The Australian Paradox(es) Revisited

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The challenge of being asked to teach Australian Studies in Hungary as part of an academic exchange in 1994 helped me to confront in a direct and practical fashion some of the issues that I was grappling with in a doctoral dissertation. An obvious temptation was there to cater mainly for an exotic interest and talk about the distinctive contents of Australia’s bush heritage and national culture with popular references from the verse of Banjo Paterson through to the Paul Hogan film *Crocodile Dundee* (which had recently been shown on the local television), a canonical literary figure or two like Patrick White or Peter Carey to add a little academic respectability and perhaps concluding with some rosy descriptions of the contemporary ‘way of life’ in the major Australian cities (for example the backyard BBQ) or at the fabled beaches. At one Hungarian university, such an approach seemed to fit comfortably with critically deconstructive perspectives in a couple of advanced units which portrayed Australia as a racist, sexist, and generally intolerant society with little culture to speak of. One of these units was actually based on video excerpts and related readings from the Open Learning series *Images of Australia* — an approach to Australian Studies which in many ways exemplifies recent orthodoxies.

The convergent dilemma was therefore one which might be recouched in the following terms: to what extent should one even try to reconcile a traditional and especially literary focus on the unique and celebrated forms of a monolithic Anglo-Celtic society, located primarily in a rural past, with more recent sociological, cultural and postmodernist critiques of mainstream Australia’s suburban developments, its ongoing engagements with post-war migrants and the history of its treatment of Aborigines. I soon realised that there was a related if ambivalent connection in Hungary between alternate representations of Australia as both a naively exotic and critical ‘other’ in a foreign context of Australian Studies — in other words, a hidden curriculum which seemed to initially promote and then ultimately disillusion fantasies about escape from local, everyday realities. Further, it occurred to me that such polarisation is also typical of local Australian cultural debates and criticism as an enduring paradox taking on ostensibly different but essentially similar forms across time. Writers and intellectuals in the nineteenth century often described the colonial paradox of using borrowed forms to represent a new land and society. Recent postcolonial critics have implied that this paradox was never resolved when promoting a model which deconstructs the modern Australian nation as a homeless social and cultural construct attacked by, or at odds with, principles of marginality, change and difference. Even some influential nationalist models recognised that colonial mimicry and deferral were inherent in traditional Australian cultural models and mythologies. A A Phillips suggested how intellectual and other Australian ‘cultural cringes’ are the alternate face of jingoistic and populist nationalism, in terms which effectively summed up the colonial: ‘at the back of the Australian mind there sits a minatory Englishman’.
The challenge of trying to develop a ‘balanced’ Australian Studies course impelled me to reflect upon the problem of method in Australian cultural and literary criticism. A start point for my dissertation was those critics who identified the inherently contradictory nature of nationalist models of criticism. As John Docker put it well, ‘the anti-nationalist critics seem to be boxing with a ghost’. Similarly, Fry and Willis wrote an interesting paper a decade ago suggesting that an emerging postmodernist orthodoxy in Australian Studies, exemplified by *Islands in the Stream*, was still trapped ‘in the nationalist obsessions and agendas of earlier cultural criticism’. Indeed, this anthology of essays represented critical attempts to subvert and contest the bicentennial celebrations of a nationalist sense of place in postmodernist terms of ‘anomalous associations, metaphoric engagements and genealogical collapses’ which converged with feminism, Aboriginal landrights and ethnic diversity. Identifying *Islands in the Stream* as an inductive case of ‘a new orthodoxy of postmodern nationalist identity … a collaged culture of pastiche’, Fry and Willis pointed out how such a framework of criticism appropriated landscape in a way which perpetuated, and thus perversely celebrated, old myths of cultural nationalism.

