

Fall 2011

**"Falling out of a Picture": The Australian Landscape in D.H.
Lawrence's *Kangaroo***

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*“[T]he mind and the terrain shape each other:
every landscape is a landscape of desire to
some degree, if not always for its inhabitants”*
Rebecca Solnit (*Landscapes* 9).

Modernist writers, captivated by the work of mapping the complex terrain of desire, present a variety of encounters with, studies on, and reinventions of the landscape. Although critical attention has focused on the *flâneur* in the cityscape, a focus on pastoral and hybrid (suburban) landscapes can reveal the way modernism engages with these terrains in order to “make it new” in aesthetics (the mythical method T.S. Eliot identified with James Joyce’s *Ulysses*) and critique the “new” of modernity (mass culture and globalization). Novels and poetry from the year 1922, which Michael North has read as a defining moment in mapping modernism, evidence a multifarious and wide-ranging engagement with the landscape, including Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Rebecca West’s *The Judge* and Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*. In each, characters’ interactions with pastoral, hybrid, and metropolitan landscapes frame central questions about identity in modernity. Landscape likewise plays a crucial role in framing questions of national and gender identity in D.H. Lawrence’s 1922-1923 novel *Kangaroo*, a novel, however, ill at ease with the modernist response to modernity.

In many ways, the Australian landscape may seem beside the point in Lawrence’s much disparaged *Kangaroo*, as the author and protagonist’s concerns are those of a metaphysical expedition—the figure obscuring the ground to such a degree, indeed, as



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to irk the viewer.¹ The landscape of Australia is the ground for Lawrence's figuring of a modernist paradox about postwar national and gendered identity. Specifically, Lawrence's protagonist Richard Lovatt Somers embodies, first, the paradox of an artist's desire to cut free from all old forms, a release that engenders revulsion at the stark consequences—silence; and, second, the desire of the “thought-adventurer” to reveal the futility of all absolutes, a revelation which uncovers a radical relativity that compels him to establish the self (relative, contingent) as an absolute (*K* 212). The landscape itself also functions as an analogue for Lawrence's drama: Lawrence, an antimodernist, finds himself writing a modernist novel, and his protagonist Somers, an exile of English imperialism, finds himself fundamentally at odds with the utopic alternative Australia's landscapes present.² Lawrence's novels from the early 1920s are narratives thematically and structurally contingent upon the spaces he traveled—from Sicily, to Sardinia, Ceylon, Australia, New Mexico, and Mexico (Roberts 183). In contrast to these, however, *Kangaroo* captures a singular ambivalence toward the landscape on the part of author and character. The novel evokes the conventions and conclusions of traditional travel and nature writing but puts them into question by utilizing modernist and feminist standpoints—standpoints that Lawrence felt deeply ambivalent about and, ultimately, must abandon. Wittingly or not, in making Australia the fundament of this particular modernist thought-adventure, Lawrence created a novel that reveals the historical and cultural tensions of a significant moment within postwar, colonial British modernism. The context of Australia made these tensions particularly prominent given its “antimodernist” disposition.³

Kangaroo, a modernist anti-hero's narrative of exile and odyssey, shares with other 1922 novels a recursive spiral into the trauma of the recent past. After being hounded and humiliated in Cornwall during the war, Richard Lovatt Somers has exiled himself with his wife Harriett to New South Wales, where he learns from his neighbor, the working man and ex-soldier Jack Callcott, of a struggle for political power between Jack's Diggers, ex-soldiers organized in a secret society led by the charismatic Benjamin Cooley (known as Kangaroo), and the socialists, who are led by the pragmatic Willie Struthers, backed by Jack's brother-in-law William James (known as Jaz). Both Somers and Lawrence seem to lose interest in the narrative line in which Somers is alternately seduced and repulsed by Kangaroo's entreaties of comradeship and love, and a bloody clash between the Diggers and socialists is at best an anti-climax. A romantic narrative line examining Somers's need for Harriett (she is his root and the nest to his phoenix) and

his desire to be a lone thought-adventurer is portrayed with contemptuous satire and even some self-parody. So while the romance and adventure of an odyssey is evoked by this "travel" narrative, it is continuously undermined in favor of the more static modernist epic of the thought-adventurer, which, for Lawrence, is a journey of the intellectual into the darkness of blood-consciousness. This exploration of the self that is both prompted and legitimated by the encounter with the other and is writ large on the landscape evokes both the imperialist dynamics of Australian landscape painting in the previous two centuries and a prominent discourse in 1920s modernism—cultural anthropology. The other for Lawrence is less the aboriginal cultures of Australia than a meeting of "English of the Old Country" with Australia's democracy of mateyness in "God's Own Country" (K 8, 10).

Landscape Theory: Canvas, Page, Frame

Landscape theory is concerned with the power dynamics of looking and framing within particular cultural contexts.⁴ *Kangaroo's* first pages, which juxtapose the way Australian workers and the Somers frame each other on their arrival in Sydney—the workers are a "mixed lot," "squatting and lying on the grassy bank," with "that air of owning the city which belongs to a good Australian," whereas the Somers are "little," "comical-looking," "strange, foreign-looking [...] the absent air of self-possession," suspected as being Germans or "a Bolshy" (7)—underscore how nationalist, political, and social (particularly class and gender) standpoints compose the resulting tableaux and valuations. Lawrence's Australian landscape functions "as something like the 'dreamwork' of imperialism," as W.J.T. Mitchell has written of this landscape, disclosing "both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance" (10). Writing about the centrality of "landscape representation" in "critical readings of national literature" (552), Philip Mead traces throughout twentieth-century literary history the challenge of assimilating the janus-faced aspects of Australia's landscape representations: these include grand narratives of utopian pastoral fantasies, heroic representations of man in nature, and "the less grand one of penal settlement and colonization" (552).⁵ Judith Wright likewise uses the phrase "double aspect" to describe the way Australia's landscape has historically functioned for its "new inhabitants" as an external reality equivalent to the inner reality "of exile" and "of newness and freedom" (xi).

As a novel that frames acts of framing in its portrayal of a writer's engage-

ment with the Australian landscape, the modernism of Lawrence's *Kangaroo* considers how landscape functions. The modern Australian poet John Kinsella theorizes "prospect" and "refuge" as key functions of landscape (14). The self-reflexive *Kangaroo* depicts the two poles of prospect and refuge in Somers's narrative of exile, but it also prompts readers to question that duality as the motive of narrative progression. The orientations of prospect and refuge bring spatiality into narrative and narrativize space. Landscape, "nature reconstructed or redirected by humans," thus is the site of humans negotiating, searching for, creating, or destroying "a safe and functional environment," usually by combining aspects of prospect and refuge (Kinsella 14-15). Narrative, in mediating one's experience of an environment, creates landscape (formulates what is prospect and what refuge by its framing) and, further, can reflect on the effects of such reconstructions of the given environment.

