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**An Imagined Space: The Dynamics of Home in
Eve Langley's Novels**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, The University of
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Abstract

This thesis sets out to examine the nature of imagined spaces described in the novels and unpublished manuscripts of Eve Langley (1904-1974), set in Australia and New Zealand from the 1920s to the early 1940s. Specifically, it explores those spaces representative of “home” and those where enactments of “being-at-home” take place. Critical to formulations of the space of the imagined home in Langley’s novels are her narrator’s representations of a coexistent and covalent sense of both belonging and “unbelonging”. This study shows that, paradoxically, a sense of belonging for Langley’s narrator relies on an equally strong sense of “unbelonging”. Langley’s evocations of home and being-at-home, unsettledness, and marginality are explored with regard to their implications for the concept of settlement as home, imagined community, nation. In this thesis, the alignment of imagined spaces of home with specific colonial locations in Langley’s texts is considered paradigmatic of the settler narrative. When read as a settler narrative, Langley’s novelistic oeuvre works to reveal many of the complex negotiations inherent in the concept of a settler colony as “home”. Langley’s narrator is considered representative of the settler subject, occupying the ambiguous, in-between position typical of that figure, and as such, is frequently concerned with the sense of being “in place” and “out of place” at the same time. Lefebvre’s classifications of social space are employed to explicate the complex dynamics of the imagined space of home in Langley’s novels, and thus to illuminate the strategies at work in the construction of that space. By investigating the evocations of home in Langley’s novels, this thesis shows that not only is “home”, in all its varied and contradictory manifestations, a key concept in Langley’s novels, but also that Langley’s novels work to produce and cultivate an imagined space of home beyond textual representation.

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Chapter One

Introduction

On whatever theoretical horizon we examine it, the house image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being.

(Bachelard xxxvi)

Habitability... dominates the second half of the twentieth century as the key analytic issue concerning space.

(Buchanan 2)

This thesis examines the nature of imagined spaces described in the novels and unpublished manuscripts of Eve Langley (1904-1974). Specifically, it explores those spaces representative of “home” and those where enactments of “being-at-home” take place. Critical to formulations of the space of the imagined home in Langley’s novels (and manuscripts of novels) are her narrator’s representations of a coexistent and covalent sense of both belonging and “unbelonging”. This thesis will consider “home” in these works as a palimpsestic space, a space inscribed with intersecting and overlapping, but often contesting, significations. Refracted in the force fields of desire evident in Langley’s representations of home are suggestions of settlement and unsettlement, (de)constructions of “inside” and “outside”, and (re)configurations of self and “other”. By investigating the evocations of home in Langley’s novelistic oeuvre, this thesis will seek to show that not only is “home”, in all its varied and contradictory manifestations, a key concept in this oeuvre, but also that Langley’s

novels, both published and unpublished, work to *produce* and *cultivate* an imagined space of home beyond textual representation.

Only the first two of Langley's novels are published documents; the remaining eleven manuscripts of novels are, as yet, unpublished.¹ However, unless otherwise specified, the term "novel", with regard to Langley's work, will henceforth refer to both the published and unpublished texts. Many of the conventional distinctions between published and unpublished work are undermined in Langley's case; on the one hand, all her extant novels were submitted to Angus and Robertson for publication, and, on the other, most of the novels contain letters, or fragments of letters, and allude to biographical detail that may, in other situations, be considered private. In the body of work that makes up Langley's novels, distinctions between public and private writing, and to a large extent, published and unpublished work, are broken down and become frequently irrelevant.

Furthermore, while this thesis at times pays particular attention to certain novels or parts of novels, it tends to treat the body of work contained within Langley's novels as a single entity. Langley's novels repeatedly refer to each other, at times discuss the same episodes or events, and act as a linked, semi-continuous, if repetitive, narrative with multiple entry and exit points. The indeterminate and unresolved, even amorphous, quality of much of the textual construction of Langley's novelistic oeuvre adds to the sense of a single body of work spread over the thirteen novels, as beginnings and endings mesh, and each novel ripples with allusions to and reflections of the events both previous and subsequent to those of its particular focus. The interwoven nature of Langley's novels supplies a supportive context to the

¹ A collection of passages from Langley's "New Zealand" novels, edited by Lucy Frost, was published in 1999.

methodology of this thesis. Though the thesis is split into clearly defined chapters, with a specific focus forming the kernel of each chapter, this investigation of Langley's texts suggests and relies on links between, not only all the parts of the thesis, but also the various parts of Langley's novels, which play on being repetitive or reiterative. While all thirteen of Langley's novels are referred to in the course of this study, the thesis tends to focus on arguments and representations sustained over the course of Langley's novelistic oeuvre without necessarily seeking to describe every separate example of these representations. While this study draws, in some ways, more heavily on those novels set in Australia, it does so within a framework of investigation that asserts those novels as part of an overall oeuvre rather than as discrete bodies of work. Other than some reworking of a few manuscripts on her return to Australia in 1960, Langley wrote all her novels, both those set in Australia and those set in New Zealand, in Auckland. Her New Zealand experiences inflect her "Australian" novels just as her life in Australia echoes through Eve's narrative of life in New Zealand. In tracing the threads of the various assertions of home, of belonging and unbelonging, that wind through Langley's novels not only is the linked nature of these novels highlighted, but more significantly, the anxieties and apprehensions that drive these novels may be drawn out.

In "Moving Images of Home" John Di Stefano comments on the unfixed nature of the concept "home". He asserts that home "is a space or structure of activity and beliefs around which we construct a narrative of belonging" (38). In his discussion of the notion of home, Di Stefano compares it with that of the nation as described by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*. Di Stefano argues, "national narratives [as described by Anderson] are constructed on imaginary images of home" (38). The exploration of the imaginary images of home in Langley's writing in this study is informed by Anderson's critique of the nation as an imagined

community. As Di Stefano notes, “Anderson proposes that, rather than a fixed state, the concept of nation might more accurately be described as a performative and enacted space within which one is perpetually engaged in trying on roles and relationships of belonging and foreignness” (38). In a formulation similar to that employed by Di Stefano and Anderson, this thesis will seek to show that home in Langley’s novels is a performative and enacted space, within which the narrator engages with and negotiates codes of both belonging and otherness. This dialectic drives Langley’s novels.

Langley situates her narrator as culturally central in three interconnected ways: as a white woman in the nationalistic landscape of Australia and New Zealand in the first half of the twentieth century, as a writer, and as a bushman/rover figure contextualised within foundational myths developed in early Australian literature. Notably, Langley utilises each of these paradigms in a two-fold manner; while all three of these locations suggest cultural centrality they are also used by Langley to indicate marginality. As a white woman in Australia during the period of the publicly enshrined white Australia policy, the narrator is a privileged person. Yet, as a woman her life is restricted by the patriarchal and frequently misogynist cultural milieu in which she lives. As a writer she is part of a world of artistic endeavour, but feels isolated socially. As a rover-figure, the narrator is further marginalised from conventional society, but may be seen as central to cultural constructions. Frequent allusions to literature are a critical feature of the rhetoric of belonging significant to the construction of Langley’s narrator as a traveller-figure and as a writer. On the whole, Langley’s literary models and inspirations—her literary “food”—are drawn from the past, and her novels are enriched by allusions to, and narratorial identifications with, figures such as Wilde, Keats, Balzac, and, from Australia, Lawson. At all times, references to these authors and their work reinforce the

opposing forces that energise Langley's novels in which a sense of belonging for Langley's narrator relies on an equally strong sense of "unbelonging". The narrator's strong desire for a sense of belonging drives her to figure the world around her in paradigms of marginality, from which she constructs images of home. Conversely, this suggests that it is in Langley's evocations of home and being-at-home that she most expresses unsettledness and marginality. In this thesis these expressions are explored with regard to their implications for the concept of settlement as home, imagined community, nation.

In charting the trajectory from home to nation (and from nation to home) in Langley's novels, this thesis considers that home, whilst an imagined space, is expressive of specific geographic, historic and political (dis)locations. Critical to the investigation of the imagined space of home in Langley's novels is the pressure placed on that space by the social, cultural, and political conditions of Australia and New Zealand, in the 1920s and 30s. In this thesis, the alignment of the construction of imagined spaces of home with evocations of specific colonial locations in Langley's texts is considered paradigmatic of the settler narrative. This study argues that, when read as a settler narrative, Langley's novelistic oeuvre works to reveal many of the complex negotiations inherent in the concept of a settler colony as "home". The investigation of Langley's novels as an extended settler narrative is largely indebted to analyses of the wider topic by Stephen Slemon and Alan Lawson. By working with these analyses, this thesis will suggest that Langley's narrator is representative of the settler subject, occupying the ambiguous, in-between position typical of that figure. Johnston and Lawson comment: "[i]t is in the translation from experience to its textual representation that the settler subject can be seen working out a complicated politics of representation, working through the settler's anxieties and obsessions in textual form" (6-7). In this thesis the textual representation of Langley's novels will

be excavated in order to both illuminate the settler “experience[s]”, “anxieties and obsessions” that inform it, and to discern the imagined space of home that is both cultivated by, and the product of, the discursive settler narrative. This examination will be facilitated by consideration of the theatricality and performativity of the settler subject who is represented by Langley’s narrator.

With very few exceptions, Langley’s narrator is called Steve in the novels set in Australia and Eve in those set in New Zealand. In Langley’s first novel, *The Pea-Pickers*, the narrator adopts the name of the bush-ranger, Steve Hart, as appropriate to her hoped-for life as a self-styled vagabond. Not long after her arrival in New Zealand, depicted in “Land of the Long White Cloud”, Steve says to her mother that her name no longer seems appropriate, and decides to change it to Eve. Both “Steve” and “Eve” are more than adopted names; they represent the conscious assumption of personae, speaking of both performance and performativity. The concepts of performance and performativity are both important to this study of the enactments of home in Langley’s novels. Langley’s narrator, Steve/Eve, is a highly theatrical character, and as such, her representations often suggest those acts and practices most typical of theatricality: “role-playing, illusion, false appearance, masquerade, façade, and impersonation” (Davis and Postlewait 4). The contradictory manifestations of excess and emptiness are frequently associated with the theatrical; theatricality is often defined as an excess of expressive means (that may need containment), but it is also commonly viewed in terms of an artificiality that invokes that which may not exist, or may not be true (Davis and Postlewait 4). In this thesis, these oppositional but connected manifestations will be shown to be key aspects in the exhibition of home in Langley’s texts. Judith Butler describes performativity as “that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (xii). In Langley’s novels, the performativity of her narrator is expressed not just in speech

acts but also in what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls the “minimal, in fact non verbal, performative utterance” (xvii). This thesis will show that Steve/Eve’s performativity works to facilitate both the enactment and the production of home in Langley’s novels.

Investigation of representations of home as developed through Steve/Eve’s performances and performativity is extended by an exploration of the spatial manifestations of those representations. Henri Lefebvre’s definition of space as process and his explorations of the operation and production of social space inform this study. Lefebvre breaks down space into three intersecting classifications: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space (33). Spatial practice concerns specific locations and “ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion” (33). It embraces the act of getting from one place to another. Representations of space, or conceptualised space, are where a culture’s social power and authority are located and reinforced. These may be banks, city squares, memorials, the “space of planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” (38-9).

Representational space “overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects”, it is “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users,’ but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe” (39). Representational space is not only concrete. Kevin Hetherington suggests that it refers to “temporal situations, events, which occur in particular places that open up the possibilities of resistance within society to certain marginal groups” (22). In Langley’s work, “home” is the locus of much desire. This leads to the construction of “home” as a multifaceted site where the different expressions of belonging are shifting, blurred, and interconnected. This study will explore the production of “home” in Langley’s work as one where all three of Lefebvre’s

classifications of space overlap and interact; spatial practice, representations of space and representational space all operate in the presentation of this site.

The rustic hut, or bush hut, is an archetypal representation of the space of home in Langley's novels. The structural fragility typical of the hut and its associations with both social marginality and cultural centrality are replicated in the other dwelling places chosen by Langley's narrator in later adventures in both Australia and New Zealand. While the specific narratives of homeliness (such as those pertaining to marital relationships, motherhood, sexuality) surrounding these sites are, at times, tangential to the exploration of the settler narrative that is central to this thesis, and so not necessary to its argument, spaces such as the hostel in Wanganui, the garret in central Auckland, the shack in Birkenhead, on Auckland's suburban North Shore, and even the boat that provides a particularly tenuous home in "The Saunterer", are all versions of the rustic hut as represented in Langley's early novels. In these novels, each rustic hut is a specific structure which her narrator occupies for some time, and which is described as a physical landmark of multiple journeys across the landscape. Overlaying the spatial practice described by the occupation of each hut, and of subsequent return visits, is the spatial representation of each hut. The dilapidated huts barely provide shelter for their occupants. Provided by the farmers and owners of the land worked by itinerant labourers in the 1920s and 30s in rural Australia, they are revealing of the power of the landowners in the face of high unemployment, and/or the large numbers of unskilled recent immigrants seeking work, leading to the low demands made by the workers with regard to their accommodation. At the same time, the state of the huts also probably reflects the borderline economics of the horticultural business at that time and place. It speaks of the transience of the workers, as the huts needed to last only as long as a season or two while workers moved from job to potential job. Concomitant with these

representations described by the space of the hut (following Lefebvre), is the representational space of the rustic hut; for Langley, the rustic hut is a symbol of mobility, poetic marginality, and romantic suffering. Her narrator, Steve, recalls standing in front of one bush hut, where she was living at the time: “There I stood, a lost being, lonely and sick of my worthlessness; behind me lay the hut with my poetry on scattered leaves” (“Bancroft House” 63). The hut is also a site of resistance to cultural practices with regard to gender and fixed subjectivity, while, at the same time, it is a site of imagined cultural centrality and authority in its association with foundational myths of Australia particularly as expressed in Australian literature, bush lore and song. Lefebvre makes the point that from the point of view of those subjects whose practices realise social space “the behaviour of their space is at once vital and mortal: within it they develop, give expression to themselves, and encounter prohibitions; then they perish, and that same space contains their graves” (34). Yet, most significantly for this study, Lefebvre also argues that “social space works [...] as a tool for the analysis of society” (34). This thesis seeks to illuminate the social space within which Langley’s narrator finds expression, and in so doing, examine the strategies by which it is produced.

Over the course of Langley’s novelistic oeuvre, from the first, *The Pea-Pickers* to the last, “The Saunterer”, Langley’s narrator travels across and through the geographical and cultural spaces of rural Australia and then, in the New Zealand novels, the North Island of New Zealand. Scattered through these landscapes are the various dwelling places of Steve/Eve. Frequently, these dwellings are only fleetingly inhabited by Steve/Eve, and the nature of the journey to and from these dwellings is often as significant as the dwellings themselves in the context of this study. The physical structure of the buildings is frequently unstable, often porous or incomplete, reflecting the fractured or fluid nature of the imagined home. In Langley’s images of

home, as we will see, discussions of movement, destabilization, and displacement of people and things prevail. Langley's narrator asserts a way of life, in which, as formulated by Deleuze and Guattari, the concept of "flow" is the basic norm for life rather than order or stability. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, this thesis argues that for Langley: [t]he model in question is one of becoming and heterogeneity, as opposed to the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant" (361). In her resistance to the sedentary, and to a fixed identity, Steve/Eve asserts a "nomadic subjectivity" (Deleuze and Guattari 55); in describing the imagined space of home, Langley invokes her narrator as a nomadic figure, of unfixed abode and unstable identity. In "The Victorians", Steve writes a letter to a potential employer and comments, "I wrote and the long silence that followed was, of course, as natural to my mind as the long golden dry plains of that hot and fascinating country" (129). Steve prioritises movement over stasis, equates mobility with freedom and asserts that enclosure (domestic and spatial) is an obstacle to her chosen way of life.

In Langley's novels, narratorial assertions of instability and heterogeneity are frequently supported by a textual construction that embraces repetition, juxtaposition, indeterminacy and the irresolvable. Langley's novels are, to varying degrees, collages of fictional prose, letters, poetry, and journal entries, entities which converse with, support and unsettle each other. Anita Segerberg writes: "*The Pea-Pickers* was and is loved as an Australian epic, but the novel can today also be read as a post-modernist text, a bricolage or interplay of realism, satire and romance in a heightened, slightly surrealistic literary style" (60), and Aorewa McLeod notes the description of Langley's "multiple voices" as "postmodern – if prematurely so" (164). The multivocal and exuberantly disjunctive nature of Langley's texts almost certainly has contributed to their unpublished status. Commenting on the unwillingness of Angus and Robertson to publish Langley's later works, Robyn Colwill notes that a "reading of the MSS of

her unpublished novels reveals that there is a plethora of reasons ranging from commercial viability [...] to massive editorial constraints and problems in relation to such transgressive and radically unorthodox writings” (13). Langley’s unconventional life, which in many ways is echoed in that of her narrator, reveals a personal attraction to the unstable, the unattached, and the unpredictable. The parallels between Langley and the nature and content of her novelistic works have led to frequent confluences of Langley and her narrator by critics,² and have caused her novels to be, as Colwill observes, “interpreted overliterally in the context of [her] li[fe], instead of in fictive contexts which extend beyond personal encodings which may or may not be discovered in [her] evasive, shifting and multilayered textual realities” (11). The unconventional nature of Langley’s life, combined with a frequently reductive reading of Langley’s texts, has led to a significant proportion of Langley studies being focussed on biographical details of Langley’s life. This thesis does not deny the value of biographical contextualisation of Langley’s writing; rather, it seeks to excavate the strategies employed by Langley in, to use Lawson’s words, “the representation, inscription, and interpretation of the particular [and] the local” (20). Langley’s rendering of specific locations of space and time is crucial to the focus of this thesis: the exploration of the imagined space of home in Langley’s novels, where home tends to be expressive of both settlement and unsettlement. While this study does not seek to more fully understand Langley the author, in a biographical sense, neither does it attempt to explicate the texts in isolation from their authorial context. A crucial aspect

² Langley’s biographer, Joy L. Thwaite, considers Langley’s novels as primarily “a creative version” of Langley’s life, arguing: “While she rarely falsified chronological fact, she certainly took delight in embroidering and dramatising her multiple pasts, presents and futures” (6). When Brigid Magner writes, “Langley [...] is best known for [*The Pea-Pickers*] and for her peculiar fascination with the figure of Oscar Wilde”, she suggests not only that there is a lack of creative distance between Langley’s textual representations of Wilde and Langley herself, but also that these representations reflect negatively upon Langley’s representations of self (127).

of this thesis, as an investigation of a settler narrative, is that, at all times both author and narrator are in play in its analysis. In Chapter Seven, “Contested Spaces”, the significance of Langley’s authorial intentions in the novel, “The Old Mill”, is particularly foregrounded as a context for the narrative of the novel, but the dynamic between author and narrator is a constant, and highly significant aspect of settler studies as a whole, and provides an essential platform for the arguments suggested by this thesis specifically.

The frequent conflation of Langley and her narrator by critics reflects the shifting dynamics and ambiguous nature of identity in Langley’s novels. Chapter Two of this thesis, “The Unstable Identity of Steve/Eve: Same and Other”, explores the polymorphous nature of Langley’s nomadic narrator, and in doing so, comes to consider Langley’s narrator as representative of multiple subjectivity. The refusal of a unified identity suggested in the duality of the narrator’s name(s) as employed in this thesis, is echoed in Langley’s novels in protean relationships such as those between Steve and Eve, and Steve (Eve) and her sister Blue (June), and Steve/Eve and Oscar Wilde. Charting the re-presentation and development of these threads in the unpublished manuscript of Langley’s third novel, “Wild Australia” (Wilde),³ Colwill comments, “Langley redeploys Oscar Wilde as Steve/Eve’s reincarnated Other/Self to explore identity inversions and temporal, spatial, and sexual dislocations that make the gender politics of *Orlando* seem by comparison about as radical as those of *Peter Pan*” (10). The spatial articulations of this polysemic identity, while inviting an exploration of the nature of the double in Langley’s novels, suggest a resistance to

³ There are three versions of “Wild Australia”. The first contains an extensive development of the episode described in *White Topoe*, in which Steve is portrayed as a reincarnation of Oscar Wilde. The second and third versions are written by Langley in response to her publisher’s concerns regarding the Oscar Wilde material. These versions have the Wilde material excised, and are identical except for typographical differences.

simple binary definitions of self and other. In the shifting and intersecting assertions of identity within the space of the double, that which Slemon terms “the ambivalence of emplacement” typical of the settler figure is discernable (80). Elizabeth McMahon situates Langley’s published novels within the context of “Australian transvestite narratives” in order to explicate “the transvestic narrativisation of self and place in Australian fiction” (103). McMahon argues: “Steve’s recourse to Wilde [...] interpolate[s] the transgendered figure as a representation of the self(-)made man in [the texts’] negotiation of the origins and originality of a distinctively Australian identity and discourse” (103). Chapter Two of this thesis examines the space *between* Steve and Wilde as the site of those negotiations, and thereby seeks to tease out discourses of identity and nation contained within.

Crucial to the interweaving of these discourses are representations of occupation. Consideration of these representations is a significant thread of this thesis. Chapter Three, “The Rustic Hut”, explores a site in which occupation (of that discursive space named “Australia”) is manifested in a physical structure: the bush hut or bark hut. The specific instances of these structures in Langley’s novels are the huts that Steve occupies while working in the market gardens of Gippsland, and that Eve, in New Zealand, nostalgically longs for as symbolic of a golden past. These huts are physical representations of more than the need for immediate shelter; in this chapter, the space of the bush hut, or bark hut is investigated as a symbolic template of Langley’s imagined space of home, a site in which assertions of authenticity and authority jostle with manifestations of exclusion and marginality. From Vitruvius, to Laugier, to modernist architect and theorist Le Corbusier, the rustic hut has been proposed as a construction pivotal to the originary myths of western architecture. Figures central to Australian national literature, such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson, depict the bush and bush-dwellers as pivotal to any discussion about

Australian national identity. In Langley's Australian novels, by locating her narrator within the space of the bush hut, Langley locates Steve amongst the bush-dwellers of this literature, as a position emblematic of her desire to embody not just belonging but also "unbelonging"; Langley draws on Romantic frameworks to suggest that while her narrator, as a bush-poet, is a heroic figure whose vision is central to the world she depicts, she is also marginalised by her solitary and itinerant habits. This chapter explores the relationship between the rustic hut as a structure resonant with historical and contemporary associations with concepts of originality and authenticity, and the bark-hut as Steve's temporary and fragile accommodation in the society of the Gippsland market gardens of the 1920s.

The Gippsland community involved in the fields and gardens that Langley's narrator labours in is made up of various groups of itinerant workers, and the locals who own the land or who live nearby. This thesis charts the interactions between Steve and these different social groups in order to discern various strategic identifications of self and "other" in Langley's novels. Langley's careful interweaving of marginality and centrality, isolation and authority, and otherness and belonging in her construction of Steve/Eve and her imagined spaces of home results in a valorisation of distance and a frequent idealisation of the "other". However this does not suggest a general perspective on the world within the novels. Apart from her complex positioning of Steve/Eve, Langley's treatment of the other individuals she depicts is notable for its lack of heterogeneity. The fluid, polytropic discourse of the imagined space of home in Langley's novels relates only to her narrator. Other than Steve, characters in Langley's novels who may make legitimate claims of marginalisation are far from valorised. This is most obvious in Langley's reductive treatment of the immigrants who work alongside Steve in the Gippsland fields. In *The Pea-Pickers*, in keeping with the xenophobia peaking in the 1920s and 1930s in

Australia, Langley repeatedly marginalises the Italian men Steve encounters. Steve comments,

With the narrow vision of youth, I imagined that the Lord had intended the Australian to rule over my country forever. I sat in the hut, writing long treatises on its mystery, genius, its loveliness and the racial splendour of its children. The Italians, I said, lovable as they were, must first submit, for centuries, to their race being washed out by toil and intermarriage. And then, not believing in racial intermarriage, I could see no way out of it for them (292).

Steve represents her relationship with the Italians as hierarchical. This is emphasised when their company makes her consider herself to have “descended another step in the ladder of [her] race” (*Pea-Pickers* 90). In a discussion of *The Pea-Pickers*, Joseph Pugliese notes the connection between Steve’s remark and Australian immigration policies that privileged northern Europeans over those from the south, and were “structured by hierarchies of ethnicity which operate[d] along often unstated but functional lines of racialised/racist ranking – from the ‘potentially-the-same’ to the outer limits of the ‘absolute other’” (241). The integration of belonging and otherness evident in Langley’s images of home does not extend to her representation of Italian, or any other evidently marginalised group of people; in fact the more “other” a person is in this strange ranking system, the less he or she may belong.

Most critical writing on Langley’s novels concentrates on *The Pea-Pickers*, which was awarded the 1940 S. H. Prior Memorial Prize for a first novel.⁴ The novel is currently in print and remains popular as a minor classic of Australian literature.

⁴ *The Pea-Pickers* was awarded this prize jointly with *The Battlers* by Kylie Tennant and *Lachlan Macquarie* by Malcolm Henry Ellis.

However, much of the critical attention that *The Pea-Pickers* has received, especially with regard to its ethnocentricity, is applicable to Langley's other Australian novels. Jane Gleeson-White, in her book on Australian classics, evokes *The Pea-Pickers* in glowing terms, yet she frankly describes Steve as "wantonly racist" (156). Helen Andreoni notes that while readers may assume that discriminatory and derogatory descriptions of Australian Italians "were only made in colonial times or early in the twentieth century", they persisted in texts such as *The Pea-Pickers*, which, while set in the 1920s, was first published in 1942 (84). Commenting on the characterisation of Italian immigrants in *The Pea-Pickers*, Andreoni and Pugliese both condemn what Pugliese terms "the politics of 'race' and ethnicity that pervade [the novel]" (239).

However, while Steve's descriptions of her co-workers are inflected by racist assumptions, they do assert the presence of these immigrant workers in Gippsland in the 1920s. In Chapter Four of this thesis, "The Space of Absence", the ethnocentricity of Langley's texts is examined in order to illuminate, not so much the nature of the relationships that Steve describes with the other field workers (which is explored in Chapter Two), but the nature of those relationships that she effaces. This chapter draws on Bruce Pascoe's observations, in which (ironically in light of the comments above) he commends Langley's vigorous and highly detailed descriptions of a multi-cultural Gippsland which, he asserts, refuse the popular contemporary vision of a white Australia. However, Pascoe condemns Langley for the almost complete elision of the Australian Aboriginal in *The Pea-Pickers*:

Eve Langley is considered by many to have written one of the most original Australian novels. *The Pea-Pickers*, when considered in the literary climate of the era, is vibrant with its evocation of Australian mateship and the bush and heretical in its challenge of conventional sex roles. A radical and influential

book in the history of Australian literature but [...] Langley can't see the colour black (209).

As alluded to by Pascoe, Langley's construction of the social and cultural world in which her narrator lives is defined by significant elisions, most notably that of the indigene. At the same time, rupture and loss are expressed in the formulations of both occupation and (dis)possession asserted in Steve's fractured family ties with the area and frequent observations of empty and abandoned houses in the Victorian countryside. In Chapter Four, it is suggested that while the substantial presence of the Aboriginal community in the fields that Steve works in is elided in Steve's narrative, it is inadvertently made visible in the expressions of loss and dispossession that frame her evocations of Gippsland.

By contrast, Langley's New Zealand novels contain numerous references to Maori people. However, in these novels, effacement of the Maori population is textually realised, not through elision but through engagement with the "dying race" discourse.

In New Zealand, social Darwinism informed racial discussion in the late nineteenth century, in particular the ideas of the dying away of the Maori and the inevitability of the triumph of the stronger race in the struggle for survival. But racial attitudes moved away from the American and Australian horror of miscegenation, actively promoting the assimilation of the Maori into the dominant European race, and this is reflected in the literature and the ethnological writings of the period. (Stafford and Williams 129)

As we will see, Langley's memorialising narrative of New Zealand Maori in the 1930s reflects commonplace but already dated aspects of local attempts to formulate a white national identity.

While Maori are incorporated as a vital part of New Zealand's settler history, memorialising of an indigenous past in Australian settler literature tends to be deflected towards stories of early settlers who, in this literature, are granted what are seen as "native attributes and skills" in order to cement settler claims for "legitimacy [and an] increasingly secure sense of moral, spiritual, and cultural belonging" to the land (Johnston and Lawson 7).⁵ In the first half of "Wild Australia", the narrator, Steve, undertakes an extended horse ride from the coast to the alps, and across them. On this journey, Steve consciously identifies with previous travellers of the road, explorers, rovers, the stage coach drivers and the bullockies, figures central to foundational myths of white Australia. She declares:

The men of my country fed my hot active mind with their own vigilant and rebellious past, and whenever I felt down to it in Australia, I had only to think of the long line of men I'd known or heard about, the tearing and obstinate old pioneers, the bushrangers brushing swiftly through the gum trees and the determined New South Wales troopers following them ("Wild Australia" 97).

While the nomadic subjectivity figured in Steve is expressive of resistance, it is also seen to be expressive of centrality, of cultural authority, and of belonging.

Modes of resistance and cultural authority are both evident in Steve's assertion. Chapter Five of this thesis, "On the Road: The Road as Imagined Space of

⁵ Mark Williams notes: "[i]n Australia the rise of a nationalist movement in the 1880s and 1890s saw Aborigines fading from literary and artistic representation as white Australians nativized themselves". He continues "in Australia a popular literary tradition that expresses white nationalism blanks out or usurps the Aboriginal claim to belonging" (229). Tellingly, Russel Ward comments: "Up to about 1900 the prestige of the bushman seems to have been greater than that of the townsman. In life as in folklore the man from 'up the country' was usually regarded as a romantic and admirable figure. The attitude towards him was reminiscent, in some interesting ways, of that towards the 'noble savage' in the eighteenth century" (5).

Home”, argues that in the first half of “Wild Australia”, for Steve, home is an imagined site sustained by activities associated with travel and travellers. This chapter suggests that in this novel, the imagined space of home is framed, not so much in association with a dwelling such as the bush-hut, but in the space between dwelling places, in the movement of the road. Rather than home being viewed in opposition to the road, as is conventionally the case, this thesis suggests that for Steve, in “Wild Australia”, the road *is* home. However, Steve’s assertions elsewhere, in which a nomadic lifestyle is asserted as expressive of otherness, or marginality, are profoundly undermined by the cultural centrality of the historic figures associated with the movement of the road. As we will see, the memorialising of these figures in the names of bridges, creeks and other features of the road works to refuse the tropes of unconstrained movement suggested by those figures by simultaneously asserting delineations of mapping, framing, appropriation, and other forms of cultural enclosure.

Chapter Six, “Bancroft House: Enactment of Encounter”, observes representations of travel and encounter in Langley’s novel, “Bancroft House”. In this novel, home is figured in terms of endless movement, not so much with regard to physical movement through space as in “Wild Australia”, but in the form of imagined travel to distant places. Yet, as this chapter will work to reveal, home in “Bancroft House” is also a destination and a place of encounter. Mary Louise Pratt employs the term “contact zone” to describe the “interactive” and improvisational” possibilities of the colonial encounter, and Pratt’s interpretive framework guides the examination of encounter in this chapter (7). Tropes of arrival and encounter asserted, in “Bancroft House”, through allusions to the literature of exploration and discovery, are also suggested by the museum-like assemblage of artefacts within the rooms of the titular house. As James Clifford argues, Pratt’s concept of the contact zone is appropriately

applied to the museum, as a space in which different cultures intersect and interact (56-7). In the narrator's repeated encounters with the souvenirs of South America, brought back to Australia by the owner, Mr Sutcliffe, the performativity of the museum experience is made evident, reflecting the performative nature of the constructions of colonial encounter discernable in the evocations of Bancroft House as a destination. In this chapter it is argued that the theatricality of the scenes of encounter makes apparent the "constructedness" of the representation of encounter, and draws attention to the mechanisms of appropriation by which the colonial project functions. In so doing, the settler position asserted by Steve in these encounters is destabilised.

Through investigation of "Bancroft House" as a series of sites of encounter, the constructed nature of the concepts of home and--as part of a continuum of identity--nation are made apparent. In discerning and examining this constructed nature, it becomes apparent that the space of home is a contested site. In Chapter Seven, "Contested Spaces: home, community, nation", competing desires for these interconnected spaces, as represented in Langley's novels, are explored. Stuart Murray's analysis of the nation as a "social 'bod[y]'" and a "site for ideological dispute" informs the argument of this chapter (*Any Map* 13). Gender-based constructions of home are frequently challenged by Langley's narrator: Steve/Eve is a woman who often dresses as a man, she is a female itinerant worker in the 1920s and 30s when this was very rare, she is physically mobile and, resisting a conventional domestic life, she seeks to be a writer and a poet. In Langley's unpublished novel, "The Victorians", Steve writes to her sister, "Blue, I'll always wander, and you too will wander [...] we'll not marry [...] four damnable walls shall never close us in (69). In *The Pea-Pickers*, when Steve is asked why she doesn't "try domestic work" she replies, "That job can go in the waste paper basket [...] We are out to see

Australia” (49). Steve is later accosted by a policeman who asks if she and her sister are “masquerading as boys”. When he suggests that young women like them shouldn’t be travelling in the way that they are, Steve responds, “We are not young women. We are life, sorrow, loneliness, searching... God knows for what” (51-2). However, while resistance to, in this case, the perceived stasis of fixed identity figured in gender-related codes of dress and socially acceptable patterns of movement informs Steve’s stance of opposition, and leads to a position of marginality, her nomadic lifestyle is significantly more than a series of enactments of resistance. While her desire for physical and social freedom conflicts with normative positions, it often conforms to contemporary Australian constructions of national identity. In Chapter Seven, domestic spaces evoked in Langley’s Australian novels are examined as spaces placed in opposition to the natural world, yet defined by formulations of nationhood centred on unmediated interaction with the natural environment. In Langley’s New Zealand novels, as this chapter will seek to show, constructions of national identity also work to define home, not so much as a domestic space, but as a socially marginal space of artistic expression. In this chapter it is suggested that, by situating her narrator beyond the social space but as part of the literary presence in New Zealand in the 1930s, Langley restages her own position with regard to a literary scene concerned with the writing of the nation. Interrogation of Langley’s representations of home as a contested space will seek to illuminate the nationalisms informing that space but also will work to evaluate the borders and constraints that define contemporary assertions of nationhood.

In tracing the evocation and stagings of home in Langley’s novels, this thesis seeks to assert the body of work presented in these novels as a settler narrative in which practices of occupation and inhabitation are repeatedly negotiated and rehearsed. The fractured, often incoherent narration of space in Langley’s novels will

be explored as mirroring the irresolvable position of the settler subject. In describing the imagined space of home, Langley employs a poetics of displacement, invoking her narrator as a nomadic figure, of unfixed abode and unstable identity. This thesis will explore the discursive production of such a poetics, and seek to chart the representation of place therein.

* * *

While this thesis treats Langley's novels as a single entity it does not discuss, in chronological order, the novels that make up this body of work. However, an understanding of Langley's publication (and non-publication) history is helpful in the analysis of these novels. Langley's novels (extant) are a fictional account of her life from the mid 1920s to 1942. The first novels, *The Pea-Pickers* (1942) and *White Topee* (1954), and the four unpublished manuscripts that followed, "Wild Australia (Wilde)", "Wild Australia", "The Victorians", and "Bancroft House" are set in the years 1925-30. These "Australian" novels are based on the adventures that Eve Langley and her sister, June, experienced while working as itinerant labourers in and around Gippsland, in Victoria, Australia. In 1932, Langley followed her sister and mother to New Zealand, and the first "New Zealand" novel, "Land of the Long White Cloud", describes the journey to Wellington, and the attempts by Langley's narrator to discover, or emulate, a New Zealand form of the Australian rover-type figure as she travels from Wellington to Whanganui. "Demeter of Dublin Street" is principally set in Whanganui" and the final five novels are set in Auckland in the late 1930s and early 40s. While there are dates recorded for the writing and publication of the earlier works, it is difficult to ascertain exact dates for the unpublished manuscripts. Thwaite's biography of Langley describes Langley frequently having several novels

underway at once, and of her “packing off” the manuscripts of “Last, Loveliest, Loneliest”, followed by “Demeter of Dublin Street”, “The Old Mill”, “Remote Apart”, “Portrait of the Artist”, “The Saunterer” and other works to Angus and Robertson, Langley’s publishers, in 1959 (458). In chronological order of events recorded within the texts, Langley’s novels are:

The Pea-Pickers (1942)

White Topee (1954)

“Wild Australia (Wilde)” (1953)

“Wild Australia” (1958)

“The Victorians”

“Bancroft House”

“The Land of the Long White Cloud”

“Demeter of Dublin Street”

“The Old Mill”

“Last, Loveliest, Loneliest”

“Remote Apart”

“Portrait of the Artist”

“The Saunterer”

Chapter Two

The Unstable Identity of Steve/Eve: Same and Other

... Is it one living being that doth/ one life through clear division run?

Or are these two, self-chose/ and both fain to be known as one.

The meaning true well divine/ whereby to make such fiddles plain

Feelest thou not in these songs of mine/ that I am one and twain.

(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Ginkgo Biloba).

As the body moves through space, crossing borders of all kinds, identity acquires sedimented and palimpsestic layers each of which reflects the locations through which the person has moved, each of which exerts some influence on the other layers and on identity as a whole.

(Susan Stanford Friedman 28-9)

In Langley's novels, the imagined space of home is described using a poetics of displacement in which Langley's narrator is invoked as a nomadic figure with an unstable identity. Representations of the narrator's identity as polymorphous and multivalent articulate a "desire" for connection which is constantly evolving and mutating. This articulation is seminal to Langley's representations of space and, in particular, the space of home. In the novels set by Langley in Australia, the narrator and her sister June express a desire to manifest themselves as male figures with male names and attire, and the fluidity of their identity is visible in the shifting distance between the expressions of Steve's clothes and of Steve's

body underneath. In the first of the New Zealand novels, Langley's narrator states, "Steve's no good of a name for [New Zealand]. It's too wild, too much like the bush, too Australian" ("Land of the Long White Cloud" 41). She decides to revert to Eve, "something feminine and attractive for this country" (41). When the identity of "Steve" no longer seems valid in the New Zealand context, the being that is "Steve" is reinvented as "Eve". Further to this flux of being, Eve's identity in New Zealand proves to be as unfixed and protean as Steve's in Australia.

In this chapter I investigate the nature of Steve/Eve's unstable identity and the spatial representations of that identity. The term "space of identity" will be employed to describe the field of representational signifiers that, while unstable and contingent, are associated with the identity of a person or an entity. The construction of this term looks to Lefebvre's interconnected triad of "the lived, conceived and perceived realms" of social space to also examine the social "body", that is, the "body" within a social space, as a spatial entity (40). Just as Lefebvre views social space in terms of its production, this thesis considers the space of identity as constructed, but also re-constructed and (re)negotiated. In this chapter, I explore the way that the self-conscious nature of Steve/Eve's refusal of a unified identity informs the construction of Langley's narrator as representative of multiple subjectivity. Further to this, I investigate Langley's employment of the double, or *doppelgänger*, as an articulation of her narrator's polysemic identity. The dynamism created through the "interplay of the reciprocal gaze" of Langley's narrator and her *doppelgänger* suggests a resistance to simple binary definitions of same and other (McKinnon 1). The intersections of the seemingly incompatible spaces of identity, which result from Langley's constructions of the double, are echoed in Langley's complex positioning of

Steve/Eve as a settler-figure within the colonial landscape of what has been termed the “Second World” (see Lawson, Slemon). We will see that the self-fashioning that frames the formulations of Steve’s unstable identity as “same and other” is reflected in the strategies of the settler-invader. In Langley’s articulation of Steve/Eve as a settler-figure negotiations of colonial power are rendered visible and are seen to assert the terms of a national narrative.

Early in *The Pea Pickers*, Langley’s narrator says, “I knew that I was comical but I thought I was serious and beautiful as well. It was tragic to be only a comical woman when I longed above all things to be a serious and handsome man” (3). This desire for metamorphosis is the catalyst for the multiple examples of self-transformation which are manifested throughout Langley’s novels. In *The Pea-Pickers*, when a letter arrives offering the narrator and her sister work on an orchard, and they decide they “must put off [their] feminine names forever” (7), after some debate the two women adopt “Steve” and “Blue” as more appropriate for their new personae. The sisters assume male attire as well as masculine names, and on the train journey to Mr Desperandum’s orchard in Gippsland they wear “wide-legged trousers, silk shirts and sweaters” of “gold and royal blue”, and they stroke “imaginary black whiskers” (10). Steve comments,

Our grandfather had come to [Gippsland] by bullock dray from Ballarat, wearing a scarlet and gold cummerbund, a bright Spanish hat, yellow moleskins, an embroidered vest with brilliant buttons, and rings of pure gold from his own mine hot on his fingers.

We looked at each other and felt that we hadn’t let him down (11).

The dashing combination of the new names and the bright colours of the masculine clothing provides more than a straight-forward disguise. The

performativity of the sisters' appearance on the train, which arouses "the dark interest of the travellers around [them]" (11) suggests that the assumed appearance is a form of masquerade more designed to attract attention than obscure the self beneath.

The "alienation of inner from outer" (Castle 4), traditionally effected in masquerade, is regularly refused by Langley's protagonists as their male "disguise" is undermined partly by the need for physical ease, but mainly through a seemingly unquenchable desire for spectacle. At the same time as Steve insists on being treated as a man when working in the fields, asserting in "a deep angry voice", "We are men, as you know [...]" (*Pea-Pickers* 77), Steve and Blue regularly wear "half boy clothes, half girl clothes" (76). In *Masquerade and Gender*, Catherine Craft-Fairchild discusses the idea of masquerade as "the creation of an image or spectacle for the benefit of a spectator" (7). That this is the intention of the masquerade in Langley's novels is manifest.⁶ For her first day in the pea fields, Blue adopts a relatively conservative version of cross-dressing:

[...] khaki trousers, neat socks and shoes that were polished to the depth of an old fiddle. A blue smock, covered with tan flowers in silk of her own working, protected her clothes, and she wore little white gloves to keep her hands clean (*Pea-Pickers* 85-6).

However, Steve's chosen attire seems designed to draw the eye:

I wore something the same [as Blue], adding to it an old felt hat I had found along the beach. It was too big for me, but by bandaging my head

⁶ For a more lengthy discussion of this aspect of *The Pea-Pickers*, see my Masters dissertation, *The Layered Discourse of Eve Langley's The Pea-Pickers*, (2005), held by the University of Auckland Library.

with scarves and towels and fastening the hat around my head with a luggage strap, I managed to look dashing and seductive (*Pea-Pickers* 86).

Later, Steve describes an outing with her boyfriend of the time, Macca:

I put my arm around his waist as we walked awkwardly on the rough road. I was wearing trousers, too, like him, but with my usual touch of the ludicrous had added to the outfit a woman's blouse and a straw school hat of ridiculous droop.

A small dark girl, plump and faintly moustached, passed us with an amazed stare (*Pea-Pickers* 134).

In Steve's frank awareness of the scrutiny of the world around her, her clothes are revealed, not as a mask but as a display. When Steve arrives in Mr Nils Desperandum's orchard in *The Pea Pickers* she is fearful that she is simply perceived as "only a woman in man's clothes" (15). Yet, Steve's sustained performance indicates a desire to undermine simple binary definitions of gender. She and Blue make no attempt to hide their womanly shapeliness, often appearing "amply feminine in [their] masculine clothes" (*Pea-Pickers* 48). The clothes and various adornments that the two sisters wear are placed in a collaborative relationship with the bodies they attire. The sexually ambiguous outfits deliberately chosen by Steve and Blue not only refuse conventional gender constructions but by asserting the polysemic identities in which the pair feel most "at home", they define what Marjorie Garber describes as "a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility" (11). As they walk down the main street of one town the two women attract the attention of the hotel proprietor who calls out "I say! Aren't those two ... girls?" and as they walk the

back streets of another town men and women “cr[y] out to each other, wondering what [they are]” (*Pea-Pickers* 50).

However, the eye-catching displays performed by Steve and Blue are not only directed outward to a watching world. When the gold bracelet visible on Blue’s wrist under her masculine clothes causes “bewilderment” to the passengers on a train, Steve says, “Blue had never looked so beautiful” (54). While rarely turning from the interested speculation that the sisters’ chosen attire regularly arouses, Steve and Blue are each other’s most ardent and gratified spectators. When the “elderly proprietress” of a hotel in Cootamundra fixes them with a “piercing stare”, the sisters immediately turn to one another: “‘By jove’, we exclaimed, as she went out, and we stared at each other sternly. ‘Did I look like a girl, then? Did my bosom appear large to you, old man?’” (*Pea-Pickers* 53). The sisters are united in their comical response to the sharp interest of the “proprietress”, and the space of their returned gaze is forged within this union. In the reciprocal gaze the already fluid identities of the two women are refashioned; not only is each woman contextualised by the other, but also, in their mutual response, their identities converge and, at that moment, overlap. In this encounter we see that Langley’s representations of unstable identity are expressed not only through the refusal of a sustained and unified self for her narrator, but also through the suggested possibility of a multiple subject.

The notion of multiple subjectivity, comically illustrated in Steve and Blue’s amused and admiring appreciation of each other, provides a significant context for Langley’s representations of Steve/Eve as a poet, in which her unfixed and fluid identity is notable. When a policeman in Springhurst says to Steve and Blue, “‘Two good-looking young women like you have no right to be

getting around like this” (*Pea-Pickers* 52), he is not only referring to the masculine clothing that the sisters are wearing. His words also allude to the physical mobility assumed by Steve and Blue. This mobility represents a refusal of conventional domestic containment, which the policeman presumably wishes for the sisters, but it also signifies a poetic desire to roam the countryside, unfettered and often alone. Steve enjoys nothing more than a solitary walk across the hills, in the fashion of her beloved Romantic poets. The representation of Steve’s unstable identity in terms of gender is situated alongside the depiction of her identity as shaped by her poetic sensibilities. From the opening words of *The Pea-Pickers*, Langley locates Steve’s mobility as part of her identity as a poet. She is sitting in “the poet’s corner” of Mia’s kitchen when she reads of Mr Desperandum’s large crop of apples, and on the walls of this kitchen the “peculiar fantastic minds” of Steve and Blue showed “in verse and drawing that the time had come for [their] strongest migration from home” (*Pea-Pickers* 3). As well as its association with Steve’s mobility, her identity as a poet is also employed to explain and illustrate Steve’s divergent character. Blue says to her, “That’s the worst of being a poet, Steve. You see too many sides of the question” (*Pea-Pickers* 171). Steve’s self-representation as a poet is often alluded to in relation to her refusal to coalesce into a stable entity with conventionally prescribed boundaries. Macca comments:

A few months ago I went all the way down to Metung to ask you to marry me. You calmly turned me down, and now you come along here, with your Oscar Wilde and John Keats accents, asking me to remember the past and sorrow with you over our long-lost love. It’s time you got a bit of sense, and found out what you really wanted in life [...] (*White Topee* 160).

In Langley's novels, resistance to social codification is frequently associated with forms of poetic association. In *The Pea-Pickers* Steve says, "I am only a bundle of books opened here and there to let a verse show through. I am not, I know, like other women" (177).

Vividly emphasising Steve's poetic sensibilities are Langley's palimpsestic representations of Steve/Eve in which she is viewed as exhibiting fleeting flashes of various other (male) poets and authors. Macca notes the tones of Wilde and Keats that imbue Steve's voice. Steve frequently uses lines of poetry written by other poets to reveal her inner state. When she arrives at Mr Desperandum's orchard she says,

My only reason for living at that moment was the remembrance of
Autumn bold
With universal tinge of sober gold
Who else among the Gippslanders knew this? I had brought a small book
of Keats's birthday quotations with me, imagining that his entire works
lay in it, and I turned to it whenever I was judged (*Pea-Pickers* 15).

