brissenden’s spiritual presence as ‘in the high branches / Staring down the stars, Brooks not only encompases cormorant, poet and place, but the elegized poet and his verse become synonymous with the landscape:

your death has gone out into the night
somewhere in the hollow dark an owl
sits on the stone hump of your spine
wallabies tear at the green shoots of you

your body already the ant’s kingdom
eyes
in the high branches
staring down the stars (183).

In its movement between earth and sky, earthliness and spirituality, ‘the eyes / in the high branches / staring down the stars’, suggests the ongoing power of the poet after death as continuing in the natural world; a feature described earlier in colonial tombeaux. In, ‘knowing these eyes’, Brooks’ representation of Brissenden as textual cormorant haunts both the poem and the landscape. The poetic voices of both the elegist and the poetry of the elegized recalls what Joseph-Vilain and Misrahi-Barak describe as the artist in the postcolonial world: a voice that is ‘always ghostly, always a “phantom tongue” carrying the various layers of a complex history’ (2005: 18).

Harwood’s, Hope’s and Brooks’ tombeaux speak of the pastoral elegiac convention of the dead poet’s body as becoming part of the landscape. In Harwood’s poem it is evoked as, ‘Death’s soft tongue breaks your bones, in darkness / returns you to the earth you loved’; in Hope’s elegy it is in the ‘bones’ of McAuley that lie under Mount Wellington; while in Brooks’, it is expressed as ‘your body already in the ant’s kingdom’. In connection with the aforementioned elegiac convention associated with death and the rebirth of the vegetation Gods in early Greek pastoral elegy, the dead poet become physically and symbolically part of the landscape he or she inhabited, making the elegy, again, a fitting genre for establishing a powerful connection between landscape, the dead, and the living poet. Moreover, ‘Those eyes’ in Brooks’ elegy for Brissenden; ‘the return of light’ in Hope’s elegy; and the ‘return of spring’ in Harwood’s elegy for McAuley renders the poet symbolically as part of the landscape after death, through renewal.
Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

In the following suite of tombeaux for David Campbell by Rosemary Dobson, ‘The Continuance of Poetry: Twelve Poems for David Campbell’, the elegist evokes a transcendent presence of Campbell on the land in a similar way to that of Brooks’ cormorant (1984). It is one in which the dead poet becomes the essence of place intertwined with and as landscape itself, one created both through the tombeau, as well as through the memory of the verse of the dead poet. As discussed earlier in Postcolonial Ghosts, Joseph-Vilaine and Mishrahi Barak suggest that the ghost is an ‘ideal figure’ to try and negotiate “homeness” (2009: 16). The poet/ghost haunting the places that he or she once lived in and wrote of, creates this sense of ‘homeness’, thereby expressing a sense of belonging and permanence in the landscape. The continuance of the ghostly presence of the dead poet in the landscape through the evocation of place is engendered in Rosemary Dobson’s tombeau, in which a search for Campbell in the landscape unfolds through evoking the dead poet’s verse. Dobson’s ‘Continuance’ is also one of Australian contemporary poetry’s most notable melding’s of eastern and western poetics. It is a suite of poems that reflects Ramazani’s thesis concerning ‘…a reconceptualization of twentieth and twenty-first century studies of poetry. Straddling not only the transatlantic divide but also the vast historical and cultural divisions between global North and South, East and West’ (2009: x), Dobson’s suite of poems for Campbell unfolds what Ramazani calls an examination of cross-cultural and cross-national exchanges (xii). Dobson’s important elegy for Campbell offers an alternative sense of contemporary western poets and poetics by drawing not only on the transnational but also on transcultural symbolism and transcultural and trans-historical poetics. In essence, ‘Continuance’ it is about a shared project across space, culture and time between Dobson and Campbell concerning the early Tang Dynasty poets. For the two poets, Campbell and Dobson, the sharing of poetry from across cultures
creates poems that ‘blow away like pollen / Find distant destinations’ and ‘Can seed new songs / In another language’, suggesting that a global poetics is a distinct and rich possibility.

Dobson searches for Campbell in the landscape and within his poetry, is as the earlier Tang Dynasty poets, who had sought their own dead poets in their landscape poetry. Dobson’s ‘Poems of the Wang River’ (the collection of poems of the same name by the Chinese poets Wang Wei and P’ei Ti who created poems in couplets as they walk together in the landscape), is the setting for Dobson to say to her dead friend and poetic colleague, Campbell, ‘Could you join me once more? / Out walking now I see blonde grass / Wild orchids, black cattle and the daylight moon’ (43). Here, Dobson re-creates the poetry of Campbell and the landscape of his poetry in her tombeau. We see glimpses of Campbell and his landscape poetics in Dobson’s suite of poems, such as in ‘The House’, where Campbell is sensed as hovering in the ‘the long white clouds low at the horizon’; and, again in the, ‘white clouds [that] gather under the rafters’ (39). However, Campbell becomes visible in the final poem, ‘After Receiving the Poems of Li Po’, the poet materializing within the Australian landscape through Dobson’s memory of Campbell’s own landscape poetry:

Not being able to find the hermit he wanted to visit
Li Po looked deeper into the landscape.
Like Li Po we lean against a pine tree;
And looking into the landscape find your poems (46).

The poetry of Campbell as much as Campbell himself has become a part of the natural world. Dobson, too, writes of ‘we’ as the readers of Campbell’s poems who find him
transposed onto and as poetic essence, thus becoming part of the landscape. In ‘The Messenger’, Dobson writes of the somatic qualities of Campbell’s poems – so evocative of the corporeal world they take on physical form. Using synaesthesia Dobson instils life through the senses into Campbell’s poems:

Here are the poems: stones, shell, water.
This one weighs in the hand. This one is shining.
This one is yellow. And smooth to the fingers.
*Ching chink* says this one clear as a wind-bell (36).

This somatic quality of the elegized poet’s verse becomes landscape in the same sense as the presence of the cormorant in the landscape, discussed above in relation to Brook’s elegy for Brissenden. Dobson’s own search for Campbell (and finding the dead poet through Campbell’s own poetry) is fruitful as she looks, ‘deeper into the landscape’ to discover Campbell is not gone but remains in the landscape through the presence of his poetry. In the final poem, ‘After Receiving the Book of Poems by Li Po’ Dobson writes:

Rounded stones in the blue thread of the river.
White, scoured, turning in their roundness.
With the slight movement of poems.
Settling deeper in the mind (46).

The ‘Rounded stones’ become the ‘slight movement of poems’ as poem and place, elegist and elegized hover together – indivisible – a suggestion of connectedness and seamlessness between the poet, the poet’s verse and the landscape as each makes and re-makes the other. I suggest that in both Li Po’s and Dobson’s search for the monk and the poet
respectively, the landscape is not metaphor for something else in the poet’s mind but exists for itself and as part of itself and part of being. ‘The dry bed of the river’, ‘the fallen needles of she-oak’, ‘the rounded stones’ and the ‘pine tree’ in Dobson’s poem (46), like Li Po’s ‘roaring waters’, ‘wild bamboo’, ‘flying clouds’ and ‘jasper peaks’ (Cooper: 1974: 29), are all presented as themselves and without reference to anything other than the monk and poet who are, through their verse, a fundamental part of the landscape’s they wrote of.\(^3\) The elegized poet becomes a ghostly figure within the landscapes of their own poetry, and within the tombeau that celebrates their verse.

**The Haunting of City and Suburban Places**

In the following discussion, the elegist ghosts the elegized poet onto urban and city environments, the dead poet remaining to haunt the urban areas within which they are memorialized. John Tranter’s ‘Elegy for Martin Johnston (1947-90)’ creates a view of Sydney in the late 1970s and 1980s through specific mention of the Toxteth Hotel in Glebe, the Balkan Restaurant, both popular haunts of a coterie of Australian poets of the time. Tranter remembers the poetry scene around the Poetry Readings that took place between 1979 and 1982 at Sydney’s Exiles Bookshop in Oxford Street. Aligned with the ‘New’ Australian poetry scene, Tranter, Johnston, Gig Ryan, Dorothy Porter, Laurie Duggan, Rae Desmond Jones and Luke Davies, were among the poets who attended these readings, Tranter observing the cultural milieu of these Sydney-based Australian poets. Tranter writes:

> Not the scent of meat hissing on the grill
Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

at the Balkan – the tables are filling up –
early one evening somewhere in the seventies
as the shops along Oxford street come alight,
buses winding through the traffic, and
Nicholas puts up the Mickey Mouse poster
in the window of Exiles Bookshop
advertising a poetry reading (2006: 122).

This speaks of poetic histories tied to place, and what has been termed, the ‘New’
Australian poetic tradition expressed by this particular group of poets. However, while a
reverie of the past, there is also a strong sense of the continued presence of Johnston
through the use of the present tense in Tranter’s elegy, ‘the party still going at 4 a.m. / an
old Miles Davis record on the gramophone / the ashtray spilling over – your move’, suggests
the ghostly presence of the dead poet in his old haunts, fixed or frozen for ever by the
memory of Johnston transcribed into the tombeau.

This sense of the ‘presence’ of the elegized poet remaining after death in Tranter’s
tombeau, is discussed in *Elegy* by David Kennedy in relation to elegies for Forbes in Ken
Bolton’s collection, *for john forbes* (2002). Kennedy suggests that these elegies ‘seek ways
of keeping their subject’s singularity in the world’ (2008: 114). This sense of the poet’s
‘singularity in the world’, places the dead Forbes’ continued presence in the streets of the
city and the suburbs within which he lived and wrote. In the same way, Bolton’s ‘Coffee and
John Forbes Poem’ pictures Forbes writing late at night:

  in your place, rather barren
  a naked light maybe over you
your head, your glasses, a T-shirt, maybe TV going
in the corner – the sound down

Equally, in ‘For John Forbes’, Cath Kenneally re-creates a ghostly vision of Forbes when she writes, ‘You stood at the end of the table there / inclined at that alarming forward angle / declaiming ‘Total Fucking Gas to Gabe’ (2002: 35-6). In a similar way, Tranter’s ‘God on a Bicycle’ places Forbes on ‘Carlton’s sidewalks’ and ‘outside “Readings” bookshop’, remembered, ghost-like and formlessly changing shape, as, ‘a handful of snow turns into a cloud / shaped like a camel, then a weasel’ (2002: 39). Written in the present tense, Tranter also ghosts Forbes on his bicycle, Forbes riding through the streets of South Melbourne described as ‘Right now he’s / bouncing off a silver Volvo as it makes the turn / into the driveway of “Gino’s Gents Apparel” / first you hear the thump, then the car tyres crunching to a stop...’ (2002: 39). So, too, Chris Burns’ ‘Ode to James Baker’s Eternal Teenager’, says of a ghostly Forbes’, ‘I want to be invisible like you’, again written in the present tense, the presence of the poet and his ‘voice’ is left, still reverberating in the city after the poet’s death:

John, complaining about the quality of mineral water
in Sydney shopping malls
& John, praising the “superior architecture”

In ‘Sydney; i.m. Robert Harris’, Forbes traces the textual ghost and the poetics of Robert Harris, as still lingering in the Sydney suburbs in the lines ‘but you sing a song like / the
clinking of schooners / the city’s still hearing / when they are dead and gone’ (2000: 122-3). In celebrating the poet’s verse, as is a central tenet of the tombeau, the verse of Harris remains to be heard in the city after the poet’s death.

Similarly, Chris Wallace-Crabbe’s tombeau, ‘Memories of Vin Buckley Spelt from Sibyl’s Golden Leaves’, places the elegized poet in Melbourne, in ‘... elegant autumn weather / filling gold coined Grattan Street / brings you obliquely back again / small-footed, huffing along to Martini’s / rather slowly / toward grilled whiting...’ (1998: 24). Wallace-Crabbe also describes Buckley at the University of Melbourne as a ghost whirling around him: ‘Yellow, frail, eddied, a linden leaf / trails its gyre around me’, here the elegist likening the dead poet to the falling of a leaf around him (25). Wallace-Crabbe imagines what the spirit of Buckley would say: ‘Trust nobody but women and old friends / your ghost would still say / treading on soundless delicate feet’ (25).

In a similar vein, ‘Dream of Return, i.m. of Gwen Harwood’, Thomas Shapcott writes of Harwood as not only haunting Brisbane but as a ghostly presence amidst the flora and fauna of Brisbane:

Back, again to stand in the school playground
in the January heat with those last scarlet flowers
of the coral tree littering the sandstone ridge
and those black Poinciana seedpods the smell
and colour of hot bitumen –they are the places she haunts,
a tangible ghost and they are all Brisbane (2000: 34-5).
Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

The ghosting of the poet on both rural and urban landscapes is a plotting of the histories and poetries of these poets on the land and city scapes of contemporary Australia. These tombeaux suggest an inheritance of place and a repository of memory that is passed down through the tombeau from the dead to the living poet. However, the ghosts here also engage in what John Potts describes in ‘Rough Justice and Buried Country: Australian Ghosts’, as ‘a figure that performs cultural work’; that, amongst a number of roles, the ghost is ‘a marker of territory, and a ‘form of cultural memory’ (2009: 177). As a territorial marker, these settler tombeau are involved in possession of place through poetry and habitation; whilst as cultural memory they are important in creating a sense of identity through the past.

Anti-Elegy: Challenging the Traditional Tombeau

The following tombeaux are also set within Australian cities or suburbs, but whilst they continue to display an emphasis on particular locations, they also critique the metropolitan centre through creating an anti-elegy that openly criticize or parodies a number of the conventions of the traditional English elegy. In ‘The Contemporary Anti-Elegy’, R. Clifton Spargo writes of the “‘anti-elegiac’” as a subgenre in itself, which he characterizes as a means of ‘emptying poetry of its inherited cultural value’ (2012: 414). Spargo describes the anti-elegy as ‘a break with the tradition of elegy’; one which was underway by the middle of the twentieth century and now firmly established in the twenty-first century (415). The author states that anti-elegy is a subgenre in which the poet enacts ‘a gesture against the conservative, constrictive aspects of literary tradition’; one clearly mirrored in the Australian anti-elegy (416). Spargo notes of the anti-elegy that such elegies ‘build on a resistance to resolution or commemoration embedded in the tradition’ (416). This
resistance to resolution, and the impossibility of such a project in the face of death, is central to a large and important group of anti-elegy/anti-tombeau in contemporary Australian poetics. In keeping with Spargo’s assessment and timeline, above, contemporary Australian poetry shows that the anti-elegy is as an important parallel stream of elegy written in the latter part of the twentieth-century. These tombeaux lack the obligatory sense of completion or pleasing circularity of life and death of the elegized poet’s life and triumphs; the anti-elegy offering little sense of restitution or hope gleaned from a life well-lived. Instead, these contemporary Australian anti-tombeaux write an often acerbic and anti-establishment verse that sets out to attack the status quo. The anti-tombeau also mounts a critique of the subgenre of tombeau itself and therefore its cultural links to national poetic traditions, and in the final analysis the veracity of the traditional elegiac form. A number of prominent poets have written important anti-elegy, including John Kinsella’s ‘Grotesque: an elegy & a parody: for John Forbes (1997: 342-3); ‘Ode to James Baker’s Eternal Teenager: I.M. john forbes (2002: 137-9); ‘The Great Poet Reconsiders the Generation of 68, after John Tranter’ by Peter Goldsworthy (1977: 44); ‘Without Preamble: Martin Johnston 1947-1990’ by Kate Jennings (2011: 180-7); and the generic, ‘The Elegist’ by Geoff Page (1983: 59-60). The caustic tone in Page’s anti-elegy sums up the way in which the traditional elegy is politically aligned with the poetic establishment, the white hegemony, and a sense of gain for the elegist expressed in ‘Sleek, dark-suited / as if on the payroll / and with and undertaker’s / nervousness of hands’ (59).

There is a focus on John Forbes in the following discussion of contemporary anti-tombeau in terms of the poet’s critique of a state-sanctioned national poetry: a critique that suggests
that discourses associated with national poetic traditions are only inclusive for some poets and for some forms of poetry. In ‘Australian Poetry: 1970-2005’, David McCooey notes of Forbes’ poetry that ‘Forbes’ odes and public poems evoke and parody the project of originating a nation poetically’, noting that poems like, ‘On the Beach: A Bicentennial Poem,’ presents poetic vocation, ‘ironically, as absurd and shameful in Australia in its bicentennial year’ (2007: 194). McCooey’s assessment is apparent in Forbes’ ‘mock-elegy’, ‘lassu in cielo: i.m. Martin Johnston’, in which Forbes’ anti-elegy is a memory of Johnston that is clearly not imbued with national cultural capital, but tells of Forbes and Martin chopping garlic in the Sydney suburb of Glebe (2001). In subject matter and tone the tombeau questions the authenticity and authority of the elegy:

Remember those post-binge
mid-seventies Glebe mornings –
lantana and sandstone, bits
of Harbour out the window

& the light, intense and blue?
I crawl downstairs & there’s

Martin chopping garlic to
vague, patrician interjections –

mate, isn’t garlic something
one can overdo?’

Martin pauses, mock pedantic –
Aristotle, Galen, Hippocrates
Elegist and elegized are presented as ‘post-binge’, located in Glebe amidst the suburban lantana, a troublesome weed, and the popular sandstone buildings of an early 70’s Sydney suburb. The usual attention to the natural world, a central convention of the tombeau, is reduced to ‘bits of harbour’ and Forbes’ parodying of traditional descriptions of nature through his rhetorical question concerning the colour of the light; as well as his rhetorical question drawing the reader to not only become aware of the conventions of the genre but to question the veracity of the elegy. The focus of the poem, the ‘garlic’, leads to a discussion of early Greek and Roman philosophers and doctors, Hippocrates, for example, considered the father of Western medicine, thus parodying the learned mention of ancient scholarly references that is an important feature found in the English tradition of tombeau. There is a tension between this and the demotic language of the Forbes’ poem, such as ‘mate’ ‘crawl’, ‘bits’ and ‘swig’ which add irony to the anti-elegy and act as counterpoint to the learned references. Johnston’s poetry is not commemorated nor his life extoled as important traditional conventions of the genre. Instead, the subgenre is trivialized by a discussion of the amount of garlic to be used and any sense of the unfolding of mourning, celebration of the poet, the poet’s verse as memorial, or transcendence falter as another poet, David Campbell presumably present on this Glebe morning, is remembered in the lines ‘...David Campbell DSO, DFC / takes another swig of whisky / looks up & says, “I see. I see”’ (195).
Here, Forbes is seen to strike at the heart of the commemorative aspect of the elegy. The comedic memory of the dead poet questions the authenticity of the genre, and as Spargo suggests of the anti-elegy, ‘...the mourning poet typically presumes a rupture in ideal memory or a fault in its foundation’ and ‘grief must oppose the ordinary regulation or maintenance of the social order on ethical grounds’ (2012:428). In Forbes’ anti-elegy, the memory of the incident and the way in which garlic replaces praise of the dead poet works to deconstruct the elegy as either a plausible form for mourning or celebration, or indeed for the carrying of national poetic traditions.