One useful way of recognising how recent debates are still caught up in the past, and paradoxically reinforce the very critical strategies that they oppose, is the related use of colonial oppositional terms to view Australian society and its history — in particular, the critical oppositions of local contents versus imported forms, nature versus society, and popular culture versus academic criticism. As other nationalist critics besides Phillips were aware, Australian writers, artists and intellectuals have always been confronted by the dilemma that when they celebrate distinctive local contents and forms of an Australian bush landscape and culture they inevitably do so through the use of borrowed or imported cultural and language forms. Even the most celebrated legends and romantic images of Australia culture, whether set in the bush or relocated into such contexts as Gallipoli or the sportsfield, have been informed by failure and yet a popular rhetoric of irony. The uneasy alliance between literary models and intellectual agendas of nationalism on one hand and those grounded in popular culture and working class realism on the other finds an equivalent polarisation in Australian cultural studies. The uneasy and ambivalent mixture of ‘celebration’ and demystification in studies of popular Australian culture such as Fiske, Hodge and Turner *Myths of Oz* (Sydney, 1987) conforms with the critical and rhetorical strategy outlined in *Islands in the Stream* to expose cultural representations as mere semiotic construction or ideological mystification. This ‘postmodernist’ turn away from privileged texts and canons has tended to not only position the critic in a privileged relation to Australian society and nature but to reinforce the notion of either mass cultural vacuums or hegemonies in Australia.

Influential critics of the last decade such as Sneja Gunew, Ross Gibson, Paul Carter and Meaghan Morris have implicitly and often explicitly assumed that Australian society is trapped across time as well as spatially in the imported languages and systems of representations of the west. When revisiting Australian writing as a migrant tradition, Gunew argues that the geographical (and subsequently social) notion of ‘Australia’ is ‘always mediated by somewhere else’. Gibson similarly concludes in his study of landscape in Australian feature films that like other forms of local cultural production, Australian film culture is ‘plugged into (a) vicious circuit’. In related fashion Carter’s seminal efforts in ‘spatial history’ investigated the linguistic lacunae left by the imperialistic imperatives to explore and settle the land.
Postmodernist deconstructions of popular sites and especially visual texts (that is, architecture, paintings and monuments, as well as the imagery of electronic media) also inform Meaghan Morris’s view of the tourist as the representative subject of a culture which ‘accepts that identities are mythic, plural — and obsolescent’. Such views thus extend and articulate Richard White’s thesis that Australia’s national identity has been produced or constructed as the invention of a local intelligentsia within a European framework of ideas.

In my academic quest to consider a balanced framework for simultaneously celebrating and critiquing Australia it became obvious that I needed to respond to Richard White’s thesis of nationalist invention and, moreover, make sense of his brilliant if undeveloped and contradictory insight that it is not so important whether the images of Australia ‘are true or false, but how they are used’. It seemed to me that the ‘paradox’ of Australian Studies is largely a result of critics approaching the forms and discourses of Australian cultural history as if they were either literally true or false.

White assumed that nationalist imagery is inherently false and that it has been abused in the public or even popular Australian consciousness. Later critics have tended to reduce cultural narratives to oppositions and an organising ‘centre-margins’ spatial metaphor. They also tend to reduce concepts of traditional or community values to transitory terms of unachievable desire. Critics like Ross Gibson, for instance, have framed cultural studies as oppositional analysis of traditional or stereotypical images of legends in the bush, in war, and in sport. Hence, the need of recent orthodoxies in Australian studies to construct nationalism as its critical other has been tied to an oppositional critical perspective of an old Anglo-Celtic, white, male-dominated mainstream Australia intrinsically at odds with a new diverse and multicultural Australia at the margins. A fundamental connection between old and new methodologies of Australian studies thus lies in alternate but ultimately complementary representations of the colonial paradox as either a temporal metaphor (and master narrative) of nationalist progress on one hand and a reductionist spatial metaphor of centre versus margins opposition on the other.

