

# **The Australian Gothic Through the Novels of Sonya Hartnett**

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## Abstract

### **The Australian Gothic Through the Novels of Sonya Hartnett**

Melbourne author Sonya Hartnett, adapts and updates the Australian Gothic within narratives that focus on individual subjectivities to bring to scrutiny the abuses that children suffer due to the invisibility of normative, hegemonic and conformist discourses. This study argues that Hartnett re-locates the colonial trope of the lost child from the wild setting of the bush to cultural topographies in the modern Australian context. The study's theoretical approach combines concepts from phenomenology, cultural geography and spectral studies to form an hauntology which is articulated and applied to detailed analyses of eleven of Hartnett's novels set in Australia. The conceptual framework is explained in chapter one and the remaining chapters group Hartnett's novels thematically and in relation to the settings inhabited by her young protagonists. This structure enables the consideration of the dialectical relationship between places 'exterior' to the subject such as the Australian suburb or country town and the psychological 'interior' of the mind. Furthermore the study proposes that phenomenological experiences of place, space and time are central aspects of Hartnett's work that function interdependently and impact upon identity.

**Key words:** Sonya Hartnett, Australian children's literature, Australian Gothic, hauntology, phenomenology, place, identity.

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\*\*\*\*\*

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## The Australian Gothic Through the Novels of Sonya Hartnett

### Introduction

To date, this is the first extended study of eleven novels by Sonya Hartnett (1968- ), who is an award-winning author from Melbourne, Australia. It will also be the first study to examine her work through an Australian Gothic approach. Concepts from the philosophy of phenomenology, cultural geography and the emerging field of spectral studies are applied to the analyses of the primary texts, which not only inform the thematic structure of the thesis chapters but construct an hauntology that develops and finds contemporary resonance with ideas of an Australian Gothic. Hartnett has written over twenty novels and four picture books within the timeframe of 1984-2014. Her first novel, *Trouble All the Way* (1984) was published when she was just fifteen. She has won numerous accolades for her writing including the Guardian Prize for Fiction for the novel *Thursday's Child* (2002) and the Michael L. Printz Honor Award for *Surrender* (2005). In 2008, she became the first Australian writer to be presented with the Astrid Lindgren Award for children's fiction. Her most recent novel, *Golden Boys* (2014) is the most autobiographical, although currently, aside from her short memoir, *Life in Ten Houses* (2012), there is no official biography or autobiography. Much of Hartnett's corpus can be described as crossover fiction, a term which, as S.L Beckett discusses, invites varying definitions (10) but, for this writer, means addressing the same texts to younger and older readers. Despite being an internationally acclaimed writer, Hartnett has been given insufficient critical attention to date in that there are no books or doctoral studies where her corpus has been the sole focus. In addition, in Hartnett's film review of *Wolf Creek* (2011), she situates her work within the sub-genre of Australian Gothic, but this claim awaits substantive critique. In short, there has been no comprehensive critical enquiry examining Hartnett's work; an omission which this study aims to address.

### Focus of the Study

Having explained the rationale for undertaking this study, I will next summarise its focus. This study argues that Hartnett works within and develops the genre of the Australian Gothic to critique cultural elements of modern Australia in urban and rural settings. In Hartnett's oeuvre, children, women, implied racial Others and Others, such as non-humans, are deployed within narratives that focus on individual subjectivities to expose the white, patriarchal abuse inherent in hegemonic, conformist discourses. The complexities and

fluidities of identity are exposed as Hartnett questions constructions of community in a modern, historical and cultural context. In order to examine the development of the Australian Gothic in Hartnett's work and to maintain both contextual cohesion and thematic coherence, I have chosen to focus the analyses on those of Hartnett's novels set in Australia. Those works that the thesis omits, such as the Gothic Romance *Black Foxes* (1996) and Hartnett's novels set during periods of war in Europe - *The Silver Donkey* (2006), *The Midnight Zoo* (2010) and *The Children of the King* (2012) - are not set in Australia and so are not included within the selection of primary texts under scrutiny, although they are briefly referred to where appropriate. As the first objective of this thesis is to explore the Australian Gothic aesthetic, a chapter devoted to the European texts would detract from the stated focus. However, the ways in which the European texts self-consciously interrogate the construction of history are referred to within the thesis chapters as well as the questioning of anthropocentric positioning, which is a feature of *The Midnight Zoo*. Anthropocentrism is defined by L. Buell as the 'assumption or view that the interests of humans are of higher priority than those of nonhumans' (134). Hartnett's picture books *Sadie and Ratz* (2010), *The Boy and the Toy* (2010), *Come Down, Cat!* (2011) and *The Wild One* (2014) would also require a different type of analysis. In addition, Hartnett's erotic novel for adults, *Landscape with Animals* (2006), written under the pseudonym of Cameron Redfern, would not be relevant to the emphasis placed in the thesis on child and young adult protagonists. To indicate the development of her corpus, accompanying chapters refer to other work completed between 1987 and 2014, which fit with, but do not comprise the focus of the more detailed analysis. For example, *Forest* (2001), Hartnett's anthropomorphic novel about feral cats, is briefly referred to but the theme of wildness is fully explored through the analyses in chapter four. The chapters include shorter analyses of works that introduce ideas and themes more fully explored by Hartnett in later novels. The critical and conceptual framework connects with Hartnett's generic frame which she situates within the Gothic. The study identifies characteristics of an Australian Gothic and maps how Hartnett's work develops this approach to interrogate modern culture, discourses of power and their effects on the development of child and young adult subjects.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Thesis**

The aim of this study is to argue that through an examination of eleven of Hartnett's novels, the sub-genre of Australian Gothic can be developed to establish a hauntology that

is relevant to the modern cultural context. In *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, J. Derrida claims that ‘To haunt does not mean to be present’ and that ‘it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time’ (201). Playing on the word ‘ontology’, Derrida proposes that existence is possible because it gains meaning and consistency due to a series of absences. For example, as M. Fisher explains in *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, ‘any particular linguistic term’ can be defined through ‘its difference from other terms’ (18). Hauntology provides a way of describing existence and is concerned with the fracturing or dislocation of time. Derrida frequently refers to Shakespeare’s play, *Hamlet*, in which the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet’s father signals that the time is ‘out of joint’, or ‘*Ana-chronique*’, as opposed to ‘the justice of time, the being-with-oneself’ (Derrida 25). The Australian Gothic, as J. Doig explains, has long represented the nation as a haunted space (9), and I assert that Hartnett’s work develops this hauntology, showing that time-space and identity are in a dialectical relationship, and this is achieved through narratives that focus on individual subjectivities to critique white, patriarchal discourse and ideas of community in a modern historical and cultural context. More broadly, the thesis produces a substantive study of Hartnett’s writing for children and young adults, situating her work within the sub-genre of Australian Gothic via literary analysis of eleven of her novels.

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Develop the concept of an Australian Gothic approach through the analysis of Hartnett’s novels.
2. Apply an Australian Gothic aesthetic to Hartnett’s work to examine how she interrogates modern anxieties, the family as a source of well-being and discourses of power which impact on young subjectivities.
3. Identify and analyse thematic connections across Hartnett’s novels.
4. Analyse how Hartnett uses ideas of place and temporality to negotiate and resist the construction of identity within white Australian culture.
5. Consider the ways in which Hartnett uses genre and narrative technique to simulate lived experience.
6. Apply concepts from phenomenology which connect with ideas of the visible and the invisible within the novels to form an hauntology and expose how Hartnett critiques

the spectral aspects of modernity. The artificial boundaries of the psychic ‘interior’ and the social ‘outside’ are breached within environments that are culturally constructed as secure.

