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**Our Lands, Our Selves:
the postcolonial literary landscape of
Maurice Gee and David Malouf**

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Abstract

Landscape is an enduring feature of Antipodean settler literature. Postcolonial fiction in New Zealand and Australia draws on pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial narratives of landscape to create compelling representations of place and people. In the adult fiction of New Zealand author Maurice Gee and Australian author David Malouf, characters typically turn to the landscape at moments of crisis or transition. Close analysis of Gee's and Malouf's fiction demonstrates that the physical environment serves as a touchstone for personal and national identity throughout personal and national histories. From childhood to old age, characters seek self-definition by locating themselves within their physical environment, rather than by directly referencing their social or cultural context. Individual life stages are shown to be analogous to early stages of national development for New Zealand and Australia – the journey from colonial child to mature identity for both the individual and the nation is figured through landscape images. However, Gee and Malouf also use the relationship between characters and landscape to reflect social attitudes and values, demonstrating a connection between confident identification with the 'other' of the landscape and the ability to integrate meaningfully with the 'others' of human society. Thus landscape functions in these texts as a means of both reflecting and constructing identity in postcolonial New Zealand and Australia.

**This thesis is dedicated to the memory of
David Wright**

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Introduction – fertile ground

Landscapes exist. They fascinate and entertain us. They reveal how the past produces the present. They nourish us and show us who we are, and who, culturally, we have been. Landscapes live – and are in constant flux, like all life systems.

Geoff Park, *Theatre Country*

From my earliest independent reading, representation of landscape has been central to my appreciation of New Zealand literature. As an Auckland child, reading Tessa Duder's *Night Race to Kawau* and Maurice Gee's *Under the Mountain*, I experienced a shock of recognition – Rangitoto! Lake Pupuke! I know those places! I've been there! The interplay between reality and imagination allowed a degree of identification with the world of the fiction unmatched by imported works. Later in my reading life, Maurice Gee's adult novels provided the same pleasure, with their capable rendering of the familiar landscapes of Henderson, Wellington or Nelson. Reading from a critical perspective, however, I was intrigued at another level. Gee's descriptions suggest that how New Zealanders see place directly indicates how they see themselves. Gee frequently uses landscape to show his characters as out of step with society, either fleeing social constraints or alienated from social structures. However, he also uses landscape as a source of solace and renewal that allows characters to define themselves and their relationship with society more clearly. When characters turn to the landscape – invariably at points of crisis or transition in their own lives – their experience of the landscape denotes their level of self and social awareness. In Gee's fiction, then, the landscape is more than a backdrop to the narrative: comments on landscape are also comments on individual characters and their social contexts.

Landscape's significance in New Zealand fiction has been often acknowledged. Trudie McNaughton, in her introduction to *Countless Signs: the New Zealand landscape in literature*, says

A great deal of very diverse nineteenth and twentieth century writing uses New Zealand landscape either as subject, setting, symbol or spiritual force. ... For many fiction writers, of novels, short stories,

poems and plays, landscape has been a stimulus for the imagination.
(McNaughton 115)

This fascination suggests a concern with identity and belonging related to New Zealand's history of colonial settlement. The relationship between self, society and the landscape has traditionally been seen as a defining factor in cultural identity for Pakeha New Zealanders. Lacking longstanding man-made cultural monuments to inform their history, the settler society of this British colony has drawn on the physical environment to provide 'shared space' in a metaphorical as well as literal sense. The nationalist writers of the 1930s – including Allen Curnow, Charles Brasch and Robin Hyde – frequently linked identification with the specifics of local landscape to the desire for national identity, both in their fiction and their criticism.

Postcolonial New Zealand historian Giselle Byrnes says "land has always been central to ideas about cultural and national identity in New Zealand", and goes on to point out:

Pakeha have always held rather ambivalent attitudes towards the land. On the one hand, they have taken great interest in preserving the natural environment, putting down roots and making their own claims to indigenous status. On the other hand, Pakeha society has expressed a strong urge to transform the land. The colonial utilitarian attitude toward land has been celebrated in literature, art and historical narratives, where the remodelling of land was seen as part of the progressive pioneer tradition. (Byrnes 2)

The tensions highlighted here – between belonging and differentiation, preservation and alteration – are not only typical of New Zealand's experience of place as a postcolony, but indicative of the ambivalence present in Maurice Gee's novels. In the second half of the twentieth century, under pressure from theoretical explorations such as postcolonialism, traditional colonial approaches to the land could no longer be unproblematically 'celebrated' in New Zealand's literature. Instead, landscape came to be used to demonstrate the difficulties of place identification in settler society. As McNaughton notes, New Zealand fiction writers tend to look to the landscape to provide "symbols and metaphors which are often complex and ambivalent" in the ways that they "draw on traditional landscape images and their connotations." (McNaughton 11-12)

Such concerns are not limited to New Zealand; critics have observed that they are typical of settler societies. Postcolonial discourse thus offers an appropriate framework to address the connection between landscape writing and national mythologies, in particular the way narratives of colonial history are perpetuated, revisited, undermined and reshaped. As critics Leigh Dale and Helen Gilbert explain:

One of the principal means of resisting imperial narratives and rewriting the self in the 'new world' is through the refiguring of place, and analyses of the relations between place, language and subjectivity have been central in criticism of post-colonial literatures. (Dale 85)

In "Late Landings: Reflections on Belatedness in Australian and Canadian Literatures" (1993), Carolyn Masel also deals with place as a specific concern for postcolonial cultures. She describes belatedness as "a condition of the postcolonial writer in relation to place" that stems from "an anxiety about the colonial experience, about arriving too late, about a perceived lack of authenticity in relation to place." (Masel 162) She goes on to point out that it is unsurprising that, in this context,

place should not be mere 'setting' but should actually constitute a preoccupation. What is intriguing is the persistence as a dominant cultural construct of a set of anxieties about how to settle, own, and live in a land and that, moreover, these anxieties should be manifested so similarly in two countries whose landscapes are so different that they might be characterized as opposites and whose colonial histories are comparable only in the broadest terms. (Masel 162)

Literature from within recent Australian and New Zealand literary canons can similarly be seen to offer settler representations of landscape from two related yet distinct environments. New Zealand and Australia (so often elided simply as 'the Antipodes') form a coherent pairing, given what the two nations have in common – their proximity within the same geographic region, relatively recent history of British colonial settlement, dominant English language culture, cultural preoccupations and island status. Both nations became independent around the same time: Australia gained political independence from Britain in 1901 and New Zealand ceased to be a colony in 1907 (although it remained a British Dominion until 1947). However, the points of divergence – size (geographically

and in terms of population), physical terrain, process of colonisation and approach to the indigenous people suggest useful areas of contrast.

Commentators on Antipodean culture often highlight how depictions of landscape reflect personal and national concerns about identity. Within the Australian context, Uli Krahn succinctly shows how place informs personhood, and both come to inform prose:

Notions of place have been central in the cultural self-definition of settler colonies like Australia, since difference in place is the most visible marker distinguishing the colony from the imperial motherland. In Australian literary discourses, place is very much tied up with landscape, presumably as difference in landscape foregrounds the distinguishing difference of place. Landscape is thus used to emphasise the distinctiveness of Australia, from earliest colonial writings to the present day discourses of nationalism, literature and tourism. As landscape is supposed to define Australia, it is by extension used to define true Australianness. (Krahn 29)

The step from natural surroundings to national selfhood that Krahn illustrates is common in settler nationalist mythologies; as she notes, it remains symptomatic of Australian discourse well beyond the colonial period. As landscape is co-opted to help define “true Australianness”, it is also used to characterise “true New Zealandness”. Critic C. K. Stead notes Maurice Gee’s preoccupation with geographical locations, arguing “One of the most sympathetic qualities of Gee’s fiction has always been his sense of place”. Stead suggests that Gee’s locations are not simply physical places,

but the location of a particular range of feelings, only some of which are directly expressed or consciously entertained by the characters. In this as much as in anything, one feels the New Zealandness – New Zealanderness – of Gee’s writing. (Stead 325)

Stead’s dual terms – New Zealandness and New Zealanderness – demonstrate the link between the country/nation and an individual’s experience of place. The notion that personal and cultural identities are forged through identification with place is a dominant national mythology in both New Zealand and Australia.

In addressing this mythology, my study focuses on recent writing from these two island nations, examining the fiction of a mainstream writer working within each culture. Maurice Gee’s fiction exemplifies how perceptions of place and

belonging have manifested in New Zealand's mainstream Pakeha writing since the mid-twentieth century. Respected Australian author David Malouf provides an ideal comparative subject, given his many similarities with Gee. The two writers are nearly the same age (Gee was born in 1931, Malouf in 1934) and both have maintained a prolific output of adult fiction over a roughly equivalent modern timeframe. Gee began publishing fiction earlier: his first novel, *The Big Season*, appeared in 1962, while Malouf's first, *Johnno*, was not published until 1975. Gee had published two further novels prior to 1975 – *A Special Flower* (1965) and *In My Father's Den* (1972) – so was already established as a fiction writer. However, over the duration of their careers to date the authors' fictional output has been fairly similar. In total, Gee has published 14 volumes of adult fiction – 13 novels and one book of short stories (technically, two books of short stories; however, *Collected Stories* (1986) is effectively a reprint of *A Glorious Morning, Comrade* (1975) with two new stories added), while Malouf had, until very recently, published 12 volumes – eight novels (the first four sometimes categorised as novellas because of their brevity) and four books of short stories. (*The Complete Stories* (2007) is not included in this count, and the list also excludes *12 Edmondstone Street* (1985), which is semi-autobiographical rather than fictional. Malouf's ninth novel, *Ransom*, was released in April 2009, too recently for inclusion in this study.) While both authors have also produced notable work in other genres – Gee as a writer of young adult fiction and television drama, Malouf as a poet and librettist – this study focuses on the genre they have in common, adult fiction. The authors' novels and short stories show striking similarities in articulating the construction of selfhood through place-identification. In Gee's and Malouf's prose, landscape commonly functions as a means of self-definition (albeit a problematic one) for characters who experience difficulty finding such definition in a purely social context.

Gee and Malouf also have potentially interesting points of difference. On a personal level, Gee strongly identifies with Pakeha New Zealand society. In accounts such as "Beginnings" and "Creek and Kitchen", Gee describes the influence of his own solidly middle-class background and his Pakeha heritage. Elsewhere he claims the middle-class suburbs of Auckland and Wellington as "my proper territory" and says he agrees that "the best place for a novelist to

live is suburbia. ... In a family in suburbia – the middle of it all.” (Alley 162)

Placing himself thus in the centre of Pakeha New Zealand, Gee resists trying to speak for (or even of) any social or cultural group beyond his own. He says:

There are areas I haven't looked into, I've stood off from because I'm not fully equipped. There's a gap in my novels where the Maori should stand, and he doesn't stand. On the other hand, I don't think one should expect a writer to delve into areas where he doesn't come properly alive. That's why I don't write about Maoris or, any more, about what I suppose I have to call the working class. I deal with the middle class New Zealander. (Reilly 5)

Malouf's heritage also influences the way the author engages with Australian culture in his work, but in a different way. As Don Randall points out:

Malouf's belonging in Australia has been a matter of question, in the space of the author's own lifetime, and not only because he has resided in England and in Italy. He has been susceptible to construction as an other in the society of his birth. His attraction to otherness, and the high value he places on it, may well come out of his own historically ambiguous relationship with Australian identity. (Randall David Malouf 11)

The 'otherness' that Randall identifies is partly due to Malouf's family background. The son of a Lebanese-born father and English-born mother, Malouf is only a second generation Australian; his paternal grandparents spoke little English, and thus remained 'foreign' in the context of their Brisbane community. This experience of cultural displacement within his own household makes Malouf's identification with normative white settler culture less straightforward than Gee's.

Such differences are reflected within the fictions. In his novels, Malouf deals primarily with white Australian experience. However, his work engages with issues of otherness, such as race and class, where Gee's does not. Though both authors tell stories of individuals, Malouf's individuals are commonly depicted primarily in their relationships with other individuals (such as friends or acquaintances), while Gee's characters are most often shown in familial relationships. Thus Malouf's characters often turn to the landscape because they are somehow already outside normative social structures: his are the figures of the exile, the orphan, the soldier and the solitary artist. Gee's characters are enmeshed in family bonds that must be reconciled with the need for freedom: the landscape promises individual space for those caught within

social structures. Temporally, Gee's novels generally deal with the events of the second half of the twentieth century; only *Plumb* and *The Scornful Moon* reach back into the nineteenth century, and neither does so at length. Malouf's novels are far more expansive in their historical scope. As Andrew Taylor points out, "two hundred years of Australian history are covered almost continuously by Malouf's fiction, something not found in any other Australian novelist." (Taylor "Origin, Identity, and the Body" 4) Malouf's concern with Australian identity is figured through writing directly about settlement, national participation in war and other potentially epic topics. Gee's approach tends to be more constrained, dealing with personal stories less overtly related to significant national events. Malouf's greater expansiveness is also seen in his treatment of such topics; he tends to offer the possibility of transcendence in his fictions. Suffering humans move beyond horrors to experience a state of absolute unity where self and other (particularly individual and landscape) are harmoniously integrated. Gee's fiction is less ecstatic; his characters do learn and grow, but their final reconciliation with the world tends to be acceptance rather than transcendence. Where Malouf offers numinous visions, Gee provides pragmatic social realism.

A comparative study of these two authors provides the opportunity to use existing critical material within one literary tradition to beneficially illuminate another. While Malouf's work has received significant critical attention, critique of Gee's writing is limited. Several books are devoted to Malouf's work: Philip Neilsen's *Imagined Lives* (1990), Karin Hansson's *Sheer Edge* (1991), Ivor Indyk's *David Malouf* (1993) and *David Malouf: A Celebration* (2001) (the latter more a collection of tributes, ephemera and portraits than a critical study), and Don Randall's *David Malouf* (2007). *Provisional Maps: Critical Essays on David Malouf* (1994), edited by Amanda Nettelbeck, brings together some of the shorter critical writings on Malouf in book form. (Nettelbeck has also written a secondary school primer called *Reading David Malouf* (1995) that provides a basic introduction to Malouf's key concerns.) These dedicated titles all offer useful comment on Malouf's use of landscape and his notions of Australian identity.

Phillip Neilsen's study provides a chronological text-by-text overview of Malouf's fictions to 1990, identifying as Malouf's "continuing preoccupations" issues such as nationality, mythology and dualism. Neilsen highlights Malouf's engagement with the problem of the cultural creation of Australian identity; he points out "the opposition of centre and edge" that manifests as opposition between notions of Australia and Europe, between the "suffocating domestic centre and the enabling periphery", and between culture and nature. (Neilsen 4) Focusing on motifs such as "the machine, the substitute, the absence, the photograph, the edge, the earth and metamorphosis", Neilsen shows how Malouf creates an "inter-connected system" of imagery that facilitates the expression of his "crucial concerns – self-creation, change, imagination and language, among others." (Neilsen 3) Landscape features most often in Neilsen's discussion as a representation of 'Nature', and he argues that Malouf demonstrates "a post-Romantic deference to Nature and the imagination" alongside "an exploration of the problem of coming to terms with Australia as a place we are still in the process of constructing culturally." (Neilsen 182)

In *Sheer Edge*, Karin Hansson addresses motifs such as the map, the gap and the edge in discussing the spatial and temporal elements of Malouf's work. She explains that such concepts are

integrated in a system connected with the themes of individuation in the Jungian sense and the quest for self-knowledge and awareness of a deeper, metaphysical reality, or, as is often the case in post-colonial literary text, they become central metaphors in the discourse of cultural decolonization, concerned with deterritorialization and reterritorialization in projecting other spaces than those prescribed by dominant and traditional cultural patterns. (Hansson 82)

Hansson goes on to demonstrate that such images are combined with a set of opposites, "such as centre-periphery, self-other, inside-outside, Australia-Europe and suburb-wilderness, ranging from ordinary literal meaning to the most esoteric symbolism of metaphysical and existential issues" (Hansson 82) to explore Malouf's ideas about the self. Through explorations of place, the sense of self is expanded. As Hansson puts it, "the protagonists' relationship to art and nature, land, plants and animals, becomes a powerful image of their capacity for creating something infinite and spiritual, of extending and ultimately defining their own identities." (Hansson 143)

Ivor Indyk's *David Malouf* picks up on Malouf's use of dual protagonists, a strikingly consistent feature of the novels. Indyk focuses on Malouf's handling of male desire, often linking male characters' relationships with each other to their relationship with the landscape. In Indyk's reading, the failures of masculine intimacy in the cluttered social world of Brisbane that are described in *Johnno* are transformed in *An Imaginary Life* into a potential for desire and human connection, made possible by an expansive natural landscape that is almost stripped of feminine influence. A comment about Jim and Ashley in *Fly Away Peter* clearly suggests Indyk's view of how Malouf's dual protagonists operate:

their two claims represent what must be seen, in the larger context of Malouf's work, as an ideal expression of continuity, combining masculine succession with imaginative vision, both grounded in the world of nature... (Indyk David Malouf 38)

Thus Indyk recognises the natural landscape as an enabling feature of Malouf's depiction of male relationships outside the traditional family and beyond the bounds of socially constrained spaces. As Indyk puts it, Malouf deals with "an area of masculine experience that is closely circumscribed socially, but which finds a freer expression... amongst the primitive continuities of the natural world." (Indyk David Malouf 61)

In *Provisional Maps: Critical Essays on David Malouf*, editor Amanda Nettelbeck says in her introduction that a recurring feature of Malouf's work "is its capacity to suggest both a Romantic idealism and what might be defined as a post-colonial conception of language, world and subjectivity." (Nettelbeck Provisional Maps iii) Such an incorporation of traditional historical ways of reading the world with modern theoretical understandings is central to Malouf's presentation of place. Nettelbeck highlights the importance of geography in Malouf's work by including "the processes of mapping" as a subheading alongside "identity, culture and history" and "questions of form and narrative". (Nettelbeck Provisional Maps iii) Included in "The Mapping of Bodies and Spaces" section is "Edges of the Self: Topographies of the Body in the Writing of David Malouf", in which Leigh Dale and Helen Gilbert argue that in Malouf's work, "connections between self and landscape are explored in terms of a metaphorical disintegration of the post-colonial body, whereby boundaries of the self and the

landscape are interrupted and broken down.” (Dale 86) Nettelbeck’s own essay, “Rewriting an Explorer Mythology: the Narration of Space in David Malouf’s Work”, uses Paul Carter’s theories of exploration to track how

travellers in Malouf’s world occupy a double-edged position. On the one hand, their probing of various kinds of boundaries and finding them indeterminate is suggestive of Australia’s current process of scrutinizing the mythologies of its own colonial history. On the other hand, Malouf’s travellers still inhabit, as Carter put it in relation to his explorers, a ‘mirror state’ ... where the horizon reflects back the image of their own presence: a presence which is defined against what is hidden, excluded, unspeakable. (Nettelbeck Provisional Maps 114)

Thus Nettelbeck suggests that the “desired space outside of time, language, social law” in Malouf’s fiction is problematic in its exclusion of aspects such as the feminine and the Aborigine.

Don Randall’s *David Malouf*, the most recent and comprehensive full-length critical study, provides succinct summaries of previous criticism in addition to wide-ranging comment on Malouf’s poetry and prose. Randall praises Neilsen’s early work, but points out that “explicitly postcolonial critique is virtually absent in Neilsen” and argues that the “postcolonial component... may be a key to understanding the interconnectedness and integrity of Malouf’s vision.” (Randall David Malouf 183) In Randall’s view, Malouf’s work demonstrates “an intense and abiding concern with the marginalisation, disenfranchisement, and exclusion that are at work in the social order of the postcolony.” (Randall David Malouf 9) Randall also notes the continuing influence of Romanticism in Malouf’s work, arguing that Malouf “participates appreciably in the Romantic conception of the modern nation” particularly in “his sense of the prevailing significance of the specificity of Australian landscape and of Australia’s status as a continental island-nation” and “the need for nation-forging, nation-inaugurating epic”. (Randall David Malouf 3)

Malouf has been included in other book-length comparative studies with postcolonial authors beyond the Antipodes. Claudia Egerer’s *Fictions of (in)betweenness* (1997) puts Malouf alongside J.M. Coetzee and Louise Erdrich, focusing on Malouf’s use of notions such as home and exile in the overlapping space between postmodernism and postcolonialism in *An*

Imaginary Life and Remembering Babylon. Lamia Tayeb's comprehensively titled *The Transformation of Political Identity from Commonwealth through Postcolonial Literature: the cases of Nadine Gordimer, David Malouf and Michael Ondaatje* (2006) provides a detailed analysis of how the three authors deal with issues of nationhood and identity. Like Egerer, Tayeb engages primarily with abstract constructions of place (such as 'home'), rather than providing specific commentary on the physical landscapes of Malouf's fiction.

In contrast to this scholarly outpouring on Malouf, Gee has been the subject of only two dedicated publications to date. David Hill's *Introducing Maurice Gee* (1981) is really a fifty-seven page 'taster' of Gee's work, with more excerpts than analysis. Bill Manhire's *Maurice Gee* (1986) is more substantial, offering a text-by-text exploration of the early novels. Though the analysis comments in passing on Gee's use of landscape in several of the texts – the pig-hunt in *The Big Season*, Kingsley's maps in *Games of Choice*, the motif of the garden in the *Plumb* trilogy – Manhire focuses on Gee's character construction and social settings, reading the novels primarily on their own terms rather than within a theoretical framework. Manhire concludes that Gee is "not a philosopher. He tells stories and makes characters. His point of view is that of the liberal humanist..." (Manhire 68)

C.K. Stead's description of Gee as "one of our significant social historians" (Stead 324) seems reflected in much of the briefer critical work on Gee's fiction. Donald W. Hannah notes how Gee's work "centres upon the family" and draws from these relationships "issues that embrace life in New Zealand society as a whole – both past and present" (Hannah 84) such as morality and puritanism. Brian Boyd's two-part *Landfall* essay on Gee, "Maurice Gee: Ironies of Growth and Judgement" (1980) identifies "the value and cost of extending individual possibility" (Boyd 268) as a key concern in Gee's work. Boyd focuses on social and family relationships, and says "the possibility of new growth is the great positive in Gee's work", whereas "the chief negative force is the impulse to judge others". (Boyd 274) Som Prakash's comparative study of Gee and R. K. Narayan, *God, Money and Success Across Cultures* (1997), focuses on the title's particular cultural measures; however, Prakash makes the point that in

Gee's work, 'Nature' is one means of getting close to God. Trevor James' examination of the quest for meaning in the *Plumb* trilogy makes a similar point, identifying the symbolic function of water throughout, and arguing that the final chapters of the trilogy "stress natural phenomena – rain, clouds, bush and earth – as virtual instruments of epiphany" that go beyond the limited strictures of Puritanism (James 51). In an analysis of the interconnectedness and temporality of the trilogy, Lawrence Jones points out "a mythic resonance in the images of tree, garden, snake/eel and rainbow" (Jones "The Maurice Gee Trilogy" 328) that binds the books together, making them more than a simple family chronicle or social history. Thus place and landscape are mentioned within discussions of broader social concerns, rather than accorded particular focus.

Some critics argue that Pakeha displacement does not rank among Gee's fictional concerns. Lauris Edmond's "Definitions of New Zealanders: the Stories of Maurice Shadbolt and Maurice Gee" (1982) suggests that Gee's work shows that New Zealand writers have grown beyond such insecurity about place:

So confidently do Gee's characters locate themselves they never think or talk of their identity. ... If Shadbolt's men and women were gripped by the unease of the displaced, Gee's are articulately, positively, even aggressively at home. As for the outside world, the older societies that Shadbolt's characters yearned over, they scarcely notice it: and the foreigner who obtrudes they have learned to despise. (Edmond 133)

Yet dislocation is a feature of Gee's work that receives attention in more recent postcolonial interrogations of his constructions of New Zealand. Sarah Dugdale's 2002 doctoral thesis, "Gee's Territory: Pakeha Society in the Fiction of Maurice Gee" points out that Gee's novels have been published "over the period of emotional and political decolonisation for the Pakeha sector of the New Zealand population" (Dugdale 3) and notes:

Gee has lived most of his life in the small towns and cities of New Zealand and his observations of these physical and cultural sites shape the basis of his novels. The realist style and careful crafting of these novels reflect Gee's deep commitment to representing the political, socioeconomic and psychic condition of his white or Pakeha characters, and their place in New Zealand society. (Dugdale 3)

Her commentary on their 'place' is, however, social and cultural rather than geographical. Dugdale's primary concern is "identifying the shifts in social,

political and economic expectations and assumptions used to refine and define the dominant or settler culture of New Zealand as reflected in the cultural terrain of Gee's fiction." (Dugdale 11) Though she touches on the use of literal terrain as a technique that prompts identification in Gee's Pakeha readers, this 'realism' is predominately a means to analyse Pakeha society.

Gee's ex-textual comments indicate his own desire to put character and story ahead of wider theoretical, historical or political concerns in his writing. He claims "nothing in my novels has anything to do with theory. I'm theory-proof and entirely pragmatic." (Alley 170) This pragmatism makes Gee less self-consciously concerned with articulating abstractions than Malouf. Nor does Gee attempt to write the story of the nation, considering history to be something that can to some extent be taken for granted:

[W]hen asked how much importance he attached to New Zealand history, Gee said: "Not a great deal of importance to it – because it is there, a kind of a ground. One sort of concentrates on or looks at how the seeds are growing, not at the ground of the garden. New Zealand history is a kind of ground that my novels grow out of. I hope I understand it correctly; I'm not sure for that matter what my understanding of it is..." (Prakash God, Money and Success 60-61)

However, Gee's rejection of conscious historicity does not exempt him from its influence, and the use of the ground metaphor suggests he is aware of the way national myths inform his work at an underlying level. In a similar way, shifts and changes in theoretical approach filter through into Gee's writing over the course of his career. While he may not actively seek to deal with postmodern, poststructural or postcolonial ideas, their impact on modern thought makes itself felt in the cultural conditions from which he writes. The zeitgeist means that echoes of twentieth-century theory can be found in his novels, though they are often implicit where Malouf's are explicit. A postcolonial reading of Gee's fictions therefore uses postcolonial theory to illuminate the way particular constructions of place and identity function within the texts. Such a reading does not suppose that Gee deliberately seeks to espouse postcolonial concepts; rather, it teases out aspects of the writing that are relevant to postcolonial understandings of the connection between place and identity.

Unlike Gee, Malouf uses postcolonial theory to deliberate effect in his fiction. Most obviously, novels such as *Remembering Babylon* and *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* actively re-vision Australia's colonial past in order to question historic imbalances of power and representation. Malouf, as a former academic, is also overtly engaged with the critical discourse surrounding national identity and the importance of place. Malouf is somewhat sceptical about reductive labels; he claims to hear the formulation 'Australian Literature', "with its capitals and its heavy claim on our attention with the same uneasy sense of being over-aware about something that ought to be left to look after itself as when I hear that other grim formulation, 'National Identity'". (Tulip *Johnno et al* 277) That the comment occurs in the context of a public address entitled "The Making of Literature" indicates, however, that Malouf does not shy away from theoretical discussion of such issues. Indeed, Vivian Smith describes Malouf as "our foremost literary figure, a rare example of a man of letters" and points out that "there is hardly a literary field that he has not worked in". (Indyk *David Malouf: A Celebration* 15) Malouf's lecture series on Australian identity, published as *A Spirit of Play: the Making of Australian Consciousness* (1999), demonstrates his high-level engagement with the theory, as well as the practice, of national and cultural production.

Many critics have traced specifically theoretical concerns through Malouf's work. Ivor Indyk says that Malouf's fiction (specifically, in this case, *An Imaginary Life*) is notable for its integration of lyrical and theoretical elements:

the poetry and the theory are so closely related, and Malouf shifts so easily between them, that they should really be thought of as aspects of the same discourse, one which scans its own imaginative constructs as they are created, reinforcing the poetic flights of fancy with a rational or intellectual underpinning.

The concepts that receive the closest theoretical elaboration are those on which Malouf depends most to achieve a sense of unity and continuity – imagination, language and nature. (Indyk *David Malouf* 27)

The complex relationship between these concepts of subjective self, language and landscape are of interest to Malouf particularly in the context of settler Australia. In an interview with Paul Kavanagh, Malouf says "If there is anything like the fall, that I might believe in, it is that fall which is peculiar to Australia, in which the landscape and the language are not one." (Kavanagh 252) This

disjunction between words and world is at the heart of *An Imaginary Life* (which, though not set in Australia, is commonly read as a metaphor for Australian settler displacement). Avis G. McDonald argues that induction into language disconnects Ovid from his past and his imaginative engagement with place:

Ovid's exile began... when he relinquished his childhood innocence and his family ties to become the urbane ironist of the metropolis. The state of exile is from harmony and wholeness: from unity with the entire natural world. (McDonald 48)

Only through relinquishing language – first Latin, then Celtic, then the language of birds and animals – can Ovid progress to the numinous state of “wordless being-in-the-world and being the world itself” (McDonald 51) that Malouf portrays as desirable.

Numerous critical responses to Malouf's work focus on such integration of humans with place as a model for Australia's future. In his article “David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* – Issues of Race and Spiritual Transformation” (1996), James Tulip says the novel

tells the story of acceptance, rejection and a partial reconciliation; and finds through this process for certain of its characters a rite of passage into maturity, a maturity which Malouf foreshadows – hopefully – for modern and future Australia. (Tulip "Issues of Race" 71)

Elaine Lindsay and John Murray, in “*Whether this is Jerusalem or Babylon We Know Not*: National Self-Discovery in *Remembering Babylon*” (1997/98) argue that Gemmy is a catalyst for other characters to come to know and understand themselves and the land better.

For over a hundred years Australian writers have striven obsessively to establish a spiritual connexion (sic) with the country through depiction of landscape and through strongly symbolic narratives that bring Europeans into contact with that landscape and its indigenous people. *Remembering Babylon*, firmly set in the landscape and history of Queensland, continues the process. (Lindsay 94)

Thus Malouf's writing on place is informed by, and contextualised within, existing critical discourses examining postcolonial framings of landscape.

Malouf's engagement with the problems of the postcolony can involve treading contentious ground. A flurry of critical responses to Malouf's handling of issues of race followed the publication of *Remembering Babylon*; Germaine Greer

condemned the book as an “Objectionable Whitewash” in its handling of early settlement encounters with Aboriginal ‘otherness’. Suvendrini Perera, in “Unspeakable Bodies: Representing the Aboriginal in Australian Critical Discourse” (1994), argues that Malouf’s creation of the white Aboriginal figure, Gemmy Fairley, contributes to a “discourse of happy hybridisation” (Perera 17) that glosses over the realities of Aboriginal dispossession. Perera argues that:

Instead of refiguring the opposition between ‘savagism and civilization’, between settler and indigene, coloniser and colonised, Malouf’s text reinscribes these oppositions even as it appears to develop a redemptive narrative of hybridity. (Perera 21)

However, in “Craft and Politics: *Remembering Babylon’s* Postcolonial Responses” (1999) Lyn McCredden argues “Perera’s purist kind of criticism, in seeking to keep an absolute difference between so-called ‘political’ and ‘aesthetic’ categories, is ‘trapped within an essentialising, oppositional economy’, as Perera claims of Malouf.” (McCredden 9) McCredden suggests:

The Romantic and sublime imaginary in *Remembering Babylon* is not... the stopper to political thought. ‘Unspeakability’, that highly crafted, sublime moment in Malouf’s writings, works through silences and absences which have a palpability and a motivating force deeply grounded in material and political experiences. (McCredden 16)

Don Randall also specifically argues back against Perera and Malouf’s other detractors in “Cross Cultural Imagination in David Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon*” (2004), suggesting that because hybridity is part of Malouf’s project, any political reading of the novel that relies on defending territories is problematic because Malouf’s work uniformly seeks to transcend the concept of boundaries. (Randall “Cross-Cultural Imagination” 144)

However, beyond *Remembering Babylon*, critics continue to identify white appropriation of Aboriginality as problematic in Malouf’s fiction. For example, “New Labours, Older Nativisms? Australian Critical Whiteness Studies, Indigeneity and David Malouf’s *Harland’s Half Acre*,” by Julie Mullaney (2007) argues that in *Harland’s Half Acre*

the space of the Aboriginal is occupied by Frank Harland and the category of the Aboriginal sacred destabilized by a vision of Aboriginality activated, appropriated and redeployed by the late settler culture of which he is a part. Thus, the figure of Harland and of a settled white indigeneity is represented as part of a communal and achieved present

rather than a lost past or an imagined future as in *Remembering Babylon*. (Mullaney 103)

Mullaney goes on to say that what Malouf “construes as a meeting-point of two different modes of being (indigenous and non-indigenous)” – effectively Don Randall’s positive hybridity – “is really a mutation of white needs and desires and constitutes a form of ‘neo-colonial racism’... Malouf’s spiritual hybrid amounts to a deracination of Aboriginality and a direct substitution of the white native-born in the place of the indigene.” (Mullaney 112-13) Mullaney’s criticism is grounded in the landscape; Harland’s intimate relationship with the land is considered inappropriate for a white man, encroaching on territory that is properly Aboriginal. Malouf’s placement of the settler (as well as the hybrid and the imagined but absent Aboriginal) within the Australian landscape has therefore proved contentious.

Malouf’s engagement with historical narrative has stimulated critical responses that develop the relationship between landscape, nation and identity in his work. Martin Leer, in “At the Edge”, demonstrates how Malouf uses the empty outline of Australia as a figure for “a map of the imagination, a topography of the mind, of the self – or that aspect of the self which involves nationality.” (Leer 3) Australia as a ‘translated’ Europe features in a discussion of outlines and edges in the poetry and prose, as an indicator of the limits of self and consciousness. As Leer points out, “Australia-as-outline is a trope in Australian literature, though not without foundation in the real map of the continent (with its uneven demographic distribution).” (Leer 3) Leer argues that the outline of Australia Dante remembers tracing at school reaffirms the “inherently deceptive or illusory quality about Australia”, and says:

The map, in fact, is a combination of misconceptions: It is partly the kind of curiously outdated propaganda one is taught at school (in this case with imperialist overtones: a map, as it were, of the Cultural Cringe); but it is also partly the kind of adolescent pose the narrator has picked up from Johnno, a romantic dissatisfaction with that Philistine, provincial backwater they are trying so desperately and unsuccessfully to rebel against. (Leer 9)

Thus Leer clearly connects representations of geographical space with both Australian national identity and the individual’s maturing self. Amanda

Nettelbeck, in "Narrative Invention as 'Spatial History' in The Great World", (1992) looks at space and place through that novel's created national histories:

As a form of the mapping process, history – what Paul Carter calls 'that fabric woven of self-reinforcing illusions' (*Botany Bay* xv) – becomes a means by which a space (geographical or temporal, personal or communal) is defined. As such, the making of history is by definition a subjective process, both in its capacity to accommodate various perspectives and as a product of the speaking subject's dependence upon language. (Nettelbeck "Narrative Invention" 42)

Lamia Tayeb points out the wide range of narrative and theoretical sources informing Malouf's fictions (particularly in reference to his construction of place), noting that the writing

brings into play such diverse elements of the Australian colonial and nationalist experience as the Edenic myth and the notion of an Australian *tabula rasa*; the twin practices of 'transplantation' and 'translation' of Europe and their role in forging a perpetual form of national schizophrenia; and the role of the homecoming project in bridging the gap between settler consciousness and physical location. (Tayeb 135)

Such postcolonial critiques offer insights into how landscape and place are constructed in settler societies, and how colonial and postcolonial discourses intersect.

Reading Gee's and Malouf's work in terms of 'postcolonial' concerns is not straightforward, however; the Antipodean context renders the term 'postcolonial' problematic. Though New Zealand and Australia are typically described as 'postcolonial' nations, caveats are necessary. Canadian critic W. H. New's distinctions between the 'colonial', 'colonist' and 'colonizer' clarify appropriate terminology for the people of settler societies:

The 'Colonist' (the person, usually European, who settles in the 'new' land, and who participates in the reshaping of social mores) differs clearly from the 'Colonial' (i.e. the European temporarily resident in the new society, generally contemptuous of the life and customs observed, who remains tied to and is somehow identified with an administrative appointment abroad), though the latter can turn into the former. (A second use of the noun 'Colonial' applies to the child of the Colonist, who is generally dismissed as uncouth, especially by travellers from the Imperial Centre.) These types also have to be distinguished in theory both from the 'Colonizer' (the European power that asserts its precedence, and sometimes its ownership, over 'new' lands and ostensibly 'primitive' or 'savage' people) and from the 'Colonized' (the

persons, generally non-European, who suffer this arrogation of authority). (New "Colonial Literatures" 105)

Thus white Australians and Pakeha New Zealanders 'once were colonists', with all the marginality and uneasy assumptions of being both dominator and dominated that the term implies. In the late twentieth century, they are 'postcolonials' in the second sense of the term 'colonials' – the children (now, descendants) of colonists, no longer directly in a relationship with Britain as 'colonizer'.

Accepting these definitions, the term 'postcolonial' applies **only** to Pakeha New Zealanders and white Australians. It cannot accurately represent the position of Maori or Aboriginal Australians, indigenous populations still 'colonized' and operating within social, political and economic structures imposed by a cultural framework other than their own. There has been limited recognition of past loss and harm due to colonial settlement (demonstrated in political actions such as Waitangi Tribunal settlements in New Zealand and the recent apology to the Aboriginal people by the government of Australia), but the power to decide what restitution is appropriate (and politically advantageous) remains firmly with white settler society and its systems. Independence from the 'colonizer' was granted to white settler society only; independence from the realities of occupation is still inconceivable for the indigenous populations of both countries. (If this seems a strong statement, the response to even the possibility of an armed assertion of Maori sovereignty in early 2008 should provide ample evidence to support it – such an assertion was not treated initially as criminal, but as constituting an act of terrorism.) 'Postcolonial' writing then, strictly speaking, must be defined as writing coming from within the dominant settler society.

That said, recent postcolonial theory makes clear that the 'post' in postcolonial does not imply 'after' colonialism. Giselle Byrnes makes this explicit in *Boundary Markers*, declaring:

Postcolonialism is... a perspective which critiques and seeks to undermine colonisation – the 'post' in postcolonialism does not, as it is sometimes assumed, imply that we have somehow passed out of the colonising phase and are now in one of 'decolonisation'. A post-colonial reading aims to unsettle and challenge the authority of colonialism and highlight its ambivalence and diversity. (Byrnes 13)

This position seems to more accurately reflect the New Zealand and Australian situations, which lack any defined endpoint to the relationship between 'colonist' and indigenous populations, regardless of the degree of political independence. Under such a definition, both New Zealand and Australia can be defined as postcolonial – that is, grappling with the political, economic and (most importantly, for the purposes of this literary study) cultural heritage of colonisation. Critic Ismail Talib references two of the numerous other critical writings that present postcolonial discourse as inherently dynamic rather than static:

Gallagher has reminded us of Fanon's definition of the term, in which 'the postcolonial is never a specific moment but an ongoing struggle, a continual emergence'. (Talib 19)

That sense of 'ongoing struggle' informs the way the term postcolonial is used here to indicate current settler culture in New Zealand and Australia. European settlement is part of the historic cultural weave but the negotiations surrounding it are by no means over.

The way that colonial framings resonate through a culture is nowhere more evident than in national discourses surrounding place and landscape. As W. H. New makes clear, traditional colonial tropes infect the language and become embedded, even when challenged by later theories. In his words:

The characterization of the land as female, of Canada as the Empire's child, of wilderness as savage, of utility and domesticity as the only acceptable measures of the beautiful: such judgements, however questionable and in whatever measure repudiated, remain influential. These metaphors encode attitudes and expectations; they tell of what some people take to be true, whether they are or not, and hence they reveal the unstable ground of social norms. (New Land Sliding 18)

Such metaphors circulate freely within the Antipodean context. In terms of the female land, Trudie McNaughton has observed that in New Zealand literature:

Stereotyped women's roles are used to evoke attitudes to the landscape that were indicated more obliquely in using physical imagery. There is of course a long tradition of seeing the earth as a mother, with images of giving life, nurturing and protecting. Another role the landscape is made to play is that of a lover or mistress. While some writers are 'in love with' the landscape, others hint at a relationship based on gratification rather than coexistence. Much writing which sees the landscape as a lover has

overtones of possession, of taking. The most extreme form of this imagery is an allusion to the rape of the land. (McNaughton 12)

Similar readings are identified by feminist critic Kay Schaffer in Australia, who says that the land

functions as a metaphor for woman – as in father sky to mother earth, colonial master to the plains of promise, native son to the barren bush, contemporary Australians to the red/dead centre. All of these equations reproduce the 'perfect' couple: masculine activity/feminine passivity. These are common-sense, taken for granted, everyday meanings. They reproduce the idea that man/masculinity is the universal norm for culture ... and woman/femininity is the other, the adjunct, an object of desire for man. (Schaffer 13)

This active masculine conquest of the land recurs throughout Gee's and Malouf's work, echoing traditional imperial exploration narratives and the 'heroic' colonial 'naming and taming' of the land.

Such masculine narratives have become part of the national mythologies of New Zealand and Australia. Patricia McLean, writing of Gee's cultural inheritance, identifies New Zealand's masculine figures in "the narratives of the ANZAC soldier of Gallipoli, the All Black great or the Man Alone in his various forms: the solitary gold miner, the bush-feller or the deer-culler..." She points out that "the nation's fables of identity are derived from recognizable and desirable images from colonial history." (McLean 104) In a similar vein, Carolyn Bliss's identification of "specifically Australian permutations of myth" in Malouf's fiction include male settler concerns such as "mateship, the bushranger... the exploratory journey, the digger, and the baptism of Anzac." (Bliss 725)

In making use of such mythologies, Gee and Malouf tend to privilege the masculine. Lauris Edmond says that Gee is "wary of the sentimental; a very masculine writer" (Edmond 144), while Randall asserts:

It would be mistaken to say that Malouf shares with his imperial predecessors a sense that he inhabits a man's world, but male voices, male characters, and relationships between male characters, are unignorably prominent in his writing. (Randall David Malouf 4)

Yet in using masculine modes, both writers challenge aspects of pre-existing male conquest narratives. As Randall puts it, "Malouf's value as a contemporary writer resides in part in his critical re-evaluation of the codes of masculinity

inherited from the imperial age” (Randall David Malouf 5). In Gee’s writing, Kipling-esque elements of male bravado appear, but are often also undermined. As Lawrence Jones explains, in colonial and late-colonial New Zealand literature of “the figure of Man Alone was usually heroic, affirming his society’s values” (Jones Barbed Wire 297), whereas Gee’s use of the figure tends to highlight the uneasy, rather than domineering, relationship between the lone man and his environment. Jones says that “explorations of the guilt and potential inauthenticity of Man Alone” are a feature of Gee’s work, and that “Man Alone is more problematic, denied the almost automatic sympathy he received in the provincial phase.” (Jones Barbed Wire 308) As Kai Jensen says in *Whole Men*, though Gee fits into the tradition of “masculinism” that is “still a living presence in New Zealand literature”, he does offer “an altered masculinism, more self-conscious, more aware of its own artificiality”. (Jensen 168)

In addition to the male/female binary, colonial conquest narrative tends to create a dichotomy between the ‘wilderness’ and ‘civilised’ land. Exploring or taming wild areas were ways a man could test himself, because wild land was considered dangerous. Schaffer details

several attributes familiar to the discourse on the Australian tradition: the male-as-norm and land-as-other; the bush as central and city as peripheral to self-definition; and the personification of the bush as the heart, the Interior – a mysterious presence which calls to men for the purposes of exploration and discovery but is also a monstrous place in which men may either perish or be absorbed. (Schaffer 52)

The idea of being absorbed by the wilderness leads to a desire for clear delineations of boundaries and borders. As Byrnes and New emphasise, ideas of taming the land and creating a productive, domesticated ‘garden’ were set in contrast to the ‘wild’ land beyond the borders of ‘civilisation’. New explains:

The *wilder-ness* was the place of the *wild deer*, and hence by tacit understanding, the territory beyond the reach or authority of English common law. The basis for this distinction lay in an attitude to land. Land was, or could be, property, that is, privately owned. Such ownership declared authority; it also expressed a participation in a system of civil order or organization, or a shared notion of ‘cultivation’. Hence the (cultivated) garden was civil, but the wilderness was ‘untractable’: unruly, hence unruly. (New Land Sliding 29)

This wilderness/garden dichotomy is hardly new; the founding text of the Judeo-Christian tradition starkly depicts the difference between the Garden of Eden and the surrounding wilderness, which was not only beyond the reach of law but beyond the blessing of God. W. H. New clearly articulates the Biblical basis for colonial clearances:

The words of the prophet Isaiah were taken literally: 'Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest, Then judgement shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the field' (32:15-16). By these terms, order – the sequence of surveying, clearing, cultivation, property establishment, acquisition, ownership, and success – is no mere accident of history but a process (and a system) given sanction by God. (New Land Sliding 76)

In his book *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation*, Robert Harrison shows the prevalence of this binary throughout history:

the forests were foris, "outside". In them lived the outcastes, the mad, the lovers, brigands, hermits, saints, lepers, the maquis, fugitives, misfits, the persecuted, the wild men. Where else could they go? Outside of the law and human society one was in the forest. But the forest's asylum was unspeakable. One could not remain human in the forest; one could only rise above or sink below the human level. (Harrison 61)

In the colonial context the 'outcaste' was the indigene, the native, who was invariably elided with nature, often in terms of hostility and wildness.

In Australia, the Aboriginal ability to sustain life in the 'desert' of the Outback (without imposing the 'order' of cultivation) was seen as evidence of their subhumanity.

The fact that Aborigines had been successfully inhabiting these 'inhospitable' tracts of land for tens of thousands of years was either carefully censored or, if considered, was taken as further evidence of the inferior humanity, even the subhumanity, of the race. It was used to condemn both the land and its indigenous people as being equally primitive and inimical to civilisation. (Haynes 34)

Such condemnation is evident in Malouf's depiction of settler attitudes in *Remembering Babylon*. From the settlers' perspective, Aboriginal wanderings destabilise the boundaries between the civilisation of colonised space and the native wilderness:

And all around, before and behind, worse than the weather and the deepest night, natives, tribes of wandering myalls who, in their traipsing this way and that all over the map, were forever encroaching on boundaries that could be insisted on by daylight – a good shotgun saw to that – but in the dark hours, when you no longer stood there as a living marker with all the glow of the white man’s authority about you, reverted to being a creek-bed or ridge of granite like any other, and gave no indication that six hundred miles away, in the Lands Office in Brisbane, this bit of country had a name set against it on a numbered document, and a line drawn that was empowered with all the authority of the Law. (Malouf Babylon 9)

In aligning Aboriginality with the uncontrollable forces of weather and night, Malouf clearly shows settler unease with a non-bounded concept of place. His depiction demonstrates how colonial settler society saw mapping as possession and ‘law’ as a means of subduing (at least theoretically) the vagaries of ‘nature’.

One reason for the disjunction between settler attitudes and indigenous understandings of place is implicit in the term ‘landscape’. White settler culture inherited a Western historical tendency to apprehend natural features of topography primarily from a distance via sight. This differs from Aboriginal understanding, as cultural commentators have explained. Roslynn Haynes cites one of Australia’s influential literati:

The poet Judith Wright has succinctly expressed the conceptual divide between European notions of a landscape derived from the perspective of an empowered observer, whose magisterial gaze calls an appropriately aesthetic prospect into being, and the Aboriginal understanding of a spirit-filled landscape through which individuals access their identity:

This very word ‘landscape’ involves, from the beginning, an irreconcilable difference of viewpoint, and there seems no word in European languages to overcome the difficulty. It is a painter’s term, implying an outside view, a separation, even a basis of criticism. We cannot set it against the reality of the earth-sky-water-tree-spirit-human complex existing in space-time, which is the Aboriginal world. (Haynes 17)

Wright’s phrase “difference of viewpoint” shows how deeply ingrained the sight metaphor is in Western understanding of perception; it is used to describe difference even as the author expressly rejects the possibility of comparing a Western “viewpoint” to the experiential Aboriginal appreciation of place. In the New Zealand context, Geoff Park points out that landscape aesthetics are likewise a particularly Pakeha concept:

the whole idea of the landscape as beautiful, and that its beauty is to be regarded and preserved, is historically very much a late-colonial British settler notion, facilitated legislatively by Antipodean adaptations of English land laws. It has nothing or little to do with Maori... (Park 201)

Park goes on to credit painter Colin McCahon with repudiating the picturesque landscape-painting tradition by forming an attachment to the land similar to Maori understanding of place. According to Park, McCahon developed

a heart connection with that landscape; the antithesis of admiration from a distance. He made us realise what 'whenua' – the Maori term for both placenta and land – means; that that heart connection is itself part of the landscape when the landscape is home. (Park 203)

Humanist geographers such as J. Douglas Porteous have articulated the difference between land and landscape in similarly artistic terms:

Landscape, whether in physical environment or in the form of a painting, does not exist without an observer. Although the land exists 'the scape is a projection of human consciousness, an image received' (Erich 1987). Mentally or physically we frame the view, and our appreciation depends on our frame of mind. (Porteous 4)

Thus 'landscape' does not simply describe the natural features of a specific geographical place. The word implies frameworks constructed by human understanding – metaphors and tropes, imaginative maps and terms of reference – that go beyond physical topology.

In the late twentieth century, the idea that "frame of mind" influences ways of seeing place has grown increasingly important. In discussing Malouf's fiction, Neilsen observes "Perhaps the most pervasive opposition in literature is that between nature and culture, and this is traced in all the novels..." (Neilsen 4) Yet redefinition of the terms 'nature' and 'culture' has been a major paradigm shift of the twentieth century, influencing understandings of how people read place. As humanist geographers Trevor Barnes and James S. Duncan point out, the 'natural' becomes simply another text, which culture both reads and constructs.

This expanded notion of texts originates from a postmodern view, one that sees them as constitutive of reality rather than mimicking it – in other words, as cultural practices of signification rather than referential duplications. For, just as written texts are not simply mirrors of a reality outside themselves, so cultural productions, such as landscape, are not 'about' something more real than themselves. But although not

referential, such practices of signification are intertextual in that they embody other cultural texts, and, as a consequence, are communicative and productive of meaning. (Barnes 5-6)

Malouf's cognizance of such theoretical movements is evident when he describes his work as "an attempt to render the way I see the world, or at least the way I want to *read* the world... Who knows what something we call reality is, except as we read it?" (Kavanagh 251) Essentialism is rejected in favour of an approach that recognises the world as text, subject to multiple constructions and interpretations.

Settler and migrant cultures are uniquely well-equipped to understand this destabilising intellectual shift. David Brooks recognises the "culture/nature border" as "one of the key topoi of mid- and late-twentieth-century thinking", with Levi-Strauss and Derrida as key proponents. However, Brooks goes on to say that "some experience or confrontation of this border is built in to our Australian situation, long before such writers began to turn their theories upon it". He argues that

just as, as a consequence of this epistemological shift, the Western mind itself is entering new and unknown territory, so too our first white, invader explorers were entering the new and, to them, unknown territory of Australia. Actual, geographical exploration has accompanied the intellectual in such a way as offers, and enables us to talk about, Australia as metaphor. (Brooks 52)

Brooks notes that numerous Australian writers have seen and employed this "secret Australian vision", which reflects "a kind of subterranean consciousness or anxiety that can seem eerily prescient, as if the Australian mind had been thrown, untutored, into territory the Western mind more generally had yet to reach." (Brooks 53) Thus in the latter part of the twentieth century Malouf enters a literary tradition in which constructions of place are shaped by cultural factors from colonial exploration to European theory.

Malouf recognises that the colonists' physical appropriation was accompanied by metaphorical reconstruction of Australian land. In *Spirit of Play*, he describes the settler experience as

a series of daring explorations of the *land*, which were also acts of possession different from the one that made it ours merely in law. This

was possession in the form of knowledge by naming and mapping, by taking its spaces into our heads, and at last into our imagination and consciousness. (Malouf Spirit of Play 10)

In his critical essay “Imaginary Conquests of Australia”, Paul Longley Arthur argues that such imaginative possession actually predated exploration:

Colonial fantasy maps, like imperialism more generally, not only generated hopes of trade but also a sense of prior possession of far away land spaces, expressed through the mode of imaginative projection. The Antipodes had been given a European identity based on its imagined colonial potential long before Europeans actually arrived there. (Longley Arthur 136)

He goes on to say that “European writers of imaginary voyages, dissatisfied with life and politics in Europe, began to depict utopian societies living morally admirable lives in the pure and fertile space of the Antipodes.” (Longley Arthur 138) This European notion of paradise was not borne out by the reality of Australian topography, and negative constructions of the Australian landscape sprang from the discrepancy between anticipation and experience. Explorations into the interior of Australia revealed a landscape very different from the verdant lushness of African explorations, and the vision of the ‘great interior lake’ dried up with the waterways that were supposed to lead to it.

This disappointment led to a dominant view of the Australian landscape as both hostile and homogenous. Kay Schaffer shows that although the landscape “looms large in the Australian imaginary”,

its infinite variety has been reduced to a rather singular vision – the Interior, the outback, the red centre, the dead heart, the desert, a wasteland. It is against this land that the Australian character measures his identity. It can be a place of vision and inspiration but most often it is represented as a hostile, barren environment. (Schaffer 22)

The red/dead centre has been a tenacious feature of Australian constructions of place. In contrast, New Zealand's traditionally accepted landscape images have been more varied. In *Power of Place*, Diane Hebley references James K. Baxter's ‘larger nature symbols’ in New Zealand – the Sea, the Island, the Beach, the Mountains and the Bush – and goes on to add “the Harbour, Hill and Plain, Lake and River, Cave and Tunnel”. (Hebley 18) Writers and critics thus seem to have turned to a wider range of topographical features, perhaps

because New Zealand's size ensures such features are in closer proximity and therefore more evident.

The uniformity of the 'arid Australia' myth has increasingly been challenged. As David Malouf says:

In a continent as large as ours, there are many kinds of landscape, each of them typical of a particular region, no one more authentically Australian than another. I mention this because I am always taken aback when I hear Australians of a certain turn of mind claim we will only be fully at home here when we have learned to love our desert places. My Australia, the one I grew up with, and whose light and weather and range of colour shaped my earliest apprehensions of the world, was not dry or grey-green: it was dense and luminous. The old idea that everywhere in Australia looks the same – the myth of the great Australian uniformity – was just that, a myth that was meant, I think, to conform to an Australian need – as if in this too the landscape was our model – for a corresponding conformity in the body social and politic. You need to believe in the idea of diversity, perhaps, before you develop an eye for it in the world about you. (Malouf Spirit of Play 49)

Malouf's insistence on Australia's geographical and social diversity is reflected in the importance of multiplicity to his fictional work. Malouf also notes the palimpsestic nature of landscape creation. He argues that when white settlers first arrived, they laid

new forms of knowledge and a new culture, a new consciousness, over so much that already existed, the product of many thousands of years of living in and with the lands. This supplemented what was already there but did not replace it, and cannot do so as long as any syllable of that earlier knowledge exists in the consciousness of even one woman or man. (Malouf Spirit of Play 51)

Malouf sees Australian landscape as the product of an historical process of superimposition, rather than erasure. Nor has this process ceased in the modern era. As Longley Arthur points out at the end of the twentieth century:

Australia's land spaces are so extensively mapped and studied that they could even be said to be overburdened with competing models for knowing the land (there are, for example, tourist maps, military maps, geological survey maps, road maps, mil maps, contour maps, population density maps, as well as Aboriginal ways of mapping the land). Australia's centre, a prime site for this kind of representational schizophrenia, is perceived both as a cultural void at the heart of the modern Australian psyche (ironically, a top tourist destination) and the symbolic spiritual home of traditional Aboriginal culture. The double-named Uluru/Ayers Rock sacred site/tourist centre is a striking reminder of this conflict. (Longley Arthur 137)

New Zealand's reinstitution of Maori place names (from Aotearoa to Aoraki) highlights competing cultural constructions in the same way as the Uluru/Ayers Rock nomenclature. But as Longley Arthur's list demonstrates, even the European mapping tradition is plural rather than singular. Postcolonial place is therefore inscribed in a huge variety of ways; the landscape is overlaid with narratives both indigenous and imported.

In their depictions of Antipodean place, Malouf and Gee draw not only on colonial histories, but on landscape symbols and stories that circulated in the Judeo-Christian Western tradition well prior to colonisation. One such figure is the garden or lucus – the cultivated or cleared space in the wilderness through which mankind gains access to God. As J. Douglas Porteous explains:

The garden, since Genesis and the Koran, has been a symbol of both earthly and future delight. Gardens have traditionally been places of privacy and retirement, where one may leave the troubles of the outer world and come to terms with the eternal cyclic round of growth. (Porteous 96)

The gardens and orchards in Gee's novels reflect this notion, frequently acting as places of retreat, contemplation and epiphany. However, distinctions between cultivated nature and wild nature are not drawn as strongly as in the religious traditions – wider landscapes of 'natural' beauty also serve as spiritual retreats for Gee's characters. As Som Prakash says,

Gee's characters also undergo spiritual transformations in natural, poetic settings, whether it's a man-made garden, a primordial forest, a creek or a river. For Gee, being natural is a form of goodness, the closest a person can come to the idea of godliness. (Prakash God, Money and Success 128)

The tendency to seek spiritual location through landscape is part of the Australian literary tradition too. As David J. Tacey puts it in his book *Edge of the Sacred*: "In Australia, landscape carries our experience of the sacred other.... The landscape in Australia is a mysteriously charged and magnificently alive archetypal presence. ... The land is, or seems to be, the sacred which bursts in upon our lives, which demands to be recognised and valued." (Tacey 6-7)

This seeking spiritual solace in nature echoes Romantic idealisation of landscape. As Wordsworth's famous words from "Lines. Tintern Abbey" have it, "Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her". (Thomas 24) Nature (cultivated or uncultivated) provides an experience of contemplation and personal growth. This deification of Nature (with a capital N) allows a positive reading of wilderness landscapes that other traditions dismiss as outside the cultivated garden and therefore beyond the reach of God. By construing untamed Nature as God's untainted work, the Romantic tradition encourages humans to worship at nature's altar, losing the self in contemplation of forces larger than the self. The romanticised landscape thus offers escape from personal issues and social regulations. It also has the potential for an experience that is both universal and intensely localised. Within Australian and New Zealand literature, the Romantic tradition became the basis for the individual's retreat into nature from the pressures of society. Trudie McNaughton says:

C. K Stead has described this new romanticism as one where topography becomes a substitute for human society. Isolated scenes, of bush, gumfield, mountains, seascapes and rural settings were seen as providing sanctuary from Puritan society and from the hostile suburban or urban landscape. Characters in fiction turned to the natural world for spiritual values. (McNaughton 10)

The familiar figure of the 'Man Alone' in Antipodean fiction epitomises this new romanticism. Gee's and Malouf's characters frequently attempt to escape society in this way, though the authors' depictions also interrogate and undercut the Man Alone archetype.