A rhetoric of Australian studies able to celebrate and critique simultaneously will reflect a view that cultural imagery is open to both use and abuse at the same time. Such a framework needs to distinguish between what is constitutive or efficacious and what is merely reactionary distortion in both the nationalist and anti-nationalist traditions of criticism. For instance, it should provide a basis for a distinction between the colonial cultural cringe and a post-colonial self-irony typical of much Australian humour and story-telling (that is, it needs to be recognised that these are different rhetorical strategies). Correspondingly, it will also have to distinguish between imposed cultural hegemony and social transformation or dialogue taking place in the lacunae — in the gaps and silences — of Australian cultural history. Such a model will need to make sense of the paradox of how some native-born Australians spend a life-time of allegiance to idealised European or other homelands, while some migrants can bond relatively quickly to their new Australian land or society.

Narratives of Settlement or Migration

In her various writings Sneja Gunew has argued that some of the key themes of post-war multicultural and migrant writing inform a mainstream tradition of fictional and autobiographical narratives — such as the preoccupations with feelings of nostalgia
and alienation and the predicament of being caught between different cultural worlds.\textsuperscript{18} On this basis Gunew has, in similar fashion to Ross Gibson, suggested that a predominantly Anglo-Celtic settler society (as well as non-Anglo-Celtic settlers and migrants) is trapped by cultural mediations ‘somewhere else’ — and that non-Aboriginal Australians can never really feel at home in their adopted land. However, there are other interpretations of this view of modern or post-settlement Australian history as the migrant’s dilemma writ large. Distinct and changing narrative models of settlement in the nineteenth century compare and, I suggest, connect with the diverse and often contradictory experience of post-war migrants. As a number of migrant writers have either argued or represented,\textsuperscript{19} many post-war migrants did eventually achieve a degree of bonding with their adopted homeland while others tended to confuse modern individualistic senses of estrangement and disaffiliation with the dilemma of being trapped between different worlds.

In early nineteenth century Australia there was a number of significant variations of a dominant narrative model of colonials journeying to Australia. Going beyond the defining founding narrative of convict exiles permanently expelled from an English homeland, Kingsley’s \textit{The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn} (1859) perhaps most effectively exemplifies the prototypical colonial itinerary — the prodigal son (or even daughter), a family failure or younger sibling, going (or sent) to the colonies to make a fortune and return redeemed, or else remain in permanent exile. Postmodernist criticism of multicultural writing tends to not distinguish between \textit{temporary} or provisional and \textit{permanent} alienation when describing the predicament of ‘double exile’.\textsuperscript{20} But in the early colonial model described above, such a distinction might be made in terms of the alternate reference-points of English (or European) and Australian homelands represented so often in terms of landscape.

Before looking at how this model continues to develop new stages and reference-points in the second part of the nineteenth century, it is helpful to appreciate the conflicting elements informing narratives of settlement or migration. A distinction needs to be made between a prototypical narrative itinerary representing the journey of individuals in relation to a new land, individuals in relation to a new society, and new societies in relation to a new land. While some stories function more as autobiography, others are seen as representative or typical plots.\textsuperscript{21} Implicit to any story is a quest for either real or imagined homeland and community. Settlers and migrants often confuse fantasy and reality because of the embedded nature of memory in language and culture.

\textbf{The Bush as an Imaginary Frontier}

Postmodern reconstructions of a landscape tradition have generally recognised how the bush has served as an \textit{imaginary}, as distinct from merely \textit{geographical}, frontier in Australian cultural history. However, postmodernist critics have perhaps failed to appreciate how ‘the bush’ functioned as a trope of landscape in nationalist models, as well as a rhetorical site or organising metaphor for an Australian cultural tradition (in the various senses of the term) and its diverse forms of visual and linguistic representation. For instance, Meaghan Morris suggested that a new postmodern version of Australian nationalism has become ‘not a quest for identity or repertoire of myths, but “our” willingness to redesign everyday life as a landscape for rigorous tourists’.\textsuperscript{22} Such a view implies that Australian society has always been trapped in, or at least delineated by, ‘other’ systems of representation which
have been *spatially* imposed on the physical landscape of Australia.