As well as the employment of other poets' words to express her narrator's identity, Langley repeatedly aligns those poets' physical attributes with Steve/Eve. Macca's earlier comment refers more to Steve's borrowed "accents" than to her actual words. In *White Topee*, Steve is employed to sort beans on Billy Creeker's farm. Sitting together in the "cool rusty shed" Billy Creeker says, "Your face as you were looking downward reminded me of Keats for a moment, Steve. I often wonder if you were Keats. You may have been. Sometimes, looking at you, I could swear you were John Keats" (118). Langley's narrator frequently expresses similar feelings about herself. Working and living in a hostel for young women in

Wanganui,⁷ in New Zealand, Eve notes, “One of the girls is lending me a volume of his letters. In another book there is such a sprightly supremely delicate portrait of him, so like myself that I am amazed by it... it is really my own face...” (“Cloud” 375). Later, Eve sits “working and writing at [her] desk” in the hostel, and notes the “two long shining brown Keatsian curls of hair hanging down on each side of [her] head and drooping on to [her] shoulders” (“Cloud” 321). Similarly, as Eve walks home from the “pictures” one night in Wanganui, she comments “how lovely it was, how fresh, how strange and adventurous and how gallantly [her] strange and Oscar Wildeish legs bore [her] alongside the young girls” (“Cloud” 224). While poetic expression is associated with Langley’s narrator as an example of her resistance to social conventions relating to womanhood, the noting of physical similarities between the narrator and other poets functions more to situate her amongst her poetic heroes. In her occupation of this space, physical connections between Steve/Eve and other poets are frequently invoked, but those between Steve/Eve and Oscar Wilde are revealed as most significant.

Towards the end of Langley’s second novel, *White Topee*, her narrator, Steve, imagines her birth into her Australian family as the reincarnation of Oscar Wilde. She explains to her friend Panucci,

‘It came about in this way. There was nothing; I was not. Then there was a huge blackness far away off in the earth and sky, and in this far-away blackness, which was a certain length of time, part of me was like a star. I came to myself in a buggy, at Minildra, in the Australian bush, sitting

⁷ Here I maintain the spelling that Langley uses, which was correct at the time. Now, Wanganui is more commonly spelt Whanganui, with the added “h” reflecting Maori pronunciation.

between a man and woman. I was Oscar Wilde, or I had recently been him.

[...] I made a great struggle to be once more, and at once, the always brilliant Oscar Wilde, beloved of London, or known of London, for the astonishing genius of his swift recoveries from the most severe attacks of Fate or man. But I could not. Yet I fancied I had done so, for I turned with the half-sublime, godlike air I always affected, to the right, my head inclining to the right, and staring into the awful loneliness of the painted-looking Australian bush [...]

I became conscious then, of sitting in this buggy between a man and a woman. At the same time I had a sense of being out driving with my mother, Lady Wilde, and some Princess [...] I wondered how I had come to be in this buggy' (241-3).

Steve/Oscar inspects the man and woman in the buggy and finds that the woman looks "faintly" like Lady Wilde, Oscar Wilde's mother. Visions of London, portmanteaus and a large liner at the docks flood her/his mind. Then, she continues:

'Handing my ticket to the uniformed official at the gangway was my last memory of London, my last first memory. My next memory as I sat in the buggy between the man and the woman, was of an old-fashioned plane of the sort the Wright Brothers used to build soaring above us. I felt as though I had fallen straight from that plane into the vacant seat in the buggy and knocked its occupants unconscious with shock. I didn't know where I was. I just kept looking round in agony, with the awful feeling that I was going to go out to it for years in a moment. I would have given a million pounds at that moment to have seen anyone who knew me. And

just then, to my horror, I saw the white ribbons fluttering from a baby's bonnet, and staring at them, saw a baby sitting on the woman's knee. The ribbons appeared to me to be waving out against a cold chill windy afternoon, and I exclaimed with the most dreadful despair and horror possible, 'Heavens! I'm the baby!' I at once collapsed into deepest unconsciousness, while the horse moved on with us through the bush of Minildra' (243-4).

In this extraordinary account, Steve does not simply exhibit flashes of similarity or likeness between herself and the poets she admires; she *is* Oscar Wilde. On hearing this version of Steve's birth, Panucci asks, "And Steva, did you really come to your family in this way at the beginning?" and Steve replies, "I do not know" (244). Yet, despite this stated uncertainty, through the rest of Langley's novels Steve/Eve repeatedly expresses a sense of intimate association with Wilde.

In "Wild Australia" (Oscar Wilde version),⁸ sitting in the pickers' cubicles at 'Panlooks', listening to the playing of a violin, Steve says, "That night, we sat together on the broad bed of our cubicle under the electric light, with quite a sense of the red rich plush of the eighties all about us, and that shadowy untranslated atmosphere of Lord Darlington's rooms in Lady Windermere's [F]an [...]" (235). She explains her strong sense of connection with those times and those rooms:

⁸ As previously noted, there are three versions of "Wild Australia". The first contains an extensive development of the episode described in *White Topee*, in which Steve is portrayed as a reincarnation of Oscar Wilde, and will be henceforth referred to as "Wild Australia Wilde".

I suppose, looking back enviously on that night of youth, I looked handsome enough to be loved. My body, rich with adolescence, clad in well tailored grey Oxford bags, silk shirt and well fitting coat [...] and above it all, my face, pale, melancholy, dreaming; the face of Oscar Wilde, drifting half drowned in deepest Lethe. I knew who I was; Oscar Wilde [...].

They [the titled people associated with Wilde] swung like a pendulum back and forth behind my mind; but theirs was a fading charm, and not like the vivid striking glorious charm of the marvellous bush people. I was one of them, now. I was Australian (238).

The intense association that Steve/Eve feels with Wilde is situated alongside her equally strong identification as an Australian. Just as the masculine clothes worn on Steve's feminine body denote a polymorphous identity, Steve/Eve's simultaneous identification as both her Australian-born self, and as Oscar Wilde suggests a form of doubling. Marina Warner suggests that while doubles such as these may present as "possession by another, and estrangement from self", at the same time:

the double also solicits hopes and dreams for yourself, of a possible becoming different while remaining the same person, of escaping the bounds of self, of aspiring to the polymorphous perversity of infants, in Freud's phrase, which in some ways mimics the protean energies of the metamorphic gods (*Metamorphoses* 165).

Writing of the "imaginative play in the repeated idea of twins" in Langley's novels, Joy L. Thwaite comments:

Steve and Blue function as a species of inseparable twins (“The Victorians” 378), Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas are the ‘Ultimi Gemini’ and Langley is designated as ‘the dreadful Siamese twins of myself’ (“Wild Australia”, Wilde 277). A series of mirror images reflect different sexes, different aspirations, different aspects of [Langley’s] confusion (92).

While Thwaite conflates Langley with her narrator, and views the identification with Wilde as a form of “confusion”, she notes the importance of the repeated trope of doubling in Langley’s writing.⁹ As suggested by Thwaite’s comment, this trope is explored by Langley on many different levels. Sears notes, “Notions of return (of the repressed), reiteration, repetition, re-enactment, imitation, disguise, revelation, recognition, recollection and resolution characterise the rhetoric of doubling...” (104), and Langley employs all these devices in her novels. The autobiographical nature of the novels is suggestive of doubling, as is the easy manner in which Steve becomes Eve. The first journey that Steve and Blue take to Gippsland, in *The Pea-Pickers*, is presented as a reiteration of the glorious journey taken by the sisters’ grandfather many years before. Langley often repeats episodes through the use of letters written by Steve alongside Steve’s direct reportage, and through the representation of memory.

In an episode in “Demeter of Dublin Street” Langley employs a classic doubling device, the mirror, to facilitate the agency of memory, which invokes

⁹ Eve Langley changed her name to Oscar Wilde by deed poll in 1954, and Langley’s biographer, Joy L. Thwaite, reads the repeated references to Wilde in Langley’s novels as evidence of a deteriorating mental condition. Thwaite may be correct in the negative implications of her assessment of Langley’s identification with Wilde. In this thesis, I focus on the potential of the association of Langley’s narrator with Wilde rather than possible problems arising from Langley’s self-identification with him.

further doubling in the forms of re-enactment and revelation. Eve looks into an old mirror that is hanging in the Wanganui hostel in which she boards and, in the engagement between her gaze and that of her reflection, both space and identity are dissolved and reformalised:

I looked into the dusty, ugly mirror that was spotted with a sort of fungus as though it had died silently and rotted without fetor or stench. Time had killed it. But as for me, when I looked into it, I was born again in time [...] I said slowly, wonderingly, conquering, 'No. 4. bedroom'. This was a bedroom in the old hotel in which I had lived for four years when I was a child. (107).

For Eve, the mnemonic effect of her face viewed through the misty surface of the mirror promotes a sense of movement through time and a reconfiguring of space. Her face is not only framed by the stains on the mirror, but also by a sense of the room in which the original mirror hung:

When I saw my face in this old mirror I knew that I had caused the bedroom of No. 4 to recrudescence. Odour followed odour, then [...] It was a male smell. And a strong tree smell and a sun smell and a white smell of thin clean pure unimaginative coverlets. 'Well, that's No. 4 all right,' I said (107).

The reconstruction of the room from Eve's childhood, which evolves through the sight of her reflection in the speckled glass, includes the resuscitation of the odours of that room. Edward S. Casey suggests that "[t]here is no memory without body memory" (172). Surrounded by the smells of the room around her,

which are, at the same time, those of the room from her youth, Eve looks more closely into the glass:

I turned to this mirror as I had turned to that one in No. 4 and breathed over it, frosting it with my breath... through it my face gleamed faintly and delicately and marchinly [sic], came dryly and stridently from youth to maturity... the mist warmed and fled and I was in the twenties again. I had done this in the bedroom of No. 4, when I was not quite ill. The creams and golds and pinks and greens of my face delighted me then. Especially that little tight curl on my right side. Where is it now? It was so splendid (108).

As Eve stares at the face of her younger self in the mirror and considers the attributes of that youthful face, her encounter with the face in the mirror involves movement through time as well as space. Eve experiences a sense of the fluid nature of her identity over time as her identity is reconfigured with the shifting manifestations of location. The mirrored reflection and the self-portraiture expressed in the self-examination and intimacy of the reflection are paradigmatic of the doubling present in Langley's work. The many iterations of doubling deployed in Eve's experience of the mirrored world articulate the possibilities framed by Langley's use of Wilde as Steve/Eve's double, in which the reciprocal gaze also mediates location in time and space.

The German word "doppelgänger" is a term appropriate to the relationship between Steve/Eve and Wilde in which the doubling is not one of symmetry. The initial 1796 definition of "doppelgänger" by Johann Paul Friedrich Richter is "So

heissen Leute, die sich selbst sehen" (42), or, "such is the name given to people who see their own selves". Nagler notes:

Doppelgänger - significantly it is both plural and singular in German - does not therefore denote the existence of two identical entities, but a situation in which people see an Other, and hence not only an active process of spotting, but also a paradigmatic action defining the hierarchical object/subject opposition. But, reminiscent of Goethe's simultaneous 'one and twain', the object seen is defined as the viewers' 'selbst', as the same and the alone, the non-other of the subject, consequently bridging or completely annihilating the very dichotomy created by the gaze (8).

Steve/Eve's conflation of herself with Oscar Wilde through reincarnation suggests that the frequent references to Wilde in Langley's novels are to a form of doppelgänger, in this case a benign figure, who is both same and other. In this context the visual images of Wilde and other alter egos that Steve/Eve comes face to face with in many of Langley's novels are seen to also be images of the narrator. As Steve/Eve travels across the landscapes of Australia and New Zealand, she repeatedly encounters visual images of faces, usually photographic, which, in the context of doubling in Langley's novels, are fruitfully perceived as images of herself, and of her doppelgänger. The situating of these images relative to Steve/Eve provides various opportunities to productively explore the space of identity in Langley's novels.

When Steve wakes up on her first morning as a resident of Bancroft House, she explores the rooms in the morning light. In one of the living rooms

she finds a book. She is slightly disappointed that there is only one volume and not the “piles of books” she had expected there. She comments:

But there was only one book standing on a small table, like the small phial in ‘Alice and Wonderland’ labelled ‘Drink me’. It stood near the piano. I approached it with as much curiosity as Alice approached the table holding the bottle that held the stuff that sent her head shooting up to the ceiling to her dismay, until she opened and drank of the bottle that made her so small that, like the mouse she met, she was soon swimming around in her own tears. With some such deep feeling did I approach the mysterious book on the Alice in Wonderlandish table, and opened it. It was a large dignified old-fashioned compilation on all the diseases peculiar to man. I turned the pages until I came to liver disorders, when I found the face of Oscar Wilde, staring up at me, labelled the ‘Bilious-Sanguine Type’. He was described as having been a professor at the University of Indiana, Perdue, or a master in a boys’ school in America. Always Oscar. One would never get away from Oscar (“Bancroft House” 111).

In this passage, the unexpected discovery of the image of Wilde is preceded by a detailed exposition of the “deep feeling” Steve experiences as she approaches the book in which the image is contained. The deep feeling is suggestive of the tunnel that Alice falls down at the beginning of her adventures, and Alice’s alternating thoughts of sudden expansion and contraction inflect Steve’s representation of being within the room, so that the containment of the space is emphasised.

The length of Steve’s walk across the room to the table with the book on it is exaggerated by the tension of curiosity felt by her on approaching the table. It

is as though she is drawn inexorably towards the book. The unexpected nature of the discovery of “Wilde’s” portrait within the book is compounded by its unlikely setting in a volume dedicated to the rendering of human diseases, and serves to further extend Steve’s passage towards the image. The humorous admission that the portrait is said to be of an American professor, or schoolteacher, adds to both the destabilising effect suggested by the “Alice in Wonderlandish” imagined expansion and contraction of being, and to the distancing effect evoked by the “deep” feelings.

Yet deep feelings are also intimate: as Steve stares at the page, “Oscar” stares back and Steve experiences a dramatic sense of engagement with the portrait. The interaction of the reciprocal gaze is a heightened experience typical of the self-portrait (see Wendy Wick Reaves, *Reflections/Refractions*). Langley exaggerates this experience even further in the complex framing of Steve’s approach to the book on the table, and the discovery of the portrait within. The space between Steve and the portrait is highly charged and focussed, and Steve expresses a strong sense of inevitability in her encounter with Wilde when she observes the portrait; she feels at-home in the space even as she describes the unsettling nature of it. The multiple framing of the portrait and of Steve as she is finally transfixed in a reciprocal gaze with the photographed face suggests containment, but the strong sense of movement towards the table, initiated by Steve’s desire to apprehend the contents of the book, destabilises the containment even as it confirms it. The shock of the moment when Steve realises she is face-to-face with her doppelganger is transmitted to the reader through the unlikely and unexpected nature of the location of an image of Wilde. That the

image is not labelled as Wilde does not matter, as the existence of the doppelganger is chiefly reliant on recognition by its double, in this case, Steve.

Months later, when Steve's friend Ramon picks up the same book, Steve records, "he picked up the health manual and commenced to find out what disease he was most likely to get. Turning it over rapidly, the face of Oscar Wilde flashed forth. 'Who's that?' asked Ramon holding the page up to Mr Sutcliffe at the fire. 'Who's he? Oscar Wilde?'" ("Bancroft House" 207). It seems that through Steve's recognition of the photographic portrait as Wilde, it has become an image of him. However, though the image is "confirmed" as Wilde, this confirmation holds none of the intensity of Steve's initial discovery of the photograph. Ramon's casual flicking through the pages of the health manual is quite different to Steve's approach to the volume on her first morning in Bancroft House. In Langley's novels Wilde is alluded to regularly, but only Steve/Eve (and occasionally Blue/June) perceives him as an alter ego to the narrator, and only when the gaze is between Steve/Eve and Wilde does the force field of that returned gaze speak of fluid and extended identity.

As Steve/Eve comes face to face with the image of her doppelganger the space defined by the returned gaze is vortex-like in its combination of an intense sense of focus with an equally strong sense of movement around that focus. Yet, as with many of the spaces that Steve/Eve is attracted to and in which she feels at home, this magnetic space tends also to interact with its surrounding landscape. This interaction is notable when Eve unexpectedly encounters an image of her doppelganger in a newspaper office. When Steve arrives in New Zealand, she decides it is now appropriate for her to stop being a bushman-poet

called Steve and instead to be a writer named Eve. Following this decision she approaches newspaper editor, C. A. Marris, for work:

We mounted dry, old stairs, I think, we came into that curious little dry brown unpainted wooden intaglio that houses the staff of any city newspaper in the colonial metropolis and encountered dry wispy men of an intellectual content marvellous to me, since they had apparently been able to hold their jobs down for years. Twisting serpent like through the dry and light woods we came upon wrinkled men of awful age, and shaven face and at last one of them took me along to the office of Mr Marris. It too, was dry of floor without paint, one desk, one chair, the other he sat in and it was therefore a mystery of a thing. A small Australian like C. J. Dennis he was, dry and sandy haired, shaven and spruce and vaguely diabolical in the way that only the Australian can be diabolical. He rose and greeted me, pointed to the chair but there was someone there before me. An exquisite creature. A photograph taken in the eighties of a man with a large smooth moonlike pallid face, the saddest and most worn in the whole world; he was like myself, I thought, he was also like Oscar Wilde, although I had never seen a photograph of Oscar, but seemed to know him well. Here in this recent magazine on his French divan, lay this most sad and sublime of beings on whom I stared with an awful look of love. Even his long dark moustache could not prevent my love from coming through. White, worn, sad, forlorn, lost, swimming in some awful tide of being, under these great words, 'LES TEMPS RETROUVES [sic] par MARCEL PROUST' ("Cloud" 144-5).

Here, the photographic image is labelled as being Marcel Proust, but it is instantly recognised by Eve as also being a likeness both of herself and of Wilde. Its fluid identity is confirmed as it “swim[s] in some awful tide of being”. Steve’s earlier encounter with an image of her doppelganger on her first morning in Bancroft House is highly framed and Eve’s engagement with this photograph is similarly articulated. In the living room of Bancroft House, Steve describes a deep feeling on approaching the table holding the book in which the image is found. In Eve’s approach to Mr Marris’ office, where she is directed to a chair on which the photographic image is propped, a similar sense of deep interiority is described. This time, the sense is manifested in Eve’s impression of her surroundings. As she enters the newspaper offices Eve describes the sense of entering a wooden intaglio, as though she is within a large knotted maze. This combination of a sense of deep containment with a feeling of restless movement is confirmed in her “twisting serpent like through the dry and light woods” as she passes along the corridor between offices. Yet, as with the Bancroft House episode, the strong sensations of containment as Eve almost burrows her way to the editor’s office, are destabilised by metaphors of openness associated with the dry Australian landscape. The dry, light woods, wrinkled men, and unpainted wooden floor are reminiscent of the bleached timbers and weather-beaten inhabitants of the bush huts scattered through the Australian landscape over which Steve roamed unfettered. And the “dry and sandy haired” Mr Marris is representative of both Australia and Australian. The deep interiority of Eve’s passage through the newspaper offices is simultaneously figured as a depiction of the open lightness of the Australian landscape that Eve has just left.

These metaphors for Australia ignite Eve's conflation of the photograph of Proust with images of herself and her alter ego, Wilde. Surrounded by the dry wooden walls of the office, the image of Proust and the title of his book prompt Eve to speak to Mr Marris of her own memories of a time now lost to her, of a life in Australia as Steve, of

[...] the wonder and awe of life and the wide warm outcrying of Australia in springtime instinct with golden wattle and the blowing and bending wild fierce winds of spring that never ceased to blow down all the dry gullies about the lakes and around all the old deserted houses there ("Cloud" 146).

In Eve's progression down the corridor of the newspaper office and into the editor's room, aware of the cubicles of desks each side, memory and space intersect. The classical rhetorician, Quintilian, in his discussion of the art of memory describes moving through a series of rooms or spaces, in reality or in imagination, and each room or specific space providing a thing or point to be remembered, a specific memory (see Frances Yates *The Art of Memory*). The newspaper offices frame the intimate space of the reciprocal gaze between Eve and her doppelgänger, Wilde (who is also Proust in this case), and also act as a mnemonic device in the mediation of that gaze. Juhani Pallasmaa argues, "we are in constant exchange with our settings; simultaneously we internalize the setting and project our own bodies, or aspects of our bodily schemes upon the setting. Memory and actuality, perception and dream, merge" (27). In *Le Temps Retrouvé*, Proust reconstructs identity and location through memory. In Mr Marris' office, location catalyses memory and, in an intertwining of place and mind, Eve's (multiple) identity articulates its location.

The construction of a multiple subjectivity in which the doubled figures are both the same and other, suggests the intersection and merging of apparently incompatible spaces of identity. In the description (noted earlier) of the night spent listening to the violin in the pickers' cubicles at Panlooks, the shifting, forming and reforming identity that is Steve/Oscar Wilde is explicitly situated in a location alternately framed by Wildean England and Australia. In this passage, England, as the originary place, and Australia as the place of arrival, are directly opposed. However, as the arc of the pendulum swinging "back and forth behind [her] mind" suggests, the identity that is Steve/Wilde may occupy not only the spaces opposed at each end of the arc but also the spaces between. While Steve/Wilde is sure at this moment that she/he is now Australian, the narrator continues, "The past never left me. Shades of people and places and names I'd know in England, and abroad, play about me... There was no escape from the past" ("Wild Australia", Wilde 239). The sensed lack of escape suggests that Steve/Eve is oppressed by her (English) past. However, articulating the contradictory nature of her position, Langley's narrator also frequently embraces her constructed English past. Due to this construction, Steve/Eve is at once Australian, one of the "marvellous bush people" ("Wild Australia", Wilde 238) and at the same time, "the always brilliant Oscar Wilde, beloved of London" (*White Topee* 242). Further, describing her reincarnation from Wilde to an Australian baby, Steve recalls being aware of the Australian bush and earth around her looking like a "vast savage picture" and "[a]t the same time the thought formed in my mind, 'What a magnificent country to colonize!' as though I had brought to the surface some other part of myself, some ancient Greek or Roman emperor [...]" (*White Topee* 242). As the reincarnation of Wilde, Steve

views herself as coloniser of the land she occupies as Steve. Steve/Wilde is both Australian and not Australian, colonial and colonist.¹⁰ One of the key signifiers of the settler literature of colonies such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand is that the construction of the subject, the settler, is articulated in response to what Slemon calls the “ambivalence of emplacement” of the settler subject (80). In this ambivalence, Slemon argues, the settler occupies a radically compromised position due to his/her internalising of the here/there binary division assumed by much Third-World (and, ironically, First-World) post-colonial writing. In Langley’s texts, her narrator feels neither purely “of there” nor “of here” but of a constantly negotiated space potentially expressive of both. The internalised nature of the “self/other binary of colonialist relations” (Slemon 80) is manifested in the spatial construction of the reciprocal gaze in Langley’s novels. Yet the positioning of Steve/Eve and her doppelganger relative to each other, in which the reciprocal gaze is framed within forces of attraction and resistance, interiority and exteriority, also suggests that, as Lawson points out, “the colonial ‘moment’ (as in physics) is a transaction of forces, a relationship – unequal, certainly, but a relationship nonetheless” (22). As Lawson notes, to acknowledge this relationship is to recognise the complex nature of colonial power.

Langley’s novels are productively read as settler literature, and Steve/Eve as a settler subject. The spatial formations of the double figure of Steve/Eve and her doppelganger symbolise and confirm the settler subject in Langley’s novels as a “non-unified subject” and as such, an example of “the very distillation of

¹⁰ The representation of Oscar Wilde as a symbolic colonist is apposite. Wilde was Anglo-Irish and so the descendent of sixteenth century planters. Johnston and Lawson (among many) note that “the ‘case’ for the inclusion of Ireland [as a settler colony] is a pressing one, and the early trialling of British colonial methods in Ireland” has been well documented (5).

colonial power, the place where the operations of colonial power as *negotiation* are most intensely visible” (original italics; Lawson 24). In a discussion of the doubled nature of the settler, Johnston and Lawson suggest that in a typical settler narrative the settler is seen

as uneasily occupying a place caught between two First Worlds, two origins of authority and authenticity. One of these is the originating world of Europe, the Imperium – the source of its principal cultural authority. Its “other” First World is that of the First Nations whose authority they not only replaced and effaced but also desired (17).

The ambivalent identity suggested by Johnston and Lawson, evidenced in Langley’s construction of the double in her texts, is both highlighted and compounded by Steve/Eve’s further negotiations of occupation of the landscape. In these negotiations, as a white woman of Anglo-Celtic descent, Steve/Eve evinces the authority and authenticity of the coloniser, whilst, at the same time, as an expression of the colonial’s geographical and psychic removal from the Imperium, and through effacement and replacement of the indigene, she appropriates the authority and authenticity of that indigene.

When Steve sees the Wildean image in the book in Bancroft House she is exploring the house as though it is a new land (this aspect of “Bancroft House” is explored extensively in Chapter Six). Steve’s approach to the house and her occupation of it are described in terms that draw extensively on discovery literature. One of the notable tropes of this literature is the description of the “New World” as empty and awaiting colonisation. Original inhabitants are completely effaced. Yet, despite Steve’s repeated observations on the emptiness of the spaces of Bancroft House, when she encounters the “portrait” of Wilde she

naturalises his presence as constant and inevitable, saying, “Always Oscar. One would never get away from Oscar” (“Bancroft House” 111). Through the presence of her double, Steve is both newly arrived and already there, “always” there. In this positioning of her narrator’s doppelganger, Langley constructs a settler narrative in which, whilst the narrator-settler is the coloniser, she also asserts herself as native to the land (of Australia). The trope of the empty space awaiting occupation is juxtaposed with the image of the subject being already in place, in the landscape. In this way, Steve is enunciating a typical colonial narrative. Lawson comments,

the colonial explorer had to empty the land of prior signification – what is already known cannot be discovered, what already has a name cannot be named. For the settler, too, the land had to be empty. Empty land can be settled, but occupied land can only be invaded. So the land must be emptied so that it can be filled, in turn, with both discourse and cattle (25).

At another time, riding to and across the alps on her horse, the effacement of indigenous occupation is implicit in Steve’s description of the exploration and “opening up” of Gippsland:

I think as part of the youth of this country, one should ride down the ways of the older generation came and as we ride we should remember them, just as by cairns and speeches our Gippsland shires and their councils keep the memories of Gippsland’s explorer, Angus MacMillan, green and fresh. He in the old days opened up this country to us, and that’s why I am

taking this ride over the alps, for the sake of the Overlander of the past and the drovers (“Wild Australia” 132).

Australian settler literature largely excludes the presence of an indigenous population and the existence of prior knowledge of the land or pathways across it (see Carter *New Country*). The trope of emptiness, figured in the erasure of prior occupation, persists in narratives of the land. Speaking of two brothers she meets, who know “just the right country for settling on”, Steve says: “But as with most Australian bushmen there was a huge and magical quality of loneliness and great space about both, the power of a great continent, thousands of miles of it [...]” (“Victorians” 361). Metaphors of emptiness continue to signify what it means to be an Australian.

The ambivalent nature of the settler-figure leads to shifting and merging expressions of both indigenous authenticity and colonist authority. From the first of her novels, Langley establishes the authenticity of her narrator as a settler in terms of her being a coloniser. In *The Pea-Pickers*, Macca says to her, “You come of a family long established here, Steve. They seized the land, as pioneers in the early days; and some of them hold it still” (168). Steve replies,

“I’d like to buy a bit of land here, put up a bark hut on it, and work the soil of Gippsland till I die. I love my country... Patria Mia”. I raised a handful of the dust to my nostrils and smelt it. “Ah, that aboriginal smell! We tread on the soft black dust of lost Gippsland tribes, Macca!” (*Pea-Pickers* 169).

Lawson comments on the tendentious nature of the term “settler”, suggesting that it occludes the violence of the invasion that inevitably precedes that peaceful sounding concept, “settlement”. His proposal that the term “settler–invader” might be more accurate is illustrated by Steve’s conversation with Macca, in

which the violence implicit in the act of settlement is referenced as evidence of Steve's authenticity (as settler); by seizing the land from the "lost Gippsland tribes" Steve's forebears "earned" the right of occupation. This violence is re-enacted when Steve wrestles for occupation rights of the bark hut already inhabited by Akbarah Khan in *The Pea-Pickers*. Notably, the violence of the forced expulsion and subsequent occupation is visible not just in Steve's actions but also in the language she uses. Having had him evicted she takes over his room. When Khan returns to ask Steve for his broom back, Steve admits, "I flung it at him, saying 'Here you are, my man', with quite a trace of old England in my voice. The broom hit him in the face. Perhaps there was old England in that, too" (83). Steve mimics not only the actions of the Empire whose authority she is enforcing, but also the voice. She says that she is only able to successfully assert her claim to the hut by "talking sheer Keats and Biblical prose" to the owner, Mr Whitebeard (84). Here, the language of the Empire is clearly employed in the enacting of colonialist brutality as Steve symbolically invades and occupies another's territory. In "Wild Australia" Steve says, "Sitting thus I liked to indulge in that type of conversation which should be accompanied by quinine and a hypodermic syringe" (100), thus evoking a link between language and an indolent, sybaritic lifestyle she, at that moment, associates with the powerful executors of colonialist activity. Yet, in the settler narrative contained within Langley's novels, language is employed not only to denote her narrator's power as coloniser but also to suggest authority through appropriation of Indigenous authenticity.

Langley repeatedly asserts a strong connection between Steve and Blue and the land of Australia. The house where they live with their mother in Dandenong seems of the land rather than on it: "the house proper was thirteen

giant plum-trees which held the soil in their hands” (2). And, when Steve comments that she and Blue, “being of coarse and fertile earth, were more sensitive to the etymon than anything else in the world” (6), she suggests that language can be used to naturalise occupation of the land as well as enforce it. While Steve frequently acts to assert imperial authority elsewhere, and in other ways, she rarely acts to erase Aboriginal place-names. Instead she assumes these names as part of her own heritage in a different kind of erasure. Planning the journey to Gippsland at the beginning of *The Pea-Pickers*, Steve comments:

At night we sat down and wrote out columns of Australian place-names, glorying in their ancient autochthonousness. English names, in Australia, we despised. ‘Effete,’ we said. ‘Unimaginative. But... ah, Pinaroo... Wahgunyah... Eudarina... Tallygaroopna... Monaro... Tumbarumba... Bumberrah, and thousands of others! How fine they are!’ (6).

Declaring identification with the Aboriginal names, Steve is claiming that these names are more informing of the sisters’ place in Australia than English place-names. More significantly, she says to Mia,

[...] we don’t care about relatives. The poetry of Gippsland is lost to them. It’s the names of the towns that is taking us to Gippsland. And after that we are going to follow the glorious aboriginal names of Australian townships to their sources and feel all that there is to feel there’ (6).

Steve’s usually strong identification as a white Australian of several generations (elsewhere she proudly states, “I was wholly, fully Australian and rich with the pride of race” (“Wild Australia” 14)) is here denied in her efforts to align herself with Aboriginal Australia through her love of poetry and language. Lawson talks

of the settler dream of inheriting “the Natives’ spiritual ‘rites’ to the land” (27) and this desire is obvious in Steve’s words; appropriation of indigenised identity, spirituality and land is naturalised by Steve as part of her poetic identity.

Steve’s identification with Aboriginal place-names is coextensive with her attachment to the Romantic poets in terms of their ideological associations with natural forces, nature and the landscape. So, while she is attracted to the “ancient autochthonousness” of the Aboriginal place-names, Langley’s narrator also frequently associates Romantic poetry with the Australian landscape. In “Wild Australia” she declaims: “For fiercely and wildly down all the ways of the penny royal and the dusty grass the blue of the sky poured and the ethereal air was like a draught of verse from the book of Keats that I read daily and at night” (387).

Steve’s association of Romantic poetics with occupation of the Australian landscape provides a critical context to a significant encounter between Steve and the only Aboriginal man to appear in Langley’s novels. In this meeting, appropriation of indigeneity through linguistic manipulation is linked with the use of language as a tool of cultural differentiation. When the nameless Aboriginal man appears near their hut one day, he agrees to sell Steve and Blue two boomerangs. In the verbal exchange between Steve and this man, their dialogue is placed directly beside the speech of the Afghan worker, Akbarah. Steve asks the Aborigine:

‘What do you make [the boomerangs] from?’

‘Oh, I find a wattle-tree that has a root shaped somewhat like a boomerang, and I work on it with a piece of glass or sharp tools until I fine it down’ said the aboriginal and, collecting his money, he strolled off into the bush.

Akbarah smiled at me. 'You have magnificent teeth, Akbarah. What do you clean them with?'

Akbarah mumbled, 'Might be get little bit bark from wattle-tree and rub on tooth' (*Pea-Pickers* 83).

In this exchange both the Aborigine and Steve speak "standard" English, and the Aboriginal man speaks in a leisurely and elegant manner, especially in contrast to Akbarah's "mumbled" pidgin English. In Langley's Australian novels, it is very rare for someone considered by her narrator as non-white to speak in this way. Through careful representation of the speech patterns of these three figures, Langley aligns Steve with the Aborigine, and simultaneously positions her in contrast to the recent immigrant, Akbarah. In this construction, it is not the knowledge and love of the sounds of Aboriginal words and names, but the speaking of "Keatsian prose" that delineates indigeneity. Steve's poetic sensibility (and especially her self-identification as a Romantic poet) provides an affinity with the land that is manifested in two seemingly opposing ways with regard to the colonial project within Langley's novels. On the one hand it enables her earlier appreciation of, and identification with, what she sees as the natural poetics of Aboriginal place-names (and so, asserts her own "natural" identification with the land named) and on the other hand, by suggesting that both she and the Aborigine speak with the same voice, which in this case is "Keatsian prose", it creates a legitimising platform for her desire to appropriate that land.

Throughout Langley's texts, the spoken words of Steve's non-white (as defined within these texts) co-workers are represented in a form of pidgin

English, usually in a racist and ethnocentric attempt at humour. Steve says of her Italian co-workers, "Their quaintness pleased and excited my curiosity, and the comical English made me laugh and secretly ridicule them" (*Pea-Pickers* 90).

Steve repeatedly attempts to diminish the status of the recent immigrants she works alongside by comparing their speech with the noises made by animals.

When she is introduced to the Italian, Domenic Gatto, Steve interjects:

'Tomcatto', I translated to Blue and Jim; they writhed about in their chairs, enjoying his name [...]

Mincing from chair to chair around the room, with his mouth wide open, his eyes glaring and his posterior bouncing as though wagging a tail, Tomcatto mewed through a dozen of Donizetti, a couple of Bellini and a Mascagni [...]

Onward passed the Cat with heart-rending howls [...] (*Pea-Pickers* 94).

Animal metaphors are combined with reduction of individual identity through crowd imagery in Steve's description of the hut of her employer, Karta Singh:

[...] from the hut of Karta Singh came such a clamour of mingled tongues that I was astounded. It seemed to me that within that small hut some two hundred cats lay shrieking, cheek by jowl and, passing and repassing [sic] over their tails, strode Karta Singh, screaming joyously (*Pea-Pickers* 99).

By demeaning Karta Singh, and Domenic Gatto, and the other immigrant workers in this way, Steve asserts herself as ethnically superior. This hierarchical vision is employed by Steve to differentiate herself from these people who also desire occupation of the land and, in doing so, suggests a preferential right to that occupation. Tellingly, Steve comments,

With the narrow vision of youth, I imagined that the Lord had intended the Australian to rule over my country forever. I sat in the hut, writing long treatises on its mystery, genius, its loveliness and the racial splendour of its children. The Italians, I said, lovable as they were, must first submit, for centuries, to their race being washed out by toil and intermarriage. And then, not believing in racial intermarriage, I could see no way out of it for them. I felt myself to be a true and invincible angel of the Lord, as I sat in the hut turning these things over (*Pea-Pickers* 292).

On the side of the angels, Steve's vision is coterminous with that of the "Lord" and presumably has similar authority. However, this lofty viewpoint does not proscribe a strong identification with the land as she sits in her hut, with its dirt floor and bark walls. From this privileged position, Steve's "valorized narratives" (Lawson 20) enunciate the cultural taxonomies suggested by her discourse of ethnocentrism. Here, by contrasting her position with those of the Italian immigrants she works with, Steve reverses her more general assertion of marginality in order to reinforce her assumption of indigeneity.

However, as noted earlier in this chapter, Langley's narrator instantiates an unstable identity whose desire for connection is constantly evolving and mutating. Many of the examples used here, in illustration of the settler figure in Langley's texts, are taken from Langley's earliest novel, *The Pea-Pickers*. In "Bancroft House", the last of Langley's novels set in Australia, the relative positioning of Steve, the indigene, and the new immigrant (formulated in the verbal exchange between Steve, the Aboriginal man who sells her two boomerangs and Akbarah Khan, the Afghan worker) is reconfigured. While effacement of the indigene is sustained, at the close of "Bancroft House" the

settler figure, Steve, is aligned with the new immigrant (Steve's Italian co-workers) rather than with the indigene. Both Slemon and Lawson note the conditional nature of settler literature and the settler figure and it is within the terms of this conditionality that the framework of mediation and compromise, manifested in the settler figure in Langley's novels, shifts over the course of these works. Notably, in the last pages of "Bancroft House", the reconfiguring of Steve's settler-position is suggestive of the construction of a nationalist narrative.

Where, in the *Pea-Pickers* passage, the relationships between cultural entities are articulated through manipulation of speech patterns, in a significant exchange towards the end of "Bancroft House", cultural relationships are suggested through relative spatial configurations. "Bancroft House" closes with a banquet on Christmas Day, 1930. A group of Italian men, co-workers and friends of Steve, provide, cook and serve the lavish meal. Over the course of the preparation, serving and cleaning up of this meal, the relationship between Steve and her Italian colleagues shifts, a move manifested spatially. It is significant that the Christmas festivities, which conclude "Bancroft House", are performed and enjoyed in the rooms within which Steve has spent nearly a year living and working. In these rooms Steve has felt a strong sense of belonging and has consciously imagined them as a home. From this home, as Steve watches the men arriving to prepare the meal, she comments that they form an "unforgettable sight":

They came on in single file, Joe Camelli first, carrying a load of green vegetables on a swinging piece of twine, Jim the beautiful Camellia followed under a gay burden of fruit, Il Salambo followed with a large cake slung over his shoulder and a guitar strapped to his broad chest,

while the [...] rest of the gang followed with swinging ropes of greens and white plucked fowls swinging to and fro from their hands. It had a strange singular look about it [...] Seen from the hill, this picturesque train of wanderers looked very beautiful and unforgettable. I stared upon them and thought, 'I shall never forget ... I cannot possibly forget! ("Bancroft House" 376).

In this description there is a hint of Steve's earlier reductive attitude in her description of the "colours of [the] Italian clothing and the bright gay procession of strange richness" as she views the arrival of the men. In a previous encounter, Steve is "half excited, half irritated" to be visited by some of her Italian co-workers. At the time their company makes her consider herself to have "descended another step in the ladder of [her] race" (*Pea-Pickers* 90). On this Christmas Day, it is significant that Steve watches the approaching men from her vantage point in the house, up on the hill. Boehmer notes that "most definitive [...] as an organising [...] metaphor in colonist narrative was the commanding perspective assumed by the European [or so-called white person] in the text" (71). However, in this case, Langley's positioning of Steve relative to the approaching men proves to signal a shift in this positioning, with a corresponding development of these spatial metaphors.

After prolonged festivities around the Christmas table, Steve, Re', her particular male friend, Mr Sutcliffe, and some of the Italian men leave the remains of the feast for the "cool sitting room or out to lounge on the wide verandah". Steve recalls:

Domenic took the boards off the billiard table and he and Re' and Joe Camelli began to play a Christmas Day tournament. And this was kept up

until afternoon tea was served by the busy kitcheners in the next room
[...] All afternoon with chatter and laughter, the long hours passed, while
the balls clicked and spun up and down the billiard table. Soon, the sun
began to sink ... with a long deep swimming bronze gold fluid seeming to
be about it, the vast hot Australian sun that we loved began to incline
down toward the blue sea [...] ("Bancroft House" 405).

In *The Lie of the Land*, Paul Carter comments "A short history of British imperialism might be derived from an inventory of the billiard tables manufactured and supplied to the colonies during the nineteenth century" (12). He conjures up an image of "executive officers of the Crown" being drawn to the two-dimensional play of the billiard balls, which clearly demonstrates a symmetry of cause and effect, soothingly "providing experimental proof of the validity of the social relations the colonists wanted to put into place" (12). Clearly implied in this image is that, while the billiard table provides a "level playing field" for those in the game, only those wielding a billiard cue have access to the field of play. In "Bancroft House", Langley depicts the Italian men not just joining the game but initiating it, and then playing on in the golden glow of the Australian sun.

Further, as mentioned earlier, after the meal, the group at leisure choose between play at the billiard table or lounging on the adjoining verandah where Steve so often lingers. The verandah is part of the house but also focussed on the outdoors. In Bancroft House, the verandah is part of Steve's home, it is an extension of the living rooms where leisurely activities take place, and it also faces out to encompass the landscape beyond. From this verandah Steve frequently takes in the fine view spread out below her. And, on this day, the

Italian men who have provided and shared the Christmas dinner gradually join Steve in her occupation of this potent space. In this occupation we are encouraged to fully perceive that the vision described by the day's events is two-fold; it is both an expression of a state of being and a representation of potential, of a mode of becoming.

While Steve earlier views the arriving men from a position of elevation, as the day develops, Langley repositions the Italians to join Steve and share her commanding perspective. Domenic enjoys the view from the verandah with Steve and Mr Sutcliffe during the preparations of the meal, and it is Domenic who initiates the game of billiards. And, at the end of the long day, Steve remembers,

Domenic called to us from the billiard room, 'Come out here, all of you. On to this verandah!'

We trooped out on to the long wide white verandah that faced [...] the lake, and far off, the bush and the ocean. All the golden glory of Australia lay before us, silent in the last of the hot bronze Christmas Day in which we had feasted and drunk. Domenic placed a small table full of wine glasses before us there and filled them and indicated them briefly, 'Beviamo! Let us drink,' he said, 'to the country! To Australia!' We stood about the table, the company of us, and raised the glasses from the table and stood staring into the face of her, the lordliest lass of earth ...

Australia [...] To the face of this our earth, we drank, saying, each of us, together in one happy strange harmonious murmur of sound, 'A Merry Christmas, Australia, and a Happy New Year!' (409).

At this moment, all of the men and Steve are united as Australians. In this moment, any racial or ethnic divisions between them dissolve and they stand in

harmony looking out over the land. They are united, not just in their occupation of the space of the verandah, but also in their powerful gaze over the Australian landscape, from the hill, to the bush, to the sea. Together, the elevated observers scrutinize the world.

The privileged position of elevation assumed by Steve and her companions on the verandah of Bancroft House “offers a manifestation of the reduction of the world to a model for consumption by the spectator” (Armstrong 66). In their gaze over the landscape, Steve and her companions are potentially complicit in an imagined appropriation of that land, the “golden glory of Australia”. In the description of the assembled group on the verandah, Langley acknowledges that both the new immigrant, the Italians, and the earlier settler, Steve, all desire the same thing: to occupy the land originally solely held by the Aborigine of Australia who is effaced, completely invisible. The mutuality of this desire makes the effect of the effacement seem even more complete.

However, the description of the light-bathed assembly is suggestive of more than appropriation of the land. What Lawson calls “the endlessly problematic double inscription” (25) of the colonial text suggests that the united gaze out over the land performs a two-faced construction of colonial power. On the one hand, strategies of occupation are asserted, and on the other, the unity of that gaze suggests a strengthening of common identity which may prove resistant to previous or other sources of identification. In the description of the gathering on the verandah, it is significant that the group is bathed in the golden light of an *Australian* sun: the members of this group are united as Australians. Lawson’s comment that, “[s]ettler postimperial cultures are suspended between ‘mother’ and ‘other’, simultaneously colonized and colonizing” (25) contains the

suggestion that the settler figure both acts for “mother”, the imperium, and against it. The description of the gathering on the verandah is expressive of a unity of purpose, a national identity in which resistance to the imperium is implicit:

Identity politics asserts the *id-entity* of the group as a form of opposition to other, more powerful groups who have access to more privileged speaking positions. In order to do this, identity politics asserts the uniqueness and the homogeneity of the group in the hope that its undivided (if specious) unity will empower it against the apparent seamlessness of the hegemonic discourse. In the foundations of cultural nationalism, then, we can identify one vector of difference (the difference between colonizing subject and colonized subject: settler-Indigene) being replaced by another (the difference between colonizing subject and imperial centre: settler-Imperium) in a strategic disavowal of the colonizing act (original italics; Lawson 30).

While acting for the Imperium in the effacement and replacement of the Indigene, Steve and her Italian friends and co-workers, as settler-figures, also enact an implicit resistance to the Imperium through an assertion of nationalism in their combined stance. Though frequently positioned in opposition to each other in order to assert Steve’s assumed indigeneity, as they come together on the verandah, Steve and the Italian men are all “at home” together and this construction of home provides a template for a national narrative. As suggested in the introduction to this thesis, in Langley’s novels, the home, and the nation, are performative and enacted spaces within which Steve/Eve engages with and negotiates codes of both belonging and otherness. The multivalent nature of the

settler subject, as depicted by Steve/Eve, suggests the constant and ongoing quality of those negotiations.

Chapter Three

The Rustic Hut

The bush is the heart of the country, the real Australian Australia.

(Francis Adams, quoted in Palmer 47)

This chapter is concerned with Langley's construction of the rustic hut as home. Critical to negotiations of identity present in the settler discourse, as discussed in Chapter Two, is the concept of occupation. In this chapter the rustic hut will be examined as a physical manifestation of the discursive practice of settler occupation of the Australian landscape. The shifting interactive relationship between belonging and a sense of "unbelonging" that Steve/Eve seeks in her imagined space of home is reflected in the tension that Homi Bhabha identifies in the colonial project. Bhabha argues that "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" ("Signs" 150; Lawson 25). As Lawson draws on Bhabha to frame his interrogation of the settler narrative, this thesis is informed by the tensions formulated in Bhabha's assertion. The oppositional significations delineated by Bhabha are paradigmatic in Langley's construction of "home as rustic hut", and this construction provides a defining framework for the dwellings that her narrator seeks, and within which she feels most "at home". The centrality of the trope of the rustic hut to originary myths of western architecture is echoed in Langley's location of the space of the hut within Edenic narratives. These narratives are supported by the association of the hut with a literature concerned with nation formation. Writing of this literature, Kerryn Goldsworthy comments that "[m]ost of the best known fiction" of the turn of the century was "given [...] form and permanence" by

Federation, which had “found its expression in a literature preoccupied with questions of nationality” (106). As Goldsworthy notes, Australian Federation (1901) is commonly thought of as “the birth [...] of Australia as an independent nation” (108). Turn-of-the-century Australian literature and its authors are employed by Langley to situate the rustic hut that her narrator occupies within a raft of ideas related to originality and authority. As both writer, and hut-dweller, Steve identifies with the characters and authors of the bush literature produced by the Australian settler and colonial society. In her sustained association with the personae of this literature, the development of nationalist expressions within this literature (in which the Australian landscape and Australian national character are inextricably linked) is drawn upon to further Steve’s desires for authority in the Australian landscape. At the same time, while Romantic tropes in Langley’s delineations of life in the hut assert Steve as an heroic figure, whose vision is central to the world she evokes, articulations of poetic solitude and isolation suggest marginality. The sense that life in the rustic hut, or bush hut, is one of both belonging and “unbelonging” is further manifested in the social ramifications of a life evoked as one of isolation, as that of a rover and female bushman-figure, while at the same time, situated within a bustling market garden community.