Not all encounters with 'nature' or landscape are retreats from society, however. The spiritual wholeness accorded by nature can stimulate an acceptance and understanding of place and personhood that offers a wider vision of social unity. Nature is shown to have the power to bring people together; metaphorical 'common ground' is transformed into social fact. As Uli Krahn puts it:

The Romantic notion of the landscape as a spiritual force allows the speaker to present nature as finally overriding cultural differences, uniting Australians of all cultural backgrounds as one; the migrant problem of making the alien land home can be neatly overcome by such a philosophy which assigns nature an active role in the process of making the new land one's own. (Krahn 35)

This view of the usefulness of Romantic notions to Australian writers is echoed by Philip Neilsen, although he argues that Malouf is unusual in using landscape in this particularly positive way:

Part of Malouf's distinctiveness is that, while he traces a familiar retreat from the city and suburbs, he is more successful than most other Australian writers in finding a viable alternative in the natural. (Neilsen 5)

Many critics have noted Malouf's tendency to gravitate towards unity between people and place. Andrew Taylor writes of *Remembering Babylon*: "in a subtle way the natural world and the human are integrated here in a landscape that shines with a tentative spirituality." (Taylor "The Bread of Time to Come" 721) Lamia Tayeb argues that:

In David Malouf's works, the narrative of Australian nationhood is much more conducive to images of national appropriation, unity and reconciliation... Rather than negotiating a human inter-ethnic and inter-racial form of reintegration, the myth of Australian nationhood is based on establishing a genuine harmony between individual and landscape, which involves a desired fertilisation of the colonial stratum of culture with the seeds of Australian nature. (Tayeb 134-35)

Thus Malouf presents wholeness as achievable through the integration of individual, landscape and society. Gee's fictions also often demonstrate a final reconciliation between people and place that gestures towards a wider social inclusiveness, though Gee's vision is usually less transcendent than Malouf's.

Landscape in these fictions means more than simply the interaction between human and 'nature'; built landscapes are also important. Urban and suburban landscapes signify human interaction with place at its most engaged. Bruce Bennett says that "giving special attention to the origins of, and sense of place" need not be limiting, and that 'place' need not be "restricted to the physical environment: the built environment and its related social and psychological patterning may be significant." (Bennett 72) M. H. Holcroft is even more emphatic, saying of New Zealand writers: "If they're to speak faithfully of life in their own country they must address themselves to life in the suburbs. ... A suburb is not only a place where people live; it's also a state of mind". (Holcroft 37) Thus cultural constructions *on*, as well as *of*, the landscape, deserve consideration. In Gee's and Malouf's fiction, city sites emerge as personalities in their own right: Malouf's Brisbane embodies characters' personal histories,

while Gee's comparative use of Wellington and Auckland makes the cities function as concrete metaphors for value systems regarding place. For both authors, suburban landscapes also signify social attitudes that characters tellingly gravitate towards or flee.

Depicting the landscape as an extension of the body is a common way that Gee and Malouf suggest the interconnectedness of the self and the 'other' of the wider environment. This is, of course, an established metaphor in fiction. As Allen Curnow observed in New Zealand in the 1960s:

Santayana somewhere calls a man's native country 'a kind of second body'. A writer's vision may be said, I believe, to be mediated through that second body, in some sense analogous to the mediation of his personal body and the agonising limitation of his private individuality. This has proved not so easy for New Zealand writers to accept. (Curnow Look Back Harder 193)

The 'embodiment' of the landscape demonstrated by Gee's fictional characters illustrates that New Zealand literature has become more comfortable with this idea than when Curnow made his argument. Moreover, modern geographers have further developed body metaphors in describing relationships between people and places.

Both body and landscape are universals of experience, but we experience body, both our own and that of the mother, before we experience landscape. Only after several developmental stages does the infant begin to distinguish itself from the general milieu, and only in childhood can mobile exploration of this external environment begin. To explore is a natural drive. Although we continue to make discoveries about our bodies throughout life, from childhood onwards most of our attention is focused elsewhere. (Porteous 72)

What this implies is the importance of human interaction with specific locations at crucial developmental points, from the personal landscape of the body to the 'elsewhere' of the immediate landscape and then the wider world. Such expanding concentric circles of exploration are evident in Gee's and Malouf's fiction. Characters consistently use landscape as a touchstone at life's transition points, and particular landscapes (or landscape features) take precedence at each life stage.

Within the postcolonial context, individual stages of experience can also be loosely mapped against the collective social narrative of the cultural history of New Zealand and Australia. The postcolonial process of 'becoming' a nation is similar to the individual process of striving for maturity. Neither progression is straightforward: individual and cultural identities obviously develop in different ways and at different speeds. However, an analogy can be drawn between the life stages of individuals depicted in Gee's and Malouf's fiction and the developments of Australian and New Zealand colonial and postcolonial history. Childhood, with its connotations of innocence and potential, suggests the early stages of settlement and colonial dependence. Adolescence and young adulthood (periods when individuals commonly assert their identity and explore beyond established social comfort zones) map against cultural assertions of nationalism and independence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Maturity, from middle-age onwards, suggests the culture of the mid-twentieth century to the present day. The childhood and adolescence analogies here are reasonably stable; the colony as a 'child' of the 'mother' country and the newly independent nation 'coming of age' like an adolescent are well-established metaphors for the early stages of settler culture. The analogy begins to break down, however, as both nations move beyond the establishment phase to maturity. While some parallels can still be drawn (the convention of middle-aged conservatism seems to map against mid-twentieth-century post-war cultural conservatism, for example) the analogy weakens as the individual nears the end of his or her life and the nation's history continues. While modern New Zealand and Australia look back over their history, they also look forward to the future in a way that the elderly individual cannot. The idea of an individual as representative of the nation also becomes less useful due to increasing recognition of diversity within the two national cultures. In the latter half of the twentieth century, new thinking began to dispel common notions of homogenous hegemonic national identity. As Australian cultural historians Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White point out:

grass-roots politics of the late 1960s and 1970s demonstrated that 'society' was fragmented into a plurality of different interest groups based on a dizzying variety of criteria: wealth, work, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, leisure activities and consumption. ... 'Social' history mutated quietly into 'cultural' history... (Teo 9)

Embracing this diversity of cultural narratives means that direct comparisons between life stage and cultural stage are less obvious and less meaningful in the latter stages of Antipodean history. Nevertheless, there are observable shifts in the social framings of landscape since original settlement that are reflected in the way Gee's and Malouf's characters engage with place at different points in their lives.

This life-stages approach has already been used in examinations of literary constructions of place in postcolonial nations. David Wrobel explains how the vocabulary of maturing has traditionally been used in discussing the literature of the West in the United States of America, citing Richard Etulain's model, in which "western literature moves through distinct stages of development – frontier, region, and post-region – that might be equated with stages of human life – youth or adolescence, middle age or maturity, and old age or wisdom." (Wrobel 394) In New Zealand, Laurence Jones's *Barbed Wire and Mirrors* uses a similar model in discussing the shift from colonial to provincial to post-provincial. While such constructs have acknowledged limitations (overly rigid categorisation being the most obvious), they continue to circulate. This residual idea of 'growing up' over the span of a cultural history is echoed in the novels of Malouf and Gee. Ivor Indyk explicitly details the link between individual and national growth in Malouf's work, arguing that "just as [Malouf's] novels depict intensely personal moments in the lives of his characters, they also depict formative moments in the history of Australia". (Indyk David Malouf: A Celebration 3)

This understanding of the connections between place, human experience and cultural history shapes this study. Each thesis chapter focuses on a key period in human life – childhood, youth, early middle age, late middle age and old age – demonstrating how characters relate to the landscape when faced with the transitions and challenges specific to that age. Such categories are somewhat arbitrary; boundaries between life stages are inevitably blurry, dependent as they are on the interplay between chronological age and life-stage activities. Challenges posed by a particular life stage are not homogenous (and nor are the characters' responses). Nevertheless, patterns emerge in how characters

perceive and utilise the landscape at particular transition points in their lives. The 'life journey' archetype provides a useful way to map a course through these characters' lives and landscapes.

Chapter One (Starting Place) deals with childhood. The child (an established metaphor for the colony) occupies a liminal space on the margins of 'civilised' adult society, and thus has a particular affiliation with wild landscape. Yet because that landscape also poses a threat to the 'innocence' and 'potential' of the child, the figure resonates with adult anxiety and ambivalence about the child's 'proper' place. In their short stories, Gee's and Malouf's male children invoke traditional masculine adventure tales, but in ways that undermine the stability and coherence of such myths. The first novels (Gee's *The Big Season* and Malouf's *Johnno*) offer conventional Antipodean boyhoods where place and personhood are intimately related. Later novels, such as Gee's *In My Father's Den* and Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*, use complex narrative strategies to show how children perceive and are perceived.

Chapter Two (Outward Bound) sees the horizons of the world expand, as the young adult forays into new territories. An assertion of individuality and separation is common in characters at this stage, but often takes the form of rejection of childhood or parental values in an oppositional way that reinstates the primacy of those values. The overseas experience (whether tour of duty, grand tour or colonial *tour de force*) shapes the young person's perspective on where they come from, and where they may be going, as they claim their place in the world. Sexual discovery is one of many explorations of selfhood and otherness, where 'wilderness' becomes a site for discovering what lies beyond the edges of the socially sanctioned world. Malouf's *Johnno*, *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* and *Fly Away Peter* are central to this discussion, with Gee's *The Big Season*, *A Special Flower* and sections of *Going West* also providing rich material.

Chapter Three (A Place for Us) addresses the issues peculiar to early middle-age – the 'settling' phase of human life, which echoes some of the difficulties of 'settler' culture. Belonging is a key preoccupation, often manifested through the

physical demarcations of place that indicate centre and margin. Gee's three consecutive novels *Going West* (1992), *Crime Story* (1994) and *Loving Ways* (1996), written during the author's own middle years, deal extensively with the issues of middle age. The three siblings in *Loving Ways* provide insight into the possible difficulties of location in this life period. May's artistic bent in this novel also offers the visual arts as a means of locating self and place; Gee foregrounds this idea again in *Ellie and The Shadowman*, and touches on it with the character of Royce in *Prowlers*. Malouf's novel *Harland's Half Acre* likewise deals with the nature of art and the art of nature as grounding forces for Frank Harland, while Malouf's short stories highlight conventional middle-aged attitudes to wilderness and civilisation, and the cultural issues that they expose.

Chapter Four (Middle Ground) continues the discussion of middle age, dealing with the later years of this life stage. By this point, most characters have settled; physical location tends to act as marker for social achievement. With their own place fixed, these characters begin to look back into the past and out to future generations. Howie and Gwen in Gee's *Crime Story* demonstrate how such musings can end in diametrically opposed places. Malouf's short stories show characters confronting death and displacement within the context of the landscape, often reflecting a diversity of perspectives on the relationship between place and society. Mr. Frazer, in Malouf's historical novel *Remembering Babylon*, provides a postcolonial revisionist perspective to counterpoint the conventional colonial approaches to land put forward by the book's other settler characters.

Chapter Five (Journey's End) deals with old age. Traditionally a time of reflection, old age incorporates the idea of return to origin, but also challenges this notion through redefining the meaning of 'home'. Older characters provide access to the past – not just in personal terms, but as representatives and repositories of historical cultural knowledge about place. Gee's fiction abounds with such aged characters (most famously George Plumb in *Plumb*, but also Noel Papps in *Prowlers*, Josef Mandl in *Live Bodies*, and Robert McPherson in *Loving Ways*). Malouf's Harland of *Harland's Half Acre* grows old disgracefully 'beyond the pale', and several of Malouf's short stories deal explicitly with

growing old. Included in this chapter (perhaps controversially) is a discussion of Ovid, protagonist of Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*, who at the age of 52 is technically only middle-aged, but who in terms of life stage is much more closely aligned with Gee's elderly characters than the middle-aged characters of earlier chapters.

This thematic approach encourages complexity, allowing the authors and their texts to be considered together in a more integrated way than a text-by-text analysis would allow. Inevitably, some texts receive more attention than others – key novels are dealt with at length in multiple chapters, while other fictions feature only briefly in one; a few works (generally those that do not include landscape as a central feature, such as Malouf's *Child's Play* and *Untold Tales* and Gee's *Blindsight*) are hardly mentioned. The study aims to be holistic and thematically thorough, rather than comprehensive. Such an approach means disruptions to the primary texts; for example, the cohesive logic of a particular motif within a novel may be lost by being re-contextualised. However, where possible such motifs are traced through the chapters of the thesis to make the original context evident. Close analysis of specific passages will form the main mode of enquiry, with critical and cultural comment included to elaborate particular arguments as required. In the first two chapters, there will be a greater emphasis on the link between personal and cultural stages of growth than in the later chapters. The chapters dealing with middle and old age will focus on how personal narratives draw on various historical narratives around place, reflecting the cultural move towards multiplicity without trying to force the analogy between individual and national experience.

Keeping the texts central to the methodology seems important, given that recent writing about the New Zealand or Australian landscape in literature generally focuses on the cultural conditions of literary production, rather than the literary product. Critics and anthologists have mapped cultural shifts in writing about landscape; the changes of values and assumptions are explored in terms of linguistics, politics, science (especially changing trends in geographical research), anthropology, and other related disciplines. This wide catchment area means recent theoretical work on landscape in literature seems to be

'tertiary', rather than 'secondary', insofar as it critiques the cultural context for, or critical responses to, the literature of different periods, rather than examining the literature itself. While this can yield fascinating insights into the national identity of the time, it involves a distancing from the literary site. Even writers whose original intentions were literary concede that their studies have become interdisciplinary. Bruce Bennett argues this is inevitable. In *An Australian Compass*, he states that

in cultural debate, it is becoming increasingly clear that studies of place, region and community, even if they begin with a curiosity about literature, must soon move into further departments of knowledge, including politics, history and geography. Such studies cannot remain aloof, pure and untouched by other disciplines. (Bennett 21)

Discussions of landscape in the postcolonial Australian context have tended to trace historical attitudes to landscape, from early colonial travel writing to recent critical and theoretical revisionist work. Other texts include Chris Wallace-Crabbe's interdisciplinary study *Melbourne or the Bush – Essays on Australian Literature and Society* (1974), R. R. Eaden's *Mapped But Not Known: The Australian Landscape of the Imagination* (1986) and Roslynn Haynes' *Seeking the Centre: The Australian Desert in Literature, Art and Film* (1998) – which, despite its title, deals extensively with exploration tracts and issues of geography, sociology and politics. In her study *Women and the Bush: forces of desire in the Australian cultural tradition*, critic Kay Schaffer poses questions of landscape and identity "with reference to a diverse body of materials", offering a feminist re-reading of conventional masculine constructions of the Australian landscape. Specifically literary studies of place tend to stop well before the contemporary period – Brian Elliott's *The Landscape of Australian Poetry* was published in 1967, and recent full-length studies are hard to find.

In New Zealand, Alan Mulgan's 1946 article "Landscape and Literature in New Zealand", argues against M. H. Holcroft's claim that New Zealand thinkers will respond to "the inner purity of landscapes that have not been drenched with the exhalations of history", saying that "we have more history than Mr. Holcroft's summary suggests. Leaving the Maori out of the count, we may say that every settled portion of our land has its story..." (Mulgan 16) He thus focuses on settler relationships with the land, suggesting that New Zealand's settler

literature will move towards regionalism, “in line with our social and political development”. He goes on to conclude “We shall derive much of our best literature and art... from these local attachments, for through our deep and passionate concentration on the particular we shall express truth in general.” (Mulgan 18) Since Holcroft and Mulgan, however, focus on landscape in literature has resulted in anthologising of writings about place, rather than critical assessment. Most anthologies are arranged by location or place ‘theme’; indicative titles include Lawrence Jones and Heather Murray’s *From the Mainland: An Anthology of South Island Writing*, Philip Temple’s *lake, mountain, tree: An Anthology of Writing on New Zealand Nature and Landscape*, and Trudie McNaughton’s *Countless Signs; the New Zealand Landscape in Literature* (1986). A useful recent critical study of landscape in literature is Diane Hebley’s 1998 book *The Power of Place: Landscape in New Zealand Children’s Fiction 1970 – 1989*. Hebley’s work offers

a ‘relational reading’ of the use of landscape as an approach to explore characters and their points of view, structure, and themes relating to social, political, ecological and cultural concerns in today’s society. (Hebley 17)

While her book covers a lot of ground (including Gee’s fiction for young adults), it highlights the absence of an extended study of the significance of landscape in adult fiction in New Zealand.

By comparing Maurice Gee’s work with that of David Malouf, this thesis aims to address that absence. In focusing on the work of two postcolonial authors, my study aligns with the assertion made twenty years ago in one of the formative critical texts of postcolonial theory, *The Empire Writes Back*:

creative writers have often offered the most perceptive and influential account of the post-colonial condition. Accordingly, the analysis and exegesis of a specific text may be one of the most crucial ways of determining the major theoretical and critical issues at stake. Such analyses are not directed towards totalizing ‘interpretations’ but towards symptomatic readings which reveal the discursive formations and ideological forces which traverse the text. As a result, readings of individual texts may enable us to isolate and identify significant theoretical shifts in the development of post-colonial writing. (B. Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin 83)

A detailed examination of texts from two pre-eminent Antipodean settler authors thus offers a sense of the Antipodean settler 'condition'. Landscape provides a focal point to explore representations of place and belonging within this culture in the current era. This study seeks to address the questions asked by the narrator of *Johnno* as a bewildered child:

Arran Avenue, Hamilton, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, the World.
That is the address that appears in my schoolbooks. But what does it mean? Where do I really stand? (Malouf Johnno 49)

1. Starting place

The early phase of a human life, like that of a settler nation, exists as a duality. The beginning for the individual (child or nation) is also the continuation of the collective (humanity or Empire). Such double inscription is reflected in the language used to describe children and early settler societies. Australia and New Zealand are 'young' nations but part of an 'established' tradition of settlement that perpetuates longstanding Western cultural values. By figuring colony as child and Empire as parent, the terminology both creates and acknowledges this familial relationship. The new society looks to both future and past, caught between building a home in the new country and continuing to identify 'Home' as the motherland. Childhood is likewise constructed as liminal. Belonging and yet not fully belonging to the adult settler society, the child is in an interim of potential, and thus the perfect subject for the settler writer. M. H. Holcroft, in *Islands of Innocence*, notes that New Zealand writers tend to turn to childhood as a subject partly because of the nation's own youth.

We write ourselves of childhood... because it offers themes and settings which can be detached from our suburban dullness and confusions, because it brings back an emotional security, or makes us emotionally aware of security as an abiding human need, especially in these islands and against our raw young history. (Holcroft 62)

Personal and cultural childhoods are thus conflated through the language of current dependence and the potential of future independence.

The meaning of childhood is inherently unstable, given its historical fluidity. Marianne Gullestad, in *Imagined Childhoods*, cites the work of Jenny Hockey and Allison James in tracing "a particular and changing vision of what it means to be a child" in the Western episteme:

For the Puritans in the seventeenth century, children – the literal manifestation of the sins of the flesh – represented uncontrolled and irrational beings. By the eighteenth century, the situation was reversed. John Locke, for example, argued that the mind of the newborn child was a *tabula rasa*, a blank sheet upon which sensations were imprinted (Hockey and James 1993: 65). Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose writings came to be very central to modern understandings of childhood, stress the child's innocence and the corrupting influence of society as the only source of evil in children (Rousseau 1762). (Gullestad 15)

Such understandings fed colonial responses not only to the young, but to the 'young countries' of the Empire. Bill Ashcroft adroitly shows how Locke and Rousseau's theories on childhood were co-opted into the colonial project and used to describe the colonial relationship with the landscape:

Both views... justified the paternal actions of imperial formation, because the blank slate of colonial space, like the *tabula rasa* of the unformed child, or the innocence of nature, is an absence of meaning itself. ... The child, then, signifying a blank slate, an innocent of nature, a subject of exotic possibility and moral instruction, as well as a barbarous and unsettling primitive, suggests an almost endlessly protean capacity for inscription and meaning. (B. Ashcroft 41-42)

In colonial narratives, this capacity results in children and the wilderness being depicted in ways that highlight the potential in their unruliness. As Ashcroft notes, the Lockean view of the child as *tabula rasa* on which the parental society can imprint its values fuses with the idea of *terra nullius*, where the land itself is viewed as a blank slate which the colonizing society will reconfigure through clearance and 'civilisation' (B. Ashcroft 39). The child's personal self or agency is denied by the rites of naming and claiming that bring the child into the social order. Once tamed and ordered, the capacity of both child and land will be utilised for the betterment of society, and, by extension, the colonial nation.

Postcolonial texts tend to show this linear process of conscription to civilisation as problematic. In Gee's and Malouf's fiction, traditional binaries of child/adult, nature/culture and native/settler are invariably destabilised. The unruly child, like the land or the indigene, can 'get away' from controlling forces of social manipulation, although such escapes are often only temporary. Ambiguity, uncertainty and misreading are common features in both authors' descriptions of the child's response to the landscape. The two writers use similar motifs – the unsettling power of light, the body as a microcosm of place, the eternal reshaping of the liminal space of the beach, the landscape in dream and the effect of migration – to problematise the child's reading of place. Thus the land is something the child can identify with and yet recognise as 'other'. Children are shown using the landscape to escape from, and come to terms with, adult society, particularly at major transition points. Gee's and Malouf's stories commonly depict a child's first encounter with sex or death – transitions that

highlight the child's innocence and exclusion even as they bring the child closer to adult understanding.

Such liminal positioning of the child harks back to earlier tales of Empire, where the child was associated with nature and similar representations of the 'other'. In discussing Malouf's similarities to that quintessential imperialist, Rudyard Kipling, Don Randall notes that both authors "make substantial use of the figure of the child" and goes on to say:

For both writers (and for the Romantics) the child enjoys an intimate understanding of, a deep feeling for, the natural world. In such figures as Kipling's Kim and Malouf's Gemmy Fairley one also discerns that child's capacity to move back and forth across cultural borders and to grasp a variety of cultural idioms. The writers' use of the figure of the child reflects another, more broad-based shared orientation: responsiveness to the allure of the other. The child, particularly the wild child, does not yet have a fixed, socially assigned identity, and therefore represents otherness from the perspective of the fully socialised adult. Moreover, the child's own responsiveness and attraction to the other are assumed to be especially intense, multifaceted and uninhibited. (Randall David Malouf 5)

This attraction to the other leads the child (in Gee's work, as well as Malouf's and Kipling's) to explore 'beyond the pale', encountering the wilderness and the native on different terms from the adult, even as some of the narratives of colonial exploration are brought into play.

Conventional masculine adventure narratives of this sort are critical to Gee's and Malouf's framings of childhood. The landscape wilderness of Gee's and Malouf's texts is a largely male preserve, where boys (encouraged by fathers and male friends) explore. Few female children are depicted, and the girls who appear often align with social structures represented by adult female (often maternal) characters. Boyhood exploration is the focus, resulting in twentieth century 'boy's own' adventure tales echoing those of the nineteenth century and earlier. Direct references to the colonial past and to male conquest narratives emphasise the way these children play out a masculine social role even as they act to free themselves from social constraints. In many cases, the authors portray their boyish protagonists as aware of their confinement within these narratives. The children acknowledge, though often in a limited way, their own

performativity. Thus their role-playing becomes a parody of previous constructions of the heroic colonial conqueror or the Man Alone figure.

The boy's place in these texts is therefore ambivalent. Male children are marginalized by their youth and immaturity, but remain part of a patriarchal tradition. This is evident in the relationship with their parents. Gee's early novel *A Special Flower* makes clear the distinction between an external masculine world and an interior feminine domesticity. Donald presents his childish self to Coralie as "a child who read more books than was usual and stayed indoors more (with his mother, she guessed), but who also managed to do the normal things: climb trees, play by creeks, crawl through culverts, etc." (Gee Special Flower 45-46) Donald is shown as something of an aberration – the 'normal' New Zealand boyhood is expected to take place outside, away from feminine social forces. Popular understanding of this separation is implied by the "etc" that assumes the rest of the list. As child, the boy is expected to escape a dominant maternal influence through exploration (suggesting a bold colonial child breaking free of the stasis of social regulation imposed by the feminine parental culture); as male, the child is constructed according to traditions of landscape exploration and exploitation encoded in masculine conquest narrative, suggesting that a patriarchal Empire empowers the child to seek a level of autonomy. As Lamia Tayeb says of Malouf's novels, "generational conflicts may be seen as an aspect of 'the interaction between colonialism and nationalism' in the process of nation making." (Tayeb 139)

The crisis that prompts the child to seek the landscape in these texts is frequently a breakdown in the parental relationship. Gee's *In My Father's Den* shows Paul Prior and his father brought closer together by conflict with Paul's mother. As an adult narrator, Paul presents his most treasured childhood memory: canoeing in a local creek with a friend. The trip is figured in terms drawn directly from classic masculine conquest narratives, beginning with paternal empowerment and the passing on of knowledge: "My father was enough for me... He gave Charlie and me sheets of corrugated iron and told us how to build canoes ... Early one Saturday we launched our canoes on the creek and set off on a voyage of discovery." (Gee Father's Den 44) Colonial

gendering shows Paul's father as "enough" to support Paul as he ventures beyond the constraints of the social order presided over by the figure of Paul's grim and fundamentalist Puritan mother. The nature of the "voyage" is glorified at every turn. Paul says he and Charlie "struck out with our wooden paddles" (the aggressive verb indicating the determination of their project) and proceed to travel "down a long stretch of Amazonian water", a description which transforms the local waterway into an epic river.

Passage through the landscape is figured as Paul's attempt at a rite of passage. Extended descriptions of the environment suggest an obsession with measuring the distance travelled, literally and psychologically:

Once we saw a Dalmatian face grinning at us from the top of the bank, but we put down our heads, dug in our paddles, and wobbled on. We wanted to put faces behind us, we wanted crocodiles, boa constrictors. In the middle of the morning we found a drowned pig, with eels trailing from its underside like black streamers. We wondered what we would do if we found a body. We passed under the bridge that carried the Great North Road into Wadesville. ... We sat awed in our canoes and listened to cars rushing over it. We had cut ourselves off, there was no safety now, the world was in another place. We paddled on, quiet and hardy. When we had to speak we kept our voices low. (Gee Father's Den 44)

Yet Paul's quest to go beyond the known world is rendered questionable because it is enmeshed in narrative conventions of exploration and discovery. The desired "crocodiles and boa-constrictors" wander from Rudyard Kipling into the New Zealand child's imagination, to sit alongside the genuinely local wildlife of the eels and dead pig. This landscape has already been developed; like the cars and the bridge, the established tropes eliminate the possibility of genuine discovery of New Zealand. Rather than forging a path into an unknown interior, as early explorers did, these boys reverse the journey, making their way to the coast.

At last we saw the sea. It was wide and silver, running into the mud. At the other side was the North Shore. On cliffs red with late afternoon sunlight stood pink and white houses whose windows burned like fires. We felt as if we had discovered a new civilisation. (Gee Father's Den 45)

Even reaching the sea does not offer the unbounded scope of the empty horizon, but the populated shore of a suburban harbour. All that they have "put behind them" lies ahead; though it is seen in a new light, it remains the

mundane suburban landscape they have left. The boys happily abandon their canoes on the beach to return home for dinner. Adventure here leads back to suburban origin.

Re-placing traditional conquest narratives into the Australian or New Zealand context shows the inherent difficulties of 'translating' such tales to a new landscape. In *Islands of Innocence*, M. H. Holcroft argues that despite the robustness of New Zealand boyhood exploits, the landscape renders adventure narratives less workable in New Zealand than in larger countries like the United States:

If Huck Finn is slow in coming to these parts, and perhaps may now never come in his rounded person, parts of him have always been here, and have needed no special nursing in our different soil. In real life he's the schoolboy who heads for the rivers and the bush, who sails his small yacht on lake or harbour, and who builds his hut in a secret place – even, as I once saw for myself, high up in the fork of a rimu tree, to be reached by swinging and climbing like Tarzan on a rata vine. This side of Huck Finn is universal; every healthy boy has part of it in his vigorous growing years. But in fiction he comes slowly into stories about children. The boy who runs away has need of country that rolls in plain and forest from the coast; and in the forest he must be able to find charcoal burners and brigands, dangers and animals and hiding places. In New Zealand, if he leaves the coast and passes through the farmlands, police announcements echoing from every transistor, he will too soon reach emptiness. (Holcroft 43-44)

That emptiness is not the 'dead centre' of barren landscape without human (read 'settled') habitation so prevalent in Australian fiction, but a kind of soullessness that is a symptom of the nation's smallness. There is no escape, Holcroft implies, from the reaches of society – as Paul's rediscovery of suburbia in *In My Father's Den* makes only too clear.

Though the proximity of society may intrude, the child continues to seek out the 'wilderness' as a site of exploration. In Malouf's short story "Jacko's Reach", a group of children go to Jacko's, a patch of undeveloped land in a "typical" Australian town. This wasteland provides thrilling opportunities for adventure; the children turn to the landscape to get a sense of the wider country and thus enlarge their sense of personal knowledge. Malouf shows how Australia's

history colours the children's reading of the landscape, as they find themselves embodying colonial exploration narratives learned at school.

When I was seven or eight years old we used to play Cops and Robbers there. It seemed enormous. Just crossing it from the main road to the river gave you some idea, at the back of your knees, of the three hundred million square miles and of Burke and Wills. (Malouf Dream Stuff 95-96)

The whole space of the continent – and of the colony's history – is figured through this childish engagement. By playing cops and robbers, the children enact the authority figures and the convicts of Australia's past. The mention of the doomed exploratory expedition of Burke and Wills suggests the historic failures of settler culture to adequately understand the landscape.

In Malouf's story "Dream Stuff", the young protagonist, Colin, is thrust into the landscape as he attempts to bond with and impress his father. The boy serves as a metaphor for the Australian colony, with the phonic similarity between Colin and colony underlining this intention. Colin's first recollection of his father is in the context of the Australian coast:

They were staying at his grandfather's house at Woody Point. His father was teaching him to swim. One afternoon, after several attempts to make him let go and strike out for himself, his father carried him out of his depth in the still, salty water and, breaking contact, stepped away. 'Now, Colin,' he commanded, 'swim'.

His father's face, just feet away, was grim and unyielding. He floundered, flinging his arms about wildly, gasping, his throat tight with the saltiness that was both the ocean and his own tears. He dared not open his mouth to cry out. He choked, while his father, his features those of a stony god, continued to urge him and back away. (Malouf Dream Stuff 35)

Here Colin is connected to the past through the patriarchal figure; they are located in a place belonging to his grandfather, and it is his father who is attempting to indoctrinate him into the culture of masculine independence required by the colonial sons of Empire. Surrounded by water and adrift from the known, Colin struggles to respond as required. As colonial child he is being asked to stay afloat and follow a parental lead – he must 'strike out on his own' because in doing so he will meet the needs of the parent culture. Malouf shows the inherently compromised position of the colony: the child is encouraged to independence by the very figure he is dependent on. In this double-bind, Colin

finds himself overwhelmed by an environment that is not yet natural to him, and rendered incapable of articulating the difficulties of his position by the water in his mouth. Yet when Colin's father dies in the war, Colin returns to the image of the swimming lesson, imagining his father drowned because this brings the two of them closer together. The generic landscape of threatening sea offers him a way to remain connected with his deceased father, even as the sea provides the link that connects Australia with the parental culture of Britain.

Malouf's story "At Schindler's" offers childhood discovery of place and selfhood that is once again prompted by a crisis of parental relationships. The young protagonist, Jack, longs for his father, away at the war, in geographical terms. Jack sees himself and his mother as "two points of a triangle, of which the third point was over the horizon somewhere in a place he could conceive of but never reach..." (Malouf Dream Stuff 9) In the heat of holiday dreams, Jack's "limbs would be stretched... across three thousand miles of real space till every joint was racked, and he would experience at last the thing he most hungered for" (Malouf Dream Stuff 10), which is the return of his father. However, 'Mother England' has claimed Jack's father, taking him beyond the reach of Jack and his mother. Jack knows the 'homeland' only via parental narratives, yet he still responds as though part of him is inextricably connected to that other world. Thus his mother's Yankee lover Milt "unsettled the map Jack carried in his head, in which the third point of their triangle, however far out of sight it might be, was already occupied." (Malouf Dream Stuff 14)

Even as Jack intellectually places his father in Europe, his emotional memories recreate his father on Australian terms, in the Australian environment. In his imagination, he hears

a voice he could no longer categorise naming the peaks of the Glasshouse Mountains on the opposite shore: Coochin, Beerwah, Beerburum, Ngungun, Coonowrin, Tibrogargan, Tiberowuccum. Smokily invisible today in their dance over the plain, but nameable, even in a tongue in which they were no more than evocative symbols. (Malouf Dream Stuff 14)

Though the visual world is unreliable, the environment resonates with his father's voice. However, the speaker of the names has been lost to one 'old

world', and the names themselves are purely symbolic to Jack, who cannot understand their meaning because it belongs to another 'old world' to which he does not have access. In this environment of elusive landmarks, the child lacks the knowledge to make sense of what is all around him.

Graham, in Gee's early story "A Sleeping Face", gets a rare chance to venture into the landscape when his parents' marriage is floundering and he is taken on holiday by his mother. In Graham's eagerness to escape his mother and discover the new territories of the beach and bush, Gee shows the masculine culture's drive to 'freedom' through exploration and conquest of the land. Graham's mother is terrified of losing the child in (and to) the bush. Gee aligns her anxiety with the loss she feels as her husband takes his place in an equally masculine economic world to which she is denied access. As Graham moves through the bush with Miss Rose (his nanny), his mother

watched until they disappeared, weaving through leaf and shadow. And then she remembered that that was how John had behaved; gone blindly off into his own world, where she could not join him, where she couldn't even breathe.

'Graham.'

The noise of the waterfalls drowned her voice.

I still have Graham. (Gee Stories 39)

Her claiming of Graham is drowned out by the falls, an indicator that she cannot triumph over this 'natural' division of the world into a masculine wilderness and a feminine domesticity. Graham's claim to the role of the conquering colonial male is particularly apparent when he stands "with his arms folded looking down the valley as though it were a piece of land he was thinking of breaking in." (Gee Stories 42) This stance is typical of colonial landscape appreciation. As Roslynn Haynes points out, for settlers "the visual sense was fundamental and the gaze (or way of looking at things) was a means not only of locating themselves within the land but of claiming possession." (Haynes 23)

Graham's further activities elaborate on this portrayal of the colonial explorer revelling in the mysteries of the new land. "Ever since he had gone into the bush with Miss Rose he'd been doing things for the first time. He'd waded in a creek, and coming down he'd swung on a creeper like Tarzan..." (Gee Stories 44) By enacting the role of Tarzan (like Holcroft's 'real' New Zealand boy),

Graham claims the mythic title 'lord of the jungle', at home in the wilderness. When Miss Rose and his mother, caught up in their own concerns, accidentally leave him behind, Graham's delight is figured through accumulated images of belonging, freedom and discovery in the wild:

He was thrilled and fearless in the greatest excitement he'd ever known. He sat and enjoyed moment after moment of it. The path and the creek, the trees, the rocks, even the sky, all came together at this spot. He was in the place where everything met. He could stay forever. He'd been forgotten. (Gee Stories 46)

In this timeless isolation, Graham is cut adrift from the cloying feminine social forces that curtail his freedom. Highlighting the potential analogy here between child and colony is the preceding boat imagery: "He was here in the bush on a big warm rock like a boat in the middle of the creek. And the only people close were out of sight and going further away every minute." (Gee Stories 45) Thus Graham, like the colonial explorer, leaves the stultifying confines of the known to an undiscovered world of adventure and possibility.

The romantic sublime commonly features in stories glamorising the colonial project from the child's perspective. Gee situates Graham in the landscape using imagery reminiscent of Byron's "Manfred". Graham's mother locates him "on the edge, on that edge that cut like a knife" (Gee Stories 39), highlighting the danger that the child courts. Graham himself longs to confront overpowering nature. He decides to visit a blowhole Miss Rose has described, imagining

a tall geyser that shot to the top of the cliffs and was sucked back into the rocks with a hideous gobble. He would go there first. Then he would see what was round the black cliffs at the top of the beach and maybe find caves. (Gee Stories 47)

"Hideous", "black", "cliffs" and "caves" suggest secret places Graham has been denied. His drive to experience them and thus prove his mastery shows in the repetition of his desire to escape, which intensifies as the story builds. As he is pursued by the women, suddenly shortened sentences emphasise the sense of imperative: "Get away, he felt. Get away. The blowhole... There was a place in the sandhills where he could hide." (Gee Stories 48)

In the end, however, Graham's dreams of breaking away prove a mirage. He is chased along the beach, knowing he will be caught despite his determination.

Though he puts his head down and eludes Miss Rose, when he looks up at his destination – the blowhole cliffs – he finds that they are “pale and very far off, floating away in a mist of sunshine.” (Gee Stories 49) Freedom proves insubstantial, rendered unreachable and ghostly in the harsh light of a landscape that he has, after all, not been able to fully encompass with his gaze. The light in which it is seen (in both senses) renders the object of desire – the landscape – mysterious and unstable from the perspective of the child (or the coloniser) who desires it.

In Malouf’s story “Great Day”, the young Ned likewise draws a sense of his own empowerment from the landscape. On his grandfather’s property, Ned confidently slips “from tree to tree like a native” to stalk “a party of interlopers”. (Malouf Dream Stuff 149) He enjoys being invisible, feeling himself to be thus both part of the landscape and in a position of power. He is

camouflaged with earth and ashes and moving from one to another of the grey and grey-black trunks like a spirit of the place. He was filled with the superior sense of belonging here, of knowing every rock and stump on this hillside as if they were parts of his own body. These others were tourists. (Malouf Dream Stuff 149)

Here Ned puts himself in a liminal position that allows him to appropriate indigenous status. He knows the landscape intimately and physically, and his sense of self is partly drawn from his identification with it. However, he feels the need, like Graham, to assert his power through the colonial appropriating gaze – he is pleased that he can see without being seen. He also claims more direct ownership as a future recipient of patriarchal inheritance. Noting that a party of interlopers are on their way to the beach, he observes:

You could not legally stop them – the land along the shore was public, it belonged to everyone – but this headland and the next as well belonged to Audley and would one day be Ralph’s, then his. He felt proprietorial, but responsible too. (Malouf Dream Stuff 149)

He is perturbed when one of the interlopers – another child, appropriately costumed as a “space invader” (Malouf Dream Stuff 149) – spots him and invites him to a sausage sizzle on the beach. Ned feels that his territory has been invaded; Malouf shows that the child’s mastery over the landscape is illusory. When Ned goes to the beach to check on the party later, he observes their bonfire and wonders

how far... it would be visible out to sea. He admitted now that what he really regretted was that the bonfire was not theirs. It ought to be theirs. The idea of a bonfire on every beach and the whole map of Australia outlined with fire was powerfully exciting to him. The image of it blazed in his head. (Malouf Dream Stuff 153)

Here the child wishes to encompass the land fully by making visible the entire Australian nation, a grandiose extrapolation of the personal gaze to global visibility.

Though children look to, and at, the landscape to assert their personal power, the landscape is repeatedly depicted as denying this desire. Malouf unsettles seeing as visual mastery through child's-eye views of the landscape mediated by light (in much the same way as Gee does in "A Sleeping Face"). In Malouf's stories, numerous youthful characters are rendered blind by the harsh Australian glare, throwing the possibility of visual domination of the landscape into doubt. In the story "At Schindler's", a fishing trip sees the child Jack and his family "stunned to a heap by the sun and with the glare off the water so strong that when you looked out across it everything dazzled and disappeared." (Malouf Dream Stuff 14) The intensity of the light obscures rather than illuminating; any claim to possess what cannot be clearly seen or defined is impossible.

Connections between child, gaze, and colonial project are made explicitly in Malouf's story "That Antic Jezebel" in *Antipodes*. The elderly Clay sees an image of the Australian past in an old photograph:

She saw a plump nine-year-old with sloping shoulders in front of a row of newly-planted poplars. The poplars were meant to civilize a wilderness, and the child, who wore khaki shorts and sand-shoes, was bearing a spade. It was a snapshot. He squinted into the sun. Well, those poplars now must be sixty, seventy-feet high, sending their roots to block someone's drains. (Malouf Antipodes 61-62)

The colonial child, with his implement of re-construction, is frozen in a moment of 'taming'. Yet the child's gaze is compromised in his attempt to defy the light; the requisite squint distorts the child's own image and his ability to see clearly. Civilizing a wilderness has likewise proven problematic; the trees now undermine the very social structures they were planted to reinforce. By

destabilising the metaphors, Malouf challenges the colonial certainties, showing the activities of the past in a different light.

Another story, “Out of the Stream” presents the child’s landscape not only stripped by light, but fundamentally unstable and subject to regular literal re-formation. Struggling with his own identity, the child visits

a desolate place, not yet tamed or suburban: the dunes held together by long silvery grass, changing their contours almost daily under the wind; the sea-light harsh, almost brutal, stinging your eyes, blasting the whole world white with salt. (Malouf Antipodes 88)

The land here has greater agency than the observer, attacking the very eye that tries to pin it down, and shape-shifting to prevent the possibility of being known or mapped. In *Remembering Babylon*, Malouf again grants agency and action to the landscape rather than the children observing it.

In the intense heat that made everything you looked at warp and glare, a fragment of ti-tree swamp, some bit of the land over there that was forbidden to them, had detached itself from the band of grey that made up the far side of the swamp, and in a shape more like a watery, heat-struck mirage than a thing of substance, elongated and airily indistinct, was bowling, leaping, flying towards them. (Malouf Babylon 2)

To the children in *Remembering Babylon*, the “forbidden” land beyond the established boundaries of their own community contains that which is undefined. The hazy figure coming out of the wilderness landscape eventually takes a solid shape, but remains difficult to name, identify or construct a history for. Gemmy Fairley, the white man who has lived with the Aborigines, remains, like the unsettled landscape, mysterious and challenging to the children. Seeing, as Malouf implies, is not the same as knowing. As the children stand at the edge of the cleared land, they perceive the “world over there, beyond the no-man’s-land of the swamp” as “the abode of everything savage and fearsome, and since it lay so far beyond experience, not just their own but their parents’ too, of nightmare rumours, superstitions and all that belonged to Absolute Dark.” (Malouf Babylon 2-3) Children and adult settlers alike lack coherent narratives of indigenous place. The landscape’s threat lies in its resistance to the familiar structures of story.

Failing to fully encompass the surrounding landscape, the children fall back on stories of other places already imbued with meaning. Parental and cultural narratives of elsewhere are deemed more interesting than the place the children themselves inhabit. Faced with school holiday *ennui*, the young protagonist of *Johnno* is invited to go on Frenchie hunts along the cliffs. Though he tags along, he does not really understand the attraction, partly because he thinks Frenchies are “some sort of fungus, hanging shiny and white from the twigs”. (Malouf *Johnno* 20) Socially and sexually unaware, he eschews actual exploration for theoretical broadenings of his horizon, staying “at home under the tentflaps” to read history. He rejects the Australian past as thoroughly as he rejects the boredom of the Australian present, refusing to engage with “the terrible history of our own misplaced continent, with Burke and Wills staggering off across the desert or Leichhardt coming to the end of a dotted line somewhere west of Quilpie” (Malouf *Johnno* 20) Instead, he chooses books about the Wars of the Roses, which he sees as complex and exciting in comparison to the present realities of his location:

Australia was familiar and boring. Now was just days, and events in The Courier Mail – even when those events were the Second World War. History was The Past. I had just missed out on it. There was nothing in our own little lives that was worth recording, nothing to distinguish one day of splashing about in the heavy, warm water inside the reef from the next. (Malouf *Johnno* 20-21)

Even Dante’s nickname locates him within the parental culture; his real name within the Australian context is never revealed, suggesting that even his own identity may be an aspect of his “little” life that is “not worth recording”.

In the same way, *Remembering Babylon*’s young Janet McIvor listens to her mother speak of “Hame”, and is “in love with this other life her parents had lived, with Scotland and a time before they came to Australia”, because it gives reality “to a world she had need of; more alive and interesting, more crowded with *things*, with people too, than the one she was in.” (Malouf *Babylon* 54) Her cousin, Lachlan Beattie, arriving from Scotland, scorns the bush; Janet recognises that “all their little treasures and secrets, were in his eyes poor – she had not seen till now just how poor.” (Malouf *Babylon* 55) Yet despite bragging of his knowledge of the old country, the transplanted Lachlan realises that “if he

was to get on here he would have to know the place”, and “is soon as much a bushman as the best of them, with a grit, and a fierce little-mannish tenacity” (Malouf Babylon 57) that earns him respect from the men. Janet knows that she cannot compete on these terms:

She resented bitterly the provision his being a boy had made for him to exert himself and act. He had no need to fret and bother himself; only to be patient and let himself grow and fill out the lines of what had been laid up for him. (Malouf Babylon 58)

The male child, like the continent of Australia, is the empty outline waiting to be filled in. Lachlan has “heroic visions in which the limitations of mere boyhood would at last be transcended”, (Malouf Babylon 60) which include getting up an expedition to search the interior for Leichhardt, discovering and naming rivers along the way.

From the outset, however, Malouf shows the limitations of Lachlan’s power to create his own landscapes and impose his adventure narratives on others. Janet and her sister Meg are forced into “a game of the boy’s devising” in which “the paddock, all clay-packed stones and ant trails, was a forest in Russia – they were hunters on the track of wolves.” (Malouf Babylon 1)

The boy had elaborated this scrap of make-believe out a story in the fourth grade Reader; he was lost in it. Cold air burned his nostrils, snow squeaked underfoot; the gun he carried, a good sized stick, hung heavy on his arm. But the girls, especially Janet, who was older than he was and half a head taller, were bored. They had no experience of snow, and wolves did not interest them. (Malouf Babylon 1)

Lachlan immerses himself in a reconstituted adventure from elsewhere, but cannot necessarily co-opt others to his project. That he must “exert all his gift for fantasy, his will too” (Malouf Babylon 1) to keep the girls in the game demonstrates that his stories rely on a particular patriarchal conquest trope that does not speak for the full range of colonial experience.

Gemmy’s arrival from out of the landscape further indicates the limits of Lachlan’s power. When Lachlan raises his stick as a gun to halt Gemmy’s approach to the settlement, he symbolically aligns himself with the settler males who protect and defend their ‘civilised’ ground, and Gemmy recognizes the representation for what it is – a statement of Lachlan’s role as potential colonial

master of land and inhabitants. Initially, Lachlan prods Gemmy to the centre of the settlement “armed with nothing... but his own presumptive daring and the power of make-believe”. (Malouf Babylon 4) Lachlan is carried by his own narrative, but the unmade space he enters highlights the flimsy basis for his confidence, for the place he brings Gemmy to “was not yet a street, and had no name”. This unformed place remains only “lightly connected” to the nearest named town and to “the figure in an official uniform who had given it his name and the Crown he represented, which held them all, a whole continent, in its grip.” (Malouf Babylon 5) The settlement is threatened by the country out of which Gemmy has come; those “tracts of country that no white man had ever entered” are marked by “impenetrable dark” and “illimitable night” (Malouf Babylon 8). If Gemmy represents the unknowable land and the unknowable people that occupy it, the childish Lachlan highlights the tenuousness of settler attempts to control both.

The crisis that drives Gemmy to the settlement landscape is the same as the crisis he experiences in arriving on Australian shores: the desire for belonging. However, Gemmy’s own liminal position as a “black white man” ensures that he is ‘other’ to the adult male settlers in the same way as the indigene, the child and the landscape. Like the child figure, Gemmy is repeatedly shown occupying a half-way position. The children see him first as “halfway” between bird and human; when he leaps onto the boundary fence, he occupies neither one place nor another. His arrival in the settlement mirrors his arrival on the continent as a child; when washed ashore, he is “half in salt and the warm wash of it, half in air that blistered” like a spirit “only half-reborn”. (Malouf Babylon 22) Later, the Aboriginal tribe he joins mythologises Gemmy’s arrival, describing him as “half-child, half-sea-calf.” (Malouf Babylon 27) Initially, Gemmy has a colonial child’s attitude to the strangeness of the place and, by extension, the indigenous people. “What struck him was the smell they gave off; or maybe it was the air of the place. Animal, unfamiliar. What he thought was: I am lost again, more lost than ever. It is not what I expected.” (Malouf Babylon 23) Dramatically displaced from English ‘civilisation’, Gemmy responds in a conventional way by reading the place, the indigene and the animal as entangled in their threatening unfamiliarity.

As a child, Gemmy is shown to be a *tabula rasa* to be re-inscribed, quickly adopting the language and knowledge of the Aboriginal people despite arriving with European preconceptions. Nevertheless, he retains a sense of the previous culture; like the land, he is reinscribed with new narratives, but the previous story is not fully erased. Moreover, Gemmy is accepted into the tribe only “guardedly; in the droll, half-apprehensive way that was proper to an in-between creature.” His exclusion takes the form of a perpetual state of childhood: he is excluded from sexual maturation because “no woman... would have to do with him” and there are things he is not permitted to touch. (Malouf Babylon 28) He remains suspended between worlds, no longer in the wilderness but not fully integrated into the functioning of Aboriginal society. Childlike, he cannot reach a full understanding of his place and his condition. Malouf explains, “he was here, though where here was, and why he was in this place rather than another, was a mystery to him.” (Malouf Babylon 29) Thus Gemmy occupies a liminal space that, unlike Lachlan, he cannot outgrow. Gemmy remains a threatening hybrid of self and ‘other’ to settler and Aboriginal cultures alike. Unable to assume full adult status and truly belong in either community, he finds his only refuge in the landscape. At the end of the book, he melts back into the wilderness as his written life story melts into the mud. In doing so, he becomes once again part of the environment of “nightmare rumours” from which he emerged.

Gee’s depictions of children engaged in cross-cultural encounters are much more subtle, but likewise point out the child’s ambivalent location within structures of power through landscape images. *The Big Season* opens with a typical boyish exploit: the protagonist, Rob, goes whitebaiting in the river. He attempts to bring back what he finds, but the town rejects Rob’s ‘wild food’ offerings. Three townswomen condemn the whitebait as ‘dirty’, and Rob knows without asking that his mother will say the same. In venturing outside the social boundaries, Rob brings contamination to the ‘purity’ of the town, represented by the feminine suburban figure. In contrast, the boarding house dwellers (marginalized by race and socio-economic status) accept the boys’ offering, but first disabuse Rob and Arthur of their misconceptions about what they have gathered from the river – not whitebait, but inanga. A product of settler culture,

Rob can venture into the wild, but cannot accurately interpret what he finds, or incorporate it meaningfully into the context of his society.

Rob's difficulties with definition mirror the language problems of early settler societies struggling to articulate place. As David Malouf said, when asked how Australians read the landscape:

We always read it, or misread it, in terms of the landscapes we carry in our heads and of the language we brought, a language that did not grow out of what was here. It was a language that had to be applied, or misapplied, or approximately applied, to what we found here. One of the most interesting things about Australia is that the language we use has not devolved out of a long cultural history in this particular place – as is true of Italy or England. What we had was a highly developed name for everything, and a reality in front of us that did not fit. (Kavanagh 252)

Like Lachlan in *Remembering Babylon*, Rob translates between indigenous and settler cultures, finding words to articulate the environment. In *The Big Season*, Rob conforms initially to social expectations that he should shed any trace of the wild on his return to society. Coming home, he takes a bath, because “his mother said he smelt of the river.” Rob is not averse to this cleansing; he is grateful for his conventionally British roast lamb because “it took the taste of inanga out of his mouth” (Gee Season 3). Yet he pushes boundaries: after dinner, he brings the river into the lounge by introducing the language of the indigenous wilderness.

'Inanga?' said Mr Miller, and everyone in the room stopped talking when they heard the new word.

'Whitebait,' said Rob. 'But they're not really whitebait. They're inanga. We made five shillings selling them.' (Gee Season 4)

Gee presents Rob as conforming to an appropriative colonial approach to nature; indigenous fauna is valued monetarily, as part of a commercial endeavour. Nevertheless, in privileging the word of the boarders (who, spatially, occupy the town's borders) over the word of the townsfolk to describe his encounter with his locality, Rob takes the first step outside the town's constraints and begins to develop a vocabulary for engaging with place without the distortion of English filters.

Both Gee and Malouf show the child as having this potential to be 'at home' in the New Zealand and Australian landscape due to their adaptability. Migration is

frequently used by both authors to show the strength of the child's attachment to place. In *Harland's Half Acre*, Frank is sent away from the beloved landscape of his home in Killarney. His displacement is described in terms reminiscent of early settler longing for a British Home:

His two worlds were quite clear to him. They looked different, they smelled different, they had a different quality of warmth and cold. One was original, it was the place he came from. The other was the one he was in. (Malouf Harland 9-10)

Frank's sense of displacement is figured through descriptions of his aunt's spotless house and his uncle's cultivated orchard. Yet Frank's longing is for another part of Australia, not for a distant hemisphere. Grounded in the Antipodes, the child longs for its origin *in* the 'child' country; Home with a capital H is transformed into a Killarney located in Australia, not in Ireland. This is the known world to Frank. As he says, "Every grass blade and bush, the many waterholes and their names, and the little round hills and farmhouses and timbermills and barns, were utterly familiar to him. Killarney was the realest place he knew." (Malouf Harland 13)

In a similar way, Gee's novel *Meg* shows the child's bond with the natural New Zealand landscape through a migration narrative. In the United States with her family, Meg says, "California was the Land of Missing. Nothing there looked right." Her displacement is figured in natural terms:

When I talk to people about it now they say I must be making it up. Children are like weeds, they say, they grow anywhere. But in California I did not grow. Mother said I was a tree that would not transplant. ...inside, I wasted away. I longed for Thorpe with a longing like that for food. There I was in a land all brightly coloured, a land that became for my brothers and sisters a kind of Arcadia... And all the time I saw Thorpe – saw grey ditches full of frogs, and saw the black pine-row where goblin toadstools forced their way through needles, and saw cold willows over narrow streams. I talk of these things in an adult way. They were not cold for me then. They were not uncoloured. (Gee Meg 29)

The immediacy of the child's experience shows how landscape grounds the New Zealand or Australian child in their identity. Gee's and Malouf's use of migration demonstrates settler dislocation even as it reaffirms the possibility for white settler society to engage imaginatively with place and find a way of putting down roots and belonging 'at home' in New Zealand or Australia.

Putting down roots is, of course, not the only way to belong in a place. As Paul Carter writes, “The challenge, at least for a post-colonial poetics, is to see in what way migration might entail a form of emplacement, might in fact be constitutional and signify a mode of being at home in the world.” (Carter 336) Malouf particularly shows that movement can offer a child an expanded horizon in which to develop their identity. As a child, *Remembering Babylon*’s Gemmy rewrites himself while moving through the landscape in time-honoured Aboriginal fashion; when he returns to the world of the whites, the stasis of the settlement turns out to be suffocating rather than empowering. In *The Great World*, the young character of Vic feels himself physically expand as the new landscape of the city comes into view.

They were coming in to Sydney now, and as street after street flashed by, little backyards with chook-houses and rows of vegetables, and off in the distance smoke pouring up out of giant chimney stacks, he felt some wider vision open in him as well, an apprehension of just how large the world was that he was being carried towards, and the opportunity it offered of scope and space. (Malouf Great World 86)

The same term is used by the young protagonist of *Harland’s Half Acre*, who says “At Southport I had scope.” (Malouf Harland 49) Physical movement through the landscape can therefore serve as movement toward self-discovery; changing places does not automatically signal displacement.

Movement and relocation are just two of the landscape figures that Gee and Malouf use to demonstrate the child’s direct, unmediated relationship with the land and how it might undermine the stability of colonial domination. Depictions of the beach and seascape, the unsettling power of the storm or the shifting landscape of dreams demonstrate a denial of straightforward engagement with place on possessive ‘adult’ terms. Children’s actual or imaginative engagement with the landscape unsettles and shows the potential for change and re-engagement. First encounters with sex or death also illustrate how the self can become one with the environment in the moment of orgasm or death. The child may turn away from the adult world that offers this threatening knowledge, but in turning to the landscape on similar terms of surrender, can begin to understand what has been observed.

Geographer J. Douglas Porteous comments that a child's exploration of the landscape is simply a widening of the initial exploration of the body:

The human body is the first landscape we encounter and explore. It is likely that we carry the cognitive imagery in our heads as well as the actuality of our own bodies as we approach the external environment. Landscape is our second major encounter. For both practical and magical reasons, the application of notions of self to the environment of non-self makes sense. In this way we humanize our environment, reduce its primeval unknownness and terror, make it ours. (Porteous 84)

Anthropomorphising the landscape does not always reduce its threatening properties, but it is a common metaphor for translating the unknown into the knowable. Sometimes this formula works backwards; by applying what is known and experienced in the environment to the body, the child can come to terms with the troubling vagaries of the self.