### **Methodology and Critical Framework**

The primary methodological approach consists of close reading and literary analysis of eleven novels by Sonya Hartnett. As C. Belsey contends, this method is also appropriate for researching the cultural aspects of the study:

textual analysis is indispensable to research in cultural criticism, where cultural criticism includes English, cultural history and cultural studies, as well as any other discipline that focuses on texts, or seeks to understand the inscription of culture in its artefacts. (158)

The analyses are conceptually as well as chronologically framed to highlight thematic development as well as the importance of a Gothic approach to Hartnett’s oeuvre. A conceptual framework, as described by G. Wisker consists of the underpinning concepts and theories which help to ‘scaffold, underpin and weave through the work’ (78). While I have included some biographical detail of Hartnett and her publications in this introduction, I have chosen to review Hartnett’s early work within the thematic structure of the thesis so that the Gothic aspects of her early representations of landscape can be identified and perceived as contributing to a longer developmental process. These discussions can be located at the beginning of chapters two, three and five. In the interests of tracing coherent connections between works, reference will also be made in these themed sections to other relevant novels within Hartnett’s oeuvre that have not been selected for inclusion in the detailed analyses. Sections within the chapters are indicated by sub-headings in bold type and titles for sub-sections are in italics.

The conceptual framework forms part of the methodology and is comprised of the theoretical approaches relevant to the study, key concepts and a rationale for their inclusion. While the ordering and detail of the sections in chapter one indicates their relative priority within the thesis, they are all significant in contributing to the Gothic approach. As such the connections between them and their relative importance within the chapters will shift depending on their relevance to the analyses of the primary texts. I explain in the first chapter how ideas of the visible and invisible encompass a range of concepts that are employed to articulate an hauntology that is appropriate for the Australian Gothic. This explanation is divided into sub-headings in chapter one which indicate the

main aspects of the conceptual framework. For clarity these sub-headings are indicated in bold within the text of the summary below.

**The Visible and Invisible: a Spectral Poetics.** Given that Hartnett has situated her work within the Australian Gothic and that the work of the thesis is to develop an hauntology through the analyses of her novels that contributes to the Australian Gothic, my explanation of the conceptual framework begins with how the thesis gains cohesion by employing a poetics of visibility and invisibility. **Perception and the Phenomenological Approach.** Ideas from the emerging field of spectral studies as well as concepts from M. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology are evoked as a discourse or conceptual metaphor which assist in the development of an hauntology that functions cohesively as a structure for speaking about the literary Gothic of Australia and of Hartnett's work. This aesthetic can be applied to the examination of previous Australian Gothic literary representations as well as new ones. Such concepts include ideas of light, shadow, absence, presence, vanishings, encounters and hauntings from alternative temporalities within contemporary lived experience, consciousness and unconsciousness, place and space, representation and non-representation. **The Figure of the Ghost** or spectre is described by Derrida as 'a supernatural and paradoxical phenomenality, the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible, or an invisibility of a visible X, that *non-sensuous sensuous* of which Capital speaks' (6, italics in original). The ghost is a Gothic trope that recurs in Hartnett's work as well as in Australian Gothic literature from colonial times to the present day. The ghost functions as a trope of liminality that inserts itself between ideas of the visible and invisible, life and death, past and present, rational and irrational while at the same time complicating these binaries. Its presence evokes questions around issues such as inheritance, commodity, identity, power and the oppressed Other, settlement and guilt that fit with my interpretation of Hartnett's work as questioning hegemonic, conformist discourses.

**A History of the Gothic Through Landscape.** The objective of this section is to begin to articulate, prior to analysis of the primary texts, what is meant by an Australian Gothic. This is achieved by initially tracing the origins of the Gothic in H. Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* published in 1764. The overview describes how the Gothic has evolved from its European origins to other exported forms such as American and Australian Gothic. This is necessary to examine how the genre came to be associated with the critique of

patriarchal power in society and how that power is abused, an example being the pressures to construct and maintain ideas of nation.

**The Haunted Australian Landscape.** The work of Australian writers besides Hartnett, such as B. Baynton and J. Lindsay, whose work might also be examined within a Gothic approach, are briefly discussed. By focusing on the Gothic texts of Hartnett, the thesis shows how adaptations of the Gothic in an imported form reflect the time and place of a specific writer as well as interrogating some of the anxieties and pre-occupations that continue to haunt ideas of nation in contemporary Australia more generally.

**Place and Space.** Next, ideas of place and space from Cultural Geography are integrated with Australian history and ideas of national identity from the time of early European settlement to show the interdependence of these constructs and how this is represented in an Australian hauntology and Hartnett's novels. Time, place and space are considered as co-ordinates for situating the subject and relate to the Gothic as well as aspects of Hartnett's narrative technique. This section on ontology provides the necessary context for making connections between Australia's colonial past and the postcolonial present and explains how this is rooted in the geographical and literary landscapes.

**The Borderland between 'Inside' and 'Outside'.** This section connects with the sixth objective of the research which is concerned with the breaching of boundaries between the psychic domain of the mind and the physical domain of the body. Narratives that are focalised through the perspectives of specific characters provide an opportunity for writers to convey how hegemonic, conformist discourses affect subjectivity and to examine the implications for community. This can be achieved through a character's interaction with the physical world of the imagined society and relationships with other characters. Positing the body as a form of consciousness, as described by Merleau-Ponty, the section explains the incorporation of concepts from phenomenology into the ontology and their relevance to the thesis and to Hartnett's work. One important example is the concept of intersubjectivity. Embodied subjectivity is defined by Merleau-Ponty in *Philosophy of Perception* as 'inherence in the world' (427). L. Hass explains in *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*, that intersubjectivity is where 'living bodies are involved with other living bodies from the start, and the perceptual field is social through and through' (99). There are also literary definitions of intersubjectivity which are explored in chapter one (see pp. 34, 35) and have some relevance to Hartnett's work. Other examples include ideas of doubling

using the phenomenon of the phantom limb as exemplar, landscape as an artificial milieu and the originary power of the childhood imagination.

### **Context for the Study**

Previous scholarship has focused on analysing single novels rather than seeking connections across Hartnett's oeuvre and has taken the form of articles, book chapters or thesis chapters. For example, L. Cain-Gray's article on *Butterfly* from 2009 examines how Hartnett articulates the ordinary as dystopian within a realist mode but does not refer to the ways in which Hartnett utilises the Gothic to create a sense of estrangement, which would have alerted the reader to the darker aspects of modernity. The Gothic in the realist mode is part of an established literary tradition that Hartnett employs to critique the shadowy aspects of contemporary life. K. Gelder and R. Weaver assert that connecting the Gothic to 'a kind of deadpan realism' serves to make narratives more disturbing and that the employment of this mixed mode dates back to the colonial Australian Gothic of the nineteenth century (5). Similarly, D. Punter and G. Byron, commenting on the Victorian Gothic, refer to writers such as E. Gaskell and C. Dickens and their appropriation of Gothic elements 'in the service of the realist agenda' (28). Establishing the city as a site of menace by importing Gothic motifs was specific to the Victorian urban experience in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, for example, and served to draw attention to the faults in the Victorian social system.