The articulation of specific locations in space and time are significant to the examination of Langley’s representations of home. The trope of the rustic hut is deployed in Langley’s novels through the evocation of the bush huts or bark huts that Steve occupies while working in the market gardens of Gippsland. The Gippsland adventures undertaken by Steve in *The Pea-Pickers* and further described in the other novels set by Langley in Australia reflect Langley’s own experiences as a young woman. Hal Porter argues that Langley “writes incessantly about [...] Gippsland about the 1928 period...” (14). Just as Langley’s time spent in Gippsland in the mid to late 1920s provides significant resource

material for the novels that she subsequently wrote, the bush huts that both Langley and her narrator inhabit during that time are foundational to the exploration of home and being “at home” in those novels. In all of Langley’s texts the rustic hut is a physically frail structure, pieced together from whatever materials are handy, and vulnerable to the harsh climate and the white ants. When Steve and Blue are offered the use of a bark hut on the land of local Gippsland family, the Hardys, Steve comments:

This was the sole remaining part of a gaunt milking shed that had once stood on the naked hill among the dry reeds. The grey shining rafters and uprights were visible for miles around, and the cow bails were overgrown with nettles [...] Within the hut was an empty fireplace of tin; to the right, a log seat was bound to the bark wall by thick fencing-wire. In the bedroom stood a bark table and two bark beds; there was a small window, too, with a fantastic pane of wire-netting stretched across it (*Pea-Pickers* 115-6).

Much later, having been away hop-picking, the girls return to Metung to find Mr Greenfeast building them a new hut “made of Lysaght’s Queen’s Head flat iron, with a mixture of their Orb galvanized, a spice of bags and a handful of boards flung in to encourage [the sisters]” (*Pea-Pickers* 287). The bush huts are fragile structures that occasionally collapse on their inhabitants. Steve describes a morning in which, as she and Jim prepare to wake Blue,

a strong wind blew in from the lake, promising rain, and blew the hut down on top of us, as we stood by Blue’s bed. She woke up then all right, and we rushed outside into Jim’s tent. When the wind calmed a little, we made the hut firm again, and got ready for a breaking-up of the drought (152).

This material fragility is valorised by Steve/Eve in her future choice of dwelling places, and indications of physical instability in a building inevitably lead her to feel “at home” within

it. For Steve/Eve the flimsy poles and rafters, and ad-hoc walls erected by the local farmers are part of a complex web of narratives given agency by the trope of the rustic hut.

The trope of the rustic hut (or bush hut as it is called in Steve's world) is seminal to a field of ideas regarding originality and authenticity. Joseph Rykwert comments "The primitive hut [...] has provided [...] a point of reference for all speculation on the essentials of building" (183). For architects and theorists, from Vitruvius (approx. 80-15 B.C.) to the present day, the origins of architecture have been sought in the idea of this primitive structure, which in turn has been associated with civilization's earliest stages of development. Vitruvius proposed a concept of "mimetic-naturalistic origins of architecture", that eventually led to a widely accepted vision of "architectural orders of columns coming basically from forest dwellings built of branches and rough-hewn logs" (Milobedzki 177). Famously, the frontispiece of Abbé Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* (1753) shows a sketch of a rustic hut ("this first model") contrived from the branches of living trees (12). Neoclassical origin-theory postulates an unequivocal original structure in the form of a rustic hut, built in response to a physical world and exhibiting a moral authority due to its reflection of the natural world. The introduction to *Primitive: Original matters in architecture* notes,

The word 'primitive' [...] has been a participant in many an originary myth of western architecture. From neo-classical proponents of the Tuscan and Doric orders to the minimalists of the modern movement, many builders and writers have sought moral or ethical authority in its complexities [...] its possibilities for valorising simplicity; the potentially productive idea of a distant romantic origin; its opportunities for making authenticity claims (Odgers xviii).

In Langley's novels, the rustic hut, as bush hut, represents a range of ideas regarding origins and authenticity developed from these European concepts. The space of the hut is drawn

from, and is expressive of the natural environment, as seen in the bark walls and beds of the bush hut on the Hardys' farm. On moving in to Mr Hardy's bark hut it is the primitive, unprocessed nature of the materials used in its construction, and the simple living conditions offered by the hut that Steve first finds so compelling: "What a power [the hut] had of projecting itself on us! We, at its mercy from the first, saw only a two-roomed lean-to of inch-thick bark that smelt like seed potatoes" (*Pea-Pickers* 115). The raw nature of the construction materials suggests an intimacy with nature; the "bush huts" and "bark huts" of Langley's novels patently reflect the natural world around them. This leads them to be associated by Steve with forms of original innocence and youth. The closeness to nature experienced by the occupant of the hut also reinforces the narrative of appropriated indigeneity and authenticity that patterns Langley's novels. (Terry Goldie refers to the common representation of indigenes as "children of nature" in his discussion of the long historical association of nature with the "other" (40)). An illustration in Arthur Phillip's *Voyage* shows huts built of large bark sheets by Aborigine who had developed techniques of stripping and curing bark prior to European arrival in Australia. While the Australian indigene is virtually invisible in Langley's novels, the material nature of the bush hut, when constructed of bark, unwittingly references the dwellings of the indigenous people. In so doing, it asserts an indigenous presence into the contemporary landscape at the same time as Steve seeks cultural authority through occupation of the bark hut.

Living in various bush huts, Steve's identification with the characters and authors of early Australian literature is situated alongside her equally strong identification with the Romantic poets and the bush hut, or rustic hut, is thus represented as a Romantic space. For Steve, the rustic hut is an appropriate dwelling for a Romantic writer. Its lack of substantial enclosure symbolically suggests a freedom to wander the surrounding countryside and assume the solitary figure of the Romantic poet. Its siting within nature is expressive of the separation of its occupant from "society", and the social isolation figured by the hut

reinforces its suitability as the home of Steve as a writer of Romantic poetry. As discussed in the previous chapter, Steve's appropriation of indigenised identity, spirituality and land is naturalised by her as part of her poetic identity. What *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* has described as the "controlled presentation of the process of alienation and disintegration wrought by the experience of bush life" in Henry Lawson's writing, is reframed in Langley's novels to also depict the melancholy and anguish of the Romantic poet as represented by Steve (Wilde 820). Similarly, the notion that the characters of the bush are influential in the construction of an Australian national identity (see Webby et al) is supported by Langley's narrator's vision of the Romantic figure as one who is separate to society but able to speak on its behalf thanks to a refined understanding of the world and a perspective of distance. Steve's identification as a Romantic poet furthers her representations of the hut as a site expressive of literary associations and encourages an exploration of the authority of the bush hut as an iconic site in Australia's cultural history.

When Steve and Blue prepare to journey into Gippsland at the beginning of *The Pea-Pickers* their journey is not simply of a spatial nature: they are also preparing to travel to a past described and eulogised in the works of Australian writers of the turn of the century. Henry Lawson's writing, with its "carefully chosen, vividly realised detail" is particularly inspirational to Steve (Webby 65). On deciding that they must put aside their feminine names and choose male ones in order to more closely parallel the figures they are emulating, Steve remembers, "it was decided that my name should be Steve, because the comic literature of the Australian bush has always had a Steve in it" (*Pea-Pickers* 7). Before agreeing on the name "Blue" for Steve's sister, Steve suggests "What about Jim [...] You know how Lawson says that 'There are a lot of good old mates named Jim' [...]" (*Pea-Pickers* 8). What Lee calls "the pioneering legends associated with Lawson's work" (15), stories of rough living and transience, strongly influence Steve and Blue in the dwellings that they choose. They reject the neat house suggested as good lodgings by their first

employer in *The Pea-Pickers*, Mr Nils Desperandum, instead requesting the use of a “little hut” in the orchard. Later, in Metung, their friend Jim proposes that the sisters board locally. They protest, “We want to live like bushmen and pea-pickers, in old huts. Freedom... freedom, James, my boy!” (*Pea-Pickers* 69). In “Bancroft House”, when offered the use of the titular mansion, Steve responds, “A hut would have been better, more romantic in a fashion. True remittance stuff” (122). When offered a shed to sleep in over night, a shed where post horses were previously stabled and which is currently used for housing bullock teams, Steve says to the teamster, ““Funny looking hut this [...] It reminds me of Henry Lawson’ He knew Lawson’s name at once, of course” (“Wild Australia” 16).

In the early twentieth century, some of the most notable fictional accounts of the Australian bush were those of Henry Lawson, whose name at that time “had already come to be associated with what was ‘Australian’” (Goldsworthy 106). Repeatedly Steve frames her adventure in Gippsland, and the bush huts that she occupies there, within a field of ideas associated with Australian literature such as Lawson’s, of the period just prior to that in which Langley’s Australian novels are set. This literature, as Goldsworthy writes of Joseph Furphy’s *Such is Life* (1901), “helped to reinforce ‘the bush’ as an essential element in Australia’s idea of itself” (108). Linking national awareness and the idea of the bush, Miles Franklin’s Sybylla Melvyn of *My Brilliant Career* (1901) says, “I am proud that I am an Australian, a daughter of the Southern Cross, a child of the mighty bush” (231). Over the period that Steve lives and works in Gippsland she occupies a variety of rustic huts, sometimes with Blue and often alone. The bush hut, inextricably associated with bush life, is in turn, inextricably linked by Steve with Lawsonsque literature.

When Steve travels to “tradition-haunted” (*Pea-Pickers* 4) Gippsland looking for the world of the old bush-men, she is looking for a world formulated in a literature of the past. The fusion of “‘conscious literature’ and folk culture” within that literature is popularly regarded as forming “a powerful myth of origins” in Australia (David Carter 266). The

work of writers like Lawson, whose writing frames Steve's expectations of her Gippsland adventures, is not only seen as marking some form of beginning in both Australian literature and Australian culture, but it is also popularly regarded as providing an authentic record of the so-called Australian experience. As Elizabeth Webby notes, "most of Lawson's best earlier stories could [...] be described as 'sketches from life'" (65). Steve views the characters associated with Lawson's writing, bushmen close to the raw Australian environment, as archetypal and heroic. These bushmen "had been let down in life and wandered into the easy-going bush, but had never forsaken their courtesy and their love of songs [...]" (*Pea-Pickers* 5). In addition, the isolation of these "old-timers", their good manners and their association with an unsophisticated and natural world is figured as a kind of innocence. Langley's allusions to the Garden of Eden, though typically humorous, emphasise this perspective of the bushman's world. Steve and Blue's first trip to Gippsland is prompted by an advertisement placed by an apple grower named Mr Nils Desperandum. The punning name of this orchardist hints at an antipodean Eden, and the sisters' hut is surrounded by apple trees. Comically, though, fallen apples with worm-holes in them already carpet the ground, disturbing the prelapsarian inferences. In addition to the Edenic allusions, Steve associates the rough life of a bushman with the innocence of youth. She comments, "We had a wash. In those days the ceremony of the wash was a splendid thing. One performed it with the scrupulousness of the bushman and was pleased by the young innocent face that came glowing out of the towel" (*Pea-Pickers* 68). And when the two women are offered the bark hut to stay in, Steve is overjoyed: "This place marked a definite period in our lives; it was, and will be forever, our youth" (*Pea-Pickers* 115).

Formulations of origins and beginnings frame Langley's evocations of Gippsland, and the life Steve experiences there. The journey that the sisters first undertake to Gippsland is significantly influenced by an interest in their own beginnings. Implying that, in some ways, this journey will lead the sisters towards their home at the same time as it carries

them from it, Steve admiringly describes her mother, Mia, as “Gippsland incarnate” (5).

Images of Gippsland are repeatedly linked to family memories. Steve says:

And of all the provinces, Gippsland, [Mia] said, was the most tradition-haunted. She speculated on the conditions of those whom she had known in youth, and filled us, too, with a desire to know what had become of them. Mia knew and loved her Gippsland, and our childhood lullabies had been the names of towns there [...] (4).

On boarding the train to Gippsland Steve is reminded of her grandfather first travelling there by bullock dray, and on the train Steve notes, “At some part of the journey, my hereditary Gippsland mind awoke” (11). Langley continues Steve's search for signs of her origins throughout *The Pea-Pickers*. Resting from picking Mr Greenfeast's beans, Macca and Steve discuss their Gippsland connections and Steve concludes:

Yes, I should like a bit of land and some stock to drive slowly to the Bairnsdale yards every week or so, and I would become soaked in the old traditions of Gippsland. The heroes of my *Odyssey* should be Thorburn, Baulch, McAlister, McDougal, Frazer, Bill Grey, Alec Cain, Jack the Packer and old Blind George.’ (168-9).

The heroes of Steve's *Odyssey* are a mix of the old families of the area and people whose names are associated with the old ballads that she identifies with. Steve layers her family ties to Gippsland with these names and all that is associated with them to strengthen her claim to connections with the area. Steve's search for her family origins adds to the convergence of originary myths represented in the trope of the rustic hut and asserts her sense of rightful occupation of the landscape as symbolised by the hut.

Steve's desire for forms of authenticity, connected by her with a world that is a "mixture of Mia and Henry Lawson" (*Pea-Pickers* 9) results in a pervasive sense of nostalgia in the representations of her adventures, and later those of Eve. Langley's novels trace an arc of nostalgia, from her first novel, *The Pea-Pickers*, to the last, "The Saunterer". Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the relationship Langley's characters have with the rustic hut. In *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin* Thomas McFarland suggests "[t]he sense of longing [...] saturates Romanticism" (7), and discusses the Romantic trope of longing for what could be called a distant world. He comments, "[t]he always distant country could be removed in time, as with the Romantic mania for the medieval [...] or removed in space, as with the Romantic preoccupation with the oriental [...]" (8). In Langley's novels, the rustic or bush hut is a symbol for such a "distant country"; it is a site resonant with Romantic longing. Notably, as we will see, the framing of the nostalgia invested in Langley's huts shifts over the course of her body of work. The "absent reality" embodied by the rustic hut moves from being made distant through the workings of time in Langley's earlier novels set in Australia (even as, paradoxically, Steve and Blue actually inhabit these dwellings), to Langley's New Zealand texts where geographical distance compounds the desire for a time past. Further, the focus of the nostalgia expressed by Langley's protagonist in the New Zealand novels is the time she spent living in rustic huts in Gippsland, a time itself spent full of longing for another time: a world found in stories of the past. In its evolution, Romantic nostalgia is not constructed as a fixed state or fixed relationship in Langley's novels, it is a process and retains its processual quality. Nostalgia grants Langley's narrator a fluid connection to place and time, and Langley's use of it is instrumental in communicating Steve/Eve's nomadic identity.

Langley figures the bush hut as representing Steve's successful engagement with a time nostalgically longed for, and as a potent sign of Steve's Romantic sensibilities.

However, as the reader moves chronologically through Langley's novels, representations of

the bush hut become more complex. Rather than an imaginative portal to a past fixed by Steve's nostalgia, each hut becomes itself a focus of nostalgic longing. In *White Topee*, Steve lives not far from the bark hut she lived in earlier with Blue, and she visits it regularly, but her immediate experiences of the physical structure of the hut are overlaid with a sense of longing for the time spent living in that place, now seemingly distant. Steve comments, "The memory of that hut! The poem-saturated place, the golden walls and the dark, the Grecian tea-tree just behind it" (153). Further to this, in the novels set in New Zealand, which come chronologically after the Australian ones, the bush hut, as representative of the days spent living in it, now symbolises a world made distant geographically as well. A sense of physical distance has overlaid the temporal one. From the remoteness of Wanganui, New Zealand, Steve says yearningly, "Madly and sadly I longed to go back, as the wattle bird had cried on the road to the Tambo" ("Cloud" 321) and later, "I love Australia. Let me go to it. I love the hills and the gum trees and the horizon laughter of the kookaburras in the morning [...] the bush and my own hut...Heavens, why cannot I return to my country" ("Dunedin Street" 194). Steve's earlier desire to be in Gippsland has been reframed by greater geographical distance to include a longing for the whole country, Australia. The sense of independence and aloneness that she associates with her hut in the bush is compounded by the vastness of the country it is situated within. Steve's allusion to the horizon in her reference to the laughter of the kookaburras does not suggest a defining line but unbounded space, the imagined space beyond the horizon. As well, where her attraction to Gippsland was initially associated with a yearning for a past found in the literature of colonial Australia, now she is nostalgic for a time from her own life.

Langley formulates the bush hut as both a portal to the "country that is always distant" that is the focus of nostalgic Romantic longing, and also as a manifestation of that distant country. This dual construction of a space that is imaginatively both here and there

informs the construction of the rustic hut as a Romantic space situated within a social context. The closeness to nature imaginatively and materially suggested by the rustic hut implies a concomitant isolation from society for the occupant of the hut. This is a particularly significant convergence of ideas for Steve; the bushranger/ bush poet figure that she identifies with is manifestly an outsider to society and is, in fact, idealised by that society *as* an outsider. As a Romantic poet she is also situated outside society. However, the bush hut is both Romantic and social space, it is a space of isolation from society and also a space within society. The forces of attraction and repulsion that construct this duality are illuminated in Langley's novels.

In *White Topee* Steve comments on her life in a bush hut:

The earth round about was so arid, so bare, that the thoughts flowing from me were received by it, greedily, it seemed. Musics floated through it, and images to the point of ecstasy were there. I heard the flowing of flutes and the imprint of delicate feet lay in the dust of the earthen floor [...] And I was alone. Yes, that was better than anything. Deluded by the charm of poetry and prose, I sat alone, musing on the sorrow and genius of my life, breathing out egotism and breathing it in again, untempered by any man's cool judgement, fevered and intoxicated by my imaginings, so I lived from day to day (9-10).

In this passage, Steve depicts the life spent living in a bush hut as one spent fully immersed in a world of artistic expression, and she stresses that it is a life spent alone. Steve emphasises that she is not only alone, but unaffected by the world beyond the hut; her poetical state of being is untempered by the judgements of society. M.H. Abrams notes that the Romantic poet naturally occupies a position outside society, being "distinguished from other [people] particularly by [an] inheritance of an intense sensibility and a susceptibility to passion" (102). Just as Wordsworth famously states that "poetry is the spontaneous

overflow of powerful feelings” (10), and Byron asserts that poetry “is the lava of the imagination” (405), Steve describes her mind “foaming over with richness” as she sits writing poetry “in the shade of the baracca” (*White Topee* 4).¹¹ Steve’s passionate embrace of the artistic life separates her from others. This separation is emphasised when, from the various huts that Steve lives in whilst working in Gippsland, she roams the surrounding landscape, alone with the natural forces around her. Remembering a time high in the hills beyond Bairnsdale, Steve says, “my mind was in that virgin condition where nature is merciless. Now she laid it onto the flesh with mystifying odours of leaves, glimpses of far-away ranges that made me tremble, sudden winds that blew gusts of loneliness into the mind [...]” (*Pea-Pickers* 28). The Romantic project of Langley’s novels, which promotes otherness and separation as a defining quality of her narrator is supported by Steve’s experience of the natural world surrounding the bush huts.

In the passage from *White Topee*, seen above, Steve sits alone in her hut, musing on her genius. *The Pea-Pickers* ends with Steve alone, having rejected Blue’s company: “‘No, Blue,’ I said calmly and coldly... ‘Good Bye, Blue!’... the galvanized iron walls of the hut went ‘Spink... spink’ as they contracted after the heat of the day. I opened the door and walked in. I was alone” (317). Later, it is this aspect of hut-life that Eve yearns for: “To go back...O you wattle birds...and get into the hut again and live as I used to alone...independent...” (“Dunedin Street” 79). The passage from *White Topee* suggests that any company in the hut is of a ghostly nature. Some years later, Steve again describes life in a bush hut:

Whenever I sat down in that hut idle, I used to think of the past; of
Kendal, of Gordon, Adam Lindsay Gordon, of Lawson and the rest of

¹¹ Steve’s name for her bush hut at the time (borrowed from the Italian word for a soldiers’ tent).

them. After a while of living alone in a bush hut in Australia, you grow like those poets; sad, morose, glowing within, but melancholy without; you speculate on life, and it seems a tragic thing and without hope [...]

That was my life. I was alone now in this old hut I had shared with Blue, and I was in my mind, part master and occupant of all the old huts about the locality. Over there, on the hill stood Hardy's bark hut; once long ago, I had lived there. Karta Singh's place by the road, could have been mine, too; When Snowy Matheson went up to Orbost to work I could have had his hut along the foreshore. And along the main road stood the hut of Akbarah Khan where Blue and Jim and I had lived long ago, and where Macca had come to see us every evening. ("Bancroft House" 42).

The ghosts of Kendal, Gordon, Lawson "and the rest of them" fill the space of the hut Steve is living in, and grant it a poetic resonance. They provide her with company of a sort, but mainly serve to illustrate Steve's point that she is alone in the hut with only imagined and morose poets of the past for fellowship. Yet, after living and working for some years in the fields of Gippsland Steve's description of her experiences of the various huts she has occupied in the area is not simply of a life spent alone. In Steve's continuing discussion of life in the huts, living people also populate her memories.

The owners of the land on which the huts sit, such as the Hardys, and the managers of the field workers, such as Karta Singh, are all part of her life in the huts. Steve repeatedly lives with her sister Blue in bush huts and their mutual friend, Jim, joins them in their early adventures. Steve's tortured relationship with Macca often fills her mind as she dwells in one hut or another over those years, and he is a frequent visitor. Fellow workers come and go from the huts, and shared meals and evenings of

music are common. Living in New Zealand in later years and looking back on her days living in a hut, Eve says, "I don't think a day passed that we didn't talk about the bark hut and Jim and Mac and Peppino and the rest" ("Cloud" 186). Her shared memories (with her sister June) are of the sociability of their time in the bush huts of Gippsland. Descriptions of the hut as a place of community activity unsettle the frequent representations of it as a site of solitude and isolation from society and thus a space in which Steve feels "at home". However, the nature of the interactions between Steve and others refuses a situation of social integration: frequently interactions between Steve and the Gippsland community she moves within prove to emphasise Steve's sense of separation from society rather than suggest assimilation.

In the passage noted earlier in *White Topee*, Steve comments that her life in the hut is completely contained by her artistic imaginings, allowing her to be unmoved by the judgement of society. However, her description of her lone state of artistic ecstasy in the hut as one filled with delusion, egotism and fevered imagination suggests that Steve is not totally removed from the perspectives of others. In *The Pea-Pickers* Steve says,

In a torn newspaper under the portrait of a pale fat man I had once read these words, "Lauré, Lauré! I am young and my plate is empty! When will my two great desires, to be loved and to be famous, be satisfied?" And I cried this out at every opportunity. I wrote it everywhere and chanted it to every tune (6).

Steve's outpourings regarding the despairing words written by Honoré de Balzac suggest that she feels that she is, like Balzac, an unrecognised artist: separated from society by its lack of recognition of her genius and its disregard for her desires in life. The dissonance between the artist and society is portrayed as actively reciprocal. In Gippsland Steve cries,

“O God, the anguish, the melancholy of going poor, unknown and unloved through this bush! I felt that I was condemned by those who did not know me; that I was to be further condemned, while far ahead lay terrible years and an anguished life” (*Pea-Pickers* 89). Steve often feels that she suffers from the lonely ways of her life in a bush hut and from society’s condemnation of her life as an artist. As Charles Taylor notes, “being “a person of exceptional sensibility... opens the artist to exceptional suffering” (423). Describing a moment typical of that life, Steve says: “There I stood, a lost being, lonely and sick of my worthlessness; behind me, lay the hut with my poetry on scattered leaves” (“Bancroft House” 63). From *The Pea-Pickers*, Langley’s first novel set in Australia, to “Bancroft House”, the last of the Australian novels, Steve talks not only of being alone, but also of feeling “lost” and “lonely” while she lives as a poet in a bush hut. Steve’s insistence on her suffering alludes to the Romantic view that “the compulsion to poetry lies in the disproportion between man’s desires, or man’s ideals, and the world of reality” (Abrams 103). For Steve, her suffering illuminates the disproportion between her desires and the world of 1920s Australia, confirming her identity as a hut-dwelling poet. As this suffering delineates the size of the gap between Steve and society, it asserts her psychic isolation from society even as she physically dwells within it.

Equally expressive of intensity of feeling, and of equal importance to Langley in her delineations of marginality is the sense of disgust that figures Steve’s position outside the society she lives within. Winfried Menninghaus suggests that in the eighteenth century, Romanticism led the way in “seeking to license the disgusting for art”, noting that Schegel considered the “turn toward the disgusting” as natural in an art engaged in an “unceasing and fully self-supporting striving for otherness” (8). The disgust which Steve’s transgressive life working in the fields of Gippsland arouses, identifies that which is outside culture and affirms Steve’s position in that space of beyond. The sensation of disgust also effects a separation between Steve and many of her co-workers, threatening but not quite

collapsing the camaraderie of the campfire. Disgust signifies an immediate recognition of the harmful; through the spontaneous acts of rejection occasioned by disgust, continuity and contiguity are interrupted (Menninghaus 6). In Langley's novels, the rustic hut provides a nexus between the socio-political project of the texts and the aesthetic experience of the Romantic. Within the space of the rustic hut, Steve, the Romantic poet converges with Steve the field worker whose livelihood is reliant on various forms of co-operation; Steve, the isolated bush poet and occupant of one of the iconic sites of Australian nationalism, converges with Steve the social outcast, who lives as a man/woman amongst the socially unembraced itinerant workers of Gippsland, who is also Steve the popular local eccentric. The space of the rustic hut simultaneously informs and complicates Steve/Eve's identity as Romantic and both of and not of Australian society.

Whereas Romantic constructs are represented as timeless and universal, the social world within which Steve lives is highly determined by its time and place. The field-work associated with Steve's life in the rustic huts of 1920s Gippsland is generally done by men, and Steve and Blue spend their days surrounded by male over-seers, workers and drifters. Dressed in men's clothing, partly to fit in but partly to attract attention, Steve and her sister regularly suffer rejection. As Steve and Blue travel Gippsland by train looking for itinerant work, their attire attracts the attention of the police who eject them from a series of the small country towns they pass through. After dodging policemen through several railway stations, like a character in a Punch and Judy show a policeman's face suddenly appears at the train window:

The helmeted head of a young good-looking policeman plunged through the window.

'Are you the two girls that the Rutherglen police are after?' he asked.

Affronted to the soul, I said, 'Yes'.

And where are you going now?'

‘Home’.

‘By jove,’ he said generously, ‘I wish I could get something on you two and have you locked up.’ He looked so handsome and kindly and human as he said it that I was speechless, preferring to believe that an ugly animal down in his stomach was enunciating those good words (*Pea-Pickers* 59-60).

The close relation between disgust and laughter has been frequently noted, and in Langley’s texts moments of disgust are often moments of dark comedy. These episodes do not suggest an overcoming of disgust through laughter but are expressive of the depth of the conflict enacted in the signalling of disgust. As Menninghaus says, “Laughing at something, as an act of expulsion, resembles in itself the act of rejecting, of vomiting in disgust. Disgust [...] and laughter are complimentary ways of admitting an alterity” (11). The divergence of opinion between the sisters and greater society regarding their cross-dressing is illuminated by the situational comedy of the police chase for Steve and Blue. The humour of the moment that the policeman pops through the window, despite Steve’s genuine affront, emphasises the difference between the lightness of the comedic moment and the potential darkness of the forces behind it, and the liveliness of the chase is expressive of the power of agitation that the feeling of disgust excites. Steve’s vision of the ugly animal beneath the smiling face of society in the form of the policeman suggests the potential ferocity of that society’s rejection of the two women. It also mirrors the basis for the sensation of disgust that drives society to expel Steve and Blue from its midst. The suggestion of the unnatural in the view of the ugly animal lodged within “the young good-looking policeman” reflects the sense of the unnatural felt by society on viewing Steve’s womanly body within male clothes.

By dressing in male clothing, the sisters provoke disgust through the assertion of their bodily presence under the “wrong” clothes. By drawing attention to the discrepancy of

gender between the clothes and the body beneath, that body becomes highly visible, metaphorically undressed. Assertion of the body in the “wrong way” raises the suspicion of immorality, another traditional cause of disgust and subsequent repulsion. Leaving Mr Desperandum’s orchard at the end of the apple season, Steve says that “He half promised and he half refused; we heard afterwards that his wife had pinched the two into full denial and that we were to return no more to the old orchard” (*Pea-Pickers* 44). The undercurrents of suspicion regarding the sisters’ morals as they live and work in a predominantly male environment regularly resurface. Steve later notes, “As for me, well, all Metung calls me a harlot” (*Pea-Pickers* 137). One evening in the hut on Mr Whitebeard’s property, there is a knock at the door:

Jim opened it. A short black-cloaked woman stood there, stormy looking, hurried to and fro by the strong wind blowing along the verandah. ‘Is Billy Creeker there?’ The little fair man hastened forward.

‘Look here, did you say that I said these two girls were no good?’

‘No no Mrs Rotterdam, I never said anything of the sort!’

‘Well,’ agitatedly, ‘everyone’s saying that I told Billy Creeker that these girls were no good and they say you’re over here, trying them out’ (80).

Though the social exclusion of the sisters, implied in Mrs Rotterdam’s words, hurts Steve and causes her to feel ashamed, at the same time she actively seeks to exclude herself, and regularly depicts herself as potentially socially repulsive in order to reinforce the sense of otherness she desires.

Steve carefully describes the social context of her life as one where her itinerancy and the inevitable male company resulting from this, as well as her frequent representations as a man, are viewed with suspicion and, to large extent, disgust. That she often describes moments of confrontation as comedic does not hide the resulting rejections that regularly

occur. Yet, while these rejections are often portrayed as hurtful, they inevitably inform Steve's overarching project of otherness, and the cloak of humour asserts a certain position of strength and control for the storyteller, while still projecting the societal rejection that contributes to Steve's outsider status. Steve parallels her account of society's rejection of her and her life-choices with her equivalent rejection of the itinerant society of the field workers she mixes with. As owners of one of the farms that she works on, the Hardys are perhaps both representative of greater society and the local workers that they also mix with. While Steve suggests that the ravenous, uncontrollable appetites that both she and her hut-mates exhibit, are unsociable and finally disgusting, she also separates herself from the family by cruelly mocking their hospitality and, in particular, their manner of speech. Later in the evening, two of the Italian field workers, Dominic and Peppino, arrive to join in the night's entertainment. In her description of the evening, they also are mocked by Steve. She describes Domenic "Mincing from chair to chair around the room, with his mouth wide open, his eyes glaring and his posterior bouncing as though wagging a tail" (94). The animalistic inferences in the ungovernable appetites of Steve, Blue and, in particular, Jim which earlier work to frame the "rejection" of the trio from the dining table, are now mirrored in Steve's portrayal of the Italian men. Steve's descriptions of her interactions with her co-workers regularly represent a sense of disgust at their company. Menninghaus comments, "The fundamental schema of disgust is the experience of a nearness that is not wanted. An intrusive presence, a smell or taste is spontaneously assessed as contamination and forcibly distanced" (1).

The fear of miscegenation, in which Steve is not much different to the greater society that she rejects and is rejected by, colours Steve's relationships with the men she works and lives with. This is highlighted in her account of cohabitation with Akbarah Khan. When Steve and Blue first arrive in Metung for the pea harvest, they share a hut with Khan. Already shamed by the local rumour that the sisters "were no good" and presumably

sexually promiscuous due to their living arrangements, Steve is appalled when Khan professes love for her. In a comic scene Akbarah takes Steve's pyjama pants from the line where they are drying and irons them. When Steve finds him "mending them at a delicate point with black thread" she protest vehemently: "'Here... what the devil!' said I snatching them and staring at him furiously. 'Ah,' murmured Akbarah softly, 'white girl... black man... many camels!'" (*Pea-Pickers* 81). In the face of this suggestive humour Steve's sense of disgust is fully aroused. She says,

As I was eating my lunch in the kitchen, Akbarah, fully enamoured of me, reached out to embrace, and I, with a billy lid of hot stew on my knees, flattened it out on his face. But of these dainty repulses he thought little, and as I walked through the dark kitchen at night he seized me. Upon which I drew a long narrow stiletto I carried and drew a little of his blood. We became almost enemies (81).

The sense of disgust is clear in Steve's physical act of repulsion towards the overly amorous and unwanted Akbarah. Steve's active sense of disgust regarding many of the other workers, who frequently share food and company with her, is more complicated.

Steve is both attracted to and repulsed by the Italians she mixes with on and off the pea-fields. In some ways this is a contributing factor in many moments of disgust, or rejection. Ironically, given Steve's denial of a binary gender framework, she finds the highly decorated and colourful clothing of the Italian men both enchanting and repulsive with its feminine associations. As Kant comments, "the very thing which is beautiful evokes disgust" (61). Steve is attracted to the music, the food, the language, the easy conviviality of the group of Italians working alongside her. She learns Italian, and the words to haunting arias. Yet frequent scenes of shared meals and the singing of Italian operas are offset with the tension Steve expresses at the proximity of these men and the threat they make to her desired isolation. Menninghaus suggests, "Everything seems at risk in the experience of

disgust. It is a state of alarm and emergency, an acute crisis of self-preservation in the face of an unassimilable otherness, a convulsive struggle, in which what is in question is, quite literally, whether ‘to be or not to be’” (1). For Steve, her strong sense of disgust, her frequent state of alarm and emergency in the face of the company she finds on the fields of Gippsland is exacerbated by the real risk that it might undermine her desire for isolation. The more attractive and delightful the company seems, the more of a threat it is and the more it must be repelled. So, while she notes that the company that she keeps on the fields, and in the rustic huts of the farms, contributes to her separation from society, she is also careful to assert her difference to that company by frequent comments regarding its broken English, lack of local knowledge, unusual food and manners, and other characteristics perceived as differentiating.

Steve’s claims of closeness to nature and the natural environment of Australia suggest forms of isolation that assert an authenticity associated with originality, and an authority linked with that of the heroic Romantic wanderer-poet. However representations of isolation through societal rejection (and the sensation of disgust) complicate formulations of authority claimed through occupation of that iconic site of Australian culture, the rustic, or bush hut as the very iconic nature of this space confers societal approval and acceptance of the isolated lifestyle of its inhabitants. Steve’s attempts to re-enact the world of the “old timers” of early Australian literature are revealed to be unsustainable in the Gippsland of the 20s. In order to maintain the separation she identifies as crucial to her parallel project of Romantic isolation, she must reject and be rejected by the society that created and sustains the myth of the bush poet. The real life of the itinerant field worker impacts on Steve’s imagined life as a Romantic poet, while her Romantic desires inform her delineations of rural life. Formulations of “otherness” and marginality circle Steve’s claims to authenticity through association with iconic figures of Australian literature. In the next chapter, “The

Space of Absence”, the production of marginality in Langley’s novels is explored in order to interrogate the claims, by Langley’s narrator, of (dis)possession and (dis)location.

Chapter Four

The Space of Absence

“The secret history, stored away in the dark folds of the landscape, in its scattered bones, of a paradise found or lost”

(David Malouf, *Conversations* 115)

“Fidelity lies in accumulating things – which appear, mostly in the form of fragments or ruins”

(Susan Sontag 16)

Langley’s novels frequently feature people, places and things that have been lost, that are, or have become incomplete, that are missed or have gone missing, that have been obliterated, or have not yet materialised. The bush hut is evoked by Langley in nostalgic terms inflected with allusions to loss and rupture. In keeping with the unstable identity of Langley’s narrator, the material world that Steve/Eve inhabits frequently figures mutable characteristics that “embrace [...] the transformative powers of decay and revitalisation” (Desilvey 328). In Langley’s texts, the erosion of material integrity is perceived as an invitation to seek new kinds of cultural information. In the second half of “Wild Australia”, Steve lives in the mountains of Victoria and works in the hop fields there. Anticipating the end of one hop-picking season, Steve and her sister Blue wander down to the field where some workers’ tents

are erected, and discuss the potential for salvageable items once the workers have moved on and the tent sites have been abandoned:

‘Good lot of tents over there, Steve,’ said Blue.

‘Too right. We’ll go through them when the pickings over, Blue.’

‘Sometimes you wonder why they leave such a lot of lids around, don’t you?’

‘Meat tins, too.’

‘And the grand impression that their bunks have made on the grander and more lovely earth.’

‘Wish they’d leave the blankets instead of the grand impression.’

‘A tent that’s been pulled up is a marvellous thing, I reckon, Steve.’

‘To me the space that’s left is glorious [...] I could dream out his life, that owned the tent, the shadow where the bunk lay, the tea tree under the mattress . . . ’ (248-9).

In this typically comedic exchange between Steve and Blue, Steve’s “dream[ing] out” of the life evoked by the trace of the tent resonates beyond the humour of the passage. Physical traces of previous activity pattern Langley’s novels: at one stage her protagonist comments that “over the clean floor, sometimes muddy boots trod and left dark healthy marks” (“Bancroft House” 205), and at another time she notes the mark in the grass left by her brother-in-law, seeing it as a “huge spread pattern [...] like a large horse lying there” (“Dublin Street” 369). Langley’s narrator accords these traces a vivid presence. Always incomplete, the trace suggests both an antecedent and subsequent context of events or description. Steve recognises that between the self-evident things, the meat tins, the lids and other debris, are gaps, absences, that are as informative as entity-like presences and which invite active interpretation. As Steve says, by looking at the “space that’s left” by the pulled up tent, she “could dream out

his life, that owned the tent”. Steve’s response suggests that cultural memory may reside in the remnants, traces, and in the potent spaces created by absences. The imagining of a life or an entity from the shape made by its absence is a significant concept in Langley’s novels, in which the nature of that which is made absent and that which is present articulates relationships between identity, culture and place.

However, Langley’s novels do not simply frame the interpretive possibilities of absence, they also cultivate and exploit absence. Langley’s construction of the social and cultural world in which Steve/Eve lives contains significant elisions. One absence that particularly shapes the cultural production of the space Steve/Eve inhabits is the effacement of the indigene from Langley’s novels. Settler discourse typically elides the indigene through a complex process of effacement and replacement of the indigene by the settler figure. In Langley’s texts, effacement of the Australian Aborigine not only references foundational settler practices, in which the land is discursively made empty and thus ready to be settled by recently arrived white people, but also articulates a construction in which the Aboriginal people present in the Gippsland fields at the time that Steve works in them are rendered invisible. I suggest that the shape of this resulting absence is detectable in the formulations of loss and dispossession that frame Steve’s discussions of occupation of Australian land. In Langley’s New Zealand novels, by contrast, effacement of the Maori population is not performed through elision but through engagement with the “dying race” discourse. In settler literature such discourse is typically posited as a natural response to a changing world and thus as involving no violence or intervention on the part of the settler/invaser. Within this discursive practice Eve’s depiction of the New Zealand Maori produces a memorialising narrative. The regular nature of the references to Maori people in Langley’s New Zealand novels is suggestive of the significant and vital presence of Maori in New Zealand at the time Eve is placed

there; but when viewed through the prism of the colonial imagination evident in Langley's texts, Maori people reduce to types and specimens.

As a series of settler narratives, Langley's texts figure both the effacement and the replacement of the indigene by Steve/Eve as a settler figure. In Chapter One, I suggested that the split subjectivity of Langley's narrator renders visible the negotiations of colonial power typical of the "Second World" settler (Lawson; Slemon). In this chapter, by investigating the nature of the manifestations of dispossession in Langley's Australian novels, I explore the concomitant fracturing and reconfiguring of the settler discourse discussed previously. The discursive practices involved in the construction of Steve as a settler figure in Australia involve foundational historical myths such as that of the empty land awaiting settlement by the first pioneers. In Australia the retrospective land policy, *terra nullius* (literally "nobody's land"), was devised in the mid-nineteenth century to legitimise the aggressive occupation of land already undertaken by squatters. According to this doctrine, Aboriginal people of Australia did not have any right to ownership of the land they occupied. Henry Reynolds notes, "In 1836 Justice Burton of the Supreme Court of New South Wales determined... that the Aborigines had not made sufficient use of the land to enable them to have any legal claim on it", and in 1889, Lord Watson of the Privy Council "declared that prior to settlement Australia was practically uninhabited without settled inhabitants or settled law" (4). Yet, as Tompkins comments, "[f]rom the first moments of settlement when Aboriginal people led whites to water and food sources, cooperative relationships were formed between the cultures" (24), and a minority of settlers decided to negotiate agreements to share land and stock with local Aborigine. Reynolds comments that "[s]uch negotiations often led to highly successful resolutions of the problem of providing for the mutual use of the same country for both stock raising and huntergathering" (8). One

pastoralist outlined the beneficial consequences of negotiating with the local Aboriginal people, claiming “so far from doing any injury [they] are of the greatest assistance in procuring bark, breaking up ground with the hoe, carrying rations to the sheep stations, etc. etc.” (Reynolds 8). While the nature of their continuing occupation of the land and the terms of their employment remained problematic, in many places Aboriginal workers became an integral and highly visible part of many pastoral and horticultural holdings.

The elision of the indigene in Langley’s texts, which facilitates Steve’s claims of an assumed indigeneity, is not simply an expression of the settler construction of the land as empty prior to white settlement. Langley’s novels efface not only original occupation of Australia by Aboriginal people but also the ongoing and substantial presence of Aboriginal people working in the Gippsland fields at the time that she places Steve there. Bruce Pascoe comments that *The Pea-Pickers*

is set in the market gardens of East Gippsland and celebrates the Australian worker not in soft focus Empire glory but as it was, full of Italians, Germans and battling Australians. Dramatically different from how the *Bulletin* saw the iconic worker of the wide brown land... [B]ut [Langley] is colour blind. The pea, bean, maize, grape and fruit harvesters of that era were predominantly black (209-10).

Pascoe notes: “The picking industry is dominated by Aboriginal families but [after one brief encounter between Steve and an Aboriginal man]¹² Langley never mentions them again...” (210). “Today”, Pascoe comments, “talk among members of Aboriginal communities never proceeds far without mention of peas and beans,

¹² This incident is discussed in Chapter One of this thesis.

grapes and maize and the districts of Bruthen, Bairnsdale, Bega and Mildura” (209). Langley renders this highly visible community invisible. That Langley describes in great detail the multicultural nature of the market gardens within which Steve works makes her effacement of the Aboriginal community more profound. Joanne Tompkins suggests: “issues of presence and absence particularly locating Aboriginal people in Australian history” reinforce “a fundamental discomfort with the process of settlement and the establishment of nationhood” (8). This discomfort is visible in the repression of the origins of the colonial paradigms that Langley employs to delineate Steve’s experience of Gippsland as a place of dispossession and loss. In the employment of these paradigms the dispossession and unsettlement of the indigene by the white “settler” is ironically and unconsciously staged. As a result, while Aboriginal workers are erased from Steve’s account of the Gippsland market gardens, their absence is present in that which *is* perceptible, that which *is* present in her words. When Steve stands with Blue and views the space left by a worker’s tent in the alps, she interprets the shadow left by the tent as the shape of the now absent life that was once lived there. Similarly, the reader of Langley’s texts is (inadvertently) encouraged to interpret the constructions of dispossession evident in Steve’s narrative as the shape of a life (that of the Aboriginal community) that is otherwise not discernable in the text.

The shapes formed by what is not said or revealed in Langley’s novels facilitate the development of a typical settler narrative which “is concerned to act out the suppression or effacement of the indigene” at the same time as it is “concerned to perform the concomitant indigenisation of the settler” (Johnston and Lawson 16). The effaced and replaced indigene of the settler narrative is an historic image, which we can see as a discursive part of the development of the colony. Terry Goldie comments, “[t]he unchanging indigene of literature reflects the unchanging indigene in literature”

(149). As Goldie suggests, historical imagery fixes the Aborigine in the past, so that she/he is “a base for Australian culture, not a part of its developing fabric” (149). Yet, in Langley’s novels any representations of the development of the “fabric” of Australia are undermined by the sustained employment of representations of unsettlement. Goldie’s words imply an inexorably widening gap between the developing nation and the past in which the indigene is fixed. However, in the close proximity of Steve’s claims of dispossession and her assumed indigeneity, not only is the certain progression of settlement and nationhood interrogated, but the erasure of the indigene from the contemporary space of the nation is undermined. Commonly in the settler narrative the land is empty so that it can “be filled with both words and herds” (Johnston and Lawson 8). Steve’s observations of the countryside layer assertions of a lengthy, pervasive, but broken occupation of the land over her settler narrative of an empty and expansive land. The empty and abandoned houses that Steve finds on her journeys suggest a different kind of a lack of occupation to that of the wide and empty landscape around the houses. While, in settler discourse, the empty land is typically synonymous with indigeneity, Langley’s empty houses signify both the occupation of the land by the settler and the fracturing of that settler occupation as a contemporary condition. Repressed in this construction, but reflected in the discourse of unsettlement signalled in the abandoned houses, is the contemporary condition of the Aborigine.

Tropes of dispossession and broken occupation are repeatedly figured in Steve’s relationship with Gippsland which is described as both a “home” and a “homeland” for her. This is evident from the first pages of *The Pea-Pickers*. The discussion between Steve, Blue and Mia evokes Gippsland as both a homeland, and a home that has been lost to them. At the time depicted, large numbers of people have

been forced to leave their homes, or find new ones due to drought and increasing levels of unemployment. A few years later, Steve says,

I had just left behind me miles of dry country from Gippsland down into Melbourne with stiff legged long bearded old men riding swift dry shining horses rapidly through the dry long grass by the roadside and bush drifters, or road ships, sledges with big sails spread sliding over the dry grass and drawn by horses rushing the starving Gippslanders down into the city for money and food (“Cloud” 9).

Yet, the loss and dispossession that Steve focuses on is not one brought about by changing weather patterns or shifts in the nation’s economy. Though contextualised within a mutable world, Steve’s narrative is not one of general social displacement but of specific acts of dispossession based on personal experience.

On her initial train journey into the area, Steve talks of her “hereditary Gippsland mind” awakening, implying that the journey is a return to a place to which she inherently belongs (*Pea-Pickers* 11). Yet, Mia reminds Steve and Blue that the people she knew as a child in Gippsland are ““All gone now [...] All gone””. She continues, ““If I’d stayed at home and not married your father and gone off into New South Wales [...] your grandfather might have left me some of the land, too, and you girls would have had property there”” (*Pea-Pickers* 5-6). Despite regular assertions that she belongs to the land (of Gippsland and of Australia), the loss of Mia’s family inheritance, and Mia’s subsequent estrangement from her family leads Steve to frequently experience Gippsland as a place of dislocation and missed opportunity. When Macca talks to Steve of having been ““cut off from the family property””, saying, ““there are hundreds of us, roaming up and down Gippsland, dispossessed by unwise marriages...”” Steve replies, “[Mia’s] gipsy love of change and wandering

got her cut out too [...] Grandfather just forgot her when the property was being handed over. After all, she was only a woman, you know. But look at the ramifications of it!” (*Pea-Pickers* 168-9). Steve and Macca both associate the break in the line of inheritance with the loss of sure possession of land. In an imagined conversation with a local auctioneer, she says:

‘Yes, I am Gippsland, too. My family have been graziers here for many years. I should be the mother of sons who would be the princes of this province, in thought and action... but what am I? Well, you can see. A wandering pea-picker, living in a galvanised iron hut. But my forefathers were the pioneers here. And that is what is really hurting more than anything. I am nothing to Gippsland; I just wander through her, being hurt by her and used by her in menial toil. But you, as you know, are part of her tradition. In the community, you are important. I am the pea-picker’ (*Pea-Pickers* 300).

At other times, Steve claims a link between indigeneity and a nomadic lifestyle, with a concomitant close relationship with the land. She says:

For company I took out my mirror and stared at my own face. The Australian. A round brown dry face, with freckles over the nose, red mouth, green eyes and black lashes. The ageless brown of it, of baked earth showing the fine white fire of the soul in it, I thought. Under the shadow of the wide brown felt hat with its chin strap, I lived and rode (“Wild Australia” 6).