Kangaroo is an effort on Lawrence's part to envision a safe and functional environment, part of his search for a utopia he called *Rananim*,⁶ and also a drama of the disillusionment endemic to such a search. Kinsella claims that landscape poetry, from Virgil's pastoral eclogues through Les Murray's rural Australia poetry, is "a language of control and liberation at once" (15). In the anarchy of the new orientations to place that modernity engendered, which the modernist project abetted as liberating the self and word, there is also an underlying insistence on "control" (in the closing lines of *The Wasteland* and in Molly's vision of how morning will be ordered in *Ulysses*, for example) that has received less attention. Reframing the landscape, a way to define, order, and ground one's experience, was a key site for modernism. Lawrence's novel shows, on the one hand, the modernist desire to see the landscape tradition as a canvas to punch a hole through, and, on the other hand, the desire of the threatened artist-subject in modernity to use that tradition to shore fragments against further ruin.⁷

Focusing on the use of landscape in shoring up national identity and patriarchal ideology, Rebecca Solnit reads place as "a crossroads, a particular point of intersection of forces coming from many directions and distances" (*Landscapes* 1). This nuanced reading of place can redress reductive readings of Lawrence's "spirit of place" as either a nature writer's accurate travelogue or a symbolic backdrop.⁸ Although many have taken Lawrence's phrase to mean a place's ineffable essence captured by the adroit writer, Lawrence uses it to designate place as the matrix that shapes individual and cultural identity. In Lawrence's "The Spirit of Place," the distance of America from old Europe makes it a fertile ground for producing "new whole men," unfettered by subjugating ideologies and old narratives (96). The spirit of place

Kangaroo captures is not essential Australia but an essence of exile; it is a site for taking up the discontents of modernity, national identity, and the figure of the artist-intellectual in the 1920s. Indeed, the narrator seems to comment on his own discomfort in this (metatextual) modernist endeavor: "Poor Richard Lovatt wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself, and calling it Australia" (28).

The subtitle of the introduction to Solnit's *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*, "Prisons and Paradises," presents paradigms that echo Kinsella's prospect and refuge and are central to Lawrence's inter-war landscapes. Prison and paradise, having a long tradition in British and pastoral literary landscapes, are likewise prominent in modernism as ready frames for interrogating the relationship of the citizen to the state, to national and racial identity, and to gendered ideologies. It is in walking the physical spaces of Australia, with its legacy of penal colony and potential Arcady, that Lawrence's characters are able to cross, confront, and be confounded by the "invisible lines" of inherited narratives that demarcate identity and where one belongs (Solnit, *Landscapes* 7). According to Peter Pierce, in contrast to Ireland and Canada, Australia's post-settlement history is singular in its recurrent tropes of "a sense of exile" due to physical distance, of "guilt at the means by which European settlers took possession of the continent," and of "utopian possibilities" in "its freedom from what Henry Lawson called 'old world errors, and wrongs and lies / Making a hell in a paradise'" (2).

Lawrence's focus on the psychological dynamics of his protagonist making a hell in a paradise—a focus the narrator satirically comments on—readily marks *Kangaroo* as participating in modernism's "inward turn."⁹ However, Lawrence's own discomfort with what he viewed as modernist self-indulgence makes him recoil from his modernist treatment of the landscape and thus founder in groundless chapters such as "'Revenge' Timotheus Cries," which, paradoxically, appear more self-indulgent than the modernist lyric modes he despises.¹⁰ Lawrence, like his contemporaries, asks the reader to interrogate the mutually informing forces of mind and terrain, to consider the prisons one chooses or refuses to live inside as well as the ground from which one builds his or her paradise, whether from nostalgic reflections of the past (Somers's recollection of an English agrarian pastoral) or visions of a better future (Somers's aborted hope for an utopic pastoral).

Walking Out of the World: Where Modernisms Choose to Tread

Having succumbed to Australia's lotus power, Somers frames Australia

for Jaz from his utopic exile's perspective: "But Australia's like an open door with the blue beyond. You just walk out of the world and into Australia. [...] All those nations left behind in their schoolrooms, fussing. Let them fuss" (204). Jaz counters Somers by asking him to "Go into the middle of Australia and see how empty it is. You can't face emptiness long" (204). Lawrence stages this exchange in a hybrid landscape typical of the novel, the aviaries of the Botanical Gardens, ideal for walking and designed to both present and contain wilderness.¹¹ Throughout *Kangaroo*, walking moves characters between prisons and paradise, prospect and refuge; moreover, walks serve as the site at which characters self-reflexively negotiate landscapes of desire. Undertaken as a pastime rather than for a particular end, walking, like the lyric mode in modernist narrative, departs at a tangent from the linear paths of the profit-driven terrain of capitalist modernity.

Lawrence's novel exemplifies the potential modernists found inherent in the walk—its opportunities for psychoanalytic exploration, for delving into questions of embodied identity, for its variations on a literary tradition of walks (from the pilgrimage, to the nature walk, to the urban *flâneur*), and for refusing the expected turns and conclusions of a realist or Victorian tradition. The walk in many modernist novels functions as a possible pivot point for characters' life narratives, and these walks manage to create in the reader the same exuberance of possibility (or the abjectness of metaphysical dread) that a departure from habitual life creates, while at the same time reminding the reader of how over-written the landscape (the literal colonized landscape, the mental and social landscape, the narrative landscape) always already is.

Lawrence's walks in *Kangaroo* exemplify two inflections of modernism with particular emphasis on the way gender and national identity are implicated in the temporality and topographies of the space-subject relationship signified by paradise and prison. His characters' walks suggest two different possible orientations to the landscape—a feminist ecocritical view open to dwelling and a Nietzschean nihilism necessitating departure. Both Lawrence's protagonist and the novel itself move between these two standpoints, and this somewhat nauseating to-and-fro can be read as a dramatization of Lawrence's own ambivalence toward modernism as a response to modernity. Despite having critiqued the underlying misogyny, anthropomorphism, and nationalism that a masculinist modernism perpetuated, in *Kangaroo*, Lawrence looks over the modernist landscape to postmodernism and experiences a "profound nostalgia" (K 238) for the male modernist artist's earnest struggle enshrined by a particular modernist narrative, and thus he is unable to settle comfortably in either country.

Hugh Stevens cites a metafictional commentary in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* in which Lawrence explains the importance of the novel for its path-breaking role:

It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life: for it is in the *passional* secret places of life, above all, that the tide of spiritual. (*LCL*)

Walks in the liberal humanist tradition, particularly in Joyce, Forster, Woolf, and West, likewise take up modernist experimentation to lead readers' "sympathetic consciousness" into new paths, to reconsider the "dead" spaces of modernity. Woolf's and West's novels of 1922, for example, combine a feminist standpoint with realist and modernist aesthetics to make visible the "largely invisible" "history of a place," articulating the limitations of its boundaries and framings as "homeland, battlefield, nation, territory, and real estate" (Solnit, *Landscapes* 161). Lawrence's novel likewise brings these invisible lines into relief, but founders profoundly, perhaps deliberately, in the attempt to envision alternative relations of man to his environs, as he is more concerned to focus on the drama of the male artist-intellectual's dilemma in this endeavor.

Throughout Lawrence's work, but particularly in the interwar novels, male characters seem to broach the borders of potentially "new" or "secret places," only to recoil—not simply because these are "things gone dead," but because they sense that dwelling in such places would mean an ebbing of their current privileged position or identity. Woolf's and West's evocations of the pastoral frequently evoke the universal rather than the national and privilege the *longue durée* of the landscape in order to disabuse man's imperialist motives, whereas Lawrence's nostalgia for and estrangement from an English pastoral landscape in *Kangaroo* emphasize nationalist identity and man's relation to the landscape as a struggle for ascendancy, or at least, inscription. Despite the great promise of "the new," the landscape of Australia proves ultimately unsympathetic to Lawrence's consciousness. Rather than accept the destabilization of authority and ego that these alternative landscapes present, Lawrence's characters depart—enabling narrative, resisting lyric stasis, and protecting personal vision.