In relation to the popular travel writings of Ernestine Hill — approached as a kind of precursor to the ‘creative visual forms of contemporary culture’ — Morris argued that the ‘paranoid border rhetoric’ of an imperialistic culture has been projected upon, and reflected back, by the bush. While sympathetic to Hill’s protests about the harsh treatment of Aborigines, Morris insists that Hill represents ideologies of imperialism and white supremacy — that the romance of the noble savage supposedly indulged by Hill is just another racist ideology. Suggesting that a new tourist rhetoric of the bush be read as a latest permutation of a nationalist landscape tradition, Morris also implies that the postmodern critic alone is able to achieve the ‘critical distance’ and associated irony necessary to escape the mediations of past and ongoing imperialism. However, it may be argued that the kind of visual model of representation used to interpret a contemporary tourist or even ‘travelling’ model of rhetoric does not do justice to the inherent contradictions and diverse lacunae of past nationalist models.

The kinds of ‘visual’ models of rhetorical analysis implicit in various postmodern theories and critical practices are insufficient as a basis for interpreting the ambivalent range of ironies informing the use and abuse of a bush frontier rhetoric. As Sidney Baker argued, the bush was initially understood as a term for ‘the country in general outside a capital’ that came to represent the organising rhetorical site for an Australian language community. Baker recognised that the ironic usage of Australian idiom. A rhetorical language focus provides a more effective means than a rhetoric of the image for recognising how the bush idiom functions metaphorically as well as literally to disguise the diverse, ambivalent, and even turbulent dimensions of Australian cultural history. Critics like Phillips were interested in the ironic bush conventions of the yarn and mateship mythologising and perhaps not completely unaware that these masked failure and disillusionment in the battle to explore and settle the frontier regions of Australia — as Morris might put it, to overcome the paranoia of an imperialistic border rhetoric.

A familiar representation of the bush is that of an alternative to the decadence of the city. On the other hand the bush represented primeval or desert wilderness. Henry Lawson’s utopian projections for an Australian society contrasted with his representations of the land as a place of alienation, a space personified as hostile, desolate, and resisting efforts to humanise it. Lawson’s transition from youthful optimist to an embittered self-conceived failure seemed to mirror the inability of nationalism to escape colonialist imperatives in the nineteenth century.

As an imaginary frontier the bush has been ambivalently open to oppositional appropriation within colonialist, nationalist, and even postmodernist contexts (not forgetting its modernist appropriations as a metaphor of Self by such critics as H P Heseltine), as alternately a spatial or temporal metaphor of ‘otherness’. The bush was originally conceived as an imaginary spatial metaphor representing ambivalently idealised and fearful projections of the ‘other’ side of the frontier. However, nationalist appropriations of the bush primarily took the form of historicist metaphor for the imagined history of Australia’s projected *past* (stories of origin) and *future* (utopian dreams) with reference to the ‘present’ reality of a predominantly urban society. In contrast, the postmodernist appropriations typified by Morris’s ‘panorama’, project an essentially empty space existing ahistorically and informed by the imaginary constructions of electronic mass culture which is perceived to have replaced the privileged representations of the past.
The bush metaphor thus provides a useful focus for discussing the methodological confusion in the history of Australian studies. Ward, Phillips and other nationalist critics tended to merge prescriptive and descriptive functions of representation in relation to the bush as a physical place outside Australian cities on one hand, and as an imaginary frontier providing a reference for historical progress and cultural growth on the other. By contrast, the anti-nationalists in general (and the postmodernists in particular) have reacted to this by viewing the bush as an imaginary frontier with no effective connection with actuality — the culturally constructed space of European imperialism and western design. In other words, the nationalists have tended to be guilty of confusing ‘the (nationalist) map with the (colonialist) territory’ while the anti-nationalists may be accused of ‘throwing the (postcolonial) baby out with the (nationalist) bathwater’.