Forbes’ ‘Sydney: i.m. Robert Harris’, mounts a critique of the life and opportunities of Harris in the latter years of Harris’ life (2001). In this, Forbes writes a damning account of the reality of poverty for Harris as man and poet in a marginalized poetic milieu, specifically of the ways that life in Parramatta in the suburbs of Sydney touched Harris’ own life:

```
you’re reconciled to breathing
gunk you can’t escape, don’t
want to, defined by decisions
you took for granted years ago,
like shiny flecks of mica in the
footpath tar, reflecting now
your own pattern of stars, free
to sparkle, (not fake free-willed
human particle –as if being
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Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

Use of the pronoun ‘you’ suggests this elegy is both addressed to Forbes himself, as well as alluding to the unofficial reality of life in the suburbs for a poet without money. The poet and the importance of poetry to the national ethos is redundant for Harris, for whom keeping body and soul together as a poet is a far cry from narratives of the lucky country and national poetic lineage. Forbes clearly suggests that life in these suburbs contributed in no small way to the death of Harris, who died at a relatively young age from heart attack, and possible influenza, and as Forbes writes, ‘you’re reconciled to breathing / gunk you can’t escape’ (123).

As central to anti-elegy, Forbes parodies the generic convention of the transcendence of the dead poet in ‘the tiny flecks of mica’ to the heavenly body who, once dead, will then shine down on the human world as a beacon to ensuing generations. This is perhaps most famously evoked in Milton’s ‘Lycidas’, in ‘…and with new spangled ore / Flames in the forehead of the morning sky’ (1637); as well as in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s, ‘Adonais’ for John Keats, when, ‘...the soul of Adonais, like a star’ ascends to the heavens’ (1821). In writing of Harris as part of ‘your own pattern of stars, free / to sparkle, (not fake free-willed human particle –as if being / shiny was to choose), to refuse’ (122), Forbes flouts this traditional elegiac convention, instead suggesting that after the confines of Harris’ life as a poet, he is now ‘free to sparkle’, but only in death. A sense of irony is also drawn between the life of Harris the poet and official narratives, not only of the supposed revered status of poet, but of the spirit of a nation that a national poetry engages with. At odds with the notion of a
poet who enshrines a people and a culture in the colonial tombeau, these anti-elegies suggest the impossibility of such a project for many, and for Harris in particular, who is not a part of the accepted poetic establishment.

In ‘Memory of Kenneth Slessor’, Laurie Duggan writes an anti-elegy for the nationalist poet Kenneth Slessor. A poet who writes of place, Slessor, known as the poet of Sydney and Sydney Harbour, his elegies amongst the most well-known in mid-century Australian poetics. Slessor can be described as a nationalistic poet in many respects. The poet’s elegies, ‘Five Visions of Captain Cook’ and ‘Beach Burial’, for the war dead at Anzac Cove, represent part of the nationalistic vein in the poet’s work (Semmler: 1976: 71-3; 127). One of the best-known Australian poems is Slessor’s ‘Five Bells’; working on several levels, the elegy for the journalist Joe Lynch who drowned in Sydney Harbour, is also a meditation on time (121-7). Furthermore, this elegy, in what is a convention of an increasing number of more contemporary elegies, may also be termed a self-elegy, the poet’s own death ghosting the poem. Duggan’s epitaph for Slessor, as ‘Aussie vessel’ who is ‘emptied of its scotch and dry,’ is scathing to say the least for the national poet, Slessor (1996: 48). In associating Slessor with ‘the fin de siècle antics / Of the frothy New Romantics’; as well as remarking that Slessor’s poetry is an object of study at university in which ‘to sing outside of lecture notes’, Duggan critiques the ‘right-wing editorship’ of Australian poetry in the previous decades in which Slessor wrote. Duggan focuses instead on the ‘drugs and ale’ imbibed, thus setting up a critique of the Australian poet through a series of remarks that humanise, rather than extol the figure of the poet. In his elegy for Slessor, Duggan reflects Spargo’s main thesis, that, ‘the surest sign of anti-elegy… resides in its refusal to find restitution in the function of commemoration in culture’ (2012: 427).
In critiquing a nationalist poetics, these anti-elegies point to the inequity of power between the local and the centre. However, while many of these poems successfully critique the imperialistic centre and national conceptions of poetry through an opposing anti-elegy such as these by Forbes and Duggan, these tombeau are still concerned with poetic traditions, albeit critiquing national poetic modes in favour of a more regional, suburban or alternative poetics. They adhere to what Ramazani terms in *The Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* as a, ‘generic dislocation with a subplot of generic perpetration’ (1994: 10). To return to Spargo’s concluding remarks concerning the relationship between elegy and anti-elegy, the writer states that ‘the contemporary anti-elegy may deploy a figurative break in the tradition, even while carrying forward themes or elements prepared by the tradition itself...’ (2012: 416). In this view, it can be argued that these poets writing anti-elegy still use the traditional genre for concerns associated with the state of Australian poetics. Elegiac conventions such as the mock ascendancy of Harris and the concern with thwarted poetic legacy, arguably still draw on the genre’s traditional conventions, even while using them as a negative impulse. Further, the marginalized status of Harris as Australian poet in terms of the establishment is still centrally concerned with the state of Australian poetics, albeit, exclusionary for some.

Furthermore, the anti-tombeau cannot be placed under the rubric of postcolonial poetry in spite of its critique of the centre due to its being a part of what is largely a white, masculinist anti-establishment position: one that prefigures the later discussion of the female tombeau; as well as that of Aboriginal elegy. The city and suburban scapes of these tombeaux present a singular and particular white settler male ‘view’ of place and poetry which, while they critique imperialistic divisions between the centre and the margins, the
relative absence of tombeau by women and non-Anglo-Celtic poets suggest that a number of differing power structures operate within contemporary Australian poetics. While some poets were not seen as representative of nation, the anti-elegy still expresses the voice of the dissenting poet as a white settler male within a masculinist culture. Moreover, Forbes’ and Duggan’s anti-elegies still position their memories of the dead firmly within particular Australian locations, thus continuing to create a settler view of Australian landscape and place. Forbes anti-elegy for Johnston writes of the ‘harbour’, ‘lantana’ and the ‘sandstone’ of Glebe; for Harris, too, the suburb of Glebe is described; while Duggan places Slessor, the poet who evoked Sydney and the harbour in his poetry, in William Street and Billyard Avenue. As is the central focus of this chapter, these poems are associated with imperialism in that they obscure other views and past histories; as well as revealing the patriarchy at the centre of the tombeaux.

Re-Conceptualizing the Elegy: The Female Contemporary Tombeau

In keeping with the anti-elegist as most often male, most tombeaux are written by male poets. Of 170 contemporary tombeau considered for this chapter, less than 20 were written by women poets. Furthermore, the tombeaux written by women tend not to show an overriding interest in positioning the elegized poet within a particular Australian location, either physically or symbolically. However, having said this, the suite of elegy for Campbell by Rosemary Dobson, as well as Gwen Harwood’s elegies for James McAuley – discussed above – place the elegized poet within the locations represented in the dead poet’s verse. This suggests, that in relation to these elegies, Dobson and Harwood are a part of the landscape tradition found in a considerable number of contemporary tombeau.
There are tellingly few tombeaux written to commemorate women poets, by women poets; several of the exceptions found include ‘Coda’ for Gwen Harwood by Diane Beckingham (1996); ‘To Mary Gilmore’ by Judith Wright (1994); ‘Lilly’ by Jennifer Maiden for Dorothy Hewett (2005: 99); ‘Revisiting the Bay’ (for Dorothy Porter) by Judith Beveridge (2015: 72). Maiden’s tombeau from Friendly Fire: New Poems, for example, recalls Hewett’s poetry in ‘Dorothy’s shy, tough, hesitant, larrikin voice’ (99). That so few tombeaux are written by female poets for female poets suggests that the subgenre has been little used by women poets in relation to establishing female literary traditions, in the way the men have adopted the subgenre.

There are a number of elegies by male poets for female poets, including Thomas Shapcott’s ‘For Judith Wright’ (1995: 58-9); Andrew Burke’s elegy for Dorothy Hewett, ‘Dorothy, Dorothy, Dorothy’ (2004: 173); Bruce Beaver, ‘A Nest of Nonnets’ (2001: 2018-19) for Gwen Harwood; Eric Beach, ‘What Use is Love’, for Gwen Harwood (1996: 48-9); Peter Goldsworthy’s ‘The Dark Side of the Head’, for Gwen Harwood (1996: 96); ‘Letter to Vicki Viidikas’ by Robert Adamson (2001: 39); ‘Nocturnal’ by Stephen Edgar, for Gwen Harwood (2008: 45-6); ‘The Day Dorothy Porter Died’ by Dennis Haskell (2011: 19). Shapcott’s tombeau ‘For Judith Wright’, remembers Wright’s rainforest poetry, saying ‘from your words I discovered my own landmarks’ (59). Furthermore, Shapcott speaks of Wright’s involvement in her own writing of the ills of colonization in the lines ‘I sensed that already you had gone from the, rainforest / back to some more gaunt, open country / of whitened bones and terrible betrayals’ (59). While Beaver’s and Beach’s tombeaux commemorate the poetry of Harwood, as with most of the tombeaux listed above, the poems written by men
for female poets are in general more about friendship and shared memories. There are also
a number of important tombeaux published by well-known female poets for well-known
male poets, for example ‘To Francis Webb’ by Diane Fahey (1986: 22-3); ‘In Memory of
Vincent Buckley’ and ‘I.M. William Hart-Smith by Fay Zwicky (1990: 96-98; 1997: 7-11); ‘For
John Shaw Neilson’ by Judith Wright (1994: 235: 468); ‘The Present Tense’, ‘Autumn’ and
‘Midwinter Rainbow’ for Vincent Buckley; ‘I.M. of William Hart-Smith’, by Gwen Harwood
That there are so few tombeaux written by and for women poets in the third millennia is
perhaps surprising, however in many respects the contemporary Australian tombeau is still
clearly predominantly a male-orientated subgenre.

This is perhaps not surprising in view of former discussions of the male-dominated colonial
tombeau and the exclusion of women historically from the writing or publication of the
tombeau, as discussed by a number of women commentators. Most notable perhaps is
that of the aforementioned Schenck’s seminal work, ‘Feminism and Deconstruction:
Reconstructing the Elegy’ (1986). Schenck suggests that ‘women poets from the first refuse
or re-work the central symbolisms and procedures of elegy mainly, I think, because the
genre excludes the feminine from its perimeter....’ (13). Schenck argues that the elegy for a
dead poet, ‘is a resolutely patriarchal genre’ that springs from the early Greek pastoral
tradition: one intimately associated with poetic careers, ‘functioning as a ritual hymn of
poetic consecration during the course of which a new poet presents himself as heir to the
tradition’ (13).
In the following discussion, Kate Jennings’ important anti-elegy, ‘Without Preamble: Martin Johnston 1947 – 1990’, is part of a tradition that Schenck traces back to Anne Bradstreet’s early elegy ‘An Elegie upon that honourable and renowned Knight Sir, who was untimely slain at the Siege of Zutphen, Anno. 1586.’ Here, Schenck points out the difficulties that Anne Bradstreet had in attempting to write her elegy for Sir Philip Sydney, which is expressed in Bradstreet’s elegy as ‘they took from me the scribbling pen’ (Schenck: 1986: 13-14; quoting Bradstreet in Hensley: 1967: 191). This graphically and historically positions the subgenre as one that has long been a male stronghold of poetry. In contemporary Australian poetry, more than 400 years after Bradstreet’s elegy, Jennings writes of similar difficulties for the female poet and elegist in contemporary Australia:

Too much was asked of you. The reverse
is true for me: I am a farmer’s daughter.

Men inherit mantles; women are humoured.
I know, I know! Generalizations like this

make people mad. Twenty years ago,
I ached to be taken seriously; instead, laughter.

I was cuffed as if I were an overeager dog
until I habitually cringed. Attitudes persist.

Men have learned not to scorn ambition
in the female sex, but it finds expression:

blank eyes, fingers that must be restrained
from thrumming. I have known encouragement
choice – elixir – but more often indifference,
attention that alights and then skips on,

accusations of presumption... (2011: 180).

In her tombeau, Jennings writes that while ‘Men have learned not to scorn ambition / in the female sex’, the vacant stares, the desire to show boredom and the ‘laughter’ at female poetic ambition has clearly been experienced by Jennings as an Australian female poet. That ‘Men inherit mantles’, is a direct reference to the passing on of the poetic ‘mantle’, that Schenck describe as denoting the male careerism and the forming of literary traditions at the centre of this subgenre of elegy.

Furthermore, Jennings’ tombeau also sets up a critique of the masculinist culture that is in evidence in some coteries of contemporary poetry; a culture strongly associated with alcohol and drugs. This ‘boy’s own’ larrikin character can be described as turning full circle or perhaps unbroken, back to the colonial bushman and the nineteenth-century Australian male ethos of mateship and a masculine life. Jennings poignantly writes of Johnston’s alcoholism, while in the final line pointing to Australian culture’s acceptance of alcohol abuse, the poet writes:

My sympathy to those who tried but were helpless
to halt your diminution. Hang by the heels

friends who expressed solicitude while feasting
on the carrion of your abasement, or urged
you ever closer to the sun, wanting a martyr
to the literary life for the murkiest of reasons.

I hear you. To apportion blame is unproductive.
A last culprit: a culture tolerant of drunkenness (187).

While Jennings’ elegy is concerned with describing what the poet sees as the silenced space of female poets in a continuing male-dominated tradition, Strauss’ elegy ‘After a Death’, works to reclaim the place of women as elegist. Strauss invokes the narrative of Orpheus and Eurydice, a central myth around which much elegiac poetry has been wrought since classical times (1979: 81). In Beyond Consolation: Death, Sexuality, and the Changing Face of Elegy, Melissa Zeiger situates her study of modern elegy around the narrative of Orpheus and Eurydice stating that the myth has served as a ‘template’, a ‘structural paradigm’, that is in many respects a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ for the making of a wide range of male elegiac poetry (1997: 2). In a gendered reading, the anxious backward glance of Orpheus, heralds Eurydice’s return to the underworld, and as Zeiger notes, this leaves Orpheus to live on ‘as the exemplary poet-mourner.’ In this, the ensuing silence of the female elegist is proclaimed. As ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’, the return of Eurydice to the underworld can be taken as a powerful motif that serves to stand for the often and repeated absence of women poets writing within the genre of elegy. If we take Zeiger’s reading of Orpheus’ turning back to Eurydice as a premeditated action, he takes for himself the mantle of the poet and spokesperson, thus in this rendering of the narrative becomes male spokesperson for poetic success and succession (3). The action of Orpheus through his backward glance creates the elegy as a male stronghold – a situation repeatedly reflected in this thesis – the
female poet symbolically silenced as Orpheus becomes the male poet-elegist. Importantly, by silencing Eurydice, he seeks to silence women and thus a female poetics centred around elegy; poetic succession through elegy thus becomes a predominantly masculine genre.

Jennifer Strauss’ ‘After a Death’, re-writes the Orphean myth in order to gain a voice for the silenced Eurydice, and consequently for the contemporary female poet. Strauss symbolically reverses the erasure of Eurydice, and thus male appropriation of elegy, resituating Eurydice in the world, while designating Orpheus to the underworld. A poem deeply inscribed by the early Greek pastoral mode, Strauss’ elegy is concerned with loss and the cycle of the seasons, and therefore with life, death and renewal. Strauss writes:

Last night I dreamt of the Pittsburgh tunnel.
I was remaking history, entering joyfully, singing,
Certain you waited in light of the tunnel’s end
And I Eurydice coming to fetch you home,
Not dreaming in dreams you ever could turn away
   Unreachable into the dark.

   I woke too soon.
   The Spring wind rattling the door.
   Was herald to no-one but itself.
Our cycles done: you will not come again

The poet addresses her dead husband in the elegy, who now unreachable through death, Strauss writes, ‘our cycles done.’ Returning in a dream the female poet-speaker re-enacts Orpheus’ role in returning to the underworld for Eurydice, which Strauss expresses as ‘I was
remaking history’. In this remaking of history, Strauss re-writes the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, re-working the very foundation of the male-dominated voice of the elegist in poetry. In Strauss’ elegy it is the male who ‘will not come again,’ and the woman remains as female poet-mourner elegizing the loss of the male, who now, as Eurydice once was, is confined to silence, whilst the female speaker reclaims her voice.

**The Meta-Elegy**

In the final group of poems – the meta-elegy/meta-tombeau – the elegist describes the creation of the tombeau in self-reflexive mode by making this process of composition apparent, thus drawing attention to the elegy as a ‘made’ thing. The meta-elegy describes the way in which the elegized poet is inscribed within, and as part of, the landscape during poetic composition. While this is clearly aligned with the anti-elegy in its conscious unravelling of the creation of the tombeau by the elegist, the meta-poetic tombeau shows the way in which the elegist is both summoned up from the landscape; as well as ghosted onto the landscape through the creation of the tombeau. The meta-poetic elegy not only reaffirms the integral place of landscape in the elegy, not least through continuation and expression of its pastoral roots with nature, but makes clear the process of using the dead poet symbolically to integrate the poet as part of a particular landscape or place.

While the occurrence of the meta-elegy is relatively small, Robert Adamson has written a number of important examples, including ‘Cornflowers: in Memoriam Robert Harris’ (1994: 20-1); ‘Elegy for Imitation Glass’ (1990: 19-20); and ‘Letter to James McAuley’ (2006: 36). Poems such as ‘Gradus ad Parnassum: for David Campbell’ by Martin Johnston (1978: 5-7); Michael Sharkey’s ‘Tombeau for Victor Daley’ (2002: 25); ‘Elegy’ for Phillip Hodgins by
Anthony Lawrence (1998: 118-119), and ‘Versary’ by Kate Lilley (2002: 87); all comment in some capacity on the making of the commemorative elegy for the dead poet. In the metapoetic suite of elegy for Michael Dransfield, ‘The Thoughtless Shore; 1’, ‘The Thoughtless Shore: 2; ‘Afterthoughts’ and ‘& Finally’ (1990), Adamson considers the poet and the creative process, marking the way both are inexorably connected to the landscape. In the first of the four numbered poems, ‘The Thoughtless Shore 1’, Adamson writes in self-reflexive mode as he creates his tombeau for Dransfield, overlooking ‘Flat Rock Point’:

(For Michael Dransfield) So out there now
we cannot tell whether rage or grief
shakes him. To Flat Rock Point he has come,
and stands in light from the full moon.
He stares over the river, over the shifting
water, and emotion turns him in night
is turning him in the night. He stands there
during a complete turn of the tide (83)

Positioned at night looking across the water, Adamson unfolds the way in which the elegy is compiled, showing how the lines of the poem are gathered and composed by the poet and the part played by the scene that the poet sees as he gazes across the water. In creating the poem as made object, Adamson writes ‘The sentimental images compile themselves / Blast – into air, in flame onto / his flesh, in air the long drift of ashes’; as ‘his life / returns him to the river’ (83). The lines: ‘the easy images flow in, and become / his way out: moonlight is an easy point / in time, an excuse to be: tasteful, clever / romantic’s way of not grieving’, reflect what Adamson sees as the insincerity at the centre of the tombeau, where images are chosen for their poetic effect (83). The ‘moon’ and the ‘water’ are both included in the
making of the elegy; while ‘the turning tide’, a fitting metaphor for life and death, pervades the poem. These images are woven into the tombeau by the elegist but are also interspersed with Adamson’s actual lived memories of Dransfield as counterpoint to the lyrical impulse within the poem. In anti-elegiac mode, evocation of the dead poet through the ocean and moon, Adamson’s ‘fish / chips and Coke. Now the smell of cats-piss / will always remind me of you, those / paperbacks gone with mould’, create a more realistic and ironic series of memories of the dead poet. Adamson juxtaposes these images to those used in the creation of the elegy, expressed as ‘moonlight floods in, sentiments aside / I weaken the elegy for you / There is a moon there, and a man watching / the tide flow in’ (84). Here Adamson’s tombeau for Dransfield points out the ways in which the actual memories he has of Dransfield are transfigured, placing the elegized and the elegy, now ambiguously romanticized by place and scene, onto and as an integral part of the Australian landscape. The continuation of life for the elegist – an important convention of elegy in terms of continuance and renewal – is expressed in the enduring movement of the tide which leaves the living poet as heir to the natural world.

In the same way, in ‘Afterthought’, Adamson as elegist reflects on the harbour waters as useful in the creation of the elegy, and in evoking memories of the dead poet expressed in the lines: ‘So I plunge into his memory as if it is some fount / for countless poems – the green harbour, air / clean enough to see right out to boats / through the heads; whatever sails or floats / makes up the list – showing others that I care’ (1990: 87). Adamson draws out the ways in which the harbour becomes part of the textual memorialization of the poet, and thus a part of the fabric of Dransfield. While this suite of poems critiques the writing of the tombeau by the elegist, as ‘useless’, it clearly suggests that Adamson understands the
power and the centrality of place in the creation of the elegy in which, water, river, harbour – based on actual locations – come to express the dead poet in the production of his tombeau for Dransfield.