In her itinerant life Steve associates herself with those white settlers who are attributed “native attributes and skills”, such as the pioneer, the explorer, the stagecoach driver and the bush-ranger (Johnston and Lawson 7). Her assumed name, Steve Hart, is that of one of the bush-rangers in the Kelly gang. However, in the monologue earlier, such formulations are reconstituted so that the mobility of an

itinerant life is associated, not with occupation of the land, but with dispossession; Steve evokes her itinerant life as a field labourer as one where her rights as one of a family of local landowners have been arrogated. Rather than simply valorising her itinerancy (as she usually does) she asserts it as evidence of a broken connection to what she feels is rightfully hers through family ties.

House sales take place in the countryside around Metung while Steve is working there. The reasons for the sales are not explored in Langley's texts, but the sales involve the clearing out and selling of the houses and their contents, and the dispersal of the goods through the countryside into the homes of local buyers. That there may be an aggressive act of dispossession elided in the term "house sale" is evident in Steve's description of one sale. She describes the local auctioneer:

Ha, the auctioneers arrive! The mud-spattered car was at the gate, and from it, with a lordly haughtiness, strode the apoplectic emperor of Gippsland auctioneers. Years of his trade had carved him with Eastern fidelity into a grand figure for an artist's model. The wind, the weather, the stock and stations he had sold, the whip he had wielded and the buyers and sellers he had looked down on were all bitten into him, as time has gnawed into the Buddha. Striding through the yard, he spurned the place, he abhorred the vile day that had called him out to sell up the few gimcracks in such a filthy hovel. His red-purple face shone as its muscles with the terrific opening of his mouth. Under his wide hat, his blood-shot eyes glared redly. The many capes of his pale golden cloak, stained with the romance of the weather, opened and shut as he stirred up the mud of the yard with his feet and thundered with immense authority [...]

We, the lost, gazed at [the auctioneer and his son] respectfully, regretting that we had become lopped off the tree of a family as old, in this province, as theirs. Ah, Gippsland, I cried inwardly, we, too, own a share in you, by right of birth and power of desire; but it is denied us. We have nothing to call our own (*Pea-Pickers* 294-5).

Terms common to colonial discourse pattern Steve's description of the sale. These terms suggest a parallel between the dissolution of the household's collection of material artefacts and the action of colonial expansion. The auctioneer, who is depicted as "the apoplectic emperor of Gippsland", and who emanates an aura of power typical of imperial action, is also depicted as a man shaped by nature. The wind and the weather have marked him, his caped cloak is weather-stained, and his feet stir up the ground he walks over. Yet, the auctioneer is not viewed as one who is a part of nature, rather that he is locked in combat with it. His wielding of the whip is matched by the biting and gnawing of nature. As well, there is a suggestion, by negative implication, that despite this interaction over a long period of time, he is essentially unaltered by it, as unchanging as Bhudda is generally held to be.

As a reflection of the authority of empire, the auctioneer is a figure of violence and violation. Goldie asserts: "a strong argument could be made that [...] white violence is, if not an essential, at least a systemic, part of the imperial principle" (100). The auctioneer's red-purple face and blood-shot eyes combine with his thunderous demeanour to suggest a barely controlled passion behind his actions. His haughtiness, the way that he spurns the day and abhors the place all suggest an arrogant disregard for others which is, in itself, a form of violation, and which inevitably leads to other violations. As a representation of the action of the house sale, the powerful figure of the auctioneer suggests an event that is imposed upon the land,

disturbing it and “unsettling” the occupation of it. In the face of this aggressive figure, typical of the project of expansionist action, Steve is a passive figure, she is voiceless, and feels “lost”. Passivity of the other is a formula used to validate displacement by a more forceful entity. Steve suggests this formulation in order to stress that displacement. Birthright and desire for connection to the land are denied by the act reflected in the house sale. Indigeneity (staged by Steve) is figured not only in terms of natural connection with the land, but also in terms of enforced dislocation with regard to that land.

Images of disconnection and dispossession are figured repeatedly in Langley’s depictions of houses and their relationship with the land. Though Mia lives in the same house in Dandenong in all but one of Langley’s Australian novels, in the first pages of *The Pea-Pickers* Steve supposes that the house is now, at the time of her reminiscing, just a memory for her and her sister and mother, as “all the flowers and grasses and hollows and hills of the old house were [probably, now] razed and mutilated” (2). The dwelling places that Steve/Eve chooses are physically fragile, often semi-derelict, and her occupation of them is always short-term. Modes of fragmentation, fractured occupation and decay are frequently associated with the dwelling places that Steve calls home. These modes are also evident in the abandoned houses that form landmarks in the landscape of Steve’s adventures. A feature of Steve’s journeys through the hills of Gippsland is the number of houses that she encounters that are either deserted, or in the process of being moved out of. Laurence Goldstein comments on the eighteenth century European “mania for physical representations of decay” (3). He describes Louis XIV’s incorporation of “six hundred columns from the ruined Roman city Leptis Magna into Versailles”, an extreme example of the interest that led eighteenth century “English noblemen [to place] classical ruins on their estates” (3-4). In a similar fashion, Langley has gathered a

collection of abandoned houses and placed them in the landscape of her Australian novels. Though these deserted houses are not in an advanced state of decay, they assert a physical transience traditionally associated with the ruin and, as with the columns placed in Versailles, these deserted houses invest the landscape (in this case Australian) with a sense of history. Like the columns from Leptis Magna, Langley's abandoned houses are deliberately assembled to create a carefully staged effect. The columns connect Louis XIV with the golden age of classical Rome; the abandoned houses assert an historical authority to the occupation of the land of Australia by white settlers. Yet, the abandoned nature of these houses simultaneously suggests forms of occupation of the landscape, and voids in the representation of that occupation, articulating spatial qualities of settlement and unsettlement, dispossession and possession.

The "silvery-grey houses, all deserted" and other isolated built structures encountered by Steve assert the trope of the ruin into the Gippsland hills and valleys (*Pea-Pickers* 26). A version of the settler narrative that asserts natural occupancy of a place through effacement and replacement of the indigene, Langley's placement of "ruins" over the land of Gippsland suggests not only existing white settlement but also works to obscure the relatively short tenure of that occupation. As Anne Janowitz notes, "the spectacle of ruins in the landscape offers evidence of a nation possessed of a long history" (3). In *The Pea-Pickers*, Steve describes a day spent roaming the countryside with Kelly and Blue, commenting, "after a mile or two we got off [the bicycles] and, making through the bush, halted at a great pile of rock, a district landmark. We climbed, and...then, as in a dream, we found an old house, deserted and white-plastered within" (25). The distancing effect of the long and arduous journey to the house and the dream-like state in which Steve finds it compounds the temporal distancing figured in the abandoned state of the house. The isolation of the

site of the house and its difficult access suggest a pervasive (and so, successful) quality to the occupation of the land by white settlers.

In Langley's novels the "authority of antiquity" asserted by the "physical trace of historical event in the countryside" (Janowitz 3) is mainly found, not so much in the decayed state of the abandoned house in the landscape, but in the notion of the house as containing traces of its previous habitation. Steve describes an abandoned house discovered when she and Blue, between jobs and out of money, roam the countryside looking for deserted orchards to raid. They approach an old quince orchard, but become more interested in the abandoned house associated with it:

There was a deserted house over the river, which we approached with the caution of robbers. "Is it empty? Is it occupied?" we asked with intensity [...] The house stood silent, set back off the road, silent, light, alert, full of itself, absorbed in its own destruction and waiting for a companion to take with it, to accompany it to its end [...] Raising the old windows with a kind touch, we got into the empty rooms. One corner was quite full of out-of-date women's magazines, and among them an ancient edition of Goldsmith's poems, in which 'The muse found Scroggins, stretched upon a board'. In the magazines was a story, an honest bit of unimaginative work that rolled in the homely vehicle of the writer's style through a grand and glorious country. And the name of the country was Yeats, William Butler. It was illustrated with photographs. Under a grey apple-tree in a Gippsland orchard sat a girl in the refined, modest sort of clothes worn twenty years ago. Her long glistening hair was bunned and knotted intricately, the curves having the lovable effect of an old fashion. She read the spread pages of a book. Startling poetry emerged from the story... new to me and ringing out with a mystic challenge.

To where the water runs its wintery race beneath the stars.

And,

Tell her I am with the people that I love...

The years like great black oxen tread the world

And I am broken by their passing feet.

I sat reading for hours and, often, after that, when the quinces were all gone and there was no further sensible inducement to bring me to this deserted house, I came and sat reading for the twentieth time (221-2).

Steve, sitting in the deserted house reading the “out-of-date” magazines, is reflected by the image of the “old fashion[ed]” girl in the magazine, who sits reading her book under a tree, and the mirrored images of the two young women emphasises the years that separate them, and that separate Steve from the time when the house was a home.

The assortment of women’s magazines and volumes of poetry are remnants of a past life and their link with that past is emphasised by their “out of date” quality, the “ancient” nature of the edition of Goldsmith’s poetry, and the old-fashioned clothes and hair of the girl in the illustration. Concepts of antiquity, ancestry, and origins are all alluded to in the description of these works¹³. The temporal associations expressed by the contents of these abandoned magazines and books are reinforced by Langley’s presentation of the volumes as textual fragments. This figures them as incomplete, as objects decayed over time.

While the representations of the magazines and pages of poetry as textual fragments have obvious temporal associations, they are also expressive of spatial

¹³ That both Goldsmith and Yeats were Anglo-Irish suggests another layer of complexity to the narrative of ruptured occupation contained within the abandoned house. Frequently viewed as colonial agents of Imperial Britain, the Anglo-Irish symbolise a predominantly lost world of privileged rural landholding.

configurations related to the ruin. As Janowitz comments, “The temporality of ruin – a whole now worn away – gives up poetic space to the shape of a fragment – the poetic incompleteness, or part of a whole” (10). The passing of time is suggested by the discontinuity of habitation rather than through the degradation of the built structure. The signs of fragmentation commonly associated with the temporal themes of the ruin are found, not in collapsed walls or picturesque piles of aged stone, but in the scattered contents of the abandoned houses. However, these remnants are both signs of the lives previously lived there and also symbols of the ruptured habitation of the dwelling places. The fragments suggest not only a sense of historical occupation, but also the dissolution of that occupation. The trope of the ruin, a tool of colonial historiography, contains within its imagined formulations of decay, articulations of “unsettlement” that disrupt an “heroic colonial history” (Thomas 130). When Steve enters the abandoned house later referred to as the “Pumphouse” she observes, “Everything that could have been taken from those who lived there once had been taken and now was breathed out again [...] Yes, from old books that I saw scattered around, from old rags and bits of crockery, an oblique sort of family was formed by the house in its loneliness” (*Pea-Pickers* 62). The family life that Steve perceives in the fragmented remains of material existence in an abandoned house is a ghost-like version of the life that once existed in the space. What was once a collection of material goods that signified “home” now speaks evocatively of the loss of home.

The overlapping of that which is home with that which is unhomey indicates the presence of the uncanny, a concept that, as Tompkins comments, is “a useful tool for reading absence and anxiety in Australian spatiality” (8). The uncanny is indicative of repression, and the return, or manifestation, of that which is repressed. “In Australia, the repressed usually signals knowledge of what was done to places and people in them” (Tompkins 8). Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs suggest that the nature

of the occupation of Australia by white settlers and their descendants, in the context of the relationship between Aboriginal people and the land, signals a form of the uncanny. This uncanny is:

a modern Australian condition where what is “ours” may also be “theirs”, and vice versa: where difference and “reconciliation” co-exist uneasily. In an uncanny Australia, one’s place is always already another’s place and the issue of possession is never complete, never entirely settled (138).

Issues of ownership and unexplained and uncertain occupation figure in Steve’s descriptions of the abandoned houses of Gippsland. The uneasiness that results is vividly apparent in her encounter with an abandoned house in “Bancroft House”:

The next point of interest, I knew, would be That House. Who owned it? ... No one lived in it, at all. But it had the look of a place to which men came now and then to do mustering. Frightened of the look of the grey sad old deserted place, I crept past in the lonely bush, and no matter how thirsty I felt I wouldn’t go in for a drink from the tank there; for the empty house seemed full to me of I knew not what; something that might come springing out at me (89-90).

Steve stresses that both ownership and occupation of the house are unknown entities. It is the combined resonances of absence and presence emanating from the contested space of the house that cause Steve to experience feelings of dread, a response to the uncanny situation in which the unoccupied space manifests signs of a hidden and seemingly inexpressible form of occupation. The fact that the house is nominally deserted, and that Steve experiences the bush around it as lonely, not only implies a vulnerability in Steve’s state of aloneness, but also highlights in contrast the

overwhelming sense of presence that Steve perceives as potentially bursting forth from the house.

In *White Topee* a similar encounter is described in which the fear of a hidden presence and the equal fear of its unveiling with violent force is evident:

I had gone about three miles through the scrub along that narrow track when it ended among swampy grass of a snake-like, whirling, lashing nature, at a fence below a property that lay in a nightmare, deserted, lonely, blank and awful. The house on the hill! I stared at it. That house was haunted and filled to my youthful mind with tall and fiery men. They might come swarming down on me at any moment (52).

Here the landscape around the house also contains signs of threatening forces.

Previous occupation of the land (and of the house built on it) is signalled through the violence that stirs threateningly beneath its surface. This construction suggests a deep sense of unease with the idea of prior occupation, and a fear that what has been repressed will become apparent. The violence may be a manifestation of the nature of that which is repressed, or an indication of the force of repression. In settler narratives the savage nature frequently assumed of the indigene suggests the inevitability of violent action, yet “heroic acts” often revolve around the violence inflicted on the indigene by the white settler. As Goldie argues, “[v]iolence is yet one more of the standard commodities through which the indigene as imaginative textual creation is valorised” (86). This violence is often constructed in parallel with forces of sexual attraction. Fear and temptation are standard companions in settler texts of interaction with the indigene. The resulting tension is expressed in

[m]any of the words associated with indigene violence [which] suggest the gothic romance in their direct association with satanic powers. Words such as

‘devil’, ‘fiend’, and ‘demon’ are ubiquitous in nineteenth-century images of the indigene in [Australia, New Zealand and Canada] (87).

The snake-like grasses lashing at Steve and the tall fiery men both have satanic connotations. Steve’s description of her encounter with the house continues:

I stared round at myself and my property, at my naked and beautiful arms, shining in the sun, at the black silken horse under me, and the delicate leather of the saddle and the bridle. I dug a frightened heel into the horse’s side and fled back the way I had come with a mad heart beating in terror (52).

Goldie speaks of the “twin poles of attraction and repulsion” in the “semiotic field of the indigene”, referring to tropes such as the tempting “dusky maiden” and the terrifyingly “fiendish warrior” (15).

Steve’s response to the figures that haunt the countryside in and around the deserted house reflects another aspect of the fear felt in confrontation with the uncontained other: the frisson of that fear. As Goldie notes, “[i]n the frisson provided by the violent indigene, the treacherous redskin can be a figure of temptation” and for the reader of the “detailed portraits of indigenous violence” common in nineteenth-century texts, “[w]hether the violence is by the indigene or to the indigene, the text’s description of evil creates the pleasure of the text” (89). While Steve’s description of herself evokes the fragile vulnerability of one faced by ungovernable forces, the sensuality of the description also speaks of the sexual frisson of the imagined violent encounter. Furthermore, as suggested by Goldie’s argument, the violence that Steve imagines embodied in the house and its surrounds may be not only by an unknowable other, but also may result from violence done to that other.

Through the oscillating representations of emptiness and presence in “That House” and the other abandoned houses of Langley’s novels, and the play of time and

space evident in their depiction, these structures perform as monuments to the settler landscape of 1920s and 30s Australia. In a discussion of the significations of the monument, Tompkins argues,

monuments encapsulate complicated (and even contradictory) constructions of memory, culture and history. In other words, while monuments suggest and reinforce a plenitude of cultural signification, they frequently identify a substantial cultural absence... They may be designed to reduce the anxiety associated with Australian space and place by commemorating an official national history, but many monuments... serve a different function: marking the traces of spatial anxiety in the landscape of “settlement” (44).

Many monuments in Australia are erected to commemorate settlers who actively, or less directly, dispossessed Aboriginal people. Tompkins refers to Jack Davis’s play, *Barungin*, in which one character notes “[e]very town - every little one-horse town in Australia – has a war memorial... [but] [t]he names of the streets... rivers... and towns celebrate our murderers” (Tompkins 66; Davis 55). Monuments are definitive of both time and place. In Langley’s novels, the deserted houses scattered across her landscapes act as memorials to the occupation of Australia by white settlers, and to a pride in colonial activity that was largely unquestioned at the time. Julian Thomas notes that, during the time in which Langley’s Australian novels were set, confidence in white Australia was at its zenith (130). However, images of decay associated with the houses complicate the memorialisation of settlement and pride in settlement; the material degradation contributes to alternative interpretive possibilities. Formulations of the uncanny, suggested by the presence of absence in the deserted buildings further accommodate multiple interpretations, and the containment of multiple users, of both the space within the houses and the space that the houses inhabit.

James Young observes: “traditionally, the monument has been defined as that which by its seemingly land-anchored permanence could also guarantee the permanence of a particular idea or memory attached to it” (3). As static structures that assert the trope of the ruin, like the columns placed in Versailles, the deserted houses act as symbols of historical presence, and memorialise the occupation of the land by settlers. The number, and wide-spread nature of the houses, asserts the vigour of white settlement; and the fact that they were constructed as dwelling places associates the act of settlement with house and home, eliding the indigenous loss of house and home that accompanied settlement of Australia. Yet these houses are no longer used as homes, and the decay associated with the trope of the ruin resists the illusion of permanence typical of the conventional monument. As entities that are in the process of change, of becoming something else, or almost nothing, the monumental qualities of the abandoned houses are subsumed and the houses act more as counter-monuments. They are, using Lefebvre’s spatial definitions, constructed as representations of a dominant ideology, but also act as representational spaces of resistance that work to unsettle that ideology. As a memorial structure that is designed to deconstruct or slowly disappear, that is, in effect, anti-monumental, the counter-monument “aim[s]... not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear... not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desanctification” (Young 30).

The abandoned house in Langley’s novels performs as both monument and counter-monument. As a monument to white settlement, the abandoned house reifies national fictions, even if there is some anxiety evoked in this memorialising. However, “[w]hile the anxiety that monuments provoke evokes some sort of absence, counter-monuments play more overtly with that absence” (Tompkins 47). The erosion of the physical integrity of the contents of the houses suggests, not a loss of cultural

information, as would be the case in a static monument, but the assertion of a different kind of cultural knowledge. As Desilvey argues: “cultural memory proceeds not through reflection on a static memorial remnant, but on the process that slowly pulls the remnant into other ecologies and expressions of value” (328). The process of change symbolised by the houses speaks not of the establishment and maintenance of settlement, but of a change in settlement, and the potential end of it. As a counter-monument the collection of deserted houses memorialises the disruption of connection to a homeland, the loss of possession, the loss of home. It speaks of the gaps and oversights in the contemporary narratives of nationhood. Overtly this speaks of Steve’s sense of dislocation and, at the same time, social conditions resulting from the drought of the early 30s. Barely discernable, but reflected in this memorialisation is the parallel displacement and disenfranchisement of the Aboriginal workers elided by Langley.

The memorialising of indigenous unsettlement is only suggested by the space of absence in Langley’s Australian novels, and adumbrates a (faint) fracturing in the narrative of white occupation there. In the texts set in New Zealand, memorialising of the indigene is not only overt, but works to confirm the dominant ideology. Where Steve’s evocations of settlement in Australia focus on the (dis)placement of the settler (which in turn reflects the contemporary condition of the indigene), in Eve’s depictions of New Zealand the narrative of colonial activity is situated in her observations of the indigenous people, the Maori. The presence of Aboriginal people in Langley’s Australia is, on the whole, only detectable in traces of their absence, but Maori are highly represented in Langley’s depiction of New Zealand. Yet, modulations of presence and absence are also apparent in Langley’s representation of Maori: the terms of their presence evoke their predicted future as an inevitable absence.

Spatially, Maori are frequently constructed as an absence or a fading presence in Langley's novels; they are commonly represented as figures in the imagination of the white New Zealander, and situated only in the past. When Maori are situated in the present they are figured as doomed entities, with no coherent future. This is a common observation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Johnston and Lawson comment:

[t]he frequent "scientific" observation of the "dying race" in the nineteenth (and indeed the twentieth) century enabled a narrative of ethical indigenisation in which the "settler" simply assumed the place of the disappearing indigene without the need for violence (or, of course, the designation "invader") (7-8).

Yet while New Zealand colonial literature often features the Maori as "disappearing", they are not invisible. While presumed to be dwindling in numbers, as a romantic figure the Maori is an iconic feature of the New Zealand colonial experience, and repeatedly discussed, and memorialised. Eve records: "I had won a prize with a poem on Ratana, called 'Black Sticks', due I think to the last scene in Katherine Susanna Pritchard's book, *Coonardoo, or The Well in the Shadow*. This poem with its sad hint of the Maori as a dying race, told on all men" ("Dublin Street" 202). Her sentiment is not uncommon. "Maorilands" by Arthur Adams asserts, "- though skies are fair above her,/ Newer nations white press onward:/ Her brown warriors' fight is over - / One by one they yield their place, Peace-slain chieftains of her race" (3). As Stafford and Williams comment, Adams's verse: "conveys the mournful conviction that the ancient 'type' of the Maori is fading away and needs to be memorialised" (111). Yet, the terms of this demise are not clear; as Stafford and Williams comment, "in the 'dying race' writing of late colonial New Zealand, we do not find a solid uniformity of opinion as to what the term meant: extinction, absorption or adaptation" (128).

Versions of all three of these constructions of the death of Maori are visible in Langley's evocations of the race.

In Langley's Australian novels, spectral presences in the landscape not only articulate past occupation, but also suggest repressed knowledge of that (indigenous) occupation. At the same time they may speak of contemporary indigenous presence, which is also formulated as an absence. In New Zealand, Eve evokes a haunted land in which the spirits of previous occupants hover, but make no claims on the living. Eve marries in New Zealand, and early one sunny morning when Eve and her husband Hilary walk through the gate of the Auckland property where they are living, Eve has a vision of "a splendid brown vivid living Maori warrior [kneeling] spear in hand on the very path". She recounts that he:

shone and sparkled like the dew immortally [...] On that wet brown yellow path the great warrior knelt in the glittering sunshine that had evoked him from his grave, and yet he in the land of death and we, in the land of the living, looked on each other and were silent, for I never spoke of it ("Last, Loveliest" 193-4).

Unlike the figures that haunt the abandoned houses in Australia, the Maori warrior is not only visible but sparkles in the sunlight. Despite his being a warrior, no sense of threat emanates from him. His warrior status is purely a construction of previous existence. His spear will remain in his hand and he will remain kneeling, frozen in a moment from the past. Unable to leave the "land of death" he can only gaze silently at Eve. He represents a construction of Maori derived from what Stafford and Williams term "the complacent assumption among white New Zealanders that Maori will fade as a living race to be replaced by a mythical version of their past, suitable for romantic art and tourist postcards" (111).

Eve feels close to a woman she calls Maori Gran, who is her landlady for a time. When Eve hears that Maori Gran is dying, she visits, and says, “I didn’t want to leave her for I mightn’t see her again. And never more would we sit on the sunny verandah and talk and weep over the Maori race” (“Remote” 213). With Maori Gran’s help, Eve imagines Maori as figures of a past that doesn’t include white New Zealanders. Maori Gran tells her “the old tales of the old tribes, the Ngapuhi, the Hau Hau and [Gran’s] own tribe the Tamahine”. Eve says,

I heard it all. And how Hughie her brother and she lived in a raupo whare in the bush, and how the wild Ngapuhi tribes of the North were feared for their fighting, and how the chiefs used to speak to their tribal members in a most authoritative fashion. You felt that they lived in a state of immense savagery and immense civilisation conjoined, but pictures came to your mind of native clothing, bird cloaks and meres and war clubs and spears still waving and threatening over it all (“Last, Loveliest” 86).

In Gran’s stories, the combination of savagery and civilisation makes the Maori chiefs memorable. In 1901 Alfred Grace argued that Maori were the cause of their own deaths due to the same “immense savagery” that Gran remembers: “Tribe conquered and even exterminated tribe, but nothing could assuage the Maori’s thirst for fighting” (vi). For Eve, the connection between the vigorous activity of the Northern tribes and the present time is the conversation of a dying, elderly, and passive Maori woman. The fierce and authoritative chiefs are part of a Maori golden age that has little to do with contemporary life in New Zealand, and their vigour is juxtaposed with the degradation of that golden age as represented by ailing Maori Gran. The Maori chiefs are historical artefacts of a past life represented by images of exotic goods that glint before Eve as though placed in a diorama. Eve is an avid observer, recorder, and

collector of information such as that revealed in Maori Gran's stories. She adopts this figure repeatedly in the New Zealand novels, leading her interactions with Maori to seem like a series of anthropological investigations rather than the friendships that she, at times, professes to have cultivated.

Eve and Hilary collect Maori artefacts. These objects are described, like the savage chiefs, to suggest Maori involvement in the demise of their own people and the loss of their prized possessions. Hilary gives Eve an old greenstone tiki. He says, "A Maori pawned it [...] See, the hole has worn away; it is so old and the green stone is beginning to crumble. Yes, it's old, very old. I had to pay dearly for it" ("Remote" 178). Another time Hilary comments that he is in possession of a Maori skull. He says: "My father picked it up around Piha. He said that a tribe got caught there on a cliff and had either to fall into the sea or on to the spears of their enemies" ("Remote" 237). Steve/Eve's observations of Maori construct them also as artefacts, as though they are specimens in a display, rather than fellow human beings and citizens of the nation. When Steve first arrives in New Zealand¹⁴, she catches the train from Wellington to Paekakariki. She notes:

[on] a hot warm platform as we left Thorndon station, I saw what I thought was a dry brown man, a baked man, a man of awful age, deathless, one who had not died, one who was brown and tattooed, dressed flash like an American negro, a flat mask of a face, mummified looking, shining, dead, expressionless [...] And after much searching about, fore and aft, I thought at last, this must be a Maori... an old one, dry of mask and brown and shining and awfully

¹⁴ At this point, Steve has not yet decided to change her name and persona to Eve. This happens only a few days later.

deathless and dried up... a wonderful specimen, preserved in the memory of me in entirety ("Cloud" 9).

In this extreme example of objectification, in which the term "specimen" is openly employed, Steve stammers a repetitive list of epithets, as though she is circling an exhibit, fixated on points of his appearance and unable to see his humanity. She describes the Maori man as though he is a relic from the past, "preserved" and "mummified", deathless but, in appearance, post death. The allusion to cannibalism in the description of him as "a dry brown man, a baked man" situates him as unmistakably other, and pre-European. The repetition of references to the man's face as a flat mask and a dry mask, in the context of his "dried up" appearance, is suggestive of the collection of Maori heads by early explorers and colonialists, as is Steve's concluding remark: he has become part of a collection of curios stored in her memory. As a specimen of the past, it is as though he lives on into the future only in Steve's gaze and within her memory of the encounter.

As the subject of anthropological interest Maori are repeatedly framed by Eve's gaze in a relationship that replicates the historical construction of the explorer and the "savage" in which the indigene is figured by the explorer as part of nature. Todorov notes in *The Conquest of America*, that Columbus's "allusions to the inhabitants of the islands always occur amid his notations concerning nature, somewhere between birds and trees" (34). Eve's description of a trip to the Auckland Zoo suggests not only the construction of the indigene as part of the natural world, but, like Columbus in his assemblage of images of biological interest, situates them as part of a collection. Eve wanders the paths of the zoo, describing the flamingos, the gibbons, the tiger, the panther. She continues her description of the big cats:

[T]hey loll and they walk and they fight it out and eat like the Mayas of the city of the world, the cities of the world. Hotter grows the day, and Maoris flock in brown dozens, lying at last under the palms with coloured bottles of drink and straw channels in their hands. An old Maori in a white panama hat lies with his shining veined hands under his head near the fat wahine and cries harshly to the little girl running around them, 'Haere mai, Akarana, te nga kare mai'. Or something. Bisi dines with us, very beautifully ("Remote" 192).

Eve's description of the exotic scene runs seamlessly from the animals in the enclosures to the Maori families under the palms. Like the flamingos, the Maori gather in flocks, brown rather than pink. Like the "striped seductive tiger" and the "spotted panther" the Maori loll on the ground in the hot sun. The tiger "leans with heavy hands crossed" and the "old Maori" lies with his hands "under his head", harshly calling out sounds that almost mean something.

In Langley's novels Maori are ghosts in the land they once fiercely occupied, locked in the past due to aggressive ways that resulted in self-imposed extinction. They are frequently visible as specimens of that past, existing as the living dead. Yet, at the zoo, the Maori are not even visible as remnants of a glorious past. The Maori families are described in terms of group behaviour, lolling in the heat sipping drink from bottles, with the young girl running amongst them. This attitude is contrasted with the assumption of individuality of Eve and her husband, and the stiffness conveyed in Eve's description of Bisi, Eve's daughter, who "dines [with the two adults] very beautifully". The Maori at the zoo are depicted as animal-like, part of the exhibit rather than visitors, and dissociated from the white community represented by Eve and her family.

At the same time as Eve situates the Maori as either not quite human, or as people of the past, she speaks of them as people who are living in the present but who have no future. As well as the vision of Maori as a race that is effectively already extinct (or having never existed as “people”), Eve’s observations of Maori assert a commonly held contemporary view that Maori are a dying race due to the high numbers of their people suffering from European infectious diseases. When living in Wanganui and working as a journalist, Eve visits the nearby Ratana community in order to write about it. Eve refers directly to the illness she witnesses there. The first time she visits, she notes,

I came to a large hut like a lepers’, full of old people all badly diseased and lifting up to the glassless windows their mummified and diseased arms and looking up through their heavily bandaged eyes into the daylight of the country. What an awful place. A disease camp (“Cloud” 248).

Despite being repelled by this sight, Eve ventures further into the complex of buildings and meets Hotu, “the local doctor, the local medical man” who shows her around. When she comments on the classical good looks of the Maori youths, he replies by commenting “But [...] we die like flies. Due to TB, mostly”. He explains that those in the “sick huts and sheds” are “mostly TB cases” and

that a doctor, a medical practitioner came out from Wanganui now and then to attend to them, but didn’t do any good. Then evening was growing cold and the coughing of these people was awful to hear and their thin frames shook with it, and I was much saddened by the sound of it, among the church bells and the rest of God, the coughing prevailed harshly (“Cloud” 250-1).

On another visit, Eve walks through the “big whare” looking for Hotu: “A terrible Thing lies on the vile stretcher under the uncurtained window. A woman thing.

Bandaged. Blotched. One eyed. Bony armed. Moveless. Patient. A hostess to death” (“Cloud” 293).

Hotu is not only a local doctor, he is also an artist, and his work contextualises the scenes of dying tuberculosis sufferers. He shows Eve “oils of some genius, quite great, framed on the wall” in one of which he has painted “[a] great dry white field of grass with bare naked trees standing dead among them” (“Cloud” 249). This evocation of the death of a great forest is situated on the same walls as “awful anatomical drawings” painted directly onto the wall surface: “the entire anatomy of man, shamelessly and pitilessly painted for us... in reds and yellows. Like cave drawings. A battlefield of blood and golden rivers” (“Dublin Street” 13).¹⁵

The terrible visions of death, disease, and bodily suffering are mixed with images of dirt at the marae. Eve describes kitchens “of unspeakable filth, darkness and vile holes filled with pools of fearful water”. She notes, “how hovel and low it all was, the smell and the blackness” and “the stinking dusk [inside] while outside the sun shines”. Eve records: “[o]ut of the door into the blessed and unlordly sun we came like two Persephones and on into a great sleeping chamber in which every one slumbered. Girls sat up among their cases and blinked at us...” (“Dublin Street” 13). Out in the crowds of people, “a fine faced woman dipped tea cups in water so dirty that it could easily have been distilled into ink” (“Dublin Street” 17). The dirt and the darkness inside the buildings on the marae, the people sleeping during the day, oblivious to the sun outside, the allusions to the underworld, all describe a corrupted unhealthy people in a state of irrevocable descent.

¹⁵ Langley’s first New Zealand novel, “Land of the Long White Cloud”, and her second, “Demeter of Dublin Street”, both contain descriptions of Eve during the time she lives in Wanganui. In this period, Eve visits the nearby Ratana Pa several times, and each time she enters Hotu’s rooms and observes his paintings (the ones on canvas and those painted directly on the walls).

The evocation of the demise of Maori through disease and unhealthy living conditions is juxtaposed with other discussions of racial death which, ironically suggest a kind of hybrid vigour. To use Stafford and Williams's terms: as well as extinction, which Eve frequently suggests has effectively already occurred, the imminent death of the Maori race is evoked as inevitable due to absorption or adaptation. A few months after arriving in New Zealand, Eve observes that Maori people:

had the run of the country and lived as they liked and did what they pleased, and the New Zealanders as a whole appeared to cherish them and live with them amiably and married them and got on well with them and they seemed to me to be the makings of fine husbands and wives and I admired them more than I admired the white people, or pakeha as they called them ("Cloud" 251).

This positive impression of the integration of white New Zealanders and Maori suggests a future where the two people form one society. Where miscegenation is feared as a corrupting force in Steve's discussions of Australian society, here it is posited as a positive means of ensuring a secure future for both Pakeha and Maori. Marriage between Maori and Pakeha, and the absorption of Maori into European culture was generally seen as the only way for Maori to survive. This assimilation of Maori and Pakeha into one society is most commonly discussed by Eve in terms of the Maori adaptation to European cultural modes. However, she is not consistent, and at times seems to suggest that this adaptation is impossible or, even, unnatural.

Eve writes an article called "Parrots' Holiday" for a Sydney paper, in which the "parrots" are the Maori she observes at a large sporting event at the Ratana marae. An extract of this article is included in Langley's novel "Demeter of Dublin Street". In it Eve explains, "I am not dealing with parrots as the ornithologist knows them; but

[of] the five or six hundred Maoris [at] the rough Sports Ground at Ratana pah". She writes of "handsome brown parrots [...] wearing hats, coats and boots. Parrots carrying ice cream cones in their claws. Parrots standing between two equidistant equations, chewing gum and opening and closing a la Anglaise beaks and claws" ("Dublin Street" 18). Presumably supposed to be amusing, this article, like the description of Maori visitors to the zoo, depicts the Maori at the sports meeting as animals; but more than this, Eve describes them as animals dressed up as humans and "parroting" human behaviour. Eve evokes the mix of Maori and European culture she observes there as an unsuccessful imitation of European ways. Colonial illustrations of Maori in European dress often depict dandified or ridiculous figures. In a parody of this attitude, Crosby reports that "Northland Maori put on the white man's clothes, often upside down and backward" (245). Contradicting her view, noted earlier, that Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders seemed to be forming a successfully integrated society, Eve fixes the Ratana Maori and their sporting opponents as static figures unable to adapt, but driven to shallow imitation. While the European clothes, and the food that she observes being enjoyed, are evidence of the absorption of at least some aspects of Pakeha culture into that of the Maori, Eve depicts it as an unnatural situation. Rather than a sign of the beginnings of a positive union, Eve describes the adoption of European cultural signifiers as a form of degradation of "natural" hierarchies.

The social Darwinism evident in Eve's depiction of the Ratana Maori as parrots "informed racial discussion in the late nineteenth century, in particular the ideas of the dying away of the Maori and the inevitability of the triumph of the stronger race in the struggle for survival" (Stafford and Williams 129). Yet, in New Zealand, as already noted, there was no deeply entrenched horror of miscegenation, and assimilation of Maori into the dominant white population was promoted. As

Stafford and Williams note, this attitude “is reflected in the literature and the ethnological writings of the time”. They comment: “Aryanism was a key intellectual component of this ideology” (129). Aryanism was used to attempt to theorise the active encouragement of the assimilation of Maori into the Pakeha population: in his 1912 book, *Who Are the Maoris?*, Alfred K. Newman, drawing on Edward Tregear, suggested that the Maori race derived from Northern India, and “as part of the Aryan diaspora” were related to the British and thus suitable for assimilation (see Stafford and Williams). Despite Eve’s criticisms of the social conditions of the Ratana marae, there is no doubt that she considers the marae’s inhabitants as “the ragged remnants of a noble race” (“Dublin Street” 16). At the same time as Eve derides the Ratana Maori for their European dress, she admires what she perceives as their classical good looks. When Eve first visits Ratana she is treated kindly by the Maori there, and after lunch is taken out and “showed the people”:

I stared at them deeply. They looked more like Greeks than Maoris to me, an ancient Cretan tribe, by the look of the white quatrefoil affected on all their clothing. Also in the faces of the old I read the unmistakable signs of great race and antiquity. Greek, certainly I thought, from either Minos or Crete, and wondered how they got here [...] Hotu told me that Ratana, the prophet, kept them and cared for them all, some hundreds of them, and when his great acres of wheat were ready they all got to and harvested it. In fact it was a sort of Scythian commune of the old style [...] (“Cloud” 249).

Eve finds both the Maori and what she perceives as their classical attributes attractive. At the sports meeting she records that “a number of cheeky handsome fellows” call out to her from their car. They “looked very Babylonian looking, brown and dazzlingly handsome, glitteringly old...” (“Dublin Street” 14). Like the ruins in the

Australian landscape, the Ratana Maori are granted authority through historical association. More than this, the classical allusions frame the Maori in association with highly sophisticated ancient civilisations. As Stafford and Williams note, Newman proposed that assimilation of Maori would lead to a hybrid race “that would discover something ancient in the process of making something new” (130). Yet, Eve does not completely assert the assimilation that Aryanism proposes. When the young men call to her from their car she says, “I don’t answer. Why? Ought to make all the use I can of this remnant. But, I’m the conventional fool right through” (“Dublin Street” 14).

Langley’s New Zealand novels are set between the early 1930s and the early 40s, some time after the representation of the Maori as a dying race had begun to be seen as misguided, and unsustainable. Arthur Adams’s “Maorilands” is published in 1899, when the formulation is current, but Langley’s memorialising poem, “Black Sticks” is published in 1933. Yet, in the same period that Eve discusses “Black Sticks” with her hostel friend, she records: “Now and then I went out to Ratana and now and then Tomut [...] came into town with Matatata his wife and we wandered splendidly and aloofly around the streets and in and out of the labyrinths of Woolworths looking at all the goods displayed there” (“Dublin Street” 202). She talks of “the Maori youths on bike and foot who give mating whistles to a young face behind which an old mind jeers and smiles a little” (“Dublin Street” 215). Langley and her narrator, Eve, alternate between images of Maori as a dying race, or a people of the past, and representations of them as vividly in life. However, reflected in Eve’s representations of Maori as a dying race is the contemporary situation where most are significantly isolated from mainstream society. The Maori whom Eve meets may not represent the last generations of a noble race, but they are frequently isolated from white mainstream society, politically and culturally. Up until the Maori renaissance of the 1980s, and even since then, many Maori experienced and continue to experience

disenfranchisement. In the 30s many Maori lived in the country on or around a marae and in the depression of that time Maori did not qualify for social welfare payments. Urban Maori were particularly disadvantaged in this situation. However, Eve's romantic and at times florid depictions of Maori are not simply a response to a very real situation of social removal but are also an indication of her literary inclinations. Eve tells a girl in her Wanganui hostel about her visits to Ratana: "I saw things there... I heard things there [...] Could I tell a romantic story of that? Give [Hotu] a conventional form of life? An orthodox place? No. I will write what I see and tie it up with some threads of Beauty" ("Cloud" 329). When Eve studies a book "on Maori history and mythology and habits of life" she recites a list of multisyllabic and sonorous Maori names and says, "It was wonderful stuff in the old days of 1933 when the Maori was a song to me, brown and slender limbed and I was a song to him..." ("Dublin Street" 65-6).

In the New Zealand landscape of Langley's texts, the Maori are monuments to a past: one which is not necessarily their own, but a construction of the colonial imagination. Eve's repeated allusions to Maori as relics of the past, or as a doomed people, draw on dated constructions. Yet, while the "dying race" discourse does not speak accurately of the Maori people, it does have relevance as an indication of contemporary Pakeha attitudes towards Maori. While not diminishing in numbers, Maori were socially invisible to a large number of Pakeha, especially urban Pakeha, in the years Eve lives in New Zealand.¹⁶ While the smooth disappearance of Maori predicted in romantic colonial constructions of New Zealand suggests a conflict-free

¹⁶ Moreover, the dispossession and loss of land that is formulated as a natural result of a race "dying" was not simply of historical concern for Maori. Maori land alienation slowed after the 1920s but until the 1970s, Maori land was often taken for public works in preference to other land, with little compensation.

solution for the nation, the presence of Maori as a socially absent group in New Zealand asserts a situation of unease.

While gaps and fragmentation are an inevitable part of the mutable world that provides a supporting context for Steve/Eve's unstable identity, the active production of loss in these texts describes an absence invoked through conflict. The highly complex staging of absence in Langley's Australian texts situates Steve in a space that uneasily asserts both settlement and unsettlement so that the framework surrounding the concept of "settlement" becomes destabilised. The effacement of the indigene in the settler narrative is reconfigured in Steve's erasure of the Aboriginal workers from her account of the Gippsland fields in which she works. In the context of this erasure, Steve's frequent assertions of dispossession cultivate in the reader an awareness of the contemporary condition of dislocation of the Aborigine. This ironic and inadvertent association is further intimated through the presence of the uncanny in the abandoned houses that are scattered across Langley's Australian landscape, and which signals both past occupation of the landscape and repressed knowledge of that (indigenous) presence. At the same time, the presence of the white settler in the landscape is destabilised in the absence indicated by the abandoned house. The production of absence in Langley's texts complicates the nationalist narrative typical of Steve's settler-position. Occupation of the discursive space of Australia proves to be as much about the shape of absence as the formulation of presence.

Chapter Five

On the Road: The Road as Imagined Space of Home

*Well, we struck the Murrumbidgee near the Yanko in a week,
And passed through old Narrandera and crossed the Burnet Creek.
And we never stopped at Wagga, for we'd Sydney in our eye.
But we camped at Lazy Harry's, on the road to Gundagai.*

(On the Road to Gundagai, Anon)

A place on the map is also a place in history.

(Adrienne Rich 212)

Settler literature, as discussed in the previous chapter, frequently memorialises figures from the past in order to effect the settler project of seemingly non-violent effacement and replacement of the indigene. While memorialisation is a significant thread to the argument which follows, the figures that hover in the spaces discussed below, shimmering in the imagined space of a constructed past, are not indigenous occupants of that space (such as Maori in the colonial literature of New Zealand) but are white settlers associated with a foundational past. Critically, these figures are restless and roving, constantly in motion. In this chapter I address the notion of home that emerges from the shifting patterns of identity, movement and space in Langley's two novels, *White Topee* and "Wild Australia", particularly in the final pages of *White Topee* and

the first half of “Wild Australia”¹⁷. Representations of home in these texts typically turn from conventional connotations of stability or constancy. Whereas home is traditionally constructed around family identity or familiarity, Steve, Langley’s narrator, feels most “at home” in a fluid, evolving situation. In “Wild Australia”, I suggest, rather than being defined by one singular place, home is experienced most potently between places and is best expressed as a sense of unfettered movement. If home is where one feels most “at home”, where one experiences a sense of belonging, then for Steve home is an imagined site sustained by activities associated with travel. Rather than a home based on a sense of family in the traditional sense, Steve imagines herself as “at home” by representing herself as belonging to a continuous and unending stream of travellers who both move along the road, and whose movement contributes to the sense of the road as a vital space.

In “Wild Australia”, Steve undertakes an extended horseback journey, from Metung on the coast of Victoria to the Ovens Valley on the other side of the alps, and on this ride Steve encounters a number of other occupants of the road environment. Frequently these individuals are representations of traveller types in whose characteristics are reflected vital aspects of Steve’s travelling self: Steve meets a young stockman just back from delivering cavalry remounts to India, whose love for Australia contains the colonial tones of the recent expatriate; she watches a young man on a large wool cart drawn by a team of twenty horses drive “at breakneck speed” down the steep slope to a precipitous bridge, with “an awful atmosphere of reckless driving and terrific speed” (135). Later she meets a character straight from

¹⁷ As noted earlier, “Wild Australia” is an unpublished manuscript of a novel. There are three versions of this novel, due to changes made by Langley in response to the concerns of her publishers. The version of “Wild Australia” referred to in this chapter is the third version, in which most of the Oscar Wilde material evident in the first manuscript is excised.

the literature of the road, whose “ponchos and wrappings flow[ed] out good humouredly from every side of him” and who “rode full at [Steve] as though he had been tilting windmills all his life” (152). Most significantly, Steve imagines herself joined on the road by lines of imagined travellers of the past, those heroic white men on whom the ballads and foundational myths of Australia are based: the explorers, the rovers, those who drove the cattle, the bullock trains or the stage coaches across the country. This association with figures central to the colonial narrative both supports and conflicts with Steve’s representations elsewhere, in which a nomadic lifestyle is asserted as expressive of otherness, or marginality. Many of these figures of the past are memorialised in the names of the bridges, creeks, and other features of Steve’s journey. These names, often presented in the form of evocative lists by Steve, formulate word-maps of the landscape that Steve traverses. The lists embedded within the narrative of Steve’s journey manifest geopolitical representations, figuring the play of power historically associated with the mapped terrain. The space of the road, then, asserts the unconstrained sense of openness that is paradigmatic of Steve’s imagined space of home, and at the same time, through the projection of cultural authority, figures the repression and enclosure signalled by white settlement.

Langley’s second novel, *White Topee*, ends with the narrator, Steve, leaving her friends and co-workers and riding off down a dusty path, the road that will take her “towards the far-off Australian Alps” (250). On leaving, despite an awareness of her distant destination, Steve is conscious that her journey is not one that simply traces a path from one point to another. The “long striding strong impatient steps” (250) of her horse are not only taking Steve towards the mountains. Leaving the relative domesticity of Metung, “glad to go and see new country, new colours and shades of earth” Steve thinks of “the miles and years before [her]” (249). As she steps out, she imagines the road ahead as representative of an unfolding, infinite potentiality

of space and time. Representation of the road as a space of openness, expressive of movement outward in space and forward in time, leads this journey to contrast with significant aspects of Steve's initial journey into Gippsland in *The Pea-Pickers*. Rather than the "road ahead" as visualised by Steve on leaving Metung in *White Topee*, the initial journey of *The Pea-Pickers* is depicted as the "road back". Described in the opening chapters of that novel, Steve's journey is notably depicted as one back in time to Mia's girlhood, the days of Henry Lawson and "old Gippsland tunes". There are obvious similarities between the two journeys. As in that earlier journey, Steve's current path as she rides out on her horse will take her to her maternal homeland. The road to the alps winds through land still owned by Mia's family, past the family hotel run by Steve's aunt, and as she travels along it, Steve encounters several of her cousins, who occupy the side of the road as naturally as dusty signposts. However, the overwhelmingly nostalgic tone of the journey planned at the beginning of *The Pea-Pickers* is absent from Steve's departure from Metung. Though Steve's path will pass through the geographical locus of Mia's family stories, this location is not the focus of the journey.

Significantly, when planning this horse-trek, Steve ponders alternative travel routes and attempts to discover the whereabouts of a rumoured back road to the mountains, which will save her "from having to go near [her] relations at Tambo Crossing or Ensay" (236). She worries:

"If I go anywhere near [my relations], and say that I'm going to ride over the Alps, they'll stop me, or raise the hair on my head with tales of fatal rides that ended in plunges to death from the top of the highest peak, and they'll want me to leave the horse there and go over with them by car. Dreadful!" (236).