Oppositional Images of Paradise vs Exile

Richard White conceived the representation of paradise and hell images in nineteenth century Australia as merely part of a contingent series of inventions. In contrast, Ross Gibson’s study, The Diminishing Paradise, argued that the utopian and paradisiacal representations of Australia which preceded settlement in the European imagination were disillusioned by the reality of failure and exile to become a ruling purgatorial image in Australia culture by the 1850s — a ‘paradoxical image which has remained influential until the present day’. According to Gibson, the European vision of Australia as utopia was initially compromised by the exile context of founding convict settlements, and later by a harsh environment which resisted the ‘successful’ American model of frontier exploration and settlement. Gibson developed this perspective into a postmodernist ‘spatial’ model of how Australian cultural nationalism has been defined by a colonial rhetoric of imagery still evident, for instance, in local films: ‘for two hundred years the South Land has been a duplicitous object for the West ... the image of Australia is oddly doubled ... as a projective screen for European aspiration and anxiety’.

Gibson assumes that all utopian images are imported and romanticised representations which distort the reality of non-Aborigines as homeless exiles. It fails to acknowledge the possibility of a utopian tradition in Australia that has a local as distinct from an ‘other’ reference. Australia is a diminishing paradise from a western or European perspective and a place of exile and disappointment from a local one. Yet, when comparing the ‘oddly doubled’ rhetoric of Australian imagery to the more straightforward imperialistic myths of the America frontier, Gibson admits that there has been a local sense of ‘forestalled reward’ informing Australian culture which could not be extinguished by the reality of endless disillusionment. Such a concept presupposes a temporary rather than permanent sense of exile (a distinction not made by Gibson) reflected in a latent optimism and provisional or patient irony that his model cannot explain away. A useful starting place to challenge and go beyond Gibson’s interpretation of an Australian utopian rhetoric is the period between the 1850s and the 1890s which, like all later periods in Australian history, Gibson views as mere footnotes to the diminishing paradise image.

Carol Lansbury’s controversial 1970 study Arcady in Australia concluded that the discovery of gold in the 1850s not only signalled a change in English-centred
arcadian views of Australia, but a new aspect in the local utopian rhetoric. The new migrants, attracted by the promise of gold, viewed an Australian 'workingman's paradise' increasingly in terms of a paradisiacal future rather than the pastoralist model of a rural arcardy. As Russel Ward acknowledged in pointing out that a later nationalist utopian rhetoric was really about a vision of a future Australian society and its progress than the bush per se as a rural arcardy, the radical nationalist writers of the 1890s were often aware that the bush 'was more like a purgatory than an Arcadia for the small farmers'. The dichotomy between rural and social utopias underlying a transition from colonial to nationalist rhetoric was compounded by an awkwardness surrounding the uneasy alliance of populism and intellectual radicalism in the 1890s. In the 1950s G A Wilkes lamented the passing of 1890s utopianism and the subsequent onset of what he saw as an Australian tradition of philistinism.

The distinction between colonial and postcolonial rhetorics might usefully be illustrated in terms of the 'narratives of migration and settlement'. Like the post-war migrants this century, nineteenth century colonials and settlers would typically experience a sense of ambivalence about becoming a part of a new society and coming to a new land. Simply put, those who stayed permanently in Australia but still continued to feel homeless and alienated in terms of both the new society and the new land remained trapped in a colonial rhetoric — a condition of 'double exile' and disembodied nostalgia. In contrast, those settlers or migrants who survived the initial disappointments of their often ambitious expectations and eventually felt somehow at home in a new land or in a new society, came to embody to some degree, a postcolonial rhetoric of the future.

Nationalist critics and writers were often very much aware that the many paradisiacal (and especially utopian) images at work in Australian culture in the nineteenth century were undercut by an enduring sense of colonial exile. To varying degrees of explicitness, many of the dominant models of cultural, social and historical study in recent times have located themselves in opposition to past nationalist models by implicitly projecting Australian society in an inevitable and permanent state of exile and alienation from nature. Both the nationalist and postmodernist models of Australian identity as either historically real or imaginary spatial construction have failed to interpret two key distinctions in the rhetorical construction and use of local utopian-exile imagery: one, temporary vs permanent representations of the inevitable experience of exile, alienation, and general 'otherness'; two, a distinction between the use of a utopian rhetoric as merely escapist fantasies of another time, place or ideal society, and a constitutive use of future models as a provisional focus for developing a collective destiny.