Malouf shows the child's body being transformed by engagement with the natural environment. In *Harland's Half Acre*, Phil Vernon responds physically to his surroundings in the cool air, saying

since the sleepout had no walls, this air, in which leaves rustled, night insects twiddled and the sea lapped or lashed according to the weather on the roughstone promenade, was the real medium in which I slept. Faintly silvered with moonlight and smelling of salt, it changed everything it touched, so that even my belly out there belonged to a different creature; I too was changed. My body seemed all on its own to have hit upon a new mode of apprehension and I couldn't tell whether it was time or place that had done it, or some leap I had taken into a new and more passionate form. (Malouf Harland 50)

Phil's location in the sleepout, or verandah, puts him in another of the liminal spaces that the child inhabits – both indoors and outdoors, domestic and public. This spatially reinforces the child's uncertain social position, not entirely 'in' or 'out'. Yet in this space the child has particularly unmediated access to the natural. Unbounded by social walls, Phil is open to all the most mysterious and unpredictable aspects of the Australian environs – wind and storms, moonlight and the sea. Through such encounters, he is given "a new mode of apprehension"; that is, he can understand the world in a different way. Martin Leer argues that "[t]he verandah is probably the Original Edge, the first sense of that being on the periphery which is the most striking feature of Malouf's images

of other aspects of his self: his country and his body.” (Leer 18-19) Here on the edge, the child does not remake the world in his own image, but is remade himself.

The “new and more passionate form” Phil discovers in the sleepout suggests the child’s growing awareness of sexuality. Sex and landscape are frequently connected in these texts. In the opening paragraphs of Malouf’s story “At Schindler’s”, the sound of the sea invades Jack’s sleep. The child’s own sweat becomes the waves of the beach, which would “hush his body to their rhythm and carry him back to shallows where he was rolled in salt” (reminiscent of Gemmy’s rebirth on the shores of Australia in *Remembering Babylon*). Jack feels that:

Down here at Scarborough, where he was most keenly aware of his body as the immediate image of himself, the sun’s heat, day after day, and especially in the early morning when it struck the glass of his hot-house sleepout, would draw him in a half-waking dream to some tropic place where everything grew faster. (Malouf Dream Stuff 9)

Malouf’s elision of the child’s growing body with the tropical heat of the Brisbane landscape shows how Jack is being ‘hothouse’d’ towards adulthood. Jack’s burgeoning sexual awareness is reinforced by Scarborough’s landscape and climate, which make him keenly aware of his changing body.

Feeling and tides rise together throughout this story. Jack’s bodily growth speeds up during sleep, and his emotional growth is figured through dreams of the sea, conventional symbol of the unconscious. Burgeoning awareness of the sexualized body of adulthood is also figured using sea imagery. Jack dreams of being stranded on a high platform during a king tide:

He was in deep trouble. Dark water rushed and foamed out of sight below, the flimsy structure shuddered and creaked. Worse still, the saplings that supported the platform had done their own growing in his sleep, so that when he shuffled forward on his knees to look over the edge, his head reeled. (Malouf Dream Stuff 19)

Unbalanced by new height and the speed of change, Jack is no longer comforted by the rocking shallows, but finds himself out of his depth. He awakens from this dream to a real storm. Groping his way through the wild weather to his mother’s room, Jack sees his mother in the throes of passion,

and is reminded of “moments when, in a kind of freedom that only his body had access to, he became a porpoise, rolling over and under the skin of sunlight all down the length of the Bay. Under the waves, then over. Entering, emerging. From air to water, then back again.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 20-21) Such images connect the sea and the sexual act, suggesting that both release the body from its conventional readings, allowing freedom. In a space beyond mapped locations, difficult transitions are effortlessly accomplished.

At the moment of seeing his mother in bed with Milt, an overdose of light, this time a lightning flash, plays tricks with the perception of the young protagonist. “The whole room for a moment was blindingly illuminated, the high ceiling, the walls, the rippled sheet and the figures beneath it.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 20) In this moment of natural illumination, Jack sees his own reflection in the mirror and mistakes it for his father; child is transformed for a moment into parent, gaining access to a world of adult understanding. After this literal and metaphoric storm, Jack sees things in a different light because place and self have been transformed:

The garden had been badly hit. There were smashed branches all over, and the pool had leaves in it and puddles where tiny frogs squatted and leapt. There was a strangeness. Some of it was in the light. But some of it, he knew, was in him. (Malouf Dream Stuff 21)

In this damaged, tumultuous environment, the beach provides a comfort zone, a place of acceptance. Earlier in the story, Jack says that on the beach he and Milt “fell into step again, saying nothing now, just letting the fall of the waves fill the silence between them, they were together, and in a way that utterly settled him in his own skin.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 12) After the high tide, and the discovery that Milt is his mother’s lover, the beach has disappeared. Jack observes: “Little kids... were gesturing towards it, marvelling at the absence of beach, dancing about on a ledge of soft sand that fell abruptly to foam.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 22) Abruptly, perhaps, for Jack, the edges have blurred and disappeared, and in his newfound knowledge, he is no longer one of the ‘little kids’. The shore, usually the neutral territory where anything goes, has become the immediate meeting point between land and sea, with no intermediary space – a sexualised image in itself.

Jack heads beyond the post-lapsarian ruined garden and into the wilderness, looking for a new perspective on what he has learned.

He went on to the north end where the storm-water channel ran all the way to the water's edge, in a tangle of yellow-flowering native hibiscus so dense and anciently intertwined that without once setting your foot to the ground you could move on through it all the way to the beach... It was another world up here, a place so hidden and old, so deeply mythologized by the games they played in the twists and turns of its branches, their invented world of tribes and wars and castles, that the moment you hauled yourself up into its big-leafed light and shade you shook loose of the actual, were freed of the ground rules and the habits of a life lived on floorboards and in rooms. (Malouf Dream Stuff 22)

Jack is climbing into the history of the place, inhabiting a space (like the verandah) that is beyond society and has its own rules. It has been created according to the mythology of childhood innocence that allows access to the ancient and natural places. However, that innocence recreates the world of conquest and possession – “tribes and wars and castles” are the symbols of a history of domination and conquest too. The passage goes on:

Hauling himself up from branch to branch, higher than he had ever been before, he found a place where he was invisible from below but had the whole Bay before him.

It was an established custom that they came to the Trees only in the afternoon. He had the place to himself. Feeling the damp air begin to heat, he settled and let himself sink into an easy state where it was his blood that did the thinking for him, or his thumbs, or the small of his back where it was set hard against rough bark. From high up among leaves he watched the tide turn and begin, imperceptibly at first, then with swiftness, to go out. (Malouf Dream Stuff 22-23)

By breaking established custom, Jack finds himself in a natural space where contact between body and environment becomes the means of thought and processing emotions. The receding sea literally opens up the new space of possibility, after the surge of feeling represented by the king tide. As cultural commentator Greg Dening puts it, “This wet space between land and sea is the true beach, the true in-between space... an unresolved space where things can happen, things can be made to happen. It is a space of transformation.” (Teo 234) In this space, Jack acknowledges that his father will not come back, allowing the repressed knowledge to enter his consciousness. By the end of the story, he can walk confidently down the beach transformed by the storm, with

body, beach and belonging reconciled, having found a place to inhabit that is both innocent and knowing.

In Gee's *Meg*, Meg comes to understand sex and death in a similar way but in a different landscape. She walks into the orchard at Peacehaven, claiming her right to "her place" despite knowing that her sister Esther has gone there with Fred Meggett.

I approached, though, with shrinking confidence. I sensed the closeness of some mystery, and a danger of revelation. I stepped into the dreaming ground of my childhood, but advanced on another level into a place where adult things might happen. Shadows fell across the summer bank. Heavy insects flew up from the grass and went ahead of me with whirring wings. I walked light-footed, straight, imperious; with a frightened crying at the heart of me.

What I came upon was an idyllic scene: lovers resting on a grassy bank. But standing out from it was Fred Meggett's face. It had a colour, a greed, a vulgarity, that drained the life from everything around it – from Esther, who was no more than a black and white figure from a photograph, from the sky and the clouds and the trees and the bank. The sunlight faded. I was dry, with the white dryness of dust. I was a vacuum, I was null. I will not exaggerate the moment – the moment I caught sight of an enemy and was slain by him. It lasted only the space of a heartbeat or two. I came back to life. (Gee Meg 61-62)

Through the image of the orchard, sex and death are confronted. The orchard seems Edenic; its idyllic lovers suggest a pastoral paradise. However, in this natural environment Meg also confronts carnal knowledge and mortality. Meg moves towards an adult experience she fears, and towards a moment of self-obliteration that mirrors what she observes. Though she tries to assert control with her "imperious tread", her encounter with what she perceives as human evil strips the landscape of meaning and Meg of her sense of identity. Meggett's face stands in for the serpent and the *memento mori* skull in Meg's morality: *et in Arcadia ego*.

The same fear and sense of obliteration also foreshadow Meg's first encounter with literal death. Gee uses seascape to show the possibility of annihilation.

A wind from the plains lifted the sea into sharp little waves that slapped our cheeks and blinded us. We swam all morning, shrieking in the tide that lifted itself up the dry sand like a live thing to swallow the world. It swelled and grew, and frightened me and drew me in, and I saw no reason why it should stop at the sandhills or the houses, or at the city

beyond, and the cathedral and the park, or stop at the hills. I would not go as far out as the others. I saw them diving like porpoises in the waves. (Gee Meg 39)

As in Malouf, the porpoise is used as a figure for absolute engagement with the landscape, signifying immersion and trust. However, also as in Malouf, this landscape is granted a powerful agency that denies the child the possibility of control; the sea-spray blinds and the tide threatens to swallow. Meg recognises the threat in the natural world, as well as in the human. Her fears are well founded. Rebecca is drowned. The landscape can overwhelm the human.

In such images, the child's insecurity echoes settler fears of the uncontrollable environment. The untamed landscape can obliterate self and civilisation, and represents the possibility of death, an intimation of mortality that the child is unwilling to face. In *The Great World*, Malouf uses the sand-as-wave to suggest that signs of 'civilisation' can be swept away by this shifting earth. Struggling with his mother's terminal illness, Vic describes his childhood home as backing on "to barren dunes":

The rise behind was always on the move. There was a time, not so long ago, when he had had a rabbit cage out here, but it was gone now, yards back under the dune. There had even, further back, been a couple of trees. He remembered climbing them. He wondered sometimes how long it would be till their whole house was covered. He would lie at night hearing the wind and the individual grains rolling. The great white slope of a wave would rise up and break in his sleep, come trickling first through the cracks in the walls, then press hard against the windows till they fell with a crash and sand came pouring over their table and chairs and the rafters caved in and the whole hill went over them. He would be fighting to get above it. (Malouf Great World 71)

Already marginalised by his youth and poverty, Vic's insecure place in society is reflected in his fear. He turns to the landscape for solace but finds only added threat. The image of the sand suggests Vic's very childhood is being swallowed, as signifiers of his youth (the pet rabbit and the play-space of the trees) are buried by sand. Vic projects his fears for his dying mother out into the landscape. He imagines her being buried by the same wave, and having to clear the choking sand from her throat. The mother, bastion of the social world to which the exploring child can return, is not secure in this environment.

Vic fears nature getting inside him, too. His childhood house, conventionally considered a psychological extension of the physical body, is not fully formed or secure in its definition of indoor/outdoor space:

The roof of the house had no lining. You could look up at night and see, under the corrugated iron peak of it, the bare rafters with mice skipping along them. It was, Vic had thought when he was younger, like living inside a huge tree, all branches. An owl lived in this tree, and sometimes, in his childhood sleep, it flew right into his head, and quietly, very quietly for all its heaviness, flopped about in there among the rafters woo-hoo-ing and blinking its yellow eyes. He would wake sometimes with his arms flailing to keep the big bird off. (Malouf Great World 79)

In another of Malouf's indeterminate spaces, Vic is subject to the transformative power of nature, but finds it frightening. Even as a child, control is his means of making sense of the world; he takes a parental role, tidying the house and caring for his mother. The disruptive dreamed presence of the owl breaks down Vic's carefully established boundaries of the self, suggesting the possibility of another wisdom or way of knowing that he cannot accept. The dream recurs and the owl returns:

It flew about, its wings beat, warm droppings fell. But when he woke in his dream and looked, the owl had a mouse in its beak. The droppings were blood. He woke with warm blood in his mouth and was too choked to cry out. (Malouf Great World 79)

Within this dream environment, Vic wakes up his own potential savagery and vulnerability, both of which his daytime self represses. He wants to kill his father; the bird brings knowledge of this desire to his subconscious even as he quells it consciously. Wild nature figures show Vic's own wild nature, choking him as he struggles for control over self and environment that will allow him to take a more secure place in society.

In *Meg*, Meg's recurrent dreams of annihilation likewise indicate a discrepancy between where she is and where she wants to be. Meg's dream is of "standing on the banks of a dark river, while my dead family floated by, Mother first, and then my brothers and sisters, one by one – I reaching out my hands to catch them until I found myself in the water too and sinking down." (Gee Meg 33) Meg's mother attributes this to their stay in California: "Mother said I dreamed because I was displaced, because I was the tree that would not transplant. 'It's

a California dream. When we go back to New Zealand it will stop.” (Gee Meg 32) Though the dream does end when Meg is on home ground, the reality of dark water continues to represent unknowable places and threat. Back in New Zealand, the creek challenges Meg’s sense of perspective and makes her insecure about the solidity of her physical self.

I looked down into the water – into the dark, for no gleam showed. It might have been a pit dropping forever. The blackness seemed to suck all the blood from my body and flesh from my bones. It seemed to suck the whole world into it.

On the edge of terror, on the edge of Missing, I knew that Robert would turn it into water, make it our creek. (Gee Meg 80)

This void is elided with Meg’s dream landscape, the Land of Missing, which threatens nothingness and is figured by a dark river. In reality, however, the fearless male child offers the possibility of conquest for Meg – if her brother Robert can dive safely into the water, it will be transformed back into a common creek, reappropriated to the safe domestic world. Meg sees the landscape as potentially overwhelming, but also believes in human power to contain it; her underlying moral sense is that human goodness can tame wild aspects of the landscape.

As children, Lachlan, Vic and Meg struggle with wild images of the landscape that conflict with social values they hold dear: masculine colonial strength and superiority in Lachlan’s case; personal agency to transcend class and social barriers in Vic’s; residual puritan morality in Meg’s. However, other characters – such as Rob in *The Big Season* or Graham in “A Sleeping Face” – demonstrate the child’s willingness to go beyond social boundaries to connect with the landscape. In Gee’s work, such characters are generally curtailed in their exploration; it is not until adulthood that such characters are shown to truly experience place without the imposition of social values. In contrast, Malouf’s child characters are repeatedly shown to have a special awareness of place that allows them to transcend social boundaries and reconcile divisions. This numinous vision is not present in Gee’s representations of childhood.

Malouf’s story “Closer” is narrated by nine-year old Amy, a girl brought up within an orderly familial environment that holds traditional values of cultivated land as

a sign of God's grace. Malouf locates the story's Pentecostal family on their idyllic dairy farm, while the family's son, banished for homosexuality, dwells in the Sodom of Sydney, expelled from the perceived paradise of the well-ordered land.

So that we will not be infected by the plague he carries, Grandpa has forbidden him to come on to the land. In fact, he is forbidden to come at all, though he does come, at Easter and Christmas, when we see him across the home-paddock fence. He stands far back on the other side and my grandfather and grandmother and the rest of us stand on ours, on the grass slope below the house. (Malouf Dream Stuff 26)

Across the great divide, the family hold the moral high ground, certain that "all that is written in the book is clear truth without error" (Malouf Dream Stuff 27) and thus that "righteousness remains in the field", as Isaiah 32:16 has it.

Amy is well-versed in the official family line that bears out these attitudes, but her uncle's banishment prompts her to re-examine her environment and seek alternative landscapes of belonging. She says, "Ours is a very pleasant part of the country. We are blessed. The cattle are fat, the pasture's good." (Malouf Dream Stuff 27) However, she breaks away from her family's belief system, looking for an alternative to the city/country dichotomy that is central to the story. Rather than choosing to continue her family's life on the land, she decides "when I grow up I mean to be an astronaut." (Malouf Dream Stuff 27) Images of space demonstrate her identification with banished Uncle Charles. When he calls to announce his arrival, "the air roaring through the car makes his voice sound weird, like a spaceman's" (Malouf Dream Stuff 27) and his car is

very like a spaceship, silver and fast; it flashes. You can see its windscreen catching the sun as it rounds the curves between the big Norfolk pines of the golf course and the hospital, then its flash flash between the trees along the river. (Malouf Dream Stuff 28)

The literally flashy car and the metaphorically flashy uncle have a romance about them that is "like something from another world".

Malouf's framing of the character of the uncle, and Amy's clear identification with him, undermines a variety of traditionally established binaries: evil city/pastoral paradise; masculine/feminine; wilderness/garden. When Amy dreams of Charles, he is a naked figure who has literally cast off the trappings

of social acceptability, and is able to simply ignore established borders between the 'righteous' cultivated landscape and the rest of the world by stepping through the boundary fence as though it did not exist.

When he saw what he had done he stopped, looked back at the fence and laughed. All around his feet, little daisies and gaudy, bright pink clover flowers began to appear, and the petals glowed like metal, molten in the sun but cool, and spread uphill to where we were standing, and were soon all around us and under our shoes. Insects, tiny grasshoppers, sprang up and went leaping, and glassy snails no bigger than your little fingernail hung on the grass stems, quietly feeding... I had such a feeling of lightness and happiness it was as if my bones had been changed into clouds, just as the tough grass had been changed into flowers.

I knew it was a dream. But dreams can be messages. The feeling that comes with them is real, and if you hold on to it you can make the rest real. (Malouf Dream Stuff 30-31)

In this story, Malouf shows a child's dream world that works beyond conventional environmental dichotomies. Amy inhabits a landscape of possibilities – through images of space and dream, boundaries are not only crossed, but rendered non-existent, and bodies can be transfigured beyond the limitations of place.

In *Remembering Babylon*, Janet experiences similar transcendent moments of unbounded communion with the landscape. When Janet picks a scab and reveals the new skin, the surprise discovery of her body's beautifying ability to remake itself extends into the landscape. Janet is opened to a new way of seeing, where the overbright light is no longer blinding, but transformational. "In a particular vibrancy of light that on another occasion might have given her a headache, all the world shimmered and was changed." (Malouf Babylon 59) Feeling herself to be a "brighter being", Janet experiences an epiphanic moment similar to Amy's dream:

Trees shook out ribbons of tattered bark, and the smooth skin under it was the palest green, streaked orange like a sunset, or it had the powdery redness of blood. *Glory* was the word she thought of... some other dream-figure with flowers round her hem and bright petals opening miraculously out of the clods at her feet might also have been there in the regions she moved in an inch or two above the earth. (Malouf Babylon 59-60)

Malouf shows Janet (like Amy) lifting off from the earth. Both children demonstrate that closer connection with, and observation of, the self and the

landscape can lead to a release from the literal; body, trees and cloddish earth can all burst forth hidden beauties. Janet recognises this as a day dream; she is “a practical child” who is “sceptical of mere feelings”; nevertheless, “they were important enough, these moments, for her to keep them to herself.” (Malouf Babylon 60) In this she contrasts with Lachlan, whose landscape encounters are intended for public consumption, full of boasts and planned conquests.

Janet’s ability to receive and experience the landscape is further extended in her encounter with Mrs. Hutchence’s bees. On one “unusually oppressive, steamy” day at the hives,

a dull sky had been glowering, bronze with a greenish edge to it, that bruised the sight. Suddenly there was the sound of a wind getting up in the grove, though she did not feel the touch of it, and before she could complete the breath she had taken, or expel it in a cry, the swarm was on her, thickening so fast about her that it was as if night had fallen, just like that, in a single cloud. (Malouf Babylon 142)

She loses her sense of her body, and can no longer tell “whether she was still standing... in the shadowy grove, or had been lifted from the face of the earth.” (142) Janet is again taken out of herself (and of the world) by an overwhelming experience of nature; new light and winds of change are the natural accompaniments to her transformation. Inside the dark cloud of bees, Janet changes from child to woman – she becomes the bees’ “new bride” as they smell “the sticky-blood flow” of her menstruation. (Malouf Babylon 142) Opened thus to her adult self and to the world, Janet encompasses dark and light, danger and protection.

She went, half-dreaming, and looked at the hive, all sealed now, a squared-off cloud, still drumming, that had once been clamped to her skin, a living darkness, so that the only light came from inside her, from the open space she had become inside the skin they made of living particles, little flames. (Malouf Babylon 144)

This baptism by fire ends Janet’s childhood, peeling away a more significant social skin to reveal her life’s work, her maturity and her indoctrination into “the process and mystery of things” (Malouf Babylon 143) all at once.

The most extreme example of the landscape’s capacity to offer the child integration and understanding is in Malouf’s story “Blacksoil Country”. Malouf’s

protagonist says, introducing self and place: “Jordan McGivern. I am twelve years old. I can show you this country. I been in it long enough.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 116) At first, “I been in it long enough” seems a childish boast; he is, after all, only twelve. However, as the narrative reveals that he is dead – that he is “in” the country’s ground – Jordan’s role as speaker for child, settler history and landscape becomes apparent. He and his family are “the first ones on this bit of land”; they have come “to settle. To manage and work a run of a thousand acres, unfenced and not marked out save on a map that wouldn’t have covered more than a square handkerchief of it and could show nothing of what it was.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 116-17) Malouf highlights the failure of the map to accurately represent the country, and puts Jordan in the position of the childish explorer whose experience gives insight into how place might be rendered meaningful. Jordan’s engagement with place moves beyond visual appreciation and exploration to a holistic interaction.

This is my sort of country, I thought, the minute I first laid eyes on it. And the more I explored out into it the more I felt it was made for me and just set there, waiting.

It was more than it looked. You had to give it a chance to show itself. There were things in it you had to get up close to, if you were to see what they really were – down on your knees, then sprawled out flat with your chest and your kneecaps touching it, feeling its grit. Then you could see it, and smell the richness of it too, that only come to your nostrils otherwise after a good fall of rain, when the smells were in the steam that rose up for just seconds and were gone.

Most of all I liked the voices of it. ...

After a bit I would get up nights, let myself out and lie in some place out there under the stars. Letting the sounds rise up all around me in the heat, and letting a breeze touch me, if there was one, so I felt the touch of it on my bare skin like hands. (Malouf Dream Stuff 121-22)

Jordan retains some elements of his settler status, initially surveying the land and believing it is “made for me”. Yet he goes beyond this, allowing the country agency to “show itself”. His range of sensory engagements goes beyond simple visual appreciation to touch, taste, smell and hearing.

While proclaiming his own early love for the country, Jordan also articulates his parents’ displacement. His mother pines for the society of shop and neighbours, refusing to look at the empty land – which to her is “a kind of horror” (Malouf Dream Stuff 121) – beyond her domestic washing line. Jordan’s father, forced to

move often in the past because of “the trouble he had knuckling under or settling”, (Malouf Dream Stuff 119) cannot relate to the men around him, or to the land. Jordan observes, “He cursed it and had a complaint about every aspect of it. Most of all about the blacks, as if all the faults of the country were their doing.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 121) This typical settler conflation of the indigene and the landscape leads Mr. McGovern to fight both, trying to prove his belonging through shows of strength. He and Jordan are busy “in the home paddock grubbing out the last of a patch of low mulga scrub, him all strained and sweating with a rope around his middle” (Malouf Dream Stuff 124) when three Aborigines come onto the land. Mr. McGovern transfers his efforts from the unruly land to the unruly native; when his command to stop is not obeyed, he shoots and kills the messenger. In doing so, as Jordan observes, he “had put us outside the rules, which all along, though he didn’t see it that way, had been their rules.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 127)

The death of the messenger brings Jordan closer to the landscape and increases his awareness of the indigenous sense of place. As an exploring child, he knows things “about our bit of land that no one else did except maybe the blacks, and places no one else had ever been into, except maybe them, when it was theirs.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 128) Acknowledging the Aboriginals’ first possession and indigenous power as his father cannot, Jordan knows that his father’s act of violence will impact on the settlers, and explains this in terms of the transformed landscape:

The whole country had a new light over it. I had to look at it in a new way. What I saw in it now was hiding-places. Places where they were hidden in it, the blacks. Places too where ghosts might be, also hidden. (Malouf Dream Stuff 128)

Jordan shares this awareness with other children in Malouf’s novels; the young Harlands in *Harland’s Half Acre* realise when they undertake a vigil for the ghost of one of their ancestors that “the transparent white spooks they had been expecting were there in negative. Black ghosts. Black.” (Malouf Harland 25) Unlike their parents, the children can see the palimpsest of history; this landscape is not as empty as the settler culture might like to believe.

Jordan is killed by the Aboriginals in “Blacksoil Country”, joining the legion of settler ghosts and becoming part of the country he loves. However, the child’s death also finally gives the landscape meaning for his parents. Mr. McGovern has a way to connect with the other men of the settlement, and Jordan observes that it becomes “his story. The whole country is his, to rage up and down in with the appeal of his grief.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 129) Eventually his father comes to realise that “that little blood was my blood, not just that black fella’s. Pa’s blood too. So he did come to see at last that I was connected.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 130) Malouf shows the child as integrated into the stories and into the very fabric of the land and its history:

And me all that while lying quiet in the heart of the country, slowly sinking into the ancientness of it, making it mine, grain by grain blending my white grains with its many black ones. And Ma, now, at the line, with the blood beating in her throat, and his shirts, where she has just pegged them out, beginning to swell in the breeze, resting her chin on a wet sheet and raising her eyes to the land and gazing off into the brimming heart of it. (Malouf Dream Stuff 132)

Jordan’s death initiates his mother’s belonging to the place. Knowing that the child is in the heart of the country, she sees into that heart. Her knowing may be limited to the gaze, rather than the deep engaged exploration Jordan enjoyed, but she has begun, through the death of a child, to feel a connection with the place. Moreover, the connection between child, native and land is here figured in terms of absolute integration. White and black are equally features of the land; both black blood and white blood feed into the soil, creating the landscape as they dissolve into oneness with it. Out of the bloody history of settlement is born, through the child, new appreciation and a fertile ground.

Through a variety of narrative strategies Gee and Malouf show the child as a hopeful figure of possibility for settler culture. In 1964, M. H. Holcroft argued that in New Zealand

the country itself projects around us in physical form the conditions of childhood: the land nurturing us from ample breasts, the hills opening a way to small freedoms until the mountains, like immutable parental authority, restrain us – and always beyond the sand the wide sea, inviting us to the future, and yet dangerous to cross. Against our recent history, this can no longer be seen as a true picture. In the new world of today our writers may still turn to childhood when some personal necessity drives them, or if it sets a challenge to their talents; but I doubt

if we shall need to find in the theme any corporate significance. ... As a nation grows older it offers a widening variety of experience, richer in the opportunities that writers are constantly seeking. And perhaps, as New Zealand feels more sure of itself and of its place in the world, and cuts at last the umbilical cord which now rather weakly links us to a distant country, we shall know a security in the wider family that will teach us new themes and disciplines. (Holcroft 63)

In the early twenty-first century, that maturity is surely evident in the literature of Gee and Malouf. Yet far from abandoning childhood as a theme, these postcolonial authors have used the figure of the child to transcend the conventional patterns of colonial appropriation and come to a new and more encompassing understanding of the land. The two authors show that the child's potential does not have to operate to reinforce colonial power, or undermine it. Gee's work shows the child venturing beyond social constraints and thus extending the boundaries of understanding, however temporary the escape from social structures may be. In Malouf's fictions, the figure of the child shows another path into the future, making the dream of an independent, flowering self and culture a reality.

2. Outward bound

Entering the adult world, the young person strives for independence from the parent. This quest for personal self-definition maps neatly against a young nation's desire for independence and need to assert a cultural identity distinct from the parental culture. Indeed, in the nationalist fervour of the 1930s in New Zealand, New Zealand's 'growing up' was articulated in precisely those terms.

In 1936, Minister of Internal Affairs W.E. Parry claimed that

pride of Nationhood... will give Britain in place of a tribe of dependent children a grown up family of virile sons strong with the desire to give the best of his individuality to the common good and preservation of all. In that spirit we look to 1940, not only as the end of a chapter, but as the beginning of a new one.

Commenting on Parry's words, Stuart Murray argues:

The image of the family of nations is a familiar one, but Parry's careful distinction in his articulation of the national adolescence offers the Centennial celebrations as a multi-faceted performance. The greater the strength of New Zealand's self-image, he argues, the more the important aspects of the old colonial relationship will be retained. (Murray 24-25)

That "multifaceted performance" of new independence and old loyalty seems an appropriate description for the acting out of adolescence in postcolonial fictions. In Gee's and Malouf's novels, characters representative of those 'virile sons' assert their selfhood. Personal growth and maturity is figured through their changing relationships with their own bodies, other bodies, their own country, and other countries. Yet in coming to terms with the difference between self and other (on a personal or national level), these youths also recognise binding ties; the young man cannot entirely escape the culture that shaped him. Characters frequently struggle to reconcile the tenacity of the claims of parent (or the pull of Britain/Europe) with the claims of the independent self (or the idea of belonging in the Antipodes). The culture/nature dichotomy is often used to represent this tension. C. L. Innes says that in Australia (as in Ireland and West Africa) cultural nationalists "claimed to be more humane, more in tune with the elemental and natural, more vital and less alienated than the Englishman or European, whose culture was denounced as mechanistic, artificial and decadent." (Innes 122) However, that "decadent" culture retains appeal. The young seek inspiration

from the architecture, art, literature and other cultural accoutrements of Europe even as they scorn it. Similarly, Australian and New Zealand landscapes offer differentiation from European landscape and cultural history, even as they reinforce the historical 'lack' of the new world.

Gee and Malouf offer fictions of rejection and return in their use of landscape to describe the condition of youth. In keeping with adolescent extremism, the texts establish polarities, with Antipodes/Europe the most obvious. Whereas the child finds belonging in liminal spaces, the young adult plunges from one state or location to another, strongly identifying with or rejecting particular places and their associations. Hence there is a contradictory desire for differentiation and belonging in such characters, manifesting as a restlessness that spills over into their reading of place and landscape. To attain the "full membership of society" (Hockey 48) that signifies adult personhood, the child must lose marginal status and become integrated with the adult world. This often entails a loss of the child's freedom to inhabit a liminal space and to identify with the 'natural' or 'indigenous'. The young adult often chooses to identify with the man-made environment over the 'natural' landscape: many characters move toward cityscapes in many of these texts. However, the wilderness landscape – in manifestations from bush to battlefield – also provides a testing ground for a fledgling sense of identity.

Gee and Malouf share some common motifs in depicting this conflicted sense of place. Migration and movement remain key features, but rather than the passive migration of the child who is moved, the young adult has choice, dictating both the direction and purpose of their movement. Water, with its fluidity and destabilising power, is also brought into play; both authors place their young protagonists in streams or water courses as ways of rebirthing, cleansing or sexualising them. Romantic love and sexual experience, useful markers for a transition into 'maturity', are contextualised by stormy weather, wild water and secret, shadowy places. The void – limitless sky, bottomless water, landscapes empty of distinguishing features – illustrates emptiness or displacement, signifying the young person's feeling of insignificance when confronted with a wider horizon. Gee and Malouf use mutable aspects of the landscape, rather

than more enduring geographical landscape features, to highlight the shifting values, emotions and understandings of the young.

In one possible permutation, the landscape offers a stable point of identification for youths who are not yet sure of their place in the adult world. Malouf and Gee create characters whose preoccupation with defining personal identity leads them to perceive the landscape and its features as reflections of self, rather than of society. For example, the young protagonist of Malouf's "Southern Skies" describes

days warmish, still, endlessly without event, and the nights quivering with expectancy but also uneventful, heavy with the scent of jasmine and honeysuckle and lighted by enormous stars. But what I am describing, of course, is neither a time nor a place but the mood of my own bored, expectant, uneventful adolescence. I was always abroad and waiting for something significant to occur, for life somehow to declare itself and catch me up. (Malouf Antipodes 12-13)

The youth recognises something beyond him that he cannot yet encompass, and such images are cycled as the character clutches at adulthood. Repeating the idea that life is "uneventful" reflects youthful Antipodean belief that real, meaningful things happen elsewhere, in the 'grown up' world of big cities and older cultures. Malouf's protagonist envies a family friend, the professor, who studies and understands celestial bodies. Out there is a universe accessible to the adult but not to the youth, who looks at the stars and wonders

what it was that he saw on clear nights like this, that was invisible to me when I leaned my head back and filled my gaze with the sky.

The stars seemed palpably close. In the high September blueness it was as if the odour of jasmine blossoms had gathered there in a single shower of white. You might have been able to catch the essence of it floating down, as sailors, they say, can smell new land whole days before they first catch sight of it.

What I was catching, in fact, was the first breath of change – a change of season. (Malouf Antipodes 14)

Using the metaphor of the change of season, common in descriptions of the life-cycle, Malouf parallels time, place and selfhood. The sky's invisible mysteries, the unseen new land beyond the horizon, and the "first breath of change" all signal tantalising known unknowns, suggesting that beyond the youth's horizon is a waiting world, but one he is not ready to comprehend. This sends him into

one of those sweet-sad glooms of adolescence that are like a bodiless drifting out of yourself into the immensity of things... shifts that against the vastness of space are minute, insignificant, but at that age solemnly felt. (Malouf Antipodes 14)

Like the child, the young man's body extends beyond its limits to embrace the wider landscape, now going beyond the local into the universe. Adolescent attempts to define the self show the scope and scale of what is 'out there'; the self is thus both enlarged and rendered insignificant.

This use of landscape echoes sentiments expressed by intellectual commentators during periods of Antipodean nationalism. Stuart Murray argues that Monte Holcroft's essays in the 1940s attempt "to formulate some notion of a cultural psychology for New Zealand, and to move from that psychology to a national philosophy that will both articulate the present and anticipate the future." (Murray 80) Holcroft relates this philosophy to the landscape. As Murray observes,

In all three essays, the sheer physical presence of the land functions both to spur and intimidate the intellectual work that takes place on its soil and beneath its heights, calling for the necessary delineation of the local yet also offering a continual reminder of a vastness that seems to be beyond any form of mental cartography. (Murray 81)

The scale of the landscape (or, in Malouf's story, the sky and the shifting landscape elements) returns the thinker to the limitations of his ability to articulate that scope. As Malouf's protagonist says in frustration, "No matter how hard I tried to think my way out into other people's lives, into the world beyond me, the feelings I discovered were my own." (Malouf Antipodes 18)

One way for the young adult to express agency in defiance of his sense of smallness is to fall back on 'making' the land; if the self is reflected in the landscape, transforming the external world may 'make the man'. In "Southern Skies", Malouf uses the 'garden as conquest of wilderness' narrative as a cure for adolescent ennui. Control over the external environment reflects personal mastery for the youth. Malouf's protagonist, now seventeen, helps a neighbour clear his overgrown garden, and declares:

I enjoyed the work. Stripped down to shorts in the strong sunlight, I slashed and tore at the weeds till my hands blistered, and in a trancelike

preoccupation with tough green things that clung to the earth with a fierce tenacity, forgot for a time my own turmoil and lack of roots. It was something to do. (Malouf Antipodes 20)

Here clearance provides a way of forgetting complications of identity. Physical hardship and “trancelike preoccupation” allay the youth’s discomfort about where he belongs. His acknowledged “lack of roots” indicates his disquiet about belonging to the place, suggesting the ongoing sense of settler society’s dislocation. Exotic imported citrus and morning glory, which overrun the garden and must be “grubbed out”, are more at home than the character; they tenaciously assert their rootedness. The garden offers a minor version of the “rigorous requirements” the youth wishes the earth would make of him, echoing a settler notion of pitting self against the wilderness and proving superiority through creating useful land. Other desires are sublimated in this external “something to do”, such as the young man’s burgeoning sexuality (the key concern of the story), which is manifested in his encounters with his girlfriend Katie, then a loaded moment with John’s wife, and finally the homosexual encounter with the Professor.

Similarly, in Gee’s *A Special Flower* Donald gains a sense of selfhood through gardening. Donald is portrayed throughout the novel as unsure and tentative, but physical transformation of the land offers the opportunity to feel he is re-making himself too.

He had always enjoyed gardening, especially the planting part of it. Digging he did not like so much. ... And clearing away grass and weeds had always seemed to him rather a cruel business. Today it seemed especially so. Weeds were first in possession, they had a right to their ground. He admired them for the fact that men had not been able to turn them to some use. And even as he chopped them down he felt his kinship with them.

When he had cleared a few square yards he began to dig. The soil was rich, with worms in almost every spadeful. He began to enjoy turning it over: he was bringing something under control, almost making it part of himself. He dug on, cutting square chunks from the ground, breaking them into the chocolate-brown patch in front of him. When he reached the edge of the cleared area he attacked the weeds again. He had no sympathy for them now. (Gee Special Flower 72)

The weeds, “first in possession” and with a “right to their ground”, indicate the contested ground of the postcolonial space. Initially, Donald admires the weeds

for counteracting the colonial value of 'usefulness' as primary to landscape and flora. However, the rare moment of mastery Donald feels when turning the sod quickly recasts him in the colonial – and nationalist – mould. He imposes his will on the land as a measure of his own worth. As with Malouf's image, the conquest of the garden is also a conquest over self, a satisfying proof of individual power that outweighs empathy for what is destroyed. However, Donald's transformation is unsustainable. Digging only briefly alleviates the pain of his deteriorating relationship with his wife Coralie, and as soon as he stops his gardening activities his personal insecurities return.

Women also use gardening to shape identity and channel other desires. In *Plumb*, young Edie delights in gardening as a spiritual activity. Her stubborn insistence in undertaking landscaping work against her mother's wishes reflects the growth of religious ideals and affiliations that are distinct from her mother's. Moreover, Edie asserts her agency and demonstrates her adult self-possession by modifying the land.

She wanted to dig, she wanted to plant and weed and prune and spread manure. Gardening, she knew, was more than a matter of collecting ripe fruit in a basket. It was a moral act, a giving as much as a taking. It was a discipline and a duty and its rewards were not in harvesting alone. (Gee *Plumb* 20-21)

Gee suggests that the creative labour of making a garden allows Edie to hone her soul. Personal growth is aligned with the literal growth of plants; both require energy and commitment in order to reap the rewards.

This desire for external transformation links to the personal transformations of adolescence. Changing perceptions of place reflect changes to the familiar, yet suddenly foreign, landscape of the physical self. In Malouf's story "Jacko's Reach", the local wilderness suddenly signifies sexuality. Boyhood explorations transform into more intimate explorations of self and body in relation to the other.

Jacko's, just the word alone, fed your body's heated fantasies, and it made no odds somehow that the scene of those fantasies was a place you had known for so long that it was as ordinary as your own back yard. It was changed, it was charged. And why shouldn't it be? Hadn't your body worked the same trick on you? And what could be more familiar than that?

What Jacko's evoked now was not just the dusty tracks with their dried leaves and prickles that your bare feet had travelled a thousand times and whose every turning led to a destination you knew and had a name for, but a place, enticing, unentered, for which the old name, to remain appropriate, had to be interpreted in a new way, as if it had belonged all the time to another and secret language. ...

Those four and a half acres, dark under the moon on starriest nights, could expand in the heat of Christmas months towards Easter till they filled a disproportionate area of your head. (Malouf Dream Stuff 96)

Like the body, the landscape offers a site for reinterpretation during the process of becoming adult.

Boyhood exploration and youthful sexual exploration are closely linked in these texts, often occurring (as with Jacko's) in the same landscape. Traditional representations of land as female mean that the vocabulary of discovery and conquest from boyhood landscape is easily applied to the female body from the perspective of the young male. Sexual explorations are thus frequently mapped in terms reminiscent of colonial representations of landscape, rather than in the more nationalist terms used to describe other markers of maturity, such as the hunt or war experiences. In Gee's story "Eleventh Holiday", for example, young Frank Milich desires Cheryl, only to be made "sick with the thought of what he could not have". (Gee Stories 114) He deals with her (perceived) rejection by swimming to a distant island, a journey reminiscent of colonial exploration. The "danger", "salty wetness on his tongue" and aching chest he feels during the swim suggest his sublimated desire. Conquest of the body of water is followed by conquest of the body of land:

the island, with its rock dome and dark green bush was bending over him. ... A line of undergrowth pointed against him but he broke a path through it, shaking off fern leaves that gripped him like hands. Strength from the swim filled him. He climbed easily. Then he broke from the bush and stood on the island's rock forehead. He had never known such exhilaration. The huge sea, the land, the beaches were all below him. He had beaten everything. (Gee Stories 115)

The anthropomorphising of the island enhances Frank's triumph and erases his earlier failure with Cheryl. Watching Cheryl's return to "the small safe cluster of cottages", Frank dances and whoops on the island "like a redskin on the warpath" and screams an assertion of selfhood: "I'm me!" (Gee Stories 115) Thus Frank's swim and climb simultaneously provide the right to claim conquest

over the body of the land, the suggestion of indigenous belonging and an assertion of individual identity beyond the reaches of feminine social safety.

Gee, like Malouf, shows the boyhood adventure ground translated into a place to embrace or reject newly discovered manhood. In the novel *In My Father's Den*, Andrew's sexual awakening is depicted as a crisis that sends him fleeing the 'pure' social domain to the wilderness. After masturbation, he refuses to let his mother touch him, and makes "dawn trips to the creek to get rid of the bits of rag he used." (Gee Father's Den 56) In contrast, his brother Paul continues to see the creek a site for exploration, now of his romantic and physical yearnings. He first sees his girlfriend Joyce "in the middle of the spring-bridge" (Gee Father's Den 89) over the creek, as she crosses a natural boundary and enters what he perceives as his territory.

Landscape is an integral part of Paul and Joyce's relationship; they turn to a variety of environments to test and discover their common ground as they discover first love. Joyce relates only to tamed and possessed land, articulating her opinions in genteel social terms reminiscent of colonial values. She believes "Wadesville was nice, it was pretty. She liked the orchards. (I smiled complacently.)" (Gee Father's Den 90) The aesthetic of Paul's land, and his ownership of it, win approval; he plays on this for romantic effect. He confesses that he is "no farmer, not really even a countryman" and says "I came to think of the orchard as no more than a suitably picturesque setting for my love affairs." (Gee Father's Den) While Joyce appreciates the picturesque, she responds negatively to Paul's attempts to use wider landscapes to impress her. Paul says no-one else knows of the local swimming hole, hoping this boyhood discovery and conquest narrative will prove his masculinity, but instead hooks Joyce's conventional reading of the wilderness as dirty and threatening. While Paul dives headlong, choosing penetration as an escape from an awkward social silence, Joyce's primary concern is to keep her head above water and remain uncontaminated. Once Paul mentions the resident lobsters, Joyce never swims in Wadesville creek again. Yet Paul finds Joyce's discomfort endearing because it ensures her dependence. A trip to Auckland's wild west coast proves Joyce's

reluctance to engage with the wilderness and prompts him to move the relationship in a new direction.

The huge waves frightened her, the desolate track of sand vanishing into haze made her feel unhappy. I drove her home, tenderly aware of how much she needed me. The next Sunday we went to Mission Bay, where she swam happily in the six-inch waves and kept a critical eye on the new season's bathing suits. (Gee Father's Den 93)

Joyce's preference for calm water and the socially inhabited environment (complete with current fashions) demonstrates a conventional colonial reading of unmediated wilderness as "desolate" and overwhelming. Joyce is clearly out of her depth in New Zealand's wilder waters, refusing to immerse herself in creek or ocean, both shaping forces for Paul. However, she wallows in the unthreatening (and slightly sexually suggestive) six-inch waves of the calm harbour beach. Discrepancies between Paul and Joyce's responses to the environment are used to highlight their difference and foreshadow the coming rift in their relationship.

The orchard therefore becomes the landscape of Joyce and Paul's relationship. Picturesque, useful, owned and fenced, it meets colonial aesthetic criteria and therefore poses no threat to Joyce's socially determined sensibilities; Paul, as owner, can exhibit his masculine possession of land and girl simultaneously. In this pastoral paradise, Paul loads Joyce's hands with apples. Symbol of knowledge and sexual awareness since the Garden of Eden, the apple serves here as a conventional representation of a conventional love affair. In this unchallenging landscape, Paul takes gentle possession of Joyce through the "demi-vierge" incident – as he himself says, "I lay on her in a gentlemanly way" (Gee Father's Den 94). Rather than roughly conquering her, he conquers himself, maintaining innocence through restraint. Joyce's nature, reflected in the refined nature that surrounds them, dictates the manner of his sexual experimentation. Like the orchard, Joyce must be cultivated rather than dominated. Paul later describes this defining incident by conflating the place and the woman. "My boyhood might appear in sepia tones" he says, "but the orchard and Joyce (one thing) was red and green and golden." (Gee Father's Den 132)

Gee uses landscape colour in a similar way in *The Big Season*. Rob and Carol's first date is on a day "all green and gold and blue, when they had driven out to the beach". (Gee Season 51) As in childhood encounters, the beach and creek here provide locations for human bonding. The two young people connect with each other and with a romanticised past as they follow

a path over the hills away from the crowd to a small beach where breakers fell in long solid lines into cliffs of bright white sand. A creek cut the beach in two. They waded along it into the bush, into a world of shadow and stillness. Tiny fish fanned away from their feet and gnats rose in gritty clouds from stretches of sidewater. They felt like adventurers – nobody had been here before, nobody since the old Maori tribes. The pebbles under their feet had the feeling of worn-down bones. Age-old cobwebs, heavy with bark-scales and the skeletons of insects, had to be parted before they could carry on. Defending themselves against awe, they grew noisy. They chased the fish and beat the gnats; they balanced on rocks, sometimes together, precariously, feeling their feet crumple the thick-pile moss overgrowing them. The creek lost its mystery. They bounced pebbles along its reaches and floated leaf boats to bombard. The bush echoed with their laughter when they discovered an old sardine tin; this they sailed triumphantly ahead of them as they continued their march of exploration.

When they came back they lay in a sand hollow for half an hour, watching two surf-casters expertly arching their weighted lines over the tumbling breakers. Then they returned along the hill path. Out beyond the bar they saw the grey fan-shapes of two huge stingrays, and in a rocky cove far beneath them a spear fisherman in red trunks was swimming just beyond reach of whipping seaweed. (Gee Season 51-52)

In this more adventurous encounter, leaving the crowd allows the young couple to cover new ground together. Discovery makes the place mysterious. What the two discover is love and sexual attraction, a path new to them, though well-worn by others. They see themselves going where "nobody had been before", despite being minutes from a popular bathing spot. The passage reiterates pairing, from the private beach "cut in two" to the two expert surf-casters and the pair of stingrays.

Rob and Carol's exploration also echoes colonial settler understandings. The trail is new only to white feet; the "old Maori tribes" are acknowledged as prior adventurers. Yet the potentially awe-inspiring tangible past, with its "worn-down bones" and "age-old cobwebs", is easily brushed aside in a rush to create their own romantic narrative. Dead leaves and discarded commercial rubbish become conquering vessels on this "march of exploration" – a grandiose

description of a brief venture into a semi-wilderness within easy reach of 'civilisation' and its markers of company and contamination. However, this exploration beyond common experience leads to a commonality of experience that allows closeness. Driving home, Rob "found she was different. One of her hands lay beside her knee, its fingers loosely curled, and because of those few hours spent together he could take it, without feeling nervous, without a decision." (Gee Season 52) Landscape here facilitates the youthful relationship by serving as an 'other' that encourages the human explorers to recognise their similarities.

In a later novel, *Going West*, Gee's protagonist Jack repeatedly sites romance on the beach. Going "down on the beach for a woo" offers a wilderness of sorts, beyond prying parental eyes yet not too far from the security of society. Jack loses his virginity on one of northern Auckland's beautiful beaches.

We went to Orewa for a week, over New Year, four of us, Loomis boys, Mt. Albert Grammar boys, with our tent and our groundsheet and our blankets, our baked beans and beer, our frenchies and our troubling virginity. (Gee Going West 64)

Orewa beach is initially established as a place of masculine bonding; 'roughing it' camping provides physical challenge, and the baked beans and beer are signifiers of New Zealand's masculine cultural inheritance. However, the beach is quickly transformed into a site for sexual coupling. Facing his first sexual experience, the young man is able to get his girl alone but remain in a sense in company; as Jack says, "the dunes accommodated dozens of couples". (Gee Going West 66) When Jack and his girl, Sarah, take to their dune, "although we didn't do it exactly right, Sarah was just as pleased as I. (It wasn't quite her first time.) We walked on the beach afterwards, back and forth." (Gee Going West 66) The beach walk, with its back and forth action, is a coupling too; as an equalising space for male and female, the beach allows the "back and forth" of conversation as well as coitus. Jack expresses his surprise that "you could talk with girls" (Gee Going West 66), a discovery that the liminal space has made possible. Like the child Jack's acceptance of Milt on the beach in Malouf's "At Schindler's", the beach site allows Gee's young adult Jack to make a genuine connection and reach an increased understanding of sexuality.

As a young man, Gee's Jack inscribes the landscape with his newfound desire, seeing sex (and that other adult mystery, death) in the places he explores during this period, whether new or familiar. Riding out to Auckland's west coast beaches with Rex, both youths fall in love with the dramatic speed, risk and adventure, having "an expectation in our minds of sea and cliff and sand – movement overturning on itself, height leaning in and leaning out, the body overturning, the mind starting to fall – desire, revelation, perhaps death." (Gee Going West 74) Even the familiar route of Jack's bus trip to town takes on a new dimension in light of his adulthood, and he begins to see adult mysteries in the simplest landscape features of cemetery and hills.

Oh the plunge into the valley in the ramshackle bus. Was it death (those thousand grinning skulls underground) or was it sex? The twin slopes opened out like thighs, with a little hump there, pubic mount. (Gee Going West 3)

The landscape continues to be an expression of the emotional self for Jack, providing an external representation of the desire and fear of his own body.

The sexualised landscape can work to illustrate connection, or represent the gulf of separation between self and other. When Jack visits the North Shore with his fiancée, Harry, there is conflict between youthful sexuality (his) and childhood nostalgia (hers). He describes the grassy side of Mt. Victoria as

almost sheer, with terraces that seemed designed as handholds; and it made me think of Harry, breasts and hips, and making love. Her mood was different, she had arrived at childhood places and did not need me. ... When I touched her in the way that had become our sign she said sharply, 'Don't do that.' (Gee Going West 123)

Once again, Jack projects desire onto the landscape, only to have his acting out of that desire rejected by a different and conflicting reading of the place.

At moments of rejection or transition, Harry and Jack repeatedly turn to the landscape, but in different ways. From Mt. Victoria, the pair make their way down to Takapuna Beach. On the sand, Harry discovers that her childhood home has been knocked down; the landscape has changed and her history has been erased. She seeks solace not from Jack, but in solitary escape into the natural environment, revisiting her past as writ in the rocky shoreline. Rex takes a swim, leaving Jack alone. Looking at the beach where Harry has gone and at

the sea where Rex is swimming back towards him, Jack feels suddenly certain of himself.

Although he was coming towards me and Harry moving away I seemed to stay equally distant from them both. Their singleness put them out of reach – the girl (the woman) I had thought to possess intimately, by intense communication, mental and physical, over six months, and the man (friend) learned over almost twenty years. Each was wrapped in self, impenetrable; and that knowledge was suddenly the defining edge of me – it elated me. (Gee Going West 126)

This recognition of individual separateness, particularly with reference to the beloved, is generally recognised by psychiatry as a defining feature of adult love relationships. Psychiatrist Dr. Mark Epstein describes Otto Kernberg's work on mature sexual love, explaining that he

made much of this capacity to tolerate one's lover's separateness. 'The beloved,' he made clear, 'presents himself or herself simultaneously as a body which can be penetrated and a consciousness which is impenetrable.' There is always an element of separation in even the most profound union. 'Love is the revelation of the other person's freedom,' he concluded. (Epstein 155)

Thus Jack's elation on the beach shows a moment of transition into adulthood. In his acceptance of Harry and Rex's otherness, Jack recognises himself. He accepts his own selfhood as a "defining edge" that requires the presence of the other but also accepts its inevitable separation from the other.

Separation and closeness run throughout descriptions of young love in these texts, and the emotional tumult of such experiences is figured by both Gee and Malouf through use of wild weather. Carolyn Masel, in an article on Canadian and Australian fiction, argues that because the majority of the population has no experience of the culturally formative landscape beyond cities and suburbs, "various metonymies for the authentic landscape, bearing the equivalent cultural freight, are often substituted for the landscape itself. The most common of these is the weather." (Masel 162) This substitution is evident in *The Big Season*, where Rob's openness to a rainstorm differentiates him from the buttoned-up conservative townsfolk.

The rain was fresh on his face; it made him feel new, as though his skin were newly uncovered, feeling air for the first time. He ran, jumping and side-stepping puddles, passing coated picture-going people, who strode along with shoulders hunched and heads down. (Gee Season 78)

Images of renewal here suggest baptism, as if the water rebirths Rob as an independent adult. His embracing the rain illustrates his heightened sensuality, later translated into sexuality. The breaking storm suggests the breaking of barriers of propriety, and prompts Rob to push an unwilling Carol for a sexual encounter. As the rain gets heavier, Rob grips Carol's arm and "knew that he was in control, she was more his than he had ever hoped she could be." However, they are forced to take shelter as the weather worsens.

The rain became thicker. They moved closer to the trunk of the tree. But heavy drops fell from its leaves and branches, as wetting as the rain itself. He looked about him desperately. The trees behind were no thicker than the one they were under. And ahead was only the long unsheltered climb up Palmer's Hill. (Gee Season 88)

Though the extremity of the weather gives Rob an excuse for extreme behaviour, the small town's suburban streets offer no suitable space for sexual exploration or conquest. There is no place beyond social structures.

Facing a dead end, Rob eventually takes Carol to the rugby ground, the ultimate socialised space in this rugby-obsessed town. On this 'safe' ground, and out of the weather, Carol evades Rob's advances and expresses sexual disgust; she says that another couple's sexual noises make them sound "like animals". Rob's response is to "let his bitterness out in one cry: 'I'm surprised you recognize the sound.'" However, neither Rob nor Carol holds a grudge for long. "He took her hand and started for the stile, welcoming the strong cold smack of rain on his face. Soon they were yelling and laughing as they ran." (Gee Season 91) Carol can enjoy the rain, though not the release it signifies for Rob; Rob can allow his anger and hurt to be washed away by the wild weather and forgive Carol her rejection. Ironically, Carol sees the storm as inducing uncharacteristic behaviour, saying later, "Doesn't the rain make people say silly things?" (Gee Season 94) Conversely, Rob feels the weather's extremity has remade him as more accurately himself – more honest, if not more civilised.

In *Going West*, Gee uses the storm metaphor in the depiction of Jack and Harry's first sexual coupling. Here both partners welcome the physical abandon the weather facilitates.

Wind and sleet, Wellington weather. ... We splashed in running gutters and skated on the grass and Harry sat down and slid. I took her by the legs and ran with her and when she had enough speed let her go and she went a hundred feet on her back, turning slowly, sliding quick, down the hill towards the trees. I thought I had killed her. She went between two trunks, curving fast, with her legs crooked upwards and her oilskin flaps between her thighs, and gave a dying shriek - what was it, pain, delight? – as the flat ground slowed her down. I ran after her and spun off trees, skinned my palms, and overtook her as she came to a stop. She lay in the dark with her white face shining at me. 'I want to do it again.' Now isn't that better than sex? (Gee Going West 116)

Spinning through the botanical gardens, Harry surrenders to her environment, relinquishing control. The playful episode prefigures the actual sexual encounter – Jack's desire is written into the landscape of the place and the woman in it, from the "two trunks", the "legs crooked upward", the "flaps between her thighs" and the "dying shriek" of the *petite mort*.

Though in the socially constructed landscape of the botanical gardens, the couple's use of the space shows them engaged in genuinely original exploration; they choose to be there in wild weather, use the slippery slopes in new ways and discover each other beyond the comfortable confines of the bedroom. Despite the "puddles on the asphalt floor", this landscape offers more scope than Jack's flat, with its "landlady guarding the door" and its tacked-up rules: "no alcohol, no noise, no visitors – meaning no girls." As Jack ruefully observes, "The roofs should have blown off some of those Wellington houses with the suppressed pressures inside." (Gee Going West 116) In a stultified society, sexual discovery must take place outside normative social spaces. Jack feels "we were lucky":

All sorts of things go wrong in beds. There's nothing much can go wrong in a shelter on a wet and windy frozen Sunday night. Standing upright. In puddles. On bricks.

Our first time was memorable. (Gee Going West 117)

Even within the cultivated garden, the weather provides an excuse to read the ordinary environment as wilderness, making it uninhabited, exciting and even slightly dangerous. Gee repeats this motif elsewhere in his fictions: John and Alice laugh in the thunderstorm in "A Sleeping Face"; Nancy and Joseph take a blustery bicycle ride in Wellington in *Live Bodies*; Jack and Fiona nearly initiate an affair on rain-lashed Petone beach in *Going West*. In contrast, fair weather is

standard for Gee's socially conventional marriages, which generally end unhappily. *A Special Flower* sees Coralie and Donald marry on a "fine spring day" when the weather is "superb. Ideal for a wedding." (Gee Special Flower 21) When Violet and James marry in *The Scornful Moon*, "the wind, uninvited, stayed away, and the sun, knowing its business, flooded the city in its bowl with warmth and light – this happy little city that framed the young couple so beautifully." (Gee Scornful Moon 10-11) Both weddings begin pairings that lead to despair and end with the untimely death of one of the partners. Gee thus works against conventional use of fine weather as a positive image of hope.