To return to Hodgins, Anthony Lawrence’s meta-poetic ‘Elegy’ for Philip Hodgins also clearly works to show the ways in which place is the crucible from which the dead poet is remembered, his poetry commemorated, and the elegy crafted (1998). Lawrence speaks of ‘the first hurried lines, on the make / like weavings of dark blue mould in the maplight’, as he scribbles the first lines of his elegy for the dead Hodgins. Travelling through, ‘the unsealed leg of a Windsor back road’, through the landscape of Hodgins’ home and the landscape of his poetry, near where Hodgins’ lies ‘under Maryborough soil’, Lawrence’s tombeau is a journey of remembrance through the landscape of the NSW farming district in which the poet lived and of which he wrote. Lawrence writes of the creative process involved in writing the elegy for Hodgins, as:

... the elegy stalls, then recovers
four days later on a windy ridge
in the Grampians when I introduce a paddock-
probing sacred ibis, and a long-billed Corella
with a red smear on its breast-feathers.
The poem moves, unaccountably,
towards its end, through many versions,
each one driven, by a reading of Philip’s poetry,
into the unmapped districts of this and future works (119).
Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

Lawrence describes the way that he, as poet, incorporates the landscape into his elegy while remembering and reciting the lines of Hodgins’s well-known, ‘Shooting the Dogs’ and the ‘many versions’ of Lawrence’s elegy that are shaped by the reading of Hodgins’s poetry. Lawrence demonstrates the way in which the dead poet’s own landscape verse, as well as the area from which the poet came, are utilized in the making of the tombeau. Lawrence describes his own inclusion of the ‘sacred ibis’, characteristic of this landscape, together with the ‘long-billed corella / with red smear on its breast-feathers’, offering a symbolic association with death from the image of blood represented by the ‘red-smear’ on the corolla’s breast (119). Thus, the elegized poet is woven into this particular location through description of place and the elegized poet’s own landscape verse. Lawrence writes of the elegy as, ‘our thin memorials tracking them / to ground or flame, worked from language’; the dead poet is in this way apprehended in the landscape through memory, symbol and language (118).

Adamson’s and Lawrence’s meta-poetic tombeaux demonstrate how the landscape is used in the creation of the tombeau, and thus the manner in which the dead poet becomes intricately associated/entwined with the land. In these tombeaux the dead poet haunts the specific, named places the elegy describes: Dransfield, ‘Flat Rock Point’, and Hodgins’, ‘Maryborough soil’. This ghosting or peopling of the past on the present is a powerful characteristic of the tombeaux discussed thus far, in a genre that keeps both the dead poet and verse within sight and on site in these particular tombeaux. Through the tombeau, and their own poetry, the dead poet haunts the places they once lived in and/or or wrote of – Hodgins the south west of Victoria; Campbell, the high country of the Monaro; McAuley, north-west Tasmania and Bruny Island; Harris and Johnston, the Sydney suburbs; Harrison,
Glebe; Harwood, Brisbane; Buckley, Gratton Street, Melbourne; and, Forbes, Carlton, Melbourne.

Conclusion

The contemporary settler landscape tombeau has been described in this chapter as diverse in its concerns and interests. Distinct from the colonial tombeau with a nineteenth-century overarching focus on literary traditions and nation, the contemporary tombeau registers many perspectives that make it both a complex subgenre; as well as one that reflects the multifaceted nature of the modern era. Views of place range from the urban, rural and coastal, to the personal, regional, communal, national and transnational. Standpoints associated with a national poetics, as in Gray and Murray's tombeaux, and those for Campbell; while individual poems reflect a number of differing concerns, such as Hope's tombeau for McAuley which registers both a local and a national interest. Conversely, the elegy has been critiqued for its hegemonic status by poets such as Tranter, Forbes and Duggan. In the larger picture, though, the contemporary tombeau shares many features with colonial elegy, most clearly seen in the masculinized nature of the tombeau, and while women begin to emerge, the tombeau is shown as a male-dominated arena.

This discussion of the tombeau is pivotal in relation to establishing a continuing focus on elegizing the poet in the landscapes and locations, as described throughout this thesis. Identity with the land evoked in colonial elegy through experience on the land and a reciprocal relationship with the landscape, is expressed in the contemporary tombeau through the elegized ghost of the poet, who in poems such as Brooks’ ‘The Cormorant’, Dobson’s elegies for Campbell, and Lawrence’s tombeau for Hodges, become a part of the
landscape through their poetry, expressing a sense of self and belonging through their spectral presence on the land.

An interest in demonstrating a symbolic ownership of the land reflecting anxieties concerning land tenure in a post-colonial settler nation is in evidence; while the inscription of settler histories and identities on to the land, discussed in the first three chapters on colonial elegy, are evidenced in this group of contemporary landscape tombeaux. An evaluation of the contemporary tombeau, whilst sometimes revisionary, is shown also to be an institution of cultural power, particularly in the overlaying of the colonial past by white male settler views and histories, obscuring the views of other groups. In Postcolonial Ghosts, Joseph-Vilaine and Misrahi-Barak describe the overlaying of the textual as the palimpsest-like reality of the postcolonial world, in which events and occurrences and the ways in which they are narrated – or silenced – are overlaid by writing (2009: 18). Further, they state that in the postcolonial sphere, ‘the voice of the artist is always ghostly’, ‘carrying the various layers of a complex history’ (2009: 18). The settler/poet ghost is traced onto Australian places in the tombeau, the ghost of the white settler thus claiming the landscape. Gerry Turcotte suggests in ‘First Nations Phantoms & Aboriginal Specters’, that:

In both the Australian and Canadian contexts there is ample evidence of the need and desire for ghosts to legitimate the imperial project...Especially when they serve to validate settler claims to place and side-line or strategically replace Indigenous priority (2009: 94).
Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

In ‘Haunted by (a Lack of) Postcolonial Ghosts: Settler Nationalism in Jane Urquhart’s Away’, Cynthia Sugars argues that ‘the inscription of ghosts becomes an act of colonization’ (2003: 9). Furthermore, Sugars’ suggests that the construction of cultural ghosts is aligned with the ‘construction of national identity’, a concern in both Canada and Australia and other post-colonial nations that began life as a colony (3). Demonstrating ownership of, and an identity with the landscape is contingent on it being emptied of the presence of Aboriginal peoples, thus histories and cultures, as well as First People’s rights to traditional lands, are obscured in the layering of recent histories. In the final chapter’s discussion on Aboriginal poetry, the suppressed histories, cultures, identities and landscapes of First Australians are reclaimed through an Aboriginal poetics of loss and renewal, thus re-peopling the landscape with the ghosts of the past that have been overlaid and omitted form the land in the Australian landscape elegy.

In Specters of Marx, Derrida speaks of the spectral as ‘a figuration of presence-absence, the negotiation of which compels a politics of memory, of inheritance, of generations’ (1994: xix: italics in original). Whilst Derrida speaks here of the spectres of the dispossessed in terms of their bearing witness to the past and inheritance of the land across generations, the tombeau with its earliest roots in the pastoral tradition and the Greek pastoral elegy, is, as this chapter has suggested, the ideal poetic form for Derrida’s memory, generationalism, and inheritance. Figuration of the ghost in the contemporary settler tombeau enacts these three important aspects for the settler poet, as part of a series of discourses for a continuing validation of land ownership. Thus, while the contemporary tombeau may show itself as less overtly concerned with nationalism and a national poetic tradition compared to the historical dictates of the genre – its focus on landscape and the dead through legacy,
memorialization and a sense of identity in relation to the land, are important aspects of the contemporary tombeau.
Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

Remembering

They can forgive you
for the land you have stolen
the rivers polluted
the forests you ruined
the water you poisoned
flour and strychnine
the island prisons
the chain and the gun
But what they cannot forgive is
you have slowed their heartbeat
and cast brute shadows
over the face of the sun
(Davis: 1992: 60).

Introduction

The concluding chapter considers elegies written by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander poets, published from the 1960s until the present.¹ The focus is a collection of Aboriginal elegy that both mourns and bears witness to the fact and effects, both short and long-term, of colonization in relation to Australian Aboriginal peoples and their cultures. Indigenous elegy is a crucial part of Australian elegy and thus of the poetry of mourning and loss. This chapter comprises a two-part analysis: the first, ‘A Poetry of Loss’, addresses issues associated with colonization and its aftermath, formally excluded into Aboriginal communities; and the continuing removal of Aboriginal children, thus marking patterns
of control underlined by legal and socio-cultural inequities continuous into present-day Australian society.2

Whilst mourning a disproportionate burden of loss and sorrow, ‘A Poetry of Renewal’ is a poetry of celebration that reclaims and expresses the long history of past and ongoing Indigenous cultures. The poetry of renewal re-peoples colonial and contemporary landscapes; reaffirms individual and communal identity and a contemporary selfhood centred on the land; as well as establishing the presence of many Aboriginal nations within Australia, the existence of which have been occluded or trivialized in settler landscape elegy. The poet and activist Romaine Moreton, of the Goernpil Jagara and Bundjalung peoples, captures this dichotomy of mourning and celebration so often found in Indigenous elegy, stating that ‘To create works that do not deal with the morbid and mortal effects of racism for one, and the beauty of Indigenous culture for another, would be for me personally, to produce works that are farcical’ (‘Australian Writing’: 2001).

Moreton suggests that Aboriginal poetry is a voice of protest and therefore political in intent. It is also by nature deeply elegiac in terms of myriad losses that lie at the centre of colonizing processes and the effects of British imperialism, thus setting the elegy as one of the cornerstones of an Aboriginal postcolonial poetics. An important debate in the field of postcolonial studies lies in the key differences between the claim to the land made by settler poets as colonists, and ownership of traditional lands by First Peoples of Australia. Thus the difference between the claims expressed within the protest poetry of the dispossessed, and that of the poetry of the colonizers seeking to express a claim to the continent, is made manifest in this chapter. While the former four chapters of this study
present what is largely a postcolonial critique of settler elegy, marking it as intrinsically imperialistic and neo-colonial, this chapter presents Aboriginal postcolonial poetry as a part of what Elleke Boehmer describes for postcolonial literatures, as that which ‘... critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship with colonized peoples’ (1995: 3). Boehmer argues that postcolonial literature is:

...writing that sets out in one way or another to resist coloniserist perspectives. As well as a change in power, decolonization demanded symbolic overhaul, a re-shaping of dominant meanings. ... postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization – the myths of power, the race classification, the imagery of subordination (3).

In ‘Postcolonial “Testimonio”: Reading Aboriginal Narratives’, Pramod K. Nayar suggests that Aboriginal writing be read as a postcolonial text, the essential features including: resistance to colonizing processes and homogenization; a drive to draw upon oral traditions; to battle injustice and exploitation; the celebration of Aboriginal culture and tradition, a search for means of continuity in the tradition, and, to adopt traditional forms in their writing (2009: 178). Nayar’s features are exactly those which will be shown in the following discussion to be a part of an Aboriginal Australian postcolonial poetics. Moreover, the poetry of contemporary Aboriginal poets provides far-reaching personal and communal narratives – testimonials; memories, both individual as well as transmitted through oral histories – that bear witness to the colonizing process and its repercussions for Aboriginal peoples in contemporary Australia. In using a postcolonial perspective to frame Indigenous
elegy, not only are the extent, details, and contemporary repercussions of colonisation made visible by Aboriginal Australian poets, but the poetry enacts a crucial shift in perspective from that of the colonizer to the colonized. Writing back to settler representations of Aboriginal peoples created in settler colonial and post-colonial writings and culture, as part of western knowledge systems, is an important focal point in terms of identity politics for Indigenous writers and poets seeking to represent their own selfhood. Boehmer writes of ‘the interpretations of identity – of the need to achieve an independent sense of being in the world’, that is central to a postcolonial poetics (8). Indigenous poetry is an important space in which Indigenous histories, knowledge and identity are expressed, contributing to a sense of selfhood and community that supports the views and cultures of Aboriginal Australian peoples.

While employing postcolonial theory, the following analysis of Aboriginal elegies endeavours foremost to listen to the voices of Aboriginal poets. In Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order, David Punter describes the ‘special relationship’ of the literary and the postcolonial, suggesting that a postcolonial perspective ‘is at least partly a matter of the mutual connection with trauma, and thus inevitably with mourning and melancholia’ (2009: 132); a position that the following discussion of Aboriginal elegy elucidates. Above all, Indigenous poetry is about memory circumscribed in Australian Aboriginal elegy by remembering the dead, and therefore providing a critical space for Aboriginal poets to bear witness to colonization and its repercussions in contemporary Australia. The epigraph from ‘Remembering’ by the Noongar poet, playwright and political activist Jack Davis, is characteristic of what is termed as Aboriginal protest poetry. Davis’ poem describes both the processes and outcomes of colonialism; the violence and
destruction of the colonizing process; as well as the dark reality for contemporary Indigenous Australians in which the aftermath has, ‘cast brute shadows / over the face of the sun’ (Davis: 1992: 60). In ‘Oodgeroo: Orator, Poet, Storyteller’, Anne Brewster establishes the importance of Indigenous poetry, stating ‘Because they are a minority group Aboriginal people’s history was, until the 1960s invisible within the white community’ (1994: 92). As the former chapters of this dissertation have shown, colonization, its aftermath and the rich pre-colonial and postcolonial history and culture of Aboriginal peoples has been misrepresented or omitted in Australian settler elegies. Instead settler elegies utilize the genre to help establish a symbolic, emotional and actual claim to the landscape through the absence of Aboriginal peoples, tracing instead, the presence of the white colonial bushman and explorer and the colonial and postcolonial poet onto the land.

In a historical and literary analysis of Indigenous writing, *Black Words White Pages: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*, Adam Shoemaker states:

... black creative writing in Australia cannot be studied in isolation: it must be examined and evaluated in terms of the social environment which surround it and the historical events which precede it (1989: 6).

In keeping with Shoemaker’s comments, this discussion is couched in terms of the social and cultural background that Indigenous poetry is embedded within, in relation to the history and impact of colonization.

There is a need for the voices of Aboriginal peoples within which to frame crimes perpetrated against them and which can highlight the inequities of the contemporary era.
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

In ‘Framing the Crimes of Colonialism: Critical Images of Aboriginal Art and Law’, Chris Cunneen speaks of the importance of ‘art as political activity’ and ‘art as resistance’ (2011: 116; 117). Cunneen discusses what he terms, ‘Cultural Criminology’, describing the role of Aboriginal art as one which ‘opens up a new space for understanding crime’, for people ‘without access to other channels of communication within mainstream social and political institutions’ (121). While the author’s discussion is centred on Indigenous works of art, Cunneen’s rationale can clearly be applied to Indigenous poetry in terms of the space it offers for what the author describes as:

A critique of the colonizing process, both as an historical record of events such as massacres, segregation and the denial of civil and political rights and an ongoing contemporary postcolonial critique of the outcomes of colonization, dispossession and racial discrimination (115).

Indigenous elegy offers an Aboriginal view of the history of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial Australia and bears witness to the crimes committed against First Australians and the profound contemporary inequities borne by Aboriginal peoples. In ‘Black Poetics’, Anita Heiss states that Aboriginal poets write a political poetics in the twenty-first century due to:

...the issues they raise, such as the politics of Aboriginal identity, the enduring impacts of policies of protection and separation on individuals and communities, the consequences of colonization including dispossession of the land, the high rates of Aboriginal incarceration and black deaths in custody ... (2006: 181).
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

Concerned with remembering, mourning, and celebrating those who have died, the elegy is both a powerful space for bearing witness to the past, as well as an important source of past and present identity. In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, Paul Antze and Michelle Lambek state that ‘Memory is invoked to heal, to blame, to legitimate’. Further, that memory that has become ‘a major idiom in the construction of identity, both individual and collective, and a site of struggle as well as identification’ (1996: vii). While identity is inexorably bound to the past, memory too has become prominent politically as both ‘a source of authority and as a means of attack’ (vii). Further, Antze and Lambek state that it ‘attends especially to the central role that trauma and victimization have come to play within a politics of memory’ (vii).

In ‘Writing Aboriginality: Authors on “Being Normal”’, Heiss articulates the key importance of bearing witness to the past through memory and its association with reclaiming identity for Indigenous writers stating that ‘The process of writing is not, as often the case in western poetry, merely “creative” for many Aboriginal writers’ – instead it is a process for ‘analysing, processing, determining, understanding, and asserting their identity’ (2007: 42). A declaration by many Aboriginal Australian poets and writers is expressed by the late Aboriginal poet, writer, and historian Ruby Langford Ginibi of the Bundjalung clan, who states of her people, ‘we are reclaiming our history, our heritage and our identity’, in response to the impact of colonization (Reed-Gilbert: 2000: 19).

Langford Ginibi speaks for many Aboriginal writers and poets when she states that the writing and telling of Indigenous peoples’ stories and lives is very important, because ‘for too long, we have had other people defining us, and telling us who we are’ (19). The
categorisation of Aboriginal people is theorised by Michael Dodson in ‘The end of the beginning: re(de)fining Aboriginality’, in which Dodson states, ‘Since first contact with the colonisers of this country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been the objects of a continual flow of commentary and classification’ (2003: 25). In keeping with Edward Said’s seminal postcolonial text, Orientalism (1978), which details the creation and management of the colonial ‘other’, Dodson articulates Said’s thesis for the classification and management of Indigenous Australians, arguing, ‘Since their first intrusive gaze, colonizing cultures have had a preoccupation with observing, analysing, classifying and labelling Aborigines and Aboriginality’ (27). Dodson historicizes constructions of Aboriginality by arguing that ‘an historical landscape is entered, full of absolute and timeless truths’; that these stand as powerful colonial controlling forces that work to limit ‘self-determination’ and the ‘right to self-definition’ (31). As the foregoing chapters have established, colonial settler elegies for a ‘dying race’ in particular have been an influential proponent of this system of classification and labelling; as well as establishing ‘timeless truths’ about Aboriginal Peoples. In ‘Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television’, Marcia Langton suggests that the main conceptions that white Australians have of Aboriginal people is based on stereotypes formed from ‘the symbols created by their predecessors’ (1993: 33). Langton’s comment is a contention richly supported in the earlier discussion of settler elegy: one in which the postcolonial perspective adopted for this thesis works to deconstruct the stereotypes and clichés associated with representations of Aboriginal peoples.

In the first part of the analysis, ‘A Poetry of Loss’, many, if not all poets considered, address a white audience, informing them of the way in which colonialism, its aftermath and the