In contrast to a colonial rhetoric of permanent exile informing mere escapist fantasies of an ideal future, a postcolonial rhetoric views exile as a temporary stage in the process of eventually achieving a reasonable degree of social and cultural integrity and becoming proactive rather than reactive in the endless battle to create a viable future. As Gibson himself points out in his contrast of Australian and American frontier mythologies, 'deferral' has been a recurring qualification in Australian images of paradise and in endless models of a nationalist 'coming of age'. From a colonial perspective, this is really an illusory and futile hope in the face of a permanent condition of fundamental exile. However, a postcolonial rhetorical perspective allows one to revisit and appropriate Gibson's purgatorial model of Australian cultural history as it does all the other versions of the Australian paradox.
mentioned in this paper, that is, to recognise a constitutive utopian rhetoric at work in the various stages of a transition from temporary colonial exile to the achievement of an efficacious (if intrinsically open and diverse) sense of homeland and collective destiny within a global context.

Such a distinction enables a comparison, for instance, between the postcolonial conditions of the United States and Australia. While American society arguably remains very much defined and determined by the ‘past’ imperatives of the European enlightenment expressed in new world mythologies and narratives of escapism and future progress, in Australia a rhetoric of failure, alienation and colonial exile has so effectively undermined any real commitment to an enduring ‘colonial’ rhetoric of utopia that the local culture is perhaps more open to the future possibilities of social diversity and change. A study of the underlying rhetoric of local cultural contradictions or paradoxes arguably suggests that Australia is (potentially, at least) less trapped by the past of either tribal tradition or the European Enlightenment than perhaps any other large scale geographical unity of people today — a society now increasingly aware of, yet still relatively optimistic about, the choices ever-presently available at the ‘postmodernist’ crossroads of the past and future.

*Notes on pages 207-209*
Notes to pp 148-151

9 Hugh Mackay, Reinventing Australia, Pymble, New South Wales, Angus and Robertson, 1993.
12 Williams, op. cit., pp 3-5.
13 Paul Ricoeur quoted in Carr, op. cit., p 15
14 ibid., p 50.
18 Daniel, op. cit., p xii.
20 Ecclesiastes 9: 11.
24 ibid.

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2 See the accompanying reader: Gillian Whitlock and David Carter (eds), Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies, Brisbane, 1992.
3 Although, as David Malouf suggested in his 1998 Boyer lectures, academic and popular representations of Australia have long shared a similar split consciousness which has prevented a balance of celebration and critical or ironic reflection. For instance, a theme in the poetry of the early native-born poet Charles Harper.

Another insight which seemed to have particular implications for a postcolonial framework of Australian Studies was James Clifford’s charge that the postcolonial critic Edward Said’s work suffered from a double ethnographic movement which inadvertently served to reinforce the very colonial dichotomies it purported to contest. James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture, Cambridge (Mass.), 1987. See also my discussion in ‘Postmodernism or Postcolonialism Tomorrow’, SPAN, no 36, vol 1, 1993, pp 65-74.


In perhaps a rare moment of concession the seminal Cultural Studies ‘theorist’ Stuart Hall once seemed to acknowledge the dangers of a criticism retaining a privileged residue. Stuart Hall, ‘The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities’, October, no 53, pp 10-24.

As Gibson went on to elaborate: ‘Australian nature resists colonisation by dominant film discourses. Yet, even as the film-makers are rejoicing in this even as they are saying “This is where we are different; look at the landscape; its our bloody unique country”, their Western culture is refusing to allow a distinctive nature to imprint itself on Australian film form’. Ross Gibson, ‘Camera Natura: Landscape in Australian feature films’, 1983.