Other scholars have favoured psychoanalytic approaches to examine Hartnett's work. For example, J. McPherson, C. Wilkie-Stibbs and V. Muller utilise J. Kristeva's ideas of the abject in their readings of *Sleeping Dogs* (1995), *Of a Boy* (2002) and *Thursday's Child* (2002) respectively (I should mention here that *Of a Boy* was published in Britain in 2003 under the title *What the Birds See* and this latter title is used in the thesis). McPherson argues that Hartnett reaffirms patriarchal power and control in *Sleeping Dogs*, because while the abject behaviour of sibling incest is punished with the son's murder by the father, the latter crime remains unpunished (15). By contrast, Kristeva's concept of the semiotic in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, is employed by Muller to argue that Hartnett privileges the maternal to disrupt the patriarchal symbolic order. In *What the Birds See*, the demise of the nine-year-old protagonist, Adrian, initially abandoned and then neglected by family members, is precipitated by his yearning and eventual journey towards a lost mother (Muller 12). It must be acknowledged that the analyses of McPherson and Muller are

focused on different novels, and while their assertions of whether Hartnett appears supportive or critical of patriarchal power appear contradictory, their conclusions can be reconciled in part by a consideration of place and its role in the formation of identity.

Wilkie-Stibbs analyses Hartnett's *Thursday's Child* along with four other novels written for children and so the attention given to Hartnett is inevitably curtailed. The novels are identified as including child protagonists whose bodies represent borderlands that provide the conditions for abjection. The feral character of Tin is described by Wilkie-Stibbs as occupying an indeterminate, timeless and transgressive space between the human/animal and culture/nature binaries which constructs him as monster; a possible explanation for his subsequent invisibility in the narrative (323). The conclusion that such borderland identities raise questions about cultural identity and collective consciousness provokes further thought, but as the novels selected by Wilkie-Stibbs for critique are written by authors from a variety of countries, the pursuit of such questions would detract from the stated focus. My thesis, however, situates the analyses of Hartnett's novels within their specific Australian historical and cultural context to probe the importance and relevance of this framework. Although I do not use a predominantly psychoanalytic lens in my analyses of the primary texts, Kristeva's concept of abjection and S. Freud's essays 'Mourning and Melancholia' from 1917 and 'The Uncanny', published in 1919, have been indispensable sources.

In his psychoanalytic reading of *Thursday's Child*, D. Rudd uses Freud's concept of the uncanny in his analysis to draw attention to several aspects from the novel such as family secrets, ideas of the primitive, the fear of being buried alive, notions of the return of the dead and the insecurity of the animate/inanimate divide (see J. Armstrong and D. Rudd). With reference to J. Lacan's theories concerning the mirror stage the character of Tin is scrutinised in relation to the feral child's rejection of the Symbolic order and Rudd notes how Tin resists a place on the surface or in modern culture, preferring wildness and a subterranean habitat. Although Rudd has not identified the novel as a Gothic text, his use of the uncanny, ideas of spectral return and the symbolic role of the novel's topography in the analysis of *Thursday's Child* hint at the possibility of a Gothic reading, and this has been developed in chapter four of the thesis. Rudd's article has been co-authored by Armstrong, who, writing in a separate section, chooses to focus on the character of Tin as a wild child. Despite identifying Hartnett as a 'realistic writer,' Armstrong must account for the mythological qualities of Tin and his absent presence, referring to him as a 'houseless

spirit' (137). Although emphasising Hartnett's juxtaposition of two genres; namely the family story with the myth of the wild, this description also aligns Tin's rejection of the domestic hearth with *unheimlich* or spectral qualities. The analyses of both scholars therefore invite a Gothic reading which the thesis develops and interrogates.

Two examples of scholars who do situate Hartnett in the Gothic mode are A. Smith in her chapter "The Scary Tale Looks for a Family: Gary Crew's *Gothic Hospital* and Sonya Hartnett's *The Devil Latch*" and, more recently, in 2017, A. Kealley's article "Escaping Adolescence: Sonya Hartnett's *Surrender* as a Gothic Bildungsroman for the Twenty-first Century". Smith notes how Hartnett's narratives explore her characters' varying capacity to withstand cruelty in the context of adult power (139) but, as the thesis interrogates, is mistaken in the assertion that Hartnett rejects supernatural 'lineaments' of the Gothic (138). Kealley comments on how Hartnett's young adult protagonist selects the abjection of becoming a corpse as an agentic release from subjectivity. Kealley's focus remains on a single novel *Surrender* and does not connect with *The Devil Latch* (1996) and *Princes* (1997). All three novels include young male protagonists who suffer with mental illness as well as featuring ideas of Gothic doubling, and so the similarities and disparities between these narratives still require examination. The need for comparative scrutiny is therefore addressed in chapter five of the thesis. It should also be noted that some of Hartnett's novels do feature positive coming-of-age trajectories, such as *All My Dangerous Friends* (1998), *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* (1999) and *The Children of the King*. Isolated studies of single novels provide valuable insights and inspire fresh interpretations but do not actively seek connections or note divergences across a range of Hartnett's novels; an opportunity that can be exploited by a longer and more comprehensive study.

### **The Australian Gothic**

The thesis chapters investigate various aspects of a new and updated Australian Gothic as part of the critical context. The analyses of the primary texts are the main methodology through which a modern or, to use Kealley's term, 'neo' Australian Gothic aesthetic is constructed. Characteristics of Australian Gothic literature are identified by K. Gelder (2007) and Gelder and Weaver (2007), and can be summarised as follows: an effect of weird melancholy that reflects the loss of colonial optimism and continues to inhere in natural and built landscapes; ideas of wildness, fears of degeneration revealed through damaged or corrupt characters and dysfunctional behaviour; representations of myth and mythical creatures, absent presences such as the Indigene or extinct non-human species and

ideas of lost innocence connected with forms of enclosure. In Australia, entrapment includes the horizontal openness and visibility of topographies such as the desert, ocean or deserted highway. Discourses of nation that contribute to ideas of ‘Australianness’ such as mateship, are problematised by the Gothic, revealing how national identity intersects with counter-narratives that challenge assumptions. As S. Kossew asserts, where the bushwoman has been represented by writer H. Lawson as tough but also as ‘mother of the nation, guardian of the family unit but still the “little woman”’ (29), Baynton in her collection of short stories, *Bush Studies*, published in 1902, interrogates mateship by assigning the word ‘mate’ to a female character in her story “Squeaker’s Mate”. Mateship, as K. Schaffer states, is a masculine ethos which has paradoxically excluded women and yet continually represented them through metaphors of landscape (xii).