Malouf uses rain in a similar fashion to Gee in *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* during the first overtly sexual contact between Adair and Virgilia. Malouf begins by locating Adair and describing the affiliation between the character's locale and his inner state.

One day when he had abandoned the others to be on his own, he found himself in the new oak-grove Eamon Fitzgibbon had planted at the edge of the farm. ...

What had carried him here, or so he had thought, was a mood, the need to catch up for a moment with his own tumultuous feelings. But when he stepped in among them he realized that the trees too were in a state of disturbance. Midges swarmed in their shade. The heat that had begun to gather, and which he felt as a dampness at the base of his spine, had set off an electric quivering in the air. It was, he saw now, the beginnings of a storm. How odd, he thought, when he looked up at the sky. There was no sign of a cloud there, only the spasms of a distant restlessness. Yet his body had felt the change... (Malouf Conversations 80)

Adair asserts his separation from "the others", moving to the edge of his familiar environment – the boundary between known and unknown. The weather reflects Adair's youthful restlessness and anticipation (as for the protagonist of "Southern Skies"); the landscape's state is embodied by the young man's state, and vice versa. Adair feels himself "very finely adjusted, subtly attuned to everything that was happening here. The air crackled. All his senses were alert." (Malouf Conversations 81) By removing himself from society, he gains heightened sensitivity to self and environment.

This openness extends to the rainstorm and to his beloved, Virgilia. As she and the storm approach, Adair chooses not to run for shelter.

He stood with his hands raised, rejoicing, when they came, in the first big splashes that wet his cheeks and darkened his shirt. Then, almost immediately, there was such a downrush of water that he might have been beaten flat into the earth. He was drenched – hair, clothes, skin – and staggering. The field turned to mud, then to liquid mud, he could barely keep upright in it. He heard his name called...

It was Virgilia, who had come out looking for him. She too was soaked, her garments liquefied, revealing the small risen breasts. She came up to him, laughing, reached for his hand, and clasped it as if she might otherwise have slipped and drowned. 'What are you doing?' she shouted.

He shook his head. For explanation he raised her hand and set it on his breast, as if it was there she would find her answer: the flesh under his clinging shirt, in the clamouring of his heart. He felt freed by this new element they were in. To be drenched like this was a kind of nakedness. He lifted her hand to his mouth, as he never could have done if they were in the presence of furniture. She did not object. When he lowered it, he let his head tilt forward and his lips found the softness of her neck. He was entirely without experience. Each of these actions was for itself. He did not think of them as leading anywhere.

The rain continued to hold them. As long as it lasted it was as if they had at last stepped outside the permitted and ordinary. But after a little her hand came up to his chest and pushed him off. He saw then that the rain was easing. They were in clear outline again and facing one another. But she was smiling.

...what pleased her, he discovered after a time, was the belief that he had changed, had broken through into some part of himself where he was reckless. But it wasn't that. He had from beginning to end been following his body – that was all; doing what it wanted, what it told him to do. (Malouf Conversations 80-83)

As in *Gee*, the rain defines a space for the characters to inhabit in the moment of intimacy. Once the storm passes, so does the opportunity for coupling. Thus wild weather acts as a transformational force in these texts, bringing a wilderness element into a tamer socialised landscape and rendering it 'other'. Thus the young assert their difference and yet connect with others, "outside the permitted and the ordinary" and beyond "the presence of furniture" and the social constraints implied by the conventional detritus of the home.

The traditional masculine hunting ritual provides the young Antipodean man with another means to prove himself in conquest of the other. M. H. Holcroft notes the tendency for New Zealand writers "to treat the hunt as a rite of initiation" and goes on to say that dozens of stories depict

the boy who kills his first deer or his first wild duck. He sets out confidently, always with someone older and experienced, a good man

with a gun; and at the first sight of blood he enters a spiritual crisis: he wants to draw back, sickened by what he has seen as a proud animal kicks out its life in the stained bracken, or a bird checks in flight and plunges with reddening feathers. But he's afraid of being despised as a weakling; and presently, this fear overcome, he feels the old excitement of the tribe, makes his killing, and wins the approval of his friends. It's a New Zealand version of the entry into manhood which is arranged ritually among primitive tribes. I have encountered this theme so often that I must believe it to come from an attitude, perhaps a conflict, shared widely in a subconscious way. (Holcroft 45)

Both Malouf and Gee offer coming-of-age pig-hunting stories, Gee in *The Big Season* and Malouf in the short story "The Valley of Lagoons". However, in Gee's and Malouf's postcolonial contexts, the hunt narrative is less straightforward than in Holcroft's neat summary. Going into this masculine world, Gee's and Malouf's characters confront human vulnerability – fear, lovesickness, falling sickness – rather than attaining mastery and belonging through killing. In these landscapes, it is not the suffering of animals that triggers disgust or empathy (the protagonists fail to shoot their prey) but the suffering of people. Gee and Malouf thus demonstrate the ambiguity of rituals of belonging.

Chapter 8 of *The Big Season* ends with two stalwart townsfolk agreeing that "Rob Andrews bore the mark of Cain" (Gee Season 110) in condemnation of his choice to go pig-hunting rather than play rugby. In Wainui, the measure of masculine conquest has shifted; it is on the sports ground, not the hunting ground, that a young man must prove himself. The next chapter opens with Rob, Arnie and Bill Waters leaving town:

They turned north from the Wairoa road towards the Ureweras and entered a country of parallel and cross-hatched ridges and gullies. The black Waikaremoana bush gave place to crisp looking second growth and tiny overhung farms. They drove up a valley and rounded a bluff into an area where many of the ridges were cleared, dotted with groins of inaccessible bush and white erosion marks. (Gee Season 110)

Rob chooses to leave the main road and adventure into rugged land, where settler presence is tenuous. The Ureweras were the natural stronghold of Maori resistance only a hundred years earlier in New Zealand's history, and the passage shows the bush reclaiming settled land, with "second growth" making farms seem precarious, tiny and "overhung".

Bill describes this land as “Home territory”, making a claim for indigenous status reinforced by his recollections:

Bill pointed out landmarks and places he had known as a boy. Behind his calm they sensed excitement and pleasure. He pointed to a cloudy-green river and a pool with limestone cliff above it. Here he used to swim, travel five miles across country from the farm-house to be with a group of Maoris, one of whom became his first woman. ... The bush on the left hand side of this road stretched unbroken to the powerful clenched shape of Panekiri’s bluff. Under the pale sunset it was black and oily and had the appearance of tight Polynesian curls. Bill and his Maori girl had hidden there once for two days. Nobody believed their story that they had been lost. (Gee Season 111)

Bill demonstrates that his youthful relationship with the landscape and the indigenous people was transgressive of colonially established boundaries, at least according to ‘respectable’ (Pakeha) society. The result of his explorations – geographical and sexual – is a “hiding” from his father, patriarchal representative of social mores. Yet such youthful transgression attracts Rob to Bill and the bush; disapproval and discomfort let Rob define himself against ‘soft’ established society. Rob revels in the tough terrain; though Bill gets discouraged, “Rob, who was fitter, was enjoying the fight against the bush and the steep gully walls.” (Gee Season 119) Like the colonial pioneer, Rob also carries another set of cultural landscape narratives. Encountering easier land, he relates it immediately to elsewhere:

The grass here was springy and rich; it folded firmly into the stream in a way that reminded Rob of photos he’d seen of the English countryside. The clouds suddenly broke and sunlight filled the valley, striking the heated faces of the men, making the stream sparkle, lightening the colour of the patch of bush.

‘This is like English countryside,’ said Rob.

But as he spoke the sunlight passed. The bush darkened. And from somewhere in its heart they heard pig-squealing and a series of flat solid grunts. (Gee Season 120)

The ideal of English countryside proves illusory in the New Zealand context – a trick of the light and of socially-conditioned perception. The landscape is not really like England, and the changeable weather reinforces its difference, transforming it into something darker and potentially more threatening.

Rob perceives the bush more accurately when it is aligned with the body. The bush is heart-shaped, and the men hunt “in its heart”. Like going into the water, going into the bush gets to the heart of the self – pretence is washed away to reveal the unique and individual self. However, threat remains omnipresent.

The chest-high fern closed round him like murky water. Below it, like eels in a creek, there must be pigs, lying quietly, hearing him come close. ... He listened for Bill and heard nothing. His eyes went ahead, but discovered only more darkneses, more impenetrable hollows in the bush. He drew his rifle down till it guarded his chest. He went on, parting the fern and ti-tree with belly and thighs that seemed no part of him, seemed to be ahead, offered up to be slashed and torn. He went on. He sweated. He broke and plunged. He saw light, a lane in the bush, grass. He ran. (Gee Season 121)

The short sentences show Rob’s tension. The dark environment renders him senseless – he sees and hears nothing to offer him safety until he reaches the lucus of the clearing. Yet he returns into the bush twice more, challenging himself and proving his masculine maturity to Bill. Both men fear, but both are also angry when no tangible reward is won for conquering fear; the pigs remain hidden, posing less threat but less opportunity for glory. “They stood and stared into the bush. Baffled, angry, they fired a couple of shots into it. It was some time before they could bring themselves to go on.” (Gee Season 122)

Facing fear shows Rob has matured since he took solace in a romanticised appreciation of the garden while feeling cowardly for not acknowledging his friendship with Bill Walters.

Scared. Well, what of it? Nothing was important. Except the plum-trees. The plum-trees were like sailing-ships going into the night. An armada almost becalmed. The faint breeze touching his face lifted their sails. He drifted with them, in a world where his failures had no existence. (Gee Season 49)

While the soft imaginary world of orchard fantasy allows Rob to quell his romantic inadequacies by dreaming, the harsh bush lets him conquer fear of being separate. Likewise, the pig-hunting episode shows Rob has developed since his earlier failure with Carol in the rain. Finding Arnie unconscious in the bush, Rob realises Arnie is genuinely helpless; Rob is thus empowered to conquer the situation in a genuinely heroic way. “Rob felt an exhilaration at the ease with which he withstood the swamping attacks of the water, which found

its way to every corner and hollow of his body.” (Gee Season 120) Though the landscape provides ample obstacles, Rob is confident he will prevail.

The track became a watercourse, about eighteen inches deep and only a little wider. Several times Rob tripped against its walls and had to support himself on the yielding scrub. His boots slogged through water he could not see and became heavier and heavier. But as he went on he felt occasional surges of joy. He knew he could keep going. (Gee Season 128)

Like Jack’s elation on the beach, Rob’s joy signifies his acceptance of the boundaries of his adult self, and his awareness of his capacity to survive and transcend his anxieties in his encounters with the other, be it landscape, animal or human.

Malouf’s recent book of short stories opens with the “The Valley of Lagoons”, a tale of a boy’s first pig-hunting expedition in the style of patriarchal bush literature, rife with mateship and desire for sublime mastery over the brute forces of nature. Yet the story’s wry self-reflexive quality undermines these elements and foregrounds the way the social imaginary constructs place. Social and narrative structures are shown to dictate conventional masculine engagement with the landscape. Long before Angus ventures into the hunt landscape, he hears stories of the valley and is drawn to “the magic of the name itself” (Malouf Every Move 3). Yet the place-name does not exist according to formal records: “it was not marked on the wall-map in our third-grade schoolroom and I could not find it in any atlas; which gave it the status of secret place...” (Malouf Every Move 4) Imbued with the mystery of oral tradition, this landscape is mythologised as a true wilderness, beyond social sanctioned maps and known only to a select few. “It was there, but only in our heads. It had a history, but only in the telling...” (Malouf Every Move 4) Angus breathlessly eavesdrops on the narratives of the older boys, waiting for the day when he will join the circle of experience and prove his worth as both actor and storyteller. Like the Australian nation, he aspires to make his mark on history. (Malouf suggests this relationship between character and nation by having Angus nicknamed “Australia” by Stuart, his friend Braden’s brother, later in the story.)

In “The Valley of the Lagoons”, Braden, Stuart, and Angus’s sister Katie offer other narratives of the transition of coming-of-age, all figured through their responses to place. Both Katie and Braden are ready to leave their small town for the city. Katie passionately says, “I’ve got to get out... I’ve got to. Nothing will ever happen if I stay here.” (Malouf Every Move 22) As a young woman, without access to the testing ground of the wilderness, Katie’s world is limited to the stuff of ordinary feminine society – silly novels, the possibility of marriage – and she imagines Brisbane will offer greater possibilities. Though Braden has access to traditional rites of passage, he is drawn into the world of cybernetics, which Angus and Braden’s family fail to understand. Braden succeeds at the pig-hunt, shooting his pig while Angus is left holding the dogs. In his successful kill, Braden does, in Holcroft’s words, feel “the excitement of the tribe” and “win the approval of his friends”. Even in this triumphant moment, however, Braden and Angus know Braden’s real path to adulthood lies in a different direction:

He had wanted it to go well for his father’s sake as much as his own; out of a wish, just this once and for this time only, to be all that his father wanted him to be. All that Glen wanted him to be as well, and Stuart, because this was the last time they would be together in this way. When he left at the beginning of the new year it would be for a life he would never come back from; even if he did, physically, come back. (Malouf Every Move 37)

Malouf makes clear that only for Braden’s older brother Glen does the act carry ‘rite of passage’ significance. Angus realises that “Glen saw nothing at all” of Braden’s separation, because Glen cannot comprehend Braden could ever imagine

anything finer or more real than what had just been revealed to him: the deep connection between himself and these men he was with; his even deeper connection with that force out there, animal, ancient, darkly close and mysterious, which, when he had stood against it and taken upon himself the solemn distinction of cancelling it out, he had also taken in, as a new and profounder being. (Malouf Every Move 38)

Braden challenges the validity of Glen’s conventionally masculine view of the transformative power of the conquest of wilderness. Angus and Stuart are more perceptive than Glen, however. Stuart is afraid of the separation between himself and Braden, as Angus has already observed:

I think it scared him to have someone who was close, and who ought therefore to have been knowable, turn out to be so far from anything he could get a hold on. It suggested that the world itself might be beyond

his comprehension, but also beyond his control. (Malouf Every Move 14)

This failure to accept Braden's new independence is one of a series of Stuart's failures of maturity in this story. Most significantly, he fails to conquer Katie, who dumps him after a tempestuous year of dating.

Stuart's struggle with defining aspects of masculinity comes to a head during the pig-hunt. Angus observes Stuart's adolescent angst (and his own) in a wilderness context supposed to make men of them both. As Elizabeth Lowry says, the pig-hunt is "the nexus for the story's energies: restless masculinity, adolescent disaffection, and Angus's abiding but unspecified self-doubts."

(Lowry 19) Though Angus has been an unwilling party to Stuart's wooing of Katie and his awkward attempts at mateship, 'going bush' provides the crucible that pulls them together. As Angus says, "I didn't want to be responsible for his feelings, and it worried me that out here there was no escape from him."

(Malouf Every Move 45) Yet each time Stuart reveals his vulnerability, Angus rejects it: the landscape provides him with an escape route. He literally retreats from Stuart's pain, which "violated the only code, as I saw it then, that offered us protection: tight-lipped understatement, endurance. What else could we rely on? What else could I rely on?" (Malouf Every Move 48) Angus depends on masculine codes of conduct in dealing with feelings; unable to face Stuart, or his response to Stuart, he goes bush. Yet depictions of his location suggest that his certainty is unfounded:

The ground with its rough tussock was swampy, unsteady underfoot, the foliage on the stunted trees sparse and darkly colourless, their trunks blotched with lichen. I had no idea where I was headed or how far I needed to go to escape my own unsettlement. (Malouf Every Move 48)

The landscape reflects Angus' state – swampy and unsteady, ill-defined, neither one thing nor another. Blotchy trees suggest adolescent spottiness. Angus projects his insecurity onto his environment and sees it mirrored back.

Nevertheless, he reaches a level of understanding through such reflection:

I walked. And as I moved deeper into the solitude of the land, its expansive stillness – which was not stillness in fact but an interweaving of close but distant voices so dense that they became one, and then mere background, then scarcely there at all – I began to forget my own disruptive presence, receding as naturally into what hummed and shimmered all round me as into a dimension of my own being that it had

taken my coming out here, alone, in the slumbrous (sic) hour after midday, to uncover. I felt drawn, drawn on. (Malouf Every Move 49)

Self seems to be revealed in hard slog through the bush. The ambiguous final line opens multiple possibilities: the place draws Angus by providing a defining background; it beckons him to explore it further; it draws on him, requiring him in order to be defined by being seen and heard; and it draws on him, indelibly, so that he says later in the story he feels he will always bear the mark of the place.

Malouf suggests an alternative narrative of connecting with place in operation for others of the hunting party. In contrast to Angus's rootless wandering, Matt Riley is shown to have history that connects him to the place. He leads the shooting party because this is his "grandmother's country"; this relationship means that "the moment he entered it he had a different status: that was the accepted but unspoken ground of his authority." (Malouf Every Move 37) The phrase 'grandmother's country' refers, "without raising too precisely the question of blood, to the relationship a man might stand in to a particular tract of land, that went deeper and further back than legal possession." (Malouf Every Move 40) To the knowing, this maternal lineage automatically implies Aboriginal claim, a connection with the land distinct from patriarchal colonial inheritance. In contrast, the grandfathers' claim to the land is that

they had made it with their bare hands... Doing whatever had to be done to make it theirs in spirit as well as fact. Brooking no question, and suffering, one guesses, no regrets, since such work was an arm of progress and of God's good muscular plan for the world. (Malouf Every Move 40)

In contrast to this linear, masculine, God-sanctioned conquest, Matt's arrival in the valley allows him to re-enter "a part of himself that was continuous with the place, and with a history the rest of us had forgotten or never known." (Malouf Every Move 40) Unlike Angus, Matt does not have to search for belonging in this landscape.

Angus knows he cannot relate to the land with Matt's easy authority any more than he can fulfil the requirements of the conquest mode that Glen embodies.

Angus' expectations, created by the many narratives surrounding the place, are finally thwarted by limitations of those very narratives.

Away back, when I first heard about the Valley and let it form itself in my mind, I had thought that everything I found unsatisfactory in myself, in my life but also in my nature, would come right out here, because that is what I had seen, or thought I had, in others. Kids who had been out here, and whom I had thought of till then as wild and scattered, had come back settled in their own aggregation of muscle, bone and flesh, and in some new accommodation with the world.

Nothing like that had come to me. I was no more settled, no less confused. I would bring back nothing that would be visible to others – to my father, for instance. I had lost something; that was more like it. But happily. As I walked on into this bit of grey-green nondescript wilderness I was happily at home in myself. But in my old self, not a new one.
(Malouf Every Move 50)

Unable to impress his father or the men of the hunting party (he never fires a shot, even when given the opportunity), Angus has lost the illusion of the 'rite of passage' that will make him a man. In doing so, he feels he has found himself as an individual – a satisfaction Malouf is quick to undermine, as Angus realises almost immediately after his assertion of being "happily at home" that he is lost in the bush. In finding himself, he loses his way.

Angus's crisis of identity is interrupted by a more dramatic youthful trauma. Hearing a shot, Angus follows the sound and discovers Stuart helpless in the bush, having shot himself in the leg. Angus interprets this as an act of desperation intended for Katie, and his preconceptions are blown apart like Stuart's flesh. He says, "Maybe what I thought I knew about people – about Stuart, about myself – was unreliable. I looked at Stuart and saw, up ahead, something that had not come to me yet but must come some day." (Malouf Every Move 55) Angus glimpses the future of his own suffering – romantic, rather than physical – in Stuart's distress. Once again, he takes refuge in the landscape (though only metaphorically) when confronted with this moment of social awkwardness and self-revelation. Watching the men tend Stuart's injuries, Angus says:

And through it all, deep in myself, I was walking away fast into a freshening distance in which my own grime was being miraculously washed away.

Walking lightly. The long grass swishing round my boots as the sparse bush drew me on. Into the vastness of small sounds that was a

continent. To lose myself among its flutings and flutterings, the glow of its moist air and sun-charged chemical green, its traffic of unnumbered slow ingenious agencies. (Malouf Every Move 56)

This dreamscape – the land he carries in his own head, constructed by his own narratives – is the place Angus finally escapes to. No longer caught in other people’s competing narratives, he is cleansed and renewed; in losing himself, he feels safe and settled at last.

Time in the wilderness reveals the path Angus must take into adulthood. As the group leaves the bush to drive Stuart home, Angus sees “settlements I recognised” and realises that he will leave this familiar environment, just like Katie and Braden. However, he feels that the place is part of him forever:

But for me there could be no final leaving. This greenish light, full and luminous, always with a heaviness that was a reminder of the underlying dark – like the persistent memory, under even the most open of cleared land, of the ancient gloom of rainforests – was for me the light by which all moments of expectation and high feeling would in my mind for ever be touched. This was the country I would go on dreaming in, wherever I lay my head. (Malouf Every Move 59)

Malouf suggests that the real transition of youth is not found in direct engagement with the land, but in residual ideas of landscape that remain as the young adult moves into the wider world. The landscape the self inhabits is less important than the landscape that inhabits the self. Like Ulla in Gee’s *Crime Story*, who carries the Sweden of her youth with her to New Zealand and escapes there in dreams when she is paralysed, Angus has found a way to keep his local landscape alive beyond its physical presence through the transcendent power of personal narrative. At the end of the story, he drives off into the sunset singing “Goodnight Irene”, a “doleful tune, full of old hurt... the sad but consoling anthem of some loose republic of the heart, spontaneously established, sustained a moment, then easily let go.” (Malouf Every Move 59) His youthful expectation that the country will offer stability and definition has been replaced by recognition of the road to be travelled, and an understanding of contingency, mutability and constancy within change.

Several of Gee’s fictions end in a similar way, with the young adult on the road to their future. In the last pages of *Crime Story*, Ulla’s daughter Olivia comes to

terms with her mother's paralysis and imminent assisted suicide. As a marker of her maturity, Olivia drives in city traffic for the first time, integrating into the stream of adult life as she negotiates Wellington's city streets. *The Big Season* ends with Rob making a break for Auckland: "The car lurched into the corner that carried the main street on to the highway north." (Gee Season 188) Donald Hannah notes that "like so many other protagonists in the *bildungsroman*", Rob "stands on the threshold of a new life" as he leaves behind the town of his youth, but he also points out that Gee's exiles remain within national boundaries. "The flight of the godwit, so important in Robin Hyde's novel and covering such vast distances, for [Gee] is one that is kept well within the shores of New Zealand." (Hannah 81) Though moving into a newfound cityscape signifies transition to adulthood for Gee, the scope of the journey is generally domestic.

In *Crime Story*, Leeanne goes to Auckland, is Sione's girl for a season, and returns to Wellington with a child, a sure-fire signifier of her completed transition to adulthood. However, the most significant transition for Leeanne is shown in the shorter journey between Wellington and Wainuiomata. For much of the book, her memories of 'home' – Wainuiomata – are tinged with pride and nostalgia.

Up the hill they crawled and over the top, and suddenly it was a different world: the town in the valley, with bush all around. She had grown up here and when people said, 'You come from Wellington, eh?' she always answered, 'No I don't, I come from Wainuiomata, different place.' She had it in her mind, the streets and houses and shops and schools, like a map; and the park where she had watched the league from the time her father took her when she was four and sat her on his shoulders to see over the heads. Wellington, okay, sparkled when you got to the top of the hill; it shone in the night and the road leading to it was like a string of beads. But coming back was better – down the hill, top speed, screaming on the corners, coming home. Wainui was best. That was what she had believed all the time she was growing up. (Gee Crime Story 92)

Leeanne has internalised the place and made it part of her, rather than maintaining the critical visual perspective that she affords to Wellington, which is seen from above and away. She engages with Wainui at full speed, revelling in the twists and turns that bring her home.

However, her idealised engagement with this childhood landscape is tainted by the discovery that her brother Brent has committed murder and suicide. Adult experience reconfigures the landscape, and on a later journey to Wainuiomata, she notices different things:

Along by the harbour, on the earthquake fault. Up the hill, the crash hill, over the top.

'Look, Sam. Wainui.' He stood on her father's knee, holding him by the ear. 'I grew up there.' So did Brent. 'It's a good place, Sam. It's the best.' ... She saw the macrocarpa tree she had climbed as a girl – lopped now, butchered – across the football field, beside the creek. She saw the dry culvert where Brent had hidden with his comics and his stolen cigarettes. (Gee Crime Story 229)

Once corners were exciting; now they are part of “the crash hill”, located on “the earthquake fault”. Leeanne sees cracks underlying her place as she sees cracks underlying her social environment. Childhood's wide view is no longer possible; the butchered tree removes her platform even as it suggests the mangled bodies of her brother's victims. Her pride in coming from Wainui is a reminder that Brent was also born and bred here. Thus she claims Wainui as “a good place... the best” for her son Sam's sake, not her own. For Leeanne, home is now ambivalent; a landscape embodying the past, tainted by the present, but containing, in Sam, the possibility of hope for the future.

Gee frequently depicts journeys as markers of transition that show the young adult's volatile relationship with place. In *Going West*, Jack perceives the trip from Auckland to Wellington as a coming of age:

From Auckland to Wellington was falling down a chute. One rattled down, bruised by the Limited, and came through the tunnel with aching joints and unwilling eyes and an ugly taste in the mouth. The Limited subtracted intelligence, and smoke and edge and shifting edge and downwards motion seemed the whole of life. Then out of the tunnel and Wellington burst like a bomb. It opened like a flower, was lit up like a room, explained itself exactly, became the capital. Wellington convinced me, for a while, of the straightness of things. It never became, in forty years, my home. I was an outsider, and some of the magic comes from there; the enduring strangeness comes from there. But I had a sense of growing up, of doing the adult thing I had not believed in for Jack Skeat. At last my life has started, I said. (Gee Going West 90)

Coming “bruised” “out of the tunnel”, Jack feels his “life has started.” The train tunnel is a birth canal that allows him to be reborn into adult existence. Jack's

“outsider” status makes Wellington seem exotic, and it is figured as a place both mysterious and ordinary, being bomb and flower, room and explanation. His distance-dependent independence suggests the power of geographical separation to allow growth for the young adult.

Wellington becomes a representation of adulthood for another Aucklander in Gee’s *Sole Survivor*. During his first trip south with Duggy, Raymond Sole initiates a sexual adventure with Myra; Myra responds by twisting his balls. Sexually thwarted, Raymond turns to the landscape for solace and discovers belonging in his alienation. He staggers “out of houses into trees and blundered in the dark, sobbing my name”. Beyond suburbia, he rests among pine trees, asserting his identity by repeating his own name, and then imagining his annihilation as he contemplates drowning himself in the harbour. Such see-sawing modes of identification continue as he ventures further and becomes increasingly aware of the place:

On the hills over the city I found myself on a country track. Cold air. Pine trees heaving in a wind. Lights burned in Oriental Bay and pricked in suburbs at the back of the island, on the lower rim of huge black hills. The sky was clear, the moon was lemon-shaped. Stars trembled on the edge of going out. The harbour seemed to turn itself on and off. It was two things – flat white plate, porcelain and lovely – then a hole that opened into nothing. I watched it flick back and forth. Pain, humiliation, had me in a mildly visionary state, and this was my vision: people showing glow-worm lights on the edge of nothing. I thought it was a good one – it would do me. I promised I would live in Wellington. (Gee *Sole Survivor* 66)

That vision of lights surrounding nothing is an image of margin and centre that Raymond identifies with. Like the city, Raymond’s young self encompasses a dark void; the harbour reflects his emptiness. In the representation of surface and depth, the porcelain plate suggests a smooth social domesticity in the same space as dark emptiness. Everything he observes feeds back his own discomfort: the “heaving” trees; the lights that “burned” and “pricked”; the stars that “trembled” and threatened to go out. Raymond’s promise to return to Wellington embraces aspects of his fractured self. A new city can thus offer strangeness or familiarity; Jack loves Wellington because of its “strangeness”, Raymond thinks “it would do me” because it accurately reflects his youthful state.

In Malouf's fiction, rejections of the familiar landscapes of childhood lead young people to leave Antipodean 'backwaters' and go to European cities. However, the great Overseas Experience seldom provides the defining moment of selfhood the young adult expects. In *Johnno*, both Johnno and Dante seek beyond the "familiar and boring" social and physical landscape of Brisbane/Queensland/Australia (Malouf Johnno 20), which Johnno terms "the arsehole of the universe". (Malouf Johnno 83) At the age of twenty, as he packs to leave for the Congo, Johnno's plan is to

shit this bitch of a country right out of my system... At the end of every seven years you're completely new – did you know that? New fingernails, new hair, new cells. There'll be nothing left in me of bloody Australia. I'll be transmuted... And at the end of seven years I'll have squeezed the whole fucking continent out through my arsehole. (Malouf Johnno 98)

Johnno plans to remake himself as a non-Australian, to expel the geography that is part of his body and remove the landscape from his consciousness even as he removes his physical body from the landscape. Dante's mild observation is "It seemed a large task for one man to accomplish. Even in a lifetime. Let alone seven years." (Malouf Johnno 98) Dante, meeting Johnno in Paris, observes: "Europe, it seemed, had deeply transformed him. He sat back, looking entirely at home..." (Malouf Johnno 114) Yet Johnno is no more at home in Europe than in Brisbane. He stays in bed reading, rather than exploring Paris' landmarks, and says "This fucking town is a nightmare! If I don't get out soon... I'll go right out of my head!" (Malouf Johnno 115) He dreams of Sweden, Nepal, Greece – and does not leave Paris. Even when he does make it to Athens, Johnno mocks Dante's desire to "see things", to engage with the natural or cultural landscape that is their reason for being there. A rare sightseeing expedition leads them on a quest for a mountainside spring – clearly an image of origin. "But no sign of a spring. Johnno snatched the guidebook from my hand and turned it to left and right, trying to make sense of the map." Unable to interpret the landscape or find the source he seeks, his final response to each and every landscape in Europe is essentially the same: "Oh, fuck it!" (Malouf Johnno 139)

Malouf shows the same inability to read the unfamiliar landscape in the story “Dream Stuff”. As a young adult, Colin takes his father’s map to Athens, and spends a day “trying to match the sketches to the modern map of the city.” In doing so, he hopes to recover

some defining image of his father, some more intimate view of the amateur classicist and champion athlete who had played so large and yet so ghostly a part in his existence. He stood at corner after corner turning the sketch-map this way and that until, admitting at last that he was bushed, he took himself off to a café on Venizelou. (Malouf Dream Stuff 39)

Here the history of the father, the history of European culture, is an inherited map rendered unreadable by time and the inaccessibility of the culture to a young reader whose experience lies elsewhere. Like Johnno, Colin cannot find the source he seeks. (Malouf reconnects Colin with Australian place even in this context by the use of the word “bushed” to describe the way Colin is confounded in this unfamiliar setting.) Thus despite the youth’s need to come to terms with history, Europe and England do not supply the answers.

In Malouf’s work, young adults find themselves in the Old Country craving the familiarity of the dazzling Antipodean light that has defined (through its blurring of definition) their childhoods. In Malouf’s story “The Sun in Winter”, the young Australian tourist sees Europe’s treasures as

a glory perhaps, but one that was too full of shadows to bear the sun. He felt suddenly a great wish for the sun in its full power as at home, and it burned up in him. He was the sun. It belonged to the world he had come from and to his youth. (Malouf Antipodes 90)

This nostalgia comes from the recognition that the ‘centre’ is not in fact to be found in England or Europe because the things valued there do not map against the imbedded landscapes of the young adult’s own Antipodean experience.

However, the return to the landscape of childhood can prove problematic. Coming ‘home’ to Brisbane, Malouf’s Dante is trapped by his sense of the limitations of the past, which the wider world has not enlarged or erased:

Brisbane, where I sometimes thought of myself as having ‘grown up’, was a place where I seemed never to have changed. Just turning a corner sometimes on a familiar view, or a familiar sign: *Fullars Dry Cleaning, Red Comb House Ind. Coop.*, made me step back years and

become the fourteen-year-old, or worse still, the twenty-year-old I once was, helpless before emotions I thought I had outgrown but had merely repressed. ... Elsewhere I might pass for a serious adult. Here, I knew, I would always be an aging child. (Malouf Johnno 144)

The familiar landscape of Brisbane triggers his sense of being caught in an historical role. In a place where every feature is reminiscent of his childhood, Dante cannot mature. Like Australia, the young man has technically gained his independence, but finds history hard to shrug off, omnipresent as it is in the built environment. Thus Dante confronts the de-centredness of the postcolonial subject; in both the old world and the new, his history (and the landscape that embodies it) prevents him from connecting with the place and feeling a secure sense of independent identity.

Malouf, as a young man in Europe, recognised that European history and tradition were not the birthright of Australians. He wrote in a letter to Judith Rodrigues in 1957:

But still it is not our past – really it isn't – and one realises with terrible poignancy here that we really are different people, neither English nor European, and that the 2000 years of European culture which we might like to feel behind us, is not really ours. (Indyk David Malouf: A Celebration 9)

Recognising this leads writers (if not always their characters) back to a stronger relationship with their country of origin and identification with Antipodean national history. Overseas explorations commonly served this purpose during New Zealand's nationalist period, as Stuart Murray explains.

Finding the New Zealand situation too constricting, especially in the early 1930s, many of these writers left for Europe. Yet Europe served, for the most part, to remind them of their difference, and most returned to become, as Curnow recognized local writers had to be, New Zealanders for better or worse. (Murray 251)

Gee continued this earlier tradition of going abroad. He says, "The world's out there but you don't really know until you go and find it." However, in his view the experience was not central to his writing, although it contributed to his maturing. "It opened me up a little. Helped me grow up. I had to grow up before I could write. I left it late. London helped but London wasn't the important thing." (Alley 161)

Gee and Malouf thus suggest that overseas experience is necessary largely to demonstrate its own futility. Only by visiting the conventional 'centres' of European culture can the young adult acknowledge that the centre of their experience lies elsewhere. In *Going West*, Gee's Rex Petley articulates this idea. Asked by Jack, "England, though? How did you like that?" Rex replies "Not much. There's nothing we need there." Jack's response is to laugh and say "That's most of our history gone, like that." Rex laughs back, explaining "What I mean, there's too much stuff, all you need is your own bit." (Gee *Going West* 125)

Nevertheless, geographical escape continues to be an important feature of Antipodean history; both nations were, after all, settled by migrants. Both Gee and Malouf delve back into "their own bit" of history, and show young adult 'outsiders' grappling with identity at defining moments in the Antipodean past. Malouf's *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* centres on Adair, a young Irishman sent to Australia during the colonial period. Adair views his time in Australia as a kind of coming-of-age ritual, which he hopes will allow him to return home and reclaim his land and his woman, Virgilia:

he wants at last to appear before her untrammelled and without intermediaries, in his own form, as himself; the new self that something in this harsh land and the events of these last months have created: a self that has journeyed into the underworld and come back both more surely itself and changed. (Malouf *Conversations* 211-12)

Australia as the underworld provides a trial by fire that will transform the young man. Adair is a colonial, not a colonist; he is not in Australia to settle. Like Johnno, Dante, Paul Prior, Rex Petley and the others, Adair will return to his country of origin. Nevertheless, the landscape of Australia has affected Adair's understanding of himself and the world.

Here he was, and some quality of the country, some effect of the high clear skies, so unlike the skies of Ireland, that raised the ceiling of the world by pushing up the very roof of your skull, had got into his head and changed his sense of what lay before, and behind too. So much space, so much distance under the dry air, had opened his eyes to the long view, as even the great plains of Poland, in the years he served there, had not, since these distances were empty, with no roads across them... only a high, wide emptiness that drew you on into an opening distance in yourself in which the questions that posed themselves had no easy sociable answer, concerned only yourself and what there was at last, or might be, between you and harsh, unchanged and unchanging earth,

and above, the unchanged, unchangeable stars. (Malouf Conversations 52-53)

While Adair sees the landscape as “empty”, in a typical colonial *tabula rasa* reading, he also feels that it raises questions with “no easy sociable answer”, about how a person might relate to the land. The scope of the landscape thus speaks to, and from, his own feelings about expanding into the world as he attains maturity and can be at last himself, “in his own form”. In seeing Australia’s open horizons as a potential, he speaks not just for himself, but for one possible world view of the Australian nation.

In *Live Bodies*, Gee’s Josef Mandl offers a young migrant’s perspective on place and belonging in New Zealand. Josef has been sent to New Zealand from his homeland, Austria, to avoid the dangers of being Jewish in Europe at the outset of World War Two. Imprisoned on Somes Island as an “alien”, Josef finds himself altered by his incarceration. On being taken to the island, he observes:

The boatman was rowing towards us and I studied Somes Island as he approached. Although it taught me nothing I had time to assemble myself and say, This is what comes next and I can handle it. So I reached the island in an adult frame of mind. (Gee Live Bodies 100)

The island, self-contained, is a landscape Josef can map against his new sense of independence, on the other side of the world from his family and all that is familiar. Nevertheless, Europe’s hold on him is not entirely released, for he must share this new space with old enemies. Approaching the island, Josef says:

The sun seemed cooler. And I became aware of the boundaries of the island. Although it sat in the great basin of the harbour and only a tiny city and its tinier satellite stood on the shores, and the mountains climbed row on row beyond, I began to feel hemmed in. It was more than the wire. It was more than guards carrying rifles. Nazis were here. (Gee Live Bodies 105)

The space all around him seems an illusion; the reality of European conflict and hatred spills even into this unfamiliar territory.

Only by passing through this constraining space can Josef find a way to belong in New Zealand. He and his friend Willi dig an escape tunnel, and though their efforts to physically escape from the island are foiled, psychologically Josef digs his way through the past and into a sense of belonging. As he describes it:

I altered my shape in the tunnel; I passed from one life into another, changed hemispheres, and would have to pass through a similar wormhole to go back. We did not make our escape; were marched off by a clown with a pointed stick. But when I looked through the narrow window at the Wellington hills and the frail houses perched on them, it was as though I completed my passage and emerged in a place where I was free. (Gee Live Bodies 17)

Josef is freed by recognising his transition between hemispheres as a rebirth. Going to ground in New Zealand becomes literal, allowing Josef to recognise how far he has travelled from home, and the impossibility of returning home to a Europe transformed by war in his absence.

In Malouf's *Harland's Half Acre*, Knack's experience shows war's double displacement of the European migrant in a similar way. Knack knows the horrors of war first-hand: buried alive in a trench full of bodies, he manages to climb out of his hole, across Russia and to Australia. Yet his sanity, like Mandl's, is compromised by that hole. Australia wipes out Knack's past, even erasing his original name. As Knack puts it,

in this place, the real name hardly matters. It is Nestorius – a mouthful, eh? And who cares now that it goes back a thousand years in the one district, with a lake, forests, a kind of castle, even a crest. ... So I got a new life, a new country, why not a new name? (Malouf Harland 111)

Knack's name is written into the landscape that signifies both his past and his identity. In the Australian environment, he loses his claim to identity and his sense of connection with the past. Frank Harland, a young Australian distanced from the war, cannot understand the depth of this displacement. He is jealous of Knack's heritage, thinking:

Knack had a headstart coming from Europe, which must be an education all in itself – a bitter one; Australians couldn't compete. You had to start from scratch here. From a bit of a yard or paddock, or a room even, and build it up slowly yourself, out of grass seeds and scribbles on bark... (Malouf Harland 113)

The thin pickings of the Australian land are seen as poor material compared to the cultural treasures of Europe. However, Harland recognises that European hardship is foreign (in every sense) to him partly because he is an Australian.

It was too dark, all that. It was of a gloom he had never encountered in all his travels up and down the state, and might not exist on this continent or on this side of the globe. The mists here were not thick

enough – not enough people. You needed centuries of breath; or maybe the sulphur cloud Knack spoke of. Had the cloud got as far as this? Had a few puffs of it got in – when was it? – 1788? Their whole commonwealth according to Knack should have been founded under it. But somehow he couldn't believe that. Knack must be wrong. He hoped, some day, to convert the man to another point of view. A picture might do it. He held in his mind, against Knack's talk and the enfolding music, one of his landscapes, and wondered if that would do it. (Malouf Harland 114)

Beginning to understand brutality, Harland dips back into Australia's past. However, he does not recognise the significance of the date he mentions: 1788 was the year of the arrival of the First Fleet of European colonists to Australia. Harland cannot see that the horror of people, names and history being erased is equally applicable to his own continent in the violence perpetrated by settlers against the Aboriginal people. This denial of the past is typical of the first wave of white Australian nationalism in the 1890s. C. L. Innes explains that

the insistence on the Australian as an existential being, living in a present untrammelled by a past, also encouraged the pretence that Australia was an empty continent without a history of conquest and dispossession. Indeed, this aversion of the eyes from the past perhaps betrayed an uneasy conscience about the disgraceful treatment of Aborigines and the occupation of their land. (Innes 130)

Harland's attempt to contradict Knack's view by presenting his own representation – the Australian landscape painted from a perspective that will eliminate the dark shadow of European violence – is a way of asserting Australian superiority. His vision encapsulates the cultural myth that violence exists only 'elsewhere' from the Antipodes.

Yet for other white Australians and New Zealanders, the horrors of two world wars were brought home by the young ANZACs whose overseas experience was military service. Traditionally, war has been seen as providing a coming-of-age for New Zealand and Australia as nations. As rite of passage, war forces the young person (and the young country) to self-definition through threat of destruction. Malouf addresses this national mythology directly, utilising the conventional conflation of personal and national identity in his war novels *The Great World* and *Fly Away Peter*. This is a significant point of difference between the two writers; where Malouf foregrounds the landscapes of war as testing ground for the young man, Gee's fictions treat the two world wars as

peripheral events. In the *Plumb* trilogy, for example, the Plumbs repeatedly turn away from engaging with war. As young men, George Plumb and Robert both choose to have their worlds shrink to jail cells rather than expand to encompass the foreign fields of military service. Meg remembers her brother Oliver as a uniformed young man marching by on a desolate beach, but once he leaves New Zealand he vanishes from view; even when wounded, he is no more than a name in the newspaper, and the physicality of his experience is not detailed. When Meg's husband Fergus signs up as a soldier (in part to prove himself a man), he likewise disappears from the narrative; the story of Meg's young adult life continues to centre on her direct domestic environment until Fergus returns. Gee's focus thus remains on New Zealand life and landscape, only fleetingly referencing world events that occur elsewhere. Gee demonstrates little interest in the theoretical constructions of national identity and the exploration of transcendent experience that typify Malouf's war novels.

Through dealing directly with war stories, Malouf's fiction addresses national mythologies of war as a 'coming of age'. As Amanda Nettelbeck says:

In setting *Fly Away Peter* during World War I, Malouf takes up the national myth of this war in particular as being a turning point in Australia's history. In the context of this myth, Australia's participation is seen as a loss of innocence; as an entry to what could be called the world of 'experience', the world of the post-Edenic fallen state. In a paradoxical sense, then, Australia's experience of war could be perceived as a claim to a new form of independence, a landmarking of our own place within the wider history of the world. (Nettelbeck "Mapping of a World" 85)

Landscape is important to this construction of war as solidifying national identity. In his article "Landscape, Memory and the Australian War Experience", Peter Hoffenberg shows connections between the Australian landscape and the war-torn landscape of Europe, saying that the harshness of the latter "was made comprehensible by its apparent similarity to a more familiar local world." He goes on to argue:

Battlefields became physical and imaginary spaces through which the Australians declared their presence in Europe and the world, as previous generations had done on their own continent. Landscapes represented both the new experience of war and the post-war national identity for Australians in terms of the fantastic, a simultaneity across

time and space at the heart of modern collective identity. (Hoffenberg 112)

National myths of masculine strength in battling the harsh landscape were thus brought into service as Antipodean men went overseas to 'fight for their land' in a different arena.

The notion of home – Australia – provides an anchor for some of Malouf's soldiers adrift in foreign lands. Being abroad, under circumstances of such duress, reinforces the strong bond Digger has with his family home, Keen's Crossing, in *The Great World*. As a child, Digger feels tied to the place that his grandfather had named, saying "he and it had found a connection that was unique in all the world. The shared name proved it." (Malouf Great World 199) Under duress in Changi, Digger's integration of home into himself serves as a source of solace.

Years later, in some of their worst times in Thailand, this connection would sustain Digger and help keep him sane, keep him attached to the earth; to the brief stretch of it that was continuous with his name and, through that, with his image of himself. He could be there at will. He had only to dive into himself and look about. (Malouf Great World 199)

A prisoner of war, Digger's agency is limited to his own body. Yet because he has embodied the landscape of Keen's Crossing as "home", it provides a haven for him even on foreign shores, because it is part of who he is. The image of diving into himself for this reiteration of his identity contrasts with his experience of connection with the foreign landscape of the Changi river. As the tiddlers feed on his diseased flesh, he feels that the "stink and ooze" of his own physical decay and mortality is "being taken back into the world, away from him". (Malouf Great World 161) He also thinks "it must be a dream"; after it is over he comes "back into himself" (Malouf Great World 161) and has to ask Vic "did any of that happen?" (Malouf Great World 162) Though the Changi river provides cleansing and renewal, Digger does not feel this experience of place to be real in the same way as his internalised experience of the Australian landscape.

When Digger returns to Keen's Crossing after the war, he undertakes a slash-and-burn clearance of the blackberry that has overrun the property.

Stripped to the waist in the November heat and armed with a machete, he waded into the massed entanglement of it. He used a gloved hand to push aside the barbed shoots, hacking at trunks as thick in places as his own wrist and grubbing out strand after strand of fibrous roots.

It was a single dense growth, its root-system as extensive and as deeply intricate below ground as above. Somewhere at the heart of it was the tap-root, but he never found it. Over and over again he thought he had; he put the machete in and dug out a fleshy tuber. But further in there was always another, tougher stock. At the end of the day his arms, chest and back were criss-crossed with scratches, and despite the gloves he wore his hands were torn, but the work was a pleasure to him. It was a way of getting down to the ground of things. (Malouf Great World 227)

Though Malouf's vocabulary is similar to that used in "Southern Skies", here the intention is quite different – rather than conquest, this clearance demonstrates renewal and return. Digger's absolute identification with Keen's Crossing is extended to this act of restoration. In hacking away at the barbed ugliness that has covered the place during the war, Digger is also hacking away at the barbs the war has embedded in him. The blackberry represents both self and other; thick "as his own wrist", and deeply rooted in the place, its heart is elusive and there is no way to entirely remove the "fleshy" tubers. When Digger burns the chopped out blackberry, Malouf points out: "The place began to resemble the Keen's Crossing he had left, though there was much that could not be restored." (Malouf Great World 228) The war has left its scars on Digger, as neglect has left its scars on the landscape with which he identifies.

In *Fly Away Peter*, Jim's arrival in Europe is announced as a confrontation with another part of his own mind. He finds himself in a world "unlike anything he had ever known or imagined. It was as if he had taken a wrong turning in his sleep, arrived at the dark side of his head, and got stuck there." (Malouf Fly Away Peter 58) Jim's response to the 'civilised' centre is thus figured in the same terms of darkness and unknowability as the colonial response to barren Australia in Malouf's historical novels. In *The Conversations at Curlow Creek*, Carney believes he has "taken a wrong turning" to arrive in Australia and says he cannot understand:

Why one place should be so green and like, easy – if it was hard too, at times – and the birds so – well sir, you know what the birds was. Larks an' that, yaffles – I loved them birds. It must mean something, I thought, that this place should be so dry and cursed, with nothin' in sight that a

man can get a handle on, an' every day so hard. Was that wrong then? Was there never any way of gettin' back? For any of us? (Malouf Conversations 51)

In *Fly Away Peter*, Jim, (also a bird-lover) is equally unable to reconcile the harshness of European war landscapes with notions of home. Listening to another soldier talk of Australia while “far out in no-man’s land, under the dangerous moon”, Jim imagines the Bay “dazzling with sunlight, or maybe building up to a storm that would only break in the late afternoon.” He perceives that other soldiers have also internalised the Australian landscape, seeing whiting “swarming under the blue surface of Bob Cleese’s eyes” as he talks. However, Jim cannot articulate his displacement; though he wants to speak “of the swamp and the big seas that would be running at this time of year, king tides they were called, all along the beaches, threatening to wash them away” he can only mutter “Golly but I’m cold!” (Malouf Fly Away Peter 60-61) Swept up in the larger tide of history, Jim can imagine the lighter side of the globe and the beauties of home, but cannot access them from this “dark side of his head”. Soldier and settler feel equivalent disjuncture between the place of origin and the place of arrival.

The European war landscape Jim perceives as “unlike anything he had ever known” can be mapped directly back onto Australia at a different point in history. Hoffenberg demonstrates similarities between narratives of settlement and narratives of war experience from the Australian perspective, saying that what was said of Australia in colonial writings was “later written about the war-ravaged Old World,” where “earlier landscapes... had been erased by devastating combat.” Hoffenberg goes on:

Australians were as obsessed by this now mythical territory as they were and would continue to be with their own mythic sense of place. Here was the emptiness and pathos of the New World of Australia, the landscape fantasy of Australian collective memory, but experienced in the heart of the Old World itself. Like the unexplored, hostile core of the Australian continent, the Great War battlefield was to be a new 'unearthly landscape' to test the 'pluck' of the Australian Digger. Combat in the Old World updated the myth of man and land, making it relevant to a national, not colonial society, and suggesting a wider inclusiveness in the experience with landscape, rather than one limited to allegedly heroic nineteenth-century pioneers – white, male and generally English or Scottish. (Hoffenberg 117)

Malouf articulates Jim's growing awareness of the connections between his own history and the broader history of Britain in very similar terms. Jim begins to feel "immeasurably old" and claims:

It was like living through whole generations. Even the names they had given to positions they had held a month before had been changed by the time they came back, as they had changed some names and inherited others from the men who went before. In rapid succession, generation after generation, they passed over the landscape. Marwood Copse one place was called, where not a stick remained of what might, months or centuries back, have been a densely-populated wood. When they entered the lines up at Ploegsteert and found the various trenches called Piccadilly, Hyde Park Corner, the Strand, it was to Jim, who had never seen London, as if this maze of muddy ditches was all that remained of a great city. Time, even in the dimension of his own life, had lost all meaning for him. (Malouf Fly Away Peter 110-01)

War reconfigures the landscape to such an extent that Jim experiences a kind of speeded-up colonisation process. The unfamiliar land is over-written with names that are familiar but meaningless in the new context. Any possibility of identifying with the land is erased by its continual transformation and the relentless movement back and forth. Jim's sense of continuity relies on memories of the more stable landscapes of home. However, he gradually recognises that transience can also be meaningful, as he returns to watching the migrating birds that connect this muddied and meaningless world to Australia.

Jim's death finally demonstrates his displacement from, and integration with, the 'foreign field' in which he is wounded. As the battle commences, Jim attains a multiple perspective that makes him feel he has been granted "the nature of a bird, though it was with a human eye he saw". Running, "he moved in one place and saw things from another, and saw, too, from up there, in a grand sweep, the whole landscape through which he was moving..." (Malouf Fly Away Peter 116) While war experience has already opened Jim's eyes to new landscapes of human history (literal and figurative), only at the end of his personal narrative can his eye (and his 'I') encompass multiple viewpoints simultaneously. The result is a completely redrawn world view: "He continued to run. Astonished that he could hold all this in his head at the same time and how the map he carried there had so immensely expanded." (Malouf Fly Away Peter 117)

This expansive new vision overcomes previously insurmountable barriers between self, place and history. Jim's imaginative landscape broadens in every sense. As he lies wounded in the battlefield watching "fingers" of cloud in the sky, he sees the history of the earth writ large:

Great continents now gave birth to islands in some longer process of time than he had been conscious of till now, and the islands too dissolved... Centuries it must have taken. When he blinked again it was quite a different day or year, or centuries had passed, he couldn't tell which. But he was aware now of the earth he was lying on. It was rolling. (Malouf Fly Away Peter 119)

Trapped in a specific historical moment, Jim becomes aware of a new scale – the pre-historic movements of the earth's plates that separated one land from another, creating the distances and oppositions that have brought him to this place. The current landscape of war-torn fields and rolling earth is part of a place that has, like all places, been moving since before recorded time; the boundaries and borders continue to shift and dissolve. That this history of the earth is written in a cloudscape is an indicator of Jim's expanded vision, and the topsy-turviness of his placement in Europe as an Australian.

In this state of strange hyperawareness where perspective is redefined, Jim's body and the landscape become similarly integrated. He becomes

conscious of pain, far off over one of the horizons, but couldn't raise himself far enough to locate it. One of the horizons was his own chest. Beyond it a wan light flapped, as if a wounded bird threw faint colours from its wings as its blood beat feebly into the earth. (Malouf Fly Away Peter 119)

With his body as landscape, Jim's consciousness begins to blur distinctions between self and other. When he tries to stretch out his fingers, they are as amorphous as the clouds in the sky. He sees his fingers

dissolve slowly into the earth, and closed his eyes and let them go. He felt the whole process, a coarsening of the grains out of which his flesh was composed, and their gradual loosening and falling away... (Malouf Fly Away Peter 119)

The breaking down of his body to components of soil is figured like Jordan McGivern's death in "Blacksoil Country". Beyond these moments of borderless integration, however, Jim still experiences a sense of displacement. He thinks,

“I am in the wrong place... I don't belong here. I never asked to be here. I should get going.” (Malouf Fly Away Peter 121) Recognising that he is not ‘at home’, he distances himself from the skyscape and the action of the war.

“Overhead, all upside down as was proper in these parts, were the stars. The guns sounded very far off. It was like summer thunder that you didn't have to concern yourself with: someone else's weather.” (Malouf Fly Away Peter 123-24)

This distancing is figured more strongly as he dies. In the narrative of his death experience, Ashley comes to find him and takes him to an open field, where he is reunited with Clancy, a member of his troop blown to pieces earlier in the novel. Clancy persuades him that their job is to dig their way back to Australia.

Jim, doubtful, began to dig. He looked about. Others were doing the same, long lines of them, and he was surprised to see how large the clearing was. It stretched away to the brightening skyline. It wasn't a clearing but a field, and more than a field, a landscape; so wide, as the early morning sun struck the furrows, that you could see the curve of the earth. There were hundreds of men... stooped to the black earth and digging. So it must be alright after all. Why else should so many be doing it? (Malouf Fly Away Peter 127)

The image of the legions of dead Australian soldiers (nicknamed, of course, “diggers” in national mythology) finding their way home to Australian soil through the centre of the earth is conciliatory. In death, the diggers find a different way of broaching distance and hemispheres; the centre is not Europe or Australia, but the core of the earth, to which all other landscapes are peripheral. Earth connects the two landscapes, as it connects the humans digging in it, and the curve of the earth that suggests width and distance also offers the way for the two places to be brought directly together. Entering the war (and through it, the world), Jim has earlier observed:

The world when you looked from both sides was quite other than a placid, slow moving dream, without change of climate or colour and with time and place for all. He had been blind. (Malouf Fly Away Peter 103)

Jim's death leads him back into the landscape of “slow moving dream”, where time and space are suddenly rendered ample once again. In acting out his new vision, Jim finds meaning returned to his body:

It might be, Jim thought, what hands were intended for, this steady digging into the earth, as wings were meant for flying over the curve of the planet. He knelt and dug. (Malouf Fly Away Peter 128)

Like the birds, whose flight transcends the political boundaries that make the war, the diggers move through their more human element to a reconciled world where landscapes are inherently unified rather than arbitrarily divided.

Gee's fiction offers no such transcendent moments of moving beyond the horrors of battle. His characters remain firmly grounded in the New Zealand social milieu; his young adults must come to an understanding of their place in the world through other means than war. New Zealand national mythologies suggest that war experience brought New Zealanders together and brought them into the world in the same way as Australia, but Gee does not reference such mythologies, focusing on the young's expanding world in more domestic landscapes. Yet the end of World War II signalled the end of an era: despite nationalist stirrings, New Zealand was no longer unproblematically part of the Empire. As historian Michael King has it,

The war would also be New Zealand's last great common denominator, the last intense experience that tens of thousands of people would share, and one whose rationale was accepted by the country as a whole. For the time being, it strengthened the convictions that made New Zealand life and cultures coherent and harmonious. In the coming decades, however, the certainties would erode and the harmonies be interrupted by static. The settled society New Zealand had become in the century from the 1840s to the 1940s would now be subject to unsettlement. (King 408-09)

In both Antipodean nations, the early twentieth-century signalled a transition from youthful striving for independence to a new maturity. That maturity included an increasing realisation that simple and singular constructions of national identity were no longer sufficient. Moving into the future would involve integrating a much wider variety of visions of landscape and belonging.

3. A place for us

Moving beyond the exploratory period of young adulthood, the characters of this chapter enter maturity and early middle age, a stage marked by preoccupation with consolidating self and place. However, delineating this stage precisely is problematic. The Oxford Encyclopaedic English Dictionary defines middle age as “the period between youth and old age, about 45–60”, but census data and other research literature does not agree. Statistics New Zealand classifies “the middle age groups” as those 30–59 years of age. While chronological age is one criterion, life stage plays an important part – types of behaviour, or shared life characteristics, are often taken as defining middle age more accurately than a simple numerical span. As social scientist Dena Targ points out:

There is no single definition of middle age that is used throughout the theoretical, empirical, statistical and popular work on the subject. The term ‘middle age’ generally refers to chronological age, family stage and work stage. (Targ 377)

The most useful definition for the purposes of this chapter is provided by J. S. Slotkin, citing Charlotte Bihler and her associates, who separate maturity into two stages: “the selective stage of maturity (beginning at an average age of 28), in which the individual definitely decides upon specific life goals and channelizes (sic) his activities accordingly into a particular career” and “the testing stage of early middle age (beginning at an average age of 43)” when “the individual examines his career to determine the extent to which he has achieved his life goals and the degree to which he has obtained the gratifications he hoped to gain from his life course.” (Slotkin 171) Characters from age thirty to fifty therefore fall within the scope of this stage. Such characters are mature, as indicated by life-stage factors such as having adolescent or adult children, being (or having been) married or partnered and being actively engaged in community life or the workforce.