At the conclusion of the American edition of *Kangaroo*, Somers has come to love Australia upon having decided to leave it. As the boat leaves the harbor, Somers "felt another heart-string going to break like the streamers, leaving

Australia, leaving his own British connection” (357). Somers waves his orange handkerchief: “farewell Victoria and Jaz’s wife, farewell Australia, farewell Britain and the great Empire. Farewell! Farewell! The last streamers blowing away, like broken attachments, broken” (358). The elegiac lines capture the wounded attachments of male modernist subjectivity to colonial and patriarchal identity. The English edition of *Kangaroo* continues for several pages, describing Somers’s conversation with “an American boy about America” (369). This ending skews any incipient hope in America for the alternative utopia Somers seeks; America is presented as a naïve democracy, even more rabidly driven by commodifying capitalism. Neither this “pure-bred,” “blond, honest lad of twenty-two,” exemplar of “young Americans,” nor the “old stoic” path of Empire offers Somers the hope of “one road through” (370).

The ambivalences and valedictory tenor of *Kangaroo* are attributable to Lawrence’s wounded attachments to an ideology of master/subject that underlies the continuing androcentric and anthropomorphic epistemologies informing our relationship to and vision of the landscape. In theorizing a “critical ecological feminism,” Val Plumwood has shown how hierarchically valued dualisms constitute western culture’s ancient and post-enlightenment structures of oppression: “the dualisms of male/female, mental/manual (mind/body), civilised/primitive, human/nature correspond directly to and naturalize gender, class, race, and nature oppressions” (43). This “logic of dualism yields a common conceptual framework” that has obscured “alternative theoretical possibilities” (2-3). As some critics have argued, Lawrence’s work would seem to offer such an alternative, given his celebration of the body and nature over mind and his fascination with the primitive. However, Lawrence is not unlike the well-intentioned environmental and feminist critics who “combine a romantic conception of both women and nature, the idea that women have special powers and capacities of nurturance, empathy and ‘closeness to nature’” (Plumwood 8);¹² these views, seen in gynocentricism, the Orientalism Said analyzed, and some radical environmentalism, perpetuate the logic of dualism by reversing it.

Somers’s walks in *Kangaroo* suggest that Lawrence’s encounters with the defamiliarizing Australian landscape forced him to reconsider the dualist foundations framing his identity. The novel’s modernist experimentalism foregrounds anxieties about the imperial and patriarchal foundations that underpin the artist-intellectual as heroic exile. While *Kangaroo* seems to expose and reject these oppressive ideologies, Lawrence is unable to relinquish their underlying dualisms and thus founders in his attempt to envision a truly new or alternative space. Plumwood’s introduction playfully maps the ways

in which others have similarly faltered in the attempt to posit a feminist or liberation theory that eludes the master/subject dynamic:

[M]isty forbidding passes of the Mountains of Dualism have swallowed many an unwary traveler in their mazes and chasms. In these mountains, a well-trodden path leads through a steep defile to the Cavern of Reversal, where travellers fall into an upside-down world which strangely resembles the one they seek to escape. Trapped Romantics wander here, lamenting their exile, as do various tribes of Arcadians, Earth Mothers, Noble Savages and Working-Class Heroes whose identities are defined by reversing the valuations of the dominant culture. Postmodernist thinkers have found a way to avoid this cavern, and have erected a sign pointing out the danger, but have not yet discovered another path across the mountains to the promised land of liberatory politics on the other side. Mostly they linger by the Well of Discourse near the cavern, gazing in dismay into the fearful and bottomless Abyss of Relativism beyond it. (3)

It is this treacherous metaphysical pilgrimage that Somers and Lawrence himself take in *Kangaroo*, but, whereas Plumwood does trace a "way through," the novel's final landscape is, ultimately, a "nowhere" (356)—a recognition of the failures of the well-trodden paths and a revulsion against the postmodern alternative.

In analyzing place, then, what is interesting is not so much its "reality"—just as Said was not interested in the reality of the Oriental—but how its reality is produced, displayed, negotiated, and understood.¹³ My concern is not to compare the "real" Australia with Lawrence's version, a trend in the works of criticism that address the landscape of *Kangaroo*, but to analyze how Lawrence dramatizes our desire for an absolute, material other and our desire to master and possess that other in reinscribing our presence upon the landscape utilizing the framing narratives of gendered, national, and racial hierarchies.

The Colonial Landscape: Haunting Pastoral

Australia was to be a site of freedom for Somers; however, he carries into this landscape a belief in an essential aristocracy that perpetuates the very inequities he chafed against in England and is the source of his sense of ambivalence in exile.¹⁴ The freedom the new country presents has two aspects for Somers, the sublime and the abject—a sublime open field for

trying out his utopic ideals (dystopic to many—including Somers's wife) and an abject vertiginous slide into relativism.

The otherness of Australia's landscape is alternately castigated and celebrated as his protagonist's attitude toward the Empire vacillates. Somers's inconsistent and racist appropriation of aboriginal imagery as a point of revulsion and identification reveals a mode of looking that exploits a position of power which it in other ways critiques. On a walk into the township of Mullumbiby, Somers fixates on the "queer[ness]" of the suburban bungalows. The emphasis on "a settlement in the fierce gloom of the wilderness" (181) evokes a particularly colonial prospect, one in which the new world threatens to overwhelm the Old. He watches a youth, oddly foreshortened in the "fern-twilight," *terra nullis* of Australia: "It was evening, and the intense dusk of the far-off land, and white folks peering out of the dusk almost like aborigines" (181). The aborigines are invoked as the background for emphasizing white Australians' difference from British and European whites¹⁵; the dualism of man over nature, white settlers over colonized, isn't reversed but utilized to critique the effect of the landscape on the colonizers. In projecting the aborigines as primordial and non-human, Lawrence erases their presence except as a haunting reference point to describe the otherness of white Australians.

Similarly, in describing Australia's "invisible beauty," he likens the "landscape" to "a face with little or no features, a dark face. It is so aboriginal, out of our ken [...]. as one looks at one of the ugly faced, distorted aborigines with his wonderful dark eyes that have such an incomprehensible ancient shine in them," and behind this lurks a "subtle, remote, *formless* beauty more poignant than anything ever experienced before" (77). Although Somers seems to reverse the dualism, attributing an even more "poignant" beauty "in landscape or in nigger" in Australia, he ultimately asserts the superiority of the white observer. However limited his "white vision" to comprehend the formless (77), it is this vision that frames and contains the latter and thus gives it its value. Lawrence's concern with the landscape, not unlike Marlow's in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, is that it has occasioned a regression of white civilization, figured by Somers as a literal thinning of the blood.

The very otherness of Australia's landscape that Somers finds appealing as an exile is also the source of his unease because it is at once too young and too old.¹⁶ On their initial train ride from Sydney to Mullumbimby, Somers observes the suburban wastes "like the Last Day of Creation, instead of a new country"; it gives a "sense of oldness" but is also "virgin" (76). The

primitive connection Lawrence and his fictional counterpart celebrate as the necessary corrective to modernity's excesses proves, in its Australian iteration, too young in that the white Australian "*à terre* democratic" society lacks hierarchy, "the aristocratic principle" (K 21). Lawrence is disillusioned by the postwar modernity embraced by most white Australians; this global capitalist culture reveals the futility of exile for interwar antimodernists like Lawrence. Increasingly, English modernists would come to share this ambivalence toward modernity as its cosmopolitanism was challenged by homogenizing mass culture and new nationalisms in late modernism.¹⁷

The landscape proves too old in that its native culture (signified by the landscape and not the aborigines) overwhelms Somers in its indifference and foreignness to such an extent that his established dualisms are threatened. Lawrence's utopic vision had generally privileged an essential primitiveness in man that he must master, signified by his favored tropes of blood brotherhood and bowels, as the other within that modernity had repressed. However, Lawrence's ability to project a paradise is troubled by contact with a landscape lacking the checks and history of English tradition and an unnerving sense of a much more "authentic" tradition crouching under the veneer of colonial modernity. Whereas Harriet sees Australia's landscape as formidable because it has never been "loved," as if it is waiting to be a "bride country—or a mother country" (77), Somers sees the landscape as thirsting for white blood, which will need to "water Australia" to make it "a real man's country. The soil, the very plants seem to be waiting for it" (78).