lives of contemporary Aboriginal people have been affected by colonization, as well as more recent neo-colonial processes. In acknowledging the ways in which colonizing practices have been centred around white-settler nation formation, Anne Brewster contends in the aforementioned ‘Engaging the Public Intimacy of Whiteness’, that ‘Indigenous protest writing plays an ongoing role in interrogating and intervening in the reproduction of the white nation’ as it ‘intervenes directly into public debate’ (2008: 57). This thesis has discussed many of the ways the Australian settler landscape elegy supports imperialistic enterprises that are deeply implicated in Brewster’s ‘reproduction of the white nation’. In representing the landscape as uninhabited, the settler elegy plays a powerful role in procuring the land through supporting the concept of *Terra Nullius* in representations of a landscape emptied of the presence of the First Inhabitants through the dying-race elegy. Similarly, colonial elegies for the bushman endeavour to take possession of the landscape, eliding colonization and the presence of Aboriginal peoples. In the colonial tombeau, a poetic search for the *voice* of Australia describes a quest centred on the *timeless* land in a putatively uninhabited continent, untapped until a colonial poet should claim that voice as *his* nation’s own. Finally, a postcolonial appraisal of the spectral presence of the contemporary elegized poet marks a continuing claim to land ownership and national-belonging through the figure of the ghost of the settler poet, who in obscuring the existence and claim to the land of Aboriginal peoples, creates the spectral presence of the settler poet as part of the fabric of place. Thus, creating a double elision as the landscape is emptied of an Indigenous presence both material *and* spectral.

Aboriginal poets write back to the settler elegies discussed in the first four chapters of this dissertation. Based on profound and irretrievable loss, Aboriginal poetry creates a sustained
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

elegy that overlays representations of the landscape as untouched by the colonizing process omnipresent in Australian settler landscape elegies. The Aboriginal poetry of loss thus undertakes what Gandhi describes in Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction as ‘the task of re-visiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past’ (2015: 5). Through memory, Aboriginal elegies repeople colonial and contemporary landscapes with the histories and the ghosts of the dead; writing of the experiences, the cultures and the knowledge systems of their own people. Remembering those who have died due to colonization involves re-instating the ghosts of colonization in history, which is of central importance in this postcolonial analysis. In ‘The contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the “spectral turn”’ (after Derrida), Roger Luckhurst’s postcolonial study of the spectral states that the ghost functions ‘as grounded manifestation of communities in highly delimited locales subject to cruel and unusual forms of political disempowerment’ (2002: 536). Luckhurst proposes that ghosts ‘appear precisely as symptoms, points of rupture that insist their singular tale be retold and their wrongs acknowledged’ (542). Further, for the spectral to be meaningful and not merely a politically ‘vacuous’ process, ‘we have to risk the violence of reading the ghost, of cracking open its absent presence to answer the demand of its specific symptomatology and its specific locale’ (542). In Postcolonial Ghost: Fantômes Coloniaux, Joseph Vilaine and Judith Misrahi-Barak suggest one of the potentials of ghosts is ‘Their capacity to blur boundaries and question dichotomies’; arguing that it is this quality that ‘makes them apt figures to interrogate the postcolonial condition’ (2009: 150). Moreover, it is the ghost’s powerful attachment to place that renders them as an important repercussion of conflicts arising between Indigenous people and the white invader, conflicts most often rooted in taking land and home (16). Representations of an empty landscape in settler elegy are re-conceptualised by the Aboriginal poet through
evoking the past, thus the ghosts of colonization are traced onto contemporary postcolonial landscapes. In ‘Genocide’ in Gilbert’s *Black from the Edges*, the speaker asks ‘Where are my people /where are the embers / where is the fire / their burning glow’ (1994: 10). The landscape emptied of their fires and the fire of their being, is replaced by the speaker who writes, ‘I stand alone / in a desert bare’; ‘the wind carrying the past in the smoke ‘o’er me’ (10). Gilbert evokes the ghosts of the past in the metaphor of ‘smoke’, which in carrying the ghosts of the past, remain spectral within the contemporary landscape, as well as in Gilbert’s elegy.

Following on from the analysis of the poetry of witness, ‘A Poetry of Renewal’ discusses Aboriginal elegy as re-inscribing not only the histories but the many cultures of Aboriginal peoples, thereby establishing personal and communal identity through the elegy. Joseph Vilaine and Misrahi-Barak’s conceptualisation of the power of the postcolonial ghost to ask, ‘How are history, culture, identity transmitted – or not transmitted – in cultures born from conquest, conflict, and sometimes obliteration?’, is a question formally asked of the contemporary settler elegy, now considered in a vastly different frame in terms of the dispossessed Aboriginal nations (2009: 18). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon’s polemical postcolonial study of the psyche of colonised peoples, considers the way that the colonial oppressor denigrates or makes absent the culture of the oppressed. Fanon writes, ‘By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it’, adding that, ‘This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today’ (1961: 126). Contemporary Indigenous elegy responds to this imperialistic drive towards ‘devaluing’ and ‘destroying’ pre-colonial history through working to re-instate their past and give life, and presence, to continuing Aboriginal
cultures and societies. Anne Brewster comments on Indigenous Protest poetry as being a poetics that both bears witness to colonizing processes and expresses the continuance of Indigenous culture and selfhood:

Indigenous people’s relationship with a colonial history of violence and dispossession is characterized by a political imperative for justice in the present. The expressive vernacular voice of protest is also an instrument of cultural celebration and revival (2008: 59).

To focus only on the dead and the lost expressed in the works of Aboriginal poets, is not only to bypass the rich and vibrant culture in evidence in many elegies, but it also reinstates a sense of an abject and dying people pervading many textual representations of Indigenous Australians, epitomized in the settler dying-race elegy. To do so would be to retain a series of binaries between possessor and the dispossessed; the living and the spectral; the future and the past in which Aboriginal people are forever fixed by the colonial past and by contemporary white-settler Australians, as the disempowered and the indistinct. The commemoration and continuance of Australian Aboriginal cultures expressed by Indigenous poets assert a present and future for Indigenous peoples. In the aforementioned ‘Postcolonial “Testimonio”’, Nayar describes postcolonial Aboriginal writing as a ‘politics of survival and recovery’, arguing that retrieving the past through ‘reconstructions of their cultural and national histories and identities’, ‘call into question established (imperial) histories of the “homeland”’ (2009: 173).
Part One: A Poetry of Loss

Bearing Witness to Colonization and the Colonial Aftermath

The following discussion of elegy centres on Aboriginal poets re-claiming their histories. The first section deals with the repercussions of colonization, including: bearing witness to the loss of traditional lands and cultures; charting effects of dispossession including colonial massacres; the colonial and contemporary neo-colonial practice of incarceration; failings in the judicial system associated with deaths in custody; the development of a white nation through the use and abuse of Aboriginal workers – in all, often a graphic and painful account of the lives of Aboriginal peoples since the First Landing.

Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal people (Kath Walker until 1988) wrote elegies bearing witness to the loss of her people, traditional Aboriginal lands, languages and cultures. While Oodgeroo’s elegies for her own clan, the Noonuccal people from Stradbroke Island, are considered in the following discussion, Oodgeroo writes too of the loss to all Aboriginal peoples in elegies such as ‘Namatjira’ and ‘Then and Now’ (1964: 15; 18). Further, elegies for other Australian Aboriginal nations such as her two elegies for Willie McKenzie of the Darwarbada people, ‘The Dispossessed: For Uncle Willie McKenzie’, and ‘Last of His Tribe’, speak of the many Aboriginal nations, whilst also suggesting a Pan-Aboriginal sensibility (1964: 16; 1966: 42). We Are Going (1964) was the first Aboriginal poetry to be published in Australia, followed by Oodgeroo’s The Dawn is at Hand (1966). In many ways, these two collections formed a template for the ‘Protest Poetry’ that has become important within Indigenous poetics. Oodgeroo’s poems explore many of the areas of Indigenous loss and
social disparity written about by later poets; as well as many poems that celebrate Aboriginal culture, particularly so in *The Dawn is at Hand* (1966).

Oodgeroo’s elegies mourning the Noonuccal people bear witness to the past and reflect the claim made by Anne Brewster, in ‘Oodgeroo: Orator, Poet, Storyteller’, that Oodgeroo’s poetry marks ‘the emergence into print of an Aboriginal history’ (1994: 92). However, while 1964 dates the first publication of Aboriginal poetry in Australia, Indigenous writing in English has a much longer history. In ‘The Aboriginal Critique of Colonial Knowing’, Ian Anderson writes: ‘The written text has been employed by Indigenous Australians / as a mode of political and cultural self-representation from / quite early in colonial history – it is not a new phenomenon (2003: 18).

The eponymous poem, ‘We are Going’ dedicated ‘For Granny Coolwell’, describes the passing of Oodgeroo’s own people, the accompanying loss of culture and connections with the land due to the repercussions following colonization and neo-colonial practices in contemporary Australia. Oodgeroo’s poem writes of the colonial history associated with the devastation of the Noonuccal people from Stradbroke Island; the poem a testament to the attempted genocide of a people. In ‘We are Going’, a once vibrant people are shown as both dispossessed and abject, ghosted onto a landscape no longer their own:

They came to the little town
A semi-naked bunch subdued and silent,
All that remained of their tribe.
They came here to the place of their old bora ground
Where now the many white men hurry about like ants.
Notice of estate agent reads: ‘Rubbish May Be Tipped Here’.
Now it half covers the traces of the old bora ring.
They sit and are confused, they cannot say their thoughts... (25).

The ‘Rubbish Tip’ prevails as a metaphor for their denigrated place in a white society and the occlusion of their culture exemplified in the covering of the sacred bora ring, a key cultural site of Aboriginal Australians, buried beneath the effluence of white culture.

Oodgeroo’s elegy for her lost people is divided into three parts forming a brief history of colonization and its aftermath. Above, describes the present of the poem as the ‘we’ of the ‘small band’ of people; while in the second section the speaker speaks of the pre-colonial past and culture of the tribe. The two sections of the poem are separated by the affirmation that the land once did and still does belong to the tribe, in the line “We are as strangers here now, but the white tribes are the strangers”. Oodgeroo writes:

‘We belong here, we are of the old ways.
We are the corroboree and the bora ground,
We are the old scared ceremonies, the laws of the elders.
We are the wonder tales of Dream Time, the tribal legends told.
We are the past, the hunts and the laughing games, the wandering camp fires.
We are the lightning-bolt over Gaphembah Hill
Quick and terrible,
And the Thunder after him, the loud fellow.
We are the quiet daybreak paling the dark lagoon.
We are the shadow-ghosts creeping back as the camp fire burns low.
We are nature and the past, all the old ways
The juxtaposing of the present ghost-like ‘semi-naked band’ of silent people and times past expressed in ‘We are the past, the hunts and the laughing games’, points to the ceremonies and the story-telling, creating a powerful comparison between pre-colonial and postcolonial Aboriginal society. The third part of the elegy describes the loss of land, the loss of flora and fauna, and the loss of culture – the poem in its entirety offering a postcolonial critique expressed in a metaphor that evokes the act of colonization, in ‘the many white men’ who ‘hurry about like ants’, who have run over the land:

Gone now and scattered.
The scrubs are gone, the hunting and the laughter.
The eagle is gone, the emu and the kangaroo are gone from this place.
The bora ring is gone.
The corroboree is gone.
And we are going (25).

In spite of the loss of land and livelihood, Oodgeroo affirms ownership of the land through a long, past habitation, in: ‘We are nature and the past, and all the old ways’ (25). In juxtaposing the present with pre-colonial times; as well as in the final lines with the demise of land and people due to the process of colonization, Oodgeroo presents a brief and lucid history that bears witness to the effects and aftermath of the colonial process, expressed by the ghostly remnants of the present in ‘All that remained of their tribe’.

In ‘Gooboora, the Silent Pool, For Grannie Sunflower, Last of the Noonuccals’, Oodgeroo again invokes the ghostly past inhabitants of a tribe now mostly dead, while the few
remaining people, ‘drift with the dead’ as a ‘whole, happy tribe vanished away’ (1964: 29). The poet imagines her people, now past, as standing around the Gooboora Pool in the lines, ‘at the setting of sun / A shadowy band that is now without care’ as ‘Old Death’ passes by, taking, ‘the dark throng’, leaving ‘my people no more’ (29). Here, the traditional lands are represented as empty and the loss of ‘the Noonuccal language and song’, evoke a silent, voiceless people and an absence of culture, now nothing more than a past dream (29).

Oodgeroo’s elegies re-populate the empty landscape with the ghosts of a people and culture, as well as with a profound and inexorable sense of the relationship between people and place, as ghosts of the dead dwell around ‘the silent pool’. It is one hitherto denied to Aboriginal peoples in the settler poet’s own evocation of the relationship between self and place within landscape elegy. The ghosts of Oodgeroo’s forebears displace the spectral presence of the settler poet inscribed onto the landscape of contemporary Australia discussed in the last chapter, an Aboriginal spectral presence that represents a repressed and much darker history. Oodgeroo’s elegies for the Noonuccal people are revisionary poems that illustrate the political power of the ghostly postcolonial figure described earlier by Luckhurst – emerging at ‘points of rupture’ – bearing witness to the effects of colonization on the lives of Indigenous peoples (2002: 542).

Oodgeroo’s address to the perpetrators of her people’s dark history is perhaps less explicit than other earlier poets such as Jack Davis and Kevin Gilbert, who write a more accusatory and vehement elegy bearing witness to the deaths perpetrated by the colonisers through massacres and attempted genocide. Davis’ epigraph offers a litany of the means of death that have been meted out to the Indigenous population during colonization. Poets from Davis, an early Indigenous protest poet, to more recent contemporary poets such as Lionel
Fogarty, Lisa Bellear, Yvette Holt, Moraine Moreton, Barbara Nicholson, Samuel Wagan Watson, and Ali Cobby Eckermann, bear witness to the many who have died in past massacres.

Kevin Gilbert, the playwright, poet and political activist of the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations, wrote graphic accounts of the violence and death perpetrated against First Australians. In elegies such as, ‘On the Road to Queanbeyan’, ‘Pastoral Pioneers’ ‘The New True Anthem’ and ‘Blackfellow’s Leap’, ‘Kiacatoo’ ‘Memorials’ ‘Bael Belbora – the Dancing has ended’ and ‘Cattle Camp Recruit’, Gilbert writes of massacres and of genocide (1978; 1990; 1994). Gilbert offers a postcolonial re-writing of history as represented in official accounts exemplifying the ‘amnesia’ that Leela Gandhi has discussed in white settler representations of the past (2015: 4). Gilbert writes of the murder of his own people in his elegy ‘Kiacatoo’, set in the traditional lands of his people by the Lachlan River:

the screaming curlew’s piercing whistle
was drowned by the thunder of the shot
men women and child fell in mid-flight
and a voice shouted ‘We’ve bagged the lot’
and singly the shots echoed later
to quieten each body that stirred
above the gurgling and bleeding
a nervous man’s laugh could be heard
‘They’re cunning this lot, guard the river’
they shot until all swimmers sank
but they didn’t see Djarrmal’s family
hide in the lee of the bank
Djarrmal warned ‘Stay quiet or perish
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

they’re cutting us down like wild dogs
put reeds in your mouth – underwater
we’ll float out of here under logs’
a shot cracked and splintered the timber
the young girl Kalara clutched breath
she later became my great grandma

While Gilbert’s elegy recounts the murder of the poet’s ancestors, ‘Kiacatoo also celebrates
the survival of his Grandmother, Kalara, thus expressing Aboriginal selfhood in terms of the
bravery and tenacity of Gilbert’s own forebears in response to the massacre. Written
without punctuation, to read the poem aloud arouses a sense of people holding their
breath beneath the river, breathing only through the river reeds. In keeping with the use of
western rhyme pairing and the ballad form in Oodgeroo’s poetry – as in ‘The Ballad of the
Totem’ – Bernadette Brennan suggests this is also a feature of Gilbert’s poetry. In ‘Poetry
and Politics: In Conflict or Conversation? Aboriginal Poetry, Peter Skrzyniecki, and Bruce
Dawe’, Brennan states that “‘Kiacatoo” graphically depicts the bloody massacre of the
speaker’s tribal ancestors in the rhyme and metre of many traditional Australian bush
ballads’; the poem amplifying the horror and carnage, ‘through tight control of rhythm and
line’ (2002: 105). The deep irony in Oodgeroo’s and Gilbert’s use of the bush ballad form
and metre – the important nation-making genre of white Australian colonial poetry in its
lauding of heroic deeds of white survival – is here used by Gilbert to show the nether side
of the colony in terms of the murder and attempted genocide of the original inhabitants.
‘We’ve bagged the lot’, a term for catching or killing animals, pervades the poem with its
connotation of the Aboriginal as little more than animal; ‘the gurgling and bleeding’, is a
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

d palpable description of death. Reflected in the initial strike and then again, as, ‘singly the shots echoed later’, a second bullet is fired to confirm death. This deeply disturbing elegy not only re-claims the history of the massacre that took place on the banks of the Lachlan river, but re-peoples the site of death, the Indigenous Australians of the past becoming ghosted onto the landscape. Forever a place to be avoided, those ghosts and the way in which they died, still haunt the river bank, in ‘...the yourung bird cries by that place now / no big fish will swim in that hole / my people pass by that place quickly / in fear with quivering souls’ (29).

In a second elegy, ‘Memorials’, Gilbert writes a litany of landscape sites where massacres occurred, and again, with profound irony, Gilbert uses the word ‘memorials’ associated with western icons that mark great nation-making events, burial places or sites of the past:

Our history is carved
in the heart of the country
our milestones memorials
named Slaughter House Creek
the Coniston massacre, Death Gully and Durrnanurrijah
the place of the clifftops called Massacre Leap,
Evan Head
where the mouth of the valley
filled up with our murdered dead bodies
the place where our blood flowed
the river ran red
all the way to the sea (1994: 12).

The landscape represented earlier in the thesis as memorial to the endurance of the bushman and the explorer; as well as to the colonial and contemporary poet singing of his relationship to the landscape, is re-written by Gilbert as one now filled with the bodies of the dead. These massacre sites are specific, named places; an address to Aboriginal peoples, as well as to the non-Indigenous reader, offering a record of colonization so often denied and unspoken in colonial and postcolonial accounts of history. In a generic elegy, Gilbert’s ‘The Tribal Ghost’, the dispossessed, ‘walks at Yarralumla / And his mournful features plead / For the Koorie men, his brothers / Seeking justice in their need’ (1978: 60-61). The ‘ghostly pleading’ of the spectre, whose ‘pleas for right and dignity’, are met only by, ‘futile rage’ at tribal dispossession, as the ghost’s appeal falls on deaf ears (60). In Derrida’s oft-mentioned seminal work *Specters of Marx*, Derrida states that: ‘It is necessary to speak of the ghost, indeed to the ghost and with it...the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead’ (1994: xiii). Derrida speaks specifically of the spectre and the need to learn to live with, to speak to, to give voice to and to listen to ghosts and ‘to make or let a spirit speak’ (176; 17). Indigenous elegy demands our attention and the ghosts that these poems evoke not only postulate questions about colonization and its repercussions, but ask non-Indigenous readers to bear witness and make amends for an often hidden and repressed past.

The ghosts that re-inhabit the putatively empty landscapes of white settler poetry (and history), mark the wound of colonization expressed by Indigenous poets. In the poetry of the Brisbane poet Samuel Wagan Watson, a man of Munanjali, Birri, and mixed European
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

descent, the deep wound of colonization is expressed as not only omnipresent within the
landscape, but held deeply within the psyche of the contemporary poet. Wagan Watson
writes a contemporary political poetry of protest that deals with past histories of
colonization. In poems to be discussed, ‘For the Wake and Skeleton Dance’, ‘...There’s no
place like home...’ and ‘Too many secrets’, the poet expresses the ever-present shadows of
the past and the ways in which, for Wagan Watson, they bear heavily on his own present
sense of self-identity; as well as on the poet’s deeply-held relationship with the land. The
ghosts of the past are evoked in Wagan Watson’s ‘The Wake of the Skeleton Dance’, which
describes an Indigenous postcolonial reality since colonization, from when first ‘the tallship
leviathans of two centuries ago’ came, ‘infecting the dreamtime with the ghosts of a million
lost entities’ (1999: 50-51). In a second poem, ‘...There’s no place like home’, there is a play
on the theme of home in the film, The Wizard of Oz (1939); the slang ‘Oz’ for Australia
offers an example of the poet’s customary merging of cultural markers from a
contemporary postcolonial Australia that is both black and white. Wagan Watson writes of
present-day Australia, saying, ‘It’s the lucky country’s closet’; a dark interior with frontier
skeletons’ (2014: 51). Present-day Australia for Wagan Watson as an Aboriginal Australian is
expressed in the poem, as ‘there’s no place like a broken home...there’s no place like a
broken home’, where the land, now ‘spawning red-sand mandalas of chaos’ offers, ‘a reality
spinning out of control, gaining momentum...’ (51).

Wagan Watson’s ‘Too many secrets’, speaks too of the dark inheritance of colonization: a
poem deeply elegiac in nature, the poet writing of a peoples’ lost connections to the land
and of the scars of past and present implications of colonization on contemporary
Aboriginal people. Located in Wiradjuri country, Wagan Watson describes the ‘scarred