In portraying middle-aged characters, Gee and Malouf limit their characters’ horizons; most of these mature characters operate within New Zealand or Australia, rather than the wider world. Many are concerned with putting down

roots and defining themselves through their choice of place to settle. Lois Tamir describes this settling phase:

Middle age, as a stage in life where polarities and contradictory activities are contrasted, compared, and accepted, can be much more fulfilling if the individual need not sway from one extreme to the other – from labor to love, from macho to maternal, from youthful to aged, and vice versa. (Tamir 56)

This period therefore involves striving for integration. However, this process is seldom straightforward in Gee and Malouf's fictions. Relationships with natural and manmade landscapes define how successful each character is in achieving integration and belonging. Through place, a large number of characters are depicted as disenfranchised, uneasy with their relationship with the environment and the community. In these texts, the search for a place where belonging is possible goes on beyond childhood and adolescence. Gee and Malouf show the complexities of place identification in operation beyond the traditionally accepted period of 'self-definition'.

In doing so, they call into question the superficial sureties of the Antipodes during the mid-twentieth century. During this period, prosperity began to replace the fear and scarcity caused by two world wars and the Great Depression. However, there was also a sense of conformity and cultural stasis. As Joy Damousi explains, Australian cultural commentators of the 1950s and 1960s tended to the view that "Australia was a vast suburban expanse which bred indifference, mediocrity and hedonism, rather than reflection and self-analysis." (Teo 214) In these fictions, there is certainly shown to be a middle-aged desire for a stable, suburban, homogenised society that avoids self-reflexivity. However, attempts to impose limitations on the physical and mental landscapes are continually unsettled – by the land itself, and by outsiders who disrupt social complacency either by associating with the landscape too strongly or by being too alienated from it.

Those 'outsiders' are often the middle-aged protagonists of the novels. Anger and violence come from within the society, yet the fear of violence is projected onto landscapes considered 'outside' suburbia, because society cannot accept

violence can come from within its centre. As W. H. New, in *Dreams of Speech and Violence*, writes of New Zealand at this time:

it was not violence but order that remained the prevailing cultural myth, an order still founded in notions of Europeanness and homogeneity, rejecting any interruption (social or verbal) which would appear to challenge such authority or stir the surface illusion of calm control. As late as 1969, J. C. Reid would assert that violence was rare in New Zealand literature, and kept to a minimum... (New Dreams 151)

Like earlier Australian nationalist 'aversion of the eyes' from historical colonial violence, this emphasis on a normative social order meant that control was an absolute value. A key feature of middle-age in these fictions is therefore repression. The landscape, like the past, must be covered up and controlled. In a sense there is a return to colonial conquest, but without the sense of *terra nullius* – the landscape contains difficult historic elements that must be obliterated to preserve the conventional, consumer lifestyle of the white settler societies so typical of the 1950s.

By presenting characters beyond the sphere of such social control, Gee and Malouf unsettle this narrative. The wilderness landscape (often framed in opposition to the 'civilised' landscape, whether garden, orchard or shopping mall) provides a means to this end, given its capacity to undermine the structures of such systematic repressions. Wilderness landscapes are also frequently the sites – or the victims – of human violence. Both authors show the natural environment as a threat to the hard-won order established by conservative characters in middle life. In doing so, they portray a mob mentality that seeks to destroy the possibility of danger in the wilderness by destroying the wilderness itself. Ironically, the seeds of destruction are repeatedly shown to germinate within society, rather than taking root in the untamed landscape beyond its boundaries. It is characters who seek to uphold social values of control and order whose presence in the landscape leads to violence and death.

For both Gee and Malouf, communion with the natural environment is depicted as a sign of self-awareness. Looking beyond social ties to the landscape allows middle-aged characters to make peace with the wildness of the land and the self. Having gained this awareness, such characters can balance interactions

with the landscape with interactions with other people. The landscape serves as a point of orientation, a reaffirmation of individual identity in the face of stultifying social forces, but does not deny the importance of the human element. Art (visual or verbal) is one means by which such characters integrate the landscape into their cultural practice. Most often, the landscape (particularly the wilderness landscape) offers a character temporary escape; relating to the environment is generally shown as less complex than relating to people. Less frequently, place mediates a relationship, providing a foundation for the building of trust and understanding. Either way, characters repeatedly project their attitudes, values and emotions onto the physical environment, and use place as a means of self-assessment, rather than defining themselves according to their relationships with others.

One temptation of middle age is to return to childhood places as a way of reversing time and recapturing an idealised past. Paul's revisitations of the orchard and the creek in Gee's *In My Father's Den* indicate how the mature man recreates landscapes as once they were. Paul's memory of the utopian creek voyage (discussed in Chapter One) is triggered by looking at the current state of that same creek:

Today the creek is a sour ditch, scummy with factory waste. In those days it was green, mysterious, frightening, magic. I can travel down it in my mind, remembering each pool and mossy rock and fallen tree the way other people remember kind or cruel actions, women they have had or tries they have scored. (Gee Father's Den 44-45)

To Paul, the bends in the creek map his life – he is defined by the place, rather than by the social interactions other people use for self-definition. As an adult, Paul accords the trip its status as “the happiest day of my life”, staring into the fouled water where perfection was once found. *In My Father's Den* shows the tendency to romanticize the nature of childhood (in both senses); the innocent child and the unspoiled wilderness are aligned in a ‘yearning for origin’ narrative. The ‘perfection’ of the past landscape is preserved by formalising the memory into a conquest narrative structure – “launching, fear, comradeship, discovery” – complete with the closure of a professed happy ending. Thus narratives of memory immortalise the fiction of the natural, even while mourning its loss. They also formalise the distinction between the state of childhood and

adulthood. As Marianne Gullestad points out, "Adult writers often end their textual childhood in very definitive ways, thus putting it into perspective. The adult writer may, for example, choose one incident as the emblem of a transition." (Gullestad 20) Such a transition occurs later in Paul's recollection; it is the end of his childhood closeness with Charlie, presented in terms reminiscent of their journey through the landscape. "That afternoon was a kind of watershed in our friendship. I went down into one valley, he into another." (Gee Father's Den 54) Paul's failure to maintain this social relationship is shown through the figure of divergent paths, and marks the point at which he loses connection with the landscape and begins to retreat into the world of books and ideas, which will lead to social exclusion in his middle age.

Such a firm and closed definition of selfhood is considered particularly important for a settler culture trying to identify in a meaningful and self-sustaining way with place. As M. H. Holcroft says in *Islands of Innocence*:

Childhood is like a distant country or a moment long ago: it can be separated from the rest of experience and given firm outlines. It's something that has happened, that's finished and can be looked at; there are no ragged edges, no raw and unassimilated sensations from the world as it presses against us among today's confusions.

This need of separateness or distinctness may be specially strong in New Zealand writers. If they're to speak faithfully of life in their own country they must address themselves to life in the suburbs. (Holcroft 37)

Moving into constructed landscapes, as Holcroft's comments about engaging with suburbia suggest, has come to be seen as evidence of maturity in New Zealand fiction. Trudie McNaughton explains that in the post-nationalist era, landscape

came to mean populated, 'built up' as well as natural settings. In many contemporary novels and short stories sub/urban (sic) environments exacerbate the characters' isolation. There is no longer an easy belief in a 'return to nature'. Nostalgic longing for rural bliss is seen as naïve, not least because of the desecration and pollution of the environment. (McNaughton 11)

Paul's awareness of the reality of present Wadesville does not prevent him from idealising his own semi-rural experience of it in the past. His yearning for a prelapsarian paradise limits his engagement with his present environment, social and geographical, because he cannot reconcile past and present. This

has more to do with his lost innocence than the landscape, however. As Som Prakash says, “Paul Prior’s disgust with the deterioration and pollution around him is at least partly a displaced response to potential corruption that he knows lies within him, and certainly within his brother.” (Prakash "Fantasy and Flight" 150)

In *Going West*, Jack and Rex actually replay the canoe adventure as adults, taking the next generation down the familiar route. Initially Jack rejects this revival of his childhood:

I did not want too much of recapturing. Boys in canoes on the muddy creek, between the mangroves, racing each other to the next bend – that was then, we were grown up now; and what’s more I had a wet behind. Soon, though, I began to enjoy myself. The banks of mud rose with a beautiful curve from the water. They were pocked with crab holes in which the flick of withdrawal showed, swifter than the blink of an eye. If you looked ahead, along the curve, below the mangrove jungle, you were riding between glossy limbs, woman thighs. I wonder if Rex felt it too; and if we’d felt it all those years ago in our tin canoes. (Gee Going West 190)

Seeing the creek with the benefit of adult experience brings new pleasures. Sexually experienced, Jack recognises the “landscape as woman” figure, and feels a sense of conquest he may have missed as a child.

Childhood can thus be accorded a duality that allows it to be encapsulated as past but also brought into adult experience. In Marianne Gullestad’s words:

When life is a journey, one’s childhood past can be experienced by the adult as a landscape left behind (‘all of this is gone now’) but also as continuously present as an inner landscape that can be recalled at any point in time. Many connections between the ‘imagining’ of childhoods and the ‘imagining’ of nations are based on the metaphoric qualities of childhood as a landscape. (Gullestad 30)

Malouf echoes this sentiment. Whether writing about childhood or national history, Malouf prefers to blur boundaries and show potentials.

Writing in Australia, and attempting to make the past real, ‘as it was’, means for me to make the past *present*. What I am interested in is continuity, and that means, if you are going to understand the present at all and see what might be the patterns of your developing life, then you need to experience, re-experience, the past, but the past as it really always was – as something immediate, full of muddle, containing in a very confused way all the things that are to come. (Kavanagh 247)

Thus the author integrates history, personal or national, into the experience of adulthood, and this integration signifies a new level of maturity.

Malouf's narrative strategy is evident in the 'return to origin' narrative of the short story "Dream Stuff". Colin, now a successful author, returns to his hometown of Brisbane after spending time abroad. Colin reconstructs his own childhood, and explicitly aligns selfhood (particularly childhood, when the self was in formation) with place. After thirty years, Colin ponders the city's changes:

It wasn't nostalgia for a world that had long since disappeared under fathoms of poured concrete that had led him, in half a dozen fictions, to raise it again in the density of tropical vegetation, timber soft to the thumb, the drumming of rain on corrugated-iron roofs. What drew him back was something altogether more personal, which belonged to the body and its hot affinities, to a history where, in the pain and longing of adolescence, he was still standing at the corner of Queen and Albert Streets waiting for someone he knew now would never appear.

He had long understood that one of his selves, the earliest and most vulnerable, had never left this place, and that his original and clearest view of things could be recovered only through what had first come to him in the glow of its ordinary light and weather. In a fig tree taller than a building and alive with voices not its own, or a line of palings with a gap you could crawl through into a wilderness of nut-grass and cosmos and saw-legged grasshoppers as big as wrens.

It was the light they appeared in that was the point, and that at least had not changed. It fell on the new city with the same promise of an ordinary grace as on the old. He greeted it with the delight of recovery, not only of the vision but of himself. (Malouf Dream Stuff 36)

Here the Australian light is finally transformed. From the child's view, Malouf shows the Australian light rendering the country invisible by its own illumination. Here, however, the adult uses the same light to reach a genuine view of the place and a better understanding of himself. With the benefit of experience elsewhere, Colin (and the colony he continues to seem to embody) has reached maturity. Changes are incidental to the "ordinary grace" of recovering a connection with a past self, and understanding how personal and national selfhood have been shaped by place to become 'of the place'. Malouf's conscious avoidance of nostalgia in Colin works to unsettle a simple separation between past and present. Where Gee's Paul yearns for origin, the idyll before 'growing up', Malouf's story celebrates the possibility that place, and the self, can be subject to multiple re-viewings over the course of a lifetime, or a national

history. As Peter Knox-Shaw has observed of *Harland's Half Acre*, Malouf “celebrates those who contain the past (not the same thing as wishing to perpetuate it) at the expense of those who attempt to efface it.” (Knox-Shaw 89)

Yet in “Dream Stuff”, containing the past proves complex. Colin’s return soon leads him to question the ground on which he stands.

What did he think of the place? Why had it taken him so long to come back? How had his work suffered by his having abandoned, as they said, his roots? Still feeling battered, he moved to one of the vast plate-glass windows and looked out.

The city he knew, and in one part of himself still moved in, was out there somewhere, but out of sight, underground. Unkillably, uncontrollably green. Swarming with insects and rotting with a death that would soon once again be life, its salt light, by day, blinding to the eye and deadening of all thought, its river now, under fathoms of moonlight, bursting with bubbles, festering, fermenting.

Inescapable. Far from having put it too far behind him, he felt entangled, caught. (Malouf Dream Stuff 61)

In this place, Colin must face the continuance of issues of family, identity and personal history that do not go away. Even protected by the “plate glass” of his position of success, he is aware of what has been pushed “underground”.

Brisbane’s tropical growth, and its effect on the cityscape, is an apt metaphor for the past that bursts through the desire to encapsulate and control it.

Greenness, that was the thing. Irresistible growth. Though it wasn’t always an image of health or of fullness.

He thought of the mangroves with their roots in mud, and under their misshapen arches the stick-eyes of crabs and their ponderous claws. They had been banished for a time under concrete freeways, but would soon be pushing up fleshy roots, their leathery leaves, black rather than green, agleam with salt. (Malouf Dream Stuff 42)

Place – indigenous place – cannot be buried, despite attempts to form lasting facades. The image speaks for the collective colonial unconscious, suggesting aspects of the past that Australian settler culture has buried and denied. “Dream Stuff” presents the rumour of a vast illegal cannabis plantation, tended by vagrants who are gathered in trucks, blindfolded till they reach their destination, and required to work away their nights. Colin knows the facts of the story are irrelevant to the validity of the narrative. “True?” he says.

It did not have to be. It was convincing at some deeper level than fact. It expressed something that was continuous with the underground history of the place, with triangles and flayed ribs, the leper colony on its island

in the Bay, the men with scabbed and bloody hands sleeping on sacks behind the Markets, an emanation in heavy light and in green, subaqueous air, of an Aboriginal misery that no tower block or flyover could entirely obliterate. (Malouf Dream Stuff 42)

The stolen, itinerant people, the illegality, and the “Aboriginal misery” are the buried past of the colonial landscape. Within the postcolonial context, the personal statement is political too. What underlies Malouf’s city is the lie of conquest; the concrete will eventually be forced to crack. Both the cultural and environmental histories of the place have the potential to rise and shatter the carefully constructed patinas of settled white Australian life.

To counteract such fear of the past (personal and political), both Gee and Malouf show middle-aged characters trying to ‘blot out’ the untamed landscape and instil place with values of order and civilisation. The wilderness, place of sexual experimentation, exploration and selfhood for the young, compromises family values from the perspective of the middle-aged conservative community. In Gee’s story “Right Hand Man”, the Olsen Park parents speak united through the voice of Mrs Spurdle, who says “We want those trees cut down. And the scrub. We want it levelled flat... He won’t have anywhere to hide then. We can keep our daughters safe. Asphalt. That’s what we want.” (Gee Stories 182) The threat to the collective “we” here is the flasher – the man who exposes what should remain hidden and thereby strips the young of their innocence. The patch of bush represents the dark hiding place of the socially unacceptable: inappropriately visible masculinity and sexuality.

Those who contest this condemnation of the wilderness due to aesthetic considerations are considered beyond the pale. As Mrs. Spurdle responds when challenged, “I told her she needed kids of her own if she thinks trees are that important. Things of beauty. I ask you. When my girls have seen what they’ve seen.” (Gee Stories 182) Social purity and the ideal of the innocent childhood are to be preserved with asphalt. The mechanism of ‘taming’ may have changed, but this is effectively a colonial attitude – ‘waste’ land is considered ungodly, a potential harbour for antisocial forces, and therefore must be ‘civilised’ by being brought under social control – in this case, obliterated under a layer of bitumen.

Malouf's story "Jacko's Reach" provides a collective voice that harmonises with Mrs Spurdle's shrill protest.

So it is settled. Jacko's Reach, our last pocket of scrub, has been won for progress. It is to be cleared and built on. Eighteen months from now, after the usual period of mud pies and mechanical shovels and cranes, we will have a new shopping mall, with a skateboard ramp for young daredevils, two floodlit courts for night tennis and, on the river side, a Heritage Walk laid out with native hybrids. Our sterner citizens and their wives will sleep safe at last in a world that no longer offers encouragement to the derelicts who gather there with a carton of cheap wine or a bottle of metho, the dumpers of illegal garbage, feral cats, and the few local Aborigines who claim an affinity with the place that may or may not be mystical. (Malouf Dream Stuff 93)

Malouf's use of the word 'settled' implies not only the end of a debate, but the history of possession, reframing and orderliness that saw the overwriting of the Australian landscape with colonial Western values. In this story, the past will be remembered only in a neatly capitalized "Heritage Walk", where even the plants no longer exist as 'native' but have been hybridized into a more suitable form for public consumption. The industry may have changed from farming production to the consumerism of the shopping mall, but the social implication is the same – place is not only valueless, but a threat to values, until it is "won for progress". Land unused except by the drop-out, the feral and the native is a threat to "our sterner citizens and their wives" and must therefore be destroyed.

Unspeakable impulses are sometimes linked to the bush or wilderness, as providing a chosen form of refuge for the offender. Tom Round, in Gee's novel *The Burning Boy*, is an architect at the peak of his career, having made his name inscribing the landscape with his houses. On his boat, drunk, he "looks at the coast and thinks, My place." He sees the landscape opening for his pleasure:

the sea fucks the beaches, and that he thinks is beautiful; and the bush green and solid at the back, climbing up and up, ledge after ledge. I'd like to build houses here, Tom thinks, one house in each bay, in the bush, and nothing else. I'd come and live in them one by one. (Gee Burning Boy 265)

This image of a series of conquests is promptly given a more sinister meaning, as he sees his daughter Belinda walking on the beach and decides to take her

scuba diving. While preparing for the expedition, however, he is confronted by his older daughters, who force him to confront his molestation of them and his intention to sexually abuse Belinda. He has only partially repressed the events, and tries to run from them by pointing his boat “straight out to sea”; “He can’t, he can’t remember.” But he cannot simply run, so he runs for cover, trying to get back into shore. However, the landscape is covered by the miasma of his own disgust. He aims his boat at the beach but “there’s a fog he runs into there, it grows thicker and thicker, forcing him back. He can’t come close to them, Stella and Mandy, and Belinda.” (Gee Burning Boy 267) Isolated from social ties, he turns to the landscape and is rebuffed. “He sends his boat darting here and there. Tom Round does not know where to go.” (Gee Burning Boy 267) In Gee’s story “Eleventh Hour”, Mr. Hughes likewise recognises that his attack on the ‘outsider’ Frank Milich covers the uglier truth of sexual desire for his daughter:

He had betrayed Cheryl. His love had not stood for an instant against the ragings of his pride. And something else – this love... He had revealed a shocking secret to himself. He wanted to run for the bush again, hide in the darkest place he could find. (Gee Stories 122)

The bush, the wilderness, therefore do provide an externalisation of the darker aspects of humanity in these stories; they represent “a pocket of the dark unmanageable” (Malouf Dream Stuff 94), as Malouf has it in “Jacko’s Reach”.

In *In My Father’s Den*, Gee shows middle aged society fighting back against this aspect of the landscape. His “stern citizens” mobilise to burn the bush where Celia was murdered. Paul, dragged out of his home to become an accessory after the fact, observes:

The other men moved off to the edge of the scrub and took positions at intervals along it. They began to soak rags and push them between manuka trunks and into thickets of bracken. The scrub patch faced them like a cornered animal. I was moved by its plight; by its silent, still acceptance. But the men too were quiet, dignified. I began to be on their side as I watched. It seemed like a rite in some primitive religion. It was communal, an action of force, I felt a stirring in my blood. The scrub appeared momentarily as the amoebic creature that had broken Celia. (Gee Father’s Den 78)

Here the scrub is both animal and primal beginning. It faces its destruction as a predator become prey, like the pig in the hunt that challenged the young to display their mastery of nature. Yet the scrub also remains unformed and

incoherent, an “amoebic creature” reminiscent of an evolutionary past it does not behave the “dignified” men to remember. It is a god-fearing pillar of this very community, steeped in the rites of a rigid religion, who committed the murder, considering it a cleansing. Thus the bush is a scapegoat for the society that seeks to exculpate its own sin by controlling anything outside itself. As Robert Harrison notes, “there is all too often a deliberate rage and vengefulness at work in the assault on nature and its species, as if one would project onto the natural world the intolerable anxieties of finitude which hold humanity hostage to death.” (Harrison 18)

However, *In My Father's Den* reveals that the landscape is innocent; it is the stalwart middle-aged citizens who uphold social values of commerce and religion who are revealed to be the culprits for human destruction. The killer of Celia Invararity is revealed to be Paul Prior's brother Andrew. Confronted with this truth, Paul wishes the landscape had been responsible for Celia's death: “Better if she had been struck by lightning. One could at least have understood the laws involved. Andrew was outside the universe of laws, in some place where blood was water.” (Gee Father's Den 160) In Paul's view, nature's cruel arbitrariness is more comprehensible than human evil. He is appalled that the social forces of ‘civilisation’ can wreak the same violent havoc on the innocent girl as on the innocent land. Andrew's social virtues – religion and materialism – are the foundation of his vice. Paul imagines a diagram of Andrew's universe, with two overlapping circles containing spirit and material security; as Paul has it, “Andrew lived in the common ground, untroubled, until I came back.” (Gee Father's Den 165) Paul's return to New Zealand reconnects Andrew with his past, and draws Andrew back to visit Wadesville. To Andrew, the “brown industrial smog” (Gee Father's Den 165) that covers Wadesville shows its desecration, its transformation from rural paradise to a “town of hoardings, shops, traffic lights” which he perceives as “no longer Wadesville” but “the town of Paul Prior.” (Gee Father's Den 166) The pollution is personal: the fouled landscape signifies the fouling of the past, his mother's memory, and his religious ideals. Confronting this landscape of memory, the ruin he perceives is embodied by Celia, and he murders her. Paul comes home to Wadesville after

discovering Andrew is the murderer and, like Leeanne in *Crime Story*, cannot see his hometown in the same way in the light of his new knowledge.

I stopped the car at the roadside and looked down at the town. The lights were a luminous skeleton. The flesh I saw was that of Wadesville thirty years ago. My Wadesville. Andrew's? How had Andrew been made? I could no more explain him than I could the town. (Gee Father's Den 157)

Even imaginatively restored to its past configuration, the built landscape of Wadesville offers no answers to explain the brutality that has grown out of it.

However, the majority of middle-aged characters perceive the built landscape as a refuge. The colonial beauty-as-utility narrative is updated from cultivated field and garden to housing and skyscrapers; undeveloped land is once again cast as baffling or threatening. In Gee's novel *Crime Story*, Athol, a successful businessman, defines himself in relation to the built environment and cannot encompass anything beyond it. Most at home in the centre of commerce, he feels the office is 'his place' and thinks "I could live here". City equals success; he does not relate to the suburbia his company is building or the empty space with which his mother Gwen identifies. Driving "down Central Terrace, down Kelburn Parade, into town" he is happy because the structured environment removes his own sense of uncertainty: "The traffic lights, and footpaths going up and down, and people on the crossings, were familiar to Athol; they made him feel he'd stepped across into the world that made sense after the one where meanings turned away." (Gee Crime Story 62)

Athol values his father's capacity to identify the monetary value of the socially drawn borders within the confines of the developing city.

He drove into Lambton Quay and turned off at the Kitchener block, half of it dead buildings and the rest barely alive, where one day his father's glass tower would rise. ... Howie knew, better than his mother, and made no fuss about fine feelings and mystery. (Gee Crime Story 63)

For Athol, non-capitalist understanding of the landscape is suspect. Owning and transforming the land cut him off from engaging with it in any but the material sense. Athol's suspicion of "fine feelings and mystery" extends beyond the landscape to his relationships. After his wife Ulla is paralysed by an attack from a burglar, Athol cannot face her, or support his distressed children. Confronted

with pain and confusion, Athol finds himself at a loss, and can only turn to the structured world of the city, with its orderly boxes of commercial activity.

Athol's brother Gordon, also a property developer, finds himself enmeshed in an illegal property deal. Gordon's desire to belong to the wealthy and powerful sector of society makes him willing to swim with the 'sharks', unscrupulous property dealers who consider land a purely commercial commodity. Initially, Gordon conceives place as Athol and Howie do, delineating the landscape through a series of status markers. When his career is threatened, his greatest fear is being forced to move from wealthy waterfront Herne Bay to poorer inland Grey Lynn. Facing prison, his displacement is figured as a search for a road back into society. Gordon contemplates the possibility of suicide as he drives around suburbia, trapped by unfulfilled dreams of wealth and comfort. For a moment he considers driving the car into the harbour and feels "dark water... closing over his head". (Gee Crime Story 50) However, he rejects suicide, knowing what he really wants is to be accepted back into suburbia.

Gordon dropped back. He turned away and crawled in suburban streets and thought, They're all in their houses and I'm out here; and had another vision of dark water. Where can I go?

He drove into Broadway and up Khyber Pass Road and had no place ahead except his flat. Trees and gravestones. Roads that fell away, down out of bright lights into the dark. (Gee Crime Story 50)

Here the dark lurks beyond the civilised streets and lighted homes that mark success within a consumer society. Like the wilderness beyond the Edenic garden, or the "Absolute Dark" that Malouf uses to describe the untamed land beyond the colonial settlement, social constructions continue to divide the landscape into a valuable/worthless dichotomy which excludes the unfavoured from belonging. Beyond the well-lit houses, the suburban streets offer little comfort, with their *memento mori* gravestones, sharp drops and dark crevices. Gordon keeps asking "Where can I go?" The deep water he imagines reflects his social situation; he is 'in over his head' in the soured business deal. Being exiled from high society, however, Gordon rediscovers that there are other ways to put down roots. In prison, he decides to take up a new career, growing trees rather than constructing edifices. Gee suggests Gordon is redeemed by this decision. In *Crime Story*, the crimes are of the city: Athol growing rich from

dodgy housing, Brent Rosser the burglar swimming through the city streets like a shark, Gordon aspiring to develop buildings at any cost. Gordon's interest in serious gardening suggests he has grown; though he still wants to transform the landscape, tree-planting is organic and potentially fruitful, rather than sterile and self-serving.

The three middle-aged siblings of Gee's *Loving Ways* offer three views of the Nelson landscape. David is, like Gordon, the middle-aged man displaced. David is locked into values of order and control represented by named, controlled and developed environments. Dispossessed of his wife, his business, and his social standing, he feels exiled into the wilderness. David's relationship with the world is territorial; space and place are to be possessed, and the only pleasure comes from this possession. His wife Freda's leaving makes him doubt his place, and literally leaves him nowhere to turn:

He drove about evenly in the morning traffic, with logging trucks, school buses, back and front, and felt that he was going somewhere. But then came the country and he had to turn back. Hills climbed up and went down and dirt roads branched off and there was no destination. (Gee *Loving Ways* 26)

Trapped by his neo-colonial mindset, David is threatened by the wilderness; his world view cannot encompass its lack of linearity. The random nature of his surrounds seems to reflect his own aimlessness.

He drove by the sewage ponds and through Atawhai, where the telegraph poles grew out of the sea. They seemed unnatural and made him pity himself. He was as much out of place as that. How did he get back to his proper place? He took the by-pass and drove along Rocks Road but turned off when he realised where he was heading. (Gee *Loving Ways* 26)

Typically, David by-passes the hard question of where he might really belong by veering onto a new road. He drives to reclaim his position, as his car is one of the few remaining social status symbols by which he can define himself. Like Gordon in *Crime Story*, David repeatedly tries to find a road back to where he once belonged.

Trying to get perspective on his situation, David takes to higher ground, in an echo of the masculine tradition of domination by gaze.

He got out of the car and stood in the lookout, where the telescope pointed at the weeds. The half-million-dollar houses stood on the cliff edge, angled away from each other, and Tasman Bay stretched uncoloured to the park, and the Arthur Range stood in the sky. He saw the bluffs beyond Ruby Bay, and the plateau where his father's orchard grew, and Takaka Hill, with May in behind it making pots, making money; and at his feet half of Tahuna beach, waves thick with swimmers; and Tahuna on the flat: golf course, airport, camping ground – and none of it had any connection with him. He was cut off. The people on the beach down there were as small as insects yet he was the one who felt small. (Gee Loving Ways 26-27)

Here the instrument of clarity, the telescope, offers no long view. David, metaphorically short-sighted, is presented only with weeds, reinforcing the ideas of wasteland and worthlessness from his perspective. Despite the expansive vista, David's psychological perspective means he feels diminished by the landscape. His terms of reference are material: the cost of the houses; the orchard he wants to own; the commercial modifications of golf course and airport. May's place is simply a reminder of her material success. Here the encompassing male gaze has been stripped of its omnipotence – rather than being king of all he surveys, David is made aware of his own insignificance. Being thus "cut off" he thinks, "I have to make something happen. I have to get back in." (Gee Loving Ways 27)

When David seeks comfort in his favoured landscape, the haven of the town centre, he is confronted with still more signs of his exclusion.

He walked in the main street and came to the yard, and read the new name painted everywhere: Barlow Motors, LMVD. His name was gone, wiped out, under this new fat red one. The empty section next door was newly paved and cars were being lined up on it now, with Barlow there, hands on hips, sticking out his belly. (Gee Loving Ways 30)

This erasure of David's name from the commercial landscape underlines his lack of agency. The new paving (like Mrs Spurdle's asphalt) indicates that someone else is now successfully controlling the land. The traditional markers of middle-aged masculine success – work, marriage, family, community – are missing from David's life, and he is pushed to the margins. Driving out of town, he turns "into back streets to avoid the car yard." (Gee Loving Ways 30) His marginalisation kills his hope for the future; driving once more, he sees only "empty spaces ahead of him" and feels "out near the edges" where "no meaning

was left.” (Gee Loving Ways 31) Though he is positioned at the centre of his own narrative (most of the sentences describing his various journeys begin with ‘he’), David is repeatedly spatially separated from what he considers central and meaningful. Expansive vistas underline his distance from the centre, rather than offering possibility for his own expansion. He epitomises the “grandiose failure” of middle age, as described by Slotkin, who

has a paranoid lack of insight into his own limited abilities or the unfavorable conditions in which he finds himself. Such a person becomes embittered. He is envious of those who do succeed; he feels unappreciated. (Slotkin 172)

David’s failure to come to terms with the landscape illustrates his equal failure to come to terms with the social world. Placing primary value on social success, David cannot turn away from society into the natural landscape, for it merely reinforces his agoraphobic sense of powerlessness and insignificance.

In contrast, David’s sister May chooses to avoid commercial society, using the wilderness as a source of emotional succour. Rather than serving at the altar of commerce by dealing with the crowds of visitors in her pottery shop, she climbs the hill behind the shop to look at the view. She wants “to have her sight drawn out to a far horizon which would empty trouble from her mind...” (Gee Loving Ways 12) Emptiness is a solace for May; almost without exception her attitudes towards the landscape are the antithesis of David’s. She observes:

The sea was white today, like zinc, and the sky so pale one had to concentrate to bring out the blue, but the town, hamlet, settlement – what name? rural slum? – declared itself, and she took pleasure in its unsealed roads and sandy paths. (Gee Loving Ways 12)

Her vacillation over what to call the town unsettles the possession implicit in the naming process. May is unwilling to title the township even with an ordinary noun. Her own ambivalence towards the settlement (she does not know from one occasion to the next whether a view of the community will lift or depress her) contrasts with David’s appraisal of the commercial value of place. To her, failures of political and commercial development are heartening rather than depressing. When she visits Collingwood, she observes:

The sea on one side, lapping across the sandflats, the inlet on the other, full of swampy islands and dead trees. Population 290. It suited her; met something in her perhaps unfinished, perhaps maimed, but so much a

working part that it was essential. On the hill above the peninsula someone had mapped out a city in the early days and declared it the future capital of New Zealand. It never failed to please her, that patch of scrub up there. (Gee Loving Ways 45)

This pleasure in an unfulfilled colonial appropriation of landscape shows May as more postcolonial in her attitude than many other middle-aged characters. Like the town (and the colonial act of possession), May is “perhaps unfinished”, but that element of incompleteness is recognised as essential to her identity. Unlike David, May recognises and has come to terms with the limitations of power – her own and settler society’s.

May also enjoys being off the beaten track. Given the option, David repeatedly chooses sealed roads; she prefers the “sandy paths”, and chooses to travel by river rather than road. May’s boat is an indicator of her ability to circumvent the more conventional aspects of settled life. Hers is the path “invisible to strangers” that leads “through tufted rushes and islands of low scrub to her dinghy tied to a waratah hammered in the mud.” (Gee Loving Ways 18) Unlike David, she is intimately familiar with the place, and has a sense of belonging that embraces the other lives lived there. Though the dinghy is hers, she has no need for sole possession: “inlet people could use it if they wanted.” On this occasion:

She dragged it to the tide-line, rowed along the shallows, then coasted with dripping oars, listening to the crackle and hiss of water taking the swamp. It was heaven, she supposed, for the crabs down their crab-holes. What beautifully punctuated lives they must lead. And the little fish darting in tepid water over the sand flats, a new world opening with each tide. Nonsense, she told herself, they don’t have consciousness. I can enjoy it but they can’t – then laughed at her need to be superior to a fish. She swept with an oar and turned the dinghy, headed across the shallows and felt the channel tug like wind on a car. The hull turned cold under her feet. She kept clear of the causeway bridge where the tide sliced through and soon was in shallow water again. She shipped the oars and let the dinghy glide. Jumped out as the keel touched; grabbed her sandals. One-handed, she heaved the dinghy to where it would lie safe. (Gee Loving Ways 18)

Here, alone in the landscape, May is at her most self-possessed. She admires the simplicity she attributes to the lives of the crabs and fish, which inhabit a world rhythmically recreated by natural order, full of possibility. Equally aware of self and other, she takes pleasure in her consciousness, but can laugh at her need to consciously assert it. In this environment May is physically and

emotionally confident. The active verbs – “swept”, “jumped”, “grabbed” and “heaved” – establish her agency, despite her willingness to “let herself be governed by the tide” (Gee Loving Ways 21) and literally go with the flow.

As May’s strength comes from her relationship with place, society is sometimes seen as impinging on her solitude. After her confrontation with Junior (who says he will “shit all over you and your wanker boyfriend” just as he has shat in the dinghy), she feels that “his hatred had splashed on her like dirty water” (Gee Loving Ways 23) and she tastes it in her mouth. Only clean water can help her regain her poise.

She walked fast on the road and reached the dinghy, where she cleared her throat and spat him out. She rowed across the inlet and became cold and ruthless: thought of ways Junior might be hunted out of their lives. In the shallows he came down to size, which was a pity because it allowed him a place: the sad man, the crippled man, Evan’s lost friend. (Gee Loving Ways 23)

Even dealing with other people, May is influenced by natural flows. Her feelings run deep and cold in the channel, which causes the hull to be cold under her feet; as the water reduces, so do her anger and the size of the problem. The river landscape brings danger, dirt and hatred back into perspective, and allows May to recognise Junior’s humanity. She may wish to exclude Junior and other intruders, saying: “My place... he can’t get in. And nor can George and Daphne. No one can.” (Gee Loving Ways 24) However, May’s vision of belonging includes those social aspects (such as her partner Evan and her work) that are harmonious with the wider landscape. In thinking of her place, “up the hill she sensed the easy busyness of the workshop, and beyond it the humming, silent humming, of the bush.” (Gee Loving Ways 24)

The masculine, aggressive thrust of the road invariably threatens May by pushing unwanted social contact upon her.

Her eyes went to the road where it dropped out of the cutting. She was fearful of trouble from there, all the way from Nelson and Ruby Bay, along that thread no act of will, only act of weather, could break; through the apple lands and hops and tobacco, over the hill set with marble teeth, up through the farms to Takaka and along the coast. The road delivered father, brother, daughter. (Gee Loving Ways 13-14)

Human shaping of nature serves as a reminder of human nature, and is thus problematic and vexed, a source of internal or external conflict. However, her own land offers May a bastion of strength against the invaders. “It was only when she faced them that she became sure; faced them here, on her own ground, behind her moat of trees.” Here, she feels, she is “definite... and happy with it.” (Gee Loving Ways 14) May appropriates the Maori concept of *turangawaewae*; she is able to stand her ground when she is grounded by her own place. Knowing that she can face her father and brother, May thinks, “I really have grown up... I’m free.” (Gee Loving Ways 14) By making such a claim to belonging and independence, May suggests Pakeha society’s increasing maturity and confidence. She has learned the “trick of standing upright here”, (Curnow New Zealand Verse 205) as Allen Curnow put it, having cast off the shackles of patriarchal control to assert her right to make of the land – and herself – what she will. May also attributes the stability of her relationship with Evan to her confidence in her place. Whenever the past encroaches, both place and relationship give May identity and strength. Her relationship with Evan figures as large as Wood’s Inlet in the refusal to be unbalanced by the realisation that her father needs her – she defies the claim of her family with “I live with Evan at Inlet Arts.” May believes that Evan is “the one who gave me back my past... He doesn’t take the pain away but he makes it manageable. I’d have been like a huhu grub in a rotten log.” (Gee Loving Ways 209)

David and May’s brother Alan provides a more complex and conflicted view of issues of maturity. Travelling to Nelson, what Alan sees is familiar yet not reliably knowable. Looking at Wellington

moved him to a feeling of loss. He turned out of the gorge on to the harbour and saw the curve of Oriental Bay and the shoebox buildings and back across the water the Orongorongo hills, and names and shapes, space and contour had a familiarity that quickly became bogus. You could not claim your past except through tricks of omission. (Gee Loving Ways 61)

Here the harbour and the hills have a stature and importance not granted to the human constructions: the buildings are “shoebox”, makeshift and insignificant. Alan perceives the entire vista as transient and unreliable. While he may presume to know the landscape, its “names and shapes” have changed. The

familiarity he feels is “bogus”; he is a stranger here. The “tricks of omission” required to claim the past resonate in cultural as well as personal terms, for the nature and culture of the indigene are denied within the construction of the city. As Geoff Park points out, downtown Wellington is constructed on “an urban grid drawn up in England, as persistently imperial as anything the empire brought to its ‘*Antipodes*’.” (Park 44)

Returning to Nelson to visit his dying father precipitates a crisis of identity for Alan as he seeks to reconcile the past with the present. Alan commonly conflates place and time; he is confused by the ill-defined relationship between distance in years and distance in metres. He questions:

Where had he been for thirty-five years?

The ferry made a rocking-horse movement in the strait. He stood on deck, holding the rail; controlled his nausea by breathing deep and watching for the channel into the hills. The sunset was bloody with smoke from across the Tasman, and he thought of Australia too, and places he had once seemed to possess – Duntroon, Queenscliff – and he knew he could not have them again. It bewildered him, this sense of possessing and not possessing. He had thought of the past as an easy thing and no more to be questioned than breathing. (Gee *Loving Ways* 62)

Like a child on a rocking horse, Alan is riding to nowhere, for in going forward through space he is also going backward through time. Possession of either place or personal identity is destabilised. He is neither the places he has been, nor the place he is, yet nor is he independent of these places because they form part of his personal past. His confusion is a telling representation of Pakeha cultural anxiety, as he wonders which landscape he can ever really belong to.

Alan has tried to escape facing himself and his family by avoiding familiar landscapes. He remembers leaving Nelson in an attempt to leave behind the vagaries of his past and the social ties of family:

He felt the miles lengthening behind him. The road ahead unrolled like a tape and he could travel on it but they could not. He crossed the strait and went by train to Auckland and got on a plane at Whenuapai. It took only a moment to break out over the west coast beaches. In six hours flying they reached Sydney. The Tasman Sea stood behind him like a wall.

He could not make it lie flat until, four years later, as Lieutenant Macpherson, he made the flight in reverse, and the train ride and the ferry, to Burnham Depot, outside Christchurch. He did not need roads unrolling or seas as barriers after that. He had turned in a spiral not a circle, and although he was close again was further away. (Gee Loving Ways 69-70)

The spiral of time and place offers a reading that reconciles Alan's repeated attempts to define how he approaches both his present and his place. The writing, like Alan's memories, is layered, offering a palimpsest of images that connect yet remain separate, sliding across one another rather than lining up neatly to present a single coherent picture of the literal journey or the metaphoric life-course journey Alan has experienced.

Returning to Nelson, Alan is threatened by David, whose possessiveness cannot tolerate competition for ownership of the land. Like May, Alan recognises that danger comes down the road, and is dogged by images of David pursuing him. "The Silverado followed him as he moved towards sleep. It mounted hills, appeared at far corners, entering each straight as he left. And sometimes it was close behind and day had turned to night." (Gee Loving Ways 158) Alan's half-dreamed fear is well-founded. David does literally tail Alan, and in David's view the pair are connected by the road they travel. David thinks "they were locked together, he and his brother, and Freda was in a blind street at the end of their journey and would not be able to get out." (Gee Loving Ways 139) While following Alan, David notes twice that his brother was "where he wasn't meant to be." (Gee Loving Ways 145) David wants to position the characters in the landscape according to his own script. His musings on the landscape are literally self-centred – the world he can see revolves around him and exists only so far as he has use for it.

The orchard in this novel becomes a symbol of control and patriarchal power to which May, Alan and David respond very differently. May, desiring communion with undeveloped landscapes, sees the orchard and its modifications as entirely negative. Even the process of growth and fruition is part of a power-play in her mind:

The weight of apples on the trees oppressed her. If they fell simultaneously the hills would tremble. And all the boughs springing up

would release so much energy that Robert Macpherson's orchard – Ben Alder Orchard – could be used to light a small town. (Gee Loving Ways 52)

The image demonstrates May's discomfort with the contained landscape; it holds a concealed energy that can be released in the service of town and society, about which she is clearly ambivalent. May's attitude contests control and utility as the best use for the landscape. Repeatedly her views desire the undoing of the more obvious human interventions in the environment. Looking out over the rows of apples, she takes the long view of the landscape, noting that "The sea stretched beyond them in the north and mountains circled round on the other sides. That was some relief. Robert Macpherson did not have everything in control." (Gee Loving Ways 54) Yet May's own recognition of the boundaries drawn in her head between free land and contained land does indicate self-awareness and the ability to hold multiple perspectives. She is caught between recognising her family's need for success and her own desire to avoid overt commercialisation.

Alan similarly dislikes the rigid control of the new "production line" orchard. He thinks: "all those even-featured trees, all of one size, were not so much an orchard as a factory for making apples. He felt like an alien, he felt civilised; and he told himself that he would get away as soon as he could." (Gee Loving Ways) Alienated from this commercialisation of the natural, Alan wants to flee into a less constrained landscape, beyond the reaches of his family's influence and his social responsibilities. Reacting against the "stretched branches and the crucified shapes", Alan thinks "I can't run this... I can't even own it. It isn't mine." (Gee Loving Ways 83) Because he does not feel he belongs in the place, Alan believes the place does not belong to him. Unlike David, he does not want to own the orchard at any cost. Predictably, of course, David sees the orchard in financial terms and sees it only as the prize in a competition between himself and his siblings. The landscape represents wealth, and jockeying to ensure this inheritance pre-empts any possibility of social connection. As David says to Alan, "All we've got to talk about, you and me, is who gets the orchard." (Gee Loving Ways 142)

Love relationships are equally figured through landscapes. Alan's growing fondness for David's ex-wife Freda is shown by his frequent casting of his eyes to the mountains beyond the orchard, through which he hopes he and Freda will be able to escape the confines of the orchard and David's threatening presence. David's inability to accept Freda's leaving is also figured through encounters with the land. On one of his random drives, thinking he sees Freda beside a pool, "David lost focus. Foreground and background ran together and he could not tell a small thing from a large." (Gee Loving Ways 41) This loss of perspective – given that his view is visual and relies on the proportioning of the neatly framed landscape – means that David's personal landscape no longer makes sense. Losing his relationship means David loses his grip on reality and can no longer relate to the world in any meaningful way.

In contrast, other characters turn to the landscape as a way of coming to terms with marriage break-ups. Despite Alan's ability to question his own prejudices and preconceptions, the end of a relationship causes him to experience the same sense of displacement as David. Alan acknowledges the transformation of his world view when he thinks that losing Phoebe

had been like someone taking him by the shoulders and jerking him round from the window he was looking out to an entirely different view. The configuration of the world was changed. ...

The channel was a danger, an exhilaration – jagged rocks, bursting waves, seabirds whirling away, and the ferry leaning on its magnetic curve from the broken water into the still. It brought back his confidence and made him feel able and controlled. (Gee Loving Ways 62)

Relationship changes change the world, making Alan's view of the landscape entirely different. In remembering the crisis of this ending, Alan focuses on his present view of the sublime landscape, relying on the exhilaration and danger of wild nature to give him a sense of mastery over himself and the world around him.

May tries to offer David's distressed ex-wife Freda some sense of peace by sharing favourite sublime landscapes with her. When Freda visits May, Wharariki beach provides a way of mitigating the circumstances of Freda's failed marriage:

She had come to tell May that her marriage was 'a write-off', and May had brought her here to – how had she thought of it, wash her clean and start her on a new way perhaps? For a while it had not seemed to work... Then Freda had pointed at the islands: 'I'd like to swim out there.'

'A German tourist tried last year. They had to rescue him in a helicopter.'

'I'm going for a short one anyway.' And she had stripped her clothes off and run into the waves and splashed and dived, and had come out bent and gasping but with a grin on her damaged mouth. She ran up the sand with her arms crossed on her chest and her skin as white as china clay.

'That's got rid of him. Shit, here's people, where's my clothes?'
(Gee Loving Ways 212-13)

Sexualised and untamed, the sea represents an oppositional force to the roads and asphalt with which David is associated. (David is afraid of the sea; driving down seaside roads he feels that it threatens the manmade landscape.) Unlike the German tourist, Freda is in her element, entirely at home naked and immersed in the wilderness landscape. Far from needing to be rescued, she needs to be left alone; the only threat in this scene of renewal comes from "people", requiring Freda to don again the trappings of social convention that have kept her in a brutal and oppressive marriage.

Water can also function to foster connection between people, however. Alan and May's shared dinghy rides provide structure for the milder conflicts between them and within them.

She took the dinghy round the western shore, under hanging trees and slabs of rock, wishing to impress him again. Went slowly over green deeps in the shade. The dinghy floated low, the upward pressure seemed increased, there was heavier life in the water. She made little dips with the oars, not wanting to go deep. Alan faced her, a metre away. This, she thought, could get embarrassing. (Gee Loving Ways 106)

As in May's conflict with Junior, the river provides a metaphor for the relationship's status. With a shared distant past but no recent connection, Alan and May are carrying extra weight. May is reluctant to dip too deeply into that past, disturbing the undercurrents of tension, but cannot skim across the surface as she usually does – Alan's presence causes the life of the past to rise up, and she must face it as she faces him. However, by the end of the book, there is a kind of peace made between them that is figured in another dinghy

ride. May says that an action was 'right at the time', reconciling the possibility that the past's rules do not necessarily apply to the present. While Alan cannot fully accept that view, he does not challenge her on it, allowing her to see things differently. "It was shifting, perhaps shifty, and he needed absolutes, while she would be unhappy without invention. Yet they could look at each other face to face. The dinghy was good for that." (Gee Loving Ways 210) Where the road brings conflict, the river brings healing and connection. May and Alan can talk and be silent together in this space, whereas David and Alan never adequately communicate, unable to find common ground anywhere.

In *Loving Ways*, the incidental characters of George and Daphne provide an example of the conflict between social bond and freedom figured through attitudes to the landscape. May notes that the conflict can become a matter of life and death.

It was possible that one day Daphne would kill him; but impossible that he would sell the house and take her back to Wellington, where she longed to be, and so, perhaps, prolong his life. 'I love Wood's Inlet, May, and I'm never leaving it. Why doesn't she just pack up and go?' 'A wife's place is beside her husband,' Daphne said. (Gee Loving Ways 13)

Kept from her rightful place by social convention that places her husband's needs first, Daphne expresses her self-repression through strict controlling of nature, creating an ideal garden. She has "the one proper gate in all the row" and her weeding of the lawn is ruthless; as May says, "You've got it looking like a bowling green." (Gee Loving Ways 19) In this same passage, Daphne shows rigorous adherence to conventional values and propriety, telling May "You should have said you were coming" and frowning at May's bare feet. May later sees her "kneeling on a cushion, slicing off dandelions at the root. Tranquillised, yes, but still committing little acts of murder. George must know that it could not last." (Gee Loving Ways 21) Controlling the environment is a way of controlling the self and the relationship of self with others. Daphne's actions also suggest the violent outbursts that arise from those who seek to dominate nature, foreshadowing David's murder of Freda later in the book. Crisis of identity occurs when the inherent identification with place is overridden by identification with the kinds of social structures that defined colonial society; patriarchy, the sanctity of marriage, duty and social stigma.

In *Crime Story*, the relationship between Ulla and Athol similarly shows the difficulties of displacement. Ulla's decision to marry Athol has kept her in Wellington, away from her home country of Sweden. Because of this, she spends her maturity misplaced, at odds with the language and aesthetic of the second country. The early promise of the relationship is undermined by the paralysis that follows it. Ulla discovers her future husband in wild weather on the Cook Strait:

I saw him on the ferry the first time. In the wet. The big waves. Standing in the bow, crossing the strait. ... Athol did not make love very well. I had to teach him. Yes, on that same night, straight off the ferry... (Gee Crime Story 199)

This sexual connection proves shallower than the strait, however. Athol and Ulla's waterbed cannot provide a sufficient imitation of that wild water to keep them in the same boat into their middle age: as Gwen says, "Sex had been by timetable and was itemised. No wave-motion could alter that – so Ulla had said, working on language." (Gee Crime Story 126-27) Athol does not provide the emotional 'home' that Ulla requires to anchor her in the Antipodes. Though elevated to a wealthy hilltop suburb, the pair cannot connect physically or verbally; displaced and 'at sea', they become foreign to each other and their relationship dies. In the couple's house after Ulla has been gone some time, Gwen notes "how Athol slept on one side still – on his sea, riding his own waves. ... In a way he had been without his country too." (Gee Crime Story 127) Like his wife, Athol is disconnected from his roots, though in his case this is caused by an acquisitiveness that denies place any importance beyond its capital value. Gee shows that displacement is a feature of social landscapes as much as physical ones, using landscape figures to describe the conditions of displacement.

In Malouf's short story "A Change of Scene", a European woman, Sylvia, likewise experiences a transition in place and time back to her origins – her girlhood in Poland. Here the jump is prompted by Sylvia's actual return to Europe, but the use of originary language and abstracted landscape mirrors the description of Ulla's experience. Sylvia claims:

For the first time since she was a child she had dreams in a language she hadn't spoken for thirty years – not even with her parents – and was surprised that she could find the words. It surprised her too that Europe – the dark side of her childhood – was so familiar, and so much like home.

She kept that to herself. Alec, she knew, would resent or be hurt by it. She had, after all, spent all but those first years in another place altogether, where her parents were settled and secure as they never could have been in Poland, and it was in that place, not in Europe, that she had grown up, discovered herself and married. (Malouf Antipodes 102)

Maturity and marriage may constitute her identity as an Australian, but they do not make her 'of the place', and childhood exerts its pull. Identification with place takes Sylvia back to where she has come from, and forces her to recognise her experience as a double exile. Her husband, Alec, as a born and bred Australian, misreads her dislocation:

His look had in it all the contempt of a man who knows where he belongs, and whose hands are cracked with labour on his own land, for a woman who has come sightseeing because she belongs nowhere.

Except, she had wanted to protest, it isn't like that at all. It is true I have no real place (and she surprised herself by acknowledging it) but I know what it is to have lost one. That place is gone and all its people are ghosts. I am one of them – a four-year-old in a pink dress with ribbons. (Malouf Antipodes 108)

Once again, the past actually becomes a place – a place that the middle aged person can inhabit if they can only reincarnate the child that experienced it.

Alec's confident modification of a place that he perceives as 'his' by birthright means that in Australia he can assert mastery and dismiss the way his wife interacts with the place she finds herself. However, in Malouf's fiction, travels beyond Australia can lead characters to reassess the nature of the place they come from and the place they are currently located. Often this act of location is also an act of self-definition, played out in conjunction with a reassessment of past and future relationships with loved ones. Changes in place can challenge the known elements of well-established relationships. While in Europe, Sylvia observes her husband:

He came back, after the long dusty walk, with something about him that was raw and in need of healing. No longer a man of thirty-seven – clever, competent, to whom she had been married now for eleven years

– but a stranger at the edge of youth, who had discovered, tremblingly, in a moment of solitude up there, the power of the dark.

It was the place. Or now, and here, some aspect of himself that he had just caught sight of. (Malouf Antipodes 110)

Venturing beyond the borders of Australia creates a kind of youthful anxiety, which reinforces the idea of youthful journeying in search of identity explored in Chapter Two. From a distance, selfhood and nationhood come into clearer focus for the youth and the mature man alike. However, in order for the mature man to rediscover his identity, he must return to a feeling of youthful uncertainty that belies his actual years. Thus stages of development are shown to overlap; there is no point at which personal or political identity becomes so fixed that a new experience of place cannot unsettle it.

In seeing her husband change, Sylvia becomes more aware of the changes others have made to adapt to cultural requirements of place. She recognises:

It was her mother who had gone over completely to the New World. She wore her hair tinted a pale mauve, made cheesecake with passionfruit, and played golf. As for Sylvia, she was simply an odd sort of local. She had no sense of a foreign past till she came back here and found how European she might be. (Malouf Antipodes 101-02)

Sylvia's definition of herself as "an odd kind of local" shows a later settler attitude. Uncomfortable with 'going native' as her mother has done, she fits yet does not fit – cannot quite claim Australia as origin, but also rejects Europe as home. Returning to Europe brings out elements of her cultural heritage, but returns her too to a childish mode. She finds comfort in meeting her husband and child on the beach, claiming her mature role as wife and mother even as she inhabits the liminal space most commonly associated with the child. As in stories of childhood, the shoreline is shown as a safe place for reunion and breathing easy: "she found herself at the water's edge. There was air. There was the safe little bay. And there too were Alec and the boy." (Malouf Antipodes 114)

Relationships can be destroyed by a lack of shared understanding of place and past. In Gee's *Going West*, Jack feels that Rex's relationship with Alice will kill both Rex's past and his poetry. Alice, society-minded, is antithetical to what keeps Rex grounded:

I saw where his duty lay. He should go back to Auckland and take up his role, honour his contract, as husband and father. Yet I wanted him to be free. Loomis was my possession too, Loomis put a roundness on me, unpinched my mind. Harry was no enemy of it. I cannot untangle the knot, but I believe that creek and town and Petleys made it possible for me to come out and meet her now and then. Alice, though, was the enemy of Loomis in Rex. (Gee Going West 164)

Harry may not be the enemy of Loomis, yet the conflict between Harry and Jack in the middle portion of their marriage is figured in terms of place. From their first wild coupling in the Botanic Gardens, they too reach a point of stasis. Harry draws both aspects of their marriage in her unconventional representations of the bush on the walls of the house she and Jack are renovating.

'What's that?'

'In the bush.'

It was more. Everything was angled, twisted, swollen, torn, reversed. Everything was greedy and malevolent. Creepers strangled trees; they cut deep grooves in them. Fat branches pushing starving branches down. Roots split boulders, which crushed ferns. Toadstools grew aslant rotten logs. Toadstools? Fungus of a sort, squat and gross. Grubs poked out their heads, and centipedes lay bent and still, curved like scimitars. Water dripped. Gum congealed. Lichen crept. A little cowed animal, possibly a hedgehog, poked out its snout from a hollow under a log.

The picture crept across half a wall – tiny acts of terror and greed; images of pain and desolation and defeat.

...

She had signed it 'Edwards', made – ironically? – with forget-me-nots. And gone on from there to draw isolated leaves and ladybirds. Clean and pretty. Washed with rain. Unreal perhaps beside her other world, but making a place for themselves by clarity and closeness and need. (Gee Going West 198)

The landscape and the art that represents it are both ways of mediating misery, bringing into focus an inscape of extremes and finding a way to put them side by side. Being able to reconcile such contradictions is one feature of healthy adjustment to maturity, as Lois Tamir explains:

Grappling with contradiction, with polarities that pull the individual in opposing ways, is actually the means by which development is promoted. If there were no crises there would be little growing experience; however, crisis out of proportion is painful and often stifling. (Tamir 56)

For Harry, expressing creativity through modelling the landscape (whether in the drawings of the bush or the renovation of her immediate environment) helps her to grow and to reconcile the contradictions of her married life.

In the newly renovated house in Wellington, Jack and Harry seem to have found a way of encompassing each other's needs, admiring the wilderness view of the sea and mountains in contrast to the built landscape of central Wellington. Jack says:

I felt that I restored our marriage and pulled off ugly bits I had tacked on. I thinned the trees and opened up the view. We looked across the city and Oriental Bay. We had the inner harbour on the left, and Some Island, the eastern bays, the Orongorongos, the Tararuas. On the right, beyond the red-roofed-flatlands leading to Island Bay, we had Cook Strait. Its colours ranged from white to black as fine days and stormy days passed through. I've seen it basalt-coloured, green, blue, yellow, I've seen the white ships shine like icebergs coming from the south, while over beyond the entrance, beyond the reefs, the shelves of Baring Head, planed as smooth as timber and shining like fields of wheat, lay in the sun, an untouched, warm, impossible new land.