As with constructions of gender, narratives which represent ideas of home are connected to the myths that have been constructed to inspire feelings of national identity and to make meaning from national experience. However, as G. Turcotte argues, due to Australia’s colonial past, ideas of belonging to place can be uncanny or *unheimlich* (unhomely) in the Freudian sense. Freud associates the uncanny with ‘fear and dread’ (123) and defines it ‘as that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar’ (124). Freud’s definition encompasses a fear of the past but also an anticipatory concern for the future, and this shows how closely the complexities of the human experience of time and place are connected with the uncanny. In the colonial context, the uncanny effect can be perceived in the attempts, through settlement, to transform an unfamiliar and seemingly hostile landscape into a homely environment. In Australia, place and time appeared ‘out of joint’ or anachronistic because of the reversal of seasons. As ‘home’ was achieved through struggling with austere realities and the violent displacement of the racial Other, settlement was accompanied by a loss of colonial optimism and repressed feelings of guilt and anxiety. Turcotte asserts that the ‘generic qualities of the Gothic mode lend themselves to articulating the colonial experience in as much as each emerges out of a condition of deracination and uncertainty, of the familiar transposed into unfamiliar space’ (278). Gothic fiction arrived in Australia as an imported genre from the British and American Gothic literary traditions and, as Gelder and Weaver describe, was in dialogue with established features or tropes of the genre (2). For example, deserted cattle stations and abandoned prisons replaced crumbling, European castle ruins. Turcotte comments that even before Australia had been confirmed as existing, the

continent had been imagined as ‘a grotesque space’ by cartographers (277). Furthermore, the myth of *terra nullius* was created to justify the expansion of Britain’s imperialist ambitions. S. Lindqvist explains that ‘*Terra nullius*’ translates from the Latin, *terra*, for ‘land’ and *nullius*, or ‘no-one’s’, meaning ‘no one’s land’, rendering the Indigenous population of Aboriginal peoples seemingly irrelevant, as if their occupation of the land was invisible (3). They were deemed inferior and thereby condemned by the laws of nature to die out. It is pertinent here to clarify my use of the word Aborigine and refer to C. Bradford who explains the complexity of the significations used to describe colonised peoples:

The word ‘Aborigine’ is more problematic, because as a term applied to the Indigenous people of Australia it omits reference to the inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands in the north of the Australian continent; and as it is used in Canada it includes three groups: North American Indians, Métis, and Inuit (6).

Acknowledging the various connotations that the term carries, in the context of the thesis, it refers to the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands. Where relevant I will refer to specific kinship networks and, when speaking collectively, so as to include the native non-human fauna and flora, the term ‘indigenous’ will be used. Following Bradford, I will capitalise Indigenous for consistency with the capitalisation of Aborigine. R. McGregor’s study *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880-1939* begins with the assertion that ‘extinction was regarded as the Aboriginals’ inescapable destiny, decreed by God or by nature’ (ix). This fiction of a doomed or vanishing race formed the basis for the dispossession and dispersal of Aborigines and the rationale for horrific acts of genocide; a term that, in the Australian colonial context as Lindqvist describes so unflinchingly, can be attributed to an accumulation of acts which belie the more romantic myths of nationhood:

Was it genocide? If so, when did it become genocide? When they shot every Aborigine they saw? When they bought or raped the women and infected them with syphilis? Or even further back, when they took land at gunpoint and bought peace with rations of flour? (9)

Such acts could not be undone and there were no systems of compensation. The ideology of *terra nullius* formed the basis for white anxieties and ideas of a haunted landscape which can be detected in colonial Australian Gothic texts.

Negative impressions of the colony were exacerbated by its beginnings as a repository for transported felons, or to use Turcotte’s metaphor, the ‘dungeon of the world’ (278). For

colonists from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Gothic novel was gaining popularity, the relationship with the Australian landscape assumed its uncanny qualities of familiarity and estrangement, prompting Turcotte's phrase, 'the dark subconscious of Britain,' to convey the unsettled feelings that settlement provoked. Nature, in this context of oppression, became a Gothic landscape; a repository for guilt and shame, so that the colonial experience could be described in terms that suggested a disorienting, spiritual malaise:

All migrations represent a dislocation of sorts, but Australia posed particularly vexing questions for its European immigrants. Nature, it seemed to many, was out of kilter. To cite the familiar clichés: its trees shed their bark, swans were black rather than white, and the seasons were reversed. And while these features represented a physical perversion, it was widely considered to be metonymic of an attendant spiritual disease. (278)

For colonisation, settlement and expansion to succeed Australia needed to attract migrants and it was imperative that positive representations of landscape and the future replaced concerns over the nation's convict past. Attempts were therefore made to invest the Australian landscape with Romantic qualities.

Early explorers, as Schaffer recounts, had evoked the land through Romantic metaphors as an exotic paradise and as virgin territory awaiting consummation (62). Yet colonial violence meant that an ambivalence remained, accompanied by an association of the land with assimilation, isolation, madness, melancholia, despair and death for the bushman of the nationalist tradition. It is this ambivalence which is absorbed by colonial Australian Gothic literature. The landscape as hostile antagonist occluded white anxieties concerning resistance from the Indigene and imperialist discourse was projected onto the land. As I have described, then, the literary Australian Gothic is already so inherent in landscape that the connection becomes obvious if not overstated. Paradoxically, as subversion is a feature of the Gothic, the genre included counter-narratives. Baynton's *Bush Studies* represents the bush as a place of abject suffering and horror for women, thereby challenging nationalist and patriarchal discourses that romanticise poverty and the domestic hardships of settlement.

### **The Australian Gothic in the Modern Cultural Context**

The Gothic has proved to be a dynamic genre with the capacity to reinvent itself from its inception to the present day. Indeed, history can be used as a lens through which to view the Gothic and vice versa, as a form of dialogism. The relation of the past to the present

can also be mapped through the Gothic in geo-political or economic terms. Different theoretical categories such as Queer Gothic, Victorian Gothic, Modern Gothic, Suburban Gothic and Female Gothic foreground approaches rather than ways of defining the Gothic. Thus, in this study, an hauntology is constructed through the importation of concepts and ideas from other fields, to analyse how Hartnett uses the Australian Gothic in the modern, cultural context. The thesis has benefitted from ideas drawn from children's literature, cultural geography, phenomenology and the emerging field of spectral studies. These are detailed in chapter one as part of the conceptual framework. In common with Hartnett's critical positioning with regard to anthropocentrism, phenomenology shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world in an affective dialectic. Both regard as central the interconnections between nature and culture; human and non-human.

Another question concerns the Australian Gothic focus on race as the means through which white vanishing might be interrogated. Yet whiteness intersects with other discourses such as social class, gender, sexuality, religion and age. The imbrication of race and ethnicity with other discourses must be emphasised and the need for a notion of identity that is multiple and shifting rather than fixed and in danger of becoming stereotyped is crucial for subjectivity, as A. Cranny-Francis observes:

From one point of view, only such a complex notion of identity is capable of expressing the various ways in which contemporary social subjects enact the relations of globalisation and localisation within which they are implicated. (62)

Race, while important, is just one aspect of identity that might be examined alongside representations of landscape in Australian Gothic texts. Constructions of gender, such as the wife as 'helpmate' and patriarchal constructions of masculinity, such as the bush hero and squatter, have contributed to ideas of 'Australianness' in colonial times and beyond. Therefore, within the thesis aspects of identity such as gender, age and social class and their representations are examined within Hartnett's novels to show how their more recent manifestations constitute a living, yet haunted literary landscape.

The narrative techniques that Hartnett employs to develop the genre, and which contribute to a Gothic approach in relation to concepts of place, space and temporality are re-visited throughout the chapters. Working definitions of these terms are set out in the first chapter, with the proviso that place is a porous concept, for as D. Trigg explains, coming into a place means inserting that lived history into the present, as 'we are never truly 'in' place

without already having been in another place, and that other place is never merely left behind within a history of forgotten places.’ (17)

Where one place begins and another ends is an artificial distinction and rational thought can be challenged by the plasticity of borders and feelings of being haunted by the memory of place which the Gothic exploits. Trigg draws attention to Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the affective qualities of place in human experience so that places are defined in relation to the individual subject who encounters them while experiences of temporality are connected to spatial activity and the movement of the body. Place, situated ‘inbetween’ the world and the subject, enables attachments to form that contribute to identity. Conversely, the subject can leave behind traces which in turn affect the environment. Re-visiting a place, whether in memory or actuality, can evoke an uncanny sense of home but in a continually evolving bio-sphere, the precise time and place can never be re-visited.