The landscape's existential threat disturbs the "poet's fine feelings" in Somers's initial encounters with Western Australia's bush. On a walk under the full moon into the bush alone, he is terrified, first, by its nullity, an encounter with "Nothing!" and, second, by an underlying, horrid presence: "It must be the spirit of the place. [...] the roused spirit of the bush," watching and waiting for "its victim. An alien people—a victim. [...] a terrible ageless watchfulness, [...] watching the myriad intruding white men" (14-15). Suburban Sydney offers a more familiar landscape, an "English" style home (81) that serves as a prospect for Somers to survey the "new country," but the view is terribly disappointing: "like chicken houses with chicken-runs. They call this making a new country, do they?" (13).¹⁸ Harriet points out that his vision of a "new country" is based upon "old chateaus and Tudor manors" (13); the suburb of modernity fails to fit Somers's paradigms, being neither organically connected with the country nor enclosed by urban life. Somers initially perceives the suburbs as a conduit to a homogenized, mass-produced future, but he comes to see them as a temporary aberration

of white “civilization” that can be blotted out.

Somers’s vision is at first limited by its rootedness to Old World and romantic frames, preventing him from actually “see[ing] anything”: descriptions of the strange bush, blue harbor, and gum-trees are followed by Somers’s longing for European and English pastoral landscapes: “Florence, with Giotto’s pale tower: or the Pincio at Rome: or the woods in Berkshire, heavens! the English spring with primroses under the bare hazel bushes, and thatched cottages” (19).¹⁹ Just as the spatial dimension of the town versus country is complicated by a vast Australian landscape that rarely conforms to Old World models of “peaceful, abundant” (Garrard 35), so too the temporal dimension of the pastoral tradition is troubled by the guilt that nostalgia for settler era Australia would entail and by the unaristocratic mateyness that rejects the kind of utopic agrarian pastoral Somers envisions.

As Kinsella writes, “The displacement and relocation of class conflict led by the squattocracy and selectors of the early to mid-nineteenth century meant a disruption of the pastoral ‘high’ and ‘low’ dramatizations” (136). Somers’s romanticization of Cornwall reveals the class dynamics of the English pastoral. Whereas Somers describes Cornwall’s “magic” and “great fascination,” Jaz describes his time as “a half starved youngster on a bit of a farm [...] hunting for a dozen sheep among the gorse-bushes” (60-61). Somers’s fascination comes from “fairy tales,” Jaz points out; it is Somers’s freedom not to have to earn a living from the land that enables him to see it as a bewitching pastoral (61). Despite himself being a borderline figure as an exiled intellectual, Somers is continually discomfited by the muddling of class distinctions in Australia. On a walk along the sands, Somers observes men picking coal from the jetty as a bucolic landscape, but is discomfited by how “Australian working men” mix their “democratic uppishness with a queer lousy quality, like a bushranger” (127), and, indeed, the men deny his authority to frame them: “They silently objected to his looking, so he went on” (127). Alienated by Australians’ “leveling,” Somers is impeded in his effort to project either a nostalgic, elegiac or a forward-looking, utopic pastoral tradition. In order to make his case for a return to a more organic connection with the landscape as the best counter to encroaching modernity, Lawrence cannot turn to the Australian landscape—which holds a threat for his (white) life—but must return to his native soil, placing at the center of the novel a recollection of a utopic, English agrarian pastoral.

“The Nightmare” chapter recounts Somers’s traumas of being spied upon and called up and rejected twice during the war in Cornwall. Following his humiliating experiences at the barracks, Somers “goes native” by spending

a summer working on the Buryan farm, spending more time with the farmer John Thomas than with Harriet. Somers, while endorsing this turn to the land as an appropriate riposte to the corrupt mob-mentality of war-time England, compares their "Druidical" mysticism and "[q]ueer" ethics with the fixed, chivalrous ethics of "the English" (236-37). Celtic mysticism (not unlike Australian mateyness) reveals Somers's tacit ideal agrarian pastoral as hierarchical; the landscape thus takes on the same "twilit," primordial gloom that Australia will evidence (237).

Given notice to quit Cornwall by the police, Somers experiences "a passion, a profound nostalgia for the place" and desires to give up his struggle as "a thought adventurer" (238), longing to stay to watch each succession of bloom of foxgloves, heather, and primroses (245). In his walks through London's landscapes, Hampstead Heath and up King's Cross Road, he recalls the farm's vistas (248). The Somers decamp in Oxfordshire, drawing solace from the landscape's heritage: "in the heart of England—Shakespeare's England—there was a sweetness and a humanness that he had never known before" (251). The people, police, and "gangs of wood-men [...] cutting down the trees, baring the beautiful spring woods, making logs for trench-props," are, despite what might be expected, "human and lovely" (251). The Shakespearian green space reframes what might otherwise be a violent image of men decimating a traditional landscape to literally prop up the war. Somers remembers himself and Harriet flourishing on the margins of a Golden Bough landscape, gathering the woods' fruits and the "[f]lakes of sweet pale gold oak" left by the lumbermen, wandering "through the hazel copses, away to the real old English hamlets, that are still like Shakespeare—and like Hardy's *Woodlanders*" (257). Yet this idyll cannot last, the war's threat causing Somers to identify with the "prisoner" squeezed in "the Pit and the Pendulum" (257). When Somers leaves for Italy, England's landscape appears from the prospect of the boat "like a grey, dreary-grey coffin sinking in the sea" (258).

Only in the "Australian night" does Somers experience "a volcanic eruption in his consciousness" that brings back the fear, trauma, and profound nostalgia for England that has been buried throughout his post-1918 travels to Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and India (258-59). Australia's landscape presents England in a convex mirror; traumatic memory is triggered by the "inversion of the seasons" and "inversion in the heavens" of this "purely English-speaking country" (260-61). Somers spends a dark night of the soul facing "out all his memories [of the war] like a nightmare," so that he can then "cut clear," breaking his ties to England and choosing to be driftwood:

“Without a people, without a land. So be it. He was broken apart, apart he would remain” (259).