I can't do lyricism and shouldn't try, but the Central Terrace view moves me still, even though poles and insulators and sagging wires lie across the front of it.

Harry admired but never came to love it. She watched the changes, recognized the moods, and would run to fetch me – 'Look at this' – but it never became more than a spectacle for her. These were not the right hills or this the right sea. (Gee Going West 199)

As Jack goes on to point out, however, "The damage done was not repaired, not in those years or in that easy way." (Gee Going West 199) Harry, during these years, is forced to 'go bush' to get away from the children and from Jack; on one of these occasions, she has an affair with Rex Petley. Renovations cannot cover up the distress figured as the landscape drawings under the wallpaper in Harry's art.

Throughout these fictions, art provides a way of mediating between physical, intellectual and emotional landscapes. In *Loving Ways*, May makes the landscape a bridge between commerce and creativity, freedom and framing. Gee shows May musing on her capacity to experience place in this mediated way and trying to maintain a sense of distance that will allow her to continue to do so:

May turned her shoulder to them and let her gaze go out to sea, thirty kilometres, to the punctuation, stops and dashes, of Farewell Spit. Some days you could not see it, others it drew a pencil line, but today was an intermediate day and it made itself mysterious. She had never taken the drive up the beach to the lighthouse and never meant to, although Evan had been twice and had come back fresh and shining-eyed, talking of the seabirds and the quicksand and dunes like in the desert with wind curling sand off their tops. Another sensitivity in her: she meant to keep the spit unspoiled – no, delicate, a place she could make into a shape with her stains. When she wanted empty sea and coast and untamed birds to screech at her, she would go, out of season, to Wharariki beach and walk to the south end, opening the archway rocks and, like Evan, find her way home with shining eyes. The archways too had found a place in her designs. When you looked in at those sea-carved doors your eye passed over to no real world. How hungry you might then become, driving home, how full of longing for pleasures that were familiar. (Gee Loving Ways 13)

Though May clearly demonstrates the desirability of the wilderness landscape as a contrast to the delights of domestic life, she nevertheless shows an artistic sensibility that moves beyond the purely visual appreciation of place. Even as a painter, May finds the landscape valuable for what it conceals as much as for its overt aesthetic, and she wants to retain some of that mystery by not becoming a tourist in the landscape she paints.

Geoff Park points out that in New Zealand during the mid-twentieth century, landscape painting came to mean something very different from simple representation of place. He gives the example of one of New Zealand's most famous and initially controversial artists:

Colin McCahon once said that his landscapes weren't landscapes. But in interpreting a place through symbol and imagination, they heighten our own perceptions in ways that are rarely permitted by the ordinary process of 'seeing'. Eyes feeding on the wilderness pressing in on him, he came along this road because these dark, primal Aotearoan hills had something to tell, and he'd been asked to tell it. (Park 57)

This drive to engage with the landscape is evident in Gee's depictions of artists, though May's commercial artistic endeavours are some distance from McCahon's 'high art' constructions.

In *Ellie and the Shadowman*, Gee demonstrates how Ellie turns to painting the landscape as she matures, and how her art offers new ways of knowing place.

In moments of significant transition, Ellie thinks of painting the landscape. Even as a fourteen year old, with Hollis Prime on the beach:

She wondered how she would paint all this... You would show the mountains by the weight of paint and Some Island by using its three lights. ... She was on some sort of edge and a whole new view would open out: Hollis Prime, his car, his intentions; her need not to let him, her need to be back with her mother in House 4. (Gee Ellie 39)

At the edge of the water and the edge of adulthood, she recognises her youth and turns to art, not sex, to extend the experience – but the art remains in her head. Not until she joins the commune Good Life when she is grown up does she put her brush to use. This first landscape picture is both tentative and temporary, despite its power.

Now the land on the other side invited her. The gorge was like a pathway into the hills.

She bent and made three lines with tar on the malthoid roof: a rounded hill, a broken one, the gorge jaggging down. They were beautiful and Ellie was thrilled. She had never drawn anything so simple. It was as if the hills said, This is me. (Gee Ellie 144)

The land asserts its identity in Ellie's art, even as she begins to assert her own identity in relation to Mike, to Good Life, and to the wider world of the valley. Yet she paints over this artwork, blotting it out, for she is still at the stage of extremes – she must claim this bold assertion of place and selfhood as hers alone.

Leaving Wellington and her lover Neil later in the novel, Ellie once again gets a glimpse of the long view of the landscape she seeks.

The plane flew out into a northerly. Ellie saw the wharves and the city with ships and cranes, tiny beetling cars in the streets, one of which might be Neil's – and tiny became right: it put him in proportion to the whole of her life which, up here, over the harbour, she was better able to grasp – although she felt a sudden sting, followed by an ache, in the part of her mind that kept to the smaller scale. Let go, she said, and the city slid behind. Ellie settled back in her seat.

They flew over the coast, the strait and sounds, then over cloudy mountains, and sand with a gravitational pull down to Tasman Bay. The plane made a wide curve, banking so she looked into the mudflats, then righted itself; and she saw the black Doubles and the yellow Dun and thought, I'm home.

She thought, I want to paint them. How do I do that? (Gee Ellie 242)

Loss gives Ellie a heightened perspective, and allows her to move beyond the capital city into a landscape that she can claim as her own. That “gravitational pull” suggests that she is finally reaching a centre that is hers, rather than one dictated by the world’s view of where the centre should lie, and this recognition resonates in her as a homecoming. Ellie has experienced pain and violence (Boggie’s attacks, at a personal level, and the disruptive violence of the anti-Apartheid Springbok tour protests, at a more removed national level) and has in many senses fully grown up.

In this state and at this stage of her life, she is finally able to take up her brush in a serious way. In Nelson she becomes a painter, and the paintings she does are both part of her and part of the landscape she inhabits. Rather than separation and distance, her art is the art of integration – of artist and place as existing in a state of mutuality.

The hills in her paintings flatten out. She sees it as a response to the gravitational pull of the world in her head. What’s inside changes what’s out there, and vice versa. ... She wrenches out allegory from her paintings – wrenches it out – wanting only nature, wanting the world, but knows that she is in nature herself, that what she believes and feels is natural too. A place for it? On the canvas. Where’s the place? A painting starts from the roots up, she is learning. It implants a shape and you grow into it, discover where the perimeters are and the centre is – and Fan, in Ellie’s head, cries, No, no. Ellie sends her away. She locks Fan out of herself, out of her work. (Gee Ellie 246)

Integrating with the place, with the process of creation, and with her maturing sense of independent self-hood, Ellie can reject social judgement and move along the path that opens before her. Her paintings provide her with roots, with a place to “grow” and find the “centre”.

At Fan’s funeral, Ellie speaks of Fan’s “belief in objects, landscapes, *things*, which if painted right can be effortlessly shared, her belief that a painting was ‘a place to go’, where, in forms and colour, a still centre can be found, her hatred of too much explanation.” (Gee Ellie 248) Art provides, for both Fan and the younger Ellie, a place to stand; in contrast to the hollowness of Paul Prior, Ellie grows into her middle age with a feeling of fullness and belonging in her place (a landscape which Fan has given her to inhabit literally too, in bequeathing her the property in Nelson.) Unlike Paul, Ellie also integrates her past into her

present, thinking “that with Fan, through her own work, she has found again the clarity she’s known at fourteen; and that she has regained her past...” (Gee Ellie 248)

In Malouf’s *Harland’s Half Acre*, Frank Harland as artist is given the chance to bring a country into being through his art. In the landscape painting he gives to the European Knack, Knack sees a new nation formed by the artist himself; Frank does not represent Australia, but makes a new place entirely.

‘I like this country you have painted, Frank. This *bit* of it. It is splendid. A place, I think, for whole men and women, or so I see it – for the full man, even if there are no inhabitants as yet. Perhaps it is there I should have migrated.’

He gave a dark chuckle. It was one of his jests.

‘But it is *this* country,’ Frank said.

‘You think so?’

Knack looked.

‘No, Frank, I don’t think it is. Not yet, anyway. It has not been discovered, this place. The people for it have not yet come into existence, I think, or seen they could go there – that there is space and light enough – in *themselves*. And darkness. Only you have been there. You are the first. (Malouf Harland 115)

Like Ellie, Frank is creating Australia from the raw material of its landscape and his paint. This dual-faceted act of artistic nation building is part of Malouf’s understanding of what it means to be an artist in Australia. Martin Leer explains

Because Australia, unlike the United States, has developed no strong unifying myth ‘you can tie your experience to’ – Malouf has argued – every artist must create his or her own. (Leer 7)

Frank’s unifying myth is of the land; it is a rejection of houses, of Europe and its horrors, of social convention and the structures of society. Yet he cannot do this until he has lost his innocence. This occurs in two crucial moments: the recognition of the reality of the war in the movie theatre, when the vision of a sunflower suddenly transforms the European landscape from an abstracted black and white ‘other’ to a terrifyingly recognisable real world, and the violent deaths of Edna and Knack. As Albert Wertheim argues,

Malouf shows that the power of art has destructive as well as nurturing possibilities, that the artist’s discovery of human Truth through the imagination can be overwhelming, disabling and fatal. Music leads Knack to experience at its fullest the European holocaust; and apparently unable to cope with his vision and with the Australian innocence to that vision, Knack fatally shoots Edna and then blows his

own brains out. Ironically, however, the deaths of Edna and Knack are themselves an act of art whereby the innocence of Australia and of Frank Harland are destroyed and transformed. (Wertheim 111)

Harland's landscape painting – the representation of new land that Knack recognises as somewhere ideal and other, as Frank cannot – is overwritten with blood, and in the vibrant red Harland finally sees what has been missing in his art and himself. Violence, at last, is rendered visible *in* the Australian landscape, not simply beyond it. Don Randall succinctly describes Harland's later painting:

Colour relations here are reversed: a red ground is feathered over with blue, instead of blue ground being feathered over with red blood spatter. Thus, the awareness of blue – firmamental and richly fluid, the blue of sea or sky so crucial to landscape – takes shape, not in naïve innocence but in relation to stark, concrete knowledge of the suffering and violence in the human world. (Randall David Malouf 99)

Landscape, self and art are thus more clearly defined in maturity, once innocence has been lost.

Wertheim points out the special relationship between Phil and Frank that illuminates art's place in the novel and in Australian society. As the writer and historian telling Frank's story, Phil becomes an artist who creates and interprets Frank for the reader, just as Frank creates and interprets Australia for Phil and society. Phil's view shows how Frank captures more than the Australian landscape; the artist shows the place as it is felt, rather than simply as it is seen. Phil discovers this experiential engagement with place in looking at the landscape painting his father purchased from Frank. Phil says,

though it bore no resemblance to the landscape of Southport itself, which was all flat water and liquid sky, [I] would find there the exact emotional equivalent of the place as I had known it in the days of my grandfather's illness. (Malouf Harland 131)

Looking at Harland's work on a gallery wall after the artist's death, Phil gains a new understanding of the landscapes. In maturity, Phil can at last see what Harland also saw in middle-age:

They were evocations of Killarney. I saw that now. Not perhaps of the place itself but some idea of it, some ideal, that might have been the same idea that was in the heads of the original Harlands, Frank's forebears, when they named it for a place in Ireland they had never set eyes on but felt for because their parents had. Could any of them be identified, I wondered, as a parcel of actual land, a potato field or cow

paddock, Pint Pot Creek Farm or Warlock's Spinney, for which I held the deeds in my Brisbane office? – part of the achievement, over long years, of a dream that Frank himself had seen the folly of before he even stopped buying up the last piece of it, and which would be inherited now, as his will directed, by Tam, by Pearsall if he could be found, by his father.

I thought of my own landscape with its break of light on the horizon (it would be mine if it ever turned up again, I too stood at the end of a line) and decided I had seen enough. I would take the rest on trust: all those fragments of blue-green, green-gold forest, and the skyscrapers of the Pacific climbing up, up, them (sic) tumbling in a wreck of stars. (Malouf Harland 225)

Phil's appreciation of Harland's achievement is partly a recognition of the disconnect between possessing the land and experiencing it. Far from the colonial visual framing of conventional landscape art, the artists in these texts offer not sight but insight – an exploration rather than an encompassment. Such explorations are much more easily accepted by society in art than they are in practice, as the narrator recognises:

Frank Harland's lone encounter with himself, with newspaper events, and with house-paints that might equally have gone on to a migrant's terrace or the feature-wall of a unit, could be seen now to proclaim a people's newly-discovered identity in a place it scarcely knew existed, and whose actual presence, like the old coot who had created it, might in the natural state have evoked a fastidious pooh! (Malouf Harland 189)

Recognition of any kind of personality of place is still distant future territory for such a culture, obsessed as it is with Harland's other (and abandoned) project of claiming possession of the land and avoiding the awkwardness of engaging with the inherently problematic nature of such possession.

In *Loving Ways*, art provides a more direct means of revelation and connection than Phil's belated recognition of Frank's landscapes. Alan's appreciation of May's paintings of Wharariki beach brings the pair together. He comments that he likes a work because "It's full of – fight, I suppose", and responds to May's hesitation at the description by explaining "I mean the sea against the land. But restful, in the end. Long term. You need a kind of tension to be still." (Gee Loving Ways 98) Alan and May thus meet figuratively at Wharariki beach; his view matches her own vision, and she "could not keep down her pleasure at what he had seen." (Gee Loving Ways 99) Through art, an approach to place can be revealed, and can therefore reveal a personal self that is more difficult to

frame in person-to-person relationships being rebuilt in middle-age after years of separation. Alan has identified May's intention in her creation of the representation of place:

She wanted to put land and sea together; paint the contest, paint the uneasy love between them – the knifing rock, the bursting wave, the overwhelming tide. Instead of fleshy orbs pumped with juice, and peonies, fat peonies, overblown, with leaves like lazy fingers holding them. (Gee Loving Ways 95)

The latter images of a tamed, cultivated nature are saleable, yet May feels the need to embrace the contradictions and the nature beyond the easily accessible. In this, she, like Alan, is showing the capacity for the crisis transition required of middle age, when polarities can be reconciled.

Finally, of course, May and Alan end up at Wharariki beach: they travel full circle in the novel, just as they do during their shared dinghy ride. The Epilogue offers the conclusion (and a new beginning) to the relationship that began with the discussion of the painting of the beach that inspired it:

They sat on the sand. It was half tide and the inner island joined the beach. The two outer ones were locked together and would not separate till they walked south. A few black-backed gulls dipped and rose in the wind and oystercatchers stood at intervals, territorial. Metre-high waves thumped the sand; hissed up, rustled back, sliding into the sea with an undercutting motion that May felt echoed in herself, a gain, a loss. She lay back on her elbows.

‘You need to go down there to see the arches,’ she said.

‘I’ve got them in your painting.’

‘A cheap copy. Did Freda really like it?’

He looked at her sideways and smiled, not with any freedom but admiring the way she went ahead, her artlessness. (Gee Loving Ways 211)

This is an ambiguously liminal space – a half tide, an island that is not an island because it joins the beach, other islands that refuse to reveal their identity accurately without a change of position – that underlines the flux and the contradictions of their relationship. May feels both gain and loss. Alan notes her movement, direction and naturalness: observations that seem contradictory, given that she is a static artist. Polarities are being reconciled. Artistic maturity gives May the right to be childlike and direct, to recognise both the validity and the inadequacy of any single captured view of place or person.

The possibility of reconciling binaries or putting back the 'excluded middle' is not only the preserve of postcolonial and postmodern thinking, but a recognised trait of well-adjusted middle age. Social scientists seem to agree that assessing one's own place accurately in maturity relies on an inclusive view of the world:

Self-assessment... is possibly the most integral task of middle age. It involves a process of examining one's individual life and one's place in the wider social environment. Self assessment also involves coming to terms with life's contradictions. During youth and young adulthood the individual, working toward specific life goals, typically relies on principles outlined in black and white. By middle age, however, the wisdom of experience allows the individual to recognize shades of gray and the multiple factors that sway the decision-making process and goal attainment. It is at this point that contradictions are recognized, not with outrage, but with acceptance, and according to the research by Daniel Levinson, life's polarities are reintegrated. (Tamir 50)

Depicting interactions with the landscape is an ideal way for Gee and Malouf to demonstrate this integration of polarities. As Robert Harrison points out in *Forests*, the forest has long been perceived as a way of muddying simple divisions, offering a space beyond society that is nevertheless mythologised by society, created by what it is in opposition with. Art offers the same possibilities of integration, of encompassing different ways of seeing and representation even as the landscape is reduced to a single view.

The contradictions of domesticity and wilderness, nature transformed into art and then art reformed into nature, are nowhere better illustrated than in May's final assertion of belonging to the place. Though she will not be shifted from Inlet Arts, "she might go up one day and paint a magpie on the watertank." (Gee [Loving Ways](#) 209) The domestic art of the watertank (which she has described as practical and fun) will now also recognise a hostile element: the magpies that attack anyone who encroaches on their territory. By incorporating this image of threat into the representation of her idyll, May acknowledges the tension between personal and social spaces and between natural and social worlds. This encompassing of polarities keeps a sense of balance that allows harmony between place and people. May's artistic vision – like Gee's and Malouf's – suggests that inclusion, not denial or repression, is the most mature means of coming to terms with one's place in the world.

4. Middle ground

Late middle age often sees an adult enter a stage of “indulgence” where “the individual concentrates on achieving the maximum gratification from what remains of vigorous life.” (Slotkin 171) This seems analogous to New Zealand and Australian settler cultures in the latter part of the twentieth century. A higher standard of living (due to the wider availability of a range of consumer goods, increased sexual freedom and greater access to education and technologies) led to the boom period of the 1980s, the zenith of the culture of consumption in Western societies. Gee’s late middle-aged characters (the majority of whom inhabit this social and temporal milieu) reflect this cultural tendency to materialism. Middle-class, educated and materially well-to-do, they inhabit comfortable suburban landscapes that reflect conventional notions of status and success. In contrast, Malouf’s characters tend to maximise their remaining life by exploring beyond the boundaries of social expectation; Malouf depicts late middle-aged eccentrics who use the landscape as a site for discovery and self-expression.

Despite the cultural and personal tendency towards enjoyment in this life stage, depictions of the landscape continue to raise discomfiting issues of integration and belonging. Caught between temporal territories, these characters find that their present locations are coloured by past events and future anxieties. Around the citadels of safety represented by the socially-sanctioned suburbs or other such settled ground, there remains a wider landscape that can threaten illusions of stability. Having reached their own secure heights (often figured literally as hilltop properties), middle-aged characters are extremely conscious of the precarious cliffs that the young have yet to negotiate. Gee’s and Malouf’s characters in this age bracket are commonly anxious for their children or grandchildren – representatives of the future who must find their feet in a rapidly changing world. Observing the young walk on the edges of the ‘safe’ ground, testing the limits of the established social world, mature characters are forced to confront their own complacency. The crisis that prompts characters to re-evaluate their positions is not their own, but that of future generations.

Landscape, with its sheer edges and uncontrollable elements, serves as a reminder of the fragility of social certainties. For the more self-assured, however, the wider environment also offers possibilities for growth and development beyond existing social structures.

Gee's and Malouf's depictions of middle-aged characters do differ. Gee's narratives of late middle age are set in contemporary New Zealand locations, and (like most of his fictions) are family-focused, dealing with individual relationships. Characters face life-crises that are intensely personal, such as marital difficulties or the death or disability of a loved one. For example, *Going West* shows sixty-something protagonist Jack Skeat coming to terms with the death of his friend Rex Petley and the changing nature of his relationship with his wife Harry. Auckland and Wellington become critical points of reference for charting these changing relationships; the cities and their suburbs are loaded with emotional resonances that reflect relationship transition points. *Crime Story* uses New Zealand's two main cities as a way of illustrating characters' values. Gwen is a Wellingtonian, while her ex-husband, Howie, is an Auckland. Gwen's expansive liberal views and Howie's pragmatic materialism are contrasted when their Swedish daughter-in-law's paralysis forces them both to examine their own attitudes to place and belonging. Rather than dealing with relationships, Malouf tends to depict late middle-aged loners who act as commentators on Australia's historical engagement with place in a more abstract or theoretical way. In *Remembering Babylon*, Mr Frazer offers a visionary postcolonial challenge to the dominant views of landscape in early settler Australia. Many of the middle-aged characters in Malouf's short stories similarly bring dominant social views of the landscape to light by contesting them.

Confrontations with mortality lead characters to a clearer view of their interactions with place and a better understanding of themselves as they reach middle-age. In Gee's novel *Meg*, Robert's terminal illness prompts Meg to reflect on the family's life at Peacehaven, the home where she and her brother grew up and have returned.

The hedges and shrubs and the trees by the humming creek were rank with a growth that seemed almost tropical. I have never been at home in the Northern summer, with its thick nights and its moody skies, and the biting insects that breed in its tepid swamps. I long for the clean summers of the South. But I love the spring up here, a green bold tender time before all turns to competition; to a seeking, a strangling, a rankness, a pungency – and I love those acres of ground my mother named Peacehaven; the house, the gardens. They had seemed, for a time, outside the laws of this place. It was my doing, it was my seeing and blindness, which set them on the outside; and now they are subject to reality. Have been for many years. My vision was false, and I learned to see with a usual eye, and have learned much more that way, and am happier. So, with bucket clanking and mop in hand, I walked down the drive, at home on my piece of the valley, though it's not the magical home I had once made of it.

I do not want to spend my time looking back. Yet I am forced to turn there. (Gee Meg 8-9)

In her musings on the landscape around her, Meg gains new clarity about her past illusions. Her own “seeing and blindness” is implicated in the creation of the mythology of the place she has grown up. That Meg saw her mother’s house and garden as “outside the laws of this place” suggests a tension between the ground Meg identifies as ‘home’ and the rest of New Zealand society. Meg describes her dislike of the Northern summer in terms indicative of the modern culture of consumption, with its “seeking and strangling” and “competition”. (Such culture is exemplified by Meggett Enterprises, Meg’s brother-in-law’s real estate firm: the company’s relationship with place is entirely acquisitive and domineering, driven by greed and competition to the point of lawlessness.) Meg’s sense of Peacehaven as a magical garden in the social wilderness echoes the New Zealand myth of Godzone, which cast New Zealand as a utopia separated from the violence and evils of the wider world. In this phase of her life, however, Meg can see through such romantic constructions. Confronted with having to sell Peacehaven to bail her husband out of the Meggett Enterprises debacle, she can no longer construe the place as untouched by “the laws of this place”. Though she may still long for “clean” summers, she can now accept the messy rankness of the literal environment, and no longer seeks an idyllic physical or cultural landscape.

When Meg goes to bring her brother Robert to Peacehaven, she demonstrates both the tendency towards nostalgia and the maturity to overcome it. Leaving

his well-tended farm, Robert simply gets in the car, and Meg feels “disturbed by his easy behaviour. I would have wandered around touching things.” However, he turns back to look at the farm and acknowledge that it “wasn’t a bad little place”, and Meg finds herself satisfied by his small act of connection with the land he is leaving. She says

I have these attacks of sentimentality, and am glad to have them. It would be unnatural, I would be some sort of monster, if I had entirely put off the habit of mind that dominated my life for thirty years. (Gee Meg 49)

Here Meg accepts that Robert’s interaction with the landscape can be different from her own and equally valid. Moreover, she is prepared to recognise and allow her own outdated landscape narratives a place in her world view, though remaining aware of their limitations. This self-acceptance is further evident when she and Robert drive into town and sit on the wharf. Meg says, “With the wide view ahead of me, the sun on the boards, the sound of the gulls, I felt very peaceful. I felt my mind expand to take in the past.” (Gee Meg 49) Her reconciliation of her own past and future, and Robert’s, is reinforced through her location at a site where sea and land, untamed ocean and constructed human structure, likewise exist harmoniously.

Bill Manhire points out that in *Meg*, the title character’s “awareness that her world is no longer the magical domain of childhood but is a diminished place is matched by the clear sense of self which she has come to.” (Manhire 45) In the final pages of Meg’s narrative, Robert is being buried. Meg and her sister Felicity walk in the orchard, and Meg says:

I led her through the trees, wondering why she could not accept whatever happened on this day. I felt again the extraordinary happiness I had felt in the garden in San Francisco when Felicity had come out and told me we were going home to New Zealand. (Gee Meg 216)

Meg has lost her beloved brother and Peacehaven has been sold; however, her losses have made her more, rather than less, at home. She is revealed to feel joyful about her place in the world, accepting her present location without sentimentality or illusions. As she puts it, “I’m alone here now. I have to make the best of it.” (Gee Meg 216) In this newly opened space, she can also make

room in her tiny cottage to take back her husband Fergus, suggesting reconciliation with others as well as herself.

Meg's son, Raymond Sole, likewise comes to a holistic acceptance of humanity's complexity illustrated through his interactions with the landscape. *Sole Survivor* opens with the words: "This morning I watched my niece and her cousin making love in the river." (Gee Sole Survivor 5) Raymond, product of a Puritan heritage, is shocked into a new understanding of place and human interaction that is more aesthetic than judgemental. The trope of youthful sexuality having its expression in water and wilderness is continued here, but given the added dimension of the observer who must learn not to judge.

I caught a brimstone whiff and mounted on my toes to thunderbolt them. Then I saw that what they made was beautiful. My aesthetic sense is not always in good order. On this occasion it saved me from foolishness. I watched, admiring, breathless. They were like figures on a vase. Behind them pool, translucent; blocks of stone tumbled in green water. He stood thigh-deep and she was locked on him. She was slick as a seal, seal-head gleaming. (Gee Sole Survivor 7)

Raymond, growing older, claims a right to observe; he does not consider himself a voyeur. Place gives permission to simply engage with the beauty of what goes on within – the lovely (and public) setting of the natural sexual act makes it artistic in the same sense as the cultural construct of the vase.

This love-making – an act of connection between two people – helps Raymond to refute the negative images of water that build up throughout *Sole Survivor*. Elsewhere in the novel, water brings death. As children, Beak Wyatt, Duggie Plumb and Raymond watch as a young American marine dives into the creek pool at low tide and breaks his neck; the landscape deceives the uninitiated. As an adult, Raymond loses his wife Glenda when she drowns herself on the same day as the famous *Wahine* disaster. Raymond watches the boat sink and grants the sea agency, saying "The sea was more alive, all broken points and angled planes – and the *Wahine* was dead." (Gee Sole Survivor 166) Images of the floundering *Wahine* (whose name means 'woman'), which "lumbers, sighs, and seems to want her death", (Gee Sole Survivor 166) must stand for Glenda's suicide, for Raymond recognises that Glenda's death is her own, and that he cannot even begin to imagine the fatal landscape she inhabited at the last.

However, Duggie, Raymond's cousin, does not have Raymond's sensitivity. When Beak Wyatt walks into the creek loaded down with iron, destroyed by the loss of his wife, Duggie follows him and watches, doing nothing to intervene. When Raymond eventually hears the story many years later, he can do nothing but refill Duggie's whisky glass, helping his cousin to drown his guilt in a less literal way. The repeated connection between water and death shows the landscape providing the ultimate escape from the heartbreak of human social ties.

Nevertheless, by the end of *Sole Survivor*, Raymond (like Meg) is shown to have come to terms with himself and his place. After finding out about Duggie's death, Raymond seeks the tranquillity of the bush. He ventures into a mine shaft, which makes him think of a vagina. Though he is frightened by this dark and dripping environment, he has come to accept this framing of sexuality as part of his own internal landscape, saying that the "images come unbidden and I can't see that they're ugly or that I'm to be condemned for them". (Gee Sole Survivor 211) Later, sitting at the fork in the creek, Raymond lets his feet dangle in the water with the eels. He accepts their presence and the potential threat they represent, and can risk dabbling in their environment despite his fear. His understanding of the integration of good and evil is evident as he watches the two streams run dark and light, and cannot tell which is tributary. Having come to this knowledge, Raymond's own path becomes clear to him. He will pack up and take the road to Thorpe. Moving to the familiar town is both a starting again and a return to the past; he will make his new life in the town where his grandfather once crusaded. Raymond is also shown to know himself. In the quiet of the bush, he no longer hears voices in his head whispering his name, because he has integrated the multiple narratives of his identity (Raymond, Raymong, R. Sole and the rest) into something manageable, if not quite coherent.

Malouf shows middle-aged characters less able to reconcile their personal identities with their location. In *Harland's Half-Acre*, Phil Vernon's father longs for the cities of England and Europe, rather than accepting his place in Australia. Retirement brings his restlessness to a head. Phil observes:

His style – the good grey suit and silk shirt – was not for the suburbs, or for anywhere nowadays. It belonged to an older style of imperial allegiance that had died with the war, in which gentlemen of a certain standing had kept up the pretence that Brisbane Queensland was on the same commuting terms with London as the Home Counties. He was out of place in the only place he had ever known. Some possibility he had seen in himself, and in the country, had died on him, leaving only a set of aspirations that were out of all proportion now to the realities of the day.

While Phil recognises Australia's colonial links "died with the war", his father is seen as somehow out of step with the times, a throwback to a colonial settler idealisation of Britain as the centre of the world. Phil's father feels a sense of disconnect that unsettles him in his own identity. As Phil explains:

In deciding that he should see England at last he was grasping for some vision of what it was in that place that had created this one, an actuality that would prove his view of things had been neither an affectation nor an empty dream. He had turned away from my grandmother to his father's world, and I was startled when I went down to the liner to get their luggage aboard to see how old he had grown. We seemed more than a generation apart. (Malouf Harland 182)

Phil's father sees home as an idealised place beyond Australia that can be reached by claiming patriarchal inheritance and adhering to the cultural rules of an older time. However, the younger Phil recognises that this as a "vision" or an "empty dream" that is not grounded in the realities of Australian life or landscape. Through rejecting a connection with Antipodean place, Phil's father also removes himself from the modern Australian society, distancing him even from his son. His outdated cultural attitude impacts on him at a personal level, making him seem older in years than he really is. When his father dies off Capetown, never having reached his dreamed-of location, Phil's mother does not continue the journey, but sails straight home. Phil points out "England – whatever it was – had not been her dream. We sold the house and moved in together into a unit on Hamilton Heights." (Malouf Harland 182) The death of Phil's father allows a severing of the patriarchal tie to England; Phil and his mother are free to move on, and settle into the suburban Australia they fully accept as their place.

The frustration of Australian-born settler society longing for Europe strikes another of Malouf's protagonists as absurd. Clay, the elderly woman in "That Antique Jezebel", derides

those deeper exiles who had been born right here, in Burwood or Gulgong or Innisfail, North Queensland, but were dying of hunger for a few crumbs of Sacher Torte and of estrangement from a life they had never known. What a place! What a country! (Malouf Antipodes 58)

The older woman's frustration is with the psychologically displaced; a migrant herself, the character is scornful of a country where cultural cringe creates homesickness in those already at home. For another character in this collection, the father in the story "Southern Skies", culture is also placed elsewhere; philosophy, Beethoven and Mahler are "his sole consolation on the raw and desolate shore where he was marooned." (Malouf Antipodes 8) The Australian landscape is depicted as desolate purely because it lacks the cakes and conversation such exiles perceive as necessary to their survival. Focus on culture, however, leaves them "marooned" by their own expectations of what place should provide. Rather than recognising their actual environment, they deny it, thus cutting themselves off from a potential source of self-definition.

Though Clay mocks such an attitude, she experiences a sense of dislocation when she gets the news of the death of an old friend. She exclaims in surprise "Karel! Tipped out on the pavements of a town he had never meant to live in, let alone die in, and the hot sky pulsing overhead..." (Malouf Antipodes 64) Clay sees Karel's life ending on a journey in the wrong direction; the European who did not belong in Australia during his life was not meant to meet his death in Australia. Clay's difficulty in confronting Karel's death (and her own) is compounded by the place in which she hears the news. After the fights and interconnectedness of her life and Karel's, she is surprised "to have reached in a public place in Sydney this moment of utter aloneness." (Malouf Antipodes 64) For both Clay and Karel, death signals an alienation from the landscape they inhabit, bringing Australia's foreignness into sharp focus.

One means of overcoming such a disjunction between hemispheres is to look for broader or more abstract versions of landscape. In "Southern Skies", the

character of the Professor maintains an investment in the “Old Country”, recreating a microcosm of his homeland through his Northern-styled house and garden, and surrounding himself with photographs of his European past. However, his primary identification is with the “southern skies” of the story’s title. Through this fascination with the transformed astrological view from Australia, the middle-aged man finds a way of balancing his intellectual need for stimulus and his sense of history with his new environment. The Professor tells the young protagonist:

The sky, which looks so still, is always in motion, full of drama if you understand how to read it. Like looking into a pond. Hundreds of events happening right under your eyes, except that most of what we see is already finished by the time we see it – ages ago – but important just the same. Such large events. Huge! Bigger even than we can imagine. And beautiful, since they unfold, you know, to a kind of music, to numbers of infinite dimension like the ones you deal with in equations at school, but more complex, and entirely visible. (Malouf *Antipodes* 18)

Though these large and important events happen elsewhere (a typically Antipodean perception), they are still able to be accessed from Australia. Space provides a new frontier here, enabling the Professor to remain connected with the past that is revealed in the present moment. Moreover, he can share this excitement with the young Australian teenager, enabling a connection with Australia’s intellectual future. Thus the Professor expands his horizons beyond nostalgia and longing by taking a more encompassing view of the landscape.

In Gee’s novel *The Scornful Moon*, the characters likewise use the landscape of the sky to initiate musings on history and meaning. The narrator, Sam Holloway, stands with his wife and friends admiring the stars, as scientist Eric Clifton describes their significance.

I was surprised to find him so expansive here; speaking of light years, multiplied – ‘Our history, told at that distance, is like the buzzing of the bluebottle fly’ – when his real concern, his professional study, is severe and formal, although wide ranging, from the moon ... to variable stars.

‘One of the things I missed in England was the Southern Cross,’ Charlie said.

‘It’s the purest of the constellations,’ Rose said. ‘The perfect one. But everything is perfect up there.’

‘I wish that was true,’ Eric said.

We stood silent for a while. I felt drawn out of myself, perhaps we all did, into the immensities of the universe – in a state where questions and answers drift into nothing and only wonder remains; and the eye,

that tiny organ, seems not to understand but absorb the mystery. (Gee Scornful Moon 41)

The sky offers an unspoilt landscape specific enough to New Zealand to allow a sense of connection with it; as Charlie points out, in England it is possible to be homesick for the Antipodean sky. Star-gazing, Sam feels separation between himself and the environment begin to break down. His sense of self enlarges to encompass enormity and absorb the universe. However, returned to earth by the politics and violence of the rest of the book, Sam loses his sense of this expansive vision. Unlike the majority of the middle-aged characters, Sam ends his narrative with a rejection of multiple perspectives. Walking the Wellington streets, he observes:

I don't know what is going on; or what goes on anywhere.

The moon came up – Shelley's 'crystal paramour', Milton's 'spotty globe'. There are thousands of descriptions to pick from. It joined with the streetlights, swallowing the stars. I could not see Eric's doubles and variables. (Gee Scornful Moon 222)

Without moral certainties, Sam feels lost; he is confronted with too many possibilities for naming the celestial landscape just as he is confronted with too many shades of grey in the social world. The glare of the manmade lights obscures his view of heaven's navigational tools in a literal and metaphorical sense.

In Gee's fiction, late middle-aged characters frequently perceive Europe as a potential escape from the New Zealand environment. Like the night sky, Europe's landscape has a comfortably distant cultural history; unlike the New Zealand landscape, it is not haunted by personal memories. In Gee's *Going West*, the narrator Jack laments:

I want to go to Greece again, not back to Loomis. I want the Castalian spring, the hill of Kronos. I want Tuscany, the Danube, the Dordogne, I've dreamed of them. Is my way to that – this? Must I run the gauntlet? And maybe plunge off a cliff at the end? And never reach that great old ruined Europe I've promised myself?

Rex is saying to me, 'Why go there, mate? Everything you need is right here.' That is his true authentic voice. (Gee Going West 6)

In his retirement, Jack wishes to avoid facing Rex's ghost and other such echoes of the past. Jack likes to feel that he "has things neatly in their place"; however, he is forced to acknowledge that "Rex Petley shifts about. Harry

shifts.” The movements of his friend and his wife create a changeable emotional landscape that colours Jack’s attitude to New Zealand and means “Jack Skeat cannot keep himself in place.” (Gee Going West 22) It is only through revisiting familiar landscapes that Jack can come to accept where they have ended up. In order to know himself, Jack must examine his relationships within the context of his own New Zealand environment.

Auckland’s suburbia provides a crucible for Jack and Harry’s relationship in the pair’s late middle-age. A chapter title in *Going West* makes the connection between location and relationship clear: “On the Map, in the Marriage”. In Jack’s retirement, the pair has ‘settled’ in Auckland in more than one sense:

Neither has the sense of having come home but each is contented and feels about the new house, this will do. It would not have satisfied them once. Jack had promised himself a house by the sea 'It's not just a view I need, I need to hear the waves' - and Harry had wanted a 1910 villa to do up. ... Now, thirty years later, they're contented with a house built in purple brick, two storeyed, semi-detached, on the sunny suburban slope behind Castor Bay. The gulf waters are calm, the yachts stand straighter. Rangitoto slumps in the middle of the view. (Gee Going West 15)

The house has two stories (as well as being “two storeyed”) in Jack and Harry’s “semi-detached” personal histories, which are connected and yet separate. Its location is a compromise move away from their pasts (Jack’s in Loomis, Harry’s in Takapuna) and their previous dreams for the future. They have traded Wellington’s earlier storms for this calm and straightforward view, and the fact that Rangitoto, the dominant feature of this view, “slumps” suggests a level of defeat in the compromise they have reached. Nor is the view they see exactly the same, despite their common location. Harry unashamedly claims her place in Auckland:

Thirty years in Wellington have modified her view of her home town but not weakened her attachment, 'blood attachment', to the place. ... 'Roots,' Harry says, without a blush. The house and suburban Castor Bay, they are not home, but the city on the isthmus, and the wild west coast out there, and the blue gulf in her view, and the beaches and the mangroves and the mud – Harry belongs. (Gee Going West 15)

Jack’s statement that Harry refers to roots “without blushing” indicates the difficulties of narratives of origin. While Harry claims whenua with the city, there

is a “gulf” in her view that denies previous occupancy of the land. Jack is more embarrassed, recognising the fragility of his personal and cultural claim to belong to any place in New Zealand.

Despite its unreliability, Jack continues to turn to the landscape as a means to come to terms with moments of marital crisis. He feels his view of Auckland is “complicated by his overstrong sense of his wife” and laments that

uncertainties prevent an easy view of everything he sees that she sees too. When she gazes out there is it the candyfloss clouds that make her touch her lips with her tongue or is it Rangitoto waiting to explode? (Gee Going West 15-16)

Harry’s inscrutability reflects the landscape’s increasing resistance to inscription in Jack’s view. The picturesque pastel clouds and the brooding threat of the volcano exist in counterpoint in the woman and the view, and Jack must interpret as best he can with limited knowledge. Searching for a safe location for their relationship, he becomes querulous, wondering “Is Auckland going to make Harry combust?” (Gee Going West 21) He tries to use the landscape to keep her cool and grounded:

Harry can be dangerous when shifting, momentum can suddenly die and she’ll swing back, remove herself entirely from his knowledge. He points at the sky, the clouds, Rangitoto darkening, to prevent it. (Gee Going West 22)

This ploy seems to work. Rather than withdrawing, Harry opens up to him in an almost unfamiliar way.

She’s very seldom naked, they’re seldom as naked as this. He wonders how much of it is Auckland. Auckland is spread out, unashamed. They sit side by side on one of its volcanoes and ‘extinct’ is not a word he wants to use. The sea, the sky, the ranges, are passive, but they make an eloquent shout. Is Auckland going to change Jack and Harry just when their lives have settled down? (Gee Going West 22)

Yet the landscape, changeable even in its passivity, prompts Jack to question what he has always known about himself and about Harry.

Jack’s tendency to anthropomorphise the landscape as an extension of the individual can lead him to become unduly judgemental. Visiting Rex’s mother

Lila, Jack reads the changed suburban landscape as an indicator of both continuity and contingency:

Glen Eden has changed but is the same. There is simply more of it, closer cramped. As a Loomis and New Lynn poor relation it has never been remotely paradisaic; but if one imagines earlier times, pre-European, pre-Maori...

He stops in a street of middle-aged houses and the short way Lila has travelled depresses him. The house a little bigger, a little newer, the town or suburb held between those two where she had lived all her married life. He wishes she had chosen somewhere else. (Gee Going West 137)

Jack sees the reality of modern Glen Eden as submerging a more desirable past Eden – a mythical pre-historic New Zealand destroyed by Maori and Pakeha settlement. From this perspective, he sees the “middle-aged” houses as tired and old. In his reading of the suburb, Jack locates Lila precisely within the confines of her marriage and personal history, using her location as an indicator of stasis in her life. Lila’s lack of movement depresses him as much as Harry’s shifting unsettles him.

In middle-age, Jack is sufficiently self-aware to recognise the limitations of his own understanding of place. He allows his imagining of a time “pre-European, pre-Maori” to tail off, knowing the impossibility of articulating a place without cultural influence. Without its overlay of human structures (physical and narrative) New Zealand is an undefined space, not a definable landscape. Jack also recognises that even suburban Auckland is becoming unknowable from his cultural position, as his knowledge relies on a past that is rapidly being overwritten. Seeing women in muu-muus and dreadlocked youths in Loomis, Jack asks:

They are foreign, he is foreign – who owns the point of view? ... Is there any part of Loomis he can claim as his own? And backwards-claiming – what can it signify in the Loomis-1990 world? He feels he is doing something vaguely indecent. ... Unseemly word: ‘once’ prevents, doesn’t it, good mental health? Yet it creates a country, a territory in his brain. Jack declares his right to go there. (Gee Going West 47)

Jack cannot answer these questions, yet his ability to ask them (like his ability to question whether his reading of the harbour view maps accurately against Harry’s) shows the breaking down of narrative unities. Though Jack wants to

claim place and fix his territory, he recognises that the construction of place depends primarily on point of view.

Later in the text, Jack is forced to confront the limits of his understanding of place more explicitly. The diversity of the modern New Zealand social landscape makes him aware of how prescribed the geographical landscape has become by cultural markers. Jack says:

I can know only small parts of Auckland. What can I know of Otara and the populations there? The conurbation out west, where Loomis, Massey, Swanson, Te Atatu used to be – I drive through and watch strangers from my car window. It is partly a matter of race and class. (All of us are New Zealanders, it's said, but anyone can see that we are two nations; three.) And it is partly fear; I'm still afraid. I fear my white face, my incomprehension; and, less justifiably, the burglar and the gag. (Gee Going West 241)

What Jack observes is the historical fact of New Zealand's changing suburban society. New Zealand historian Michael King explains:

A steady and increasing rate of urbanisation would mean that in the second half of the twentieth century Maori and Pakeha would come into widespread contact with each other for the first time since the 1860s. With that contact would come challenges, prejudice and conflict... (King 470)

King goes on to point out the longstanding Pakeha myth that New Zealand had the best race relations in the world. Gee has Jack articulate this myth with the words "all of us are New Zealanders". Jack knows that this is patently untrue, and recognises that Maori and other non-white New Zealand settlers are "strangers" to him as a Pakeha New Zealander. In this newly configured suburban space, Jack feels like an invader where once he was most at home, and is afraid of the "burglar" (who will dispossess him of his property) and the "gag" (which will remove his ability to speak). Both fears spring from the same root – his fear of losing his place in a rapidly changing landscape.

Jack retreats to what he can articulate and know, the safety of Pakeha suburbia and the landscape of the past. As he puts it:

I'll move about in my middle class suburbs. I'll walk on Takapuna beach. And I'll visit Loomis in my head. It is old Loomis, under this same sky, that makes me feel I have come home after the long adventure in Wellington. (Gee Going West 241)

Jack uses the unchanging sky as a way of reconciling past and present earthly landscapes at an earthly level; the continuity of the heavens allows him to claim connection between his present location and the place he once called home. Even when securely ensconced in white suburbia, however, he cannot escape the landscape's omnipresent reminders of class. Jack refers to Rex's wife Alice's grand hilltop location as "Mercedes land" (Gee Going West 253), where expensive exotic plantings attempt to transform the landscape into somewhere other than modern New Zealand. He finds himself in "a yard surrounded by bougainvillea in bloom. It's like being put down in Tahiti. The over-weening purple, its super-abundance, threatens him". (Gee Going West 86) Trying to get away from this threatening artifice (which subtly reverses the trope of wilderness as posing the threat) puts him on a "street of barbered lawns and sweet-orange trees. There's a white Mercedes on a tiled drive. There's a woman on a cushion, asking her roses to say ah." (Gee Going West 86) This highly modified modern landscape is the legacy of a settler attitude to indigenous nature that (as Geoff Park has it) was "suffused with cultivated contempt for what was there before it." (Park 49)

Malouf's novel *Remembering Babylon* deals directly with that "cultivated contempt" in describing a settlement in colonial Queensland. Settlement involves overwriting 'nature' with 'culture' in the opinion of the majority of the settlers. Many of the middle-aged settlers have a child's fear of the unbroken land, which "even in full sunlight... was impenetrably dark." (Malouf Babylon 8) The untamed land is seen as hostile; clearing it provides safety and security.

Most unnerving of all was the knowledge that, just three years back, the very patch of earth you were standing on had itself been on the other side of things, part of the unknown, and might still, for all your coming and going over it, and the sweat you had poured into its acre or two of ploughed earth, have the last of mystery upon it, in jungle brakes between paddocks and ferny places out of the sun. Good reason, that, for stripping it, as soon as you could manage, of every vestige of the native; for ringbarking and clearing and reducing it to what would make it, at last, just a bit like home. (Malouf Babylon 9-10)

The colonial desire to modify the landscape and impose British notions of "home" on this new soil is clearly evident here. "Natives", whether human or arboreal, must be eradicated to facilitate this process.

The darkness of the land beyond the settlement is conflated with the perceived threat from the 'blacks'. This discomfort with the untamed land is discomfort of proximity to the native. Coming face to face with a 'black', even in broad daylight, brings the community of mature men "slap up against a terror you thought you had learned, years back, to treat as childish: the Bogey, the Coal Man, Absolute Night." (Malouf Babylon 42)

And the horror that it carries to you is not just the smell, in your own sweat, of a half-forgotten swamp-world going back in both of you, but that for him, as you meet here face to face in the sun, you and all you stand for have not yet appeared over the horizon of the world, so that after a moment all the wealth of it goes dim in you, then is cancelled altogether, and you meet at last in a terrifying equality that strips the last rags from your soul and leaves you so far out on the edge of yourself that your fear is now you may never get back. (Malouf Babylon 43)

Aboriginal Australians are associated with a swamp world that is pre-historic and terrifying, unsettling the mature settlers' preconceived notions of themselves and threatening their sense of identity. These early settlers (unlike the twentieth-century mature characters Gee depicts) are not yet ready to reconcile the self with the 'other'. Though the crisis of Gemmy's arrival forces the settlers to confront the reality of the landscape that surrounds them, they remain too threatened by the unfamiliarity of the untamed landscape and the indigenous people to be able to encompass them.

The way Malouf describes the settlers' fear of black land and black personhood is resonant with postcolonial theory. In reconstructing conventional settler views, he allows the settler community to articulate the questions of identity and belonging posited by postcolonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha argues:

From the point of view of the colonizer, passionate for unbounded, unpeopled possession, the problem of truth turns into the troubled political and psychic question of boundary and territory: *Tell us why you, the native, are there*. Etymologically unsettled, 'territory' derives from both terra (earth) and terrere (to frighten) whence territorium, 'a place from which people are frightened off'. The colonialist demand for narrative carries, within it, its threatening reversal: *Tell us why we are here*. (Bhabha 99-100)

While the settlement community have no access to such twentieth century questions, Malouf examines these issues through his portrayal of the baffled uncertainty and mistrust that underpins the assurance of settler possession of the land.

Malouf also creates the character of Mr Frazer to offer an alternative (and thoroughly postcolonial) reading of the Australian colonial landscape. After the initial turning point of arrival in Australia, Mr Frazer does not experience exile or dislocation; rather, he feels drawn to explore the mysterious aspects of Australia's nature, and his own. As a child, he remembers having loved the nature of the night:

Night creatures, night-flowering plants. They touched on what was hidden in his own nature; and it occurs to him, as he plunges through the undergrowth with Gemmy, or strides knee-deep up a slope, that in a way he is still at it. This, from the point of view of where he began, is the night side of the globe. He has found it at last, can explore it now in full sunlight. (Malouf Babylon 131)

Mr Frazer feels himself transported into a world where what he guessed at in childhood can finally be opened to investigation. Through his documenting of the native flora, and his visions of orchards of indigenous rather than imported fruits, he shows himself to be ahead of his time. Bucking the traditional colonial "cultivated contempt" for what is already there, Mr Frazer puts himself out of step with the culture of his time by accepting that the local and immediate landscape may have much to offer that the settlers are not able to recognise. As James Tulip puts it in his discussion of the novel:

Mr Frazer writes his reflections on Australian botany so fulsomely, and with such a cogent appeal for accepting Australian life on its own terms, that it reads like a surrogate sermon by Malouf himself. It is an ecological vision that is worthy of the twenty-first century. (Tulip "Issues of Race" 73)

In his ecological approach, Mr Frazer breaks down the traditional binary between garden and wilderness. He dares to imagine a landscape where the untamed landscape is no longer considered antithetical to godliness:

Is there not a kind of refractory pride in it, an insistence that if the land will not present itself to us in terms that we know, we would rather die than take it as it is? For there is a truth here and it is this: that no continent lies outside God's bounty and his intention to provide for his

children. He is a gardener, and everything he makes is a garden.
(Malouf Babylon 130)

Recognising that his view is 'a' truth, rather than 'the' truth, also suggests that Mr Frazer is aware of multiple possible readings of place, echoing postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial understandings. As Don Randall says,

Malouf's mappings tend to be remappings, reconfigurations of the world that acknowledge that the world can be – and is – variously envisioned; Malouf's mappings counter rather than confirm the perspective of power. ... Frazer's vision challenges the pre-existing colonial understanding of the land he studies. (Randall David Malouf 6)

Through Mr Frazer, Malouf can offer both a re-reading of Australia's past approach to the land and a hopeful vision for its future engagement with place.

Mr Frazer also demonstrates the difficulties inherent in the relationship between white settler culture and the Australian landscape. While his botanical drawings and naming of the native flora are prompted by genuine desire for engaging with the place on its own terms, the act of recording is a form of cultural appropriation. Mr Frazer seeks a reductive categorisation of the natural features, rather than experiencing them holistically like Gemmy and the Aboriginal Australians. If this cultural tendency keeps Mr Frazer slightly removed from the landscape, his passion for the native flora equally distances him from his society. The other settlers dismiss his offerings of the strange little fruits of his labours. Even the Premier, who can imagine the orchards of cultivated natives that Mr Frazer envisions, does not demonstrate the enthusiasm that Mr Frazer has anticipated. Ironically, the crisis of dismissal brings Mr Frazer to an acceptance of his immediate and domestic environment.

The orchards he had foreseen receded into a future that appeared increasingly remote but no more unreal to him than the place he now stood in, with the Premier's letter in his hand, the jug and basin with their nasturtium pattern, sitting solidly on the washstand, and the busy little capital coming to life beyond the sill, all its picket fences gleaming, the relentless sunlight bouncing off its domes. (Malouf Babylon 175)

His vision for the future broad landscape becomes concurrent with the humble furnished room and the new-built city beyond it, suggesting reconciliation with the man-made settler impositions on the landscape that already exist.

In the more conventional settler view, the future is seen as being threatened, rather than redeemed, by the native Australian environment. Losing a child to the wilderness was a common figure for wider colonial fears of separation from the known environment. As Roslynn Haynes puts it:

Lost explorers and lost children were only specific instances of lost colonists separated from their cultural source and struggling against a hostile land at the margins of the known world. (Haynes 114)

Malouf shows this anxiety in the figure of middle-aged Jim Sweetman. Though Jim's appreciation for the landscape does change over the course of the book, initially he considers "the line of greyish scrub" that marks the edge of broken land as "the last strip of country that was in any way comfortable". (Malouf Babylon 100) At this point, Jim takes his comfort from the social landscape of the settlement, and is disconcerted by any blurring of the boundaries that might threaten his home or his family. His primary concern is for

his little granddaughter, around whom his whole world revolved. He saw her wandering off from the safe ground where her mother was hanging out the wash, after a butterfly maybe that kept moving ahead into longer and longer grass. (Malouf Babylon 101)

The fluttery unpredictability of the insect and the child's path leads, in Jim's mind's eye, to the child's disappearing into the increasingly less well-controlled grass that leads to the wilderness. Jim's fear is a feature of both his status as a colonist and as a grandfather. As social scientist Lois Tamir explains, a key "psychological task of middle age involves taking responsibility for future generations, be they one's own offspring or protégés, or a less tangible, more abstract group of younger adults." (Tamir 51) Malouf demonstrates both the colonist's unease and the middle-aged anxiety for future generations through the landscape image of the boundary between the known and unknown landscapes.

Gee likewise shows middle-aged characters driven to reassess boundaries by their anxieties for the young. In *Going West*, Jack sees a clifftop as a potential site of loss, worrying that a child might fall.

He had not realised they were so close to the edge of a cliff. A camellia hedge makes a barrier but he sees how children could slide through – have slid already judging from earth worn smooth between the trunks. Risk is part of childhood, cliffs and creeks; but a little bit of wire netting...

Jack stops himself again. He doesn't like his reflex of foreseeing sudden deaths. He opens a gate (child-proofed) in the hedge and walks with a forward stoop to the cliff edge. (Gee Going West 80)

The child-proof gate is shown to be beside the point; children will carve their own path through the landscape in defiance of barriers to exploration. It is Jack, representative of the older generation, who sees the risk. In *Crime Story*, Howie feels this risk more directly because the threat is to his own flesh and blood. The clifftop property that symbolises Howie's material success becomes a source of paralysing fear when his grandson Damon adventures beyond its safety. Howie is rendered powerless:

He couldn't call out or get his breath, he just watched Damon go out of sight – down there, where it bulges out and then cuts underneath. Damon says there's lots of handholds, but it looked as if he'd fallen. (Gee Crime Story 256)

This concern for the grandchild is typical of this life stage, when 'generativity' becomes a major concern as the adult assesses their legacy to the world. As a child, Damon embraces the exciting liminality of the clifftop edge, challenging the defined boundary; as his grandfather, Howie wants to keep Damon within the safely established confines of the known landscape.

In *Crime Story*, such concern extends to children now grown. Both Howie and his ex-wife Gwen are repeatedly shown worrying over their sons Athol and Gordon, who are dealing (largely unsuccessfully) with the transitions of early middle age. Howie observes his son, Gordon, walking the fine line of despair along the edge of the same clifftop property.

The Rangitoto channel shone and the islands lay flattened out, spreading into the night. Gordon seemed to be walking there.

Don't do that, Howie thought. It was an easy step off the cliff. His spine tingled at the thought of falling. He saw the rocks and sea rushing up, and saw how Gordon would be free. (Gee Crime Story 169)

Once again, the landscape provides a source of danger, but one that is related to the threat of social pressure rather than any menace inherent in the natural environment. Howie perceives that the landscape offers Gordon a route to freedom from failure, and can understand the appeal of such an escape. However, he still wants to draw his son back into the safe world of society. Gordon does return from the edge; the solitude of the landscape gives him the

courage to face the social reality of his situation, and he accepts that the next step on his journey is jail.

Gwen does not feel that Gordon is ruined by being sent to jail. When he asks her to bring him gardening books about growing trees, she feels he has finally been “found”; in her view he is moving towards growth and putting down roots. Her primary concern is for their other son, Athol, whose superficial engagement with place and people inspires her pity:

All she could do was send him away – through the hedge, back to his empty house – while crying silently, Athol, Athol, as though his name might save him. She did not know where he was or what he might go on to, just that he was lost, he was lost. (Gee Crime Story 258)

Here the gap in the hedge leads to a soulless suburban house, rather than a cliff edge, but the effect is much the same; the now-adult child is treading a dangerous path and rendering the watching parent helpless. Athol’s desire for domination of the landscape through commercial exploitation is something Gwen perceives as deeply suspect.

Fifty houses, Gwen thought. How many houses does a man need? Newtown, Mt Cook, Island Bay, Miramar: bits of Athol scattered all over Wellington. If you brought them together they’d make a suburb: Atholtown. And the people there all worried about their drains and their rent, and the rent flowing steadily into Athol’s pocket. (Gee Crime Story 56)

Fragmenting the land – the conventional bordering, framing and partitioning of the colonial era remade in the modern rhetoric of commercial development – is construed by Gwen as a way of fragmenting the self. Athol is a product of a new culture that she wants no part of.

Through Gwen, Gee provides an example of emergent Pakeha values of the landscape that draw on indigenous understandings of place. Gwen shows respect for land and its resources as natural taonga. Drinking a glass of piped Wellington water, Gwen remembers

Athol’s scheme for buying the rights to a South Westland stream and shipping tanker loads of water – ‘Find a name for us, Mum’ – to Europe and the Middle East; and how it had shocked her so profoundly – water was like sunlight and air – that she had found herself stepping back from him and putting up her hands to ward him off. (Gee Crime Story 58-59)

Gwen's concern represents an understanding of the environment embodied in the Māori concept of mauri. Geoff Park details the concept with specific reference to waterways:

mauri is the driving wedge of the principle that when it comes to the life and health of nature, Māori and Pākehā perceptions differ fundamentally. Increasingly, legal decisions involving the use of rivers are recognising this – for example, upholding Māori argument that water drawn off for electricity generation destroys much more than the flow of water. (Park 25)

The difference in Athol and Gwen's understandings suggests the concurrent use of various historical narratives of place to define Pakeha relationships with the land. Athol's cavalier attitude to the exploitation of natural resources, and his impatience at Gwen's "fuss about fine feelings and mystery" (Gee Crime Story 63) harks back to colonial attitudes; trapped in a neo-colonial way of thinking, he cannot see beyond profit. Gwen's understanding goes back to indigenous ideas that pre-date settler arrival, demonstrating that Maori values are beginning to have impact in the wider culture in the late twentieth century.