country’ that underlies the ‘hill of learning’ – the ‘writer centre’ – part of the university where Wagan Watson resides (2014: 64). The poet, ‘Awake until sun comes up and morose
/ voices subside; the dawn-like blades whispers back into the creases of the scarred
country’, cannot sleep, the land echoing with the ghostly voices of the past:

…I can’t sleep here, in the writer’s
centre; a beautiful place with so many bright
voices that burn into the night, spectral sages cloud my
ears like moths to a flame. Too many secrets here;
ceremony ground now a university. There is too much
information in this place here, singed, black pages that the
granite boulders relay in monolithic volumes. Tumbleweeds
spin and stutter. The air licks with a cold wet mouth that
bears the driest parables… I just can’t sleep on this
beautiful soil that was sung… and sewn
with too many secrets… (64).

The past history and culture of the Aboriginal people that once dwelt on the ‘ceremonial
ground’ beneath the university, register on the land and within the poet himself. The
’singed, black pages’ of history written on ‘the granite boulders’, that ‘relay in monolithic
volumes,’ suggest that the colonial past is written on the landscape, as much as in the
poet’s consciousness. Wagan Watson’s elegy reclaims the landscape and its history, bearing
witness to the past and to the Indigenous ghosts, in the form of the voices of ‘spectral
sages’. Wagan Watson’s elegy for the colonized dead consists of a number of layers of
history: that of the pre-colonial past shrouded by what the poet describes as the silences
concerning colonization, overlaid by the contemporary white institutionalism of the
university; finally, expressed in the contemporary poet’s sense of loss and disquiet pervading the contemporary landscape of the poem.

The final lines of the poem symbolise the fact of colonization: its stain on the land, its aftermath and competing interests in a contemporary Australia expressed in ‘Outside vicious birds swoop across the battlefield / picking at the skins of audible shadows….’ The italicised final three lines stand as a coda to the poem and may be read as having multiple Indigenous and non-Indigenous meanings. ‘Dark fruit on the tree / One Two, three, four, five and six / Seven crows singing, can be read in a number of ways: as mimicking the counting as aid to memory in English nursery rhymes – their early forms often covertly reflective of tragic and murderous deeds. Similarly, the ‘Seven crows singing,’ speaks back to the plural of a group of crows as a murder of crows, possibly a reference to their association with death and therefore used as a metaphor for colonizing practices. Further, ‘Wagga Wagga’, named variously by Indigenous people of the area as ‘the place of many crows’ and as a non-Indigenous description of a ceremonial dance performed by Wiradjuri people who lived on the site where Wagga Wagga now stands, Wagan Watson offers a number of cultural markers that are culturally provisional in terms of ‘white’ and ‘black’ history and forms of memory. These cultural references, too, attest to the shared history, presence and future of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on the landscape; a theme to which Wagan Watson’s poetry returns again and again.

In, At the Limits of Postcolonial and Hyperreal Translations of Australian Poetry, Bridie McCarthy discusses Wagan Watson, speaking of him, as ‘charting an Australian legacy of Eurocentric history, dispossession and alienation’ (2006: 41). McCarthy suggests that the
poet’s “ghost” subjects are both haunted and haunting, negotiating postcolonality as a psychological predicament’ (41). McCarthy suggests too, that Wagan Watson’s poetry tends not to speak of contemporary Australia in terms of the “dead” heart of the land, but of the dead ‘souls of its people’ (62). ‘Too many Secrets’, expresses a deep wound at the heart of the land itself as well as within the contemporary postcolonial Aboriginal poet. For Wagan Watson, ‘Even by the daylight hours’, carries an awareness of the past in the presence of ghosts, that ‘forging motions’, disrupting ‘sleep’, haunt not only the land but the poet himself (64).

The postcolonial Indigenous ghost is both witness to and expression of a re-telling of official narratives of history. Settler accounts of history in the settler elegy are challenged by those of Aboriginal poets such as Oodgeroo, Gilbert, Davis and Wagan Watson; their unearthing of ghosts from the past enacts what Luckhurst describes as part of the ‘spectral turn’ engendered in postcolonial works; the ghost functioning as an earthly manifestation in societies where cruelty and political disempowerment are in evidence (2002: 536).

**Unpaid Labour: Elegies for Aboriginal Workers**

Elegies written in memory of a particular person bear witness to the ways in which the colonised person is disempowered, and their cultural heritage and connections to country denied. Langford Ginibi’s elegy, ‘Mary’s Poem: In Memory of Mary Washington’, describes Mary’s life as a worker in the cane fields and the Dairy Cattle industry in a land colonized and re-shaped by European farming (2011: 35). Mary led ‘a life of servitude’, without freedom, culture or family – the reality of colonial dispossession for many Aboriginal people
who laboured for the colonizers (35). The elegy presents the question of how Mary became ‘an orphan raised by nuns’ – through the death of her family, or as a casualty of the Stolen Generation, acknowledging too, the impact of Christianity with an incumbent loss of Indigenous cultures, communities, and languages:

An orphan you were raised by nuns, put out to service.
when only 13, Bundaberg, the great cane fields
your job milkin cows, 17 morning and night....
Twenty-three years behind those walls, the laundry was your job, wahin’ white men’s clothes and sheets for hotels.
They made ya earn your keep, Mary! A life of servitude is the only life you’ve known; you had no kith or kin. Rest up now, Mary from the dairy. Ya getting old, ya see (35).

Langford Ginibi bears witness to the severity of Mary’s treatment by her white masters, invoked in ‘they flogged you with stock / whip, till you couldn’t take no more’, in treatment that speaks of slavery and corporal punishment. Langford Ginibi’s elegy for Mary brings to light the unspoken and forgotten histories of many Aboriginal people, thereby reclaiming the hidden and repressed histories of individual lives.

Importantly, the figure of Mary is also witness to the part that Aboriginal Australians played in settling and developing colonial Australia; as well as their involvement in fostering the economy in large rural properties, such as the cane fields and the dairy industry described as part of Mary’s life. In ‘My Mob, My Self’, Langford Ginibi comments that ‘the first settlers would never have been able to settle this land without Aboriginal involvement’ (2000: 19).
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

Like Mary, Langford Ginibi’s ‘people on the mission’ were involved in building the wealth of individuals, as well as the white nation ‘for next to no pay’:

My people were stockmen and women, housemaids, servants and midwives, and deserve recognition, along with Australia’s glorious pioneers! In Bundjalung country, where I came from, my people on the mission where I was born built up those big cattle hierarchies, for next to no pay, compared to the wages the white stockmen got (2000: 19).

Oodgeroo’s elegy ‘Cookalingee (for Elsie)’, shares many similarities with Ginibi’s elegy in its expression of the emotions of a cook who, like Mary, is little more than a slave. As ‘Station cook’, Oodgeroo expresses the loneliness of the culturally and racially dispossessed Aboriginal worker in a non-Indigenous world. Here, the cook is depicted as being, ‘Lonely in her paradise’ one where, ‘Cookalingee sits and cries’ (1964: 22). Oodgeroo’s poem sets up a comparison between a traditional Aboriginal world, with that of the white man ‘Trained and safe, and civilized’, while recalling Cookalingee’s cultural past with its ‘Songs of old remembered days / The walkabout, the old free ways’ (22). Moreover, the dispossession of the ‘Ragged band of her own race / Hungry nomads’, who wait to be fed outside Cookalingee’s kitchen door, creates a sad mosaic of dispossession that echoes through Oodgeroo’s first two collections of poetry (1964; 1966).

Similarly, Oodgeroo’s ‘Daisy Bindi’ is an elegy to Mrs Daisy Bindi of Western Australia, an Aboriginal leader who fought for wages for the unpaid stockman and domestic workers of Roy Hill (1966: 24). Oodgeroo speaks of the slave-like conditions of the workers:
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

Slavery at Roy Hill, to our shame profound,  
Wages for the black nil all the year round,  
Slavers given free hand by police consent,  
Winked at obligingly by Government.  

‘Daisy Bindi’ reveals the ways that white land owner, police and government combine to use the Aboriginal worker to develop the wealth and fortunes of the nation. As Cunneen discusses in ‘Framing the Crimes of Colonialism’ in terms of ‘Aboriginal art’ providing ‘a unique window on state crime and the colonial process’, these elegies charting the lives of Mary, Elsie, and the ‘slaves’ of Roy Hill reveal the workings of the colonial state. Further, they describe the ways in which the different institutions combined to create a tight web of colonialism within which the Aboriginal worker became ensnared, without recourse to any forms of legal or moral justice (2009: 120)

In ‘Cattle Camp Recruit’, Gilbert tells of an event passed down orally when ‘The white men had come for black stockman’, in which a Kamilaroi woman was taken from her husband, her children murdered and the woman taken by the white men as slave to a droving camp, recounted in the lines ‘Eleena / Was now a black camp slave out on the trail’ (1999: 12). Romanticized, nationalistic representations of drovers and stockmen forging the land in the bushman elegy omit the place, presence and input of Aboriginal people such as Eleena who, stolen and enslaved, work for the colony. Nationalistic tropes of the white, colonial bushman forging a nation in settler elegies are re-presented in Indigenous elegy as also founded on hardship, loneliness, isolation and, often, the slave-like conditions of Aboriginal workers. In ‘Subalterns and Other Agencies’, Walter Mignolo discusses the way in which
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

colonialism as a practice creates the racial differences between the white, western supremacist and the black colonial subject:

The rule of colonial difference structured modern/colonial power in one specific way: racism operated not as a question of skin color, but as a way of ranking human beings and as a means of taking away their human dignity (2005: 388).

Mignolo states that ‘coloniality’ works at the level of both racial oppression and class oppression in the form of exploitation of the worker, who is also the racial other, arguing that ‘race and class ranking are two different forms of oppression and justification of exploitation’ (390). Economic exploitation in the colonised country is based on the two oppressions of race (a categorization based on ‘degree of humanity’ in comparison to the colonizer as benchmark); as well as class (wealth and material possessions). This powerful interconnection of oppressive forms works to both racially denigrate and exploit Indigenous people in the labour market. Laid bare in these postcolonial elegies, they show how race and class are utilized by the powerful to contribute to the building of an affluent white nation, through the unpaid labour of the colonial, racialized ‘other’.

Incarceration and Deaths in Custody

The foregoing discussion has considered the elegies of Aboriginal poets that bear witness to colonization; the loss of land, as in Oodgeroo’s elegies; as well as the changing landscape, in Langford Ginibi’s elegy for Mary as traditional lands that underwrite the culture and survival of Indigenous groups become part of the pastoralist industry. In the following section, the long-term repercussions of colonial and neo-colonial rule are discussed in relation to
contemporary deaths in custody. A significant number of elegies in this important and extensive subgenre of Aboriginal poetry were written between 1985 and 1995, a period of increased political agitation in response to the high rate of suicides and other, often unexplained Aboriginal deaths in prisons and lock ups. Davis’ eponymous poem in *John Pat and Other Poems*, dedicated to ‘Masie Pat, and all mothers who have suffered similar loss’, was published during this period. The lines repeated at the close of each of the four verses, ‘a concrete floor / a cell door / and John Pat’, evokes an image of the dead Aboriginal boy creating a litany of loss throughout the poem that speaks powerfully of the more recent repercussions of colonization (1988: 2-3). Graeme Dixon’s *Holocaust Island* represents Dixon’s own experiences in the prison system as a teenager, and later as an Aboriginal man, describing ‘Prison’ as a life of ‘Brutality / Savageness / Depression’ (1990: 3). Dixon writes specifically of Aboriginal deaths in custody as a part of a social commentary concerned with the complexities and inequities present in the lives of urban Indigenous men and women. The earlier section of Dixon’s book describes the death of a re-captured escapee, found dead after inhumane treatment in ‘Yigga’s Run’; and in ‘Darryl’, Dixon remembers the death of ‘a skinny half-cast kid / hanging in a cell’; the harrowing memory of the boy’s ‘agonised face / and the leather boot lace,’ omnipresent within the poem (1990: 3; 10-17; 20-21). The national enquiry into these deaths, and the subsequent setting up of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1987), brought these deaths to the attention of the Australian public; many elegies such as Davis’ ‘John Pat’ and the work of Dixon’s *Holocaust Island* providing a powerful emotional poetics of loss that bears witness to these events (1987-1991). Aboriginal deaths in custody continue unabated as a re-assessment upon the 25th Anniversary of the Commission verifies. This subgenre of Indigenous elegy constitutes an important collection of humanitarian and political documents that offer an Aboriginal
account of a number of those deaths and the inequities for Aboriginal Australians within the prison and judicial system.

Barbara Nicholson, a poet and political activist of the Wadi Wadi people, writes of the inequities in the judicial and prison system for Aboriginal Australians. Nicholson’s elegy for Mulrunji, ‘Reconcile This’, offers an account of the Aboriginal man’s death, the poet laying the many deaths in custody at the feet of a legal and judicial system founded on deep inequities between white and Aboriginal peoples (2011). Critiquing a prison system that fails in its duty of care to Mulrunji, Nicholson writes:

In for drunk and disorderly
Mulrunji died in prison on Palm Island
at the hands of those who whose role of guardian
was so shamefully neglected.
Neglected because in judicial terms
the word guardian translates
to ‘Duty of Care’
but in that powerhouse of white power
duty of care is ignored
the guardians are absolved
of responsibility to this philosophy
they beat him senseless, his precious body
battered and broken... (201)

Nicholson points out that for the death of Mulrunji ‘There was never going to be / an investigation an explanation, a why’ (201). To explain this statement, the poet juxtaposes
the unresolved injustice of Mulrunji’s death to that of a murdered white prisoner, naming the white prisoner, the ‘self-styled / Al Capone of Melbourne’, who ‘died in prison after a vicious beating / at the hands of another crazed inmate’. Nicholson writes of the ramifications of this second prison murder stating that ‘immediately three investigations were launched / respect is given to the family / millions of dollars are thrown at / the investigation / and all the resources the authorities can muster’ (202). The circumstances and repercussions around each of the deaths and Nicholson’s final line, ‘God. It must be a privilege to be white’, speaks eloquently of what the poet recognises as the deep inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within both the prison and legal systems in contemporary Australia. In comparing the case of Mulrunji, his arrest for drunk and disorderly behaviour, and his death due to a severe beating due to a failed duty of care, against the criminality of the ‘white’ prisoner charged with committing numerous murders, Nicholson addresses what she understands as white privilege and entitlement and the power of white money and influence that pervades postcolonial contemporary Australia today.

In the epigraph ‘Remembering’, Jack Davis points to the history of the incarceration of Indigenous people during colonization, in ‘the island prisons / the chain and the gun’. These images haunt much Aboriginal poetry, not least the elegies written for Indigenous people dying in prisons and lock ups, often for small offences. Writing of the imprisonment of her son in ‘Oppression’, Langford Ginibi’s stark images in ‘Black hands tied together by white chains / blood running freely’, asks the question: ‘police brutality, deaths in custody, the lot / Can anyone explain why this convict mentality, still remains?’ (2011: 98). Incarceration lies at the centre of colonizing practices, to which Davis, Langford Ginibi and many Aboriginal
poets give testimony, bearing witness to not only the past but to continuing imperialist systems based on incarceration in present-day Australian prisons, detention centres and the judicial systems. In ‘Crimes and Punishments’, Hodge and Mishra state that ‘The carceral mind is one of the central themes of Australian culture today, adding that ‘Aborigines as a group are Australia’s experts on carcerality’ (2001: 353). ‘Death in Custody’ by John Muk Muk Burke, of Wiradjuri and Irish descent, represents a generic death that makes clear the connection between death in custody and the colonizing process. The poet writes, ‘You came / With brandy / Chalk / Salvation / to set up / situations / Of yet another / Death in Custody’ (1999: 36). Alcohol, the demarcation lines in chalk that portioned the land for white ownership, Christianity, these are all marked by Burke as precursors to each single death in prison through loss of freedom, culture and land. ‘Death in Custody’ is for Burke, not the death of one Aboriginal person but of many Aboriginal nations.

Lionel Fogarty, the well-known Aboriginal poet, political activist, (particularly in relation to land rights and deaths in custody), and Murri ‘songman’ of the Yoogum and Kudjela people, also describes this sense of Australia as a vast prison system for Aboriginal Australians – both in the past and in contemporary Australia. In ‘Consideration of Black Deaths (story)’, a narrative poem about deaths in custody and the oppression of Aboriginal peoples, Fogarty writes, ‘210 years we are in the custody of white people’ (1995: 1-6). Fogarty’s poem bears witness to a number of Aboriginal deaths in custody, including those of Robert Hopkins, Lawton and ‘two sisters’ dead by ‘rape and knife cuts,’ the poem a political document unfolding the often inhumane treatment, the suffering and deaths as a result of incarceration.
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

In *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera*, Fogarty writes two elegies for his brother Daniel Yock. ‘For I Come –Death in Custody’, creates death as a spectral presence that not only haunts and stalks the Aboriginal prisoner in police custody, but uses ‘jail’ as a metaphor for Australia after the colonizers arrived, and for the way it became a vast penal colony or a death sentence for Aboriginal people, claiming, ‘even a Murri wouldn’t know / if him free’ (1995: 54).

Him not free
For when white man came
it’s been like a jail
with a wife and family
black man can stay in jail
like its home.
Fuck they hung us all (54).

The distorted syntax and the absence of adjectives (other than ‘white’ and ‘black’), punctuation and the staccato style and series of statements, creates a factual litany of the wrongs incurred through the colonising process in which the colonizers came; the land became a jail in which Aboriginal people both live(d) and die(d) within the prison system that is Australia. The confusion of tenses in the poem conflates the prison-like existence as it has existed in the past, unchanged and continuous today within the prison system and within life in Australia for Aboriginal men and women.

Fogarty’s oeuvre as a whole works to subvert English, the language of the colonizer which has supressed many traditional Aboriginal languages. Aware of the colonising powers of the oppressor’s language, Fogarty’s poetry works to destabilize English and to re-make it as a
tool of decolonization. In *Networked Language: Culture and History in Australian Poetry*, Philip Mead argues that poets such as Fogarty that are not a part of official white representations of Australian literature and poetry, ‘offer a number of challenges to our thinking about poetic expression in relation to history, nation, race and ethnicity, through the constitutive prism of language, as much as through identity politics, revisionist history, or social protest’ (2008: 403). Mead states that Fogarty’s work ‘exemplifies the poetics of resistance, in its forms, in its multiple rhetorical gestures in its grammar and vocabulary, in every capillary of its language’ (422).

Language, and poetic language in particular, are institutions for nationalistic discourses that work to further marginalise minorities and represent them in ways that diminish their presence and power. In using the language of the colonizer to deconstruct the colonizing process, Fogarty’s poetry offers a significant intervention into imperialism and power structures that are inherent in language. In ‘For I come’, mentioned above, Fogarty uses white, demotic language, such as ‘screws’ with its derogatory implications for the ways in which the prison system operates, thus the poet turns the language and the penal system of the colonizer back on itself. Fogarty’s association with the word ‘freedom’ – a central tenet of western democracy – plays out in the lines, ‘See that scarred hand at work / that’s cutting away to freedom’, here the idea of freedom is not for the living Indigenous man in prison or within Australia, but freedom is to be found only in death (54). So too, ‘Fuck they hung us,’ is a statement about the white colonizer’s behaviour that reveals a colonial pragmatism and cruelty that sits in opposition to the romanticised and the sentimental inherent in the lyrical impulses around death in the settler colonial and postcolonial elegies. In writing of the colonial practice of hangings, Fogarty’s elegy, and much of his poetry,
stands in opposition to the colonial settler elegy that searches for the ‘voice’ of Australia in which to laud the land and the *civilized* culture of the colony. Mead points out the ways in which the English language – “‘settled’ language” – has been utilized in establishing white supremacy. Conversely, Mead describes Fogarty’s poetic resistance to the English language, as ‘the other side of the “settled” language’, through his ‘unsettled, wounded, conflicted relation to dominant forms of everyday language, and in opposition to a vernacular literary nationalism that has been both self-conscious and aggressive’ (2008: 406).