Lawrence’s inset English agrarian pastoral of the Buryan farm functions not only to show the “things gone dead” in the English landscape, but also to champion particular elements of English tradition to counter the modernity of Australia’s “new places.” J. S. MacDonald, praising the pastoral Australian landscape artist Arthur Streeton, viewed their nation as “the last bastion of the Greco-Roman-Renaissance cultural legacy,” a legacy that Australia could perpetuate “so long as it maintained this modernism-modernity free zone” (Stephen, McNamara, Goad 21).²⁰ With this framework in place—one in which male companionship, authentic sensuality, and a “natural” hierarchy are privileged—Lawrence’s subsequent chapters show attempts to project an utopic vision on the Australian landscape.²¹ Somers walks through Sydney in “A Row in Town,” observing that while “a real metropolis,” it “seemed again like a settlement in the wilderness, without any core” (305). Walking in the tame and placid Palace Gardens, Somers “felt as if the harbour were wild, lost and undiscovered, as it was in Captain Cook’s time. The city wasn’t real” (305). The refuge of the contained and conquered landscape enables Somers to recreate a prospect of wilderness, the imperialist’s refiguring of the landscape; he figures the city and its white inhabitants as “hollow” and unreal in comparison to the authentically “wild” landscape, a utopic vision that the actual bush overpowers (305). Kinsella writes that Sydney’s parks, “attempts to construct the ‘bush’ in the city,” are evidence of the “desire for taxonomy, for recording and archiving species as a databank of identity, but also to provide an inverted *cordon sanitaire*” (40). He links this “refuge inside refuge” with the compulsion of “surveillance,” the need for “a sense of order and destiny” (40-41).

In his encounters with wilderness in the bush and the sea, Somers’s ability to encapsulate the sublime and evade the abject requires the affirmation of a prospect of surveillance, of an articulation within the social sphere that provides order and the narrative movement of destiny.²² The paradigm of paradise and prison seems compulsory for Somers’s construction of self-meaning. It is in the Palace Gardens rather than the bush that Somers can think that perhaps “this is really the country where men might live in a sort of harmless Eden, once they have settled old Adam in themselves” (305). Indeed, he sees the lure of the landscape as Eve’s temptation of Adam when he tells Jaz of being tempted to stay, “Talk about Eve tempting man to a fall: Australia tempts me. *Retro me—*” (347).

The equilibrium Somers finds in these spaces, however, is ultimately

upset by cultural chaos as the Diggers' and the socialists' conflicting nationalist ideologies erupt in a scene of violence, thus ruining Somers's idyll, which he pursues by retreating with Harriet into the country. The violent "Row in Town" chapter is a flat anti-climax to the political drama, and the tension driving the progress of the novel increasingly shifts to a self-reflexive drama of the artist-intellectual's own identity which the style mirrors: what ideological mode will Somers choose in response to these traumas of modernity? What aesthetics—modernist or postmodernist—will Lawrence choose?

Pondering his role in Australia, whether he should become involved in the political upheavals Kangaroo and Jack invite by aspiring to act as its "Homer" (109), Somers tells Harriet, "Of course [...] this land always gives me the feeling that it doesn't *want* to be touched, it doesn't *want* men to get hold of it" (278). Harriet, who has laughed at Somers for declaring his "aristocratic principle" while in fact sitting on a tin lid atop an old barrel, affirms his observation, "my ideal has always been a farm. But I know now. The farms don't really belong to the land. They only scratch it and irritate it, and are never at one with it" (278). Somers has come as far as to recognize the other in itself in acknowledging the recalcitrance of the Australian landscape, and Harriet, while harboring agrarian pastoral ideas like Somers, readily recognizes man's oppressive relationship to the landscape, suggesting instead an ideal relationship of dwelling and mutual belonging.

The novel, however, refocuses on Somers's internal mental disputes, a move that the narrator self-ironically comments upon. The next chapter, "Jack Slaps Back," recaps Somers's thought-adventurer struggles and dismisses the typical plot events a reader might expect by giving a series of portraits of the mundane activities of the various characters that a realist narrative would capture, questioning whether these are any more interesting than "Richard's climbing a mental minaret or two in the interim" (284). Evoking Henry James's "Art of Fiction," the narrator scolds, "If you don't like the novel, don't read it. If the pudding doesn't please you, leave it, leave it" (284). Given Lawrence's diatribes against modernists' focus on the minutiae of the psychological landscapes of their protagonists, the vigorous case he makes here for a novel about the internal landscape of Somers's thought-adventuring is unexpected. Nonetheless, the narrator's bitter tone suggests Lawrence's ambivalence; it is as if, being unable to reconcile with the actual landscape of Australia, the narrator is driven to mental landscapes and self-reflexive narrative topographies in spite of himself.

Untethered Modernity: Between Modernism
and the Deep Blue Sea

Lawrence, driven across oceans by his desire for a utopic Ranim for his self-definition, recapitulates Australia's colonizers' projections of "Old World" models of the pastoral upon the "new world." *Kangaroo* shows the failure of the models to work and thus evokes the "melancholy" that Ian McLean identifies as endemic to utopian pastorals of "the colonial imagination" (132). More importantly, the novel shows the failure of the observer to see any viable alternative narrative or vision emerge as compensatory reward for his courageous exile. The classism, misogyny, and racism underpinning the Western pastoral tradition (the culture that both frames and is framed by that tradition) are made conspicuous in Somers's inability to imagine any alternative except nihilism. The question then arises whether the failures the end of the novel represents—in Somers's departure, in his tacit reification of Western hierarchies—are there to provoke a rejection of this tradition, evidence of a bourgeoisie savoring its destruction with melancholic elegy, or are symptomatic reflections of the political-aesthetic crises of the 1920s for a figure like Lawrence.

The recalcitrance of the Australian landscape may be a disappointment to Lawrence's Ranim hopes, but it may have also provided the failure, melancholy, and dissonance productive of modernist experiment. Exiled from one prison to enter another, Somers is the figure on the ground for examining the identity of the artist-intellectual in postwar modernity: "It is just the male human creature, the thought-adventurer, driven to earth. Will he give in, or won't he?" (212). If *Kangaroo's* central thought-adventure is the artist's attempts to contain the landscape within given frames, his failure, and the variations on the pastoral tradition that might enable him to move from melancholy paralysis to redemption and transcendence, it is likewise a central narrative of modernism—the failure of the old frames and the task of making it new. The narrator's ambivalence throughout reflects Lawrence's own toward the modernist project. The aggressively experimental chapter "Volcanic Evidence" begins with Somers comparing his previous identity as a British subject to an Australian's. Having come to the end of his tether, he wonders whether it is "better to be savagely tugging at the end of your rope, or to wander at random tether-less?" (149). The chapter itself is an exploration of what it might mean try out the latter—in thought-adventure, in narrative style, and in mimetic action: "When you come to the end of your tether you break the rope. [...] you straggle on into the bush and beat about

till you find a new way through, no matter if you raise vipers or goannas or wallabies, or even only a stink" (149).

In a letter to S. S. Koteliansky, 9 July 1922, Lawrence writes from Australia that he's "nearly finished" *Kangaroo* and describes the sublime and abject experience of breaking the frame in the Australian landscape: "It is rather like falling out of a picture and finding oneself on the floor, with all the gods and men left behind in the picture" (244).²³ Somers's similar displacement and reaction to this fall are what marks the novel's modernist antimodernism. McLean notes a continuous thread in Australian art and criticism that sees the Australian landscape tradition as a mythos of "redemption and failure," an "alibi for impotence" according to Graeme Turner in *National Fictions* (135-136). Lawrence's novel also seeks redemption in the form of "one of the most enduring local myths: transcendent failure," a pastoral mythos born out of the postcolonial landscape and white Australia's need to recognize the "failures of the culture of dominion" while offering "some kind of glory" for "esteem's sake" (Gibson 173).²⁴

Lawrence's letter to Koteliansky attests to his being seduced by the landscape's indifference and remoteness to "our European world" and speculates he might "go a bit further away from Sydney, and go 'bush'" (244-245). However, his "conscience" cautions that he would "drop writing even a letter: sort of come undone from everything," and so he and Frieda "go to the States" (245). *Kangaroo's* conclusion, after a departure into the bush, attests to a modernist impasse and a turn to heroic failure as a compensatory mythos. In "Adieu Australia," Somers's visions of the landscape take over the narrative entirely for several pages, each new tableau offering a pastoral variation by contrasting man's small efforts at settlement (the flimsy bungalows, the bit of scratched earth that indicates farming, the toy-like industry, the "lost" domesticated animal) with the sweep of the bush, sky, and sea that have and will endure "the flood of time and the flood of civilization both," seen to best advantage in "the thick aboriginal dusk" (344). No longer in a position to master the landscape, Somers's vision can engage it: "He loved the country [...]. While he 'cared' he had to rail at it. But the care once broken inside him, it had a deep mystery for him, and a dusky, far-off call" (342).