The characters of Howie and Gwen offer the most glaring contrast between attitudes to the landscape. Throughout the novel, Gwen embraces both the natural and social elements of her environment. She enjoys walks through her suburban environment, using her perambulations to think and to increase her self-awareness.

Gwen walked to the top of the cable car and round the bus roundabout and back to Central Terrace and so home every weekday, wet or fine, but did not go into the gardens because the dog spoiled them. She walked there in the mornings and on cool late afternoons. She thought about many things – money, food, the mountains, being alone, being further south, down where it snowed, with nothing but grey oceans between here and Antarctica; and of a little house in the bush, up from Karamea perhaps, and no one there with her, not even a dog, just the birds and the river and the weather and the sky – lovely, she imagined, knowing it would suit her for a day or two... (Gee Crime Story 22)

Gwen can both value the remote and untouched aspects of the New Zealand landscape, and accept their limitations. She knows herself well enough to realise that isolation in the wilderness would only provide temporary solace; soon she would crave social and built landscapes once again. In her

appreciation of Wellington, Gwen displays an open-minded acceptance of her chosen place.

Wellington lay in its bowl, with its buildings shining; roofs red and green and cladding polished. The cranes stood long-legged over pits of clay where spikes and webs held the workmen tight. The mountains were unpretentious, lower in the morning than at night; the harbour grey. I like it however it is, Gwen thought. (Gee Crime Story 126)

Change does not faze Gwen; she includes the cranes in her cityscape without judgement, encompassing the city's constant development over time. She also does not romanticise the landscape, mentioning the grey harbour and the unpretentious mountains rather without casting them as beautiful or sublime.

Gwen's awareness of place is underscored by her own self-awareness, which is figured in terms reminiscent of the postcolonial notion of reconciliation with the other. Gwen's inscape is made up of landscape features from the real New Zealand environment and more abstract metaphors of place and separation:

There were so many freedoms she could claim – freedoms of the mind. There was nowhere she could not travel in there – except, she conceded, those places put off limits by race and gender, by language and by temperament, by prejudice, belief. Oh dear, dark continents, she thought, but was not distressed because it was the same, or much the same, for everyone. It was still huge, was limitless, the world outside her 'lot in life'.

All the same, she thought of that and of how it constrained her. Boundaries had been changed by her divorce, but boundaries were not done away with. A huge natural feature was removed. The sun shone longer; at night more stars were in the sky, and she could stride on paths closed off before; but in the end day and night remained much as they were, just more of them, or less, and hotter, brighter, colder than before. (Gee Crime Story 22-23)

In detailing her own journey and her personal scope and potential, Gwen turns to the landscape for suitable images. She incorporates the idea of boundaries even as she rejects the idea of limits, a reconciled binary that shows her mental landscape as one of inclusion.

Comfortable in her own place, Gwen's inclusivity extends to other people. She offers solace to her daughter-in-law, Ulla, an unhappy exile from Sweden. The crisis of Ulla's paralysis sends Gwen to the landscape again, searching for images that can transcend the boundaries of Ulla's suddenly limited physical

environment. She asks Ulla about Sweden, prompting the disabled woman to travel in her imagination back to the rural and urban landscapes of her youth. Gwen also brings landscape paintings to Ulla's bedside, offering art as a means to mediate between the imaginative and physical worlds. Despite her best efforts, Gwen also recognises that she cannot stop Ulla from wanting to escape into death. Seeing Ulla's withdrawal, Gwen wonders:

Was she trying to make a path back home to travel on when she died? Did she have a premonition? And do these men tell her now, Come home, here is your place? Ulla, I won't stop you if you really have to go. But, my dear, there are other ways that you should try. We have blue empty nights as well, and black hills and cold sea, just look out there, past the buildings and across the harbour. Yours, I know, are the ones that you understand. (Gee Crime Story 196)

Common landscape elements are offered as a way of creating shared space that Ulla and Gwen can both appreciate. In fact, though, it is Gwen herself who becomes a surrogate 'home' for the younger woman. As Gee puts it, "There was nothing Ulla would not say to Gwen, who was her country in a way." (Gee Crime Story 126-27) Gwen epitomises values of openness, inclusivity and understanding that are shown through images in which the landscape and the human are seamlessly incorporated.

In *Crime Story*, Howie's middle-aged attitudes are more conventionally framed. His assertions of location and possession of place are unequivocal. From his wealthy hilltop home, he unashamedly claims what he perceives as belonging to him:

There's my view, he thought, there's all the sea and sky a man can ask for, and islands out there in the gulf, and I can go round the back and see the parts people never see, in my launch. She was down there at Westhaven, tied to a pole – forty feet of her and lines like a girl. And up here on the cliff was his house... (Gee Crime Story 48)

King of all he surveys (though he would dispute the title, accepting "Howie Powie! The toughest thing that ever came out of Henderson school" but declaring that he "was no King Howie") the wide view and the ability to claim "the parts people never see" is a large part of his pleasure in ownership. The boat is not the only thing figured in terms of feminine possession, either:

He smoked his cigarette and flicked the butt away and watched it like a falling star until it went out, then watched the lights on the harbour bridge, way up past the wharves, making a lovely female curve. The

North Shore glowed and flickered. Ponsonby and downtown Auckland prickled and swam with lights. Out west, a long way out, the Waitakere Ranges made a crooked line on the sky. The Henderson valley lay somewhere below, wet and green. That was where he'd started from and this was where he'd got to. (Gee Crime Story 40)

He has attained a place where he can call the shots. "He made the rules on his bit of land and no one told him not to drop his ash on the carpet or not to take a leak off the cliff if he was inclined." (Gee Crime Story 39) In contrast with Gwen, Howie enjoys being permitted to treat his landscape with disrespect. Howie demonstrates none of his ex-wife's self-reflexive awareness of the social narratives that frame his understandings of place. However, he is capable of integrating the personal narrative of his past and present:

When Howie looked back he had no sense of travelling great distances, even though times were far away. The creek, his mother's kitchen, the islands and the launch, the bloomed girls in the roofless shed, and Gwen, Darlene – there was no break; it was not even linked like a chain. (Gee Crime Story 39)

Howie has climbed from one place to another up the social ladder, and sees no need to interrogate the journey he has made. In his late-middle age, he has found a place to be comfortable – now, as he puts it, he is "waiting for the best part of his life to start." (Gee Crime Story 39) The crises of Ulla's paralysis, Gordon's imprisonment and Athol's corruption do not touch him in the same way as they touch Gwen, for he is not ready to examine the ground on which he stands.

In *Going West*, Rex Petley seems to have found a similarly undemanding place to retire from the pressures of the world. He purchases a property in Waiuku with his second wife Margot. It has its own microclimate, suggesting its isolation from the surrounding world, and in this temperate zone, Rex enjoys the landscape of the present without it being touched by the past. Sitting beside the creek with Rex brings Jack into direct contact with the way Rex has changed:

He picked up a pebble and lobbed it into the water. He lived in a capsule labelled 'here and now', and time slid by and the world slid by while he enjoyed the golden weather inside. Yet he had mentioned Loomis Creek without being prompted. Perhaps there were some pictures on the walls. And I had entry. I could visit this creek (this 'now' creek) and watch the child swinging on her rope. I could come as long as I stayed simple. (Gee Going West 246)

Jack, whose own retirement has prompted him to visit the landscapes of the past and reassess himself and his relationships, cannot identify with Rex's disassociation. He wants Rex to continue to engage with a more expansive landscape, one that permits and acknowledges change.

I could not see that sitting by the hole enjoying the sun, watching Sal fall and splash and swim to the tree roots and climb up and capture the rope again, was any better – healthier – than nosing obsessively down Loomis Creek and sliding in the mud chute with Fiona. I could not see that there was any fight left in Rex. And it was not until we went back to the house – they had a house and lived together now – and I saw his old Holden with the dinghy roped on top, and knew he had an escape from his thirty acres, that I felt my depression lift. (Gee Going West 246)

Rex's peacefulness and rejection of questions seem antithetical to ongoing life. As in his view of Lila, Jack sees limitation to one location as a stasis that will bring stagnation. However, others recognise the ability to move on from the past enough to settle down as a sign of maturity. As Margot explains, life on the farm is "another world" but one that is just as valid as "all that stuff in Loomis". In her mind, "Rex grew up". (Gee Going West 268)

Rex is not, however, immune to incursions from society in this piece of the landscape; news of violent death forces him to travel backward and outward once again. Tod, Rex's nephew, comes to the farm to confess that he has murdered his family. Tod's act is motivated by the 1987 stock-market crash, in which he loses his money and his job. As his position in society is wrenched away from him, he feels unable to support his family, and turns to the waters of the Hauraki Gulf to relieve him of the burden. In crisis, Tod projects responsibility for the murder of his wife and children. Jack tells Tod's story:

If it was to happen it must happen in the dark. But it was not decided on, darkness would not decide. He put it on the weather so the choice would not be his. Weather was a dice he threw.

A light rain came up, and wind and waves. Everything was swallowed up in greyness. He made a game of it at first, skidding down the waves, and his daughters shrieked with delight, but were soon afraid. His wife, Janice, was afraid too, but she trusted him. He told her they would head for Red Beach not Murray's Bay, and go ashore there. Then came his part, the decision was his. It was easy to seem to misjudge – to hit a wave the wrong way and fill up with water. He had wanted the boat to tip over but it didn't happen that way. (Gee Going West 271)

Weather and tide are pitted against the woman and children as Tod uses the unpredictable landscape as a murder weapon. Once the boat is flooded, he pushes his pregnant wife under water and holds her there. He ties his daughters to the boat; the younger is unable to hold her head up and drowns while he is tying up the other. He finds himself unable to drown her himself; instead, he swims away.

Having heard this story, Rex turns to the wider landscape to exorcise ghosts. The horror of Tod's quadruple murder brings back Rex's own past, when he too used the landscape as a murder weapon. Prompted to crisis by learning of sexual abuse, Rex pushed the perpetrator, Sidgy, down one of Wellington's steep hills. Thus Rex's journey into the Hauraki Gulf in bad weather is an attempt to reconcile himself with the past. By recreating Tod's game of chance, Rex hopes to reclaim the landscape from the taint of murder by facing the forces of nature and through a sublime effort overcoming them. Jack says:

If he had come ashore he would have got past them, Tod and Sidgy, and stood on the other side, the Margot and Sal side, and been able to carry on. He must have expected to come ashore. He liked his chances. That's what I think; Margot too. He would not have left Tod with her otherwise. But he was almost sixty, he wasn't strong and wiry any more. (Gee Going West 273)

Rex's death by drowning in the harbour is not exactly suicide, but an attempt at reparation. Jack believes that Rex undertakes his final journey into order to reconcile the past with the potential for a future, saying "he was swimming westwards in the end; swimming back to Margot, and possibly to Loomis as well." (Gee Going West 278) However, the past is not so easily erased. Rex's death adds to the weight of the landscape for those who know these histories.

Jack is more able to face the potential of his own death than he is the reality of Rex's. At sixty, Jack maintains his vigour, proudly stating "I stride along, I'm boyish." (Gee Going West 8) Nevertheless, he plans to commit suicide when he feels himself becoming old, and his thoughts circulate around finding a suitably isolated landscape. He has planned a journey to Mt. Duppa in Nelson. He imagines complete integration with the natural world and revels at the thought of the scope: "Huge land. Huge sky. The bare-headed mountain welcomes him..."

(Gee Going West 42) He imagines the ring of mountains and feels that his presence will complete the circle. As he dies, the land will embrace him and he will embrace eternity: “When he lies down the rocks lean inwards... He’ll keep his eyes open and watch the stars. Presently Jack Skeat will die.” (Gee Going West 43) Even in Auckland, standing on Mt. Eden, Jack nurtures the thought of finding solitude and integration at the end of his life. He thinks:

If he can’t make it to Duppa the crater in this one will do. Half a million people all about but here is a place where he can lie alone and see a fringe of trees and the sky – and perhaps, as he fades, a city face that looks down and does not get involved. (Gee Going West 46)

In his visions of withdrawal into the landscape, Jack does not exclude the human; he imagines the child or jogger who will find his body on Duppa, or the curious city-dweller who will simply observe his death. As the observer of Rex’s own self-precipitated death, however, Jack finds it more difficult to reconcile visions of the embracing landscape and the social impact. In Jack’s mind, Rex “drives to Wenderholm and heads out to sea. The waves are smooth at first and the wind is soft. But I don’t need this. Not now. I have his end.” Having solved the mystery of the crisis that sent Rex to sea, Jack turns away from imagining the last moments of his friend’s life. Jack knows he is burdened with the narrative, saying “I have to carry it round with me for the rest of my life.” (Gee Going West 274)

As a survivor, Jack Skeat eventually achieves the serenity that seems appropriate to his age. Coming to terms with Rex’s death and putting Loomis to rest, Jack reconciles who he is and where he is, without needing to escape to Europe. When the weather is fine, Harry joins Jack in walking on Takapuna Beach. Jack says “If it rains – it rains a lot in Auckland but the wind doesn’t blow like Wellington’s – we run for the car, holding hands”. (Gee Going West 278) Like the weather in the place they have settled, their relationship is finally less tempestuous. On the calm east coast beach, simply holding hands conjures up a return to innocent closeness reminiscent of “going down on the beach for a woo”. Given their rain-driven first coupling, the increase in rain in the new environment could be read as increased intimacy in another sense too. Jack explains that he is confident enough now to face an enlarged view of the landscape:

I'm out of my hole under the stairs and do my own work at a desk in the sitting-room. I watch liners and container ships going in and out. Past Rangitoto is the Coromandel. The little yachts stand upright on the sea. I've let my eye look inside and back. It's good to be able now to turn another way. (Gee Going West)

In putting the past to rest, Jack has found a place to be comfortable. Once again, reconciliation with violence and pain has led to a resolution of sorts with a person's place in the world.

Malouf's characters also face their mortality in the landscape. In several of his short stories, ordinary middle-aged Australians take to the landscape; the events that occur bring dominant historical narratives about place to the fore. In the story "Lone Pine", Malouf shows a suburban couple, Harry and May Picton, embarking on "the trip of their lives" (Malouf Dream Stuff 102) across Australia. After twenty-seven years of a paper run, Harry has gone the distance in covering Australian ground. He proudly notes that has "done a distance of a hundred thousand miles. That is, ten times around Australia". However, he knows that "doing it that way, piecemeal, twice a day, gave you no idea of what the country really was: the distances, the darkness, the changes as you slipped across unmarked borders." (Malouf Dream Stuff 103) The couple aim to break out of their settled routine, having recognised "how predictable their life was, what narrow limits they moved in." (Malouf Dream Stuff 104) In doing so, Harry and May become part of an itinerant, wandering community of the road, described in terms reminiscent of the Aboriginal: "Whole tribes that for one reason or another had never settled. Citizens of a city the size of Hobart or Newcastle that was always on the move." (Malouf Dream Stuff 103)

Despite the restlessness that initiates the trip, the pair interacts with the physical locations in conventional settler fashion. Harry and May appropriate the landscape, renaming the places they stop and marking them on the map. When the story begins, they have pulled up in an isolated location; Harry is not quite sure why he has chosen to stop at this specific place.

There was a pine. Perhaps it was that – its deeper green and conical form among the scrub a reminder out here of the shapeliness and order of gardens, though this particular pine was of the native variety. (Malouf

Dream Stuff 101)

Their camping spot straddles the two worlds of the garden and the wilderness, the cultivated import and the native. Harry names the spot Lone Pine, by association connecting it with the historic narrative of the legendary World War One battle in Gallipoli. The simple camping spot is therefore a strangely liminal place, simultaneously incorporating imported culture and native nature, comfortable suburbia and foreign battlefield.

Harry and May are forced out into this landscape in the middle of the night by a young man intent on stealing their caravan home. As they walk into the bush, the couple realise that they are going to be killed. Facing his own mortality, Harry's thoughts turn to the landscapes of his life. May is killed first, and Harry cries out in grief and regret for her, and for his past. As he in turn is shot, Harry thinks of himself in childhood:

that boy sending his piss out in an exuberant stream into the dark, his eyes on Aldebaran, and for the last scene at Todgers, that unruly Eden, which he would never get back to now, and for his garden choked with weeds. He meant to hurl himself at the youth. But before he could do so he was lifted clean off his feet by a force greater than anything he could ever have imagined, and rolled sideways among stones that after a moment cut hard into his cheek. They were a surprise, those stones. Usually he was careful about them. Bad for the mower.

He would have flung his arms out then to feel for her comfortable softness in the bed, but the distances were enormous and no fence in any direction. (Malouf Dream Stuff 114-15)

In the confused moment between his wife's murder and his own, it is Harry's territorial marking that flashes before his eyes. He remembers pissing on the land, and his now derelict garden, both symbols of his claim to belonging in his piece of Australia. However, at the moment of his death he is startled by the incongruity of the ground on which he dies. He believes his death to be part of ordinary suburban life, and displaces the stony ground on which he falls to his suburban garden. Nor does the landscape he sees in death conform to his expectations. This land expands wider. There are no fences in the undiscovered country. While the lack of softness and feminine comfort in this landscape seem to indicate his despair, the expansiveness of the enormous distances and the unbounded landscape offer a whole new set of potentials, though he cannot quite grasp them. Through his death at Lone Pine, he joins the legion of other

Australians who fell at Lone Pine in Turkey. Thus Harry and May's small personal history is conflated with a larger national mythology.

In the story "Mrs Porter and the Rock", Malouf uses an aging woman to provide another insight into Australian history. Despite her son's enthusiasm, Mrs Porter is supremely uninterested in looking at Uluru/Ayer's Rock. At home in suburban Australian culture, she is aware of how the Rock has been appropriated by white Australian culture to advertise everything from hamburgers to cars.

Suddenly it has plonked itself down in the middle of people's lives like something that has just landed from outer space, or pushed up out of the centre of the earth, and occupies the gap that was once filled by – by what? She can't think. Movie stars? Jesus? The Royal Family? It has opened people's minds – this is Donald again – in the direction of the incommensurable. What a mouthful! (Malouf Every Move 185)

The potentially sublime landscape is stripped of meaning by popular culture. As an icon, the Rock is on a par with any other celebrity, existing culturally primarily as a commercial entity. Though the less cynical Donald sees the landmark as mysterious and spiritual, Mrs Porter is deeply sceptical of the Rock as simply another marketing ploy.

Mrs Porter also reveals the shifting sands of wider historical narratives through her personal disconnection from the landscape. She cannot relate the defining topologic feature of the red centre of Australia to her own suburban life. What, she asks, does the Rock have to do with getting tea on the table?

Nothing. How could it? It wasn't on the map. It wasn't even on the *list* – there was a list, and you had to find out where the names belong and mark them in. Capes, bays, the river systems, even the ones that ran only for a month or two each year. You marked them in with a dotted line. But this Rock that everyone makes such a fuss of now wasn't on the list, let alone on the map. So there!

It certainly wasn't on *her* map. (Malouf Every Move 183)

In detailing her own childhood experience of school geography, Mrs Porter demonstrates that until very recently, white Australian society ignored the largest feature of the Australian heartland. Even as Ayers Rock, the ancient Uluru has only recently been accorded value by the settling society, which now claims it as a national icon. Mrs Porter's scepticism punctures claims to knowing the "incommensurable" elements of landscape which, until recently, were not acknowledged as part of the white Australian landscape. Yet Mrs Porter's

unwillingness to acknowledge the Rock even once it has become a cultural icon suggests an equivalent reluctance to look hard at her socially-based existence. In resolutely turning away from Uluru, she also turns away from Donald, just as she has turned away from her husband by refusing to look at iconic European cathedrals. In her attitude to the landscape, whether Australian or foreign, natural or built, Mrs Porter reveals her discomfort with the “incommensurable” on the level of personal and social relationships.

The prosaic Mrs Porter therefore spends her life insisting on the value of mundane and suburban Australian life, refusing to acknowledge any aspect of the geographical or built landscape that is framed as transcendental, whether it is her husband’s beloved European cathedrals or the “inspiring” presence of Uluru/Ayers Rock. Yet she too finds that time and landscape and body converge at the moment of her death. Awoken in her motel room by a strange humming, she finds herself drawn to look at last at the Rock, which, “darkly veined and shimmering, was sitting like a cloud a hundred feet above the earth.” Despite her scepticism, she suddenly discovers “what she felt was an immediate and unaccountable happiness, as if the Rock’s new-found lightness was catching.” (Malouf Every Move 200) This lightness leads to the awareness that she too is floating, and the awareness of her death, which prompts her back to earth to go and say last words to her son Donald.

Rather than connecting with Donald, however (she cannot remember his room number), Mrs Porter finds herself outside, wandering over the motel’s wet lawns to bury her toes luxuriously in the desert sands. Lost, she heads for the Rock, and collapses as the sun comes up and renders the desert too hot for comfort. She is attended to by a group of Aboriginal children, who bring her water and keep her company until evening comes. As she sees the Rock’s shadow fall across the group, Mrs Porter becomes aware:

The Rock, which had been hoarding the sun’s heat all day, was giving it off now in a kindlier form as it turned from orange-red to purple. If she could swing her body round to face it, to look at it, she might understand something. Might. But then again she might not. Better to take what she could, this gentle heat, and leave the show to these others. (Malouf Every Move 208-09)

The children, however, continue to watch her as she dies; she is conscious of floating away, and wants to call out that she is “up here”. However, both the actual children present, and Donald, in her imagination, are “looking in the wrong place.” (Malouf Every Move 209)

While Mrs Porter seems to reject the moment of potential unity and understanding by choosing not to turn towards the landscape, the redirection of “looking in the wrong place” operates in narrative terms; Malouf gives another place to look for Mrs Porter’s transcendent moment of connection and understanding within the landscape. The story ends not with her death, but by returning to an earlier episode of Mrs Porter (then a child called Dulcie) watching a dying fish dolphin on the beach with her friends. The huge shape of the fish dolphin is “changing colour like a sunset”, linking it back to the figure of the Rock. At the moment of the creature’s death, Dulcie is silent:

She too was breathless. This was a moment, she knew, that she would never forget. Never. As long as she lived. She also knew, with certainty, that she would live for ever. (Malouf Every Move 209)

Thus this story too ends with the eternal moment, the elision of space and time so that stories and events overlap and become one, and the human and the landscape are integrated – Dulcie’s death with that of the fish dolphin, which has already once left her “breathless”.

Gee and Malouf offer a variety of crises that prompt the late middle-aged to connect with the landscape. However, these characters almost uniformly seek somewhere where they can be comfortable, regardless of the initiating event. Gee and Malouf use a wide variety of landscape narratives to locate their characters, indicating the multiple perspectives of place possible in the late twentieth-century’s Antipodean culture.

5. Journey's end

Old age is traditionally a time of reflection, as the aged revisit places that have defined their life journey. As they approach the end of life, the future holds less importance, and the primary focus is on reconciling the past and the present. In remembering, elderly characters in Gee's and Malouf's fictions continue the middle-aged project of reshaping and re-visioning, identifying patterns or discontinuities in their history that were not obvious at earlier stages. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, New Zealand and Australia likewise re-examine the settler culture's historic relationship with place; new negotiations with the indigenous people regarding rights to land ownership are the most obvious example. However, the analogy between selfhood and nationhood is much weaker here than at earlier stages of development. The aged person faces death, whereas the mature nation still faces the future; unlike human characters, these human cultures do not face imminent cessation and thus do not need to seek closure in their narratives. Increasing recognition of diversity also makes hegemonic national stories less clearly identifiable in recent times. Nevertheless, Gee and Malouf continue to show connections between personal and national histories through flashbacks, characters' own commentaries, or the elision of events of personal and national significance. The landscape provides a touchstone for the aged, acting as a signifier both of change and continuation that mirrors their personal experience and broader social histories.

In depicting the elderly, Gee and Malouf use landscape to demonstrate the ongoing and cyclical nature of human search for integration and belonging. Their aged characters tend to occupy the same literal landscape at the beginning and end of each text, but during the text undergo a transformative journey that allows them to be finally reconciled with where they find themselves. Gee's novels offer a plethora of aged male characters, all of whom are very specifically situated: George Plumb at Peacehaven (*Plumb*), Robert Macpherson in his Nelson orchard (*Loving Ways*), Noel Papps on his hilltop (*Prowlers*), Josef Mandl gazing from his Wellington hilltop to Somes Island (*Live Bodies*). In Malouf's most extended depiction of the condition of old age, *An*

Imaginary Life, disconnectedness from the past prompts connection with the present location. Experiencing exile in what he initially considers a wilderness, Ovid comes to recognise natural forces – weather, seasons, temperature, processes of growth and decay – to which he has previously been blinded by the ‘refinements’ of culture. His understanding of Tomis is transformed as he comes to a greater understanding of himself and his society. Malouf’s other elderly characters – Harland, in *Harland’s Half Acre*, or a character such as Audley in “A Great Day” – may be more literally mobile, but inevitably reach a place where they finally ‘settle’, demonstrating some reconciliation between past and present, self and society, personhood and place.

Older characters often function as commentators in these texts. Experience allows the elderly to recognise changes to residual, existent and emergent social values that are often exemplified by attitudes to the landscape. Whether the aged characters condemn or condone such changes depends on values shaping their own generational perspective. Often older characters will be bastions of older modes of appreciation, representing colonial values that place utility and British notions of aesthetic above an appreciation of Antipodean indigeneity. Such older characters are sometimes direct settlers, harking back to older times to show settler dislocation in contrast to the approach of born-and-bred younger generations who have grown up in the Antipodes. Yet often older characters are portrayed as going ‘back to nature’, developing an appreciation of the natural environment that is contrasted with the materialist attitudes of the early middle-aged. Less encumbered by notions of making material progress as they move out of active participation in social affairs, most of Gee’s and Malouf’s elderly characters accept their environment as it is, rather than as they might wish it to be. Making peace with place becomes an indication of a completed journey of self-discovery that has reconciled self and other.

In the article “Old Age: Cultural and Critical Perspectives”, Lawrence Cohen demonstrates how gerontology and related disciplines have sometimes constructed narratives of old age that assess the elderly in colonial terms:

from the beginning old age is framed in a split fashion in *The Ageless Self*, as the aged Other presenting a threat and the aging Self who is threatened. The latter is the explorer, adrift in 'uncharted territory,' the heart of darkness of old age where we encounter the natives in classic anthropological fashion: 'for only by first knowing how the elderly view themselves, their lives, and the nature of old age can we hope to fashion a meaningful present and future for them and for those who follow.' We fashion for them, and what is exchanged in this colonial encounter is meaning. (Cohen 143)

Here the elderly are shown in the same position as the child within the framing discourse – as both self and other. Moreover, in approaching old age this discourse casts the old as other in the same way as the native is other, insofar as they are assumed to understand the world differently from the person who approaches them.

In his essay "Fortunate Senex: The Pastoral of Old Age", literary critic Steven Marx says that "Gerontologists report that disengagement from the active and productive functions of a society defines the role of elder in almost every human culture." The aged adult, no longer a key social cog, occupies a similar position to a child in relation to society. As Marx goes on to explain:

Youth and old age, grandchild and grandparent, share the vantage of the peripheries, share distance from the center of social control and from the height of ambition. Traditional schemata of the Ages of Man picture old age as second childhood; the opening and closing acts of "this strange eventful history" of the life cycle form the lower steps of a pyramid, while adulthood stands at the peak. (Marx 26)

Marx also points out a correspondence between depictions of old age and "traditional primitivist ideologies" involving the "philosophical expression of 'civilized man's misgivings with civilization'". (Marx 23) Thus the old are seen as like the child and like the primitive, yet not quite like. Where the child and the indigene are associated with 'nature' due to not yet being fully admitted into the dominant society, the elderly disengage from the machinations of society and therefore demonstrate scepticism about 'civilisation'. Once again, withdrawing into the landscape becomes a potential escape-route from social pressures.

Such escape is not always permissible. The aged character, like the child, is shown to be subject to social forces (often feminine) that curtail personal exploration. Venturing into the landscape suggests an assertion of individual will

that poses a threat to social conformity; the Man Alone mythology remains in operation. The 'society' that puts pressure on masculine freedom in old age most frequently takes the form of a man's daughters. In Gee's short story "A Retired Life", the aged Mr Webb runs away down the beach. The watching narrator, Cliff, notes:

A hundred yards away the two Miss Webbs were coming at a middle-aged run. They would catch the old man before he reached the end of the beach. Cliff wondered what he thought was round the headland. The women should let him get that far. (Gee Stories 161)

Like the child Graham in Gee's earlier story, "A Sleeping Face", Mr Webb aspires to reach an unknown landscape beyond the headland. Cliff recognises that Mr Webb must be caught, but wishes that the feminine pursuers would give the old man a chance to experience the landscape beyond the known limits. However, the real barrier to Mr Webb's exploration is shown to be not social forces, but the man's personal limitations. Cliff observes:

He came to a place where the trickle from a storm-water drain had cut a shallow channel in the sand. It was only a couple of feet wide but Mr Webb went back and forth at its edge like a bird at the bars of a cage. He looked back and started to moan with fright. (Gee Stories 161-62)

A captive of his own fear, the miserable Mr Webb cannot strike out as confidently as Graham does for his independence, for he is unsure where to go or what stands in his way. Having lost touch with his identity through the ravages of dementia, he is threatened by both landscape and society, and finds himself stuck. No escape or integration is possible; the scenario of flight and capture is a narrative that will play out time and again without resolution.

In another story, "A Glorious Morning, Comrade", Gee shows a similar scenario from the point of view of the elderly escapee, Mr Pitt-Rimmer. Set up in the sun on the verandah while his daughters play bridge, he is (like the children who sleep on the verandah in Malouf's writing) neither inside nor outside the social circle. Rather than accepting this liminal position, on this occasion he decides to "outfox them" and makes a Man Alone dash for the wider world. He knows that his best bet is to avoid built landscapes and head for the hills:

He would keep away from roads and butcher shops, where he had been caught twice before looking at roasts of beef. They would not think of

searching on the hill. (Gee Stories 193)

Though he makes a quick stop at the shops for forbidden pleasures (cigarettes and Turkish Delight, which are denied to him by the shopkeeper), he continues to move away from society, going into the trees “until he stood on the edge of the cliff with the wharves below him.” (Gee Stories 194) From this slightly precarious position (which once again highlights his marginality), he looks out at a landscape that triggers images of his present situation and the country’s past.

Below him ships were tied up at the wharves, all piddling water out of their sides. One of them was a phosphate tub, moored at a wharf that he remembered now was Pitt-Rimmer Wharf. There had been those years on the Harbour Board – a tedious business. ... He walked on and the cape came into sight, standing up like Chunuk Bair. He had no wish to be reminded of that. That had been a very great piece of nonsense. (Gee Stories 195)

Incontinent himself, Mr Pitt-Rimmer sees the boats as “piddling”, interpreting what he sees in the landscape as a projection of his own body. He remembers that he has inscribed his identity more literally on the landscape when he notices that one boat is tied up at ‘his’ wharf. Mr Pitt-Rimmer’s assessment of his personal history and the nation’s political history is that the business of controlling the harbour is “tedious”, the war “a very great piece of nonsense.”

However, being dismissive of past achievements (in business or in battle) as a means of identification leaves Mr. Pitt-Rimmer confused. He is “lucid about food but cloudy about everything else”, conflating past and present and admitting “He was not quite sure where he was.” (Gee Stories 197) Beneath his confusion, he understands that his escape is simply a game – he is timing the length of his freedom, knowing perfectly well that his daughters will find him and take him home. Lying in his own urine on a bank, getting cold, he wonders “Where were his daughters? Where were the wretched women?” (Gee Stories 197) Though the myth of breaking free survives, comfort and security are required at this age. As with the child, the elderly man is torn between escape and belonging, inhabiting an uncomfortably liminal space. Mr Pitt-Rimmer (whose name echoes the trope of the outline around emptiness that recurs throughout these fictions) and Mr. Webb exemplify the disjunction between self, landscape and society

that limits the possibility of genuine independence or appropriate social connection.

Reliance on the very social culture that is felt as constraint is one of the paradoxes of old age. In Gee and Malouf's depictions of the aged view, social forces are frequently framed as insects or other annoying natural predators that are difficult to escape. Thus landscape and society are conveyed as producing equally irritating pressures on the old. In Gee's *Loving Ways*, the aged Robert McPherson's own deteriorating body reminds him of his time as a seaman:

Feel like a dead fish in the bilges. Watching the gut boat empty out. Gulls like maggots, eating. Big grey kingis follow it down. Years of rubbish after Noly. Not one thing has happened, rubbish dump. I hear gulls. Hate bloody scavengers, hate gulls. And people hanging on to me licking their chops. (Gee *Loving Ways* 124)

Like Mr Pitt-Rimmer, McPherson projects his body out into the landscape, eliding the boat's gut and his own. Rot and deterioration in the natural world are linked to his own physical deterioration. Due to his age and his illness, he relies on help from Heather and other younger members of the family, but his position as landowner makes him feel that such help is only another form of scavenging – seeking to dispossess him of the land that has defined his identity since he left the sea.

The idea of the scavenger animal picking at the decaying carcass, of nature reclaiming the body, is linked in much the same way to human voraciousness in *Harland's Half Acre*. Harland, whose artistic impressions of the landscape have value beyond the hoard of land titles he thinks of as his riches, is in a similar position to McPherson, whose orchard holding makes him suspicious of the motives of people who want to strip him of his place on the land. In both McPherson and Harland's case, the physical frailty of old age makes the man susceptible to becoming prey to scavengers of all kinds. Harland can no longer stand up to all the vicissitudes of his own aging, despite his toughness, but he will resist being drawn off the land by the pull of society until his last breath.

Twice in the last year he had fallen and been a whole day unable to move.

'I did call out a fair bit,' he admitted. 'I reckon the ants heard. They turned up from everywhere, little buggers! I must be sweeter than I think.'

But when we tried to get him to move to the city, where one or other of us could see he was properly looked after, he wouldn't hear of it. 'What for?' he snapped. 'Why should I move. If they want me the buggers can find me here.' (Malouf Harland 217)

This conflation of ants and people as "buggers" that tease and annoy is similar to Plumb's being troubled "as though the buzzing of a mosquito or a fly" (Gee Plumb 29) by his attentive daughter Meg announcing the arrival of visitors.

Like Plumb, Harland is more prepared to accept the disagreeable nature of the natural world than of the social one. The elderly artist gets the younger Phil Vernon to mediate between him and society. Phil must go "back and forth between Brisbane and Sydney to consult with trustees, negotiate with owners and to carry messages and apologies from the painter himself" because Harland has "decided to stick, as he put it, to the sandflies." (Malouf Harland 216) Thus Harland bows out, leaving Phil to manage his active social role. Phil thinks of Harland "out there in the dark, as a parent might think of an errant child", in a role reversal that makes the younger character responsible for the elder. Phil maps the changes in their relationship according to movement through the landscape:

We had moved to opposite poles of it, that relationship that had opened up, by the merest accident, all those years ago at Southport; as he had moved in time from one end of the Bay (the southern end, closed in by the low sandy pit of South Stradbroke) to the island, his island, that closes the Bay to the north. His island – with the wide still water of the Bay on one hand, the Pacific on the other, and the tattered grey gum-forest and banksia scrub between. (Malouf Harland 185)

Harland's island locates him on the edge of the city, between sea and land, an ideal liminal space to examine the world. Phil's incursion into this space discomforts Harland at first; Phil feels his unease, saying "we might have been meeting as conspirators on a bit of waste-land at the edge of a city or in an empty square." (Malouf Harland 184) Malouf's metaphors show Harland as edgy in every sense. In his escape to the island, the artist has not yet made peace with the social elements of the landscape.

Later in the novel, Malouf shows that experiencing the world in a direct and childish way can lead the elderly to transformation and acceptance of the full spectrum of modern landscapes. Having been buffeted by a storm that strikes the island, Harland sees place in a new light, which includes the human element in the form of friendship from two young surfers. As Phil indicates:

It was for him the vivid physical quality of what he had experienced... feeling through his wrists and chest and thorax the rhythms of the island itself as it hung on against sea and sky, that had endowed with such force the image of the two boys... the extraordinary at that point brought down to earth and losing none of its beauty or power. (Malouf Harland 209)

Remembering this moment of complete integration between the physical self, the battered landscape and the caring people, Frank's expression is "childlike and vulnerable" and he says: "I been very fortunate, Phil. At this stage of my life. You don't expect it. It's –" (Malouf Harland 209) Harland is reduced to almost pre-linguistic wordlessness by his changed subjectivity, and is absolutely at ease with all aspects of his environment. Phil describes Harland as "happier, I think, than I had ever seen him." (Malouf Harland 208)

Elsewhere in *Harland's Half Acre*, Malouf shows a less dramatic return to childlike appreciation of the landscape. In his old age, Uncle Gil "spent his days in a dinghy on the Broadwater or in the quieter reaches of the river. He had retired into his boyhood." (Malouf Harland 133) In reconnecting with the peaceful place of his youth, Gil recovers a pre-war innocence that rids him of the war-induced rages of his middle age. As Phil says, it is as though "the something that had shaken loose in his head had settled back again, like a sheet of roofing iron after a storm" (Malouf Harland 133) – a description that foreshadows the storm and rebuilding that will later bring Harland to his state of grateful acceptance. From this safe and settled position, Gil emerges once a week to take Aunt Ollie to the supermarket. The pair "'note every change', as Southport, that colonial version of an English watering place, was left behind by the spirit of progress that was sweeping south along the surf." (Malouf Harland 133) Thus Malouf frames the elderly Gil as being comfortable with his place in the world. Gil recognises and accepts the changes of modernity, but is happy to live out the remainder of his days in a backwater.

In *Plumb*, Gee's metaphors of place indicate that Plumb initially struggles to find such acceptance of his place in the world. Plumb identifies "the thorns that prick me now" as "the thorns of remembrance" (Gee Plumb 11) when he thinks of his children and followers. Having perceived his children as being "on the margins" of his life, Plumb is now marginalised himself by his old age, and comes to see those he loves as being "in a state of exile". (Gee Plumb 11) Yet in fact it is Plumb who is in exile, locked in a world of ideas that disconnects him from both the landscape and the social world. He says that his wife Edie was "the planter, the one who put down roots" and declares that for him place is less important because "movement and stillness are in the spirit, a going forth and coming home for the soul." (Gee Plumb 11) Nevertheless, Plumb critiques the younger generation for turning place into a commodity by imposing commercial values upon it. Noting that his son-in-law Fred Meggett is "in land again, in a big way", Plumb says: "He saw before anyone else that our town must change its centre and he bought up the land where he thought it must go. And it goes there, of course." (Gee Plumb 49) Meggett is "accumulating wealth" by reshaping the world in his own image; Esther calls his enterprise "Meggettown". From his own position beyond this new centre, Plumb admires Fred only "in the way one can admire a weasel or a stoat". (Gee Plumb 49)

Plumb condemns his own children's strictly materialist attitudes to their place in the world in similar terms. He says of his first-born son Oliver: "A mountain to him is something to mine; a tree to mill for timber; a stream to dam. He's the cleverest of my sons, and the most limited." (Gee Plumb 95) To Plumb, limitation is being unable to see the landscape from more than one perspective. He claims Oliver's mind "is like an ant nest under glass. The little creatures are so busy, so full of purpose and hive-importance; they're never aware of the eye looking in." (Gee Plumb 95) Both metaphors suggest a narrow point of view that ignores the possibility of anything beyond simple utility. Oliver's desire for control is particularly abhorrent to Plumb. In depicting this distaste, Gee repeatedly uses images of nature that are brutal, contorted, or alien to the New Zealand context. Seeing his son in court, Plumb observes:

Oliver, set on a ledge, had the look of an eagle. His beaky nose, his wig and steel-rimmed glasses, added to it. He looked capable of spreading wings and swooping down on some squealing victim, some plump and hatted woman – a tasty bite. But, I reflected, the simile was too bold for him. He had a meaner nature. Everything about Oliver was clipped, controlled. His mind especially. In that garden with square beds and gravel paths, no proscribed plant, no interdicted insect, lived for long. Oliver had a well-stocked shelf of poisons. (Gee Plumb 163)

Seeing Oliver sitting in judgement – at the height of social success – makes Plumb aware of his son's artifice. Oliver has not the natural brutality of the bird of prey; instead his limitations are represented by the human instinct to control nature as an effort of will. Oliver's rigidity suggests a throwback to colonial displacement that prevents association with New Zealand as home. When Oliver dresses to leave the court, Plumb says:

He looked ready to issue from 10 Downing Street. But he also looked like a plaster man, ready to be broken. And how then could he be fixed? To stay whole in his artificial shape, in this rude Dominion, he must walk on paths unknown to the rest of us. (Gee Plumb 166)

By aligning Oliver with colonial power structures and brittle artifice, Plumb suggests that Oliver's rigidity alienates him from truly belonging in the New Zealand environment. Despite Oliver's social success, Plumb thinks that looking into Oliver's life is like "gazing into emptiness". (Gee Plumb 167) Plumb's crisis here is not his own disconnection from the place he inhabits, but the realisation of Oliver's.

Over the course of his narrative, Plumb shows a dawning awareness of his own hollowness and its influence on his offspring. At the beginning of the novel, the old man is preparing for a journey. He walks in the orchard at Peacehaven and passes "the hollow where the stump of the quince tree rots" and says "I neither looked nor turned my face away". (Gee Plumb 13) The stump, a reminder of Plumb's banishment of his son Alfred for homosexuality, is a signal of what remains unresolved in Plumb's life. Plumb recognises this, saying "In the hollow past the quince stump bracken grows, young pine trees raise their heads. This is a lesson to me." (Gee Plumb 13) The new growth that comes from the stump suggests that Plumb's family grows around the hole he has created in his own consciousness, suggesting the possibility of acceptance and renewal. Yet Plumb is not fully ready to learn this lesson. The novel traces his journeys – in

memory and fact – through a variety of landscapes, which are used to demonstrate the slow development of his coming to terms with himself and his children.

Throughout the novel, Peacehaven functions as a place of comfort for Plumb. He reconnects with himself and others in this environment. When Edie dies (one of the most significant crises of Plumb's life), Plumb feels he has lost touch with the world and himself. Reading Edie's journals, he cannot imagine the scent or colour of the roses she describes, or recognise himself in her descriptions of 'the minister'. He puts the book down and goes out into the rain, and the garden and the intemperate weather provide a place where he can reconnect. Sitting in the summer house, he feels "I began to find myself and my wife. I sat on the wet seat. The rain came down in drops as large as bantam eggs and splashed on my head and cheeks." (Gee Plumb 241) Separated from Edie, Plumb recognises himself to be genuinely lost. Only through coming back to a familiar landscape, the garden Edie loved and cared for, can he regain his sense of self and other.

In his old age, Plumb also looks for spiritual comfort in the garden. He says:

Gardens I find calming to the mind; and calmness of mind a necessary condition for the quickening of the spiritual faculties; the stirring in its slumber of the soul; the sense of mystical union with the One. I have read that this is brought on by a change in body chemistry. But we penetrate *terra incognita*, we plumb the human deeps, search for the self, the soul, the Light within the dark, by means other than the scientific. (Gee Plumb 147)

In this description, Plumb searches for authentic connection with the ultimate other of a divine power. However, his traditional association of garden as gateway to God also introduces updated twentieth century narratives. The inscape of chemical changes within the body is offered as an explanation for the garden's sensual and spiritual appeal. Nevertheless, Plumb prefers the older exploration metaphor of "*terra incognita*" to describe his personal inscape. Plumb's rejection of scientific narrative to explain his experience is also a rejection of the modern culture that threatens his elision of the natural and spiritual. (He likewise rejects or misunderstands many other markers of social progress, burning his hand on Meg's stove because he believes it cooks by

electricity not heat, and refusing the hearing aid that would allow him to communicate more effectively with the social world.) The Peacehaven garden, therefore acts a retreat and a sanctuary from the pressures of progress, a doorway to the past.

Throughout the novel, Peacehaven functions as representation of 'home' in multiple senses. Plumb sometimes utilises it as a microcosm of an ideal New Zealand, juxtaposed against the 'other' of California, of the war, or of other evils. In his memories, he frames the place as though it is isolated, standing alone in a sea of difficulties, saying "We lived at Peacehaven as though on an island. Few people came to see us." (Gee Plumb 260) New Zealand is the literal island sheltered from the evils of the world; Peacehaven is the symbolic island where the values of family, nature and goodness are in harmony.

Plumb's memories of California demonstrate the contrast between New Zealand and the rest of the world. The modern and material values Plumb resists in New Zealand in his old age were apparent in America many years earlier. Though Plumb recognises the limitations of New Zealand's colonial attitudes and nationalism, he recognises them as part of his own environment (and, perhaps, as part of himself). Even the challenging aspects of culture and landscape become objects of desire when he is away from home. He describes his experience in California in terms entirely composed of otherness:

But I never felt at home. I missed the cold of Thorpe; the climate of Calvinism; missed the flag-waving, the jingoist hatreds; Empire Day, the Steinway piano axed in the street. Missed, that is, my known enemy. I missed the plains and the mountains, the trout rivers, the shingle beach and grey cold sea. I sorely missed my friends. We knew very soon that we would not stay in California. But for two years we pretended we were settled. (Gee Plumb 143)

It is both the landscape and culture of New Zealand that Plumb is homesick for, suggesting his connection with both. However, this is not uniformly the case for the other Plumbs: one of the divisions here is generational. For Plumb's children, California is the 'new world', full of shiny promise and waiting to be annexed. The young Plumbs learn to belong, and their response to America is reminiscent of the children of settlers who do not understand the pining for the lost values of the colonial 'Home'. "California was theirs" Plumb says, "They had

grown into it.” (Gee Plumb 144) Only Meg pines for New Zealand, feeling as displaced as her parents in the new environment.

America and New Zealand landscapes become shorthand for sets of values as the novel progresses. When Plumb and Edie realise they have enough money to return home, Plumb’s first thought is of the place, his second of the people: “In the instant I knew it an image of grey streets came to me, and cold crashing waves, and humourless faces. It made me happy. There – that was mine.” (Gee Plumb 144) Through staking a claim to the landscape and culture as part of himself, Plumb asserts his belonging and his imaginative possession of New Zealand landscape and culture. His gladness stems from the security and sense of home indicated by the word “mine”. Later, as he releases Agnes and Emerson to Europe and America, he feels the gap between his understanding of home and theirs:

That land, that rich, noisy, blue and golden land, for me, for Edie, a dry and bitter place, was full of a sweetness my daughters learned the taste of. It drew them fatally and made of them people whose language I do not speak. Agnes too.she would not come back. No more than Rebecca. Hers was almost as surely the ‘undiscovered country’. (Gee Plumb 202-03)

Distance here is more than literal. The transition between countries is figured as a commensurate transition between value systems, making parent stranger to child. Plumb perceives his children as ‘dead’ to him when they go beyond the borders of his world, whether through physical death, cultural exile or sexual sin.

Yet while Plumb is scathing about the values of America, he remains unsentimental in his framings of New Zealand. Like America, New Zealand has been loaded with a cultural baggage of ideal nation that is impossible to fulfil.

The dream of a Utopia in the southern seas, of God’s own country, had never been more than that: a dream. Holes had been shot in it before the depression. But in the depression it rusted like an old tin can, it fell to pieces. All we had left was human kindness. Without it we would have become a nation of beasts. (Gee Plumb 231)

Peacehaven (where Edie’s patience reigns and Robert tends the gardens and provides food for the needy during the Depression) is for Plumb a

representation of the kindness that keeps bestiality at bay. Discovering Alfred in a homosexual liaison with John Willis under the quince tree therefore shatters Plumb's sense of what this 'home' landscape means. Seeing what he perceives as sin in paradise destroys his construction of Peacehaven as a Godzone – the island of goodness has been invaded by evil. At this moment of crisis, he sees the gentle landscape transfigured:

I fled from them, I fled back through the orchard, but it was an orchard no longer, I ran through the slime-pits of Siddim, where the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell. I ran on the plain and did not turn my eyes, for behind me the smoke of the evil cities went up as the smoke of a furnace. (Gee Plumb 214)

It is not only Alfred's perceived transgression, but Plumb's failure of human kindness that reinscribes the place into one of horror. Plumb must threaten Robert to make him cut down the quince tree, once again demonstrating an aggression that falls short of his stated values. Thus the hollow stump in the Peacehaven orchard is a reminder of Plumb's own hollowness; the missing heart of the tree is the missing heart of the man.

Journeys through the landscape demonstrate the distance Plumb has to travel to know himself and truly recognise Alfred. Travelling by train to Wellington, the elderly Plumb takes his bearings from the landscape, looking out the window to see Mt Ruapehu. The sight of the moonlit mountain prompts him to think about constructions of the landscape and how they have traditionally been linked to constructions of humanity and selfhood. He says:

I have always looked at scenery in an eighteenth-century way – a Johnsonian way that is, not Wordsworthian. It is the grandeur of man that moves me, not mountains. Mystical experience for me is not set in motion as for that good gray man of the Lakes. And so when he says:

I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man –
I say, Yes, and give my intellectual assent to his catalogue, but am moved to joy only by its last item. (Gee Plumb 94)

Intellectualizing his own response to the environment, the educated Plumb draws on theories of landscape appreciation. Such abstraction, however,

demonstrates his distance from real engagement with his own thoughts and with the observable world. Plumb claims to be moved more by people than by vistas, yet fails (at this point) to recognise that he has more commonly sought solace from solitude in the garden than from human company. He can admire the view with distant equanimity that allows no passionate engagement:

The flanks of the mountain were certainly beautiful. They were smooth and pale, like cold butter. I enjoyed their slow turn about the train. No stirring in my soul, to be sure, but a calm enjoyment of beauty. I have been accused of lack of enthusiasm. (Gee Plumb 94-95)

Even when he does analyse the train of his own thought, Plumb constructs his world with himself at the centre: the mountains revolve around his movement, rather than him moving around them. His perspective on place, and other people, is still egocentric.

However, on this journey Plumb also begins to recognise his “self-deception”. He says, “I have noticed many times that I turn to some example or case from literature when I want to evade a clear sight of my behaviour. It will not do.” (Gee Plumb 96) As he travels through New Zealand, Plumb extends the horizon of his personal landscape in an imaginative as well as literal sense, and accepts that Alfred is not dead but occupying the same place as Plumb himself. As the old man puts it, “Somewhere in the world Alfred was living; journeying as I was journeying.” (Gee Plumb 96) As the train journey ends, the landscape descriptions suggest hope and renewal. Plumb feels “the motion of rushing ahead”, and the dawn breaks, casting new light on Plumb’s destination. Arriving in Wellington is figured here (as elsewhere in Gee’s fiction) as a rebirth: Plumb says “soon we were in a long tunnel, and then bursting on to the harbourside.” (Gee Plumb 96)

It is after he returns from the journey to Wellington that Plumb determines he has come far enough to reconnect with Alfred. Before this moment of crisis, Plumb collects his thoughts by retreating to Willis’s orchard. The surrounds work their timeless magic; Plumb feels he has escaped from the irritations of modern society and is back in his comfort zone.

To avoid his dust I retreated into the trees. How grateful I was for their stillness. Orchards are part of the world I understand. I struck in deeper.

The leaves lost their coating of dust and became glossy green. Weeds lapped about my knees. The internal combustion engine seemed centuries away. I sat down beneath a tree whose fruit had been left to ripen. The golden orbs hung like suns above my head. I put my stick and trumpet in the grass and lay back on a natural springy pillow. Shortly we would be driving to Esther's house, and there I would meet Alfred. In the meantime how pleasant just to loaf in the grass – 'loafe and invite my Soul'. Well, that was Whitman, and I a lesser being. And Alfred's path curved towards mine with a geometrical, a terrifying beauty. But I took this moment like a gift. A moment lying outside time and care. I closed my eyes. I folded my hands on my chest. The old are great improvisers. I went to sleep. (Gee Plumb 263)

Plumb's literary bent once again obscures his understanding in this idyllic scene, however. He sleeps on a "natural springy pillow" surrounded by "golden orbs", as though this Eden has been created for his personal pleasure and comfort. Yet in his quotation, he allows Whitman, whose homosexuality was overt in his poetry, a place in Eden – the place he has denied Alfred. This authorial irony shows that Plumb's limited awareness creates a pastoral paradise where alternate truths go unrecognised. Nevertheless, Plumb does recognise that his respite the orchard offers can only be temporary; he must face Alfred and thus face his own actions in that other orchard long ago.

At the end of the novel, Plumb is back at Peacehaven, and moves again into the orchard. Though he still eschews company, waving Meg away when she wants to accompany him, his solitary ramble in the landscape is no longer an attempt to escape the human facts of his life. He says:

When I had climbed the little hill and looked down into the hollow I knew I was near my death. It would not keep me long. The rotting trunk poked up through the bracken. (Gee Plumb 270)

Plumb has learned enough to look squarely at the 'other' represented by the quince tree stump. Having faced this *memento mori*, and come to accept his past and future fallibility, Plumb can move on:

I walked back through the trees and on to the bridge. I found a few crumbs of bread in my pocket and scattered them on the water. After a little while an eel floated up. I saw why people found them sinister. Dead mouth, snake's body. And they rose from dark holes in the slime. But I did not pursue it. They were God's creatures. And looking for symbols a game. (Gee Plumb 271)

Finally, Plumb is able to accept his environment as it is. He has come a long way from the “pits of Siddim” and the desire to turn landscapes into metaphoric representation of his belief system. The eels are eels, as Alfred is Alfred, and dark holes are only cause for fear if they are loaded with symbolism – a game, the passage suggests, that Plumb is no longer playing. Plumb ends the novel able to say he’s happy with the good he’s done, and sorry about the bad. Though he ends the novel in the same landscape as he began, his experience has brought him to a much more inclusive place.

The return-to-origin narrative is also utilised in Malouf’s *Harland’s Half Acre* to signify shifting values of place and belonging, although in a different way. As a child, Phil describes his dying grandfather in terms drawn directly from the Australian environment: to the Australian-born boy, the old man’s skin has “the scratchiness of bark or the papery quality of an insect’s wing” and is like “the scribbles on a tree trunk”. (Malouf Harland 65) However, Phil also recognises that his grandfather’s dying is like a process of “withdrawal to England, where he had originally come from, a place whose manners and habits of speech had always cut him off from us.” (Malouf Harland 66) These colonial social habits, which disconnect Phil’s grandfather from his Australian context, are handed down to Phil’s father, who longs for the cultural bastion of England. When Phil’s father dies *en route* to Europe, Phil suggests it is “in all ways the end of an era” (Malouf Harland 182), implying the death not just of an individual, but of a set of values that put Britain at the centre of the world. Phil observes:

They lived, the men of that generation, in a world of their own strict choice, defying climate and place. Manners and morals were inseparable and both derived from some reality that stood over and above the actual. (Malouf Harland 183)

Such elderly men embody the colonial attitude of transporting cultural values to a new land, rather than translating such values in response to the changed environment.

Elderly characters allow Gee and Malouf to show changing attitudes to the landscape over the course of recent Antipodean history. In Gee’s novel *Live Bodies*, Josef Mandl comes to see *Somes Island* as a representation of

personal and social histories, demonstrating the shifting ground of historical appropriations of the place. Josef muses:

Somes Island. On the outer path you can walk around it in less than an hour. Its area is 120 acres and its height above sea level 200 feet at the highest point. I use these imperial measures because they are natural to me, they fit my times, and I stay with 'Somes' (an official of the company that colonised Wellington) for the same reason, even though I think it only just that some at least of our place names should change back to the original Maori. But Matiu Island would not be mine.

There are beaches on either side of the wharf. The rest of the coastline is rocky, and broken cliffs rise from the sea. The island is ideal for confinement – people and animals have both been kept there. ... But I do not mean to write a history of the island, even of the year when I was there. (Gee Live Bodies 106)

Josef knows the island from multiple angles. He can provide an experiential measure of the size of the island in addition to the figures of the conventional contour map. He recognises the importance of naming to claiming place, choosing to use Somes over the indigenous Matiu because the colonial title makes it “mine”. Using the phrase “our place names” suggests he considers himself a New Zealander; his connection to the landscape is sufficiently strong that he feels justified in joining the modern debate about the reinstatement of Maori place names. However, he also retains his right to remain in the past, using imperial measures in his description because “they fit my times”. Thus Josef’s reminiscences provide a potted historical overview of New Zealand settler society’s changing methods of encompassing place.