In describing the death of his brother Daniel in jail, in lines such as ‘He died at the white hands / it was there in the stinkin’ jails / up you might blacks / him not free’, language breaks down; the broken syntax and disconnected phrases reflect the enormity of loss and anger that the poet feels at the death of his brother. The ‘unsettled, wounded, conflicted’ nature of Fogarty’s poetry as described by Mead and discussed, particularly within the poetry of Fogarty and Wagan Watson, is ever-present in Aboriginal elegy. The presence of the wound of colonization is articulated in Jahan Ramazani’s ‘The Wound of History: Walcott’s *Omeros* and the Postcolonial Poetics of Affliction’, which considers the wound trope in terms of colonised peoples throughout the world. Ramazani suggests that Walcott’s ‘pervasive figure of the wound’, offers a ‘figurative site where concerns with imperial injury, literary archetype, and linguistic heritage most graphically intersect’ (2001: 50).

However, in discussing this in relation to Derek Walcott’s Caribbean epic poem, *Omeros* (1990), Ramazani also writes that ‘the wound trope’ is one that ‘suits preconceptions of postcolonial writing as either “victim’s literature”’ or “resistance literature”’ (2001: 50).
This is important for the following analysis, for while colonial and postcolonial ghosts have pervaded the first part of this discussion of Aboriginal elegy, the wound trope most powerfully also signifies the *survivor*. While the dark wound of colonization is expressed within many of these elegies and within the poet’s consciousness, the ‘resistance’ that Ramazani speaks of, based on the wound of colonization incurred by the living as a mark of survival, is one most powerfully expressed by Aboriginal Australian poets.

**Part Two: A Poetry of Renewal**

*Cultural Celebration*

The Aboriginal elegy is not singly a poetics of loss, but one that Brewster describes as revival, replete with ‘cultural celebration’ (2008: 59). Many Indigenous elegies are richly represented by references to the continuance of pre-colonial cultural beliefs and practices; as well as of a continuing contemporary culture in the present. Poets are also involved in claiming an identity, and as Anita Heiss states in ‘Blackwords: Writers on Identity’:

> The act of writing often becomes more than solely creative for many authors who use the process as a vehicle for analysing, understanding, asserting, determining and defining their own sense of identity’ (2014).

As previously noted, to speak only of ‘victim’ elegy is to support and to reinscribe Indigenous Australians as an absent, doomed or vanishing people. In ‘Cultural Geographies: Indigenous Spectrality and the Politics of Postcolonial Ghost Stories’, Emile Cameron discusses the trope of haunting in Canadian scholarship in relation to colonization,
suggestions ghosts ‘gesture towards the materiality of colonized and abject bodies’ (Cameron: 2008: 383). While there are many differences between Canadian and Australian colonization and the aftermath felt by each of the First Nation’s Peoples, Cameron’s remarks concerning haunting tropes in Canadian literature can be usefully applied to Australian Aboriginal ghosts. Cameron argues that the spectral can be seen as ‘conceptualizing that which we cannot easily see, even of giving voice to some colonial traumas’, but that ‘confining the Indigenous to the ghostly also has the potential to re-inscribe the interests of the powerful upon the meaning and memories of place’ (390). This is a situation that is powerfully reproduced within Australian settler elegies in their ubiquitous representation of the landscape in ahistorical terms, as neither owned nor inhabited.

Australian Aboriginal elegies are involved with not only the elegists’ memories of the dead, but with the places and events of the lives of the dead. Thus elegy celebrates past and continuing Aboriginal cultures within which the dead and the living are embedded, in a circularity of life that is not shaped by historical and cultural constructions based on linear time. The following analysis considers the use of Aboriginal languages, references to cultural practices, world views, and spiritual belief systems expressed in this group of elegy. In addition, reference to cultural heritages and contemporary practices that place the non-Indigenous reader outside the reading frame through lack of knowledge of Indigenous cultures and cultural practices, are in evidence. Furthermore, the inclusion of traditional Indigenous oral characteristics marking the continuation of precolonial oral traditions in contemporary Aboriginal elegy, are explored. In addition, the elegiac voices of Aboriginal women poets are also considered in terms of their mourning of the loss of family members.
in relation to the Stolen Generation. Finally, elegies that contribute to the task of mending the familial, cultural and genealogical rupture created by the Stolen Generation, colonisation, and colonial and continuing neo-colonial practices, are discussed.

In returning to a discussion of the elegies of Fogarty, a second elegy for his brother Daniel ‘Murra Murra Gulandanilli Waterhen,’ establishes the presence of a complex culture and sense of spirituality that the poet, his brother and their people are heir to. While Fogarty’s poetry is political in intent, it is also, as he writes ‘In Consideration of Black Deaths in Custody’, concerned with the desire to, ‘tell pure in Murri thinking’ (1995: 20). In *Practices of Proximity: The Appropriation of English in Australian Literature*, Katherine Russo quotes Fogarty on this sensibility within his poetics, in which the poet states ‘I want them [non-Indigenous readers] to feel the spirit that is in me and in the people of my community. I believe in the pride and heritage of an Indigenous ancestral past...I see words beyond any acceptable meaning, this is how I express my dreaming’ (2010: 62-3 citing Fogarty: 1995: ix-x). To ‘tell pure in murri thinking,’ is central to this second elegy for Daniel ‘Murra Murra Gulandanilli Waterhen’. While mourning his brother, as in ‘Pain and ache / Yes he was loved by the Great Ones / Grief came out, out of sharing / and sharing / alike was him’, the sense of the importance of community, and the importance of ‘sharing’, reflects the presence of a living culture. Fogarty’s positioning of himself and his brother Daniel within a dynamic Murri culture is an act of signifying an Aboriginal identity: an act of selfhood by the poet that is part of a crucial decolonizing process. This signification reclaims a personal and community identity denied in representations of Aboriginality found in settler elegy and discursive regimes associated with Aboriginal Australians, mentioned earlier in the light of Dodson’s and Langton’s discussion of white, Australian stereotypical representations of
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

Aboriginal people. A sense of the spiritual beliefs of the Murri people is expressed by Fogarty in relation to Daniel’s spiritual journey, as:

The journey of his beginning
No more pain no more suffering
Dreamtime dancer keep me strong
Murra Murra Gulandanilli
You’re on the other side, the light you see is where you’re from
Is where the light you see is going to be the form of the feeling that was within you (6).

The poem is also witness to a spiritual and cultural continuance linking the past that Fogarty says of Daniel, is both ‘within you’ and ‘where you are from’ (6). This past is expressed as both indivisible from the present and the future in relation to understanding Aboriginal origins, a reality expressed in Fogarty’s poem as Daniel returns to, ‘The journey of his beginning’ and his own personal ‘Dreaming’. In Fogarty’s description of Daniel in relation to the Dreamtime and ceremonial dancing, as ‘spiritual dancer and ‘Dreamtime dancer’, Fogarty’s brother is always ‘present’ through the continuation of the traditional spiritual dance which he performed when he was alive, that he is still a part of (6). When Fogarty speaks of Daniel’s journey after death, his life and his dancing and Dreaming, it is part of a mosaic of cultural, spiritual and social practices and beliefs that speak of Murri culture. Fogarty’s elegy for his brother offers a postcolonial reconceptualization of the presence and complexity of Indigenous culture in contemporary Australia. The denigration of the culture of the colonised described by Fanon is reversed by Fogarty in an act of decolonisation through the expression of an Indigenous selfhood (1961: 126).
However, the poet’s use of English and the genre of poetry as part of neo-colonialism embedded within society, culture and the political apparatus, together with Indigenous cultural content, brings into play the question of hybridity. There are possible pitfalls in maintaining unequal power structures inherent within the term ‘hybridity’. Ramazani’s discussion of the positive repercussions of hybridity in postcolonial African, Indian and Caribbean poets in *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English*, also alerts us to what the author terms, ‘the false impression of symmetry between unequal terms’; noting that ‘hybridity theory too readily dissolves and thus depoliticizes the division between colonizer and colonized…’ (2001: 180). Furthermore, Ramazani points out that hybridity ‘replicates the binaries it is meant to supersede’, suggesting that the possibility of a ‘“third space” of interculturation’ cannot exist when the power structures between the colonised and colonizer still exist (181).

Rather than creating a ‘third space’ to which presumably both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers would be privy, it is suggested that the cultural references in Fogarty’s poetry place non-Indigenous readers outside the text, and therefore outside Aboriginal cultures. Thus, the position of non-Indigenous readers is unstable in relation to understanding the full impact of what is presented in the poem. In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Boehmer suggests that this ‘alienation’ of the non-Aboriginal reader provides a means ‘of asserting a specifically Aboriginal vision’: one clearly present in Fogarty’s elegy and within much of his poetry (1995: 230). Both the former presence and putative superiority of the English and European cultures, as well as the notion of a shared reading space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers and poets, are here destabilized by the Aboriginal poet in an act of decolonization that renders the term ‘hybridity’ unstable.
While Fogarty provides a glossary of words in his *New and Selected Poems*, non-Indigenous reader (as myself) may not have a deep understanding of the spiritual journey of Daniel; or of whom ‘the Great Ones’ are, or the cultural and spiritual relevance and significance of the ‘Murra Murra Guldanilli dancer’. Neither too, the meanings and values imparted by Daniel’s performance – in all, the social, cultural and spiritual traditions; as well as the aligned meanings associated with ‘country’ that are coded within dance, musicality and the ceremonial aspects that the poet emphasizes.

**Oral traditions in Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Poetry**

Through remembering and celebrating the dead, a sense of selfhood, personal and communal identities are created in Aboriginal elegy, as shown through Fogarty’s placing of himself, his own poetics and his brother within a rich, cultural and spiritual matrix. Discussion now turns to the presence of Aboriginal oral traditions in the poetry of renewal, as informed by Stuart Cooke’s scholarship in ‘Tracing a Trajectory from Songpoetry to Contemporary Aboriginal Poetry’. In attempting to trace Indigenous Australian oral traditions within Fogarty’s poetry, Cooke’s insights underwrite the following analysis of Fogarty’s poem as placed within and as part of a culture and a community, saying of Fogarty that, ‘Like a songpoem’s place in a larger communal performance, Fogarty’s position as a member of a wider community is central to an understanding of his poetics’ (2013: 100). Cooke argues that in Fogarty’s poetry, ‘His I can be his own, or that of the local community, or even that of the Aboriginal people across the whole continent’ (100); thus an individual, communal or Pan-Aboriginal poetics is shown to be engendered by Fogarty. As songman in his community, Fogarty’s role is expressed in ‘Murra Murra’ by the
use of ‘I’; ‘our’; ‘we’ and ‘everybody’, in speaking of and to Murri people. As Cooke suggests for “traditional songpoetry”, ‘the emphasis on any particular subjectivity recedes amid multiple subjectivities’, a characteristic clearly apparent in Fogarty’s poetics (92).

Cooke states that there has been little acknowledgment within Western critical discourse regarding ‘the extensive Indigenous cultural heritage of contemporary Aboriginal writers’ (89). However, there is much evidence not only in Fogarty’s poetry but also in the elegies of Aboriginal poets to further exemplify Cooke’s claim. In response, the following discussion of Ali Cobby Eckermann’s elegies point to a number of characteristics of Indigenous oral storytelling and oral histories within Indigenous elegy, offering further evidence for celebrating what Brewster has described previously in the discussion as a ‘revival’ of Indigenous culture within poetry.

Boehmer’s assessment that Aboriginal poets use ‘totemic symbols, cyclic patterns and mnemonic codes of oral poetry’, is also in evidence within contemporary Aboriginal poetry (1995: 230). In ‘Murra Murra Gulandanilli’, we are shown the presence of Daniel’s totemic symbol – the ‘waterhen’ (Gulandanilli) – and the way Daniel is for Fogarty, ‘living always’, in and as part of the living community through the ‘murri way of dancing’ and the waterhen as the dynamic totemic symbol of the community. Totemic symbols are present in the poetry of Ali Cobby Eckermann, a Yankunytjatjara / Kokatha Kunga woman, writing in a number of her poems of the ‘Wedge-tail eagle’, as totemic symbol of her own clan. In ‘Wallaroo’, past generations of ‘Patriarchs’, including family members who have died both in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial times are elegized, elucidating a long-remembered past history of the poet’s people. Eckermann expresses their mourning, pain and anger at colonization in
‘the storm of men’ that gather in the dark clouds in the sky, expressed as part of the totemic being of the ‘Wedge-tail eagle’:

I see family who have passed away
And family Patriarchs I never met
I see a corpse. Slowly another
Shape emerges – an eagle
So large and so old
So frail yet so strong.
I can see into his cloud skin
This totem being – the oldest
Wedge-tail eagle in the world

The string of men, their anger
and anguish attached are resting on the eagles wing.
The wings stretched far. Determined as
he carries the storm of men on his feathers
Determined to reach the city quickly

While the ‘anger’ and ‘anguish’ of the dead are continuous with the present, held within the totem of the eagle as the spiritual emblem of Eckermann’s people, there is a strong sense of cultural continuity between past and present expressed in the ‘wall of faces that the poet sees, who are ‘Wise men, Unaipon’ (a reference to David Unaipon, the writer from the Ngarrindjeri people), together with family who have died and patriarchs from the past (59). This sense of the totem ‘the oldest Wedge-tailed eagle in the world,’ as part of the Dreaming, is symbolised as carrying the past generations of the dead creating a rich sense of past history that Eckermann describes as ‘resting on the eagle’s wing’. As discussed in
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

Fogarty’s elegy for his brother, and underwritten by Cooke’s comments on the past and the present continuous within traditional oral poetry, time, events and those who have died are represented as ever-present in Eckermann’s elegy. As Cooke writes, ‘the fact that such song poetry can never be described in the past tense tells us that poems are in constant movement through country, “flowing like a living conduit of meaning, ever present”’ (90 citing Bradley: 2010: 106). The poet is not speaking of western conceptions of linear time, but the eagle as totemic bird in continuous flight carries the past, as well as the present, and the future, ‘on its wings’.

With reference to this sense of song poetry as a “living conduit of meaning”, Cooke brings to light an important characteristic of traditional oral songpoetry that stems from the overarching use of verbs, together with a paucity of adjectives. In speaking of songpoetry not only from Central Australia but from the Kimberly and Arnhem Land, Cooke states that:

...there is a tendency towards the reduction of the parts of speech to mainly verbal or substantive elements: the poetic vocabulary consists largely of nouns and verbs (91).

While this is associated with enhancing rhythmic and sound patterns, Cooke suggests that a lack of descriptive language tends to avoid delimiting a particular environment ‘by confining it within the language of a descriptive survey’ (92). Cooke states that ‘Objects remain free to enter into partnerships with, or break away from, language... creating greater flexibility’; thus ‘phrases cannot become “inaccurate” because the object to which it refers has changed in some way’ (92). This flexibility can be seen in the final lines of ‘Wallaroo’, in which Eckermann writes in the present in relation to those who have died, as ‘I sit at the
The poet not only mainly uses verbs in keeping with Cooke’s statement, in ‘sit’, ‘watch’, ‘wonder’ and ‘think’, but in using the nouns, ‘wind’ and ‘rain’, avoids descriptions of them in which a detailed portrayal would situate them as having a particular quality, at a particular time, in a particular place. In expressing the wind and the rain as nouns, they acquire a substantive quality that gives them an independent existence, thereby not fixing meaning, subjectivity, or ownership by the speaker in the poem. This is markedly different to many of the settler elegies discussed, in that the poet describes the natural world in detail – symbolically, aesthetically, and subjectively – thus tending to fix landscape in cultural, geographical and spatial terms that underlie demarcation of territories, which can substantiate ownership. Alternatively, as Cooke argues, a poetics that does not limit the environment through description, seeks not to ‘encompass the country’ but instead ‘needs to form a relationship with it’ (92). Cooke’s understanding reflects one of the differences between the ways in which Aboriginal poets, as exemplified in Eckermann’s elegy, and settler poets represent their different cultural sensibilities concerning the natural world, the land, and land ownership.

The importance of maintaining oral traditions in order to recount the past is central to Eckermann’s elegy, ‘Kulila (Listen)’. While this elegy bears witness to the many massacres of Aboriginal peoples in the past, it also underwrites the place of Aboriginal oral culture in the process of historical memory, and the memorialization of past deaths perpetrated by the colonization:

tell every little story
when the people was alive
tell every little story more

don’t forget ‘em story
night time tell ‘em to the kids
keep every story alive

don’t change ‘em story
tell ‘em straight out story
only one way story

all around ‘em story
every place we been
every place killing place

sit down here real quiet way
you can hear ‘em dying
all the massacre mobs

hearts can’t make it up
when you feel the story
you know it’s true (2015:7-8).

Not only is the writing and ‘speaking’ of Eckermann’s elegy highly personal but it is also deeply communal in the use of the second person ‘you’. Eckermann’s elegy is a cultural map that tells of how to pass down oral information in the present, while recalling, and maintaining pre-colonial cultural traditions. Each re-telling, as the poem recounts, needs to be honest, never forgotten, and told and felt with emotion, in order to pass on orally, the history of colonization, and retain unbroken spiritual connections to those of past
generations. The significance and memorizing of this lesson is delivered through the cyclic patterns that Boehmer identifies earlier in the discussion, through the patterns of sound in Eckermann’s tercets; as well as in the use of repetition to enhance mnemonic learning in lines such as ‘tell every little story’, ‘don’t forget ‘em story’, and ‘keep every little story alive’. There is a sense that no detail is disposable, changeable or forgotten; while repetition of words, phrases, and sounds aid memory. The three stressed lines carry much information about not only how to tell the stories, but how to listen, and ultimately how the past is always in the present, as in the line you can still ‘hear ‘em dying’. As Eckermann stresses, this ability to listen, hear, feel and have empathy with the dead is an important part of the re-telling of histories. Eckermann’s elegy connects recounting and remembering to a sense of ‘feeling’ and deep emotional attachment by the teller and listener to those lost in the past. In ‘sit down here real quiet way / you can hear ‘em dying’ and ‘hearts can’t make it up’, the stories are told in such a way as to evoke emotion and strengthen connections between the living and the dead. ‘When you feel the story’ requires an emotional engagement in the present, both with the past, and with those who died in the past.

In making the past a part of the present, Eckermann is involved in what Cooke describes as the ‘driving motivation’ of Paddy Roe’s stories – based on oral story-telling – of the Kimberly region of Gularbula as “…the way that they interact with and make coherent the present-day social context” (94 quoting Roe and Muecke: 2009: viii). Eckermann’s elegy not only ensures that colonization and the many deaths are remembered in the present, but that oral storytelling of history remains within living memory, and as part of the future of the community. The ‘present-day social context’ that Cooke describes of Roe’s stories, is
in Eckermann’s elegy the present-day memory and repercussions of colonization: one to be committed to memory and never forgotten.

Eckermann’s lesson on how to pass on histories through oral storytelling that involves the emotions of the listener, suggests that a part of pre-colonial oral traditions elicited the empathy of the listener to create a deeper engagement. This is a feature that Penny Van Toorn attributes to Aboriginal women’s writing in colonial Australia. In *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia*, Penny Van Toorn discusses the complex interplay between Indigenous social conventions and the advent of literacy in colonial Australia (2006). Van Toorn considers that Indigenous writers in the colonial period found that ‘One way of bringing people close is by telling them stories, letting them know how it affected you’ (200). Van Toorn reasons that, ‘Implicit in such narratives is the question of how you would feel if this happened to you?’ (200). Van Toorn’s research reveals that ‘Many of the early letters from Aboriginal women to government officials used narrative in such a manner, as did many of the Aboriginal witnesses who testified at the Stolen Generation enquiry in the 1990s’ (200). Eckermann’s elegy ‘Kulila (Listen)’, suggests a continuity in the use of empathy described in Indigenous colonial women’s writings, as discussed by Van Toorn: one that is not only found in pre-colonial oral traditions, but is also unbroken with respect to Aboriginal women’s writings during colonization, and continuous within culture today, as well as in contemporary postcolonial Aboriginal poetry. Many of the elegies discussed in this chapter work to evoke a sense of empathy and understanding described by Van Toorn, through the poet’s unfolding of past and present losses to Aboriginal Australians.