After a comic interlude in the bar in Bruthen, the difficulties of finding the “back track” are established, but the possibility of alternative paths has been raised, with the openness of choice and chance implicit in that possibility. At the same time, sites related to Mia’s family no longer represent the magnetic focus of romantic longing described by Langley in *The Pea-Pickers*. Mia’s family are now viewed as potential obstacles to Steve’s progress, and the locations of Mia’s childhood reminiscences are figured as part of the landscape through which Steve will ride rather than as her destination. Though Steve’s journey will physically take her to that “home” previously longed for, it is the journey itself which is now the focus of Steve’s longing. The road with its sense of movement is presented as a more significant space than that of Steve’s maternal homeland. In this journey, that which previously figured as an ancestral home is now perceived as part of the landscape, and it is the road that forms the imagined space of home.

In her introduction to *The Penguin Book of the Road*, Delia Falconer makes the comment that “in [the Australian] collective imagination the road is usually a place traversed on our way to somewhere better” (xi), suggesting that to occupy the space of the road is to inhabit the ephemeral space of the in-between. Modes of restlessness, movement, and reiteration signify the space of the road. Traversing the landscape, evocative of movement towards a distant horizon, the imagined space of the road is frequently viewed in opposition to that of the home, with the road either leading towards or away from the home. In “Free Way, the Hume Highway as a spatial narrative of nation”, Kiera Lindsey discusses the complex relationship she perceives between the imagined spaces of the road and the home. She notes,

road and home appear interdependent and coterminous. They define and determine, complement and compel each other. ‘Home’ provides ‘the road’

with purpose, direction and closure, while the road offers entrance to and escape from the claustrophobic confines of 'home' (1).

Lindsey further suggests: "the road is a site where home is longed for, just as home has often been a place where the road is romanced" (2). However, this conventional opposition between road and home is refused by Langley in "Wild Australia". This novel, which chronologically follows *White Topoe*, describes the journey from Metung as Steve makes her way to the Alps and across them. In Lindsey's discussion, freedom of movement is engendered by "escape" from the home. In "Wild Australia" it is within that movement which is facilitated by the space of the road that Steve feels "at home," rather than in the relatively still "confines" of the spaces more conventionally viewed as home.

Langley's treatment of the resting places within which Steve spends the night at the end of each day's travel reflects the assertion of the road as home in this text. The more that these resting places speak of the life of the road, the more Steve feels "at home" in them. The more that they are figured as a withdrawal from the activity of the road, rather than an extension of it, the more disquiet Steve feels. At the end of her first day's ride, when Steve approaches the keeper of an old posting station and asks him if he has "anywhere [she] could sleep for the night" (16) she reveals her true preference: "But somehow, even as I spoke, and I was always like this ... I was lying out in the dry grass, watching the stars, and not happy about the dark roof overhead that he might offer me" (16). However, she is happy to accept when he replies, "There's a shed at the back, part of the stables where they kept the horses [...] The bullockies from Omeo use this place as a change-over if anything happens to the team. You can sleep there if you want to" (16). Sleeping in a shelter that is regularly filled with animals and people who work the road, Steve is able to remain within the

psychic space of the road even while at rest. Her desire to remain within that space is illustrated when she is offered a hot wash. She chooses to take the tin basin “out on to the bench outside, so that all the Gippsland drovers and bullockies could see me as they passed, rolling oathfully down the Tambo Valley with the wool and the hides bound for the Rio Grande of Melbourne” (25). However, though she goes out the door to perform her ablutions in the sight of those passing by, Steve’s description of the calendars that decorate the interior of the posting station suggests that images of the activity of the road permeate the space of the building:

Calendars on the wall with Captains Moonlight and Thorn sticking up the old brown coaches at the end of fine blue revolvers, while around their necks, their red and white deep living and vivid coloured handkerchiefs blazed rubily under graceful white moonlight silken swinging eucalyptus with soft long grey misty leaves. And under this incoherence of art of mystery, greetings of a seasonal sort from Bruthen and Omeo shopkeepers and grain merchants (26).

The calendars refer to both the historical activities and the commercial life of the road. In Steve’s description of the calendar illustrations, the road is represented as a place of unlawful activity, a space outside the social structures of rule and regulation. This space is historicised by situating it within the lifetimes of long-dead bush-rangers. Presumably supplied by the shopkeepers and merchants whose names emblazon them, the calendars are also reminders of the commercial activity that provides the reason for much of the road traffic. The logos and business names assert the road as a representation of the space of commercial and agricultural trade central to local society. The calendars juxtapose representations of the road as a space both within society and beyond its boundaries. This juxtaposition reflects aspects of Steve’s evocation of the road as home, which are discussed later in this chapter.

When Steve first dismounts to enter the posting station, her body feels “stiff and hard as though the rafters and crosspieces of the old slab hut had flung themselves into [her] being and were [her] structure” (16). Overtly referring to the effects of a long day’s ride on her body, this description also encourages the reader to perceive the close relationship between Steve, the rider, and the basic dwelling which is figured as contiguous with the road. While she is at home on her journey, the hut where she is to spend the night is also at home in her. As Steve later prepares for sleep, this mingling of body and building is echoed by the mixing of her mind with the natural world outside. While sheltered by the roof overhead, there are “wide cracks” in the walls of the slab hut, and the night air wafts in through the dark interior just as Steve’s thoughts drift out beyond the walls: “Outside, shadow by shadow one’s thoughts went ranging over the wide long thousands of miles of Australia, and wave after wave of dry earth and scrub and unknown creek beds and rivers came swimming into the mind, ecstatic with the odour of continent and of leaves” (19). Further, beyond this freeform expansion of thoughts, while bodily in repose, Steve’s mind explores the road ahead, mentally continuing her journey:

Often in the night, I woke up and was glad that I was in my native land, its great names ahead of me in the long day ahead... its dry town carrying the great names, Ensay, Tongio, Omeo, Cobungra. These echo and thrill with a savage splendour through the soul in the night. The darkness of Australia came surging through the slabs of the beloved old hut... (19).

The porous enclosure of the stables building and its associations with the bustle of the road both enable and extend Steve’s relationship with the road outside. Lying in the dark, with the names of the towns ahead pulsing through her thoughts, Steve remains within the imagined space of the road.

As the list of names runs through Steve's mind, the imagined road as it crosses the land, fills the space of the hut. This assertion of the pre-eminence of the road is concretely figured in Steve's later description of the hotel in Swifts Creek. Notably, in this small town reached by Steve at the end of the third day of riding, the road runs straight through the middle of the hotel establishment. Steve describes "[o]ne hotel, split in half with one half on one side of the road and the other half opposite it" (143). She explains: "[t]he large hotel had had the new road run through it and made the best of it. A concrete faced newish place on your left as you rode up the wide street and an old wooden structure with bedrooms and stables all mixed up together on your right" (144).

As if to emphasise the way that the activity of the road has permeated the space of the hotel, when Steve asks for stabling for her horse, the hotelier:

br[ings] the horse up on to the verandah and [leads] it through the front door and right down the long wooden floored hall with its echoing heavy metal tread, and past the bedrooms, down to the stable which was just around the corner, in a sort of square medieval court contained in the hotel building (145).

The horse, here symbolic of road traffic and movement through the outdoors, is led through the heart of the hotel building. The echoing sound of the horse's shod feet on the bare boards presumably reverberates through the bedrooms they pass, entering those rooms conventionally thought of as spaces of deep interiority. The juxtaposition of the traditionally private space of the bedroom with the life of the road is also figured in Steve's description of the verandah of the hotel, which has all "the star boarders" seated along it watching the activity of the road. Steve remembers, "I rode over to where the long row of men in white sat on the forms under the hot verandah, behind the forms the snowy white curtains blew out from their windows in the

bedrooms” (144). The soft white material of the bedroom curtains billows into the verandah, mingling with that interactive space that faces the road and, for Langley, forms part of its fabric.

In *12 Edmonstone Street*, David Malouf describes the space of the verandah as “no-man’s-land, border zones that keep contact with the house and its activities on one face but are open on the other to the street, the night and all the vast, unknown areas beyond” (20). Bill Ashcroft refers to the verandah as “that penumbral space” (42), a space of partial shade or shadow around a thing. For Ashcroft, the “thing” defined by the penumbra of the verandah is the building it is attached to; he comments that “The verandah is not the surplus of the building but the excess which redefines the building itself” (42). However, he also notes “It is the bi-focal orientation of the verandah which gives it its resonance” (42). The term bi-focal suggests that with only a shift in perspective, the verandah may be perceived as focussed primarily on the outside world rather than that building it is connected to. In “Wild Australia”, it is the space of the road that is defined by the verandah rather than the attached building; for Langley the verandah is phenomenologically part of the road. The gathered men, mysterious in their white clothes, the stories of the road, the air breathing out of the bedrooms behind, are all situated within the space of the road and construct that space. For Steve, the verandah is the most desirable part of the hotel at Swifts Creek. After her horse is stabled, she describes her walk across to the dining hall on the other side of the road: “So, looking once more fascinated along that silent length of white clothed men on the sagging form under the dark verandah I dragged myself away from what I felt to be the [most] marvellous story in the whole world, and walked over to the other part of the hotel ...” (146).

Preferring to spend the night in spaces closely associated with the life of the road, Steve consciously stresses these associations in her accounts of these places.

Parallel to these descriptions are evocations of disquiet in the resting places where Steve feels either removed from the space of the road as she imagines it, or where she feels resistance to her progress along the road. As Steve approaches the family hotel at Tambo Crossing, the verandah of the hotel is the site of initial interaction with the inhabitants. However, while Steve finds the verandah space in the hotel at Swifts Creek is highly desirable due to its proximity to the road and association with road travel, this verandah space elicits a mixed response. Steve describes rounding the last bend in the road before reaching “the old hotel”:

[...] through the deep soft silent dust, I rode, until I saw the tropically lighted long verandah stand in the hot summer evening before me. The ‘Sir Walter Scott.’ A long and low hotel [...] A long low tropical looking verandah went right round it and on slender forms along it, in front, overlooking the Tambo river which swirled shallowly down below, sat two women in white and a few men, speaking in soft murmuring Australian voices [...] Voices related to time and things unknown [...] I felt uneasy and unhappy and excited. (42-3).

Steve asks for food and lodging; her horse is stabled and she is taken inside the hotel building and given the last bedroom at the end of a corridor of rooms. Steve is excitedly distracted by the proximity of her aunt and cousins and accepts her room, though it is physically removed from the road and its associated activities. However, the next morning she discovers “a red book lying on the bed” (86):

Tales of Mystery and Imagination by Edgar Allen Poe! Very strange [...] I opened the pages and toppled with the author into the whirling churning earthquake of doom which was the Fall of the House of Usher.

Still, even to this day, I am haunted by that tragic place, the yellow lights there and the voices crying out in the gloom; the half seen ancient furniture, the

forgotten curtains the grass on the turning swerve of the flying earth and the downward cascade of all things living all over the world as the gigantic house of Usher fell (86).

The unease generated by Poe's prose echoes the disquiet felt by Steve as she approached the verandah of the hotel earlier. Though she seems genuinely pleased to be associated with her family, and enjoys their company, the enclosure of Steve's hotel bedroom and the psychic disturbance evoked by the book on the bed contrast with the openness and the feeling of ease generated by those spaces more connected with the road.

This negative representation of the bedroom in the family hotel is consistent with assertions of the family as obstacles to Steve's journey. They are repeatedly figured as offering gestures of resistance to her representation of the road. In "the Australian twilight" of her first day of riding this road, Steve encounters a mob of sheep shepherded by two men. She comments,

One of them looked to me like Bill Davidson, my cousin Willie, as we used to call him. A sunburnt young fellow who looked at me so long and so intensely that I was sure he knew me as a relative. He halted right in the middle of the bridge and stared at me, but I made no sign of recognition [...]

Suppose he rode up to me and said, 'Is that you Steve?'

'Yes Willie. That's me.'

'Where are you heading for?'

'The Tambo. Then I'm going up over the alps down into the Ovens Valley.'

'Godstruth! Not on that thing?' Indicating the racer.

There you are. More trouble (10).

When Steve later tells her aunt about her travel plans, “Aunt Lou” replies, “[o]ver the alps? Good heaven, what an awful ride” (48). While Steve’s aunt and cousins make no attempt to stop her travelling to the alps and riding across them, and their lack of encouragement is no hindrance to her physical journey, Steve perceives their attitude as a threat to the movement that is vital to the space of the road as she imagines it. In the imagined space of the road she enjoys unfettered movement, but the reactions of “Aunt Lou” and her sons are perceived as potentially inhibiting that movement.

Aunt Lou and her sons are not simply disapproving of Steve’s ambition to travel over the mountains. They repeatedly question Steve’s decision to make the journey on horseback and urge her to take a more modern form of transport, as predicted by the barman earlier, in Bruthen, who asks Steve, before she leaves Metung, why she doesn’t just ask her cousin Clive to run her “over in the car. Better than riding” (237). In the hotel at Tambo Crossing, Steve’s cousin Tommy tells her that the days of “[m]en who rode horses for hundreds of miles all across Australia”, days that Steve openly identifies with, are “gone, and the cars rule the roads now” (82-3). When she replies, “[d]ashed if I care, as long as I can ride over as they used to do in the old days”, he takes her “outside to where a couple of cars stood dusty and white. ‘Now, Steve’, [he says] ‘I could take you over to Bright within a few hours and land you there cool as a cucumber without a speck of dust on you’” (83).

The offers of a lift over the mountains throw into relief the theatrical nature of Steve’s endeavour, emphasising the artifice of her project. As Alexander Cook argues, “At some level [...] re-enactment is theatre. It is a dramatic staging of the quest for ‘the historical’” (11). The artifice of Steve’s project asserts the sense of active construction of place and identity in Langley’s novels. As a re-enactment of pioneer activity, Steve’s horse-back journey is an attempt to not only “make the past seem deceptively present and concrete”, but also to frame that past to fit the agenda of the

present (Cook 13). As Steve later argues, her destination is not the focus of her journey: “I think as part of the youth of this country, one should ride down the ways of the older generation [...] and as we ride, we should remember them [...] and that’s why I am taking this ride over the alps, for the sake of the Overlander of the past and the drovers” (132). Steve situates her journey within a history of previous travellers, stories of whom are foundational to Australian narratives of nationhood. Steve contextualises her journey within those of previous riders and insists that the nature and the speed of the journey are as important as her arrival at some destination. She asserts the different texture of the experience of the road from horseback to that of the motorist. Riding along the road leading away from the hotel at Tambo Crossing, Steve declares, “Ah God, Australia! I rode at times ceaselessly among the riders of the past. The Gippsland horsemen. Only the voices rising mournfully against the Tambo and the clocklike beat of their horses hooves, measuring out time” (124).

Steve perceives these previous occupants of the byways of Australia as elemental to the emergent nation, saying:

It seemed odd to me that in spite of the fact that hundreds of bushmen had once thronged this road from the Stream down into Bairnsdale that no form of record had been kept of it in the way of unceasing sort of memories that I thought ought to be in the mind, in the air, as though suddenly one should hear the cry of men and women and their speeches, their talkings of long ago [...] Just a long road winding up and down to a place called Tambo Crossing, and yet, what a great great world it had once been and how full of vitality. Therefore I must go forward on the strength of it and love everyone with the most utmost energy and fire and be eternally young and eternally full of genius and life would endure forever (“Wild Australia” 11).

Identifying the early travellers of Australia with the youthful state of a young country, Steve vows to emulate them in order to reinstate the vigour she associates with them.

Patterns of allusion to early travellers and their activities contextualize Steve's journey within a network of national narratives. As Elizabeth Furniss argues, early white travellers of the Australian landscape

become condensed symbols that stand for the values, ideals and qualities believed to represent the Australian nation and national character. The struggles, achievements, and even tragic deaths of explorers such as Captain James Cook, Edmund Kennedy, Ludwig Leichhardt, and Burke and Wills exemplify the central themes - suffering, the struggle for survival in an alien landscape, heroic death in the face of adversity - that frame Australia's foundational histories (279).

Both suffering and heroism are alluded to in the representation of Steve's journey.

When Steve is urged by her cousin to take the ironically named Pioneer bus over the mountains, she declines, commenting, "'Wild Australia' Tommy, is what I love" (82).

When offered the chance to ride in comfort over the mountains in a car rather than on her horse, she insists that discomfort and hardship are important components of her travels, exclaiming, "'Aren't we descendants of pioneers? Aren't we Australian? Shouldn't we suffer awfully and strongly and sweat and ride and work and toil and wander as only an Australian can do?'" (83).

Steve's ride does cause her to suffer considerable physical discomfort. The afternoon sun "send[s] wave after wave and stab upon stab of glare and scorch" (126) and the road is long and dusty. The Condy's crystals she carries in case of snake bite work their way out of the bottle and bite into her skin, causing pain that "was just about as bad as being bitten by a tiger snake" (113). Later, in Omeo Steve describes

finding a chemist's shop in order, as she says, "to make an important purchase for the gallop saddle, otherwise known as 'an exercise pad' for this instrument of torture had well exercised me, but in one spot only and caused much more blistering there. The ride was beginning to leave its mark" (160). The pain caused by the blistering and other discomforts resulting from the journey do not deter Steve; rather they confirm Steve's identity as a traveller whose endurance locates her within the world of the pioneers whom she seeks to emulate. In her discomfort, Steve feels "at home" moving slowly along the road under the blazing sun.

The heroism, which Furniss suggests is also a quality attributed to the foundational figures of Australian nationhood, is repeatedly alluded to in Steve's description of the road that she travels. Attributes of heroism are evoked in Steve's journey, not only by her actions or the suffering she aspires to, but in the descriptions of the world she moves through. The feeling of being "at home" in the "old posting station" where Steve spends the night early in her journey is informed by the allusions to heroic narratives in the descriptions of both this posting station and the "new" one passed earlier in the day. The posting stations are depicted as staging posts of her trek, with odyssean connotations of travel and adventure. Riding by the new station earlier in the day, Steve observes the open door and the tall man standing there. She notes "the smell of onions just peeled and being boiled, a real Australian standby, and there was the onion peel lying brown on the earth in front of the door, reminding me of a passage read in Homer. Onion peel all over the place" (10). Later, the old posting station has a similar-looking man standing on its broad step, with "onion peel lying about the front of the hut too" (15). Invited inside, Steve explains the significance of the onion peel: "... in Homer there is a passage that runs... 'And in that place wherein the heroes feasted the door was surrounded by the tan peel of onions with a fine and silken white weave running through them.'" When the teamster replies, "Homer,

ay?” Steve is impressed: “Gigantic man! He seemed to know him well... no wonder about him at all...” (18).

The Homeric allusions that Steve attributes to the posting stations contribute to Steve’s sense of being “at home” while resting for the first night of her journey. Similarly, heroic features are noted by Steve in the stables of the family hotel at Tambo Crossing. When Steve reaches the hotel she is first led round to the stables:

Down past the verandah over soft earth to a huge old stable that in the dark soft classic night looked about forty feet high. I have never seen such an enormous stable. Hercules in his labours would have shrunk from it. The doors were strangely carven with a shieldlike stroke of the blade and a classic rotundity and columnic beauty [...] As far as Tambo crossing was concerned, Mira¹⁸ had been always keen on the old stables. She used to tell us how Neil McCarthy used to sleep above them, and how Bill McCloud when he was a groom there used to inhabit them, too. Blind George the shoe-black used to sleep there, too, and half a dozen other worthies including the carpenter were wont to slumber above the old stable. You got the idea from her that those stables were wonderful places. Gods, as it were slept in those Olympian heights, bearded dark singing deities who came down and drank with the travellers as they trundled through on Cobb and Co’s coach (44).

The stables, like the staging posts, are associated with the activity of the road. Mira’s memories of them are of movement and the bustle of people and animals. Both the staging posts and the stables are perceived as worthy of veneration due to their age and long use. Connections to the past are figured in the “well worn and shining slabs”

¹⁸ Steve/Eve’s mother is called Mia in Langley’s early texts, but more often Mira in the later ones.

of timber (24) but also through classical allusion, leading to suggestions of the heroic. Here, the heroic is figured in both the seemingly super-human size of the structure, and association with the classical gods, who are imagined mingling with wayfarers as they paused on their journey. Yet, the notable size and associations of this structure are not only inspiring of awe and action, but also of a homely comfort in terms of her life on the road. Steve describes “A safe tall loomy shadowy large deep empty old stable into which the horse and dog fitted comfortably” (44).

Beyond the habitations scattered along the road, Steve suggests that her ride has heroic connotations by perceiving classical references in the natural world around her. Commenting on the colourful birdlife in the “grey bush” she notices the “black and white jays, wearing the small delicate white Greek quatrefoil on the tips of their wings” as they

whooped and screamed and moaned in the wild cherry trees [...] ‘Chuahair, Cuhair, Cuhair! Cuhair, Cuhair, Cuhair!’

In sobbing harsh square brown voices like autumn leaves, so that I felt like some ancient Celtic hero of thousands of years ago riding through Britain. They covered the red laden branches from sight with their large wings and savage eyed bodies. They stared at me and cried out, brokenly in my very face as though they had been harpies, and I, lost Ulysses or Jason, their deity... (129).

In her identification with figures such as Ulysses, Jason of the Golden Fleece and the ancient Celts as they rode across Britain, Steve presents herself as part of a mythic and continuous narrative of travel.

This narrative is of two-fold significance to Steve’s journey, as it is both generated by and generating of the movement that is so significant in the construction

of the imagined space of the road for Steve. In *The Road to Botany Bay* Paul Carter notes that the “explorers themselves promoted the image of the explorer as hero”, associating this self-promotion with the act of recording their movements:

The heroic explorer exists [...] as a convention of the explorer discourse. He is a figure who emerges from the explorer-writer’s abilities in transforming the country into a narrative. It is the explorer-writer’s talent for forging a metaphor of himself as a traveller that makes the narrative heroic, not the country and even less the personal qualities of the explorer (90).

In “Wild Australia” Steve acknowledges that her journey is composed of the parallel activities of movement along the road and the recording of that movement. She consciously aligns herself with the explorer-writer delineated in Carter’s discussion. She frequently refers to the potential of her journey for providing a wealth of raw material for literary expression. Only hours into her trip, she comments, “I could have written an absolutely gigantic book of verse already out of all the energy I’ve put into this pilgrimage” (11). She tells her aunt that she wants to be a writer, asking, “What on earth do you think I do all these extraordinary things for, else?” (84), and on the point of departing her aunt’s hotel, laments

Why did I not spring upon the Chinese staff and make them unburden the years? I had wasted my time. I lay in my sorrow and wished I had written even a small book during the day on the entire past. I ran the events of the years swiftly through my mind and hoped that that would do (117).

Through her discussion of heroic aspects of the journey, Langley also promotes the figure of the writer-explorer (as opposed to the explorer-writer) or writer-pioneer. This persona is depicted by her as foundational in the construction of the place called

Australia. In the hotel at Tambo Crossing, Steve recalls a conversation with her mother who cries:

“Who is going to write these great times we live? These gigantic sorrows that we endure? Look what Henry Lawson’s doing for us old timers, even now! Think of Adam Lindsay Gordon! Of Charles Harpur and Henry Kendall. Ah, they were real men and great poets! Look what the great Australian writers have done for the old timers, the Gippsland Overlanders, before our time even? What about Rolf Boldrewood and Marcus Clarke? They’ll live forever [...]”

Years

afterward, I rode into this ancient still chiming battlefield where long ago the clamour of arms sounded, as men struggled with the Muse of Memory, and yearned for the harp that once [rang] through Tara’s halls to strike the chords of power and poetry again. Here, on this marked field they had suffered and struggled and chanted the poets, hoping for their own native Burns, their rural Dickens, their local Tennyson, at last to set the world afire with his great,

‘Arma virumque

cano...’

Ulysses, dark bearded

white with the green burden of the seas, might well have stood on the scarlet hill above the tavern and cried out, ‘Odysseus’ to the river gods below, or with tears, called on these lost and restless wanderers who it seemed to me were then haunted by the feeling that they had once been part of his great tales of unrest. None other god would have sufficed these fastidious dead. All, all had vanished, leaving only a strange worn immortal looking road of classical clay and myself riding a jet black race horse silently over the highways that they had made... (115-6).

Australian writers and poets of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are given god-like attributes in their association with the gigantic, the great, and the immortal. Steve relates their activities to the wanderings of Odysseus, during which he repeatedly interacted with the classical gods. Depicted as suffering in their “struggle” to claim the local in their writing, these writers are directly associated, in their adversity, with the explorer/pioneer figures of Australian foundational narratives; their written achievements are perceived as significant in the formation of the nation, through the envisioning of the landscape and imagining of the roads that Steve now treads. Ann Curthoys cites anthropologist Andrew Lattas who, she says,

has examined how Australian nationalist discourses emphasise a struggle in which the pioneer, the explorer and the artist all suffer as they seek to possess the land: ‘Their suffering takes on the epic proportions of a pilgrimage that redeems and heals the nation’. White settler suffering, he suggests, becomes a means for conferring right of ownership to the land (Curthoys 3; Lattas 234-5).

Steve’s horseback journey is repeatedly evoked as an expression of refusal of the containment of the domestic space and of the restrictions that Steve perceives in conventional society. In “Wild Australia”, both of these forms of containment are represented by Steve’s maternal family, but a number of other characters express surprise or disapproval regarding Steve’s journey, emphasising its unconventional nature. Yet, by paralleling her horseback journey with those pioneering exploits foundational to Australian nationalist rhetoric, with her frequent evocations of suffering and heroism, Steve is asserting a form of containment at the same time as she overtly resists it. In the physical suffering that Steve experiences in her contact with the frequently harsh environment and trying heat during her ride, she consciously

replicates the colonial narrative of conflict with the land. As Curthoys notes, this colonial narrative is neither “innocent [n]or transparent”:

Rather, it offers a colonial society a way of displacing the conflict between settlers and indigenous people onto a more acceptable narrative of a direct conflict between the settler and the land itself. The land and the indigenous people become merged, the former foregrounded, the latter denied a place in history at all (13).

The freedom of movement expressed in Steve’s imagined space of the road is thus, at the same time, an expression of the containment of the space that the road traverses, and the curtailment of the occupation and movement of those outside the space configured by the road. This simultaneous evocation of movement and containment is further manifested in Steve’s employment of place-names in the narration of her journey in “Wild Australia”.

Carter suggests: “it is hardly exaggerating to say that but for the place-name there would be no place” (*New Country* 123), and Langley is alert to the potency of the place-name. As previously noted, lying awake in the stables of the posting station the names of the towns along the road ahead stream through Steve’s mind. Each name is an “echo and [a] thrill”, representative of an assemblage of histories, people and perspectives. Each name, itself a focus of this range of material, links together with the other place-names uttered by Steve to trace a line across the landscape and show the way forward. For Carter, the act of naming creates “a place in the wilderness, a point towards which one might direct one’s footsteps; it impl[ies] the possibility of reply, a local resonance or, at the very least, a ghostly echo” (*New Country* 123). In “Wild Australia” the place-name is a magnetic device, impelling Steve along her path, each name calling her on and then sending her forth. A string of place-names traces

the line of a road, energising it, giving it a charge so that movement along it seems inevitable.

However, the lists of place-names that energise Steve's journey do not simply work to provide impetus to her movement along the road. Each list also works as a word-map, defining the passage of her travel route and alluding to the nature of the terrain that the road traverses. This form of map asserts both geographic and symbolic articulations but, as J. B. Harley argues, it is "at the symbolic level [...] that maps are at their most rhetorical and persuasive" ("Maps" 295). When Steve lies awake in the stables behind the old posting station, the "great names" of the towns on the road ahead, "Ensay, Tongio, Omeo, Cobungra" resound "with a savage splendour through the soul" (19). The impact of the list of names suggests more than the faded timbers of a series of townships, or reliable places to buy provisions. As a word-map, the list is also an expression of a socially constructed form of knowledge, presenting, as Harley argues, "a manifesto for a set of beliefs about the world". (*New Nature* 204).

In Chapter Two I discussed the final few pages of Langley's novel, "Bancroft House". In those pages Steve describes a moment in which she stands on the verandah of the eponymous house and, in the golden light of the "Australian" sun, gazes down upon the land that is stretched out beneath her. Her elevated position symbolises an assumed domination over and consequential imagined appropriation of all that she observes. Similarly, Steve's construction of the word-maps of the land that she travels through suggests some sort of an overview and symbolic domination of that land. Harley argues that an elemental aspect of the power of the map is its manifestation as a spatial panopticon (*New Nature* 165).

In the narration of her journey Steve lists streams, bridges, towns and other features of the road, and in doing so, not only catalogues this area of Australia, but also appropriates it. Just as strategies of occupation are asserted in the particular

gathering on the verandah at the end of “Bancroft House”, the word-maps embedded in the text of “Wild Australia” provide “symbolic shorthand for a complex of nationalist ideas” (Harley “Maps” 300). Steve describes the historic activity of the road she travels along:

[I]n those days there was a lot of mining being done at Haunted Stream some miles away and the hundreds of men turned up at the Sir Walter Scott to drink. Then it was on the main road to Bruthen, Bairnsdale and consequently Melbourne and then again to Ensay, to Swifts Creek and Omeo, so that was how it was always full of wild bearded men, deep drinkers and great tellers of tales, and of bullockies and of horse team drivers and packers travelling like Jack the Packer, with a big bundle up on a slow pacing horse (119).

The figures of the road that Steve identifies with are much the same as those that stereotypically inhabit the Australian bush of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In *The Australian Legend* (1958) Russel Ward comments that, “[b]y 1893 the stereotype [of the typical bush-dweller] was so firmly established that it was already being satirised” (211), and by “the time of federation [...] the ‘noble bushman’ was already firmly enshrined in both the popular and the literary imagination” (212). Figures central to Australian national literature, such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson, depict the bush, and bush-dwellers as pivotal to any discussion about national identity. In “Wild Australia”, the road, as the location of these iconic figures, replaces the bush as the signifier of national narrative. Typically, the word-maps embedded in “Wild Australia” assert the road as the pre-eminent feature of the landscape, and road-travel as the dominant form of movement across the landscape. The creeks that are mentioned are those that are features of the road and their names

represent not the complex of waterways and shady sandy banks in the landscape as it sprawls to the horizon, but a series of sites of intersection of the road with that landscape. Towns and settlements listed in the word maps are only those that are linked by the road. Furthermore, this road is the established travel route of white settlers and pioneers; in Steve's word-maps, both what is featured and what is omitted work to legitimise and maintain the status quo of her narrative which is that of white settler occupation of the Australian landscape.

On the first day of her journey Steve observes: “[f]rom Bruthen to Tambo Crossing you cross creek after creek, all of them shaded by blue gums and by black jays haunted and emus stroll out on to the road in their bush-used feathers and blue horny bills”. She describes further:

Beyond the Double Bridges lay a succession of creeks that had been named in the old days, Wild Dog Creek, Fitzpatrick's Creek, Piano-box Creek, Jew's Pinch, Shady Creek, and Pig and Whistle Creek and at last Tambo Crossing, which was the place where the Sir Walter Scott lay, just above Lock-up Creek (8).

The detailing of the numerous creeks that Steve must cross before the end of the next day's ride gives an indication of the landscape she travels through, although the list offers more than a representation of a particular lie of the land. The list of bridges, rivers and creeks between Steve and her family's hotel, not only maps certain aspects of the nature of the road and the countryside around it, but through allusions to people and characters, details events, myths and traditions associated with that stretch of the road. James Clifford suggests that “a location... is an itinerary rather than a bounded site, a series of encounters and translations” (11). Steve's word-maps articulate the south-east Victorian landscape between the coast and the mountains in terms of a

multiplicity of encounters and events. Each of the place names on this list is like the first words of an anecdote, or the identifying phrase of a family joke. When Steve describes in greater detail a place named in one of her maps, the rhetorical nature of the name is manifest. After crossing the Double Bridges, Steve says that she felt that she “ought to go back and most reverently and dutifully stand on [them] for a whole hour given over to the most solemn meditation on the past”:

Everyone along the Tambo Valley treasured that place in the eighties as though it had been holy ground.

A man when he wanted to take leave gratefully, immortally and timelessly along the Tambo, had only to say as he stroked his long brown whiskers, slapped his hard hitter on with a careless air, [...] ‘Bye, bye, I’m off to the Doubles!’

And that man was made, he was immortal, a god, be careful how you spoke of him forever after (27-8).

The name of the Double Bridges, the names of the creeks that Steve must cross on the road she is travelling, all speak not so much of a certain topography but of an imagined place, of remembered and imagined events.

In a discussion of early mapmakers Michael Neill notes “the power of cartography to render the past visible”, where “the past is quite literally mapped onto the countryside” (380). What Neill doesn’t discuss is the power of the cartographer to decide *what* or *whose* past is made visible in any particular map. Carter argues:

“Places of human significance are the consequence of naming... What matters is its rhetorical identity: its name” (*New Country* 123). The place names listed by Steve as she maps the road ahead are not simply factual representations of those places, versions of so-called scientifically based cartographic signs or devices. The names

used by Steve to describe each place she lists depict that place in terms of specific human occupation within a specific time frame. In the family hotel at Tambo Crossing Steve remembers her mother listing the men who lived their lives in the hotel and on the road:

Thorburn, Baulch, MacAlistair, McDougal, McCloud, Neil McClarthy, Blind George, Jack the Packer, not to mention Dave Tait, Jack Mazza, George Beck, the Sandys and Jonah Jones from Goanna Creek thrown in for good measure, all these lived profoundly as I've heard you say... (116).

The similarity between this recital and Steve's lists of the towns and creeks strung along the road is notable. This alignment highlights the type of human occupation referenced in the place names that she uses, and suggests that the lists, or word-maps, configure intersections of the road with previous occupants of the road such as those in the list above, and are, in effect, maps of the history of white settlement in the area. Excluded from the word-maps is any allusion to other histories or other settlements in the area. Other pathways across the landscape, generated and used by other occupants of the land, are not acknowledged. As already noted, in Langley's texts the construction of absences is just as significant as that which is made overtly present.

Harley comments:

The notion of 'silences' on maps is central to any argument about the influence of their hidden political messages ... [M]aps – just as much as examples of literature or the spoken word – exert a social influence through their omissions as much as by the features they depict and emphasise (“Maps” 290).

Harley argues that in colonial maps, “silences... may also be regarded as discrimination against native peoples” (“Maps” 292). Steve's word-maps of the space

between the coast at Metung and the tops of the alps shape that space so as to assert the significance of the travel routes and pathways established within it by white settlers and at the same time, efface indigenous presence.

In the nineteenth century, Australian texts not uncommonly contained discussions regarding the (often uneasy) nature of shared occupation of the land, but as Curthoys comments:

In the twentieth century, Aboriginal existence almost disappeared from the national historical archive; the common-sense understanding of the historians and the society at large was that Australian history began with the European early visitors and then the establishment of a British settlement at Sydney Cove (14).

In mapping no more than white settler activity, the landscape that these maps record only exists from the time of the first white explorer, or first settler, or the first pioneer (as memorialised in the bus that Steve is urged to take as an alternative form of travel over the alps). The place names describe the time or nature of the establishment of each place within the framework of white settler occupation of the land, and so, each list describes a series of beginnings. The linear shape that each list takes also visually supports the construction of foundational time. Each list has a definite beginning and is read forward from that point. Deborah Bird Rose discusses the concept of the Australian white settlers' frontier as, what she terms, "Year Zero". She suggests "[i]magin[ing] the frontier as a rolling Year Zero that cuts an ontological swathe between 'timeless' land and historicised land" (9). Rose's construction not only is suggestive of the containment of the historicised and thus mapped land, but also alludes to the difference between the linear structure of white history and other differing conceptualisations of time indicative of space before "Year Zero".

Omissions discernable in the word-maps in “Wild Australia” parallel the voids and absences that pattern Langley’s texts and which frequently signal unease regarding occupation of the land. However, the shape and structure of these maps overtly asserts control of the land of Australia. Written surveys and inventories codify information about land ownership. The rhetorical identity of place names is used in the lists that construct Steve’s maps to legitimise the assumption of territorial boundaries and the occupation of appropriated land. In the deployment of the lists that map Steve’s journey, representations of containment and repression are juxtaposed with the parallel construction of that journey as a site of resistance to containment. Steve’s conscious identification with early white travellers of the road she rides along situates issues of mastery over a harsh and unpredictable landscape alongside issues of control over ownership of that land, as land and indigeneity become conflated. The unfettered movement that asserts the road as an imagined space of home projects the road as a space in which representations of cultural authority are refused at the same time as the word-maps assert that authority. Her assertions of the life that she associates with the road-as-home are seen to enforce the settler project; Steve’s imagining of the space of home is, at the same time, an assertion of the settler-nation as home. In this construction Langley replaces the bush, a common spatial metaphor for the Australian nation in nineteenth and early twentieth century literature, with the concept of the road as a metonym for nation.

Chapter Six

Bancroft House: Enactment of Encounter

We have now compassed the World [...] And as in Geometricall compasses one foote is fixed in the Centre, whiles the other mooveth in the Circumference.

(Samuel Purchas 20:130)

As we have seen, tropes of movement and travel are significant to Langley's representation of home. This chapter is also concerned with these tropes, but with regard to imagined travel rather than the physical movement through space as in "Wild Australia". This chapter examines enactment of the colonial encounter in Langley's unpublished novel, "Bancroft House". However, as a supportive site in this enactment, home, in "Bancroft House", is figured in terms of endless movement in the form of imagined travel to distant places as well as through manifestations of the house as a destination. In the representation of these connected but opposing constructions, the narrator, Steve, is located within the titular house by the means of a complex web of allusions both to historical accounts by explorers and travellers, and to the literature written in response to these accounts. "Bancroft House" may be read as a travel narrative in which Bancroft House is figured as both the destination, a new world to be discovered and explored, and also as a portal to other geographically and temporally distant worlds. The framework of allusions to voyage and arrival constructs the interior of Bancroft House as a space of colonial encounter, a space that Mary Louise Pratt terms the "contact zone": "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and

establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). Pratt comments that the term “contact zone” is often synonymous with the concept of the “colonial frontier” but makes the point that while the concept of the frontier is “grounded within a European expansionist perspective”, her term “contact zone” tends to foreground “the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination” (6-7). As Pratt notes, “A ‘contact’ perspective emphasises how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other” (7). In “Bancroft House” the interactive nature of scenes, which may be construed by the reader as stagings of colonial encounter, suggests the possibility of multiple agencies, but inevitably results in highlighting colonial strategies of control. Exploration of Bancroft House as a contact zone is facilitated by the number of artefacts gathered in the rooms of the house, souvenirs of South America, which assert the rooms as museum-like spaces. In this setting, the performativity of the museum experience is made evident. The theatricality visible in Steve’s staging of this experience, both vivifies the relationship of the museum experience with the colonial project, and also draws attention to the mechanisms by which that project functions. Repeated enactments of the colonial encounter assert the settler position in “Bancroft House”, yet the artifice of these stagings proves to destabilise this position even as it is asserted.

In much the same way that the weathered old posting station depicted in “Wild Australia” has the air of Australia moving freely through it, the spaces of Bancroft House are also frequently represented as contiguous with the wider Australian landscape. When Steve wakes for the first time in the house it is to the light of an autumn day in Australia, and she feels that,

[s]omehow or other, the maize and maize cribs and the long desolate paddocks of George and Garry Seehusen, and Dudley Timmins's sunflowers, lowrie loaded, [comes] streaming across with a faint flicker of the atmosphere of Mossface and Bruthen into [her] room, and out across the dry land and the pink geraniums around Bancroft House (107).

The country air moves freely around and through the house. The wind that blows in from the sea is "full of Bogong moths by night" as it "come[s] sweeping across the wide billiard room" (15) and the same wind wafting along the verandah softly rattles the "row of rusty kerosene tins used for picking [...] reproducing with simple genius the variety and quality of all the winds of Australia" (19). The interior spaces of Bancroft House are open to, and part of, both the natural environment of Australia, and the rural community that shapes the landscape. Yet the spaces of the house are filled with more than the light and air of Australia and the sense of the landscape glowing beyond the windows. At the same time as the house is figured as an Australian location, Steve experiences it as a series of spaces redolent of places distant in space and time, and expressive of journeys to those places. Alberto Manguel comments that "home is always an imaginary place" (145). For Steve, in "Bancroft House" this imaginary place is located in constructions of elsewhere--the foreign places variously framed by historic terms such as the "empire", the "colonies", or the "New World"--but these constructions always speak also of her Australian location.

Some years before the time that she lives in Bancroft House, Steve works for a few days in the fields belonging to the owner, Mr Sutcliffe, and is invited up to the house for lunch. Steve's description of the house at this time prefigures her experience of it as the setting of frequent imagined journeys and as enacting a contact zone (as described by Pratt). Mr Sutcliffe has spent most of his working life in South

America, and offers Steve and her companions a drink of “Maté Yerba” tea. When he opens the “pale yellow packet” of “pale green glittering yellowing leaf” Steve comments that the “great long shining thousands of acres of it in leaf seemed to leap out at us from far off Paraguay” (22). As the imagined fields, glinting in the sun, cross the Pacific to fill Steve’s mind, she is similarly transported to those distant lands. The image of the tea-fields that the box of “Maté Yerba” evokes for Steve is suggestive of the discursive framing of unknown places by early European explorers and travellers. It speaks of both foreignness and familiarity. The tea is that most domestic of commodities, but speaks of elsewhere. Steve comments that the tea in the packet has a “faded ancient look to it”, emphasising the distance it has travelled from “far off Paraguay” and the time taken to traverse that distance. It glitters in the packet and shines under the sun in the fields like something precious. Its qualities make it stand out even in the busy kitchen. Yet the tea is not entirely figured as special and unfamiliar. The measurability of the “long shining thousands of acres” of plants creates what Boehmer terms, “a humanly viable landscape for the traveller” (17), a kind of provisional familiarity. As well, the description of unknown places in terms of acreage evokes the settler practice of mapping “new” lands as a form of control, as discussed earlier in the chapter on the road as home. In this construction, to measure is to know and to know enables appropriation.

Representations of appropriation and conquest in discovery are unmistakable in Steve’s depiction of a painting hanging in Mr Sutcliffe’s kitchen. Glancing up from the table, Steve notices a “long narrow blue and gold picture of Balboa discovering the Pacific hung on the graygreen wall under the window” (21). Observing it in greater detail, she comments:

It was a splendid picture to us, a lovely thing, of Balboa standing upon a peak in Darien among his men and staring with a dreaming and pondering look, gazing for the first time upon the Pacific. From under the golden helmet his great eyes looked upon his sea, and behind him, up the rough rusty ancient cliff struggled his picturesque men staring upon him, and with him, upon their sea. The Pacific was dramatically blue and had a look of startled stirred blue about it, strong and terrible, as though for the first time, in time, it stared upon men. Spaniards! The great ocean moved and trembled richly under their gaze (16).

In this powerful description, Steve evokes the sense of ownership figured in Balboa's stance. About to claim the Pacific Ocean, and all the land adjoining it, for Spain, Balboa's future acts of appropriation are figured in the mastery of his gaze as he and his men stare at the sea. Steve's observations reference the terrible nature of Balboa's power, but also dwell on the glory of his stance. This image of Balboa's forceful agency forms a backdrop for Steve's description of the one room of the house she has entered at this time--the kitchen in which she is sitting--and shapes her representation of the activities around the lunch table on that day. The spatial demonstration of Balboa's dominance asserts the asymmetrical framework of power typical of moments of first contact. This framework is reasserted in Steve's role as the fictional author of the travel narrative "Bancroft House". What Pratt terms "the relation of mastery predicated between the seer and the seen", demonstrated in the painting of Balboa, is replicated in the rhetoric of the travel narrative (204). As Tzvetan Todorov observes in his discussion of the nature of the travel narrative: "[i]n order to ensure the tension necessary to the travel narrative, the specific position of the colonizer is required: curious about the other and secure in his own superiority" ("Journey" 295).

Balboa's position high on the cliffs overlooking the Pacific is reflected in Steve's privileged stance as observer of the lunch gathering.

Sitting around the lunch-table are Mr Sutcliff and the field workers he has employed who (other than Steve and "Eb", who is from a local family) are itinerant workers recently arrived from Italy. Having spent his working life in South America, Mr Sutcliff often prefers to converse in Spanish. Steve relates the initial moments at the table: "In this Australian house, silent before with a long unbroken Australian silence and fluent and liquid in the kitchen with the Italian and Spanish tongue, we sat looking curiously on the face of our host" (20). She portrays the kitchen as a "contact zone", a Year Zero (to draw on Rose), in which the "long unbroken silence" of a *terra nullius* blossoms into the sound of fluent language. The sense of a new beginning, the mix of languages, and the backdrop provided by the painting combine to evoke the space of the kitchen as that of colonial encounter. The description of the gathered workers gazing curiously upon Mr Sutcliff's face reasserts Steve's assumption of the role of seer, and reflects Pratt's observation regarding the superior position taken by the coloniser when in that role. In Steve's portrayal of the group's gaze across the table at their host, Mr Sutcliff is staged as "other". In Steve's description of the lunch party, communication - in the form of fluent language - is portrayed as a significant aspect of the "new beginning". In the context of this suggestion, Mr Sutcliffe's symbolic otherness, as a disadvantaged position, is reasserted through representations of his deafness. Steve says:

He was stone deaf and kept up a continual conversation with himself, mainly because he couldn't hear himself talking. His speech was in grumbles and grunts of a strange sort, half of satisfaction, half of disgust and a quarter irritation with an eighth of abstraction thrown in (20).

Pratt borrows her term “contact zone” from the use of that of “contact language” in linguistics. She says that contact languages are:

improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in context of trade... Like the societies of the contact zone, such languages are commonly regarded as chaotic, barbarous, lacking in structure (6).

In *The Tempest*, Caliban is judged by Miranda to “gabble like/ A thing most brutish” (I. ii. 58-59). Steve’s description of Mr Sutcliff’s speech echoes Miranda’s comment. The difficulties in communication between Mr Sutcliff and the others at the table are suggestive of those repeatedly represented in historical and literary moments of colonial encounter.

The mono-directional gaze described by Steve, her representations of Mr Sutcliff’s deafness, and the powerful presence of the painting of Balboa all signal the imbalance of power typical of the “contact zone” and situate that power within Steve. However, Steve’s further observations about the gathering highlight the artifice of her assumed position. The narrative delineated in the painting of Balboa is also aligned with the gathering in the kitchen of Bancroft House through the use of Spanish as the preferred language of communication. Steve comments: “the Spanish [conversation] was talked against the glowing colours of this [painting]” (21). However, the choice of Spanish destabilises Steve’s position of authority as, of those gathered at the lunch, only Mr Sutcliffe is fully fluent in this language; he tells Steve that, due to his long working life spent in Argentina, he “can speak Italian and Spanish and all the South American dialects, too” (20). As a capable linguist Mr Sutcliff is cast in a role of authority, and as a speaker of the Spanish language, Mr Sutcliffe is linguistically positioned alongside Balboa, who is a symbol of Spanish imperial expansionism. In

addition to this, as alluded to in Pratt's reference to "contact language", trade provides a frequent context for moments of contact, and Mr Sutcliffe is the employer of the workers whom he has invited into his house. The "context of trade" that has brought the workers into Mr Sutcliff's house asserts Mr Sutcliffe's position of influence, as both employer and host of Steve and the other workers. It is this position of influence that enables Mr Sutcliffe to dictate which language is used at the lunch. Mr Sutcliffe's authority, situated in opposition to Steve's assumed agency, may, on the one hand suggest the shifting, interactive nature of the colonial encounter, but on the other, it makes clear the false consciousness of Steve's position. The Balboa painting proves to be a significant context for Steve's representation of the lunch; in contrast to the narrative of the painting, its presence makes apparent the various, contradictory, crosscurrents typical of the colonial encounter, discussed further below. More significantly, through Steve's employment of the painting in her descriptions of the lunch, the painting highlights the performative nature of her "authority" at that gathering, and it directs attention to the staging of the colonial figure in Steve's account of life in Bancroft House.