Hartnett describes in the Redmond Barry Lecture of 2010 (which was re-worked into *Life in Ten Houses* and published in digital format in 2012), how a sense of belonging to place remains elusive: a haunting that returned to her in the affective form of a dream:

I dreamed once, that I found a corner of it [Melbourne] where I’d always be content, but I forgot to write down the address, and in the dream, I drove around cursing, searching in vain. I’ve come to accept that such a place might not exist, or maybe I’m not fated to find it – maybe transience is intrinsic: I won’t be staying. (Redmond Barry Lecture, 16)

This sense of impermanence or of treading lightly upon the Earth, combined with the search for belonging, as the analyses of the novels show, is a haunting feature from Hartnett’s experience that becomes displaced onto the novelist’s young protagonists.

### **Sonya Hartnett: A Suburban Biography**

Moving from place to place has been a feature of Hartnett’s life, as the title of her memoir, *Life in Ten Houses* implies. Born on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1968 in Box Hill North, Melbourne, Australia, to parents of Irish extraction, Sonya Hartnett was the second eldest of six children. Her first home was a three bedroomed, white weatherboard house that was built in haste after the Australian gold rushes from 1851 when Melbourne was trying to accommodate a burgeoning population. Apart from a brief experiment with a rural smallholding in Warrandyte in 2014, Hartnett is an urban dweller, and she moved in 2016 to the city of Castlemaine, in the goldfields region of Victoria. Her favoured settings within the novels are the Melbourne suburbs which possess a Gothic liminality. At the time of

Hartnett's childhood, her home stood opposite an area of wasteland stretching to Koonung Creek and described by Hartnett in the Redmond Barry Lecture as 'an unusable, neglected parcel of land beneath which water allegedly flowed' (4). Her description notes what may be invisible: the undercurrents, wild and unpredictable, that are barely acknowledged by those who inhabit the surface. Such features form borderlands between wild nature and culture and real and imagined states of being.

Hartnett credits her early life in the suburbs with providing the ideal setting for her fiction and the influences as such are evident in her work. Her choice of the house as a metaphor for a creative locale reinforces the importance of place to her oeuvre: 'Specifically, it is the eastern and northern suburbs of Melbourne that have been my roof and walls and floor as well as the launching-place of my imagination' (3).

The suburb, as experienced by Hartnett, provided a wealth of creative inspiration but was also frequently a site of familial tension and conflict, exacerbated by the raw cruelties of school life. Hartnett's mother was a midwife or 'maternity nurse' (5) and her father, who had studied to be a lawyer, supported his family by working within different occupational areas such as fishing, second-hand car dealing and proofreading. A source of tension for Hartnett and her siblings were her parents' 'frequently violent' marital arguments often caused by her father's drinking (5). Hartnett claims that nevertheless she and her three sisters and two brothers developed resilience. Many of her novels, including the more recent *Golden Boys* feature aggressive patriarchal figures and mothers who are either absent or have become passive sufferers. One of her more terrifying patriarchal characters is Griffin Willow from the novel *Sleeping Dogs*, who, as she describes in *Wolf Creek*, is based on the owner of a caravan park in rural Gippsland. It is not just this man who unsettles her though. The eight-year-old Hartnett and her siblings had been on holiday with their mother when the unexpected arrival of her father was perceived as 'oppressive, just a twitch away from actually frightening' (1). As Hartnett's novels reveal, school life also contains its shadowy aspects. Shy when young, Hartnett dreaded her schooldays, which were presided over by Indian-born Carmelite nuns at the Catholic school of our Holy Redeemer in Surrey Hills. Hartnett comments in the Redmond Barry lecture that the nuns 'seemed to despise children utterly' and that here she was 'deemed a simpleton' (6). School is represented as a place of terror in various ways in Hartnett's novels, especially the propensity of peers to exploit signs of perceived difference or weakness.

Happier memories for Hartnett include riding her red bike up and down the suburban roads, watching horses and exploring, among other things, storm water drains on the wasteland, an activity that is described in *Golden Boys*. Hartnett explains in the Redmond Barry Lecture that she was also inspired by her grandmother's classic cream-brick 1950s house in Balwyn that would become 'a mainstay' of her work with its pile of *National Geographic* magazines and polished floorboards (5). Here she was slightly removed but still close to home and describes how these memories inspired her novels:

... A big house in a motionless junction of roads where you could easily believe yourself the last person alive. Those streets in various guises appear over and over in my work – it is Adrian's neighbourhood, Plum's, Kitten Latch's and Maddy's. Every time I write of neat lawns and blue skies and post-apocalyptically silent streets absent of life but for blackbirds and the snicker of a closing front door, then my corner of the eastern suburbs rises from the oblivion of time (7).

Hartnett states that she began writing when she was nine and names American writers such as S.E. Hinton, U. Le Guin, P. Zindel and R. Cormier (6) as influences. Works such as Hinton's *The Outsiders*, published in 1967, helped to establish the genre of the adolescent novel and includes characters drawn from realist suburban settings. *After the First Death* by Cormier includes the death of a young character and it was to Cormier that Hartnett would send her complete draft of *Sleeping Dogs* in the hope that he would respond. His review on the book's cover describes how he sat stunned in the spell of the powerful, ground-breaking work. R. Dahl also appears on Hartnett's list of influences and this is unsurprising considering his penchant for the Gothic within the realist mode. In the Redmond Barry lecture Hartnett describes the moment when, at the age of fifteen, Hartnett's father gave her 'the vital piece' (6) of M. Shelley's nineteenth-century novel, *Frankenstein*, which uses ideas of doubling, landscape and Gothic elements to critique normative discourses such as science, education and social class. Such works provide the foundations for Hartnett's interest in plots which feature young protagonists in desperate circumstances. The degeneration of some of Hartnett's rural characters and settings is in common with Appalachian Gothic writers such as C. McCarthy, but Hartnett is writing primarily in the Australian Gothic context and one of the most prominent tropes associated with the sub-genre and with Hartnett's corpus is that of the lost child.

### **The Trope of the Lost Child as Context for the Study**

The place of humans in the Australian landscape is connected in Hartnett's work to the trope of the lost child and ideas of cultural memory. K. Steele's article "Fear and Loathing

in the Australian Bush: Gothic Landscapes in *Bush Studies* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*” explains how previous scholarship has neglected to focus on the connections between landscape, context and character. Baynton’s portrayal of a hostile landscape arises from the perceptions of her settler characters, rather than the environment (34). Steele also criticises J. Kirkby’s and J. A. Wainwright’s readings of J. Lindsay’s text for not taking account of the temporal displacement of European characters, nor the absence of Aborigines from representations of landscape (Steele 35). These omissions are addressed by Steele, who states that the Indigene, invisible to constructions of colonial Australian culture, meant that the bush became the setting for ‘the ghost story of Aboriginal absence’ (37): a haunted site that created a Gothic consciousness and atmosphere of weird melancholy. As there were few clocks in the bush, time tended to be measured in distance or from the movement from one place to another (37). This fusing of spatial-temporal dimensions becomes a means of orientation for white Australian characters who yearn for a sense of belonging to place and to the nation’s history.