In a landscape in which "people" are displaced, Somers finds an exoticized other perspective that calls to him. "It is said that man is the chief environment of man. That, for Richard, was not true in Australia. [...] The vast continent is really void of speech," and so Somers "had fallen apart out of the human association" (345). Finding man turned out of the picture, finding

oneself on the floor as Lawrence writes in his letter, Somers looks back at “the heavy established European way of life” with nausea and finds the mass and bulk of Italy’s and France’s architecture sickening in comparison with Australia’s “amorphous scrappy scattering of foundationless shacks and bungalows” which, like “Japanese paper houses,” are easily erased (346).

In contrast to America’s “enabling” myths of hope as an “escape from the perceived inequities of life in Europe,” Turner describes Australia’s haunted landscapes as fostering myths of an “ordeal of exile” that “accommodates us to the inevitability of subjection” (75). In his walks along the shore, in the night, and into the bush, Somers treads the path of Australia’s “fictional heroes” who come to a stop “just before the feeling of absurdity, without fully accepting it” (Turner 80). Somers’s existential struggle with the Nietzschean “nothingness” of Australia’s landscapes (Turner 79) is portrayed as a heroic struggle or fatuous absurdity as framed by the narrator’s ambivalent commentary and Harriet’s laughter.²⁵ In “Volcanic Evidence,” Somers turns to the seascape as no longer a victim of its indifference but as a master: having rejected the ties of letters from England and Europe, “he felt quite capable of saying ‘Good dog’ to the sea” (153). In contrast, Somers temporarily relinquishes his earnest internal struggle for and against his lord and master ideology in the later chapter “Bits”; walking along the sea with Harriet, they are caught off guard by the tide, and he dives after his hat. Harriet falls with laughter on the sand, “His hat! His hat! He wouldn’t let it go,” and Somers’s reaction is rather unexpected: “He was looking at his wet legs and chuckling with his inward laughter. Vivid, the blue sky: intensely clear, the dark sea, the yellow sands, the swoop of the bay, the low headlands: clear like a miracle. And the water bubbling in his shoes as he walked rolling up the sands” (274). It is a rare moment of humility for Somers, of genuine connection and affection for his wife, and it is one of the few times that the landscape appears to Somers “so clear, so very distinct, and yet so marvelously aloof” (275). It is only when Somers relinquishes the standpoint of master/subject that a different perspective on the landscape emerges, one that recognizes difference without subjugating or fearing it.

However, Somers only tries on this standpoint, and he soon reasserts “the aristocratic principle” (277) and his identity as a “thought-adventurer” separate from “bullocks” and “mechanical logs of life” (279). Abjectly, in the dunking at the beach, Somers has been made to realize the situatedness of his privileged position to stage a sublime moment in the colonial landscape during his solitary walks. Harriet’s presence functions both to, even in his failures and in the ambivalence and paranoia that Harriet’s laughter signifies

for the male author, Somers's sublime mode, paradoxically, triumphs in a traditionally masculinist mode.²⁶ The possibility of rapprochement or dwelling must be rejected in favor of narrative movement, requiring the comic idyll to give over to tragic progression, even if undertaken with bitter self-irony. As Turner writes, "Instead of responding to an existential vision by evolving an existentialist mode of behavior, the narratives tend to admit defeat" (80). The dualistic, deterministic vision of Lawrence's male protagonists are pitted (dualistically, of course) against the pluralist, dwelling-in-uncertainty positionality of his female protagonists.

Kangaroo, in Somers's articulated longing for the frame of tragedy and his abject realization of its absurdity, articulates this modernist impasse and his unwillingness to embrace, nonetheless, the open field of postmodernity.²⁷ Following "The Nightmare" and "'Revenge' Timotheus Cries," in which Somers wrestles with a series of unresolved dualisms to finally "give up his own earnestness" (268), the chapter "Bits" begins with a montage of fragments from the *Bulletin* and Somers's rejection of his previous stoical-modernist-artist "frantic struggles with the 'soul' and the 'dark God' [...] Blarney—blarney—blarney!" (272). In its descriptions of advertising signs and a landscape that looks "as if it had tumbled hap-hazard off the pantechnicon of civilisation as it dragged round the edges of this wild land, and there lay, busy but not rooted in. As if none of the houses had any foundations" (273), *Kangaroo* brings the reader, and perhaps Lawrence, just to the threshold of a postmodernist response to modernity.

Ultimately, however, the paradigms of paradise and prison are revived in Lawrence's turn to foreign landscapes for "new places"; colonial melancholy, as McLean and Kinsella have noted, projects onto the bush's otherness the possibility of redemption and a recourse through the sublime. Somers resumes his "afternoon occupation" of walking along the shore (328), where the flora and fauna of the seaside effect once more the drift "into indifference," displacing "[t]he world" from its frames: "his old life, the old meaning, fell, and rippled, and there was vacancy, with the sea and the Australian shore in it" (331). The landscape—"he cared not a thing about the landscape" (331)—is both a force that creates a blank slate within the mastering subject and is the slate waiting for the subject's mastery:

To be alone, mindless and memoryless between the sea, under the somber wall-front of Australia. To be alone with a long, wide shore and land, heartless, soulless. As alone and as absent and as present as an aboriginal dark on the sand in the sun. The strange falling-away

of everything. [...].

The past all gone so frail and thin. 'What have I cared about, what have I cared for? There is nothing to care about.' Absolved from it all. The soft, blue, humanless sky of Australia. *Tabula rasa*. The world in a new leaf. And on the new leaf, nothing. The white clarity of the Australian, fragile atmosphere. Without a mark, without a record. (332).

Here Somers projects onto the other—the Australian landscape and its aboriginal inhabitants—a willing subjection, a ready blankness. Despite having recognized in the landscape a suppressed other and a powerful force (it is, indeed, the influence that enables him to break his former ties and to drift free), here he reconfigures that other as a grateful subject, waiting for Somers to assume a position of authority, its "soul," and so score a record on the earth. Here the "dark" vision that has menaced the landscapes of the interior is eclipsed by refocusing on sky and sea, which reflect back a "white clarity."²⁸

Nostalgia for a vanished past is a haunted nostalgia for modernists in the twenties, since that past had created the nightmares of the present. In embracing the landscape of Australia in the final chapter, Somers sees only the fragility of white civilization's current status on the continent that enables him to reframe it as a potential blank slate for his utopic vision of connection with the dark god within the white man's self. "No wonder Australians love Australia. It is the land that as yet has made no great mistake, humanly. The horrible human mistake of Europe. And probably, the even worse mistake of America" (347). The inhuman mistake of colonial subjugation and genocide is perpetuated in Somers's glaring blindspot—he cannot see it because he cannot see the aborigines "humanly." As Conrad's Marlow attests, it is realizing his kinship with aborigines that deeply disturbs Somers. To do so would mean to acknowledge the inhumanity of his aristocratic principle. To do so would also require Somers to come to a different relationship with the landscape, one based not on mastery but upon dwelling.