During this first visit to Bancroft House, Steve's only physical experience of the interior of the house is of the kitchen. However, she is aware of the rest of the house and, while her observations of the kitchen are framed in representations of arrival, discovery and encounter, Steve's allusions to the rooms beyond the kitchen are more suggestive of anticipation of the unknown:

Beyond the long dry kitchen lay the fourteen rooms of the great house. Mr Sutcliffe didn't take us through but the wind slipped through the long green curtains of some thick stuff hanging there and took a voyage through from

room to room, returning to us smelling of billiard cues and chinks, grand pianos and Argentinian carpets and china and silver (20).

In this passage, Langley figures both European descriptions of the journeys towards “new” lands and the resulting and seemingly inexhaustible fascination with the exotic objects found in those lands. Bernard McGrane observes, “The ocean of the fifteenth century functioned as the parameter, as the limit of the world” (33). To go far off shore was to go beyond “the Island of the Earth” (32). The thick green curtains represent the edge of the world of the “long dry kitchen” of Bancroft House. In his *History of the Indies* (1527-1560), Las Casas refers to Columbus as “the first who opened the doors of this Ocean Sea, through which he entered...”(37). The voyaging wind, as it accompanies Steve’s curious mind through the curtains into the unknown rooms beyond encourages us to think of those early sailors and explorers carried by the wind beyond the edges of the known world and into the new. Never having entered those rooms through the curtain, Steve is prompted to imagine their contents from the scents carried by the wind. The English captain Arthur Barlowe recounts that when he and his fellow captain, Philip Amadas, entered the coastal waters off what is now North Carolina, on the second of July in 1584, they enjoyed “so sweet a smell as if we had been in the midst of some delicate garden abounding with all kinds of odoriferous flowers” and inferred that “the land could not be far distant” (Qtd. in Kolodny 10). Similarly, in her enjoyment of the scents wafted by the breeze, Steve infers the proximity of a world through the curtains of the kitchen doorway that is different to the one she is sitting in: full of promise, she imagines it as scented and exotic.

When Steve surmises that the unseen rooms of Bancroft House are full of treasures, she is employing a similar construction to that used by Europeans in their evocations of far lands. Caught up in the “scents” carried by the wind back to Steve are hints of china and silver. The catalysts of curiosity and anticipation of the exotic are inextricably linked with the machinery of commerce. Bernard McGrane argues, “exploration in the sixteenth century [...] cannot be understood apart from commerce and commercial exploitation” (24). Steve’s construction alludes to this practice, but with the inclusion of the “scents” of the grand piano and billiard cues, refers more certainly to a fantasy of colonial leisure, surrounded by marvels and wealth. Yet, as Boehmer comments in a discussion of imperialism and textuality:

For the questing European imagination as for the West’s entrepreneurs, Africa and India, the ‘Exhaustless’ East, and the New World of America were filled with wonders. Travel meant imaginative anticipation, and the actual treasures and curiosities encountered on distant shores – gold and ivory, cinnamon and ginger, parrots, exotic beasts, human beings of very different cultures – could only embellish expectation (16).

In her depiction of the wind in its airy voyage through the unseen rooms of Bancroft House, Steve evokes the sense of anticipation of the explorer and the traveller, reaching out towards unseen but foreshadowed lands. Seated in the kitchen of Bancroft House, her vision of the rest of the house, expressed in repeated references to travel and exploration, is notable for this sense of anticipation as opposed to a sense of arrival.

The feelings of anticipation expressed in Steve’s evocation of the rooms beyond the kitchen of Bancroft House speak of expectations built on a long history of travel narratives. Greenblatt comments on the influence of *Mandeville’s Travels* and

Marco Polo's *Book of Marvels* on the expectations of Christopher Columbus as he first voyaged across the Atlantic (26). Such expectations lend a complex sense of familiarity and unfamiliarity to the apprehension of the "new". Todorov observes that Europeans, primed by accounts such as Mandeville's, were not very surprised by the first narratives of the discovery of the New World ("Journey" 287). During the lunch in Bancroft House, Mr Sutcliffe talks of his time working and living in South America. Steve responds:

A huge yellow picture of a shining two storied hotel arose in my mind like a vision as he spoke. I felt that I had been there, too, about that time, but had forgotten. Suddenly a great black earthquake rose up in my mind and broke the city of Valparaiso and the two storied yellow hotel up far underneath (22).

This is the first time that Steve has heard Mr Sutcliffe's reminiscences but she hears his stories of life in a Spanish colony through ears familiar with the cadences of adventure travel stories. McGrane writes of the influence of classical studies on the renaissance understanding of the inhabitants of the New World (20-23), and similarly, in the eighteenth century, John Hawkesworth, who accompanied Captain Cook, drew on classical reading in his descriptions of Patagonian men as titanic. In the kitchen of Bancroft House, Steve's vision of Paraguay is viewed through a lens of prior knowledge gained through reading accounts of travel and discovery. However, the earthquake that shakes the foundations of her imagined colonial hotel suggests the unreliability of travellers' tales: newly discovered worlds frequently confound expectations.

Several days after that first lunch at Bancroft House, Steve and the other field workers finish picking Mr Sutcliffe's crop of peas. Steve "look[s] around the many

paddocks on the property” and “wish[es] to know the place better” (28). She asks, “How could I come to live here?” and wonders:

What Fate or Chance could, at last, bring me to this house to live? Bancroft House; I loved that name. Through a great white screen in my mind ran a host of the brilliant theatrical people of the past [...] The very paddock in which we worked seemed to me, in some strange way, to be lightly covered and strewn with fine powdered gold, all over its dry soil. It was a field of gold to me, that day [...] The fine gold leaf and tinsel floated over the field before me [...]

(28).

When, some years after the lunch in the kitchen, Steve returns to Bancroft House, her arrival is presented as both an unlikely and yet strangely inevitable event, seeming to stage Steve’s earlier suggestion of the workings of “Fate” and “Chance”. Steve’s reception by Mr Sutcliffe is like a cinematically staged scene from the “great white screen” of tinsel town. As well, a popular trope of travel literature is visible in the description of Steve’s arrival at Bancroft House. Ulysses, Crusoe and Gulliver are all shipwrecked on lands that invite exploration. The events of *The Tempest*, *A Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* are all precipitated by a storm at sea. The beginning of Steve’s inhabitation of Bancroft House gestures to this convention when she washes up at the gate to the property. A misunderstanding with her old friends Eb and his wife Jess causes Steve to leave their home and dramatically storm off into the countryside. After a day or two of drifting, Steve finds herself in the lane that leads to Bancroft House. She remembers her previous time there, enters the lane and finds Mr Sutcliff standing at his gate as though waiting for her: “There was the gate, with the wire loop on it, and there, by the gods, stood Mr Sutcliffe. Just inside the gate. He opened it when he saw me coming” (101). Steve tells Mr Sutcliffe that she is without

a home. Remembering Steve from her visit years before, he promptly invites her to stay, commenting, “there’s the house up there, Bancroft House, my home, fourteen rooms of it, and you can have any one of them you like to stay in over the winter” (102). He insists, “the house is quite empty, off you go, straight up to the house and say to your self that from now on Bancroft’s yours” (104). Both Steve’s earlier expression of hope for a return to the house, which is framed as a gold-hazed, theatrical dream, and the later trace of the literary device of the shipwreck, situate Steve’s arrival within a “marginal or privileged space” where normal relations are suspended and the fantastical aspect of this arrival is made apparent (Pratt 100).

Steve now has the opportunity to penetrate further into the foreign world that is symbolised by the interior of the house. Mr Sutcliffe’s kind words represent a colonist’s dream; usurping the role of indigene in this scene, he is not only freely offering his habitation to the new arrival, but he also describes it as empty: not only ready for occupation but awaiting appropriation. Communication difficulties between those newly arrived and the original occupants of land “discovered” by Europeans were frequently invoked to justify the appropriation of land from people perceived as uncivilised and thus unfit to govern. Similar language difficulties are evoked in Steve’s description of her earlier experience of Bancroft House. However, at this later meeting Mr Sutcliffe’s invitation to Steve is unprompted and freely given. This encounter suggests a space in which the settler is both newly arrived and already there, and, at the same time, that space of arrival is represented as “empty”. The indigene is doubly repressed in this production. However, the gesture towards a shipwreck convention, the earlier reference to the action of “Fate”, and the cinematic-like dream of return, which all affect the reading of Steve’s arrival at Bancroft House, also work to suggest the fantastical nature of the colonial trope of the empty and welcoming new world, and highlight the contrivance of the casting of Mr Sutcliffe as

an indigene-figure in this scene. Earlier, after the first lunch with Mr Sutcliffe, Steve asks herself how she could come to live at the house, but the subsequent staging of her arrival as fate or chance, as the result of forces beyond her control, reveals a “strategic disavowal” of her intentions, reflecting the disavowal of the colonising act typical of the settler-figure (Lawson 30). Steve continues to assert a colonialist position, but the *constructedness* of the stance assumed by the colonial figure is highlighted for the reader by the strategic framing of place and person that is visible in Steve’s return to Bancroft House.

Steve’s response to Mr Sutcliffe’s offer reaffirms the scene as an enactment of settler arrival:

I was very pleased, very happy. I blessed him a thousand times. It was true.

Another Vita Nuova; another adventure was opening up before me. I was to stay, I was actually to stay here, for as long as I liked in Bancroft House.

Fourteen huge rooms, and all, I supposed, full of books” (104).

A few days after moving in to the house Steve reasserts her sense of a new beginning, exclaiming: “Broad hot droughty dry Australian day in autumn at Bancroft House. That was my second morning there. Make no mistake, it was a new life for me. Don’t think I didn’t love it. I did. I loved it too much. This was La Vita Nuova” (121). The scene at the gate of Bancroft House figures the transfiguration and consequential fulfilment associated with the colonial frontier, it suggests the clean slate alluded to in the concept of “Year Zero”, and it asserts new possibilities (Rose 9). In Steve’s representation of the house, prior to her occupation of it, the expansive space signalled in the large number of rooms within it, and the treasure-trove of books anticipated there, situate Bancroft House within the two interlocking spatial frameworks that articulate Langley’s evocations of home in “Bancroft House”.

Interconnected but conflicting expressions of spatiality are paradigmatic of Langley's representation of home throughout her novels. One spatial framework is illustrated by Steve's assertion of the road as an imagined space of home in "Wild Australia", where home is a space of openness, both empirically and as an imagined construct, and also figures unrestrained physical and social movement. In "Bancroft House", openness and movement are suggested in the assertion of the house and its contents as portals to other places. The second framework opposes the first. In "Wild Australia", it is expressed when Steve's suggestions of the road as a place of unlimited movement are complicated by the containment and control of the terrain asserted in the word-maps. In "Bancroft House" the openness and freedom of movement that Bancroft House represents as home-as-voyage is opposed by the simultaneous evocation of it as home-as-destination. In spatial terms this representation of home asserts enclosure.

When Steve enters the house following Mr Sutcliffe's encouragement, the rooms of Bancroft House are initially depicted as empty and evocative of South America. In the double (and conflicted) configuration of space paradigmatic of Bancroft House-as-home, this formulation asserts Steve's entry into the house as both an arrival at a destination which awaits her occupation, and the extension of her peripatetic life in the form of an imagined journey:

I took the large octagonal brass doorknob in my hand, turned it slowly and walked into the silent rooms of Bancroft House. What a strange melancholy perfume drifted out to me; the odour of loneliness, the scent of desolation, the smell of South America in the long gone eighties, of the Argentine, Buenos Aires, Monte Video and Avvelenado. The great barren yellow winds of Uruguay and the South American pampas had risen and followed [Mr Sutcliffe] (105).

As Steve slowly turns the brass doorknob and steps over the threshold, entering the house as a resident for the first time, the over determination of quietness and the emptiness that Steve anticipates of the inside of the house is notable. At this moment, Steve's fragmentary knowledge of the spaces within the house encourages her to fill the interstices between the fragmented impressions to imagine a whole. Just as the New World was imagined long before its "discovery" by Columbus, when Steve slowly enters the house, the world within is already imagined by her, constructed from extrapolations and desire. Emphasising the full range of possibilities, the world imagined within is one in which quietness is anticipated by Steve as the larger experience of loneliness, and emptiness envisioned more dramatically as barrenness. These enlarged possibilities signal a degree of apprehension, and Steve's constant sense of theatricality, but also echo the expansive nature of Steve's hopes for life within the house. Alongside Steve's frequently expressed desire for a home spatially defined by unconstrained openness, is figured Steve's sense of a space waiting to be filled by her, and objects awaiting discovery and appropriation. Remembering the earlier lunch with Mr Sutcliffe, as Steve steps through the house preparing to spend her first night there, she comments, "Tomorrow I would go through the house and find something that was mine. I had sensed that in the kitchen when I first entered it" (107). And, as she drifts off to sleep, she hints at her sense of authority over the dominion represented by the spaces of Bancroft House: "The Happy Prince, I called myself as I rolled over, smiling secretly and drowsing in the night. The Happy Prince" (106). Despite her sleepiness and prostrate position, Steve's thoughts figuratively situate her alongside the vital and towering Balboa who is depicted earlier, in the painting on the kitchen wall, gazing down upon the world that lies at his feet. In "Wild Australia", the word-maps embedded in Steve's travel narrative suggest a form of surveillance over, and assumed possession of, the land she traverses. Formulations

of appropriation in Steve's identification as a prince about to uncover that which is already hers within the house--contextualised by the multiple allusions to the tropes of discovery literature in the text of "Bancroft House"--are facilitated by her having cast her settler predecessor in the role of other.

When Steve wakes to her first morning in Bancroft House, her initial responses are to an expanse of emptiness which suggests that her "domain" may exceed her expectations. She comments "So this was what Bancroft House looked like inside! Hello, I thought, where's all the furniture? Where's the floor covering? Nothing on the polished floor at all" (107). Steve steps from her bedroom and opens the front door "and a great flash of daylight came swiftly down the empty bare corridor with its light brown oak pattern linoleum. Opposite my door stood another one, closed. I tiptoed over and opened it" (107). She journeys through the house, drawn on by the warmth of shafts of sunlight, the mystery of dimly lit rooms beyond the doorways that open from the central corridor, the hints of the outside world glimpsed through "brown lace curtains". As she moves from room to room, shadows and light create variety, perspectives develop and recede with her steps and the expansive nature of the interior of the house is confirmed. The spaces of Bancroft House, quietly waiting in the autumn light, are representative of the wide, open spaces both desired by European explorers as the ideal destination and imagined by Steve as significant to her imagined space of home.

Standing in the drawing room, Steve comments that the "wind blew in a lonely fashion through the empty rooms" (111). Discussing the house some time after her arrival, Steve says, "A fourteen roomed big cream house with a wide verandah, wide railing and pink geraniums [...] We were all there, but it still had a haunting and fascinating air of desolation about it, as though there was no one there but myself" (132). Yet, despite Steve's repeated confirmations of the emptiness of Bancroft

House, many of the rooms are furnished with artefacts brought back from Argentina and other South American countries by Mr Sutcliffe. The room that Steve tiptoes over to, across the sunlit corridor from her bedroom, is “large, lofty and elegant with great windows through whose delicate brown lace curtains [she] could see the blue flash of the lake”. Her initial focus is on the expansive nature of the space, but she goes on to comment, “I loved the room at once, but something in it was suddenly old, alien, yellow, musty, polite, like South America. This was an Argentinian carpet chair; a chair as unmistakably from the Argentine as you could imagine” (107-8). Steve enters this room, enjoying its “high white ceiling” and the glimpse of the lake out the window, but the openness of the room seems insignificant in relation to the breadth of the potential journey that is offered through contemplation of the objects in this room.

In her realisation of the contents of the room, Steve is at first fully focussed on the carpet chair, but she comes to realise that “[o]rnaments and souvenirs of the Argentine were lying about everywhere. There were knives and daggers and belts and boughs of silver leaves and wine flasks everywhere” (110). Steve’s earlier sense that there would be something in the house to claim as hers, and her sleepy representation of herself as a “Happy Prince”, evoke the princely collections of the Renaissance, whose purpose was “to recreate the world in miniature around the central figure of the prince who thus claimed dominion over the world symbolically as he did in reality” (Bennett 95). The collection that Steve finds in the rooms of Bancroft House is not hers, but the sense that she is viewing the world through her gaze upon the objects gathered there is pivotal in understanding her relationship with those objects. Preziosi and Farago note: “Kunst- and Wunderkammers [...] assembled by princes, aristocrats and other learned persons since the fifteenth century became the actual material bases of many modern museums” (106). Anthropologist James Clifford notes the similarity in operation between imperial practice and that of the museum: “A centre and a

periphery are assumed: the centre a point of gathering, the periphery an area of discovery” (192-3). Steve’s responses to the collections of artefacts in Bancroft House figure the house as a kind of wunderkammer, a cabinet filled with all kinds of curiosities and exotic objects, or more significantly, as the successor to the wunderkammer, as a form of museum. Calum Storrie discusses the way the accumulation of items gathered on trips to distant locations may become a museum exhibition in which the rhetoric of each object is an articulation of the life of that object. It speaks not only of its previous location, but of its transportation, and of the system in which it now resides. He describes a tavern:

This pub [...] was located on West India Dock Road, at the north end of the Isle of Dogs. It sat at the crossroads of a number of routes to the docks and, as such, it became a haunt of sailors setting out on and returning from, sea voyages. From the turn of the century many of the sailors deposited artefacts collected on their trips in lieu of payment. Instead of selling these things, the proprietor began to cover the walls of the pub with them (16).

The objects in Bancroft House, brought back to Australia by sea, and sorted, arranged, and rearranged through the changing conditions of Mr Sutcliffe’s life, like those on the walls of the dockyard tavern/museum speak of many and varied journeys, of South America, and of their acquisition by Mr Sutcliff: these artefacts are souvenirs of Mr Sutcliffe’s life in South America, they have been taken from the settings for which they were initially made and gathered for the pleasures of nostalgic contemplation by Mr Sutcliffe. Susan Stewart argues that the souvenir “generates a narrative which reaches only ‘behind’, spiralling in a continually inward movement rather than outward toward the future” (135). Yet, when formulated as artefacts in the museum-like setting of Bancroft House, the backwards-looking narrative attached to the

souvenir is potentially reversed as each object invites multiple and differentiated readings and imaginative projections by the observer. Each of the objects assembled has journeyed from afar, but their arrival at Bancroft House, and their subsequent viewing by Steve and others, is as much a beginning as an end to the journeys symbolized by their presence. Susan Stewart notes, “The exotic object represents distance appropriated” (147); the perception of the collection of artefacts as a synecdochic assemblage of the wider world leads to the not uncommon assertion by museums that the viewing of these artefacts is representative of a form of voyage.¹⁹ The large number of objects displayed in the rooms of Bancroft House affirms Steve’s anticipation of the house as some form of treasure-trove. At the same time, while it conflicts with Steve’s initial sense that the house is “empty”, and, by association, expressive of unfettered movement, the objects themselves offer the possibility of imagined travel in much the same way that the places within a travel narrative are constructed.

Steve describes her relationship with the carpet chair in the room across the corridor from her bedroom in terms of the imaginative journey it evokes:

I loved [that chair] because it was from the Argentine. And I had a strong feeling that it had once belonged to a gentleman of family in Buenos Aires and that he had often liked to sit in it in his dry hard shrivelled desert conservatory, filled with strange smelling dry South American plants, such as the Century plant and the South American Everlasting. I had sent to the Argentine once for one of those desert growths. It only grew when one wanted it to. Not until it was placed, grey, cold, hard and stone-dead in water did it respond and spread

¹⁹ As one example of many museum statements about their collections, Fleetwood Museum in Lancashire advertises itself as “a voyage of discovery”. See www.lancashire.gov.uk/acs/sites/museums/venues

out long fossilized creeping sea-like laterals and a perfume, the most wonderful in the world [...] And when you had tired of it, or perhaps it had forced satiety upon you, the water was tipped from the white pottery butter-cooler I kept it in, which smelt like the purest aquarium in the world, and the plant set back in the dry container to recoil and sleep until next time. An eternal dry lonely sad wind like that of the desert seemed to search and find this plant and whirl and sing fascinatingly about it. I thought this chair with its faint dry shrivelled carpet of crisp brown ancient flowers very like the desert blossom and I admired it, greatly (108).

In relating the artefact to the natural world that she imagines it coming from, Steve's comparison of the chair with the desert plant is an exposition of the rhetorical life of the artefact and the constructed nature of the viewer's interpretations. The juxtaposition of the "carpet of crisp brown ancient flowers" with the scented desert blossom that is the result of attention suggests that, as museum theorist, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, reminds us, "ethnographic objects are made, not found [...] They *became* ethnographic through processes of detachment and contextualization" (original italics; 3). The artefact, in this case the carpet chair, under the gaze of the interested observer releases long laterals of imagined life, blossoming in potential interpretations.

The contrast between the known original context of a collected artefact and the context of the collection is frequently so large that this produces a sense of distance in itself. As Tony Bennett notes in *The Birth of the Museum*, "The authenticity of the artefact [...] does not vouchsafe its meaning" (147). This is illustrated in the chapter of "Bancroft House" named "The Pen Called Felicidad". In this chapter Steve asks Mr

Sutcliffe if she may borrow a pen to write a letter. He walks into the drawing room and offers her one from the mantelpiece:

A rack of pens stood there. I had not noticed them before among the tangled junk of the Argentine. All these queer pens stood in a Spanish rack; they were all beaded with tiny gay coloured beads set in an intricate rich South American design of strange flowers and animals and geometrical shapes, and set in the middle of the design was the one word, in Spanish, "FELICIDAD."

"HAPPINESS." "I bought these in Buenos Aires," said Mr Sutcliffe. "The prisoners in the gaol there make them by the thousand."

I got a strange shock. It staggered me. I felt sad and white, I knew not why. [...] I saw the inside of the cell, dark in the dark gaol, and a man in dark clothes sitting there patiently beading pens and decorating them with the sad word, "FELICIDAD." "Happiness." I felt a wild, wild agony of sorrow sweep over me, then, and handled the pen with uneasy hands, yet such was my interest that I was fascinated by it (133).

In this passage the difference between here and there is reflected in the word beaded on the pens and the supposed state of mind of the prisoners decorating them. This difference is accentuated by Langley's emphasis on contrasting elements. The drawing room where the pens are now has "high white ceilings" and "white plaster walls" (107) and hearing Mr Sutcliffe's story of the origins of the pens makes Steve feel "sad and white". In contrast Steve imagines darkly clothed prisoners in dark cells at work decorating the pens. She comments on the pen she is holding, "I should imagine the prisoner felt the reverse of Felicidad as he embroidered [it]" (133). The history of these pens, as related by Mr Sutcliffe, contrasts with the beauty of them as objects collected in Bancroft House. Steve notes that "the Southern sun made [them]

glow in the hues of the wine and the vermouth and the sherry and the two blues of the sea” (136). The contrast between the dark history and the bright beauty of the object in the present is echoed in the rapid shift from Steve’s initial unease in handling them to her fascination with the pens as both objects of beauty and of cultural interest. The play on light and dark invests the scene with allusions to imperial practice; it draws on biblical references, suggestions of the “light” of Christianity shining on unconverted parts of the globe, and situates Steve within the “light” space of “civilisation”, in contrast to the darkness of “uncivilised wilderness”.

However, the dual spatial framework apparent in “Bancroft House” suggests that Mr Sutcliffe’s South American souvenirs do not simply extend or enhance the representations of Bancroft House as a site symbolic of distance and voyaging. At the same time as the artefacts prompt the imagining of travel away from the site of observation (Bancroft House, Australia), their presence signals that the site is a destination, both for the observer and the artefact. As portals to distant places, the artefacts facilitate imagined encounters with distant others, such as the dark clad prisoner in the uncertain light of a Buenos Aires gaol. As symbolic of encounter within the space of observation, the artefacts suggest a more immediate form of contact. James Clifford borrows from Mary Louise Pratt to suggest that the museum may be understood as a contact zone, a place where different cultures intersect, interact, and are mutually affected by the encounter (56-7). Preziosi and Farago comment:

[M]useums are ‘performances’ – pedagogical and political in nature – whose practitioners are centrally invested in the activity of making the visible legible, thereby personifying objects as the representations of their makers, simultaneously objectifying the people who made them and, in a second order

reality that is part of the same historical continuum, objectifying the people who view made objects in their recontextualised museum settings (5).

The interactive nature of the museum space suggests that Bancroft House-as-museum is a theatrical space in which both viewer and object perform. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues: “Exhibitions are fundamentally theatrical, for they are how museums perform the knowledge they create” (3). This suggestion, in turn, reflects on the enactment of colonial encounter in this space, highlighting the artifice involved in that enactment. This reflection is made particularly apparent through Steve’s repeated representations of Mr Sutcliffe, not only as a collector of artefacts, but *as* an artefact.

Mr Sutcliffe is frequently figured so that he seems as much an exhibit as the artefacts he has collected and displayed in the rooms of his house/“museum”. Clifford argues: “Gathering an individual’s or a group’s treasures and history in a museum overlays with practices such as collecting memorabilia, making a photo album, or maintaining an altar” (218). Stephen Bann notes similarities between the visual display of the shrine and the museum. The shrine-like atmosphere of the kitchen suggests that Mr Sutcliffe is a relic within it, an object on display:

The air of the room being that of one lived in by a man who had spent the major part of his life in the Argentine, and as his long rich memories oozed out of him, day by day, in silence, the room absorbed them, the house took them in [...] It was classic with the immemorial dust of time, with his long hours of sitting alone, talking in Spanish of the past (105).

Steve is aware that, while he has spent his working life in South America, Mr Sutcliffe is Australian; yet she repeatedly depicts him as an archetypal Argentinian in the same way that she views the artefacts that he has brought back from South America. When she first works for him she watches him “stroll slowly down with his

great dry solemn black Argentina stride” (15) and he stares at her “from two pale blue eyes set in Spanish-Argentine flesh” (18). Steve observes:

This man from the Argentine with his rough silver flannel shirt, braided with soiled silk at the neck, and with his short sleeves showing his long red old strong arms when he took the old coat off, was picturesque and reminiscent of the long years he had spent in South American cities (24).

The quality of Mr Sutcliffe’s body is inspected and the aesthetic nature of his clothes evaluated. Stewart comments that the picturesque “is formed by the transformation of nature into art and thus the manipulation of flux into form, infinity into frame” (75); the ‘picturesque’ nature of Mr Sutcliffe’s appearance frames him as a specimen, and figures him as a pictorial vision, a curio, an object to be collected. His incorporation into the taxonomy of the museum enacts the reconfiguring and absorption of the “other” in the colonial project.

In the rooms of curios and souvenirs, Mr Sutcliffe is another manifestation of the exotic. Beyond the evocative nature of his appearance, he literally speaks of distant places. As much as any item gathered in the house, Mr Sutcliffe is a portal to other worlds. Steve talks of how he “would suddenly recall a big bull-fight at Buenos Aires or Monte Video, and in a few words he made the bullring blaze in thousands of colours and a million angles of sunlight before us” (197). She comments:

And whenever he stood, tall and handsome and old in that long cool kitchen and said, ‘Well, Steve, I’m off to Monte Video today’, he seemed to turn Time right back on itself and out shot the long dark length of fifty years ago and all its heat and [...] all the old, old Argentinian gentlemen there (199).

In Bancroft House-as-museum, all transportation to distant worlds is of the imagination, and all those worlds are as distant (or close) as imagined ones. Included

in his often-repeated reminiscences are Mr Sutcliffe's descriptions of his meeting Rider Haggard, the author of a number of popular so-called Lost World novels:

Down the liner trooped a great long line of bearers, gun bearers and pack bearers and porters and all else [...] shining with oil and grease and carrying great loads of guns and packs on their backs, down they came to the boat. And walking in front of these bearers with their heavy elephant guns and packs was Rider Haggard, the great writer [...] A real figure out of a book, to look at (209).

When boarding the ship that Mr Sutcliffe is travelling on, Rider Haggard is like a figure from one of his own books. With his "long, long beard and moustache", "old wide yellowish dirty hat", "Service revolver stuck in his belt and [...] big bandolier with a round of cartridges over his shoulder and [...] round his waist", Haggard is a simulacrum of one of his own characters (209). Baudrillard suggests that the simulacrum offers the pretence of a reality in which the original model is superseded, or may not exist. In the case of Rider Haggard, the author is figured (by Mr Sutcliffe) as an image of one of his imaginary characters who exists in a textual representation of a colonial construction of the world. Mr Sutcliffe's memories of Haggard draw attention to Steve's depictions of Mr Sutcliffe as an Argentinian in which a similar layering is evident. As an Argentinian, Mr Sutcliffe represents the "other" in a form that is a construction of the colonial imagination.

In her reading of the Trade and Colonial exhibitions in Britain in the early twentieth century, Annie E. Coombes notes that unlike the traditional museum, "whose exhibits could only signify the colonised subject", the Colonial exhibitions, a form of popular museum, literally captured these subjects and placed them in

mock ‘villages’ stocked with items that were purportedly characteristic and representative of a particular culture [...] allowing the visitor to travel metaphorically from one country to another without ever having to leave the site [...] The ‘villages’ successfully fostered a feeling of geographical proximity, while the sense of ‘spectacle’ was calculated to preserve the cultural divide (281).

During the time that Steve calls Bancroft House “home”, the spaces in and around the house are suggestive of what Coombes calls the “traditional museum” but the interactions between Steve and Mr Sutcliffe also assert the spectacle of the live exhibit. The juxtaposition of proximity and strangeness figured in the representation of the other in the Trade and Colonial exhibition is central to the staging of Mr Sutcliffe who is strongly associated with the Australian landscape as a rural landowner but is also depicted as a typical Argentinian. Steve says of Mr Sutcliffe that “he really looked more like a South American than an Australian” (18), but also, later comments: “Yes, he was irresistible, that man from the Argentine, a tall honest lovable romantic characteristic Australian” (296). A similar juxtaposition is apparent in Steve’s description of Mr Sutcliffe’s washing:

Out on the line, Mr Sutcliffe hung some South American rugs, and they swung there dancing like Argentinians [sic] all afternoon. While we worked for Sutcliffe, I noticed that we were in the Argentine. Something floated out of the struck mind like a colourful and irresistible ardent waltz, the most spirited in the whole world. The most fascinating and maddening. [...] One note of tango sounding in those paddocks of Sutcliffe’s and out from the mind ran white and red striped estancias, piazzas, pampas, striding, stamping dancers, men of

unique loveliness, their mouths smelling of wine, their eyes like moonlight under the midnight of their hair (27-8).

Echoing Coombe's description of the mock 'villages' of the Colonial exhibition, Steve portrays being drawn in by the dancing rugs so that she feels as though she is "in the Argentine" while the movement and bright hues combine to create a spectacle of "exotic" beauty. The highly theatrical, clichéd picture that Steve paints emphasises the constructedness of the spectacle and reminds us of the absence of the "other" who has been replaced by the spectacle. In this dissonance the artifice involved in Mr Sutcliffe's role as "Argentinian" is further highlighted.

Mr Sutcliffe is a settler who is figured as "other" by being cast as Argentinian, but that Argentinian is a colonial agent, responsible for the collection of artefacts now displayed in his house. So, he is a colonialist figured as "other", where that figure is also the self/colonist. This self/colonist is emphatically framed as Australian, and his house is located within the Australian landscape. The frequent casting of Mr Sutcliffe in the role of "other" in "Bancroft House" speaks of South America, but also directs attention to the representation of the indigene of Australia. In Chapter Four, "The Space of Absence", I explored the presence of the indigene, the Australian aborigine, as suggested in the form of absences in Langley's novels. In "Bancroft House", the effacement of the indigene is figured through what could be called an excess of representation. The figuring of Bancroft House as a museum-like space, and the positioning of Mr Sutcliffe as an artefact in this space, highlights the performativity in Mr Sutcliffe's casting as Argentinian (as "other"), and asserts the theatrical nature of the space of colonial encounter represented by Bancroft House. In Coombe's discussion of the mock villages, she notes the careful staging of the "other" as both proximate and yet safely removed, both here and there. But the performance staged by

the assemblage of the mock villages involves both viewer and subject: the viewer is also simultaneously positioned here and there, or here and not here. Citing Gelder and Jacob's interrogation of the uncanny in the Australian landscape, Tompkins comments on the "dilemma of being 'in place' and 'out of place' at the same time" (166). A key signifier of settler literature is the internalised self/other or here/there binary division of the settler subject. Alongside Steve's desires for home-as-journey, the presence of the gathered artefacts conflicts with the figured (desirable) "emptiness" of Bancroft House, and asserts the house as not only a destination but one that is "always already" settled. As discussed in Chapter Two, in the context of the colonial discourse of "Bancroft House", and through the presence of a double, when Steve approaches the sole book in the living room of Bancroft House and discovers the "portrait" of Oscar Wilde, it is as though she is both newly arrived and already there, "always" there. Bancroft House may be seen as a site in which the "ambivalence of emplacement", as Slemon terms it, is made visible. Steve's evocations of Bancroft House enact the performativity inherent in this project of emplacement, and the false consciousness that it articulates.

Chapter Seven

Contested Spaces: Home, Community, Nation

[L]ives are lived in more than one location, generating fragmentary and fugitive biographies that defy fixity in politically delineated space.

(Donnan and Wilson 109)

The moral is that the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion.

(Henry James 23)

Exploration of Langley's novel, "Bancroft House", as a series of sites of encounter makes apparent the constructed nature of the concept of home. In so doing, home is also revealed to be a contested space. Critical to the representation of Langley's narrator, Steve/Eve, is the use of competing perspectives to position her within a location (Australia and New Zealand, but also home, away, society, culture, nation). Frequently these perspectives are not so much intersecting as overlaid, so that a significant feature of Langley's novels is the manifestation of contested space: a dynamic indicative of the desirability of that contested space. Discussing competing desires for the space of Australia, Tompkins comments: "[d]ebates over land rights, anxieties regarding nationalism, settlement, reconciliation, traces of what was known as the yellow peril and subsequent invasion scares are preoccupied with space" (6). In settler discourse, contestation of space is the practice that drives the settler project

even as, at the same time, settler narrative elides contestation in a discursive production of uncontested land. Defining structures such as the frontier, the border and the boundary, the nation and nationalisms, emerge from the contestation of space.

In this chapter I explore particular contestations of the spaces of home in Langley's novels, and investigate the interconnectedness of the forces that shape the home, the community and the nation in these texts. Stuart Murray observes "that 'the national' does not function on its own during its development, but is entwined within other categories – ideas of gender, of power, of social organisation. So nations might be seen as social 'bodies', or as sites for ideological disputes" (*Any Map* 13). Gender-based constructions of the space of "home" coincide with social regulations in 1920s Australia. As we shall see, Steve's desire for home as a space of personal and social freedom conflicts with these constructions, but while her desire seems to oppose social norms, it is also closely identified with contemporary Australian formulations of national identity. In the domestic spaces explored below, freedom is expressed through unmediated interactions with the natural environment of Australia in the form of the flora and fauna of the "bush". I will investigate the way that these interactions, which are generally viewed as critical to the make-up of the archetypal Australian, are seen to conflict with the conventional space of home, while they also work to define it. In Langley's New Zealand novels, "home" as a domestic space is also constructed relative to social and national frameworks. In this chapter I explore how, in the Auckland-based novel, "The Old Mill", the domestic space is placed in opposition, not so much to the natural world (as in the Australian novels), but to the socially marginal space of home as an artist's studio, and home as the space of artistic expression. By situating her narrator beyond normative social constructions but within the literary scene of New Zealand in the 1930s, Langley, I suggest, restages her own position relative to a literary scene particularly concerned with the writing of the

nation. Langley's careful positioning of Steve within the space of Australian national identity through her narrator's association with the natural world has an ironic counterpoint in the construction of the national space in New Zealand: the anthology title "Kowhai Gold" is appropriated as a pejorative label affixed to writing such as Langley's by those seeking representations of a shifting national consciousness in New Zealand literature. This chapter considers parallels in Langley's strategic placements of her narrator within the social and cultural frameworks of Australia and New Zealand, and explores delineations of nationalism interrogated by those placements.

In several of Langley's Australian novels, the narrator, Steve, spends time hop picking in the Alps. There, she makes friends with "Charlie Wallaby" (Willoughby) and his mother, Annie. Steve and her sister Blue are invited to stay over winter at the Willoughby house when the picking work dwindles. They grasp this opportunity to stay in the area and continue their adventures even in the off-season of the hop-fields. However, the warm and genuinely kind invitation has a hook: Mrs Willoughby becomes certain that Steve would make a good wife for her son. Sitting by the fire one wet afternoon, Mrs Willoughby and Steve chat:

[Mrs Willoughby] droned, while I listened, sleepy-eyed, hypnotized by the rain and the fire, 'Charl's a good boy, and a hard worker too. But he needs someone with him. He ought to get married. He wants cleaning out.'

I woke with a shock of unease and wondered if she meant that I should be his marital chimney-sweeper. Yes, and I was sad, too; for it seemed that she was one of that unending band of men and women, who, for some reason or other, tried to take me from my wandering life and my ideal love, so that I might be mated and tied down to bear and slave, without poetry to fire and console me (*Pea-Pickers* 265).

The cosiness of the fireside chat suddenly becomes a situation of threatening repression in the form of marriage. To Steve, marriage is a convention she associates with an undesirable containment enforced by society in the form of an “unending band of men and women” whom, she imagines, wish her “mated and tied down”. It is a convention situated in opposition to the freedom of a “wandering life” and a life in which she is free socially, and in which she can choose to be a poet rather than a wife and housewife. That heart of domesticity, the warm space of the family hearth, is contrasted with the solitary pleasure of the flame of poetic inspiration.

Steve’s sense of entrapment arises not simply from the words of Mrs Willoughby. On being invited to tea for the first time, Steve and Blue have to “break[...] through the webs” to enter the kitchen: “Over the furniture, and the iron bed-posts that bruised our shins, lay a web of crochet work, dirty and spotted with mould, but of fine pattern and done by a good needle-woman” (*Pea-Pickers* 225). The space of the house materially manifests the snare-like quality Steve experiences in the social conventions represented by the house and Mrs Willoughby’s hopes for her and Charlie. On a later visit to the house, Steve observes:

The front room in which we ate was full of Annie’s old white linen underclothes, nightgowns and tablecloths, tethered by many intricate knots to the Bell pattern or the Kangaroo and Emu partnered. Or the Kangaroo all alone. The Bower-bird and Lyre bird with the moss stitch. The Bower bird alone with a china dish resting on him. The Bellbird and the Kangaroo... fighting it out. The Lyre bird and the Rooster perched on the Greek key pattern. A real menagerie all around us. Annie kept her pets well within the fretwork of a lace cover (“Wild Australia” 345).

One of the sustaining frameworks of the nomadic life that Steve chooses is the resulting association with the natural world, through proximity as well as cultural

connection. The Australian native birds and animals stitched and hooked into the lace work that festoons the front room of the Willoughbys' house are fellow occupants of the landscape that Steve wanders through. Some are depicted as trapped in solitary confinement, and they are all separated from their fellow-kind and their natural environment. Steve comments that "[a]ll these [creatures] stood embowered in their white and cottony paradise of forlorn bush flowers" ("Wild Australia" 345), but it seems that the bush flowers, rather than providing a natural backdrop to the fauna, are similarly cut off from the landscape. Evident in Steve's observation is her sense of the skilful and firm ties that threaten to bind her to the household, as Annie's daughter-in-law and as one of Annie's "pets". Steve's desire to wander the landscape, as an itinerant worker and poet, is repeatedly asserted in opposition to the conventions of domestic space in Langley's novels. To use Lefebvre's formulations, the representational space of "away", with all its connotations of freedom, distance and isolation, is positioned in opposition to the cultural and social power represented in the domestic space.

Yet, "away" is also representative of cultural power through its relationship with the construction of national identity (see the chapter "On the Road"). For Steve, "home" is found in a combination of refusal of conventional domestic regulation and engagement with the celebration of a landscape central to Australian constructions of identity. In Annie's lace work, domestic practice and symbols of Australian nationalism are literally intertwined. Elizabeth Webby notes that the poem "Bell Birds" by Henry Kendall (regarded as one of Australia's foremost "pioneer poet[s]") was "learnt by heart by generations of Australian schoolchildren" (59-60). A kangaroo and an emu support the shield of the Australian coat of arms, and are the unofficial animal emblems of the nation. In the lace work, the symbols of nationalism are embraced but are portrayed by Steve as sitting uneasily within the containment of

the knots. In this set of contestations, the stereotypical opposition between domestic space and the outdoors, in terms of both social and physical freedom, is unsettled by the representations of national identity in the knotted designs. The incorporation of the emblems into the lace work brings representations of the nation into the house and so, into the space of “womanly” domestic practice, but Steve’s descriptions evoke the emblems as captured rather than “at home”. Her realignment of the symbols of the Australian natural world—which are also symbols of nationalism—in opposition to the domestic space suggests that the life of social marginality that she desires, in close association with the natural environment, is also representative of forms of cultural centrality. By aligning social marginality with cultural centrality, this construction raises questions about popular understandings of national identity. In the next section of this chapter, the dynamics of this formulation are explored further through consideration of representations of the house thought of as “home” in the opening pages of *The Pea-Pickers*.

The contested nature of the imagined space of home in Langley’s novels is manifest in Steve’s evocations of the house in Dandenong, where she lives with her mother and sister at the beginning of *The Pea-Pickers*. This house is not, at this point, referred to as Mia’s home, as it is in later novels, but is called “our house” by Steve (2). As her home, it is depicted as a space consistent with the nomadic lifestyle she aspires to, and which to a large extent she achieves in the adventures recounted in Langley’s later novels. The precarious nature of its built structure is emphasised and the separation between the inside of this house and out is tenuous. In *The Pea-Pickers*, Steve says that from the street Mia’s disintegrating house “looked like a pile of rotten chips” (2). In the kitchen “the red and white flags [of the floor] rocked in their beds” (*Pea-Pickers* 279) and in the “old front room the ancient brown, brown rich golden brown wallpaper shook and shivered like an old Gobelin tapestry and gullibly gulped

and bulged outward” in the draught (“Victorians” 186). Ivy grows through the walls and as the giant plum trees around the house draw the goodness out of the dark soil, the house seems to settle further down into it, continuous with the landscape rather than separate from it:

[T]he house proper was thirteen giant plum trees, which held the soil in their hands and brought up snow out of its blackness every spring. It is lost to us now, but yet, how mysteriously satisfying it is to know that in the minds of my mother, my sister and myself the old house is embalmed, so that one may render to a forgetful other a fine correction of some intricate detail that has escaped her memory. It is a thought as sweet as heaven to know that in the minds of each of us the may by the fence still blooms in an eternal springtime; that the snowdrop has in our hearts a triple birth, and blooms in three separate minds, faultlessly. The river-weed by the tap may not, in the season of dehiscence, split the purse that holds its seeds and fling them far and wide, but the ghosts of its ripeness spring up seasonably in our minds and sow a ghostly seed. So that if all the flowers and grasses and hollows and hills of the old house were razed and mutilated – as they are now, I suppose – we keep them intact in three minds, each depending on the other to supply it with the delicate minutiae of remembrance (*Pea-Pickers* 2).

In Steve’s imagined collective memory of the family home, the house itself is simply absorbed into the garden. Both the physical fragility of the house and the collective memory of the finer details of its imagined dissolution are representative of those structures in which Steve feels most at-home. The material nature of Mia’s house and, what Lefebvre terms the representational space of that house, that is, Steve’s imagined home, converge in an expression of fluidity. Both physically and in Steve’s imagination, the house is described as part of the ebb and flow of nature, with a

natural lifecycle associated with the seasons, the lifespan of timber construction, and the longer-lasting amorphous lifespan of individual and collective memory.

As Steve's home, the house is not depicted as separate to a life of wandering and freedom, but part of an ongoing adventure. Mia, who had lost her family home through leaving for adventure as a young woman, and "looked like an old bushman herself ..." (*Pea-Pickers* 5), seems as unsettled as her daughters and actively propels them out into the wider world. Steve says,

Mia had encouraged us to wander; made restless by long hard years of gipsying [sic] through the Australian States, she found peace in urging us out to follow the echo of the aboriginal names of towns that had tempted her when she was young... For years she had been saying, 'You girls would love Gippsland... the Monaro... the Stream... the Tambo and the Lakes.' For years she had laid the powder trail [...] that would set us alight. (*Pea-Pickers* 4-5)

Mia is associated with the house in its run-down state and, with her daughters, participates in the family's practice of "harmless deceits against the town's health inspector, whereby, with many variegated roses, lilacs, ivies and grapevines, [they] concealed from his unkindly eye the fact that [the family's] 'kipsie', as Mia called it, was falling down" (2). Significantly, the efforts of the family to maintain their home in its decayed state not only identify it further with its natural environment in the form of the flowers and vines encouraged to smother it, but also assert it as a space resistant to social regulation such as that enforced by the local health department.

However, as Steve and her sister Blue follow Mia's "powder trail" to Gippsland and find work and adventure there, the family home becomes simply termed "Mia's home" and, while Steve's descriptions of the house still acknowledge the insubstantiality of its structure, her representations of it as a cultural space reposition the house within the force fields of what Lefebvre refers to as "social

power and authority". Situated within the house, Mia becomes identified with its cultural representations of domesticity. Each of the novels that Langley sets in Australia contains a description of at least one of Steve's visits back to her mother Mia, and these visits describe a disturbance of the culturally prescribed domestic space of Mia's home. Over the course of the novels Steve travels widely through the countryside of Victoria, as an itinerant field hand and self-styled rover. At the end of each adventure Steve returns to be with her mother and to discuss her movements beyond the house through the wider world. When Steve visits her mother she invariably brings evidence of her adventures with her. These souvenirs articulate Steve's imagined space of home that is now situated beyond the social and physical space of the house. The placement of the souvenirs in Mia's home describes an intersection of the domestic space with that which articulates a refusal of the domestic.

Unexpectedly arriving home early from one eventful journey through Gippsland, Steve observes:

Mia was bewildered by our sudden arrival and the way we thrust our imaginary whiskers through the window and announced, 'We're home, little woman... whataboutacuppatea?' [...] We put on beards and moustaches of black rabbit-skin and performed before her until morning, acting the parts of all the those we had met (*Pea-Pickers* 60).

A living souvenir of her own experience, Steve is projected as representative of all the characters encountered in her time away. The breadth of the experience she encapsulates, which takes all night to re-enact, is reinforced by contrast with the parodically named 'little woman' who is bewildered at the sudden appearance of her daughters. At this time, Steve clearly differentiates herself from her mother through her assumed manliness and larger than life confidence in performance. By appearing

unannounced, and arriving at the window rather than the door, Steve asserts a lack of domestic regulation, a condition she associates with the countryside she has been occupying, and which she, in turn, wishes to be associated with.

Despite its physically blurred boundaries, when Steve stays in Mia's home in between adventures and jobs, her impression is one of undesirable containment. She says, "The gate of home admitted us to that small untidy garden which was to be our world for a few weeks; and the sudden cramping, after huge ranges, long valleys and wild rivers, was like a physical stricture to us" (*Pea-Pickers* 279). The restrictions of domestic life in a suburban family home are compared with Steve's life away in terms of size, relative distance, openness, and implied freedom. Though she loves her mother and speaks of her warmly, Steve does not feel at home in the containment represented by Mia's house. This containment is multifaceted. In *White Topee*, during another visit, Steve comments:

Mia and I settled in for a fortnight or two of winter, after that first afternoon. I took much persuading to remain at home. Dandenong always appeared contracted to my eyes, used to the miles and miles of Gippsland. I walked around the Lodge and eyed the laurels gloomily. I could not understand how my mother could be bothered living in such a place. Motor cars were passing it every minute; clerks and shop girls went by to their work down in the main street. And next door one could hear the servant saying to her old mistress, 'The figs will soon be ripe, ma'am' (60).