As White put it, ‘A national identity is an invention. There is no point asking whether one version of this essential Australia is truer than another because they are all intellectual constructions, neat tidy comprehensible — and necessarily false. They have all been artificially imposed upon a diverse landscape and population’, Richard White, Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1981, p viii.

See quote above. In the retrospective essay ‘Inventing Australia Revisited’ (Creating Australia, Wayne Hudson & Geoffrey Bolton (eds), Sydney, 1997). White admits to having borrowed from poststructuralism and being ‘stranded somewhere in the middle’ of methodological paradox - but denies ever being an anti-realist and relativist (p 15).


See Andrew Reimer, Inside Outside, Pymble, NSW, 1992; and, say, the writings of Angelo Loukakis.

Hence, Gunew’s writings about the migrant’s predicament reflect a similar framework of criticism as that applied by, say, Mudrooroo when describing the Aboriginalist dilemma of double exile (from both a local context, or sense of homeland, and from self). Mudrooroo Narogin, Writing for the Fringe, Melbourne, Hyland House, 1990.

In the first part of my PhD I attempted to develop a rhetorical model of criticism which distinguished real and imaginary bodies located in an interplay of physical, social and cultural worlds — in a way which avoided or went beyond the confusions and contradictions of poststructuralism.

Meaghan Morris, op. cit., p 182.


In contrast to Russel Ward’s simplistic view of an osmosis of bush influence on the city, Baker recognised the extent to which a distinct and even marginal language-use of rural communities became appropriated to represent a wider mainstream language community — as epitomised by the role of the Bulletin’s Red Page to collect and preserve the bush idioms.

For example, see Phillips’ discussion of Lawson’s storytelling craft, Phillips, op. cit., pp 1-17.
26 The American critic Kenneth Burke distinguished between relativist, romanticist and self-alienating modes of irony, and the facility for recognising 'consubstantiality' or empathy with others. In contrast to the condescending or fatalistic modes of irony typical of European modernism, the dominant irony of Australian popular culture (self-deprecating, but ultimately optimistic) in Burke's distinction is arguably more related to the latter type of irony than the former.


30 In his book *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (New York, 1969) Nisbert discussed how Greek metaphors of ever-changing essence were transformed in the West into an Enlightenment dichotomy of historical progress versus its implication of a (physical, social and cultural) void or vacuum. Such a dichotomy is evident in the alternate constructions of the bush as both spatial and temporal metaphor in both the nationalist and postmodern models.

31 A claim made on the cover blurb for Gibson, op. cit., 1994.

32 Gibson, op. cit., 1992, p x.

33 ibid., p 12.

34 Lansbury compares the privileged pastoralist model of free settlement taken up by people like Wakefield in the 1830s and the model of working-class opportunity later romanticised by writers like Sidney, Lytton and Dickens.


36 Sylvia Lawson’s study *The Archibald Paradox* (Melbourne, Penguin Books, 1983) effectively exposes the colonial paradox of Archibald's Bulletin ambivalently deferring to European cosmopolitanism while pursuing aggressive nationalist strategies (p.ix) — as also reflected in its often indiscriminate appropriating of 'stories from Elsewhere and stories from Here’ (p 259).

37 Wilkes, op. cit., chs 5-7.

38 Paul Ricoeur's distinction between utopia as escapist fantasy and possible destiny lends itself to the distinction being made here between a colonial and postcolonial rhetoric. See Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures in Utopia and Ideology*, New York, 1986.

39 As Richard Coe has suggested, an Australian utopia-exile rhetoric is usefully evidenced in autobiographical writings which remember childhood as a temporarily lost or deferred paradise. In his article 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Australian: Childhood, Literature and Myth' (Southerly, no 2, pp 121-61), Coe discusses the convergence of biographical itinerary and the Australian colonial paradox in terms of the exemplary embodiment of writers who responded to their predicament in the following ways: romantic or popular retreats to a pioneering past and bush mythology; critical and privileged ‘expatriation’ to Europe or to an alienated local intelligentsia.