Unable to reconcile with the responsibilities of an alternative relationship to the land, Somers must background the landscape as other in order to keep himself in the foreground and to provide narrative ground for the epic struggle of his thought-adventurer's unresolved dualisms—not only those of nation and race but also of gender. Australia "tempts" him like "Eve tempting man to a fall"; he "want[s] Australia like a man wants a woman." (347). However, Somers is unwilling to live in Sydney or even "in the bush

near one of the little townships," as he professes to desire, because "I won't give in, not yet. It's like giving in to a woman" (348).²⁹ Instead, he'll keep his ideals in tact, fighting "forever for the flag" of his belief in an aristocratic principle and this metaphysical campaign is "perhaps the best adventure" (348-49).³⁰

The novel's modernist experimentalism foregrounds anxieties about the imperial and patriarchal foundations that underpin the artist-intellectual as heroic exile. When the narrator describes the state of democratic modernity as "between the devil and a deep sea" and describes Somers as wanting "a new show," one not dictated by capitalist endeavor or existing structures of "mastership" (303), it seems that Lawrence might be steering toward an alternative mode of being in the world, departing from "things gone dead" into the "new places" that the best novels can direct our sympathetic consciousness to, as he argued in *Lady Chatterly's Lover*. However, Lawrence founders. Rather than finding a path beyond, as Val Plumwood writes, the "Mountains of Dualism," Lawrence reels back from the "Abyss of Relativism" and stumbles into the steep defile of the "Cavern of Reversal" (3). His call for a "new recognition of difference" is not grounded in the ethic of care and mutual relation Plumwood posits; rather, Lawrence calls for a recognition "of highness and of lowness, of one man meet for service and another man clean with glory, having majesty in himself [...] The single soul that stands naked between the dark God and the dark-blooded masses of men" (303).³¹

Unwilling to submit to the displacement of ego that submission to the "nothingness" of Australia's landscapes would entail—a displacement of his English identity, his status as an artist and intellectual, his belief in paternal hierarchy over "mate love" in "the new democracy" (*K* 197), his romantic nostalgia for an English agrarian pastoral—Somers has no choice but to leave, and Lawrence likewise departs from the novel's deeply modernist experiments in form. Lawrence offers a heroic send up of the landscape as Somers and Harriet take a final drive into the springtime Australian bush, an Edenic paradise, but significantly a paradise without coordinates: "it was heaven. They splashed through a clear, clear stream, and walked up a bank into the nowhere" (354). For modernists in the twenties, narrative requires that paradises—including those of polymorphous desire and relationship, of dwelling rather than mastery—are those that must remain lost.

Notes

¹John B. Humma gives an overview of the views of critics who have “thoroughly disliked [the] novel,” including Middleton Murry, Eliseo Vivas, Julian Moynahan, and Keith Sagar (84). Humma and a smaller band of critics, including Graham Hough and John Worthen, have written in praise of or performed revaluations of its aesthetics. Macdonald Daly’s introduction to Bruce Steele’s Penguin edition, cited throughout, names “a strengthening tide” of approving critics, including Michael Wilding, Ricky Rylance, and Gisèle Marie Baxter (xiii).

²Hugh Stevens’s exceptional “D.H. Lawrence: Organicism and the Modernist Novel” analyzes Lawrence’s critiques of the modernist novel and the modernist elements of Lawrence’s own work to argue that Lawrence “emerges as something like an ecological antimodernist, continuing a tradition of Romantic organicism which modernism often appears to leave behind” (137).

³The editors of *Modernism and Australia* note, “the reception of modernism was remarkably heated because it implicitly challenged an evaluation of art resting upon nationalism, identity and the pastoral landscape tradition” (14).

⁴W. J. T. Mitchell writes, “Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package” (5).

⁵Indeed, in “Nation, Literature, Location,” Mead briefly points to Lawrence’s descriptions in *Kangaroo* as evidence of the Australian bush as “a repeatedly contentious site of debate about the rhetoric of politics of settler nativism in the history of Australian ‘landscape’” (552).

⁶Lawrence conceived of a “*Rananim*,” a utopia in some other land, as early as 1915, as indicated in his letters to S.S. Kotliansky, from whom he derived the word, which is traceable to the Hebrew root of “rejoice” as well as “green, fresh, or flourishing” (Zyaruck xxxiv).

⁷In the 1923 essay “The Future of the Novel,” Lawrence castigates high modernist as well as popular novels. In *Kangaroo* Somers tells Harriet, “I don’t wonder they can’t read English books, or only want Nat Gould. All the

scruples and the emotions and the regrets in English novels do seem waste of time out here" (190). His essay proposes a new novel that would bring philosophy back into the novel and have the effect of punching "a hole in the wall" (145). He acknowledges that this "glaring hole in what was your cosy wall" would be alarming, but the sheep would gradually filter "through the gap" to "a new world outside" (146).

⁸ Lawrence's 1922 essay "The Spirit of Place" praises the truths classic American literature tells, truths made possible by the "spirit" of America's unique political, social, and spatial dimensions: "Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland" (94). The broken attachments *Kangaroo* describes appear here as well: "even places die. The Island of Great Britain had a wonderful terrestrial magnetism or polarity of its own, which made the British people. For the moment, this polarity seems to be breaking. Can England die? And what if England dies?" (94). Lawrence is hopeful for America: "Democracy in America is just the tool with which the old master of Europe, the European spirit, is undermined. Europe destroyed, potentially, American democracy will evaporate. America will begin" (96). Notably, American democracy is a "false dawn" for Lawrence, a sentiment that inflects Somers's disillusionment with Australian culture (96).

⁹ Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace, in arguing for the relevance of ecocriticism to studying writers like Henry James, point to the theoretical work to be done in considering "the natural environment" as "a shaping force of individual and group psychology and identity" (7).

¹⁰ In "The Future of the Novel," Lawrence writes, "So there you have the 'serious' novel, dying in a very long-drawn-out fourteen-volume death agony, and absorbedly, childishly interested in the phenomenon. 'Did I feel a twinge in my little toe, or didn't I?' asks every character of Mr Joyce or of Miss Richardson or M. Proust" (142).

¹¹ The caged birds likewise present man's desire for nature's otherness and need to refashion it as familiar: the cockatoo's voice is "absolutely human [...] and yet a bird's"; the emu is "[a]n alert gentleman [...] from the lost plains of time" (205).

¹² The essentialist paradigm that both *Kangaroo* and co-authored *The Boy in the Bush* evince in their male protagonists' final jeremiads are largely echoed

by essentialist radical ecofeminists like Sharon Doubiago, who claims “ecology consciousness is traditional woman consciousness,” as “Women have always thought like mountains, to allude to Aldo Leopold’s paradigm for ecological thinking. (There’s nothing like the experience of one’s belly growing into a mountain to teach you this.)” (41, 42). The claim is problematic in reproducing essentialist dualities and her anthropomorphic projection upon the mountain parallels the mastering and appropriative masculine modes these claims are meant to oppose.

¹³ As Barnes and Duncan have written, landscape’s meaning is “by no means fixed; rather it is culturally and historically and sometimes even individually and momentarily variable” (7).