The brief length of time allocated for the visit, a "fortnight or two", is indicative of the sense of discomfort Steve feels in encountering the bustle of life on the city streets, and the domestic life expected of young women in the suburbs. In contrast, she later says:

I loved to ride and wander forever, to come home to my mother with my

annual collection of bandicoot skins, lowry feathers, kangaroo hides, porcupine bristles, rifles, powderflasks, old bridles, ancient books, old drawings and copies of old, old Italian songs. (“Bancroft House” 98)

In the disparity between the two or so weeks allocated for Steve’s visit to her mother, and the time between the annual visits we see co-ordinates of the life in which Steve feels at-home. Steve’s souvenirs represent her life away from the house as rich and wide-ranging, involving physical and mental extension. The range of animal skins, feathers and bristles implies a life engaged with the countryside rather than the city and suburbs of her mother’s home, and the books, drawings and songs imply an intellectual life rich in comparison to that of an office worker or domestic servant.

Bill Brown suggests we feel encouraged to look through objects for the stories beyond, and souvenirs are a particularly potent class of objects; they speak not just of where they have come from, but also of where they are. Susan Stewart suggests:

The double function of the souvenir is to authenticate a past or otherwise remote experience and, at the same time, to discredit the present. The present is too looming, or too alienating compared to the intimate and direct experience of contact which the souvenir has as its referent. This referent is authenticity. (139)

For Steve, “authenticity” is found in an itinerant life associated with the works of authors such as Henry Lawson and A. B. “Banjo” Paterson, regularly published in the *Bulletin*. “Authenticity” is attained through immersion in a rural environment or the “bush” and in identification with character-types like the “noble bushman” who are central to discussions about Australian national identity. Steve describes the souvenirs brought back on a visit described in *The Pea-Pickers*:

Opening up our packing-case, we brought out our trophies and nailed them to the wall with those from Metung. Beside the six-foot snake-skin, a gift from

Jim, was the ticket off the bag into which Macca tipped peas and beans. Above these we set the four guns I had found in the alpine district; the racing bit, a purple and gold jockey's cap, and a beautiful brown hat of Italian felt which Major had given to Blue. (279)

Like the souvenirs described in the earlier excerpt, these objects speak largely of Steve's life in the outdoors, of adventure, and physical freedom.

Yet a simple alignment of the souvenirs with stereotypical national characteristics associated with rural life is refused by the opposition that the souvenirs pose, not only to the physical parameters of the domestic life traditionally ascribed to women, but also to social constructions of that life, constructions that are also integral to the national narrative. While, as Kay Schaffer writes, "women have long been considered to be absent in the bush and the nationalistic bush tradition" (xii), in the 1920s Australian women were governed by the terms by which that tradition was constructed. Schaffer notes that "the dominant norms of Australian culture [were and] are masculine, White, Anglo-Irish and heterosexual" (12). As an interior, contained space, the home was conventionally expected to be feminine rather than masculine, but the stereotypical Australian home was still white, Anglo-Irish and heterosexual. As well, contemporary terms of femininity were severely circumscribed (see Miriam Dixson *The Real Matilda*). Each of the souvenirs unpacked by the sisters represents social aspects of the life that Steve and Blue experience while "away". As souvenirs, these objects represent, not the lives or experiences of the makers or even of the objects in their original locations but, as Stewart puts it, "the 'secondhand' experience of its possessor/owner" (135).

Yet, the souvenir has a double function: while the narrative associated with each souvenir is focussed on an experience of life between visits to Mia, it also speaks of the house in which it is displayed. The space of "away" symbolised by the

souvenirs interacts with and unsettles the socially constructed space of the house, contesting the closed space of culturally prescribed domestic life. The six-foot long snakeskin is a reminder, not so much of the snake in its habitat, or even Jim, as represented by his kind gift, but of the relationship Steve and Blue have with Jim, which is one of mateship as though they are three male friends. This version of mateship ironically destabilises one of the cornerstones of Australian cultural identity. The relationship between the two sisters and Jim involves not only the cross-dressing of the women, which threatens conventional heterosexuality, but also unmarried cohabitation, which contravenes the social containment of women.

Implications of sexual freedom asserted by the gift of the snakeskin are also visible in the social situation suggested by the ticket from the crop bag. This ticket talks not only of the bag, or of the peas and beans loaded into it, but of the working lives of the sisters in the fields of Gippsland, and of Steve's intimacy with and passion for Macca. In the display of the ticket Steve is expressing her predilection for drawn out, melancholic and ultimately unfulfilled romance, modelled on a perceived Romantic ideal of love encouraged by her reading of poetry. The guns and racing gear represent the masculine model of life adopted by the sisters on their adventures, and the Italian hat speaks of the crossing of ethnocentric boundaries in a time spent mixing with new immigrants in the fields and huts of the horticultural world. Later, on the night of the sisters' arrival at their mother's house, Blue grabs the hat back off the wall: "'See, Mia? Maggiore gave this to me!' 'Ah', said Mia fearfully, 'those Italians will be the cause of your death yet, you girls. Keep away from them!'" (280). Mia is referring to the social death feared from miscegenation, particularly during the time of the White Australia Policy. The souvenirs speak of a life that is experienced not only outside in a spatial sense, but also socially. The socialising with the Italian men that the girls work alongside, the living and working as men in a male-dominated rural

culture, and the life spent mainly outside all contrast with the domestic life represented by houses like Mia's. As archives of Steve's day-to-day life away from Mia's house, and representations of their original context, the souvenirs contest both the masculinity of the archetypal Australian bushman/rover figure, and also the converse constructions of womanhood at this time. Also contested is the implicit mono-ethnicity inherent within the national stereotype. In contradiction with Steve's overt ethnocentricity at other times, the souvenirs suggest a cultural space unembraced by the prevailing White Australia policy.

Yet, while that evoked by the souvenirs contests social prescriptions of 1920s Australian life, it does speak of what Schaffer calls, that "unique and original Australian creation, 'the voice of the bush', which [is] somehow equated with the voice of Australia" (29). The skins, feathers, and other representations of Australian wildlife are expressive of a certain intimacy with nature and, in those terms, suggest a lifestyle that is coterminous with Australian cultural stereotypes. The cultural stereotypes evoked by the souvenirs are highlighted when the souvenirs are considered as collections rather than regarded individually. Whereas the souvenir is a synecdochic device, in that it is a sample of its original whole, the collection "offers example rather than sample, metaphor rather than metonymy" (Stewart 151). The grouping of the souvenirs suggests a narrative that adds to those of the individual objects. In the collection, historical aspect is transformed into space; the space is not that signified in the distance evoked by the souvenir, but that of the narrative of the collection itself. The souvenirs of Steve's time away are placed carefully on the walls of her mother's house. She comments,

Mia had placed all our treasures in the right places. On brackets on the walls were my seven rifles and two Service revolvers. There were foxes' skins, wallabies' skins, the skins of eagles and snakes, bandicoots and lizards,

jockeys' caps, racing bridles, saddles, powder flasks, bullet and cartridge belts, two battle boomerangs and half a dozen exhibition boomerangs. (*White Topee* 60)

Steve explains the layout of each display in some detail; they are deliberately arranged collections. Stewart says, "To ask which principles of organisation are used in articulating the collection is to begin to discern what the collection is about" (152). The arrangements within the displays of souvenirs as described by Steve, have parallels with the arrangements of hunting trophies presented in photographs in hunting and game fishing magazines.

It is significant that when Steve unpacks her souvenirs from the packing case they have been brought in, she calls them trophies. Analysis of photographs in hunting magazines shows that a common device in the exhibition of animal trophies is the positioning of weapons and other hunting equipment over or above or in front of the animal body (Kalof and Fitzgerald 118). In the displays of Steve's souvenirs, her assemblage of guns is prominently placed relative to the animal skins, feathers, bristles and hides on display. Kalof and Fitzgerald suggest that the prominence of the weapons in the displays photographed for the hunting magazine is staged in order to represent the activity of the hunt and the kill (118). Often there is no human in the photographs of trophy displays, suggesting that the weapons also stand in for the people who had held and employed them in the hunt. In the displays on Mia's walls, the guns figure the animal remains as hunting trophies and the owner of the guns, Steve, as a hunter. The guns represent their owner as being at home in the "armed confrontation between humanness and wildness, between culture and nature" that is the hunt (Cartmill 30). The trophy displays in Mia's house construct a narrative about hunting and killing Australian native fauna that reconfigures the narrative represented in the individual souvenirs. The hunting narrative presented in the collection of

souvenirs shifts the rhetoric of the object from one of intimacy with nature to one of mastery over nature. Steve frequently expresses a deep sense of integration with the Australian landscape. In “The Victorians” she says, “A man is a millionaire in Australia if he’s only got a bark hut and a billy for his tea and comes out of that hut to look around and over the great dry land he loves and is part of...” (329). The suggested harmony of this vision contains an assumed indigeneity. However, the imposition of will represented in the “trophies” suggests not so much a peaceful and rightful occupation as a re-enactment of the violence of oppression and appropriation of indigeneity by the settler figure.

At the same time, the hunting narrative offered by Steve’s displays is complicated by the probable state of disrepair of the guns collected. Langley never directly describes Steve firing a gun, and throughout her novels most of the guns handled by Steve are depicted as broken and abandoned by their previous owners. In *The Pea-Pickers* Steve says:

I was beginning to collect guns of all sorts. The rusty Martini-Henry [...] was the first I had picked up. I developed a passion for them, and sought them everywhere. Beyond the river, in a house deserted by the Sullivans, I found two old rifles, together with a quaint broken teapot and old romantic dance programmes. (228)

Later, on hearing Steve speak of her “passion for guns” her friend, the “Bucaneer” is “moved [to] go under the house and bring out an old kangaroo gun that he had flung out of sight years ago. Sitting by the fire, [Steve] cleaned it up and oiled it” (*Pea-Pickers* 286). It is implied that the guns brought back to Mia’s house as souvenirs are all acquired in this way, and the association of the guns with the broken teapot and other debris found in an abandoned house suggest that they are, in their original sense, functionally deficient. The guns brought to Mia’s house by Steve are symbols of an

aspect of Steve's life as a wanderer, in which she imagines herself living self-sufficiently in solitude; yet, like the fake swagger and false beards, the state of disrepair of most of the guns means that they are souvenirs of Steve's *desire for* a way of life as much as souvenirs *of* the way of life itself. The souvenirs displayed on Mia's walls are as performative as Steve in her false beard. The previous chapter explored Steve's interactions with the spaces of, and the objects in, Bancroft House in which the overt theatricality of moments seen to enact those of colonial encounter unsettles the discourse of those encounters. The performative nature of the souvenirs of Steve's life as an itinerant worker, which unsettles her representations of that life, also works to contest the constructions of national identity built around the Australian bushman/rover type that Steve strives to emulate.

The performativity evident in Steve's displays of herself through her souvenirs is echoed in Eve's self-fashioning in Langley's "New Zealand" novels. Where Steve's performativity is suggestive of her position within an Australian national narrative centred on occupation of the landscape, Eve's self-fashioning asserts a discussion of place through enactments of a "writerly" persona. In Langley's novels set in New Zealand, the narrator Eve maintains the sense of belonging to the Australian landscape expressed by Steve: missing Australia, Eve dramatically asks, "Heavens, why cannot I return to my country. She is my mother. She is my home. She is my lover" ("Dublin Street" 194). However, despite this sentiment, Eve does construct an imagined space of home in New Zealand: one not based directly on an engagement with the landscape, but centred on the space of the artist and writer. Her discussions of home shift from those contextualised within cultural constructs of Australia, to those that seek to situate home as an imagined space within the constructions of a literary world. In Langley's first novel set in New Zealand, "Land of the Long White Cloud", her narrator says, "I gave up the bush for the books" (401). The firm link

between writing and national identity is well established, but in the years that Eve lived in New Zealand, there was a particularly conscious attempt to define the nation through its literature. This literary context may be seen as critical to Langley's positioning of Eve in her early New Zealand novels and to the understanding of the dynamics of Eve's imagined space of home. Langley's first two New Zealand novels follow Eve as she travels to Wanganui and works as a journalist for the *Wanganui Herald*. She says, "I was busy writing as usual and sending work to the *Mirror* in Auckland and getting poems in and doing work for the Herald too. In all directions I spread my literary wings after a long time of letting them rest..." ("Cloud" 252). By the third New Zealand novel, Eve is living in Auckland, and has made a number of local literary connections.

In "The Old Mill" Eve rents "a garret of two rooms" (174). This studio sits at the top of a house near Partington's Mill, a windmill sited near the intersection of Symonds Street and Karangahape Road on the edge of the city centre. In this place the physical environment complements the nature of her imagined space of home. Significantly, Eve compares her life in the studio space with her life in the fields and countryside of Gippsland in Australia:

I had never known such gay delightful days as those I spent in the old garret under the Old Mill... such days had never been since the days of the pea pickers... Jim and Blue would have fitted in here well... Macca would have called in and shyly, ah, how shyly enjoyed knowing Hilary... and Peppino would have loved his ancient piano and the records... ("Old Mill" 238).

In Langley's Australian novels Steve feels "at home" in the life represented by the souvenirs brought back to Mia's house. In "The Old Mill", Eve's life in the "old garret", like the life spoken of by the individual souvenirs, evokes life outside societal norms and denotes freedom of movement and expression. The physical nature of the

studio rooms is situated within a discourse of artistic identification drawing on clichés of impoverished nineteenth century European artists starving in garrets. The itinerant artistic lifestyle represented by these rooms suggests both marginality and a sense of belonging. The enactments of belonging and otherness portrayed in Langley's construction of Eve's garret as home speak of Langley's vision of the artists' world generally, but also reveal a significant positioning of Langley as an author within the changing literary world of New Zealand in the 1930s and 40s.

The physical freedom that Steve associates with her life away from Mia's house, and which is a critical element in her imagined space of home, is experienced by Eve in her studio space. Towards the end of her stay there, she is asked what she will do with her "Rogues Gallery", the assortment of portraits she has placed on the walls in one corner of the main room. She replies that she will take it with her and "put it up again like the tent of Pagliacci in some other place..." (395). Like the players in the commedia troupe of Leoncavallo's opera, Eve feels able to pack up and move on at will. When Eve first views her garret she notes that its physical state is relatively unenclosed and unanchoring. It is situated at the top of a flight of stairs, off a "slim fine boarded landing" and entered through "a curious little thin door" (174). Eve warmly describes it as "a lovely derelict old spot" (177). Her focus, however, is directed towards the suitability of the rooms as a writer's studio. She notes that the main room of the garret is "so lovely... so really suited to a writer and poet's passion for solitude and quaintness and with what genius one could work here and write here" (174). She later adds, "... in this garret I'd be able to write really great books... it would soon be winter, it was now May and soon I must shift in and start to write and read and live the life of the artist writer, just as I liked to do..." (177). Standing at the window with Mr Partington, the landlord, she thinks, "O, how glorious it was... to be young, and like a female Rembrandt set down in an old white house that stood right

under a real mill” (176). For Eve, the “life of the artist writer” in this space is one associated with otherness and distant locations, allusions which are linked with the freedom of movement she identifies with the studio space. She comments on her garret, “With the most unique air of Paris about it all, it was precisely as though one were living ‘Sur les Toits des Paris’ or ‘on the roofs of Paris’” (174), and later notes, “Rising in the morning in the garret as I at once called my acquisition, was unforgettable... you were in Europe, in France, Holland, anywhere but in Auckland” (182). When Mr Partington describes the other tenants of the house to her, including a woman with her small daughter and her lover, Eve “delightedly” thinks “Truly le atelier Paris” (175). The otherness framed by the space of the garret is not only associated with geographical dislocation; Mr Partington’s reference to the unmarried status of this couple suggests there is a social dislocation associated with Eve’s occupancy of her rooms. She compares her “writer’s garret” with the “suburban ‘rooms’, utterly rooms” that she had lived in previously, noting the “low company” and “low suburban [...] atmosphere” of those places (177).

Langley confirms Eve’s sense that occupation of the garret will situate her as an artist dwelling amongst other artists through scenes of critical recognition and situational parallels. Eve’s vision that the nature of her dwelling place furthers her construction of herself as an artist is supported when she reads “of a group of young people in Sydney who were living in an old mill [reminiscent of Eve’s dwelling] and printing and publishing their own books in remarkable printed cloth covers” (383). In her descriptions of the garret and Eve’s response to it, Langley’s evocations of distance locate Eve, through location and temperament, within the ebb and flow of a wide-spread artistic community. This is substantiated when one day Eve’s sister, June, (the equivalent character is called Blue in Langley’s Australian texts), leaps up the steps and into the room where Eve is sitting and presents her “with a book from

London, in which was printed a comment on [Eve's] poem 'A Vision of Clouds', the editor saying that it was like the work of John Keats of long ago" (334). Further approbation from a more local source is evident when Eve unexpectedly receives a visit by Iris Wilkinson, known as the writer Robin Hyde:

A high voice came peeling through the thin door following the sound of stumbling footsteps on the stairs and the voice cried, "May I come in?" "Wait!" I rushed to the door and opened it and saw Robin Hyde standing on the small landing below the light cord... "Aim Robin Hyde," said she [...]

"Come in," said I. And in she came, haltingly leaning on her walking stick she used against the limp caused by a stiff knee [...] Sitting down in the chair by the window [...] she drew me into her lap and nursed me there silently for a while, as the old mill sails in the blue air of spring revolved slowly above us... We talked for a while thus, myself a small slender figure in trousers and frock over it on her matronly knee and she bowing above me, fondling my hands [...] She read my poetry and liked "The Last Sacrifice" that I had written down at Carterton best of all... (339).

Robin Hyde, as she refers to herself in this passage, is two years younger than Eve (as consistent with Langley's age). Eve's description of Hyde's stumbling footsteps and matronly knee suggests a maturity consistent, not with her age, but with Hyde's standing as a poet and novelist. Langley frames Hyde's visit almost as a mother visiting her child, a benediction scene with the senior writer bestowing her approval not only on Eve's writing but also on Eve, as a writer.

Invoking a poetics of displacement to describe the imagined space of home, Langley situates her narrator within, what Deleuze and Guattari call a "nomadic subjectivity" (55), which describes not only the unfixed nature of her abode but also

her unstable identity. Langley repeatedly suggests a polymorphous state of identity for her narrator. Within the space of home formulated by her occupation of the garret, Eve's identity as an artist and writer exhibits constant change, flickering from one state of becoming to another. Arriving at the steps of her garret in a taxi with her "various goods" Eve says, "I entered into possession after a word with a slender little well clad dark woman with waving black hair and a pleasant face, very like Constance Wilde, the wife of Oscar Wilde" (180). Eve is taking occupancy of the rooms and control over her life as a writer, but her observation also suggests a concurrent state of being possessed. Langley describes Eve's occupancy of her garret as a simultaneous occupancy of Eve by the imagined literary world associated with it. Influenced by her vision of the location of her new dwelling as resembling an artists' ghetto of historical standing, Eve's immediate impulse upon getting up on her first morning there is to alter her appearance to suit that location:

I had acquired a lot of rich old clothes that went with the garret ... a fine antique lace shawl of thick knotted cotton made by hand in the eighties, and I leapt out of bed and put on a pair of short gay pants like a juggler of Notre Dame's, slung a pretty frock over this and over my neat shining hair put this lace white shawl ... I was quite medieval looking and like the mill in a curiously rich way... (182).

Yet, Eve's consciously fluid sense of identity as an artist is represented by more than a desire to reflect the unfixed nature of her surroundings as imagined home. Within this space Eve practices serial enactments of a range of artist/writers, consistent with Langley's construction of the artistic world as a free-flowing creative network.

In addition to Robin Hyde, Eve also receives New Zealand poet Henry Brennan in her new home next to Partington's Mill. As noted, Eve also imagines Constance Wilde as the concierge of this house. Asserting Eve's imagined space of

home as one situated within a literary world, Langley fills the garret and its environment with artists, both real and imagined, local and international, contemporary and from the past. Reflecting the fluid nature of this occupancy, Langley frequently figures Eve as enriched by an emulation of various of these artists. After a few months living in her garret, Eve records,

In the winter time, the importance of the Auckland writers have greatly and suddenly increased, no doubt, I thought, due to my residence in the old garret, a Writers Week was inaugurated [...] I cultivated to look as much like Katherine Mansfield as I could during the week, for I felt really imbued with genius... (253-4).

After a talk by Richard Singer, one of the instigators of the Writers' Week, Eve wanders through a display of book-bindings and Ex Libris bookplates:

A section given over to home tooled bindings of a violet and purple and gold and much beribboned and betasseled kind enclosing the poets own verse, attracted me by its rococo nature...

As I stood gazing at them, a young girl, tall and slender of that dim and mystical Florence Balcombe look that endears and ever mystifies, stared at me startledly, as though crying out within,

“Heaven, how like Katherine Mansfield she is...!”

And I felt that the felt hat and the navy blue Bonaparte coat was not really in vain... The shadowy brown hair floating ethereal over the shoulders was perhaps more Rossetti and Raphael than Mansfield, but it was enough...

(260).

Langley develops Eve, the artist/writer, as a heterogeneous identity, one who consciously opposes constancy in order to cultivate a mode of living which endorses endless becoming. Eve's emulation of the appearance of Katherine Mansfield evolves

to echo imagery associated with the pre Raphaelites. Whilst enacting the appearance of one artist she is able to simultaneously imagine reflecting the style and the art of others.

Eve's serial adoption of identities, which allude to both artistic place and persona, is notable in her enactment of home within the space of the garret. Yet, while constructing a fluid identity as an artist/writer, in "The Old Mill" Eve most consistently frames herself as writer through her reading of nineteenth century French works. Eve's imagined space of home is significantly constructed from the rooms and locations of these novels. By modelling her narrator on Balzac and his writing, Langley underlines Eve's attention to the material world, and to the local. In Langley's Australian novels, Steve's engagement with the local, in both a social and material sense, is manifest, and situates her with regard to a national narrative. In "The Old Mill", Eve's interpretations of realism, informed by her reading of Balzac, situate her writing within Auckland and within the 1930s, and also gesture towards Langley's awareness of the importance of the writing of place in New Zealand at the time. While those spearheading the new literary formulations of literature in New Zealand promoted public concerns over private, the enactments of home in Langley's novels suggest that, for Langley, formulations of nationhood are to be found in constructions of the home. In the first few days of living in her garret, Eve is given a novel written by Balzac:

"I must bring round to you a special book I've found down in the library", [Hilary] continued, "it's called *Jesus Christ in Flanders* by de Balzac... it will give the garret a quality, the very binding of it is so superb, brown and gold, glittering among faded leather bindings, and the stories have the same curious quality of gold glittering amongst faded leathers, all short stories and all of rare genius..." (184).

This volume, its surface qualities and the qualities of its contents, are paradigmatic in Eve's enactment of home within the space of the garret. On reading Balzac, Eve determines to emulate the author; she adopts a lifestyle based on her understanding of his way of living, including a rather unusual diet, and decides that his style of writing is to be hers. Eve says, "I duly received it from his hands and read it avidly, modelling myself from then onward on the lines of the great master of the French short story" (184).

When Eve first moves in to her garret, she decorates it to make it aesthetically pleasing to her artist's eye. She paints a dark ink dragon on the table she works at, and she places vases and flowers on the shelves. She continues,

Now I must adorn the room further, must hang something from the old brown fine precious walls gemmed clearly with the light of many years [...] I flew off down to Sanfords the fish company that owned the lively trawlers and asked them for a long dark thick coarse net, like a woman's hair, and a couple of dry golden fish to hang glittering golden in the web of it (182-3).

On reading the volume of Balzac's writing, which is lent to her, Eve is

avidly shocked by the ornate clear beauty of 'vast rooms... dark as night, but the silver ornamented breastplate of a Reiters corselet, that hung upon the wall, attracted a stray gleam to its dim abiding place among the brown shadows, or a shaft of light shot across the carved glistening surface of an antique side board covered with curious silver plate, or struck out a line of glittering dots among the raised threads of the golden warp of some old brocaded curtains, where the lines of the stiff heavy folds were broken, as the stuff had been flung carelessly down to serve some model...' (185).

Eve is struck by Balzac's ability to describe the world of her abode, commenting, "Like the coffee... like the golden fish in the net, like all the odours of the garret he

was with me, and I turned again and again, slyly and sorrowfully to read, as I wrote, his magnificent gems of descriptions” (186). She asks:

Who is it that has not been thrilled, fascinated, tormented and empowered by the great writings of Honoré de Balzac? Few men have escaped the dreaming clutches of this insatiable writer whose mastery of old furniture and old tapestries is such that his rich jewelled phrases cling about them all like the sun itself in old, old, rooms... I, too, in my garret in Symonds Street became his victim and vowed to write exactly as he did... and with black and bitter coffee, in blue cups, sat at my dragon printed table and wrote a long story called “The Three Dregs” in the style of de Balzac... His phrases and descriptions of old pictures and jewels so enchanted me that I lived in my days to the close thick dark jewelled song of his prose, and made myself as much like him as possible (186).

While Eve’s embrace of Balzac’s vision situates her alongside a canonical writer of French literature, it also informs her scrutiny of the world immediate to her. Sitting at the table with the dragon pattern, Eve writes “long stories of a particular merit”:

Mostly about the dark Indian hawkers who used to rattle around the old Auckland streets, especially up Symonds Street near the Wynyard Arms Hotel, with their frail carts full of bottles that glittered from the torn bellies of bags... Often I would meet the dark, the swarthy and glittering eyed Indian face to face [...] He and a large number of his men lived in a most old house down in Wellesley Street just above an old shop in which straw and cane invalid chairs were made... the very gate, a large grey unpainted one with a dragging frame left its polished stamp on the dry or wet earth at the entrance since it was pushed open at night by the Indians and the horse and cart admitted to it while they went within the house, old and tall and made high wassail there amongst

themselves all night, dining and wining I thought on the most sumptuous and delicate fare, of a very rich Honor de Balzacian nature [...] and in fact lived there like Hindu gods devoted to orgies of religious grandeur and to the glory of some form of literature now defunct in Indian letters...” (227-8).

It is “[o]ut of the life of the Indians in the old house in Upper Wellesley Street” that Eve writes the short story called the “The Three Dregs” which is later published in the *Mirror* (228). This detailed description, which draws heavily on Balzac’s style of narration, evokes a New Zealand scene that is particularly specific in place and time. It speaks of an urban New Zealand, but one where the ground is marked by occupation. Langley evokes the Indian hawkers within a framework of exoticism typical of attitudes in the 30s, but the day-to-day multi-ethnic nature of urban New Zealand is also acknowledged. Notably, home is a place closely associated with unregulated street life but is also a space where literature is worshipped.

Eve’s descriptions of home, while living in her garret, are highly detailed in the Balzacian way. She uses this detail to evoke not only the material circumstances of her Auckland home, but also its history, which is described as one of contested occupation and local commerce. She remembers a conversation with her landlord, Mr Partington:

There we stood in the old mill listening to the faithful creak of the sails, watching the swinging sieve with its burden of dusty white flour floating about in the air, while back of us in the great room at the back the huge grind stones moved and crushed the grain into white and fine flour again and again... With a heavy load of white flour on his hat, the old miller [...] talked to me about the past, the Maoris that once came here loaded with grain, golden in their bags and maize, too... His father had had a great time in the Maori wars, defending the town, and the house we lived in had had a soldier on guard all

night during the moonlit nights standing by on a great shining chestnut horse under the shade perhaps of the camellia trees [...] And Mr Partington remembered the wild tribes coming into the city with bags of wheat and maize slung over their shoulders or on packhorses... He could recall all the incidents, the names and the days [...] He had grown up here and had never married, but had a collection of nephews and nieces all about him, and was related to the Goldie timber merchant group too... And of course to Goldie, the great artist whose Maori portraits were so vividly part of the Auckland National Gallery... (250).

The armed guard on the house by the mill asserts the building as a frontier space, and alludes to the violence involved in white settlement of New Zealand. Yet, the house, which is now home for Eve, is, or has also been, a mutually rewarding place of interaction between settler and Maori: the mill is a place of historical reciprocal remuneration and financial advancement through trade. This space of home evokes both violent usurpation of land, and also occupation through trade and commerce. In this representation of the space of home, creativity is linked with assumed indigeneity in the form of Goldie's portraits of Maori, where the images are as associated with the artist as they are with the subject of each work, and are problematically hung in the National Gallery.

Eve's descriptions of her home in Auckland invite a double reading of the space through which Eve is perceived as marginalised with regard to conventional society, but integrated within a temporally and spatially widespread network of writers, and through close scrutiny of her environment. As well, Eve depicts herself as both part of a Balzacian novel and the writer of Balzacian text; she is both inside and outside the "text" of her studio space. Writing of literature such as that of Balzac, Peter Brooks suggests that realist art and literature "claims to offer us a kind of

reduction – *modèle réduit* – of the world” so that “[m]ore than most other fictions the realist novel provides a sense of play very similar to that given by the scale model” (2-3). In this reduction, Brooks argues, realist prose encapsulates the world so that it may be viewed in a gesture similar to that of lifting the roof of a dollhouse and peering inside. In “The Old Mill”, the represented dualities of interiority and exteriority invite a further reading of Eve’s evocations of home in her garret, which concerns Langley’s positioning of herself as an author in New Zealand. Langley’s representation of the garret space as oppositional to society evokes a social marginality that is inflected with associations with respected local and canonical writers such as Katherine Mansfield, Robin Hyde, Oscar Wilde, Guy de Maupassant and Honoré de Balzac. This representation of the writerly space is suggestive of Langley’s desire to assert her own position within the literary community of New Zealand at the time “The Old Mill” is set. Divisions then emerging within that literary community raised critical questions regarding the location of authority and authenticity in local literature. It is productive to read Langley’s construction of Eve as a writer in terms of a response to these questions.

When Langley first lived in Auckland, Christchurch was the cultural capital of New Zealand. Writing of Auckland in the 30s and 40s, Ruth Park comments,

The arts tried to live, but usually didn’t. To be radical was not chic, and in wartime, which it was, there was a sort of increased self-defensive uniformity of everything, especially political philosophy. Some parts of Auckland were not intellectual deserts, but I didn’t know of them (2).

In “The Old Mill” Langley suggests that there is an alternative to the intellectual desert of 1930s Auckland. After a few months of living in her garret, Eve says,

I [...] now devoted myself to the imitation of de Balzac and Maupassant [...]

The French school of writers now at last claimed me as its own and I lived the

life of a de Balzac female... My black coffee, my breakfast of figs and brown bread, my diet of work all day and poetry and prose and fine line drawings, all this constituted the life of the Trilby of the garret in Symonds Street, Auckland... (200).

Langley represents her narrator as a hard-working writer emulating the life and style of canonical authors such as Maupassant and, in particular, Balzac. The studio space of the garret is a physical manifestation of Eve's imagined centrality within a rich literary world of artist/writers. At the same time, Eve's identification with Du Maurier's character "Trilby" suggests a bohemian lifestyle representative of a counter-culture. Though associated with canonical writers, Eve's literary world is placed outside the society of Auckland. In this construction it is possible to perceive an attempt by Langley to strategically position herself (as reflected in Eve's position) in opposition to societal norms in order to affirm her location within a literary scene that expressed itself as contemptuous of (the aesthetics of) middle class New Zealand. However, despite her undoubtedly unconventional lifestyle and appearance, Langley's position within the contemporary literary community was uncertain.

Langley wrote "The Old Mill" in the 1950s, but it is set in 1936-7, when she herself lived in Auckland in circumstances very similar to those of her narrator. During the 1930s Langley was a widely published poet, with critical support from other local writers such as Henry Brennan, Robin Hyde, Ruth Park, and Douglas Stewart (who also edited *The Bulletin* for twenty years).²⁰ Her poem "Native Born" is still published in anthologies of Australian poetry, valued for its lyrical evocation of the Australian bush and the settler condition. In the 30s, Langley's main source of

²⁰ Bibliographies of Langley's works can be found in Joy L. Thwaite's biography of Langley, *The Importance of Being Eve Langley*. North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1989 and at the end of Anita Segerberg's article "'Strangled by a Bad Tradition'? The Work of Eve Langley" *Journal of New Zealand Literature*. No. 10 (1992), pp. 55-73.

income was the money earned from freelance journalism and the publication of her poetry in local and Australian newspapers. However, most of her poetry of that time is notable for its sentimentality and, like that of Eileen Duggan, was viewed as “Georgian” by the new literary establishment emerging in New Zealand at that time, featuring Fairburn, Glover, Curnow, and Sargeson. While Langley relied on journalism for financial survival, in 1935, Glover called journalism “that literary mincing machine”, condemning the “patronage of our daily press” as having too much influence on New Zealand literature (16-17). Wellington journalist and publisher, C. A. Marris, included Langley in his stable of regularly published writers, and her work regularly featured in Marris’s *Art in New Zealand* and annual *New Zealand Best Poems*. However, Marris himself was under attack from the “new wave” of poets who were attempting to forge a new direction in New Zealand literature.

Lawrence Jones comments,

The ‘new men’ of New Zealand literature who began publishing in the early and mid-1930s in Phoenix and other University college publications [...] were better at defining themselves against current movements than they were at defining their positive goals. Although there were some primarily positive literary manifestos [...] the ‘new men’ most insistently defined themselves by opposition, whether to an idea or literary movement such as ‘Georgianism’ or to the journalistic-literary establishment and the individuals representing it: the triumvirate ‘Mulgan, Marris, Schroder’ (144).

In 1937 Glover wrote “The arraignment of Paris”, a satire attacking Marris and, in particular, the female poets he published. Glover depicts Paris (Marris) leading a group of women poets on a picnic in the countryside. Langley is specifically mentioned as one of the picnicking poets in the opening of the poem:

Come down, Sweet Muse, come down! You mustn’t roam

In realms where Gloria finds herself at home,
In realms where Eve with inky footsteps goes
Leading the dimpled cloudlets by the nose

Langley's poetry is grouped with that of other women poets in what Fairburn infamously called the "Menstrual School of Poetry". Keith Sinclair describes this type of poetry, commonly associated with *The Kowhai Gold* collection, as "sentimental faded Georgian work, away in fairyland, full of archaisms" (242). The new movement demanded New Zealand poetry to have a unique New Zealand voice; "reality must be local and special" (Curnow 1).

By the time that Langley wrote "The Old Mill" in the 1950s, Marris was dead and the style of writing he endorsed was long out of favour. The *Phoenix* and Caxton writers had come to dominate the literary community and their writing was seen to express an authentic New Zealand voice. Yet, in "The Old Mill" Langley suggests an alternative path towards an authentic local literature. While her voice is more romantic (and Romantic) than modern, her writing reveals a strong interest in the local and the specific. In "The Old Mill", Langley doesn't ever refer directly to her literary "opposition" at the time in which it is set. Yet, her construction of Eve as an author of realist texts, and the importance she gives to realism in describing the literary world as an imagined home suggests a response to the critical shadow over her work during the 1930s. As Anita Segerberg argues, "[t]he demand to be 'local' and specific was not in itself a problem for Eve Langley" (63).

In 1945, New Zealand artist Rita Angus wrote a letter to composer Douglas Lilburn commenting: "I believe that your heart though somewhat encrusted with civilisation as mine really feels for burnt tussock land (and a little cow dung)". In "The Old Mill", Langley reveals an interest in both the encrustation of civilisation and, if not quite the "burnt tussock", then an urban equivalent. This is not unusual for

writers of colonial literature who frequently impose a European perspective on local material. Yet, Langley's evocations of "The Old Mill" as a Balzacian text in a colonial setting are not simply an inability on her part to see, directly, the world around her. Langley's allusions to realist representations situate her narrator as a writer but also serve to position Langley within realist traditions. Peter Brooks notes that realism as a genre "both appealed to and represented the private lives of the unexceptional – or rather, found and dramatized the exceptional within the ordinary, creating the heroism of everyday life" (12).

The desire for an overt ideology of nationhood, seen particularly in the polemics of literary figures such as Dennis Glover in the 1930s, and the later anthologising and, to quote Murray, "constant critical interventions" by Allen Curnow, form a meaningful context to "The Old Mill" (*Never a Soul* 11). Langley's early novels, starting with *The Pea-Pickers*, are all set in Australia and all may be read as explorations of the dynamics of belonging and marginality in the construction of home in the Australian cultural and geographical landscape. Though all the Australian novels were written in New Zealand, they reveal a highly developed language of location, seeking and expressing strong relationships between natural landscape and local Australian culture. Langley's evolving constructions of home are also constructs of nation and nationality. Langley's later novels are set in New Zealand and follow her narrator as she comes to terms with self-imposed exile from Australia. Langley is still involved with representing the local in her work, but whereas in her Australian novels, a formative aspect of being-at-home for her narrator is an association with paradigms of the frequently isolated (male) wanderer, a sense of belonging for Langley's narrator in New Zealand is formulated through association with literary traditions. Langley's layered evocations of Balzac and realist literature in "The Old Mill" situate her narrator within these literary traditions and, at the same

time, suggest both an awareness of the literary forces at work in 1930s New Zealand and a response to them, in which it is asserted that the writing of “nation” is also the writing of the space of home. As an assertion of Langley’s writing within the literary culture of New Zealand in the 1930s, “The Old Mill” references both home and nation so that, to draw on Murray, these spaces are “both physical and abstract” and “always part and parcel of a dialogue” (*Never a Soul* 9).

Commenting on New Zealand writers of the 1930s, Murray notes that they “were forced at times to borrow vocabularies and structures from the very spheres of political, social and cultural activity from which they were trying to distance themselves” (*Never a Soul* 14). Langley’s narrator Eve says of Balzac, “I did not care twopence for his plots, his stories, his men, his women or his loves, but ah, his furniture, his pictures, his gems, his jewels, his objects d’art!” (186). In “The Old Mill” Langley asserts that, rather than retrogressive, nineteenth century literature has a valid place in the evolution of twentieth century literature: she suggests that the importance of place, and things in place, in realist literature provides a significant site of intersection with a literature intensely interested in the formation of a national culture through attention to the local and the specific. As Peter Brooks notes, realism values “ordinary experience and its ordinary settings and things” in its struggle to “do greater justice to the language of ordinary [people]” (7). It has already been noted (see, in particular, Murray *Never a Soul*) that in Curnow’s two influential anthologies of 1945 and 1960, his editorial direction suggests a relatively narrow vision of what constituted a local or a national voice in the 1930s. Though Langley’s place in the literary community of the time was minor, her glance back at the 1930s in “The Old Mill” suggests a developed awareness of the critical forces surrounding the layered reception of her writing during those years. Her positioning of her narrator, Eve, as outside conventional society suggests a response to Glover’s denigration of Langley’s

work as simply representative of popular taste. At the same time, through Eve's identification with canonical writers, Langley promotes herself as a serious writer in the realist mode.

The desire for some form of literary and cultural agency, discernable in the positioning of Eve in "The Old Mill", casts light, not only on the nature of Eve's imagined space of home--which is expressed in terms of interacting modes of belonging and "unbelonging"--but also on dominant mythologies in the writing of New Zealand at the time the novel is set. Langley's novel, when read as an assertion of her position as a writer in New Zealand, suggests a simultaneous desire for social marginality and cultural centrality that re-presents the social and cultural strategising visible in Langley's Australian novels. Interrogation of Langley's representations of "home" as a contested space is revealing not only of the nationalisms that provide a significant context for that space, but is also suggestive of the borders and boundaries that define contemporary assertions of nationhood. Steve's desire to be a female rover unsettles conventional ideas of the home and highlights gender-based assumptions of Australian national identity, assumptions that also emerge in contemporary "writing of" New Zealand. In *Never a Soul at Home* Murray suggests that "articulat[ion] of space and place" in the 30s "included key narratives of authenticity, belonging to the place *appropriately*, that resulted in crucial definitions about the issues of gender and community in New Zealand, and the craft of being a writer in the newly evolving literary scene" (original italics; 108-9). "The Old Mill" can be read as an effort to unsettle those definitions. Yet, nationalisms are not only concerned with what *is*, but also with what *was*. Murray notes: "Implicit in the processes of cultural decolonisation is an economy and language of capability. For the culture, or nation, to assert a sense of difference requires proof of the legitimacy of that difference" (*Never a Soul* 108). Ideas of freedom, independence and difference (from that which was

before), celebrated in the projects of nationhood in both Australia and New Zealand, are asserted in Langley's texts, but the contested nature of both home and nation unsettles these assertions at the same time as they are made.

Chapter Seven

Contested Spaces: Home, Community, Nation

[L]ives are lived in more than one location, generating fragmentary and fugitive biographies that defy fixity in politically delineated space.

(Donnan and Wilson 109)

The moral is that the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion.

(Henry James 23)

Exploration of Langley's novel, "Bancroft House", as a series of sites of encounter makes apparent the constructed nature of the concept of home. In so doing, home is also revealed to be a contested space. Critical to the representation of Langley's narrator, Steve/Eve, is the use of competing perspectives to position her within a location (Australia and New Zealand, but also home, away, society, culture, nation). Frequently these perspectives are not so much intersecting as overlaid, so that a significant feature of Langley's novels is the manifestation of contested space: a dynamic indicative of the desirability of that contested space. Discussing competing desires for the space of Australia, Tompkins comments: "[d]ebates over land rights, anxieties regarding nationalism, settlement, reconciliation, traces of what was known as the yellow peril and subsequent invasion scares are preoccupied with space" (6). In settler discourse, contestation of space is the practice that drives the settler project

even as, at the same time, settler narrative elides contestation in a discursive production of uncontested land. Defining structures such as the frontier, the border and the boundary, the nation and nationalisms, emerge from the contestation of space.

In this chapter I explore particular contestations of the spaces of home in Langley's novels, and investigate the interconnectedness of the forces that shape the home, the community and the nation in these texts. Stuart Murray observes "that 'the national' does not function on its own during its development, but is entwined within other categories – ideas of gender, of power, of social organisation. So nations might be seen as social 'bodies', or as sites for ideological disputes" (*Any Map* 13). Gender-based constructions of the space of "home" coincide with social regulations in 1920s Australia. As we shall see, Steve's desire for home as a space of personal and social freedom conflicts with these constructions, but while her desire seems to oppose social norms, it is also closely identified with contemporary Australian formulations of national identity. In the domestic spaces explored below, freedom is expressed through unmediated interactions with the natural environment of Australia in the form of the flora and fauna of the "bush". I will investigate the way that these interactions, which are generally viewed as critical to the make-up of the archetypal Australian, are seen to conflict with the conventional space of home, while they also work to define it. In Langley's New Zealand novels, "home" as a domestic space is also constructed relative to social and national frameworks. In this chapter I explore how, in the Auckland-based novel, "The Old Mill", the domestic space is placed in opposition, not so much to the natural world (as in the Australian novels), but to the socially marginal space of home as an artist's studio, and home as the space of artistic expression. By situating her narrator beyond normative social constructions but within the literary scene of New Zealand in the 1930s, Langley, I suggest, restages her own position relative to a literary scene particularly concerned with the writing of the

nation. Langley's careful positioning of Steve within the space of Australian national identity through her narrator's association with the natural world has an ironic counterpoint in the construction of the national space in New Zealand: the anthology title "Kowhai Gold" is appropriated as a pejorative label affixed to writing such as Langley's by those seeking representations of a shifting national consciousness in New Zealand literature. This chapter considers parallels in Langley's strategic placements of her narrator within the social and cultural frameworks of Australia and New Zealand, and explores delineations of nationalism interrogated by those placements.

In several of Langley's Australian novels, the narrator, Steve, spends time hop picking in the Alps. There, she makes friends with "Charlie Wallaby" (Willoughby) and his mother, Annie. Steve and her sister Blue are invited to stay over winter at the Willoughby house when the picking work dwindles. They grasp this opportunity to stay in the area and continue their adventures even in the off-season of the hop-fields. However, the warm and genuinely kind invitation has a hook: Mrs Willoughby becomes certain that Steve would make a good wife for her son. Sitting by the fire one wet afternoon, Mrs Willoughby and Steve chat:

[Mrs Willoughby] droned, while I listened, sleepy-eyed, hypnotized by the rain and the fire, 'Charl's a good boy, and a hard worker too. But he needs someone with him. He ought to get married. He wants cleaning out.'

I woke with a shock of unease and wondered if she meant that I should be his marital chimney-sweeper. Yes, and I was sad, too; for it seemed that she was one of that unending band of men and women, who, for some reason or other, tried to take me from my wandering life and my ideal love, so that I might be mated and tied down to bear and slave, without poetry to fire and console me (*Pea-Pickers* 265).

The cosiness of the fireside chat suddenly becomes a situation of threatening repression in the form of marriage. To Steve, marriage is a convention she associates with an undesirable containment enforced by society in the form of an “unending band of men and women” whom, she imagines, wish her “mated and tied down”. It is a convention situated in opposition to the freedom of a “wandering life” and a life in which she is free socially, and in which she can choose to be a poet rather than a wife and housewife. That heart of domesticity, the warm space of the family hearth, is contrasted with the solitary pleasure of the flame of poetic inspiration.

Steve’s sense of entrapment arises not simply from the words of Mrs Willoughby. On being invited to tea for the first time, Steve and Blue have to “break[...] through the webs” to enter the kitchen: “Over the furniture, and the iron bed-posts that bruised our shins, lay a web of crochet work, dirty and spotted with mould, but of fine pattern and done by a good needle-woman” (*Pea-Pickers* 225). The space of the house materially manifests the snare-like quality Steve experiences in the social conventions represented by the house and Mrs Willoughby’s hopes for her and Charlie. On a later visit to the house, Steve observes:

The front room in which we ate was full of Annie’s old white linen underclothes, nightgowns and tablecloths, tethered by many intricate knots to the Bell pattern or the Kangaroo and Emu partnered. Or the Kangaroo all alone. The Bower-bird and Lyre bird with the moss stitch. The Bower bird alone with a china dish resting on him. The Bellbird and the Kangaroo... fighting it out. The Lyre bird and the Rooster perched on the Greek key pattern. A real menagerie all around us. Annie kept her pets well within the fretwork of a lace cover (“Wild Australia” 345).

One of the sustaining frameworks of the nomadic life that Steve chooses is the resulting association with the natural world, through proximity as well as cultural

connection. The Australian native birds and animals stitched and hooked into the lace work that festoons the front room of the Willoughbys' house are fellow occupants of the landscape that Steve wanders through. Some are depicted as trapped in solitary confinement, and they are all separated from their fellow-kind and their natural environment. Steve comments that "[a]ll these [creatures] stood embowered in their white and cottony paradise of forlorn bush flowers" ("Wild Australia" 345), but it seems that the bush flowers, rather than providing a natural backdrop to the fauna, are similarly cut off from the landscape. Evident in Steve's observation is her sense of the skilful and firm ties that threaten to bind her to the household, as Annie's daughter-in-law and as one of Annie's "pets". Steve's desire to wander the landscape, as an itinerant worker and poet, is repeatedly asserted in opposition to the conventions of domestic space in Langley's novels. To use Lefebvre's formulations, the representational space of "away", with all its connotations of freedom, distance and isolation, is positioned in opposition to the cultural and social power represented in the domestic space.