Van Toorn’s remark that Aboriginal colonial women’s writing was often involved in entreating officials for the return of children who had been removed by the state, also establishes a continuity between colonial Aboriginal women’s writing and the large number of contemporary women’s elegies that write about the effects of the Stolen Generation on the poet, their families and their communities. The term ‘Stolen Generation’ refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians forcibly removed as children from their families by government, church and welfare agencies. The long-term and widespread removal of Aboriginal children is described in the *Bringing Them Home* Report, which states:

Nationally we can conclude with confidence that between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities in the period from approximately 1910 until 1970. Most families have been affected, in one or more generations, by the forcible removal of one or more children.6

If one considers the removal of Aboriginal children in the nineteenth century, as described by Van Toorn; those removed as part of the Stolen Generation, and ‘The Northern Territory “Emergency Response” Intervention’ of 2007, as well as a documented increase in the taking of Aboriginal children from their families in the present, a history of the removal of children from Aboriginal families spans the period of British settlement in Australia.7

Elegies mourning members of the Stolen Generation express the anguish and sorrow of broken families. The accompanying loss of spirituality, community, traditional lands and personal identity – discussed earlier with regard to Oodgeroo’s ‘Cookalingee’ and Langford
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

Ginibi’s ‘Mary’ – create a rupture in generations of Aboriginal peoples that can never be healed, as the poets in the following discussion witness. To return to ‘Black Poetics’, Anita Heiss writes, ‘Many of the children now as adults have used the pen as a means of healing the scars of removal, of telling their own stories of survival’; as well as to provide ‘a voice for Aboriginal Australians in the political history of this country that has denied they even existed’ (2006: 187). An example of Heiss’ statement can be seen in ‘Torn Apart’ by Pam Errinaron-Williams, of Goreng Goreng, Irish and Maori descent, who as a stolen child mourns the loss of her mother. The poet writes, ‘I cried for years / seeing my mother / cling to the last feel / of my arms / as I clung to her’; the continuation of feelings of loss in the lines, ‘I cry for you at night / my mother / so strong and silent / I wail for the loss / and the pain / they inflicted on us both’ (1988: 88-89)

Eve Johnson, the playwright, poet and actor of the Mulak Mulak people writes in ‘A Letter to My Mother’, of her forced separation from her mother, first as a child, then as an adult. The child-like English of the ward of the Australian Government not only stresses the lost autonomy of the subject but the loss of traditional language, the adult unable to write adequately of her feelings of grief, loneliness and despair in a language not her own:

I not see you long time now, I not see you long time now
White fulla bin take me from you, I don’t know why
Give me to a Missionary to be God’s child.
Give me new language, give me new name
All time I cry, they say - ‘that shame’ (1988: 24).
The pervasiveness of the Christian religion, naming and loss of language that Johnson draws together are witness to important colonizing processes that have continued into recent times through the taking of Aboriginal children from their families. Johnson’s elegy for her lost mother writes not only of the familial rupture, but the cultural hiatus created by the Stolen Generation as expressed in, ‘I need you to teach me your wisdom, your lore’; as well as of the passing down of traditional knowledge from mother to daughter. While the lost sense of belonging and identity expressed by Johnson denies an Aboriginal past and future for the poet, the poem also exposes a deep connection between mother and daughter as the poet writes, ‘Two women we stand, our story untold / but now as our spiritual bondage / We will silence this burden, this longing this pain / when I hear you my Mother give me my name’ (25).

Further, the loss of the poet’s place on her tribal lands that she dreams of returning to is expressed in, ‘One day your dancing, your dreaming, your song / Will take me your spirit back where I belong / My Mother, the earth, the land …’ (25). In this way the elegy for her birth mother becomes woven together with an elegy for the lost ‘Mother’ the land and all that the connection with country entails in terms of spirituality, life-meaning, culture, history, identity and community. There are a considerable number of elegies that are similar to Johnson’s in that they too speak of the land as lost ‘mother’. There are several for example collected in Kerry Reed-Gilbert’s The Strength of Us as Women Black Women Speak, which includes Yasmin Johnson’s ‘The Answers Are Within’ and ‘Mother Earth’; Nellie Green’s ‘The Stars Fade Mysteriously’ and Christine Simpson’s ‘My Kind of Woman’ (2000: 15; 16; 54-5; 57). These poems and Johnson’s, elegize the lost relationship with the land as living being, within which all life and the past, present and future is cradled. These
poets bear witness to the powerful and life-giving connections between land, culture and people and are testimony to the profound cultural and personal consequences of the loss of traditional lands, mourned within the elegy.

This shared sense of identity and connection to family, culture and land discussed within Johnson’s elegy is evident within many elegies women have written in response to being a part of the Stolen Generation. Eckermann’s latest collection of poetry, *Inside My Mother*, seeks to mend the fissures and the cultural and family disconnection and subsequent loss of identity imposed by such legislation. The collection is dedicated ‘to my mother’s Mum Audrey Ngingali, Aunty Mable, Aunty Lorna, Aunty Lola, Aunty Nura, who in their passing strengthened me to know who I am’ (2015). This is an important collection centred on the land; as well as the relationships between mothers and daughters and between generations of women, and as the title *Inside My Mother* reflects, the relationship with land as ‘mother’ and as nurturer.

In, ‘First Time (I Met My Grandmother)’ Eckermann describes the experience of her first visit to her ‘grandmother’s country’, where the poet first met her family’s ‘mob’:

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It’s three days, here come the mob, big smiles are on
their face
‘This your Grandmother’s Country here,
this is your homeland place’
‘We got a shock when we seen you, you got your Nana’s
face
We was real sad when she went missing in the cold Port
Pirie place’ (2015: 20).
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No longer enmeshed in ‘half-caste lies’, or the racial eugenics underwriting the discourses associated with removal of ‘mixed-blood’ children, the poet writes of belonging to her Grandmother’s people, their culture and ‘this red land’, that she now knows is a part of her. Eckermann writes, ‘I understand my feelings now, tears push behind my eyes / I’ll sit on the soil anytime, and brush away them flies / I’ll dance with mob on this red land, munda wiru place / I’ll dance away those half-cast lies, cos I got my Nana’s / face’ (21). Eckermann writes of the new-found connection between herself and her Nana, her land and her people, and as the final verse of the elegy shows, begins to establish a connection with the past and a sense of identity and belonging.

Moreover, ‘First Time (I Met My Grandmother)’ establishes lost connections with the matrilineal line between the poet and her Grandmother’s ‘mob’, healing the rift that separated children from their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters. In a similar vein, in ‘Why Was It’, Barbara Nicholson recounts genealogical, cultural and spiritual connections between the living and the dead. This establishes a sense of continuity across generations that bears witness to a long history, a rich past and an ongoing culture through which the poet expresses a sense of cultural belonging and personal selfhood in the present. The poet writes of the powerful women both from pre-colonial culture, colonial and postcolonial times:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{I am forty thousand years} \\
&\text{I am she and her sister} \\
&\text{who bore the children,} \\
&\text{the children of the great serpent.}
\end{align*}
\]
I am all the women who came after,
I am Trugganinna,
I am Altinta and Oodgeroo,
I am Maydina and Jeda,
I am Bangama,
I am the last born,
I am Baandji (32).

Here too, Nicholson reclaims ‘Trugganinna’, who was appropriated as settler proof of the demise of Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples in the colonial settler elegy. Further, in ‘I am forty thousand years’ Nicholson’s elegy describes the long history of Indigenous peoples in Australia, a feature of Indigenous poetics in which a claim to the land is made through settlement over countless millennia. In her elegy, Nicholson lists the poet’s long genealogy in cultural, social, mythic, and historical terms in answer to colonization and dispossession, thus stressing the long familial, communal and cultural past.

A Nurungga woman from South Australia, Natalie Harkin’s Dirty Words, is based on the State Historical Archives and the State Aboriginal Archive. Foucault’s power/knowledge formulation described in an earlier chapter is applicable to the archival information collected about Indigenous peoples by the settler imperialist, in terms of the power derived from ‘knowing’ and describing the ‘other’. Harkin’s elegies for her aunties – Auntie Irene, Aunty Elaine, Aunty Charlotte, Aunty Doreen and Auntie Veronica – bring new knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultures through articulation of the legacy that her family have left the poet in terms of the histories of her people, and the deep roots of blood and culture that run from the past to the present. Of Auntie Irene, Harkin writes, ‘... she talks of
the old people my ancestors my blood and the roots of that tree like a magnet
earth my heart to its core’ (2015: 25). So too, Harkin writes of Aunty Elaine in the lines ‘...
she goes right back to the almost-beginning my history carried-forward’; ‘she speaks
through the sacred-space where oral- histories merge with memory-in-the-blood’ (26).
Of the strength, persistence, wisdom and knowledge garnered from her Aunts, Harkin says:

These days
I think of the women
who fought and loved so hard
I raise my hand catch their last breath
with clenched-fist-resist
I thank them (31).

In ‘Through My Eyes: In Memory of Lisa M. Bellear’ —an elegy for the poet and political
activist (a Minjungbul woman from Goernpil, Stradbroke Island), the Bidjara and Wakaman
poet Yvette Holt writes of the strength of Aboriginal women, through the poet’s
acknowledgment of the many Aboriginal nations in Australia. Pan-Aboriginal in scope,
Holt’s elegy is an important documentation in the expression of a national Aboriginal
solidarity that works to decolonize myths of the empty landscape; as well as the abject
figures of the lone, grieving women in the settler elegies for a dying-race. Through naming,
the stereotypical representations and the omission of Aboriginal peoples and cultures in
settler elegy are over-written, as Aboriginal women’s strength and solidarity and a sense of
culture and continuance through the matrilineal line is established. Holt’s language is both
proud, joyous and affirming as the poet celebrates Aboriginal women throughout a long
history on the land:
When I look at Aboriginal women I see Murri, Koori, Nungah, Nyungar, Yolngu and Palawa
I see more than forty thousand years of strength, courage and determination in animation
I look at Aboriginal women and rejoice, relate, receive....

Being born woman is learning about the struggle, being born Black and woman is knowing how to survive

I celebrate knowing the struggle
For I too am Woman with heritage, spirit and pride (2008: 16).

Indigenous women have carried the weight of oppression on the strength of their hips, breathing life into our culture and nurturing our Grandmother’s Mother’s Mother
When I look at Aboriginal Women today I see history, past, present and future (2008: 16).

Eckermann’s, Nicholson’s, Harkin’s and Holt’s elegies suggest that contemporary Indigenous women’s poetry is concerned with re-establishing a matrilineal line in order to fill the hiatus in their history and identity created through the forced removal of children, as well as through colonising processes and their aftermath in contemporary Australia.

Conclusion
In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida writes of the voices of former ghosts being allowed to both speak and be heard in relation to the injustices of the past. The ghosts that poets such as Oodgeroo, Davis, Gilbert, Wagan Watson, Ginibi, Dixon, Nicholson, Fogarty, Johnson and Eckermann evoke, give voice to a past that has been occluded in settler elegy, and needs to be heard. Loss of people, cultures, languages, and most profoundly the land, as well as past histories of colonization and its repercussions emerge within the work of these poets as they write back to past representations in colonial and contemporary elegy. These ghosts bear witness to the past as victims of history, as Chris Cunneen has discussed in terms of Aboriginal art, thus providing a document of past injustices (2011: 16). In evoking the ghosts of the past – a key argument in this chapter in terms of the theorizing of the postcolonial spectre in the present – the ghosts of the past are evoked by Aboriginal poets, to reappear on the empty landscape. The continued presence of inequality between settler and Aboriginal Australians, as well as the continuation of colonial and neo-colonial patterns of domination in social, political, legal and cultural terms in the contemporary era, have also been explored by Aboriginal poets. As an expression of historical patterns of incarceration extending into the present in Australia since first European settlement, Nicholson, Fogarty, Dixon and Davis for example, write elegies to those who have died in custody, while Wagan Watson expresses the wound of colonization at the heart of the land, and the urban, Aboriginal Australian person.

Van Toorn’s research of the letters written by Aboriginal women entreating the return of their children in the colonial era, extends the practice of their removal to periods in colonial history long before that of the ‘Stolen Generation’, as well as up until the present. This demonstrates the continuation of imperial neo-colonial processes, suggesting that whilst
Chapter 5: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

the twenty-first century may be considered to be ‘post-colonial’, patterns of control still prevail in Australia. The repercussions of loss through the removal of Aboriginal children that creates a dark pause in generations and cultures, are expressed by many Aboriginal Australian poets including Johnson, Errinaron-Williams and Eckermann. These poets describe not only the loss of family, but of culture, spirituality, and the land, both as the basis of life and community, and as ‘mother’.

In keeping with Anita Heiss’ earlier statement that Aboriginal writing is associated with establishing a selfhood and identity (2007; 42), the celebratory aspect of the Aboriginal Australian elegy engendered in the poetry of renewal by poets such as Fogarty, Harkin, Holt, Eckermann and Nicholson, provide an affirmation of the long and extensive past histories of pre-colonial and colonial cultures; moreover, a detailed discussion of Eckermann’s and Fogarty’s elegies acknowledge the presence of a number of features continuous with Aboriginal oral traditions. Furthermore, the elegies of Eckermann, Nicholson, Harkin and Holt celebrate the strength and endurance of Aboriginal women, as well as the continuation of a powerful matrilineal line, in which Holt encompasses a Pan-Aboriginal solidarity amongst women. These poems resist the colonial and neo-colonial perspectives; the myths of power, and subordination that Boehmer discusses, and thus they are a powerful agent of decolonization (1995: 3). Abject representations, absences, and the silences associated with Aboriginal peoples that are pervasive in settler elegies, are replaced in Aboriginal elegy by self-determination and individual and communal identity in the present. The poetry of renewal is part of a powerful process of engendering identity and selfhood in which the poet expresses a sense of social cohesion and cultural continuity.
across generations – one formerly broken and denied by imperial and colonial models, as typified in the colonial settler landscape elegies.

To return once again to *The English Elegy*, Sacks maintains that the importance of mourning the dead is crucial to inheritance, stating that ‘The connection between mourning and inheritance has remained a close one throughout history’ (1984: 37). The right to mourn the dead—to mourn the fact and repercussions of colonization expressed within Aboriginal elegy, so often unspoken in white Australian poetry, literature and wider settler society—is a post-colonial poetic space in which to claim traditional lands, bear witness to the past of colonization, as well as to the social, cultural and legal inequities in contemporary Australia. Furthermore, in expressing the presence of ongoing Aboriginal cultures and identity through a poetics that speaks of a long history of traditional ownership and habitation of the land in contemporary Australia, Aboriginal poets writing elegy reclaim a past and continuing heritage that has been ignored or denied both in textual and real terms.
Conclusion

In engaging with a considerable gap in the literature, this thesis seeks to establish the importance of the settler landscape elegy through identifying and describing its place in conceptions of landscape, identity, and nation, in colonial and post-colonial Australia. My analysis of colonial and contemporary Australian elegy from the 1820s until today, demonstrates that elegy and landscape, as political and discursive fields, function in the broader project of establishing both a symbolic ownership of the land and a national identity through eulogizing the dead. This study therefore stresses the important place of elegy, and of the ways landscapes and the dead support personal, imperial and national interests concerned with land ownership.

A discussion of settler elegies recognizes its involvement in conceiving an Australian identity, created on, and through, experience of the landscape. The nineteenth-century bushman is described as an imaginative figure in the colonial settler elegy honed in the crucible of an imaginative textual landscape. In representations of the colonial landscape as both alien and intractable for immigrant settlement, the survival of the bushmen on the land creates a heroic figure that is utilized, particularly in later nineteenth-century conceptions of the prototypical Australian male, as a national figurehead to represent the nation. Moreover, nineteenth-century settler poets writing tombeaux represent a set of noble and high-minded beliefs in relation to the poet, thus the poet is said to be a fine exemplar of the spiritual and moral ethos of an emergent nation. Among many elegies disseminated through a proliferation of nineteenth-century newspapers, Charles Harpur
Conclusion

and Henry Kendall emerge as the two most visible elegists, their oeuvres concerned with nation and establishing a poetic tradition. In keeping with the English tradition of elegy, the Australian colonial tombeau is presented as a powerful subgenre in relation to the inheritance of poetic traditions. It is perhaps the quintessential space for engendering nation, one putatively, but not in fact, free from its British imperial roots.

In addition, the spectral presence of the elegized poet inscribed onto contemporary landscape and place is key in the creation, tenor and quality of the poet’s verse. This is exemplified in Chapter Four, in Rosemary Dobson’s suite of tombeaux for David Campbell; A.D. Hope’s tombeau for James McAuley; and David Brooks’ celebration of David Brissenden’s coastal poetics. Contemporary landscape tombeaux are involved in a symbolic claim to the post-colonial lands of contemporary Australia through elegizing the dead in named, material settings. While these elegies situate the poet in relation to a number of geographical and political perspectives – transnational, national, regional, rural, urban, coastal – they share a focus on landscape in relation to identity. The echoes of a disquiet associated with a post-colonial anxiety concerning legitimate ownership of land, emerges as a rationale for poets writing both nineteenth-century and contemporary settler tombeaux; an argument partially supported by the absence of the past or present histories of Aboriginal people on the land in the settler landscape elegies.

Postcolonial theory has provided a valuable frame for analysing the prevalence of white settler power; as well as locating and describing the social, as well as the cultural and national interests, visible in the use of the landscape elegy. My work contributes to recognizing that settler elegy upholds the interests of the white settler in a multicultural,
multi-raced nation. Not only relevant to elegy, but pervasive in contemporary culture and society, the settler elegy illustrates the way in which poetry is often written, published and disseminated through white hegemonic forces to support the concerns of the status quo. This thesis also makes apparent the discourses of gender and race, operating within the genre of elegy, and, clearly exemplified in the Australian tradition. A feminist analysis locates continuing patterns, not only of imperial practices at work in Australian elegy, but also of patriarchal and white hegemonic interests revealed as characteristic of the settler landscape elegy, most particularly within the tombeau. Critics such as Celeste Schenck and Melissa Zeiger, stress the masculine, patriarchal nature of the genre, as one written by men, about men (1986; 1997). My analysis of the elegy shows that in relation to concerns aligned with landscape, nation, poetic tradition and identity, the genre is still a male bastion, in spite of recent inroads into the genre by contemporary Australian women poets such as Gwen Harwood, Rosemary Dobson, Kate Jennings and Jennifer Strauss.

A key finding of my research of the settler elegy is in identifying political and power divisions in terms of racial difference between Anglo-Celtic Australians and Aboriginal peoples. Colonial discourses associated with presenting Australian Aboriginal peoples as a lesser other, or absent from the land, are pervasive in the dying-race elegy. The dying-race elegy is not only successful in representing an empty land through extinction discourse, but in expressing the nineteenth-century western scientific rationale for the demise of the whole of the Aboriginal population. As a discourse employed by imperial forces in other nineteenth-century colonies, the dying-race elegy masks the fact and continuing impact of colonization, and is theorized in this discussion as a panacea for colonial guilt. The settler elegy is engaged in a series of misrepresentations in which the establishment of