Malouf brings Australian history into more personal histories in the story “A Great Day” by depicting the celebrations surrounding Audley’s seventy-second birthday and the “larger occasion” of the Australian bi-centenary celebrations of the arrival of the First Fleet. On the first page of the story, Malouf offers a view of the landscape that suggests Australian pre-history:

down here on the headland, in an expanding stillness in which clocks, voices and every form of consciousness had still to come into existence and the day as yet, like the sea, had no mark upon it, it was before breakfast, before waking, before everything but the new tide washing in over rows of black, shark-toothed rocks that leaned all the way inland, as they had done since that moment, unimaginable ages ago, when the earth at this point whelmed, gulped and for the time being settled. (Malouf Dream Stuff 131-32)

The key figure of Audley is introduced fishing from this headland in a “black suit and tie”, a cultural costume incongruous with the setting and the time. Audley, whose house above the headland is “massive and permanent-looking” (Malouf Dream Stuff 132), serves as a representative of Australia’s colonial history. He “claimed descent from two colonial worthies... both well recorded. His roots were as deep in the place as they could reasonably go.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 135) His wife, Madge, however, has no such family history. This marriage of the historically grounded and the unplaced individual is suggestive of the thematic concern of the story: the reconciliation of Australia’s past, present and future. The historical occasion is put out of mind as being beyond the scope of the family’s concerns: as Marge says, “it won’t be special... Audley’s birthday, like we always do. The other thing’s too big. I couldn’t cater.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 138)

Yet the “larger occasion” keeps crashing into the more personal story by way of descriptions of the landscape. Audley’s son Clem is the walking embodiment of this collision between the landscape, history and personal consciousness. He has previously had a traffic accident in which “the whole continent – the whole three million square miles of rock, tree-trunks, sand, fences, cities – came bursting through the windscreen into his skull.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 142)

Towards the end of the story, Clem is the one who feels the need to commemorate the national occasion. He makes a speech that demonstrates Australia’s expansiveness: not only the physical scale of “this land mass, this continent”, but the nation’s sounds projecting beyond national boundaries and out into space. In doing so, Clem traces the country’s progression from silence to occupation by animals and humans, saying:

How could anyone know how big it is with so few heartbeats scattered across it? But slowly others started to arrive, just a few at first, rough ones, rough – hearts – then a rush, till now there are millions. Us, I mean, the ones who are here tonight. (Malouf Dream Stuff 180)

His speech ends “It’s possible. Anything is possible. Nothing is lost. Nothing ever gets *lost*.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 181)

The soundscape image Clem uses joins two striking visual images of landscape fire that illuminate notions of personal and national past and future in a similar

way. On this birthday, Audley enjoys a walk into town to visit the family museum founded by his grandfather, a monument to the colonial past. Later that night, an arson attack sees the museum consumed by flame, leaving a gap in the town and the family. However, Audley does not perceive this as a loss of the past; rather, he is “exhilarated, released”. He sees the destruction of this piece of property as almost inevitable, a manifestation of the “ancient and irreconcilable argument in us between settlement and the spirit of the nomad” (Malouf Dream Stuff 177), bringing together the image of the colonial and indigenous pasts of the continent. The image of the fire also brings Audley to an acceptance of his own death; he says “There is no hope... that’s what the old know, that’s our secret. It is also our hope, our salvation.” (Malouf Dream Stuff 178) The destruction of the familiar landscape feature provides Audley with an opportunity to reconcile himself with the past and the future on a personal level even as they suggest a national reconciliation with the past.

The “play of flames across the inlet and the reflected glow in the sky” (Malouf Dream Stuff 176) that this town fire creates are mirrored by the beach bonfires that burn as people celebrate the national occasion. Like the building, the bonfires in the cove gradually collapse in on themselves, but the collapse also suggests a phoenix-style rebirth. The final words of the story are:

a shimmering mass, revived, threw up flames that cast a flickering redness over the sand, till one of the men, conscious perhaps of the renewed heat, sat up for a moment out of sleep and regarded it, then burrowed back into the dark. Till here, as on other beaches, in coves all round the continent, round the vast outline of it, the heat struck of a new day coming, the light that fills the world. (Malouf Dream Stuff 185)

This is a landscape of potential, not of loss. The fire lit to celebrate Australian history also celebrates potential for the future, as it shimmers and revives. In illuminating a vision of Australia, it warms and brings the individual to consciousness.

The end of *Remembering Babylon* casts personal histories within the wider context of national history by using landscape in a similar way. Janet and Lachlan, now old, meet in the garden of Janet’s convent home, and talk about Gemmy and the past. The temporal distance between that time and this is

figured in territorial terms. Janet notes “All that, fifty years ago. An age. They were living in another country.” (Malouf Babylon 197) Australia has been transformed: no longer a settler colony, it is now sending its men to war. Yet Janet and Lachlan can use their shared past to find shared space. Remembering standing behind Lachlan at the moment of Gemmy’s arrival in the settlement, Janet says, “They would come back, as they had now, from the far points they had moved away to, and stand side by side looking up at the figure outlined there against a streaming sky. Still balanced.” (Malouf Babylon 197) Janet uses the landscape to illustrate the distance and proximity between herself and her cousin, encompassing change and yet suggesting that time has not shifted the essential ground that underpins their relationship – the experience of their childhood in the settlement, particularly the incursion of Gemmy which unsettled their view of the world but finally introduced greater balance to their understanding of the landscape and their relationship with it and each other. In her old age, Janet’s view has remained open to multiple possibilities suggested by that image of balance. As a bee-keeper, she works to harness nature by channelling it rather than taming, and she enjoys the knowledge that there is more than one view of nature. She thinks:

Her hives were out of sight here but they were not out of mind; her work went on, continuous somewhere in her head, and she was pleased to have in sight this other view, these flatlands that as they approached the bay became mud, and later, when the tide rippled in, would be moonlight. (Malouf Babylon 198)

The bees here create a link between Janet and her past, between the literal landscape they inhabit and the world as it goes on inside her head, and between the domestic landscape of her husbandry and the wider landscape with which it is contrasted.

The final image of *Remembering Babylon* brings these ideas of history, time, shared space and multiple views together in a description of the changing landscape that reflects the changing nation.

Out beyond the flatlands the line of light pulses and swells. The sea, in sight now, ruffles, accelerates. Quickly now it is rising towards us, it approaches.

As we approach prayer. As we approach knowledge. As we approach one another.

It glows in fullness till the tide is high and the light almost, but not quite, unbearable, as the moon plucks at our world and all the waters of the earth ache towards it, and the light, running fast now, reaches the edges of the shore, just so far in its order, and all the muddy margin of our bay is alive, and in a line of running fire all the outline of the vast continent appears, in touch now with its other life. (Malouf Babylon 200)

In showing the incoming tide, Malouf offers an image of transformation and reconciliation. As land and sea embrace each other, so too do light and dark, spiritual faith and intellectual knowledge, and human beings. By reconciling differences in this way, the image suggests that the entire nation of Australia can be seen to be newly alive. The “muddy margin”, an indefinite edge that connects the island nation with the rest of the world, is transformed by a light that allows a new way of perceiving. Outlined by the fire of this enlightened vision, the nation is put “in touch now with its other life”, an abstract metaphor that indicates the reconciliation of self and other. As Janet and Lachlan have come to terms with their personal history and the implications of their interaction with Gemmy, so has Australia been re-defined.

In both Gee’s and Malouf’s fictions, then, personal histories of place can also reveal national histories. Such narratives are depicted as fluid, subject to changing interpretations. In Gee’s *Plumb*, George Plumb remembers those who were old during his own youth, providing a look back over several generations of New Zealand’s history:

There were many old miners living in shacks round the town; old-timers who had come to the Kumara rush in the eighteen-seventies and stayed to work on sluicing claims or in the mills, and built their little huts to see out their days in. I took special pleasure in visiting these independent old men. ... Johnny Potter was my special friend. He had been a forty-niner, and worked on every Victorian and Otago and West Coast goldfield. Gold was his life, the ‘colour’ his *ignis fatuus*. When the fields died, when all that was left was sluicing or dredging, Johnny took his shovel and pan and headed for the mountains. He was bent like a bow, his fingers were set in a hook, before he came down to Kumara and built his shack. (Gee Plumb 51)

Plumb’s memory of the miner shows the original colonial bushman ethos on which mythologies such as the Man Alone were built. In extracting gold, Johnny forms a direct and experiential relationship with the landscape that attracts the contrastingly bookish and spiritual Plumb. Here is the adventure ethic of adult

independence; Plumb admires Johnny for his self-sufficiency, his travels, and his refusal to 'settle' for the comforts of society. Johnny's old age, Plumb suggests, is in keeping with his rugged lifestyle on the land. The price paid for living beyond social comforts is accepted with equanimity: "Wet camps and icy rivers had locked his joints. But he made no complaint. He had enjoyed his life and had no quarrel with the way it was ending." (Gee Plumb 52) The old man's stoicism reinforces the mythology of the bushman, who is tough enough to withstand the landscape's harshest conditions and is comfortable in his own skin, however weathered. The community of miners' shacks suggests the sociability and mateship of such men, who in their old age stay together on the edges of the land to which they have dedicated their lives.

In Malouf's *Harland's Half Acre*, the narrator Phil elides the elderly Frank Harland with Australian history, making the old man in the wild landscape a representation of both time past and time future.

I thought of Frank out there; especially on nights of storm or in the cyclone season after the turn of the year when the river would be swollen and the fig trees and palms in suburban gardens clattered and churned. The Bay then was all pitched black tents. Rain-lashed, wind-rocked on his flimsy white one, he was always in my thoughts. Down on his island: on his island, one of the many, each with its history of vanished tribes – the Nooghies and Noonunckle – of convicts, lepers, whalers, and those old ladies at Dunwich whom my mother would go once a year to see dance for pennies, laughing and tossing up their skirts. And in our time, Frank Harland. (Malouf Harland 185)

Clearly located beyond "suburban gardens", Frank's rough tent dwelling seems simply an extension of the stormy sea, entirely in keeping with the landscape he inhabits. His island is also, in Phil's thinking, set in the stream of history. Frank is placed within "our time" (here, the late twentieth century) yet physical place connects him to an Aboriginal past and an early settler history. The "vanished tribes" are not only the Nooghies and Noonunckle, but the representatives of white settler history from the colonial era. This landscape is peopled by the historical old, in every sense; the narrator recalls his mother remembering women already old in her youth, who were paid in a currency now outdated and valueless. Thus the island represents not only Harland's personal connection with the landscape, but the historic story of the larger island of Australia and the various people who have been 'at home' on it over the ages.

Through Noel Papps in *Prowlers*, Gee offers a similar summary of New Zealand's historic connection with place. A soil scientist, Noel takes pride in his role as economic transformer of the landscape, indicating that his work has been critical to covering the surrounding hills with productive orchards. Yet in his eighties, he also recognises that the past and present offer many other readings of the land. His sister Kitty claims to like the landscape "unregenerated", which he decries as "a funny word for a politician". When she challenges him on the reductive title, he recognises his tendency to categorise and label, and notes that his sister "moved into mystery when she forced me to consider her". (Gee *Prowlers* 204) Through their different perspectives on the landscape, Noel is jolted into an awareness of Kitty's individual identity prompted to a minor moment of crisis that forces him to examine the ground under his own feet. He says "I had to hold myself in place, and defend observed reality with mundane thoughts." The reality he observes is the landscape that they have been discussing:

I looked at the swamp, saw what she meant; but thought of reclamation, looked for uses – and it was a suggestion of mine, some years later, that led to the use of dried moss as bedding for orchids. Big business now, big sales to Japan. I've done as much as anyone – mundane thoughts – to turn this South Pacific wilderness into the giant dairy farm and sheep run and slaughter-house of today. First the settlers and soldiers, raw encounter, gaining and getting, then politicians rationalizing theft, then men like me with our improvements. I'm not ashamed, I'm not proud either. That is the way it was. (Gee *Prowlers* 204)

In directly addressing the issues of the colonial descendant, this is a rare description in Gee's fiction. Noel's scientific approach to history, which tries to acknowledge the facts without judgement, allows for a de-clawed postcolonial overview of interactions with the landscape. Noel sees value in Kitty's view, and his own more utilitarian perspective; he does not condemn settler appropriation.

However, despite his instigation of moss sales to the developing Asian markets, Noel recognises that old age means his role as an active modifier of the land is coming to an end, and that coming interactions with the land will be urban and beyond his comprehension. He recognises history but refuses to be part of the future. As he puts it:

Who comes after? I can't identify them properly. The entrepreneurs and the urban peasants. Kate and Shane come from a different world. Big city world, city apprehensions. They don't have much of the loot but they understand it. I never will and don't want to.

Phil Dockery understands. It's a world he helped to make and lives in happily. That putting up, money and buildings both, 'developing'; and that ripping down, and 'ripping off', as Kate would say. ... And the original owners are acting up. They want back what was theirs and I don't blame them. I really don't blame anyone. Except myself, at times, and not very hard, for not understanding it and being glad to be past it all. (Gee Prowlers 204-05)

Gee shows Noel grouping Maori reclamation of the landscape with trends for the future, suggesting the growing awareness among Pakeha New Zealanders that indigenous histories will become central to future understandings of land use. However, Noel uses his age as an excuse for opting out of coming to grips with urbanisation and Maori land rights debates. He accepts his place in the historic narrative of New Zealand's landscape appropriation but refuses to engage with what he perceives as new values around "developing" the landscape.

In his old age, Noel is continually confronted with the difficulty of holding on to a single perspective, despite the imperative to make sense of history. In recalling the events of his childhood, he is hampered by what he calls

a kind of seeing round corners, a view through mirrors cunningly placed, when all I want is to look straight at the single thing. Obliquity makes me dizzy, multiplicity smothers me. Yet I'll go on. I think that if I'm silent I'll soon die. (Gee Prowlers 14)

His longevity makes him aware of the impossibility of direct and straightforward readings of his place in the world; in this Gee obliquely recognises post-modernity's fracturing of the idea of a single stable narrative of history or identity. However, what Noel can identify clearly is that he has been most himself when on home ground. New Zealand serves as a point of reference that allows vitality to his life story. England, the conventional colonial 'home', is an 'other' that is too distant for Noel to incorporate it into himself and his personal historic narrative. Describing his three years in Cambridge, Noel says:

This part of my life, the English part, is not available to memory. It's an object rounded off, put aside. I can admire it and be glad it's mine but soon I want to turn away and look at more interesting things. I was busy, successful, I was happy most of the time, but happiness, it seems, is not

a measure. It leaves things aside, waiting another sort of possession, and I have no instruments for that. There are connections I cannot make in streets, in rooms, in gardens not my own. That place is there. Here predicates. It makes a fizz and ferment, it's rude and beautiful. There lies dull and idle, won't be moved. There's inert. I have a hold of myself in Jessop, although I wriggle and slip free. In Cambridge, in London, I'm fashioned, I'm complete – stone fish on a mantelpiece. I'm real fish in my streets; I dart about, there's life hard and slippery in me. (Gee Prowlers 85)

Selfhood is perceived as having an indigenous basis: the streets of Jessop are crucial to Noel's identification with himself. His identity may not be firmly graspable – it can “wriggle and slip free” – yet this is perceived as a sign of life, in contrast to the solidified completeness of his identity as a Cambridge student. The fish metaphor suggests he is in his element only when he is in New Zealand, the land of his birth, his childhood, his working life and his old age.

As the novel progresses, Gee shows Noel becoming more capable of accepting multiplicity, with his understanding of the landscape serving as an example of his expanding perceptions. While watching a storm from his hilltop home, Noel is influenced by Royce, a visual artist, to stop categorising the landscape and to simply experience it. Noel's position begins as possession; by his own admission he has “a little love affair with the river”. He says:

The river turned yellow, then brown, and covered the pediment of the bridge. Islands of dead leaves and twigs floated by. ‘The logs will start in a moment,’ I said, showing off my river.

‘She's quick. She's sudden.’

I was jealous of that ‘she’. How had he become so intimate with her? I never questioned that it was genuine. (Gee Prowlers 161)

The feminised landscape is an object to be desired and possessed by the gaze even for the elderly man and his middle-aged companion. Gee uses descriptive terms reminiscent of fetishised sexuality; as the river rises, it is “full of little coils and whips and tongues. Two or three black logs, a piece of foam plastic.” (Gee Prowlers 162) However, as the storm unfolds, Noel finds that he is no longer jealously competing with Royce, but sharing the experience with him.

The rain made the roar of tipping shingle on my roof. Houses, cold houses. Gleaming cars. Misty hill with red and yellow, leached and cold. On the bridge, two women. White coat, red coat, slick as satin ball gowns. The quarry face, flayed muscle, slippery. I felt I should offer him that, I felt I was seeing, but he kept me quiet and kept me still; and in the

end I stopped collecting things and saw just the moving river and the hill.
(Gee Prowlers 162)

From the human women to the slickness of the anthropomorphised quarry, Noel is offering Royce the view rather than trying to possess it alone. As they turn away from watching the storm, Noel says: “I was feeling good. My river, my storm. I’d had him round for a kind of meal and felt the thing had gone off very well.” (Gee Prowlers 162) Though Noel does not immediately shed his sense of possession, the landscape has become a shared source of nourishment that brings the two men closer together. Most importantly, Noel learns a new way of seeing from Royce that is direct in an artistic rather than scientific sense. The point at which Noel admits he “stopped collecting things” is a turning point, and shows a movement beyond his earlier assertion that his view means “I’ve got Jessop under a microscope”. (Gee Prowlers 23)

Once Noel is opened to the possibility of seeing the world through Royce’s artistic eyes, he can also appreciate Royce’s artistic representations of place and people. Early in the book, Noel dismisses Royce’s paintings. He despises the “hills like worms, lakes like livers and kidneys, trees like penises, caves like eyes” (Gee Prowlers 33), rejecting the landscape imaged as the human body. Nor does he believe that the paintings offer any insights, saying “Royce... was lifting no skins. Irene was deluded.” (Gee Prowlers 104) However, when Royce later paints the view from Noel’s house that they have shared during the storm, Noel immediately connects with the landscape, and through it, recognises that it is a portrait of the woman they have both loved: Royce’s sister, Irene.

I touched the black shape over the sea. ‘That’s Irene. If you turn it round you’ll see her face.’ I was quite sure. I saw her face looking away from me. ‘That’s her too.’ I touched the shadow in the sea and it seemed to move off slantwise and settle in a new place, deeper down. (Gee Prowlers 224)

Here Noel, like the image in the painting, settles into a new and deeper understanding of the shadowy and sometime elusive connection between people and place. He can now acknowledge, as he could not earlier, that Royce had “always been good at things lying underneath; shapes within; shadows under surfaces.” (Gee Prowlers 223)

In *Harland's Half Acre*, Malouf's Frank Harland provides the same connection between the human and the landscape through his art. In his old age, Harland distances himself from society, and (like Noel Papps) is out of step with the urban future. As Brisbane becomes a modern city, the elderly Harland chooses a more directly earthy environment. Nevertheless, his life and his work both demonstrate the harmonious integration of people with place. In his paintings (as in Royce's), the human figures "had to be detached from the other shapes here of trunk and wing, or from the great vertical masses that were blue-green, blue-purple, purple-red water." As Phil recognises, Harland admits the human "on nature's terms":

Picnickers raising smoke out of flat water, crouched surf-board riders, lone walkers by the sea with a dog or a solid shadow at their heels, gave up their separateness and the hard lines of a species, and as they moved on into the landscape resumed earlier connections, between bough and bone, and hand or foot-print and leaf. (Malouf Harland 187)

Harland's work blurs the boundaries between people and place, human and animal. Moreover, Phil sees the process of producing this artwork as equally a product of the landscape: Harland is "not so much painting it as painting out of it". Phil observes:

Each new work as I saw it in that place... was a newly emergent form out of the island itself, roughly torn away like bark from a tree; as if there were continuity in essence, but also in the movement of a real hand over paper, between all the individual parts of this world, and each made object had to be judged first against the natural objects it rose from and among which he now set it down. (Malouf Harland 187)

The "individual parts of the world" include the painter himself. As he ages, Harland becomes increasingly like the landscape he inhabits, further blurring distinctions between the context, the creator and the creation. Phil makes the connection explicit, saying:

The scrub, its trunks all spotted and pealed with grey, lime, mushroom, ochre, came right up to where he worked; and Frank, himself all spotted brown and peeling white or pink, in a straw hat and frayed army-shirt, was as much part of it as any straight trunk or gnarled and papery limb. (Malouf Harland 187)

This alignment with 'nature' makes Harland awkward in company; he finds visitors extremely difficult, and takes time to adjust even to Phil's undemanding

presence. Phil says that Harland “kept his distance at first” and that at every meeting the pair are forced to “go back to beginnings” (Malouf Harland 187).

In one sense, Harland’s strong sense of connection with the environment seems to distance him from the human and social world. Phil says:

He would live and work for the rest of his life now in a state of almost complete isolation; connected to the city across the Bay only by the glow its lights made over the treetops on starless nights and the passage of suburban board-riders past his patch of scrub... (Malouf Harland 185-86)

However, distance does not equate to severance. Despite the familial disruptions and disappointments that prompt Harland’s withdrawal to the island, he remains “connected” to the social world through his relationship with Phil, through his friendship with the young surfers, and through the presence of the city lights on the edge of his landscape. His liminal position does not indicate a complete rejection of society, but a sense of being content to belong on the margins in his old age.

Harland’s landscape paintings also function to create a bond between the cultural and the natural worlds. As he paints out of the place, his individual identification with Australian landscape and history become integrated into the national consciousness. Despite his personal marginalisation, his understanding of the world becomes central to the culture. After Harland’s death, Phil notes this irony:

Harland. A household word, evoking the whole story of his having set himself apart, of choosing to live rough, ‘down there’, at the very moment when the rest of the continent, the lucky island, was moving deeper in behind a wall of thirty-storey tower blocks and the columns of figures they stood for, into the dazzling light of bathroom-tiles stainless steel towel-racks, Waterford glass, Christofle tableware. (Malouf Harland 221)

Harland’s celebrity status makes a comment about the continued cultural desire for connection with the raw landscape. Malouf seems to suggest that even a modern materialist society cluttered with imported signifiers of wealth and status needs depictions of the view beyond the wall of tower blocks. Moreover, even in its intense locality, the art speaks of a universal experience that transcends the

“question of geography”. At Harland’s retrospective, Phil views Harland’s paintings in a new way, seeing

the sweeps of the imagination he had made that had carried his intense encounters with a few square inches of the world into a dimension that could no longer be named or fixed at a particular latitude, Cooktown or Yeppoon or Dornoch Terrace, or in any decade.” (Malouf Harland 222)

Thus through his artistic integration of personal identity and local place, Harland creates pictures that act as “stepping stones” (Malouf Harland 222) to an enlarged understanding of the wider world.

Characters who are not New Zealanders or Australians also allow alternative views of Antipodean displacement in these fictions. In Gee’s *Live Bodies*, Josef Mandl is an elderly expatriate Austrian Jew, who arrives as an enemy alien in a fiercely patriotic World War II New Zealand. In Malouf’s *An Imaginary Life*, Ovid is an exile from ancient Rome, whose marginalisation is generally read as an exploration of the settler condition. Ovid enters an unfamiliar landscape that reduces him to pre-verbal childlike dependence and aligns him with the native people, the Getae. Within this context, he initially describes himself as being “the least person here – a crazy comic old man, grotesque, tearful, who understands nothing, can say nothing... I communicate like a child with grunts and signs”. (Malouf Imaginary Life 17) In fact, only Ovid’s exiled position renders him old. He recognises that place plays a larger role in the framing of age than chronological years when he speaks of the man who gives him shelter:

I call him old, though we must be pretty much of an age, and I am not yet fifty. The harshness of his life, and the rigors of this place, have weathered and tanned and lined him so that he has the appearance, to a Roman eye, of a man of seventy. (Malouf Imaginary Life 39)

At this early point in his exile, Ovid sees only through that “Roman eye”. His cultural framework distinguishes how he sees the place and the people that inhabit it. His description of the new environment encompasses more than simply the physical facts, as he acknowledges:

I have found no tree here that rises amongst the low, grayish brown scrub. No flower. No fruit. We are at the ends of the earth. Even the higher orders of the vegetable kingdom have not yet arrived amongst us. We are centuries from the notion of an orchard or a garden made simply to please. The country lies open on every side, walled in to the west and

south, level to the north and to the northeast, with a view to infinity. The sharp incline of the cliffs leads to the sky. The river flats, the wormwood scrubs, the grasslands beyond, all lead to a sky that hangs close above us, heavy with snow, or is empty as far as the eye can see or the mind imagine, cloudless, without wings.

But I am describing a state of mind, no place.

I am in exile here. (Malouf Imaginary Life 15-16)

Metaphors of stuntedness, sterility and emptiness signify Ovid's despair at being beyond the cultural centre. Colourless scrub and endless plains (clearly reminiscent of the central Australian landscape) demonstrate the shift from pleasing gardens and orchards, signifiers of human civilisation. The landscape reflects Ovid's emotional situation as much as his literal position in the world. Distanced from the markers of the culture by which he has defined himself, the poet cannot relate to the new landscape or the people who inhabit it, and thus loses all sense of his own identity.

In much the same way, Gee's Josef Mandl feel alienated by a landscape not his own. He says he left Vienna "on the point of my father's toe"; he is forced from Europe by war, and thus feels that his view of the war "does not have a place" (Gee Live Bodies 35). Instead of being at the centre of the conflict as an active participant, he is marginalised in a way that threatens his sense of self, and he initially experiences New Zealand as a void. As an old man, he remembers first looking at Wellington's "ragged hills" and "flimsy houses" from his prisoner's hut on Somes Island and trying to imagine a reason "why people might settle in this vertical place – lean into the wind and rain, cling to the hills". The conclusion he comes to is that "There's an emptiness here I'll come to like, and a dumb stupidity, I don't mind that." (Gee Live Bodies 13) It is the difference from his home that makes Josef want to stay in New Zealand, as though the changed location will somehow transform him too. However, he recognises that this early decision is not entirely reasonable; "my sanity", he says, "was under threat". (Gee Live Bodies 13)

In remembering his initial experience of exile, Josef frames the landscape in terms of disjunction and disquieting intimacies. He admits "he did not like the place at first" but New Zealand is where he chooses to settle because it is "as far as I could run" (Gee Live Bodies 65), suggesting his desire to position

himself beyond the boundaries of his previously known world and self. What strikes him first about the New Zealand landscape is its emptiness, which reflects the emptiness and disconnection he feels. He says “Sea coasts increase the inlander’s sense of being lost – of being cut off from the certainties that have sustained him.” (Gee Live Bodies 65) At the Neusiedler See, signs of human occupation – “fields, vineyards, houses” – are never more than a hundred yards away. The sea coast highlights the gulf that now separates Josef from those signifiers of culture. Moreover, the New Zealand landscape seems at first to be without such markers of human occupation.

Willi and I drive in a borrowed car out to a west coast beach called Muriwai, through hills that had no buildings or people on them, and that was bad enough; but at the beach waves as high as houses rolled in half a mile apart. Spray streamed from the tops as they mounted higher. They turned their shoulders into their laps and made the coastline tremble. This went on, I could see, for twenty, thirty miles, into the haze. A beach, they called it. I felt it suck the breath out of me and weaken my blood. Yet there was no disharmony, although water beat and land withstood. And nothing was disproportionate. Only me. (Gee Live Bodies 65-66)

Such “intimacies between the elements” seem “indecent” (Gee Live Bodies 65) to Josef’s European eyes. Josef acknowledges the landscape as harmonious in itself, but cannot see how to harmonise with it; he is stripped of breath and blood, physically compromised by his displacement and sense of not belonging.

Early in their exile, both Ovid and Josef reject the landscape and feel that it rejects them. Gee’s book opens with Josef trying to find a comfortable place to escape both landscape and other people. He gets a little drunk and loses “all knowledge of a social existence”, coming instead to

know my being as molecular, like this wine in the glass, French wine, Swedish glass, or like the good cloth of my trousers that once was wool on the back of a Southland sheep, and grass before that, minerals in the soil, rain sucked from an ocean on the other side of the world... You see where I am heading? It is enormously comforting to make the journey into the universe and into time and understand that I come from there and will go there and that consciousness will be put aside. (Gee Live Bodies 7)

Like the child in Malouf’s story “Closer” who wants to be an astronaut, or the Professor in “Southern Skies” who projects his many levels of otherness into the

drama of the skies, Josef tries to find an absolutely neutral space by going universal in scale.

Josef knows, however, that his body and mind must find some less abstract location. Moving beyond his “happy conceit” and “looking for some other place to hide”, he feels there are “not many”. He rejects Vienna, and his life with his wife Nancy, before arriving at the “narrow place” that “will not change and will not go away”. (Gee Live Bodies 8) The place is *Somes Island* – a place where he is both imprisoned and set free as his past and his present collide. The island is the omnipresent oppositional ‘other’.

It is set in my forehead, a third eye through which I look at the other side; it presses like a thumb on the beating membrane, fontanelle. Was I so young, so unformed, when they took me there?

Perhaps on the morning when I peered from the operating room I saw my house. I looked towards Wadestown and Tinakori hill. The slopes black with pine trees under the hurrying sky were balanced like a stone that might crash down. I live now in one of the houses under threat, above the fault line on the tilted hill, and when the ground trembles in an earthquake I stand in a doorway and grip the jamb or I kneel under my desk, obeying the rules, but know it is the deep-rooted trees that hold me safe. Pine trees, my daughter says, have shallow roots, but that is mere botanical knowledge. They go deep enough for me.

I watch the island. My third eye, the island, watches me. Light narrows to an aperture; and light from the other side, where I lived in a great city between East and West, reaches me through that tightened place, giving each thing I see new lines and darker shades. (Gee Live Bodies 13-14)

Josef knows that he is on shaky ground in New Zealand; the earthquake fault underlines his sense of insecurity within his adopted country. Yet he, like the pine trees, has roots that go deep enough, for he has taken shape in New Zealand; he is no longer young and unformed. Being on *Somes Island* has transformed his vision of the world and allowed him to see with heightened awareness of the European and the Antipodean.

What both Josef and Ovid discover is how to adapt to the environment in which they find themselves, bringing their cultural awareness to bear on their landscapes. In *Live Bodies*, Josef finds peace in the boundary space that opens him up to be able to cope with the social world again:

I walk down. The road winds with the contour of the hill, turning on the edge of a gorge filled with trees, where, after rain, you can hear the running of a hidden stream. The cuttings on the high side are bright with Cape daisies at this time of year, and huge pines, purple and scaly, bend their arms like old men and make a soft hissing like the sea. High in the trunk of one, where it bifurcates, is a small native tree with shiny leaves, growing as though in a pot. Needles strew the slopes, as slippery as ice, and give way to lawns with rhododendrons at the edge. One day I saw two parakeets, yellow and red, conversing in the branches of a tulip tree. Between my suburb and the city, this magical place. I end my walk with fresh blood in my veins... (Gee Live Bodies 59)

The pines, which Josef describes as “like old men” are also like him – they are imports, but have taken root here, and in their solidity in the new place, provide support for new growth of the native. Given that Josef is at this moment walking away from where his granddaughter struggles (in his house; he is offering her shelter) with her own demons, the metaphor is particularly telling. The garden that Ovid builds in the Getae village is a similar assertion of the possibility of inhabiting ‘inbetweenness’. Ovid’s act of creation of the garden mirrors his previous creation of texts. He is brought out of the abstract and into the real, recognising that though he used the names of plants and herbs for poetic effect, he has no knowledge of what these things actually look like.

Both Ovid and Josef find themselves in the new landscapes of exile. Beyond the realms of the constructed world lies an alternative centre. Ovid says:

I have come to realise that this place is the true destination I have been seeking, and that my life here, however painful, is my true fate, the one I have spent my whole existence trying to escape. ... I belong to this place now. I have made it mine. I am entering the dimensions of myself. (Malouf Imaginary Life 94-95)

It is only when released from the ironies that got him exiled in the first place that Ovid finally begins to understand both himself, and the world around him.

Throughout *Live Bodies*, Josef likewise asserts the process of accident and will that have allowed him to make New Zealand his home. He says “I did not choose this country and nor did it choose me. I arrived by accident, but after the accident came necessity. I am tied. There are bonds I can never break.” (Gee Live Bodies 66) Later in the novel, he refers to his change of hemisphere in terms of Canetti’s tale of exile:

I too was expelled from my paradise and I came into being in the hard world of the island. I thought, I have had my nose rubbed in this place so

I will stay and make it mine. I will stay here and keep what I find. (Gee Live Bodies 161-62)

By the end of the novel, Josef is no longer trying to escape into the abstractions of space as he was at the beginning. Still on his Wellington hillside, he has reached an understanding of the hemispheres that will always be part of him.

As he puts it:

I will try to stay away from down there and live up here, in the country of the natural affections, where I have been both uneasy and at home. At home with Nancy. With everyone else I've had to keep renewing my visa. How I wish it had been my native land. (Gee Live Bodies 263)

Hardly "no country for old men" (Yeats 217), these countries do offer the possibility of redemption and a kind of peace. Yet the migrant, the settler, cannot ever be truly at home; the best that each of these characters can hope to achieve is the shrug of recognition that comes with recognising a personal and national place reached that cannot now be changed, but must simply be accepted, even if the desire remains to call it "mine".

An Imaginary Life finishes on a more transcendent note, offering death as the ultimate integration of self and place. Ovid discovers "my body feels almost no ache, only a kind of remoteness from itself." Like Jim in *Fly Away Peter*, Ovid is granted an expanded vision that encompasses a view of the landscape with himself in it. His spirit:

expands to become the whole landscape, as if space itself were its dimensions; filling the whole land from horizon to horizon and the whole arch of sky, its quality now the purest air, a myriad particles of light, each one a little centre from which the whole can be grasped at a single glance, and from whose vantage point, above, I see those tiny figures crawling, who are the Child and myself. (Malouf Imaginary Life 142)

This expanded view of both self and landscape also extends to notions of time. Like Jim, Ovid suddenly feels that there is plenty of time. Unlike Jim, however, Ovid gives up destination, which he feels "has been swallowed up in the immensity of this landscape, as the days have been swallowed up by the sense of a life that stretches beyond the limits of measurable time." (Malouf Imaginary Life 142) Having found himself, and truly connected with the landscape, there is only one more journey to be made – the journey to "that undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveller returns." (Wells 670)

This endless expansion of time and space, body and world, is the transcendent end to the novel. As Ovid approaches death, he claims “I am growing bodiless. I am turning into the landscape. I feel myself sway and ripple.” (Malouf Imaginary Life 145). In the book’s final words, all borders – time, space and the personal history that connects them – are dissolved in a moment of absolute transcendent oneness:

It is summer. It is spring. I am immeasurably, unbearably happy. I am three years old. I am sixty. I am six.
I am there. (Malouf Imaginary Life 152)

This oneness is, however, conditional on its position at both the end of the text and the end of Ovid’s life. As Andrew Taylor convincingly argues:

The end of *An Imaginary Life* celebrates a kind of lyric comprehensiveness, a boundaryless state in which distinction between subject and object, between the I and the not-I, is joyously dissolved. It is not, of course, a condition within which we can permanently live our lives, because our lives, like language itself, depend on such distinctions. It is therefore not fortuitous that it is achieved at the moment of death. It is also not fortuitous that what is achieved and celebrated at such a moment is a union of the human with the nonhuman and, especially, the human body with the natural world. Ovid’s death occurs within a landscape in which the unity of the human and the natural comes, for a moment, shimmering alive. (Taylor “The Bread of Time to Come” 716)

The integration of human with landscape signifies the moment of ultimate aliveness, which can only occur at the ultimate moment of life.

Through their elderly characters, Gee and Malouf bring together the issues of the earlier stages of human life: reconciling past, present and future; finding meaningful belonging; integrating self with the landscape and with human society. Gee’s elderly characters end in the location they began, but with transformed vision that allows a greater sense of acceptance and a stronger self knowledge. Malouf’s older characters offer a vision of death as the ultimate transformation; as the elderly approach the end of their lives, all boundaries are rendered meaningless.

Conclusion – new horizons

We have come a long way.

In New Zealand and Australia in the early twenty-first century, the suggestion that Antipodean culture is non-existent (or, at best, weak and inherently inferior to the culture of Britain and Europe) has been largely erased by a plethora of creative assertions of New Zealand and Australian identity. The fiction of Maurice Gee and David Malouf sits alongside music, film, television programmes, magazines and academic writings that constitute a vibrant palimpsest of narratives about life in these postcolonial nations.

Close analysis of the adult fiction of Gee and Malouf demonstrates that the landscape remains a dominant feature of constructions of cultural identity in New Zealand and Australia. At moments of crisis or transition throughout their lives, characters in these fictions turn away from human society towards the landscape. Through this technique, Gee and Malouf use landscape to indicate the strength of a character's sense of self and social positioning. Those characters depicted as confident and self-aware find solace in the landscape, particularly the wilderness landscape. Gee and Malouf show such characters appreciating the 'otherness' of the external world, even as the authors also use landscape description to indicate the characters' internal states. Characters who experience 'meaningful loneliness' in the landscape (thereby accepting the separation between self and other) find that escape also offers a path to re-integration. Gee and Malouf show a period of withdrawal to the landscape as a potential prompt towards acceptance or transcendence of social structures. In contrast, less self-reflexive characters are shown to experience the landscape as a frightening and alienating 'other'. Projecting their insecurities onto the environment, such characters suffer from agoraphobia, paralysis or paranoia when confronted with the landscape, and use rigid mechanisms to try to control the external world, particularly those elements that might be designated 'nature'. Paradoxically, such measures tend to result in further alienation from society, leaving such characters floundering in a no-man's-land of their own

construction. Thus Gee and Malouf use connection with the landscape as an indicator of personal and cultural security: those who connect with the landscape have attained a sense of individual and collective belonging; those who disparage, fear or fight the landscape have not.

Though Gee and Malouf cover very different thematic and literal terrain in their fictions, they utilise many of the same landscape features, and in strikingly similar ways. Both authors use well-established literary tropes of the Antipodean environment, though in many instances they reinterpret or challenge the validity of such narratives. In Gee's and Malouf's fictions, images of open vistas, the bush, and the beach tend (as in national mythologies) to frame positive interactions with the landscape in these fictions. The beach generally operates as a liminal site that breaks down boundaries, promoting a sense of self-acceptance that frequently also allows genuine ease between people. The beach also functions in some narratives as a potential site of escape from feminine forces, albeit short-lived. Bush settings commonly serve as sites of self-discovery; most notably, both authors present a pig-hunting coming-of-age episode, highlighting fear and confusion being overcome (at least to some extent) in this environment. Wild weather is shown in multiple texts to free characters temporarily from the bounds of social regulation, particularly in terms of sexual discovery. Open views – whether the vista from a hilltop or the distance across the flat plains of the Australian outback – demonstrate a sense of expansive possibility. Both authors also use the elusively bright Antipodean light to undermine conventional certainties about the 'knowability' of place, suggesting the necessity of maintaining a dynamic relationship with a changeable landscape. These repeated figures suggest both the pervasiveness and the mutability of particular landscape images in New Zealand and Australia.

Gee's and Malouf's use of landscape is not, of course, homogenous or uniform. In some cases, the writers use similar landscape images to entirely different effects. For example, both authors use immersion in water as an indicator that characters are moving beyond the bounds of social control. However, Malouf tends towards traditional representations of water as healing or cleansing – Vic and Digger's bathing in the Changi river in *The Great World*, for example,

counteracts the deprivation and disease that result from the punitive social structures of the prisoner of war camp. Gee sometimes uses such positive framing too, such as in May's relationship with the river and the sea in *Loving Ways*. However, Gee's depictions of water are more often negative, with death by drowning a common feature of his fiction. Many of Gee's characters (such as Glenda in *Sole Survivor*, Rex in *Going West* and Rhoda in *Prowlers*) escape social pressures by surrendering their lives (intentionally or inadvertently) to the sea in their search for release from the pain caused by human relationships. In other cases, the two authors use different landscape features to depict very similar concepts. The symbolic 'dark void' is one example – the black waterholes of Gee's *Plumb* trilogy work in the same way as the "Absolute Dark" of Malouf's unsettled bush to signify an unknown realm that threatens stable identification and thus a stable sense of identity. At times the authors also vary the meaning of represented landscapes even within their own oeuvres. For instance, in *Plumb* and *Meg* Gee establishes the orchard as a haven; in *Loving Ways*, the orchard is symbolic of capitalist greed and mechanised control over place and people. Such diversity suggests the fluidity and hybridity of postcolonial settler culture, where readings of the landscape are not concrete or stable, and the environment is construed and constructed according to multiple perspectives.

Such multiplicity and inclusiveness are elements of postcolonial understanding of place that resonate throughout both authors' work. Gee and Malouf show their self-aware characters experiencing the world in a sensually holistic way, rather than through the more traditional visual appreciation that separates the observer from the landscape. This direct engagement with place breaks down barriers between the self and the other, the individual and the place inhabited, in a boundary-blurring that is central to postcolonial understanding. Malouf's characters are more likely to experience unity with the land as ecstatic and transcendental (Ovid's final moments of integration into the landscape, for example, or Jim's calm digging to Australia from war-torn Europe when he dies at the end of *Fly Away Peter*), whereas Gee's characters make peace with themselves and their place in the world in a more understated manner (as with May's inclusion of the magpies in her artistic vision of the world, or Raymond's

quiet moments of meditation beside the creek at the end of *Sole Survivor*). However, both authors suggest the possibility and desirability of characters coming to a meaningful understanding of their environment. In doing so, each author reflects a long history of Antipodean attempts to find belonging and acceptance in the landscape.

Examining these texts through a postcolonial lens highlights how deeply white settler readings of the Australian and New Zealand landscape have been affected by the historical context of European settlement. In drawing an analogy between the depictions of life stages in these fictions and the widely accepted stages of development of New Zealand and Australia as settler nations, this study illustrates the subtle pervasiveness of mythologies of 'nation-making'. Certain attributes of the process of personal maturing have become so closely aligned with the political journey of the nation that the personal story can easily be read as political. By making a relationship with the land so central to the characters' lives in these fictions, Gee and Malouf suggest (whether consciously or otherwise) the wider engagement with place that has shaped the cultural identity of their respective nations since white settlement. While such a reading may not be directly evidential, the numerous and extensive references to exploration, conquest, origin and displacement validate such a postcolonial take on these novels.

Gee's and Malouf's depictions of landscape thus map changing cultural views of national and individual identity. Their fictions demonstrate how imaginative engagement with place creates a meaningful relationship not only between the individual and their physical environment, but between the individual and their social and cultural environment. As Andrew Taylor puts it in his discussion of Malouf's critical writings:

If the imagination is what enables us to be conscious of experience – both personal and national – both as a totality, a wholeness, and as meaningful, it must embrace the physical. ... And the physical, in *A Spirit of Play*, means three things which, ideally, would interact in a seamless harmony. They are the physical body of the continent (what Malouf calls the landscape), the body politic, and the individual physical body. (Taylor "Ethics of the Body" 76)

Gee's and Malouf's literary representations bear out this suggestion that place, politics and personhood are inextricably linked. The interaction of the individual with the place they inhabit reflects "the body politic" – the social structures, history and cultural mores of a nation's society.

Gee and Malouf feel differently about the extent to which they speak *for* their nation and culture in writing *about* their country. Gee explicitly states that he does not particularly address New Zealand as a subject in his fiction, saying:

I don't feel like a New Zealand writer, I just feel like a writer. ... I'm not – as some novelists feel they are – writing the story of my tribe. I'm trying to write stories of individual people – and maybe those become the story of the tribe, or part of it. (Reilly 8)

However, Gee's works have commonly been read as social histories of New Zealand Pakeha culture: this is hardly surprising given that Gee's adult fiction is, without exception, set in a recognisably New Zealand landscape peopled by characters who are clearly members of New Zealand society (even if, as in Josef Mandl's case, they are recent migrants). Critic Donald W. Hannah has even gone so far as to suggest that this singular focus is a hindrance to international recognition; he says that Gee's novels have "a rather restricted spectrum of interest in their resolute concentration upon New Zealanders living in New Zealand, all of them apparently preoccupied with specifically New Zealand concerns." (Hannah 80) Though Gee might aim to address the universal through the individual, his work is nevertheless so firmly grounded in New Zealand that the national context remains central to most readings of his work.

Malouf consciously contributes to the discourse around what it means to be an Australian, acknowledging that he intends his writing to resonate for Australian settler society. Unlike Gee, Malouf believes that:

a writer ought to write for the community immediately around him; he ought to write for the tribe. And I think it's only when his work works absolutely profoundly in that way that it has any chance of being good. I think that if people from somewhere else want to overhear that, and discover that it speaks for them as well, that's fine, but I do think that the notion of Literature with a capital L is a very, very dangerous one, and the notion of writers with international stature and all of that is a very dangerous one. (Rogers 35)

The danger of de-contextualising the author is aptly demonstrated in the brochure for the 2009 Auckland Readers and Writers Festival, where the blurb for “An Hour with David Malouf” reads:

Malouf established himself as one of the great Australian writers with award-winning novels and short stories. Now he is simply himself, a writer from the periphery who has become part of the central narrative of what it is to be human today. (“Auckland Writers and Readers Festival brochure” 39)

The description implies that Malouf is no longer an “Australian writer” – that in becoming an individual who is “simply himself” he has shed his Australianness and his location on “the periphery” (a traditional framing that fails to take into account the decentring of literary production that has been so important in postcolonial studies) and joined the central ranks of Literature with a capital L. Such a dislocation works against Malouf’s own assertion that the local is highly significant to his work, and that everything he writes is about Australia. Don Randall’s recent book on Malouf notes an increasing tendency for critics to “seize on Malouf in relation to a broad-based, internationally-oriented postcolonial studies” and reiterates the importance of locating Malouf more precisely. In his study, Randall attempts “to give due attention to Malouf’s place, already well established, within the international field of postcolonial writing, but without losing sight of Malouf’s specificity and the specificity of his Australian context.” (Randall David Malouf 187)

As Randall suggests, postcolonial literary works lend themselves to readings that take into account what Milan Kundera calls the “small context” of national literature along with the “large context” of worldwide literature. (Kundera) From one perspective, the interweaving of national and ‘universal’ narratives of place in Gee’s and Malouf’s fictions seems a direct legacy of colonial history and so-called ‘settler schizophrenia’. Given their colonial beginnings, Australia and New Zealand’s national histories necessarily borrow from, and translate to their own context, the historic narratives of Britain and Europe. Even during periods of separatist nationalistic fervour, such as the 1930s and 1940s in New Zealand, writers inevitably drew from, and contributed to, narrative traditions beyond the Antipodes. As Stuart Murray explains:

In the business of writing place, the writers of the 1930s took their inspiration not only from that which they saw around them, the raw material of the local. They were also prompted and challenged by the full force of writing in English world-wide, as well as the pace of international events... There is no real sense of contradiction here. The history of New Zealand as a settler colony is full of the unavoidable tension that comes with the colonial legacy of facing in two directions at the same time. Wanting to define self as the nation grew and matured, the writers – like most New Zealanders in the 1930s – looked to Europe for ideas and the approbation that the colonial culture still required. (Murray 13)

Thus Gee and Malouf are connected to a longstanding Antipodean literary tradition that looks in “two directions”.

In the twenty-first century, however, the “two directions” of the colonial situation have been overtaken by the global communication explosion, and duality has become multiplicity. Simple binaries such as Antipodes/Europe or national/international have been replaced by a web of complex cultural interactions. In the modern age of communication, the influence of the media (and particularly the internet) is ubiquitous in New Zealand and Australia. Thus cross-cultural fertilisation is inevitable. One of the advantages of postcolonial discourse is the recognition that it always was. With their mix of migrants from so many parts of the world, Australia and New Zealand have never had homogenous settler societies; their cultural make-up has always incorporated far greater diversity than the simple native/settler binary revealed. Writing within the postcolonial world, Gee and Malouf recognise and affirm this multiplicity. In depicting landscapes, they draw on narrative traditions from around the world, such as the metaphor of the garden in multiple religious traditions. At the same time, depicting their characters in Antipodean landscapes allows these authors to assert the particularity of these stories to New Zealand and Australia, stressing the uniqueness of the local context. Narrative and national elements are brought together when the authors utilise mythologies from the Antipodean context, such as the boy on the beach or the Man Alone. Most importantly, in their depictions of people in the landscape Gee and Malouf challenge simple binary distinctions and affirm the multiplicity and hybridity that typify not only postcolonial discourse but the twenty-first century world. Gee and Malouf’s characters experience, and learn to recognise, various ways of coming to terms with the landscape. Mutability is a dominant feature of these landscapes, and of

the characters that interact with them. Through challenging boundaries between character and environment, nature and culture, the personal and the political, Gee and Malouf present the potential for integration and acceptance in place of the traditional divisions.

In his critical writings, Malouf affirms this inclusive approach, using the analogy of the Australian landscape to debunk the idea of cultural purity at any level. He condemns those “puritanical exclusionists” who aim for “the expulsion from our parks and gardens and foreshores of every bush, plant and flower that is not a *bona fide* native.” He sees such action stemming from concern “for the health of the nation, our sense of ourselves as Australians” and goes on to elaborate the exclusionists’ argument:

Only when the last non-native shrub and flower has been grubbed out of the earth... will we have broken free at last of the old superstitious nostalgia for Europe and be ourselves natives, at least in spirit, of our Australian land. This is the most fundamental form of an argument that only what belongs uniquely to this place, that derives all its elements from the life of this place, can be authentically Australian. That Australia must be kept free of all alien pollutants and influences. That if we, as individuals and as a nation, are to be unique, only the uniqueness of the land can shape us. (Malouf Spirit of Play 58)

Malouf highlights this new use of the word ‘native’ to describe settler culture:

Once applied only to Aborigines, it was appropriated by the first generation of the native-born as a sign of their difference from settlers and other imports, and as a claim to belonging. We have long since given up that claim to it; we no longer speak of ourselves as ‘native’. Perhaps, as some of our radical conservationists use the term, we are meant to see in the exclusive claim of ‘natives’ to a place here, not only an argument about the land but a restorative gesture towards its original owners. The gesture may be a noble one, but is not, in its exclusiveness, in the spirit of Aboriginal thinking about these matters. That seems more concerned, in its pragmatic way, with what is now here and on the ground, with re-imagining the scene to include all that is now in it, than with looking back nostalgically to what was there 20 or even 200 years ago. This capacity to re-imagine things, to take in and adapt, might be something that we should learn from, something that comes closer than a nostalgia for lost purity to the way the world actually is, and also to the way it works. It might remind us as well of something we need to keep in mind: which is the extent to which Aboriginal notions of inclusiveness, of re-imagining the world to take in all that is now in it, has worked to include us. (Malouf Spirit of Play 58)

Malouf sees the Australian landscape as a metaphor for Australian culture – shaped by a huge number of influences and layered with meaning. His argument is that in geographic and social environments, inclusiveness must transcend exclusion. For Malouf, “the ability to take in and adapt” is a primary value. The poets, artists, nature-lovers and migrants that people his fiction demonstrate this flexibility in their relationships with the landscape.

New Zealand culture struggles with the same changing attitudes to the land that Malouf identifies in Australian settler culture. In his book *Theatre Country*, Geoff Park acknowledges that in “the sprawling urban zones of Australia and New Zealand, where the influences of Europe – the design plans for new cities and the domesticated biota, for example – are so used to being in control of what was there before them, a sense of place is redolent with tension.” However, he argues that “the forces that determine the uniqueness of each place” result from this interplay “between influences that are native factors and those that are foreign”. (Park 47) Like Australia’s, New Zealand’s current landscape has been, and will continue to be, shaped by multiple influences. Park also points out that in New Zealand, as in Australia, the settler culture wants to make some claim for ‘native’ status, but is as yet unsure of how to achieve the belonging they desire. As he puts it:

despite the vigour with which those of European descent have been celebrating their first-comers’ arrival in Europe’s antipodes, they no longer like to talk of themselves as a *colonial* people. But if they are, they are certainly *adjusting* people, still on a steep learning curve where the land is concerned, intrigued by the idea of a ‘sustainable’ relationship with it, if as yet unaware of what that might require of them. (Park 49)

What both Malouf and Park indicate is the continuation of the journey that has led to this point. There is no *tabula rasa* – history cannot be wiped out. What is important is how white settler culture might establish a sustainable relationship with the land through engaging with it practically and imaginatively.

Building such a relationship does put settler culture at risk of accusations of further cultural appropriation from the indigenous people. Indeed, Malouf’s very claim to speak knowingly of the Aboriginal position on the land is problematic; as a white settler Australian of mixed British and Lebanese heritage who has

chosen to live for many years outside Australia, the basis for Malouf's understanding of Aboriginal attitudes to land and settler culture is not clear. Malouf has been criticised for under-representing the reality of colonial political dispossession and its ongoing impact, and for being rather too positivist in his vision of an inclusive Australia. However, Don Randall defends Malouf:

Malouf's creative wager is that one can cross interpersonal and intercultural boundaries imaginatively; his ethical belief is that one should try to do so. In Malouf, boundedness exists to be surpassed. Self-overcoming, through responsiveness to the other, is one of his principal themes. (Randall "Cross-Cultural Imagination" 144)

Whether that 'other' is the indigene, the child, the doppelganger or the land itself, Malouf attempts to allow his characters to integrate understanding in a way that allows greater knowledge of the self. Though Gee makes similar use of the child, the landscape and the doppelganger, he is much less inclusive with respect to race. Maori are conspicuously absent from most of Gee's fiction, suggesting that at least some members of mainstream Pakeha culture remain uncomfortable with integrating this particular 'other' into imaginative constructions of the world.

Of course, Malouf and Gee do not represent (or claim to represent) the full gamut of possible cultural responses to the land in Australia and New Zealand. Both authors effectively operate from within the dominant settler literary tradition of white male writing. In demonstrating how conventional masculine mythologies of settler New Zealand and Australia have been re-appropriated and interrogated in the latter half of the twentieth century, they contribute to the tradition they challenge by operating within it. The postcolonial make-up of these societies ensures numerous other sites of literary production within each country. Most obviously, the groundswell of indigenous fiction in both New Zealand and Australia (as in most colonial and postcolonial nations) in the latter half of the twentieth century demonstrates a significant incursion into the traditional European literary power base. Likewise, the increase in volume and commercial success of women's writing over the last fifty years indicates a shift away from patriarchal control of literary production. Non-white (for example, Asian or Pacific Island) New Zealanders and Australians provide another perspective on national identity, land association and selfhood in these

contexts, as does writing by recent migrants. The diversity of voices contributing to the discussion of landscape from outside Gee's and Malouf's fiction shows how the base of literary production has matured through the process of integration.

Theoretical discourses have likewise expanded by breaking down rigid distinctions. In an article entitled "The Postmodernization of Landscape" Dianne Harris makes the point that:

it is becoming increasingly clear that landscape studies contribute equally to the fields and frameworks from which they borrow. The relationship is a reciprocal one... the postmodernization of landscape history clarifies the significance of the landscape as a critical agent in the formation of culture, and confirms that the study of landscape yields specific and particular results that cannot be gleaned through analysis of other sources... (Harris 434)

Harris's assertion bears out this study's premise by demonstrating the value of landscape analysis in providing insight into cultural history. Landscape, which relies on the human, is a cultural construct beyond topography; landscapes are created by human hearts and minds as much as human hands. Thus Gee and Malouf's fictions are cultural artefacts that both reflect and construct the landscapes of New Zealand and Australia. In writing about human interaction with the physical environment, Malouf and Gee transform 'space' into 'place', 'landscape' into 'lived land'. They communicate an understanding of the land that is as multi-faceted as the characters they portray and the stories they draw on. Gee and Malouf are geo-graphers – writers of place – in no lesser sense than the scientific.

Postcolonial discourse has extended into scientific fields of study related to understandings of landscape. Ecocriticism, with its refocusing on phenomenal reality and human impact on the environment, opens up new areas of debate by reading literature in a scientific light. The influence of postcolonial notions of re-envisioning is evident in an article discussing the Australian landscape, where Kirsty Douglas points out that the familiar tropes of colonial discourse continue to circulate within modern scientific writing. Douglas notes

striking correlations between frequently non-secular colonial accounts of landscape formation and twentieth-century 'scientific' accounts of the same places. The parity is evident both in the metaphors and mechanics

of landscape description, despite the oppositional stance of certain contemporary scientists and Christians to each other's explanatory frameworks. Exploration and discovery are at the forefront of the imaginative shift between unlocated space and locality or place. In this context metaphors of literacy and inscription are useful. It is a truism that colonial cartographers and surveyors created places first by 'reading' the land and then filling in the spaces on the maps of the unknown country. Similarly, scientific 'knowledge about' a region, about the mechanics of landscape, places that landscape into the corpus of the already-known. It becomes public or scientific property in a way that uncharted space is not. In this sense geology, too, is a 'frontier' and its practitioners are explorers – science is often perceived thus, and even in today's depressed industry, few mining companies lack 'exploration' divisions – in the mould of nineteenth century surveyors and geographers who, driven by curiosity and economics, set out to discover and decipher. (Bonyhady 69-70)

Thus the idea of colonial narratives being continually appropriated, updated and recirculated goes beyond the literary discourse argued here, and into the much wider field of discussions about place and landscape. As Noel Papps has it in *Prowlers*, "One could write the history of science in the language of religious myth". (Gee *Prowlers* 227) No discourse remains disconnected: in the modern world, discourses overlap, intersect and inform each other.

Integration is a key feature of Gee's and Malouf's writing about landscape. It is also a key feature of postcolonial discourse, postmodernism, humanist geography and a range of other emerging disciplines that aim to deal with the totality of human experience in all its fluidity. As human geographer J. Douglas Porteous succinctly puts it:

Cultural integrity involves not the static preservation of existing modes of expression, but the continuous evolution of our personal, as well as collective, imaginative response to the world. (Porteous 204)

Our response to the world begins with the self, but quickly moves out to find the 'other'. That 'other' can be the landscape (the physical world) or the human (the social world). In Gee's and Malouf's fictions, landscape functions as the perfect intermediary between society and self. It is an external projection of the 'other' that allows understanding of both what one is and what one is not. If either the social or the natural landscape is excluded, integration is impossible; landscape exists at the intersection between the individual, the place and the culture. In

this transcendent space, genuine discovery is possible. As Australian cultural critic Greg Dening has it:

Where minds meet is a beach of sorts, a place in-between, a limen, a threshold, where to share that space one has to give a little, where everything is new by being somehow shared, where everything is in translation, where we see ourselves reflected in somebody else's otherness. (Teo 233)

By bringing the elements of narrative, landscape, settler culture and selfhood firmly to the fore in their fictions, Maurice Gee and David Malouf open up that space within the postcolonial societies of Australia and New Zealand.

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