The emphasis on place as a means of mapping both temporal and spatial orientation relates to settler anxieties concerning the violence of colonisation, or the taking of place from Australia’s first inhabitants and the forced removal of the Indigene. This is expressed through narratives concerning the white child who wanders into the bush and becomes lost. J. McGennissen describes the role of School Readers in the construction of a national imagination in which child and nation are symbolically associated, for ‘Invested in the innocence of the young and the child’s naïve adventurous spirit is the potential of a new nation’ (142). This preferred version or *vision* of history (my emphasis), constitutes a collective forgetting in which Aboriginal inhabitation is written over and ideas of nation begin with the arrival of the English First Fleet in 1788. Countering this optimistic view are the narratives of children lost in the bush, such as H. Kingsley’s *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* first published in the *Queensland School Readers* in 1859. In this tale, a wild, athletic child is tempted to cross a river into the forest but becomes lost, and cries for his mother. The white searchers re-enact colonisation through the act of tracking, which maps the bush and makes it give up the secret of the boy’s corpse. The act of storytelling also serves to re-map the landscape through representation.

Hartnett states in a Book Trust website article that she uses the trope of ‘the lost child’ and ‘the feral child again and again’ (n.p.) but in the absence of an extended study, such as this thesis, her claim remains unsubstantiated. Neither has there been an examination of how

these tropes function as intertexts or how they have been developed by Hartnett for a contemporary readership. Although Hartnett's child protagonists are rarely lost in terms of finding their physical way through their various landscapes, they do become socially and culturally lost. The pubescent character of Plum, for example, in *Butterfly*, is initially alienated by her own developing body and, as the analysis of the novel in chapter two investigates (see p.77), she suffers through her inability to sustain meaningful friendships. The thesis explores these different methods of being lost and how Hartnett updates the trope to challenge the modern, cultural constructions of nation.

Before embarking on the analyses of Hartnett's novels in relation to the lost child, it has been important to investigate existing Australian scholarship on this subject to establish whether its literary representations have always been confined to the topography of the bush or if writers have sought to re-locate this elusive figure. If, as Steele has described, place and time are conflated in narratives set in the bush, there remains an additional question relating to whether the lost child can be transplanted from the colonial to the modern historical and cultural context, and whether Hartnett's novels also seek to re-create this indeterminate quality. E. Tilley has challenged the idea that the lost child trope can be transferred from the bush to other settings. Referring specifically to P. Pierce, she criticises his claim for extending the interpretation of the 'lost' child to include children in the twentieth century who are 'victims of infanticide, abduction, and murder', suggesting that this 'compromises his argument for unique Australian cultural significance given that many cultures offer a rich vein of media coverage involving similar crimes against children' (29). As the lost child recurs across Hartnett's oeuvre, it is necessary to contextualise this debate and clarify my own positioning before continuing further.

Pierce's study from 1999, *The Country of Lost Children*, traces the history of the figure of the lost child referencing documented disappearances from real life as well as fictional representations from the nineteenth century to modern times, showing how emblematic the lost child's haunting of the national Australian imaginary has become. Pierce argues that the lost child, a victim of the wild, indigenous landscape and symbolising the displaced racial Other, is deployed differently in modern times. More recently, the child victim is used to reflect and interrogate the abuses enacted by white society on the vulnerable. Tilley, arguing in 2012 against Pierce in *White Vanishing: Rethinking Australia's Lost-in-the-Bush Myth*, insists that it is not just white children but white adults that disappear and that they continue to vanish into the natural landscape. To include modern instances of

vanishing such as abduction, abuse and abandonment, claims Tilley, is not appropriate because this ‘does not explain the specificity of the vanishing trope’ and ‘detracts from the uniqueness of Australian vanishing’ (29). To support her argument that the distinctive landscape of the bush is the key element of white vanishings, Tilley provides examples of contemporary narratives which continue the colonial association with racial Otherness into the present, such as D. Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon* and the short story “Aquifer” by T. Winton from the collection *The Turning*. While I agree with Tilley that landscape is central to the white vanishing trope so that an understanding of the lost child figure can be broadened to include lost adults, and that problematic representations of race should continue to be challenged, my point of departure is that the study of this trope should not be confined to one kind of topography.

In Hartnett’s work, representations of landscape are used to interrogate and explore the inter-relationship between Australians and a range of environments, which reflects the diversity of the continent’s topographies, both ancient and modern. Scholarship such as T. Cresswell’s *Place: A Short Introduction*, J. Anderson’s *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces* as well as fictional texts help to make sense of urbanisation and suburban sprawl because new configurations of the landscape have social and personal consequences. In Hartnett’s novel *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* for example, the re-routing of a main highway has led to the economic decline of a country town. This illustrates how cultural and political imperatives have an impact on human and non-human environments. It is unsurprising, then, that Hartnett draws on landscapes other than the bush to examine modern subjectivities and recalls existing literary tropes as intertexts while also developing them in new ways. As Tilley’s study exemplifies, it is indeed important to trace the continuation of racial Othering through bush narratives from the time of colonisation to reveal contemporary prejudice, but as she reiterates within her analyses, it is the desire for power connected with capitalism that is frequently at the root of racial and other dominant discourses. This suggests that the construction of the lost child myth colludes in maintaining the invisibility of white power because the focus on searching for and discovering the missing person or people, detracts from the scrutiny of dominant ideologies that are the root causes of colonial violence:

The focus in white vanishing texts on white people’s business, traumas and heroic responses in facing white vanishings obscures the naturalized underpinnings of colonialism and capitalism (153).

These wider discourses haunt the narratives like spectres that are paradoxically hidden and revealed by the texts. The lost child is one example of a range of literary tropes that might be deployed to construct, negotiate or resist them. A revised focus can accommodate Pierce's proposition in that the vanishing trope can be broadened from being 'lost' in a physical/geographical sense, to include other methods of becoming lost, such as psychological disorientation; a definition which Tilley rejects. Yet, I can also concur with Tilley that landscape (whether part of the psychic 'inside' of the subject or part of the 'outside' as represented by exterior topography), is a key factor in all instances of vanishing. Tilley's study ranges across genres to support her argument and so inevitably does not deal with the complexities and nuances of the development of white vanishing within just one genre. In addition, such overarching and wide-ranging studies such as those of Pierce and Tilley are, understandably, subject to limitations and can omit writers such as Sonya Hartnett who contribute to how white vanishing might be understood in the modern Australian literary context. My thesis addresses this omission from previous studies, examining how Hartnett interrogates ideas of white vanishing along with other Australian Gothic tropes, to critique by making visible those discourses of power that rely on invisibility for effect.

The vast continent of Australia comprises diverse landscapes of rainforest, desert, urban areas, beaches and large, agricultural stations as well as the bush and outback. Figures produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2012, affirm that population density remains highest in the city centres, particularly East Sydney and the centre of Melbourne. In response to Tilley, and here I must declare the frame of my own perspectival positioning as a white, British woman, I remain unconvinced by her earlier assertion that an examination of white vanishings occurring in historicised, geo-political landscapes other than the bush, has the effect of detracting from Australia's uniqueness concerning this trope. Had Pierce maintained a focus on landscape but included topographies other than the bush, while updating the lost child figure to modern times, then perhaps Tilley might have found the argument for the plasticity of the trope more convincing.

The thesis chapters, outlined below, consist of a detailed analysis of the selected primary texts and the findings are summarised in a conclusion. I argue within the chapters that Hartnett's writing can be effectively examined through the development of an hauntological approach, comprising an Australian Gothic that interrogates the everyday on

a variety of levels, questioning assumptions concerning people and environments that have previously been configured as familiar and safe.