¹⁴ Jaz shares this belief with Somers because of his “Cornish imagination”: “The Celt needs the mystic glow of real kingliness. Hence his loneliness in the democratic world of industry, and his social perversity” (71). Jaz explains it isn’t “swank and money,” nor “*thinking* yourself superior” but a “gift of being superior” that is bred in one (72).

¹⁵ Plumwood uses this term to describe a mechanism within Western epistemologies that persists hierarchical orders by inferiorizing women, races, and nature, “their treatment providing the background to a dominant, foreground sphere of recognized achievement or causation” (21).

¹⁶ For Ian McLean, Australia’s landscape is “melancholy” because it is haunted by historical memories, “making this *new* country the most *ancient* land” (137).

¹⁷ Deborah Jordan describes the disillusion of a generation of Australians who had hoped for an “alternative modernity” after World War I; encroaching industrialization and mass consumption spurred a turn to the British pastoral tradition for Australian writers like Vance Palmer “as a vehicle for national self-definition and as a way of envisaging Britain’s ‘new world’” (103).

¹⁸ Lawrence’s focus on the houses—from the recurring descriptions of the suburban landscape as an encroaching banal modernity, to Somers’s careful attention to ordering domestic details in *Co-ee*, to the recurring focus on boundaries and fences—underscore the narrative’s move between the paradigms of paradise and prison, dramatizing the search for a grounding narrative. Kinsella writes that “The house in a colonized landscape becomes the

claim, the fortress, the bastion, as much as the hearth, retreat, and enclave. It is a declaration of colonization and occupation" (144).

¹⁹ Paul Kane, describing a genre he calls the "anti-pastoral" in Australian poetry, notes "Australian landscape is too harsh, too expansive, too different to be assimilated into a genre that appears to celebrate a *locus amoenus*" (275).

²⁰ In his assessment of Streeton, MacDonald voices a viewpoint strikingly evocative of the Diggers in *Kangaroo* and eerily predictive, as is the novel, of the emergence of 1930s fascist ideologies. The pastoral vision epitomized by Streeton's landscapes are the sole hope for carrying on the Hellenic-Renaissance tradition of European civilization which has been undermined by modernity elsewhere:

If we [white Australians] so choose we can yet be the elect of the world, the last of the pastoralists, the thoroughbred Aryans in all their nobility.

Let others if they are bent upon it mass produce themselves into robotics; thinking and looking like mechanical monkeys chained to organs whose tunes are furnished by riveting machines.

We do not need these things. We have the pastoral land [...]. (97)

It is a vision both nationalist and racist: Streeton's pastorals "sing in our national being. For we are not only a nation but a race and both occupy a particular territory and spring from a specific soil" (98). MacDonald's infamous statement lays bare the imperialist impulse beneath such turns to the utopian pastoral and accounts in part for modernist writers' ambivalence. Distance reconfigures that past as a paradise, but traumatic memory also returns its experience as prison.

²¹ Somers admits he desires "*some* living fellowship with other men," but not love or comradeship, "Not mates and equality and mingling. Not blood-brotherhood" (107). He likens his desired relationship to "the thing dark races know: that one can still feel in India: the mystery of lordship. [...] Not any arbitrary caste or birth aristocracy. But the mystic recognition of difference and innate priority" (107).

²² The sublime theorized by Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* in 1757 values the confrontation with wilderness, producing astonishment and passion, over the

pleasure of the merely beautiful. As feminist critics have noted, the experience of the sublime posited here is gendered: the confrontation is masculine and the subjects who have the freedom to make and record such encounters are male.

²³ Solnit notes that frames serve “both to underscore the value and to isolate the work within” (*Wanderlust* 112).

²⁴ David Walker describes the prewar dream of an “emerging national culture” to postwar disillusion with an “Australian society [that] had become more urban, more commercial, more bourgeois” (196, 201). The devastations of World War I and the influenza pandemic intensified focus on national self-definition.

²⁵ Garrard sees Lawrence’s attraction to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra as informing his reconfiguration of a dualist perspective of man’s relation to nature: “Nietzsche, like deep ecologists, seeks a biocentric perspective, but unlike them finds only nihilism in the process” (90).

²⁶ Patricia Yaeger writes:

Typically the male writing in the sublime mode will stage a moment of blockage which is followed by a moment of imagistic brilliance. That is, the mind fights back against the blocking source by representing its own ability to grasp the sublime object. This representation of inability becomes scriptive proof of the mind’s percipience and stability—of the mind’s unwillful relation to a transcendental order, and thus of the mind’s powerful univocity—its potential for mental domination of the other. (202)

²⁷ Joseph W. Meeker argues that man’s construction of the tragic mode is detrimental to a balanced existence; the tragic mode presupposes a hierarchical belief system in which a superior order judges and is concerned for man (“fate, the gods, or impersonal moral law”) and in which “man is essentially superior to animal, vegetable, and mineral nature and is destined to exercise mastery” (167). Tragedy does not, in actuality, imitate life: the universe is indifferent to man, and nature recurrently proves itself not inferior (Meeker 167). Although the tragic mode is thus “absurd,” it persists because of the attractive frame it offers for man. However, modernity has given the lie to “dignity, honor, truth, law, and the gods as the inventions of egocentric man,” and in such an age, “tragedy can only parody itself” (167).

²⁸ When he sets off a day later for a walk in the bush, Somers retains his sense of ascendancy by focusing on the sky, "virgin blue, [...] pale with clarity," but contrasts it with the "eternally unlighted" bush's somber, spear-like flowering, and its vast landscape reconfigures the temporal plane: "The vast lapse of time here—and white men thrown in like snow into dusky wine, to melt away and disappear, but to cool the fever of the dry continent" (334). Somers doesn't relinquish his dream of a white superman taking his proper place in the landscape, but the physical landscape of the bush requires him to defer it to a "far-off afterwards" (334).

²⁹ Somers has linked the bush with the aboriginal other in using it as a sublime and abject background, and has celebrated its male and female fertility symbols in his final walk with Harriet, but ultimately figures it as an archetypal female temptress. Kinsella notes that the gendering of the bush usually links threat with femininity, "when the bush is feminised it becomes a place of fear, a place that will, dentata-like, consume you" (35).

³⁰ In the first half of *The Boy in the Bush* (1923), the novel Lawrence co-wrote, or rather took over, with Molly Skinner, people inhabit landscapes much less dichotomously. In *Kangaroo*, Harriet scorns Somers for his inability to imagine or pursue a viable narrative of dwelling that entraps him in his hysterical, egotistical cycles of struggle with and revulsion from men.

³¹ The narrator seems to endorse this status quo by recapping Harriet's relationship to the landscape. Whereas Somers loathed and then came to love it, Harriet initially loved Australia for its freedom: "A land with a new atmosphere, untainted by authority. [...] Woman that she was, she exulted, she delighted," but the innate principle of the female ultimately cannot reconcile with this freedom, and she is struck "in her deepest female self, almost in her womb" by "dark revulsions" toward the land's interior (350-51). The narrator shows her entrapment: she despises Richard for seizing upon this state of revulsion to bark "about control and authority," loathes Europe's old "encumbrance of Authority," and is disillusioned with Australia where her sense of "freedom [was] all going to turn into dirty water" (351-52). Thus, while Lawrence exposes the absurdity of Somers's position (he appears a hysterical dog, yapping imperialist, patriarchal dualisms[?]), he ultimately underwrites Somers's metaphysical point of view.

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