Conclusion

stereotypes of Aboriginal Australians in nineteenth-century poetics are still evident in contemporary Australia. Furthermore, Aboriginal histories, cultures, languages and communities are elided; while the overlaying of settler histories and land rights further diminishes the right to traditional lands and the rights of Aboriginal peoples. As a result, a particular version of history is created that writes over claims to traditional lands of Aboriginal Australians. Couched in poetry and poetic language, the settler landscape elegy masks their sometimes racist and hegemonic intent, which is arguably their most potent force: one which this study draws attention to.

This thesis creates a space in which to consider Aboriginal elegies, giving voice to the impact of colonization, its aftermath, and contemporary social realities for Aboriginal peoples. This is a timely discussion in view of the increasing visibility in recent times regarding the profound disadvantages often borne by contemporary Aboriginal peoples. Consideration of Aboriginal poems of loss offer a series of aesthetic/political documents that chart past and present-day impacts of colonization. These include: the continuation of imperial practices such as the ongoing removal of Aboriginal children from their families; the presence of often unjust legal and prison systems founded on early colonial practices of incarceration; and the continued impact of the loss of traditional lands on cultures, languages and communities. While Aboriginal histories and continuing inequities are frequently aired in the media, the more recent of these poems suggest that little has changed for many twenty-first-century Aboriginal people.

This analysis of contemporary Aboriginal elegy stresses the presence of traditional cultures, including an account of features of traditional Aboriginal oral song poetry. A consideration
of what Anne Brewster terms a poetry of cultural celebration and revival (2008), reflects the inheritance and continuation of cultures that challenge settler representations of Aboriginality in the settler landscape elegy, and culture more generally. Elegies by female Aboriginal poets give credence to past histories and cultures situated on the land as continuous within present Aboriginal rural and urban communities. Moreover, as most of the Aboriginal poetry discussed in this study, these elegies are crucial to the decolonization process, as well as engendering contemporary Aboriginal selfhoods. A more recent wave of Aboriginal poets such as Sam Wagan Watson, Lionel Fogarty, Barbara Nicholson, Graeme Dixon and Ali Cobby Eckermann, continue the work of early protest poets such as Oodgeroo and Jack Davis in addressing a white audience to express a political imperative for change and equality in contemporary Australia. In a global context, the inclusion of Aboriginal elegy in what Jahan Ramazani terms ‘the wound of colonization’, marks both the deep injuries, as well as the survival of colonized peoples, both in Australia and the world over (1997).

A lack of anthologies and limited scholarship on which to draw has been in evidence throughout the research and writing of this thesis. However, the large body of international elegy studies provide a view of elegy from many perspectives and many disciplines that form the backbone of this study – the scholarly foundation from which an understanding of Australian elegy has been built, together with my analysis of the elegies chosen for discussion. The primary research on which this study is founded, numbering over 1,000 elegies, is the first collection of Australian elegy, providing a rich source for future study.

Inheritance is of central importance in the Australian elegy in relation to claiming the land through generationalism. A postcolonial perspective of the settler elegy brings to light the
Conclusion

ways in which elegy is an ideal genre for colonial poets in support of legitimizing land tenure through legacy. Based on the concept of heritage through the writing of the elegy, inheritance of the land is established across generations of people who have inhabited the land; thus the elegy confirms the right to land ownership enacted through elegizing the dead. The *English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, by Peter Sacks has provided the foundations for an understanding of the elegy and the elegiac conventions present in the early Greek and in the traditional English elegy. The continuing use of early elegiac conventions such as lauding the dead, social renewal, personification of the grief of the land, the laurel wreath, and the apotheosis of the poet are shown in this study, as variously present in Australian colonial and contemporary elegy. Of note, Greek myths and the Greek pastoral forms are also in evidence within the Australian elegy. Overall, the tension between the changing contours of elegy according to social and cultural needs, and the underpinnings of much western society, such as inheritance, land ownership, racial dominance and continuing evidence of patriarchy, are located and described within this study.

Lawrence Lipking’s work *The Life of the Poet* (1981), enables a discussion of the Australian tombeau in relation to the ways the subgenre is used to create poetic traditions to support Australian cultural nationalism. Moreover, while Lipking’s’ *The Genius of the Shore* (1996), establishes imperial mapping at the centre of the elegy through Milton’s ‘Lycidas’ (1638), the textual mapping this study locates in the colonial and post-colonial Australian settler landscape elegy, establishes a continuing tradition. It is one which again illustrates the national and political cultural value in the present western form of elegy; as well as stressing the genre’s association with imperial land ownership. A more recent study
describing a sense of national cohesion and national identity created through the writing of the elegy, is that of Patricia Uppal’s *We Are What We Mourn*, in which Uppal discusses the contemporary English-Canadian elegy (2009). My findings offer an Australian perspective in relation to Uppal’s study, that seeking out the dead to support the creation of a past through elegizing the dead, is an act of national impetus: one closely entwined with identity formation in a contemporary settler nation with a limited history.

New, contemporary perspectives of the elegy in this thesis include a discussion of a large vein of anti-tombeau written by contemporary Australian poets, which is in keeping with Jahan Ramazani’s discussion in *The Poetry of Mourning*, of a need to redefine the elegy in view of twentieth-century social and cultural changes (1994). Through Clifton Spargo’s work in ‘The Contemporary Anti-Elegy’ (2012), my discussion of the anti-tombeau suggests male poets such as John Tranter and John Forbes, as part of the ‘New Australian Poetry’ in the 1960s and 70s, critique hegemonic poetry traditions, but still firmly maintain its masculinist foundations. The poet Kate Jennings, on the other hand, draws attention to the elegy as a masculine domain in late twentieth-century Australia in her tombeau for Martin Johnston. The discussion of meta-elegy attempts to open up a field of study of a new subgenre that comments on the elegy as a textual creation, rather than an emotional response to loss, demonstrating the ways in which the dead poet, his or her verse, and the landscape are used in the making of the tombeau. Furthermore, theorizing the spectral presence of the elegized poet on contemporary Australian landscapes adds to the body of work informed by postcolonial spectral theory. That the contemporary Australian poet ghost shows an involvement in a symbolic mapping of known landscapes, offers a perception of the
Conclusion

contemporary Australian ghost in keeping with a number of texts discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis.

This study adds to our understanding of Australian colonial and contemporary literary history. The presence of a poetic line through the nineteenth-century poets, Charles Harpur and Henry Kendall, is shown to culminate in a series of tombeaux that create a nineteenth-century poetic tradition in the two decades before Federation. This perspective, initially discussed by Michael Ackland in That Shining Band (1995), challenges the idea that the bush ballad tradition centred in the last decade of the nineteenth-century, constituted the first Australian national poetic tradition. Further, colonial elegies that celebrate the reputedly fine qualities of the Australian bushman are shown as present in colonial poetry throughout much of the nineteenth-century. Consequently, this study establishes that they are not purely a creation of late nineteenth-century nationalism centred around the late nineteenth-century newspaper The Bulletin, as many commentators have argued.

The field of Australian elegy is wide and diverse, as the poems so far sourced suggest. There is a pressing need for further studies of the genre in terms of Australian particularities, such as those for nineteenth-century historical figures, including convicts and bushrangers associated with the penal system; while those elegies by immigrants for loved-ones and homeland, write of loss for the exile. Areas for further study include an analysis of elegies written by non-Indigenous poets such as Judith Wright and Francis Webb writing a postcolonial poetics; as well as the study of elegy by women poets, requires further research to support limited discussions in this thesis. Other examples of study include elegies associated with personal mourning such as familial elegy; elegies for children and
Conclusion

partners; war poems; elegies for dying parents in an age of the medicalization of death; and
the self-elegy. The areas of study seem almost limitless, in a genre that is important in
relation to the ways we speak of the dead; the many parts we ascribe them in our histories,
societies and cultures; as well as how we define ourselves through them.

An inevitable limitation of my research is in the collecting and categorizing of elegy, in
which a particular view is established through categorization, subsequently tending to
exclude other possible views. A nuanced perspective is perhaps difficult to achieve in a
study such as this, which has a particular focus. For example, acknowledgment of a deep
and genuine regret in instances of the dying-race elegy could have been be further
examined. Furthermore, of many examples, the early history of Australia as a penal colony
has been given no consideration in this study in relation to the exacting physical, social and
geographic circumstances in which early nineteenth-century settler poets sought, bravely I
believe, to establish an Australian poetry. However, a particular view associated with
anxieties concerning the landscape and identity presented themselves as of great
importance to colonial and post-colonial contemporary Australian poets, to which this
study has tried to respond.

While it is crucial to understand the ways in which race operates within post-colonial
Australia, I hope I have treated the Aboriginal texts with respect and sensitivity, especially
in view of the past and present circumstances in which Aboriginal lives and poetry are
embedded. As a non-Indigenous person, I cannot hope to fully understand Aboriginal
cultures or the circumstances of people’s lives, and therefore cannot do justice to
elucidating these elegies. However, I thought that to silence the Aboriginal poet’s voice in
Conclusion

my own discussion of Australian elegy, seemed the greater omission. I fully concur with Gail Jones view in ‘Sorry-in-the-Sky: Empathetic Unsettlement, Mourning and the Stolen Generation’, when Jones states that while one cannot ‘put oneself in the other’s position’, one can become a secondary witness; and as such, need to produce ‘honourable and careful appraisals of truly traumatic histories’ (2004: 167-8).

While there are inevitable limitations to this study, a positive outcome lies in the issues discussed in relation to both Aboriginal elegies and settler elegies. Of these, the pressing problem of the land and dispossession of First Peoples, misrepresentations and disavowal of Aboriginal people, gender inequality and questions of who the dominant voices are in past and present Australian society and poetics, are all-important matters in contemporary Australia. Furthermore, this analysis of colonial and post-colonial Australian elegy suggests not only its significance in understanding how the past impinges on the present, but also that it re-affirms the place and value of poetry today.
Notes

Introduction

1 There are a number of elegy studies, mainly in literary journals, however these are generally, author-based. See for example, James Tulip: 1985; Jennifer Strauss: 1989; Dennis Haskell: 1992; 2002; David McCooey: 1995; 1996; 1997; and Kate Lilley: 1997.


4 In ‘Mourning Beyond Melancholia: Freud’s Psychoanalysis of Loss’ Tammy Clewell presents an account of Freud’s later thinking culminating in his essay ‘The Ego and the Id’ (1923) (1986). Clewell demonstrates that Freud clearly changes his perception of the polarization of mourning and melancholia that has hitherto seen successful mourning as relinquishing of the dead and melancholia as an unsuccessful form of mourning associated with a continuing and pathological attachment to the dead (2004). Clewell argues Freud’s later work reinstates melancholia as a necessary part of mourning in which the lost object is retained as part of ego formation, and, in this way, the mourning process is seen as continuous:

   By viewing the character of the ego as an elegiac formation, that is as a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes, Freud’s later work registers
the endlessness of normal grieving (43).

Chapter One: The Colonial Dying-Race Elegy

1 A number of colonial poets use the pejorative term ‘Aborigine’.

2 McGregor points out that even as the dying race discourse started it decline between the two World Wars, ‘the doomed race theory cast a long shadow over newly emerging proposals for securing an Aboriginal future affecting the way white Australians saw and treated Indigenous peoples until at least the 1950s, and beyond’ (1997: ix). There are a number of elegies to a dying-race published in more recent times, for example see Old Days and Old Ways, ‘Last of the Tribe’ by Alexander Hutchison Barrowman (1971: 208-210).

3 See for example, Paul Daley’s discussion in ‘Restless Indigenous Remains’, of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century practice of obtaining and digging up Aboriginal peoples remains in pursuit of the study of phrenology. As Daley details, Aboriginal remains and skulls have been sent to, and kept in various museums, such as the 725 remains held at the National Museum of Australia (2014: 6).

4 Published in Northern Territory Times and Gazette (29.04.1878: 2) Queensland Punch (1.10.1890: 124); and Northern Affairs Vol. 1 No. (1.4. 1932: 20).

5 There are a number of different versions of this poem as the difference in detail between the Sladen publication and that of the version published by Elizabeth Perkins in The Poetical Works of Charles Harpur, reveals.

6 NG Butlin Our Original Aggression: Aboriginal Populations of South-eastern Australia 1788-1850, uses population dynamics applied to hypothetical demographic structures to assess effects on populations due to disease, resource losses and killings (1983).

7 There are a variety of ways of spelling Truganini.
Chapter Two: The Busman Elegy: Claiming the Colonial Landscape

1 For a number of other major perspectives on the 1890s bush myth see, Richard White (1981); Marilyn Lake (1993); Richard Nile (2000; 2002).

2 However, in reality, as Richard Waterhouse states in ‘Rural Culture and Australian History: Myths and Realities’, ‘In rural Australia women ran sly grog shops, owned and operated bullock teams, managed large properties, cleared and farmed selections, and even functioned as swag women, humping their swags through the Bush as they tramped from station to station in search of temporary employment’ (2016: 84).

3 Poems discussed that are included in The Poets’ Discovery: Nineteenth-Century Australia in Verse by Jordan and Pierce are referenced as JP with a page number throughout. The date of the newspaper publication of the elegy is given in order to demonstrate the continuation of themes across the nineteenth century; as well as the upsurge in publications between 1880 and 1901.

Chapter Three: The Colonial Tombeau and Nation

1 One of the few references to the term ‘tombeau’ in the Australian literature is used by Werner Senn – following Lipking– in an analysis of a number of recent Australian poets whom, he argues, participate in establishing Australian literary tradition(s) (2002).

2 See ‘Interpreting the Genre: The Elegy and the Work of Mourning’ in The English Elegy in which Sacks discusses conventions of the elegy in detail (1985: 18-37). Amongst others, Sacks describes the pastoral elegiac conventions of repetition; the giving of flowers; the laurel wreath; as well as the feigning of poetic credibility by the elegist seeking to enter the tradition, all of which are noted in this chapter.
Notes

3 Formally, Moschus was attributed with this lament for the poet Bion, however recent scholarship suggests that Moschus may not be the author.

4 This verse tribute named ‘To CH’ is sometimes known by the same name as a second verse tribute to the living poet published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2.5.1863), ‘To Charles Harpur’.

5 Others, for example include Halloran’s ‘In Memoriam: Charles Harpur’ and ‘Extract from the Bards’ Colloquy: Pipe No.2 Charles Harpur’, both published in 1882 in *Australian Town and Country Journal*; as well as the re-publication of Kendall’s tombeau ‘To Charles Harpur’ in *The Windsor and Richmond Gazette* 1889. Tributes to Gordon set at the graveside are frequent, such as ‘Gordon’s Grave’ by Francis William Lauderdale; ‘At Gordon’s Grave’ in *Sydney Quarterly Magazine* (1880); ‘Adam Lindsay Gordon: In Memoriam: Brighton Cemetery 1880’ by Arthur Patchett Martin (1895: 50); ‘At Gordon’s Grave’ by Arthur T. H. Princeps in *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine* (1890) and ‘In Memoriam: Adam Lindsay Gordon’ by ALG published in *The Free-Lance* in 1896.

Chapter Four: The Contemporary Tombeau: Landscape and Identity

1 Hodgins wrote many self-elegies – an increasingly common sub-genre of the elegy within contemporary poetry, in which the poet writes of his or her own inevitable death. Hodgins wrote of his experiences of leukaemia, charting his illness and ensuing death. In poems in *Blood and Bone*, such as ‘The Cause of Death’, ‘A Palinode’ and ‘Room 1 Ward 10 West 12/11/83’, Hodgins writes openly and often ironically of his illness and treatment. The epigraph to Hodgins’ book by André Malraux, ‘There is no…death…. There is only…me…me…who is going to die,’ goes some small way towards expressing the inexpressible, the deeply personal enormity of one’s own death as articulated in the self-
Notes

elegy (1986). Other examples of contemporary self-elegy are ‘In Memoriam Dorothy Hewett’ (2002: 60); and ‘Waterview Street,’ by Dorothy Porter (2006: 65-6);

2 There are many instances of Australian tombeau written for poets other than Australian. Several important examples are, Fay Zwicky’s, ‘Banksia Blechifolia: In memory of Primo Levi’ (1998: 22-3); Mark O’Connor’s, ‘Elegy for WH Auden’ (1982; 133); Robert Adamson’s, ‘Waving to Hart Crane’ (1994: 27-8); Shane McCauley’s, ‘Homage to John Berryman’ (1991: 105); and Bruce Beaver’s, ‘The Self-Killing of Paul Celan’ (1999: 7). These and others, particularly for American poets in the latter half of the twentieth-century, attest to the cross-cultural influences that Ramazani discusses.

3 The search for Campbell in Dobson’s final elegy refers to Li Po’s poem translated in Cooper’s Li Po and Tu Fu, ‘On Visiting a Taoist Master on the Tai T’ien Mountain and Not Finding Him’ (1973). Dobson’s direct reference to the poem in, ‘Like Li Po we lean against a pine tree’, mirrors Li Po’s own search for the monk and his inability to find him in the landscape, ‘No one here knows / which way you have gone / Two, now three pines / I have leant against!’ (Cooper: 1973: 105).


Chapter Five: Loss and Renewal in Aboriginal Elegy

1 In accordance with the Indigenous academic, Eve Mumewa Fesl’s discussion in, ‘How the English Language is used to Put Koories Down, Deny Us Rights, or is Employed as a Political Tool against Us’ (1989), I endeavour to use the correct terminology in speaking of Australian Aboriginal people(s). I recognize that there are numerous Aboriginal cultural
groups and acknowledge the ways in which inappropriate language can create further suppression and inequality. In accordance with Eleonore Wildburger’s sentiments in *Politics, Power and Poetry: An Intercultural Perspective on Aboriginal Identity in Black Australian Poetry*, my knowledge of Indigenous Australian culture(s) from a non-Indigenous perspective is and can only ‘remain fragmentary and insufficient’ (Wildburger: 2003: 26).


See for example, Ali Cobby Eckermann’s ‘Intervention Pay Back’ (2012: 47-51); and Natalie Harkin’s ‘Intervention’ (1015: 13) in response to this report and subsequent child removals (2012).


The coroner, D. A. McCann, found on 6 February 1984 that Pat had died of a closed head injury suffered during a disturbance in Padbury Street, Roebourne. Pat had also suffered two broken ribs and a torn aorta. Four police officers and a police aide were charged with manslaughter; tried in the Supreme Court of Western Australia at Karratha in May 1984, they were acquitted by an all-white jury and reinstated to duty. No disciplinary action was taken against any police officer’.

4 Mulrunji Doomadgee’s death in custody as reported in *The Age* by Kenneth Nguyen in an article entitled ‘Palm Island man bashed to death by policeman’, published on September 28th 2008. Nguyen wrote, ‘Doomadgee died after being bashed by a Queensland policeman, according to a damning coronial finding issued yesterday. The coroner found that police left
the Aboriginal man to die after the bashing, despite cries for help, and later made no attempt to resuscitate him’.


5 In ‘On Australian Aboriginal Poetry: “The last evening glow above the horizon”’, Sarah Dowling discusses traditional Aboriginal oral songpoetry as being spiritual, ceremonial or public; sung in groups, or by individuals on particular occasions, such as male initiation; or for the telling of everyday occurrences. For further understanding of songpoetry, see Dowling’s discussion in Jacket 2

http://jacket2.org/feature/australian-aboriginal-poetry_retrieved_17.11.2016 See also Martin Duwell and RMV Dixon (1994); and Stuart Cooke (2014) for examples of Australian Aboriginal song poetry.


7 In ‘Indigenous kids are still being removed from their families, more than ever before’, Larissa Behrendt states that ‘The statistics from the year before the apology speech, from June 2007, showed that 9,070 Indigenous children were in out-of-home care; in June 2015 that number had risen to 15,455. In 2007, 45.3 per cent of Indigenous children in out-of-home care were placed with their own Indigenous family. Today that number has been reduced to 35.9 per cent. So more Indigenous children are being removed today than at any other time in Australian history – they are 10 times more likely to be in care than their non-
Indigenous peers. Although they represent only 5.5 per cent of their age population, they make up 35 per cent of children in out-of-home care’. Retrieved 27.10.2016.

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