## **Structure of the Chapters**

### **Chapter One: Introducing the Conceptual Framework**

This chapter sets out the conceptual framework for the thesis as explained above (see p. 9).

### **Chapter Two: ‘The Snicker of a Closing Front Door’: The Suburb**

The first section of the chapter uses a brief discussion of Hartnett’s early works to establish the Melbourne suburbs as a source of continuing inspiration. Hartnett uses this topos to relocate the trope of the lost child from the bush to suburbia and to suggest how children can be lost in different ways. The child and pubescent subject become emotionally lost when they lack guidance at critical points. The public places that young people frequent, such as the school, park or swimming pool (configured as safe), or marginal spaces away from adult scrutiny, reveal their Gothic potentiality. The suburb topos is examined in relation to the cultural history of Australia as well as its contribution to the development of the literary suburban Gothic. This forms part of the Gothic approach to representations of modernity.

Ideas that contribute to national identity such as notions of ‘the good neighbour’, the suburban ideal, the nuclear family as a preferred model of stability for the child are discussed in relation to patriarchy, the position of women, the effects of urban planning and the assertion of family values and responsibilities. Detailed analyses of *What the Birds See* and *Butterfly* follow, focusing on how Hartnett uses the lost child’s perspective to critique the family and Australian modernity more widely. The uncanny environment of the suburb connects with what T. Constantino has called the nation’s colonial uncanny (1). Colonial anxieties persist through generations and on to the contested site of the Australian landscape, which is continually evolving, and this includes its modes of representation. Merleau-Ponty’s ideas in *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible* combine with Hartnett’s metaphoric application of artistic concepts such as horizon, linear perspective and vanishing points to offer a poetics of the visible and invisible that connects the spectral landscapes of modernity with haunted subjectivities. The presence of the uncanny in the domestic space of the home complicates G. Bachelard’s idealist assertions of the positive properties of the house and must be reconciled with lived experience as defined by contemporary culture (7). The child lost-in-culture sets up an opposition to the

lost-in-the-bush child so that the hostility of the wild, indigenous environment is transferred to the social and cultural context of modern, white Australia.

### **Chapter Three: The Lost Artist and the Country Town**

The first section of this chapter examines the position of the country town topos within the national imaginary, referring to Hartnett's early work *Sparkle and Nightflower* (1986) as an exemplar. The idea of entrapment is evoked by the visibility of open landscapes such as the highway or deserts of Australia's interior. The bush can also disorient a person by an endless array of eucalypts. Hartnett exploits the isolation of country towns and the impact on the young of dwindling employment opportunities to add rural Gothic tropes to the Gothic aesthetic, ensuring that the wider political and economic context is exposed as responsible for creating the spectre of a rural community in decline. Hartnett's dystopian representations subvert the discourse of the bush pioneer from the nationalist literature as well as the landscape art provided by the Melbourne-based Heidelberg School of painters discussed by C. Allen and in a separate study by T. Bonyhady. The replacement of the Romantic ideal with narratives of ghost towns in Gothic decline poses questions concerning sustainability and the dominance of anthropocentric positioning. The analyses of three Hartnett novels, *Wilful Blue* (1994), *Sleeping Dogs* and *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* are connected by an examination of the country town and the employment of the male artist character perceived as Other. By critiquing forms of masculinity in rural settings, Hartnett shows that hope for Australia at national and local levels relies on an inclusive, eco-friendly philosophy which is based on the celebration and protection of diversity, difference and creativity.

### **Chapter Four: Vanishing Points: The Child Lost to Culture**

Hartnett employs ideas of the wild or feral child to develop her critique of white Australian society, such as the extreme poverty experienced by families in the 1930s Depression era in *Thursday's Child*, and, both in this novel and *The Ghost's Child* (2004), to emphasise the courage required of subjects who choose to live counter to expected norms. Continuing ideas of perspective and the visible and invisible to develop the Australian Gothic through Hartnett's novels, this chapter considers the ways in which spatial dimensions such as the underground topos, which suggests depth (the past, or time), and the distant horizon from land to sea, which emphasises the horizontal perspective (the future, or space), represent different ways of searching for a philosophical truth. In contrast with the connotations of

death and confinement associated with chthonic spaces in the British Gothic, in the Australian Gothic, both depth and distance contribute to an understanding of how the subject can find orientation in time and space. Hartnett additionally employs myth, with exemplars of the heroic journey such as katabasis and the epic voyage, and aspects of magical realism to re-examine archetypal questions associated with the respective roles of the individual and community. These include the search for peace, which is a contested term related to individual perception, and a sense of identity and belonging. Hartnett represents ideas of unsettlement through successive generations in various ways. One example is through the narrative device of using recurring characteristics when describing different characters, so that they seem to haunt more than one novel. This ensures the spectral credentials of her protagonists, who appear both familiar and strange.

### **Chapter Five: The Gothic Topographies of the Mind**

The chapter examines how Hartnett uses the Gothic trope of the double or *doppelgänger* to interrogate those normative discourses that create the suppression of memories, traumas and anxieties in young subjects, causing them to become lost through mental illness. Three novels that are connected in this regard are *The Devil Latch*, *Princes* and *Surrender*. Mental illness, as a form of enclosure from which the subject cannot escape, is frequently a Gothic experience for the sufferer. The mind, which is embodied, constitutes a psychical and physical environment that the subject inhabits, and in mental illness, the boundary of 'inside' collapses into 'outside' when a subject experiences hallucinations or hears voices. Frequently labelled the invisible illness, the condition of the subject will deteriorate without appropriate care, and it is this neglect, which includes lack of understanding from families, peers and the wider community that Hartnett critiques in these incarnations of the child, lost in the labyrinths of the mind; estranged by culture and the self.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion sets out the recurring tropes, character traits, themes and narrative techniques in the preceding ten novels and, using Hartnett's most recent novel to date, *Golden Boys*, delineates how they have contributed to the construction of an hauntology which contributes to a modern Australian Gothic that is continually evolving. The final summary points to how the study might be developed.

## **Chapter One Introducing the Conceptual Framework**

### **The Visible and Invisible – a Spectral Poetics**

This chapter sets out the theoretical and conceptual framework for the thesis which informs and supports the methodology. A poetics of visibility and invisibility is appropriate for the theorisation of a hauntology that can be applied to Hartnett's representations of modern Australian culture, develops ideas of an Australian Gothic and provides a cohesive way of thinking about Hartnett's corpus. The aesthetic accommodates the writer's use of the Gothic within a realist mode as well as her use of Gothic topographies. Central to the poetics is the assertion that Hartnett uses ideas of visibility and invisibility to expose those discourses that, through their normativity, may not always attract scrutiny within the culture, for as Bradford states 'the ideologies of the dominant culture are so often accepted as normal and natural and are thus invisible' (10). Examples of discourses discussed within the thesis include the following: capitalism, with a focus on re-configurations of the landscape as a consequence of colonisation, settlement and expansion, which includes modern consumerism and suburban sprawl; anthropocentrism; political discourse, which includes government policies relating to urban planning; white patriarchal power; ideas of national identity and how artistic movements and myths contribute to representations of nation; gender construction, such as the position of women; cultural and social norms such as the nuclear or immediate family as the assumed source of love and protection for young subjects. Hartnett interrogates the 'invisible' processes of normativity to make them 'visible' through her work.