Yet, "away" is also representative of cultural power through its relationship with the construction of national identity (see the chapter "On the Road"). For Steve, "home" is found in a combination of refusal of conventional domestic regulation and engagement with the celebration of a landscape central to Australian constructions of identity. In Annie's lace work, domestic practice and symbols of Australian nationalism are literally intertwined. Elizabeth Webby notes that the poem "Bell Birds" by Henry Kendall (regarded as one of Australia's foremost "pioneer poet[s]") was "learnt by heart by generations of Australian schoolchildren" (59-60). A kangaroo and an emu support the shield of the Australian coat of arms, and are the unofficial animal emblems of the nation. In the lace work, the symbols of nationalism are embraced but are portrayed by Steve as sitting uneasily within the containment of

the knots. In this set of contestations, the stereotypical opposition between domestic space and the outdoors, in terms of both social and physical freedom, is unsettled by the representations of national identity in the knotted designs. The incorporation of the emblems into the lace work brings representations of the nation into the house and so, into the space of “womanly” domestic practice, but Steve’s descriptions evoke the emblems as captured rather than “at home”. Her realignment of the symbols of the Australian natural world—which are also symbols of nationalism—in opposition to the domestic space suggests that the life of social marginality that she desires, in close association with the natural environment, is also representative of forms of cultural centrality. By aligning social marginality with cultural centrality, this construction raises questions about popular understandings of national identity. In the next section of this chapter, the dynamics of this formulation are explored further through consideration of representations of the house thought of as “home” in the opening pages of *The Pea-Pickers*.

The contested nature of the imagined space of home in Langley’s novels is manifest in Steve’s evocations of the house in Dandenong, where she lives with her mother and sister at the beginning of *The Pea-Pickers*. This house is not, at this point, referred to as Mia’s home, as it is in later novels, but is called “our house” by Steve (2). As her home, it is depicted as a space consistent with the nomadic lifestyle she aspires to, and which to a large extent she achieves in the adventures recounted in Langley’s later novels. The precarious nature of its built structure is emphasised and the separation between the inside of this house and out is tenuous. In *The Pea-Pickers*, Steve says that from the street Mia’s disintegrating house “looked like a pile of rotten chips” (2). In the kitchen “the red and white flags [of the floor] rocked in their beds” (*Pea-Pickers* 279) and in the “old front room the ancient brown, brown rich golden brown wallpaper shook and shivered like an old Gobelin tapestry and gullibly gulped

and bulged outward” in the draught (“Victorians” 186). Ivy grows through the walls and as the giant plum trees around the house draw the goodness out of the dark soil, the house seems to settle further down into it, continuous with the landscape rather than separate from it:

[T]he house proper was thirteen giant plum trees, which held the soil in their hands and brought up snow out of its blackness every spring. It is lost to us now, but yet, how mysteriously satisfying it is to know that in the minds of my mother, my sister and myself the old house is embalmed, so that one may render to a forgetful other a fine correction of some intricate detail that has escaped her memory. It is a thought as sweet as heaven to know that in the minds of each of us the may by the fence still blooms in an eternal springtime; that the snowdrop has in our hearts a triple birth, and blooms in three separate minds, faultlessly. The river-weed by the tap may not, in the season of dehiscence, split the purse that holds its seeds and fling them far and wide, but the ghosts of its ripeness spring up seasonably in our minds and sow a ghostly seed. So that if all the flowers and grasses and hollows and hills of the old house were razed and mutilated – as they are now, I suppose – we keep them intact in three minds, each depending on the other to supply it with the delicate minutiae of remembrance (*Pea-Pickers* 2).

In Steve’s imagined collective memory of the family home, the house itself is simply absorbed into the garden. Both the physical fragility of the house and the collective memory of the finer details of its imagined dissolution are representative of those structures in which Steve feels most at-home. The material nature of Mia’s house and, what Lefebvre terms the representational space of that house, that is, Steve’s imagined home, converge in an expression of fluidity. Both physically and in Steve’s imagination, the house is described as part of the ebb and flow of nature, with a

natural lifecycle associated with the seasons, the lifespan of timber construction, and the longer-lasting amorphous lifespan of individual and collective memory.

As Steve's home, the house is not depicted as separate to a life of wandering and freedom, but part of an ongoing adventure. Mia, who had lost her family home through leaving for adventure as a young woman, and "looked like an old bushman herself ..." (*Pea-Pickers* 5), seems as unsettled as her daughters and actively propels them out into the wider world. Steve says,

Mia had encouraged us to wander; made restless by long hard years of gipsying [sic] through the Australian States, she found peace in urging us out to follow the echo of the aboriginal names of towns that had tempted her when she was young... For years she had been saying, 'You girls would love Gippsland... the Monaro... the Stream... the Tambo and the Lakes.' For years she had laid the powder trail [...] that would set us alight. (*Pea-Pickers* 4-5)

Mia is associated with the house in its run-down state and, with her daughters, participates in the family's practice of "harmless deceits against the town's health inspector, whereby, with many variegated roses, lilacs, ivies and grapevines, [they] concealed from his unkindly eye the fact that [the family's] 'kipsie', as Mia called it, was falling down" (2). Significantly, the efforts of the family to maintain their home in its decayed state not only identify it further with its natural environment in the form of the flowers and vines encouraged to smother it, but also assert it as a space resistant to social regulation such as that enforced by the local health department.

However, as Steve and her sister Blue follow Mia's "powder trail" to Gippsland and find work and adventure there, the family home becomes simply termed "Mia's home" and, while Steve's descriptions of the house still acknowledge the insubstantiality of its structure, her representations of it as a cultural space reposition the house within the force fields of what Lefebvre refers to as "social

power and authority". Situated within the house, Mia becomes identified with its cultural representations of domesticity. Each of the novels that Langley sets in Australia contains a description of at least one of Steve's visits back to her mother Mia, and these visits describe a disturbance of the culturally prescribed domestic space of Mia's home. Over the course of the novels Steve travels widely through the countryside of Victoria, as an itinerant field hand and self-styled rover. At the end of each adventure Steve returns to be with her mother and to discuss her movements beyond the house through the wider world. When Steve visits her mother she invariably brings evidence of her adventures with her. These souvenirs articulate Steve's imagined space of home that is now situated beyond the social and physical space of the house. The placement of the souvenirs in Mia's home describes an intersection of the domestic space with that which articulates a refusal of the domestic.

Unexpectedly arriving home early from one eventful journey through Gippsland, Steve observes:

Mia was bewildered by our sudden arrival and the way we thrust our imaginary whiskers through the window and announced, 'We're home, little woman... whataboutacupatea?' [...] We put on beards and moustaches of black rabbit-skin and performed before her until morning, acting the parts of all the those we had met (*Pea-Pickers* 60).

A living souvenir of her own experience, Steve is projected as representative of all the characters encountered in her time away. The breadth of the experience she encapsulates, which takes all night to re-enact, is reinforced by contrast with the parodically named 'little woman' who is bewildered at the sudden appearance of her daughters. At this time, Steve clearly differentiates herself from her mother through her assumed manliness and larger than life confidence in performance. By appearing

unannounced, and arriving at the window rather than the door, Steve asserts a lack of domestic regulation, a condition she associates with the countryside she has been occupying, and which she, in turn, wishes to be associated with.

Despite its physically blurred boundaries, when Steve stays in Mia's home in between adventures and jobs, her impression is one of undesirable containment. She says, "The gate of home admitted us to that small untidy garden which was to be our world for a few weeks; and the sudden cramping, after huge ranges, long valleys and wild rivers, was like a physical stricture to us" (*Pea-Pickers* 279). The restrictions of domestic life in a suburban family home are compared with Steve's life away in terms of size, relative distance, openness, and implied freedom. Though she loves her mother and speaks of her warmly, Steve does not feel at home in the containment represented by Mia's house. This containment is multifaceted. In *White Topee*, during another visit, Steve comments:

Mia and I settled in for a fortnight or two of winter, after that first afternoon. I took much persuading to remain at home. Dandenong always appeared contracted to my eyes, used to the miles and miles of Gippsland. I walked around the Lodge and eyed the laurels gloomily. I could not understand how my mother could be bothered living in such a place. Motor cars were passing it every minute; clerks and shop girls went by to their work down in the main street. And next door one could hear the servant saying to her old mistress, 'The figs will soon be ripe, ma'am' (60).

The brief length of time allocated for the visit, a "fortnight or two", is indicative of the sense of discomfort Steve feels in encountering the bustle of life on the city streets, and the domestic life expected of young women in the suburbs. In contrast, she later says:

I loved to ride and wander forever, to come home to my mother with my

annual collection of bandicoot skins, lowry feathers, kangaroo hides, porcupine bristles, rifles, powderflasks, old bridles, ancient books, old drawings and copies of old, old Italian songs. (“Bancroft House” 98)

In the disparity between the two or so weeks allocated for Steve’s visit to her mother, and the time between the annual visits we see co-ordinates of the life in which Steve feels at-home. Steve’s souvenirs represent her life away from the house as rich and wide-ranging, involving physical and mental extension. The range of animal skins, feathers and bristles implies a life engaged with the countryside rather than the city and suburbs of her mother’s home, and the books, drawings and songs imply an intellectual life rich in comparison to that of an office worker or domestic servant.

Bill Brown suggests we feel encouraged to look through objects for the stories beyond, and souvenirs are a particularly potent class of objects; they speak not just of where they have come from, but also of where they are. Susan Stewart suggests:

The double function of the souvenir is to authenticate a past or otherwise remote experience and, at the same time, to discredit the present. The present is too looming, or too alienating compared to the intimate and direct experience of contact which the souvenir has as its referent. This referent is authenticity. (139)

For Steve, “authenticity” is found in an itinerant life associated with the works of authors such as Henry Lawson and A. B. “Banjo” Paterson, regularly published in the *Bulletin*. “Authenticity” is attained through immersion in a rural environment or the “bush” and in identification with character-types like the “noble bushman” who are central to discussions about Australian national identity. Steve describes the souvenirs brought back on a visit described in *The Pea-Pickers*:

Opening up our packing-case, we brought out our trophies and nailed them to the wall with those from Metung. Beside the six-foot snake-skin, a gift from

Jim, was the ticket off the bag into which Macca tipped peas and beans. Above these we set the four guns I had found in the alpine district; the racing bit, a purple and gold jockey's cap, and a beautiful brown hat of Italian felt which Major had given to Blue. (279)

Like the souvenirs described in the earlier excerpt, these objects speak largely of Steve's life in the outdoors, of adventure, and physical freedom.

Yet a simple alignment of the souvenirs with stereotypical national characteristics associated with rural life is refused by the opposition that the souvenirs pose, not only to the physical parameters of the domestic life traditionally ascribed to women, but also to social constructions of that life, constructions that are also integral to the national narrative. While, as Kay Schaffer writes, "women have long been considered to be absent in the bush and the nationalistic bush tradition" (xii), in the 1920s Australian women were governed by the terms by which that tradition was constructed. Schaffer notes that "the dominant norms of Australian culture [were and] are masculine, White, Anglo-Irish and heterosexual" (12). As an interior, contained space, the home was conventionally expected to be feminine rather than masculine, but the stereotypical Australian home was still white, Anglo-Irish and heterosexual. As well, contemporary terms of femininity were severely circumscribed (see Miriam Dixson *The Real Matilda*). Each of the souvenirs unpacked by the sisters represents social aspects of the life that Steve and Blue experience while "away". As souvenirs, these objects represent, not the lives or experiences of the makers or even of the objects in their original locations but, as Stewart puts it, "the 'secondhand' experience of its possessor/owner" (135).

Yet, the souvenir has a double function: while the narrative associated with each souvenir is focussed on an experience of life between visits to Mia, it also speaks of the house in which it is displayed. The space of "away" symbolised by the

souvenirs interacts with and unsettles the socially constructed space of the house, contesting the closed space of culturally prescribed domestic life. The six-foot long snakeskin is a reminder, not so much of the snake in its habitat, or even Jim, as represented by his kind gift, but of the relationship Steve and Blue have with Jim, which is one of mateship as though they are three male friends. This version of mateship ironically destabilises one of the cornerstones of Australian cultural identity. The relationship between the two sisters and Jim involves not only the cross-dressing of the women, which threatens conventional heterosexuality, but also unmarried cohabitation, which contravenes the social containment of women.

Implications of sexual freedom asserted by the gift of the snakeskin are also visible in the social situation suggested by the ticket from the crop bag. This ticket talks not only of the bag, or of the peas and beans loaded into it, but of the working lives of the sisters in the fields of Gippsland, and of Steve's intimacy with and passion for Macca. In the display of the ticket Steve is expressing her predilection for drawn out, melancholic and ultimately unfulfilled romance, modelled on a perceived Romantic ideal of love encouraged by her reading of poetry. The guns and racing gear represent the masculine model of life adopted by the sisters on their adventures, and the Italian hat speaks of the crossing of ethnocentric boundaries in a time spent mixing with new immigrants in the fields and huts of the horticultural world. Later, on the night of the sisters' arrival at their mother's house, Blue grabs the hat back off the wall: "'See, Mia? Maggiore gave this to me!' 'Ah', said Mia fearfully, 'those Italians will be the cause of your death yet, you girls. Keep away from them!'" (280). Mia is referring to the social death feared from miscegenation, particularly during the time of the White Australia Policy. The souvenirs speak of a life that is experienced not only outside in a spatial sense, but also socially. The socialising with the Italian men that the girls work alongside, the living and working as men in a male-dominated rural

culture, and the life spent mainly outside all contrast with the domestic life represented by houses like Mia's. As archives of Steve's day-to-day life away from Mia's house, and representations of their original context, the souvenirs contest both the masculinity of the archetypal Australian bushman/rover figure, and also the converse constructions of womanhood at this time. Also contested is the implicit mono-ethnicity inherent within the national stereotype. In contradiction with Steve's overt ethnocentricity at other times, the souvenirs suggest a cultural space unembraced by the prevailing White Australia policy.

Yet, while that evoked by the souvenirs contests social prescriptions of 1920s Australian life, it does speak of what Schaffer calls, that "unique and original Australian creation, 'the voice of the bush', which [is] somehow equated with the voice of Australia" (29). The skins, feathers, and other representations of Australian wildlife are expressive of a certain intimacy with nature and, in those terms, suggest a lifestyle that is coterminous with Australian cultural stereotypes. The cultural stereotypes evoked by the souvenirs are highlighted when the souvenirs are considered as collections rather than regarded individually. Whereas the souvenir is a synecdochic device, in that it is a sample of its original whole, the collection "offers example rather than sample, metaphor rather than metonymy" (Stewart 151). The grouping of the souvenirs suggests a narrative that adds to those of the individual objects. In the collection, historical aspect is transformed into space; the space is not that signified in the distance evoked by the souvenir, but that of the narrative of the collection itself. The souvenirs of Steve's time away are placed carefully on the walls of her mother's house. She comments,

Mia had placed all our treasures in the right places. On brackets on the walls were my seven rifles and two Service revolvers. There were foxes' skins, wallabies' skins, the skins of eagles and snakes, bandicoots and lizards,

jockeys' caps, racing bridles, saddles, powder flasks, bullet and cartridge belts, two battle boomerangs and half a dozen exhibition boomerangs. (*White Topee* 60)

Steve explains the layout of each display in some detail; they are deliberately arranged collections. Stewart says, "To ask which principles of organisation are used in articulating the collection is to begin to discern what the collection is about" (152). The arrangements within the displays of souvenirs as described by Steve, have parallels with the arrangements of hunting trophies presented in photographs in hunting and game fishing magazines.

It is significant that when Steve unpacks her souvenirs from the packing case they have been brought in, she calls them trophies. Analysis of photographs in hunting magazines shows that a common device in the exhibition of animal trophies is the positioning of weapons and other hunting equipment over or above or in front of the animal body (Kalof and Fitzgerald 118). In the displays of Steve's souvenirs, her assemblage of guns is prominently placed relative to the animal skins, feathers, bristles and hides on display. Kalof and Fitzgerald suggest that the prominence of the weapons in the displays photographed for the hunting magazine is staged in order to represent the activity of the hunt and the kill (118). Often there is no human in the photographs of trophy displays, suggesting that the weapons also stand in for the people who had held and employed them in the hunt. In the displays on Mia's walls, the guns figure the animal remains as hunting trophies and the owner of the guns, Steve, as a hunter. The guns represent their owner as being at home in the "armed confrontation between humanness and wildness, between culture and nature" that is the hunt (Cartmill 30). The trophy displays in Mia's house construct a narrative about hunting and killing Australian native fauna that reconfigures the narrative represented in the individual souvenirs. The hunting narrative presented in the collection of

souvenirs shifts the rhetoric of the object from one of intimacy with nature to one of mastery over nature. Steve frequently expresses a deep sense of integration with the Australian landscape. In “The Victorians” she says, “A man is a millionaire in Australia if he’s only got a bark hut and a billy for his tea and comes out of that hut to look around and over the great dry land he loves and is part of...” (329). The suggested harmony of this vision contains an assumed indigeneity. However, the imposition of will represented in the “trophies” suggests not so much a peaceful and rightful occupation as a re-enactment of the violence of oppression and appropriation of indigeneity by the settler figure.

At the same time, the hunting narrative offered by Steve’s displays is complicated by the probable state of disrepair of the guns collected. Langley never directly describes Steve firing a gun, and throughout her novels most of the guns handled by Steve are depicted as broken and abandoned by their previous owners. In *The Pea-Pickers* Steve says:

I was beginning to collect guns of all sorts. The rusty Martini-Henry [...] was the first I had picked up. I developed a passion for them, and sought them everywhere. Beyond the river, in a house deserted by the Sullivans, I found two old rifles, together with a quaint broken teapot and old romantic dance programmes. (228)

Later, on hearing Steve speak of her “passion for guns” her friend, the “Bucaneer” is “moved [to] go under the house and bring out an old kangaroo gun that he had flung out of sight years ago. Sitting by the fire, [Steve] cleaned it up and oiled it” (*Pea-Pickers* 286). It is implied that the guns brought back to Mia’s house as souvenirs are all acquired in this way, and the association of the guns with the broken teapot and other debris found in an abandoned house suggest that they are, in their original sense, functionally deficient. The guns brought to Mia’s house by Steve are symbols of an

aspect of Steve's life as a wanderer, in which she imagines herself living self-sufficiently in solitude; yet, like the fake swagger and false beards, the state of disrepair of most of the guns means that they are souvenirs of Steve's *desire for* a way of life as much as souvenirs *of* the way of life itself. The souvenirs displayed on Mia's walls are as performative as Steve in her false beard. The previous chapter explored Steve's interactions with the spaces of, and the objects in, Bancroft House in which the overt theatricality of moments seen to enact those of colonial encounter unsettles the discourse of those encounters. The performative nature of the souvenirs of Steve's life as an itinerant worker, which unsettles her representations of that life, also works to contest the constructions of national identity built around the Australian bushman/rover type that Steve strives to emulate.

The performativity evident in Steve's displays of herself through her souvenirs is echoed in Eve's self-fashioning in Langley's "New Zealand" novels. Where Steve's performativity is suggestive of her position within an Australian national narrative centred on occupation of the landscape, Eve's self-fashioning asserts a discussion of place through enactments of a "writerly" persona. In Langley's novels set in New Zealand, the narrator Eve maintains the sense of belonging to the Australian landscape expressed by Steve: missing Australia, Eve dramatically asks, "Heavens, why cannot I return to my country. She is my mother. She is my home. She is my lover" ("Dublin Street" 194). However, despite this sentiment, Eve does construct an imagined space of home in New Zealand: one not based directly on an engagement with the landscape, but centred on the space of the artist and writer. Her discussions of home shift from those contextualised within cultural constructs of Australia, to those that seek to situate home as an imagined space within the constructions of a literary world. In Langley's first novel set in New Zealand, "Land of the Long White Cloud", her narrator says, "I gave up the bush for the books" (401). The firm link

between writing and national identity is well established, but in the years that Eve lived in New Zealand, there was a particularly conscious attempt to define the nation through its literature. This literary context may be seen as critical to Langley's positioning of Eve in her early New Zealand novels and to the understanding of the dynamics of Eve's imagined space of home. Langley's first two New Zealand novels follow Eve as she travels to Wanganui and works as a journalist for the *Wanganui Herald*. She says, "I was busy writing as usual and sending work to the *Mirror* in Auckland and getting poems in and doing work for the Herald too. In all directions I spread my literary wings after a long time of letting them rest..." ("Cloud" 252). By the third New Zealand novel, Eve is living in Auckland, and has made a number of local literary connections.

In "The Old Mill" Eve rents "a garret of two rooms" (174). This studio sits at the top of a house near Partington's Mill, a windmill sited near the intersection of Symonds Street and Karangahape Road on the edge of the city centre. In this place the physical environment complements the nature of her imagined space of home. Significantly, Eve compares her life in the studio space with her life in the fields and countryside of Gippsland in Australia:

I had never known such gay delightful days as those I spent in the old garret under the Old Mill... such days had never been since the days of the pea pickers... Jim and Blue would have fitted in here well... Macca would have called in and shyly, ah, how shyly enjoyed knowing Hilary... and Peppino would have loved his ancient piano and the records... ("Old Mill" 238).

In Langley's Australian novels Steve feels "at home" in the life represented by the souvenirs brought back to Mia's house. In "The Old Mill", Eve's life in the "old garret", like the life spoken of by the individual souvenirs, evokes life outside societal norms and denotes freedom of movement and expression. The physical nature of the

studio rooms is situated within a discourse of artistic identification drawing on clichés of impoverished nineteenth century European artists starving in garrets. The itinerant artistic lifestyle represented by these rooms suggests both marginality and a sense of belonging. The enactments of belonging and otherness portrayed in Langley's construction of Eve's garret as home speak of Langley's vision of the artists' world generally, but also reveal a significant positioning of Langley as an author within the changing literary world of New Zealand in the 1930s and 40s.

The physical freedom that Steve associates with her life away from Mia's house, and which is a critical element in her imagined space of home, is experienced by Eve in her studio space. Towards the end of her stay there, she is asked what she will do with her "Rogues Gallery", the assortment of portraits she has placed on the walls in one corner of the main room. She replies that she will take it with her and "put it up again like the tent of Pagliacci in some other place..." (395). Like the players in the commedia troupe of Leoncavallo's opera, Eve feels able to pack up and move on at will. When Eve first views her garret she notes that its physical state is relatively unenclosed and unanchoring. It is situated at the top of a flight of stairs, off a "slim fine boarded landing" and entered through "a curious little thin door" (174). Eve warmly describes it as "a lovely derelict old spot" (177). Her focus, however, is directed towards the suitability of the rooms as a writer's studio. She notes that the main room of the garret is "so lovely... so really suited to a writer and poet's passion for solitude and quaintness and with what genius one could work here and write here" (174). She later adds, "... in this garret I'd be able to write really great books... it would soon be winter, it was now May and soon I must shift in and start to write and read and live the life of the artist writer, just as I liked to do..." (177). Standing at the window with Mr Partington, the landlord, she thinks, "O, how glorious it was... to be young, and like a female Rembrandt set down in an old white house that stood right

under a real mill” (176). For Eve, the “life of the artist writer” in this space is one associated with otherness and distant locations, allusions which are linked with the freedom of movement she identifies with the studio space. She comments on her garret, “With the most unique air of Paris about it all, it was precisely as though one were living ‘Sur les Toits des Paris’ or ‘on the roofs of Paris’” (174), and later notes, “Rising in the morning in the garret as I at once called my acquisition, was unforgettable... you were in Europe, in France, Holland, anywhere but in Auckland” (182). When Mr Partington describes the other tenants of the house to her, including a woman with her small daughter and her lover, Eve “delightedly” thinks “Truly le atelier Paris” (175). The otherness framed by the space of the garret is not only associated with geographical dislocation; Mr Partington’s reference to the unmarried status of this couple suggests there is a social dislocation associated with Eve’s occupancy of her rooms. She compares her “writer’s garret” with the “suburban ‘rooms’, utterly rooms” that she had lived in previously, noting the “low company” and “low suburban [...] atmosphere” of those places (177).

Langley confirms Eve’s sense that occupation of the garret will situate her as an artist dwelling amongst other artists through scenes of critical recognition and situational parallels. Eve’s vision that the nature of her dwelling place furthers her construction of herself as an artist is supported when she reads “of a group of young people in Sydney who were living in an old mill [reminiscent of Eve’s dwelling] and printing and publishing their own books in remarkable printed cloth covers” (383). In her descriptions of the garret and Eve’s response to it, Langley’s evocations of distance locate Eve, through location and temperament, within the ebb and flow of a wide-spread artistic community. This is substantiated when one day Eve’s sister, June, (the equivalent character is called Blue in Langley’s Australian texts), leaps up the steps and into the room where Eve is sitting and presents her “with a book from

London, in which was printed a comment on [Eve's] poem 'A Vision of Clouds', the editor saying that it was like the work of John Keats of long ago" (334). Further approbation from a more local source is evident when Eve unexpectedly receives a visit by Iris Wilkinson, known as the writer Robin Hyde:

A high voice came peeling through the thin door following the sound of stumbling footsteps on the stairs and the voice cried, "May I come in?" "Wait!" I rushed to the door and opened it and saw Robin Hyde standing on the small landing below the light cord... "Aim Robin Hyde," said she [...]

"Come in," said I. And in she came, haltingly leaning on her walking stick she used against the limp caused by a stiff knee [...] Sitting down in the chair by the window [...] she drew me into her lap and nursed me there silently for a while, as the old mill sails in the blue air of spring revolved slowly above us... We talked for a while thus, myself a small slender figure in trousers and frock over it on her matronly knee and she bowing above me, fondling my hands [...] She read my poetry and liked "The Last Sacrifice" that I had written down at Carterton best of all... (339).

Robin Hyde, as she refers to herself in this passage, is two years younger than Eve (as consistent with Langley's age). Eve's description of Hyde's stumbling footsteps and matronly knee suggests a maturity consistent, not with her age, but with Hyde's standing as a poet and novelist. Langley frames Hyde's visit almost as a mother visiting her child, a benediction scene with the senior writer bestowing her approval not only on Eve's writing but also on Eve, as a writer.

Invoking a poetics of displacement to describe the imagined space of home, Langley situates her narrator within, what Deleuze and Guattari call a "nomadic subjectivity" (55), which describes not only the unfixed nature of her abode but also

her unstable identity. Langley repeatedly suggests a polymorphous state of identity for her narrator. Within the space of home formulated by her occupation of the garret, Eve's identity as an artist and writer exhibits constant change, flickering from one state of becoming to another. Arriving at the steps of her garret in a taxi with her "various goods" Eve says, "I entered into possession after a word with a slender little well clad dark woman with waving black hair and a pleasant face, very like Constance Wilde, the wife of Oscar Wilde" (180). Eve is taking occupancy of the rooms and control over her life as a writer, but her observation also suggests a concurrent state of being possessed. Langley describes Eve's occupancy of her garret as a simultaneous occupancy of Eve by the imagined literary world associated with it. Influenced by her vision of the location of her new dwelling as resembling an artists' ghetto of historical standing, Eve's immediate impulse upon getting up on her first morning there is to alter her appearance to suit that location:

I had acquired a lot of rich old clothes that went with the garret ... a fine antique lace shawl of thick knotted cotton made by hand in the eighties, and I leapt out of bed and put on a pair of short gay pants like a juggler of Notre Dame's, slung a pretty frock over this and over my neat shining hair put this lace white shawl ... I was quite medieval looking and like the mill in a curiously rich way... (182).

Yet, Eve's consciously fluid sense of identity as an artist is represented by more than a desire to reflect the unfixed nature of her surroundings as imagined home. Within this space Eve practices serial enactments of a range of artist/writers, consistent with Langley's construction of the artistic world as a free-flowing creative network.

In addition to Robin Hyde, Eve also receives New Zealand poet Henry Brennan in her new home next to Partington's Mill. As noted, Eve also imagines Constance Wilde as the concierge of this house. Asserting Eve's imagined space of

home as one situated within a literary world, Langley fills the garret and its environment with artists, both real and imagined, local and international, contemporary and from the past. Reflecting the fluid nature of this occupancy, Langley frequently figures Eve as enriched by an emulation of various of these artists. After a few months living in her garret, Eve records,

In the winter time, the importance of the Auckland writers have greatly and suddenly increased, no doubt, I thought, due to my residence in the old garret, a Writers Week was inaugurated [...] I cultivated to look as much like Katherine Mansfield as I could during the week, for I felt really imbued with genius... (253-4).

After a talk by Richard Singer, one of the instigators of the Writers' Week, Eve wanders through a display of book-bindings and Ex Libris bookplates:

A section given over to home tooled bindings of a violet and purple and gold and much beribboned and betasseled kind enclosing the poets own verse, attracted me by its rococo nature...

As I stood gazing at them, a young girl, tall and slender of that dim and mystical Florence Balcombe look that endears and ever mystifies, stared at me startledly, as though crying out within,

“Heaven, how like Katherine Mansfield she is...!”

And I felt that the felt hat and the navy blue Bonaparte coat was not really in vain... The shadowy brown hair floating ethereal over the shoulders was perhaps more Rossetti and Raphael than Mansfield, but it was enough...

(260).

Langley develops Eve, the artist/writer, as a heterogeneous identity, one who consciously opposes constancy in order to cultivate a mode of living which endorses endless becoming. Eve's emulation of the appearance of Katherine Mansfield evolves

to echo imagery associated with the pre Raphaelites. Whilst enacting the appearance of one artist she is able to simultaneously imagine reflecting the style and the art of others.

Eve's serial adoption of identities, which allude to both artistic place and persona, is notable in her enactment of home within the space of the garret. Yet, while constructing a fluid identity as an artist/writer, in "The Old Mill" Eve most consistently frames herself as writer through her reading of nineteenth century French works. Eve's imagined space of home is significantly constructed from the rooms and locations of these novels. By modelling her narrator on Balzac and his writing, Langley underlines Eve's attention to the material world, and to the local. In Langley's Australian novels, Steve's engagement with the local, in both a social and material sense, is manifest, and situates her with regard to a national narrative. In "The Old Mill", Eve's interpretations of realism, informed by her reading of Balzac, situate her writing within Auckland and within the 1930s, and also gesture towards Langley's awareness of the importance of the writing of place in New Zealand at the time. While those spearheading the new literary formulations of literature in New Zealand promoted public concerns over private, the enactments of home in Langley's novels suggest that, for Langley, formulations of nationhood are to be found in constructions of the home. In the first few days of living in her garret, Eve is given a novel written by Balzac:

"I must bring round to you a special book I've found down in the library", [Hilary] continued, "it's called *Jesus Christ in Flanders* by de Balzac... it will give the garret a quality, the very binding of it is so superb, brown and gold, glittering among faded leather bindings, and the stories have the same curious quality of gold glittering amongst faded leathers, all short stories and all of rare genius..." (184).

This volume, its surface qualities and the qualities of its contents, are paradigmatic in Eve's enactment of home within the space of the garret. On reading Balzac, Eve determines to emulate the author; she adopts a lifestyle based on her understanding of his way of living, including a rather unusual diet, and decides that his style of writing is to be hers. Eve says, "I duly received it from his hands and read it avidly, modelling myself from then onward on the lines of the great master of the French short story" (184).

When Eve first moves in to her garret, she decorates it to make it aesthetically pleasing to her artist's eye. She paints a dark ink dragon on the table she works at, and she places vases and flowers on the shelves. She continues,

Now I must adorn the room further, must hang something from the old brown fine precious walls gemmed clearly with the light of many years [...] I flew off down to Sanfords the fish company that owned the lively trawlers and asked them for a long dark thick coarse net, like a woman's hair, and a couple of dry golden fish to hang glittering golden in the web of it (182-3).

On reading the volume of Balzac's writing, which is lent to her, Eve is

avidly shocked by the ornate clear beauty of 'vast rooms... dark as night, but the silver ornamented breastplate of a Reiters corselet, that hung upon the wall, attracted a stray gleam to its dim abiding place among the brown shadows, or a shaft of light shot across the carved glistening surface of an antique side board covered with curious silver plate, or struck out a line of glittering dots among the raised threads of the golden warp of some old brocaded curtains, where the lines of the stiff heavy folds were broken, as the stuff had been flung carelessly down to serve some model...' (185).

Eve is struck by Balzac's ability to describe the world of her abode, commenting, "Like the coffee... like the golden fish in the net, like all the odours of the garret he

was with me, and I turned again and again, slyly and sorrowfully to read, as I wrote, his magnificent gems of descriptions” (186). She asks:

Who is it that has not been thrilled, fascinated, tormented and empowered by the great writings of Honoré de Balzac? Few men have escaped the dreaming clutches of this insatiable writer whose mastery of old furniture and old tapestries is such that his rich jewelled phrases cling about them all like the sun itself in old, old, rooms... I, too, in my garret in Symonds Street became his victim and vowed to write exactly as he did... and with black and bitter coffee, in blue cups, sat at my dragon printed table and wrote a long story called “The Three Dregs” in the style of de Balzac... His phrases and descriptions of old pictures and jewels so enchanted me that I lived in my days to the close thick dark jewelled song of his prose, and made myself as much like him as possible (186).

While Eve’s embrace of Balzac’s vision situates her alongside a canonical writer of French literature, it also informs her scrutiny of the world immediate to her. Sitting at the table with the dragon pattern, Eve writes “long stories of a particular merit”:

Mostly about the dark Indian hawkers who used to rattle around the old Auckland streets, especially up Symonds Street near the Wynyard Arms Hotel, with their frail carts full of bottles that glittered from the torn bellies of bags... Often I would meet the dark, the swarthy and glittering eyed Indian face to face [...] He and a large number of his men lived in a most old house down in Wellesley Street just above an old shop in which straw and cane invalid chairs were made... the very gate, a large grey unpainted one with a dragging frame left its polished stamp on the dry or wet earth at the entrance since it was pushed open at night by the Indians and the horse and cart admitted to it while they went within the house, old and tall and made high wassail there amongst

themselves all night, dining and wining I thought on the most sumptuous and delicate fare, of a very rich Honor de Balzacian nature [...] and in fact lived there like Hindu gods devoted to orgies of religious grandeur and to the glory of some form of literature now defunct in Indian letters...” (227-8).

It is “[o]ut of the life of the Indians in the old house in Upper Wellesley Street” that Eve writes the short story called the “The Three Dregs” which is later published in the *Mirror* (228). This detailed description, which draws heavily on Balzac’s style of narration, evokes a New Zealand scene that is particularly specific in place and time. It speaks of an urban New Zealand, but one where the ground is marked by occupation. Langley evokes the Indian hawkers within a framework of exoticism typical of attitudes in the 30s, but the day-to-day multi-ethnic nature of urban New Zealand is also acknowledged. Notably, home is a place closely associated with unregulated street life but is also a space where literature is worshipped.

Eve’s descriptions of home, while living in her garret, are highly detailed in the Balzacian way. She uses this detail to evoke not only the material circumstances of her Auckland home, but also its history, which is described as one of contested occupation and local commerce. She remembers a conversation with her landlord, Mr Partington:

There we stood in the old mill listening to the faithful creak of the sails, watching the swinging sieve with its burden of dusty white flour floating about in the air, while back of us in the great room at the back the huge grind stones moved and crushed the grain into white and fine flour again and again... With a heavy load of white flour on his hat, the old miller [...] talked to me about the past, the Maoris that once came here loaded with grain, golden in their bags and maize, too... His father had had a great time in the Maori wars, defending the town, and the house we lived in had had a soldier on guard all

night during the moonlit nights standing by on a great shining chestnut horse under the shade perhaps of the camellia trees [...] And Mr Partington remembered the wild tribes coming into the city with bags of wheat and maize slung over their shoulders or on packhorses... He could recall all the incidents, the names and the days [...] He had grown up here and had never married, but had a collection of nephews and nieces all about him, and was related to the Goldie timber merchant group too... And of course to Goldie, the great artist whose Maori portraits were so vividly part of the Auckland National Gallery... (250).

The armed guard on the house by the mill asserts the building as a frontier space, and alludes to the violence involved in white settlement of New Zealand. Yet, the house, which is now home for Eve, is, or has also been, a mutually rewarding place of interaction between settler and Maori: the mill is a place of historical reciprocal remuneration and financial advancement through trade. This space of home evokes both violent usurpation of land, and also occupation through trade and commerce. In this representation of the space of home, creativity is linked with assumed indigeneity in the form of Goldie's portraits of Maori, where the images are as associated with the artist as they are with the subject of each work, and are problematically hung in the National Gallery.

Eve's descriptions of her home in Auckland invite a double reading of the space through which Eve is perceived as marginalised with regard to conventional society, but integrated within a temporally and spatially widespread network of writers, and through close scrutiny of her environment. As well, Eve depicts herself as both part of a Balzacian novel and the writer of Balzacian text; she is both inside and outside the "text" of her studio space. Writing of literature such as that of Balzac, Peter Brooks suggests that realist art and literature "claims to offer us a kind of

reduction – *modèle réduit* – of the world” so that “[m]ore than most other fictions the realist novel provides a sense of play very similar to that given by the scale model” (2-3). In this reduction, Brooks argues, realist prose encapsulates the world so that it may be viewed in a gesture similar to that of lifting the roof of a dollhouse and peering inside. In “The Old Mill”, the represented dualities of interiority and exteriority invite a further reading of Eve’s evocations of home in her garret, which concerns Langley’s positioning of herself as an author in New Zealand. Langley’s representation of the garret space as oppositional to society evokes a social marginality that is inflected with associations with respected local and canonical writers such as Katherine Mansfield, Robin Hyde, Oscar Wilde, Guy de Maupassant and Honoré de Balzac. This representation of the writerly space is suggestive of Langley’s desire to assert her own position within the literary community of New Zealand at the time “The Old Mill” is set. Divisions then emerging within that literary community raised critical questions regarding the location of authority and authenticity in local literature. It is productive to read Langley’s construction of Eve as a writer in terms of a response to these questions.

When Langley first lived in Auckland, Christchurch was the cultural capital of New Zealand. Writing of Auckland in the 30s and 40s, Ruth Park comments,

The arts tried to live, but usually didn’t. To be radical was not chic, and in wartime, which it was, there was a sort of increased self-defensive uniformity of everything, especially political philosophy. Some parts of Auckland were not intellectual deserts, but I didn’t know of them (2).

In “The Old Mill” Langley suggests that there is an alternative to the intellectual desert of 1930s Auckland. After a few months of living in her garret, Eve says,

I [...] now devoted myself to the imitation of de Balzac and Maupassant [...]

The French school of writers now at last claimed me as its own and I lived the

life of a de Balzac female... My black coffee, my breakfast of figs and brown bread, my diet of work all day and poetry and prose and fine line drawings, all this constituted the life of the Trilby of the garret in Symonds Street, Auckland... (200).

Langley represents her narrator as a hard-working writer emulating the life and style of canonical authors such as Maupassant and, in particular, Balzac. The studio space of the garret is a physical manifestation of Eve's imagined centrality within a rich literary world of artist/writers. At the same time, Eve's identification with Du Maurier's character "Trilby" suggests a bohemian lifestyle representative of a counter-culture. Though associated with canonical writers, Eve's literary world is placed outside the society of Auckland. In this construction it is possible to perceive an attempt by Langley to strategically position herself (as reflected in Eve's position) in opposition to societal norms in order to affirm her location within a literary scene that expressed itself as contemptuous of (the aesthetics of) middle class New Zealand. However, despite her undoubtedly unconventional lifestyle and appearance, Langley's position within the contemporary literary community was uncertain.

Langley wrote "The Old Mill" in the 1950s, but it is set in 1936-7, when she herself lived in Auckland in circumstances very similar to those of her narrator. During the 1930s Langley was a widely published poet, with critical support from other local writers such as Henry Brennan, Robin Hyde, Ruth Park, and Douglas Stewart (who also edited *The Bulletin* for twenty years).²¹ Her poem "Native Born" is still published in anthologies of Australian poetry, valued for its lyrical evocation of the Australian bush and the settler condition. In the 30s, Langley's main source of

²¹ Bibliographies of Langley's works can be found in Joy L. Thwaite's biography of Langley, *The Importance of Being Eve Langley*. North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1989 and at the end of Anita Segerberg's article "'Strangled by a Bad Tradition'? The Work of Eve Langley" *Journal of New Zealand Literature*. No. 10 (1992), pp. 55-73.

income was the money earned from freelance journalism and the publication of her poetry in local and Australian newspapers. However, most of her poetry of that time is notable for its sentimentality and, like that of Eileen Duggan, was viewed as “Georgian” by the new literary establishment emerging in New Zealand at that time, featuring Fairburn, Glover, Curnow, and Sargeson. While Langley relied on journalism for financial survival, in 1935, Glover called journalism “that literary mincing machine”, condemning the “patronage of our daily press” as having too much influence on New Zealand literature (16-17). Wellington journalist and publisher, C. A. Marris, included Langley in his stable of regularly published writers, and her work regularly featured in Marris’s *Art in New Zealand* and annual *New Zealand Best Poems*. However, Marris himself was under attack from the “new wave” of poets who were attempting to forge a new direction in New Zealand literature.

Lawrence Jones comments,

The ‘new men’ of New Zealand literature who began publishing in the early and mid-1930s in Phoenix and other University college publications [...] were better at defining themselves against current movements than they were at defining their positive goals. Although there were some primarily positive literary manifestos [...] the ‘new men’ most insistently defined themselves by opposition, whether to an idea or literary movement such as ‘Georgianism’ or to the journalistic-literary establishment and the individuals representing it: the triumvirate ‘Mulgan, Marris, Schroder’ (144).

In 1937 Glover wrote “The arraignment of Paris”, a satire attacking Marris and, in particular, the female poets he published. Glover depicts Paris (Marris) leading a group of women poets on a picnic in the countryside. Langley is specifically mentioned as one of the picnicking poets in the opening of the poem:

Come down, Sweet Muse, come down! You mustn’t roam

In realms where Gloria finds herself at home,
In realms where Eve with inky footsteps goes
Leading the dimpled cloudlets by the nose

Langley's poetry is grouped with that of other women poets in what Fairburn infamously called the "Menstrual School of Poetry". Keith Sinclair describes this type of poetry, commonly associated with *The Kowhai Gold* collection, as "sentimental faded Georgian work, away in fairyland, full of archaisms" (242). The new movement demanded New Zealand poetry to have a unique New Zealand voice; "reality must be local and special" (Curnow 1).

By the time that Langley wrote "The Old Mill" in the 1950s, Marris was dead and the style of writing he endorsed was long out of favour. The *Phoenix* and Caxton writers had come to dominate the literary community and their writing was seen to express an authentic New Zealand voice. Yet, in "The Old Mill" Langley suggests an alternative path towards an authentic local literature. While her voice is more romantic (and Romantic) than modern, her writing reveals a strong interest in the local and the specific. In "The Old Mill", Langley doesn't ever refer directly to her literary "opposition" at the time in which it is set. Yet, her construction of Eve as an author of realist texts, and the importance she gives to realism in describing the literary world as an imagined home suggests a response to the critical shadow over her work during the 1930s. As Anita Segerberg argues, "[t]he demand to be 'local' and specific was not in itself a problem for Eve Langley" (63).

In 1945, New Zealand artist Rita Angus wrote a letter to composer Douglas Lilburn commenting: "I believe that your heart though somewhat encrusted with civilisation as mine really feels for burnt tussock land (and a little cow dung)". In "The Old Mill", Langley reveals an interest in both the encrustation of civilisation and, if not quite the "burnt tussock", then an urban equivalent. This is not unusual for

writers of colonial literature who frequently impose a European perspective on local material. Yet, Langley's evocations of "The Old Mill" as a Balzacian text in a colonial setting are not simply an inability on her part to see, directly, the world around her. Langley's allusions to realist representations situate her narrator as a writer but also serve to position Langley within realist traditions. Peter Brooks notes that realism as a genre "both appealed to and represented the private lives of the unexceptional – or rather, found and dramatized the exceptional within the ordinary, creating the heroism of everyday life" (12).

The desire for an overt ideology of nationhood, seen particularly in the polemics of literary figures such as Dennis Glover in the 1930s, and the later anthologising and, to quote Murray, "constant critical interventions" by Allen Curnow, form a meaningful context to "The Old Mill" (*Never a Soul* 11). Langley's early novels, starting with *The Pea-Pickers*, are all set in Australia and all may be read as explorations of the dynamics of belonging and marginality in the construction of home in the Australian cultural and geographical landscape. Though all the Australian novels were written in New Zealand, they reveal a highly developed language of location, seeking and expressing strong relationships between natural landscape and local Australian culture. Langley's evolving constructions of home are also constructs of nation and nationality. Langley's later novels are set in New Zealand and follow her narrator as she comes to terms with self-imposed exile from Australia. Langley is still involved with representing the local in her work, but whereas in her Australian novels, a formative aspect of being-at-home for her narrator is an association with paradigms of the frequently isolated (male) wanderer, a sense of belonging for Langley's narrator in New Zealand is formulated through association with literary traditions. Langley's layered evocations of Balzac and realist literature in "The Old Mill" situate her narrator within these literary traditions and, at the same

time, suggest both an awareness of the literary forces at work in 1930s New Zealand and a response to them, in which it is asserted that the writing of “nation” is also the writing of the space of home. As an assertion of Langley’s writing within the literary culture of New Zealand in the 1930s, “The Old Mill” references both home and nation so that, to draw on Murray, these spaces are “both physical and abstract” and “always part and parcel of a dialogue” (*Never a Soul* 9).

Commenting on New Zealand writers of the 1930s, Murray notes that they “were forced at times to borrow vocabularies and structures from the very spheres of political, social and cultural activity from which they were trying to distance themselves” (*Never a Soul* 14). Langley’s narrator Eve says of Balzac, “I did not care twopence for his plots, his stories, his men, his women or his loves, but ah, his furniture, his pictures, his gems, his jewels, his objects d’art!” (186). In “The Old Mill” Langley asserts that, rather than retrogressive, nineteenth century literature has a valid place in the evolution of twentieth century literature: she suggests that the importance of place, and things in place, in realist literature provides a significant site of intersection with a literature intensely interested in the formation of a national culture through attention to the local and the specific. As Peter Brooks notes, realism values “ordinary experience and its ordinary settings and things” in its struggle to “do greater justice to the language of ordinary [people]” (7). It has already been noted (see, in particular, Murray *Never a Soul*) that in Curnow’s two influential anthologies of 1945 and 1960, his editorial direction suggests a relatively narrow vision of what constituted a local or a national voice in the 1930s. Though Langley’s place in the literary community of the time was minor, her glance back at the 1930s in “The Old Mill” suggests a developed awareness of the critical forces surrounding the layered reception of her writing during those years. Her positioning of her narrator, Eve, as outside conventional society suggests a response to Glover’s denigration of Langley’s

work as simply representative of popular taste. At the same time, through Eve's identification with canonical writers, Langley promotes herself as a serious writer in the realist mode.

The desire for some form of literary and cultural agency, discernable in the positioning of Eve in "The Old Mill", casts light, not only on the nature of Eve's imagined space of home--which is expressed in terms of interacting modes of belonging and "unbelonging"--but also on dominant mythologies in the writing of New Zealand at the time the novel is set. Langley's novel, when read as an assertion of her position as a writer in New Zealand, suggests a simultaneous desire for social marginality and cultural centrality that re-presents the social and cultural strategising visible in Langley's Australian novels. Interrogation of Langley's representations of "home" as a contested space is revealing not only of the nationalisms that provide a significant context for that space, but is also suggestive of the borders and boundaries that define contemporary assertions of nationhood. Steve's desire to be a female rover unsettles conventional ideas of the home and highlights gender-based assumptions of Australian national identity, assumptions that also emerge in contemporary "writing of" New Zealand. In *Never a Soul at Home* Murray suggests that "articulat[ion] of space and place" in the 30s "included key narratives of authenticity, belonging to the place *appropriately*, that resulted in crucial definitions about the issues of gender and community in New Zealand, and the craft of being a writer in the newly evolving literary scene" (original italics; 108-9). "The Old Mill" can be read as an effort to unsettle those definitions. Yet, nationalisms are not only concerned with what *is*, but also with what *was*. Murray notes: "Implicit in the processes of cultural decolonisation is an economy and language of capability. For the culture, or nation, to assert a sense of difference requires proof of the legitimacy of that difference" (*Never a Soul* 108). Ideas of freedom, independence and difference (from that which was

before), celebrated in the projects of nationhood in both Australia and New Zealand, are asserted in Langley's texts, but the contested nature of both home and nation unsettles these assertions at the same time as they are made.

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