The poetics I have used to examine how Hartnett achieves the interrogation of normativity is supported by concepts drawn from the fields of phenomenology, cultural geography, children's literature, spectral studies and psychoanalysis and these concepts also enable the analyses of Hartnett's novels to be appropriately contextualised. The sections below explain the following ideas in relation to the thesis and to Hartnett's novels: the choice of philosophical positioning, the importance of the figure of the ghost to Hartnett's work, the history of the Australian landscape as a haunted topos, how place and space are configured in Hartnett's novels and how these concepts are defined in the thesis, and the embodied boundaries of 'inside' and 'outside' as experienced by the subject.

## Perception and the Phenomenological Approach

The world is perceived and remembered in different ways and the implications for Hartnett's characters in relying on these fallible methods of seeing are examined in the thesis, especially in chapter four. The Gothic approach developed in the thesis comprises an hauntology that has been inspired by Merleau-Ponty's posthumously published work *The Visible and the Invisible* from 1964, in which the French philosopher queries what it is that we see in the world. This question can also be applied to identifying what is seen in the fictional world of texts. For as soon as the words 'we', 'see' and 'world' are scrutinised, 'a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions' reveals itself (3). The terms are loaded because, for example, 'we' might signify the implied reader, the fictional protagonist, or the writer. To 'see' might mean the world of the text as it is imagined or to 'see' in terms of clarity of meaning, or depth of understanding. 'World' might signify the 'real' world inhabited by the reader, the fictional world of the text or a speculative future that can be envisioned. Indeed, the creation of setting requires that the reader is always positioned in at least two spatial-temporal frames. Further questions arise: Is it possible to 'see' from different subject positions through narrative strategies and, if so, how is this achieved? How easy is it to explain something as familiar as time in a way that engages with how it is experienced through memory, dreams and foreboding, for example? Literary study can be perceived as a process of following ambiguous and intriguing threads through the twists and turns of narrative to arrive at understanding. Yet just as important as noting presences and appearances are those absences from the text: what is withheld from sight, included as sub-text and why? In short, what is haunting the text? K. Shaw describes the experience of being haunted as 'one of noticing absences in the present, recognising fissures, gaps and points of crossover' (2). The ways in which a literary text is perceived and interpreted have much in common with how existence is understood, and this is unsurprising, for human beings use narrative to make sense of experience.

Hartnett is unafraid to expose the darker aspects of life for children and young adults, and this draws attention to the normative influences that shape perception. Hass explains that a phenomenological argument 'uses language to direct our attention to something in our worldly experience, and to show us something, to help us notice and see it' (5). Hass defines phenomenology as the rigorous philosophical effort to articulate reality 'as it is lived and directly known' (55). As this thesis establishes, Merleau-Ponty and Hartnett share a similar philosophical positioning in that they are each focused on uncovering and

examining the features of reality as they are experienced. Hartnett draws attention to the visible and invisible in various ways; so that her novels reveal what is seen and not seen by her characters, whether as visual phenomena or through insight, and at the same time, exposes those discourses that construct what people are *meant* to see. To more fully appreciate the Gothic phenomenology that Hartnett creates, it is necessary to appreciate the meaning of the visible and the invisible in the context of phenomenology.

Hartnett uses Gothic affect to create an unsettling atmosphere or mood in her novels. When such presences occur in a literary context they call attention to aspects of the text and to things in the lived world that require scrutiny. It could be argued that reading is a purely cognitive behaviour and yet Gothic affect experienced while reading is embodied. It is the curl of apprehension in the stomach or a tingling of the spine, or just the desire to read quickly through a section of text so that the build of tension might be released. For example, when I read Hartnett's novel *Butterfly*, I read it in one sitting. I remember where I was but not how much time passed or if anything else was happening around me, yet the shock of the ending made me drop the book. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty refers to the triad of 'self-others-things' and Hass recalls that in his final writings the philosopher calls this triad 'the visible,' while the processes of thinking, language and knowing are called 'the invisible' (Hass 193). These concepts, combined, are used to explain perceptual experience as it is lived, whether in nature or culture. The visible is characterised by the ambiguity of synesthetic perception. For example, how does one see the brittleness of glass or the texture of honey? Why does one feel as well as hear a piece of music? Merleau-Ponty explains that this is something we have been conditioned to ignore because the discourse of science has gained prominence:

Synesthetic perception is the rule, and, if we do not notice it, this is because scientific knowledge displaces experience and we have unlearned seeing, hearing and sensing in general. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 238)

Synesthetic potentialities, then, are the norm for embodied experience. As well as the synesthetic experiences that occur while reading Hartnett's work, the tone and subtleties of language create and contribute to Gothic affect. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty is interested in how colour contributes to the form of objects as well as the play of light, reflection and shadows. These 'non-things' are overlooked yet haunt perception and enable us to see more than the object, just as when reading a tragic novel, a sense of foreboding might

accompany the plot line. Expression can be understood as the act of transforming ideas into words but can also indicate the non-verbal manifestation of emotion through mood, movement or intonation. In an interview with C. Bantick in 2009, Hartnett provides an example from *What the Birds See*: ‘despite the words you are reading, the plot or characters, the book has a tone of sadness or softness’ (3). In the same interview, she describes how the struggle with tone in *Butterfly* induced her to set the novel in the Australian summer because ‘the weather matches that kind of flatness of tone’. Hartnett sought to use this stubborn flatness ‘to be a kind of, not personification, but soundification of Plum’s emotional state’ (3). The influence of tone, or, to use Derrida’s term ‘frequency’ (133), is conveyed as part of an invisible field or non-verbal atmosphere that pre-exists the book. A useful analogy for understanding Hartnett’s term ‘soundification’ is provided by Merleau-Ponty’s collection of essays, *The World of Perception* from 1948, in which S.Mallarmé’s poetry is discussed. As a creation, the poetry is described as a multi-sensory perceptual experience rather than a work that can be translated into ideas. Merleau-Ponty then goes on to include other forms of literature in his analysis:

A successful novel would thus consist not in a succession of ideas or theses but would have the same kind of existence as an object of the senses or a thing in motion, which must be perceived in its temporal progression by embracing its particular rhythm and which leaves in the memory not a set of ideas but rather the emblem and the monogram of these ideas. (101)

Hartnett’s soundification or use of tone to express the relentlessness of the Australian heat functions as a kind of emblem that runs through the novel, affecting the characters but at the margins of their consciousness. Literary tropes, such as that of the lost child, can also be described as emblematic. Text can work on the subject at conscious and unconscious levels and the capacity to immerse oneself in the reading experience means opening the body to affective experience, just as one might perceive the mood of a piece of music without attending to each specific note. Literary criticism, however, to which my thesis contributes, must focus on the notes as well as the whole composition.

Although as a writer, Hartnett is inevitably concerned with representation, she uses the multi-sensory properties of language to challenge the assumption that representation is the primary way of thinking and knowing about the world. Creative expression blurs the boundaries between inside and outside, reality and representation. Writing is a *secondary* process which relies on a *primary* process of creative cognition that occurs within the

framework of experience in the real world. In a culture, normative discourses are absorbed so that they become part of an acquired world that people share. For example, the trope of white vanishing is defined by Tilley as ‘recurrent stories about white Australians who become lost or disappear into the landscape’ (1) and includes fictional and non-fictional accounts. Learning about Australia as part of an inherited past includes understanding its myths as well as its Indigenous and colonial history. Merleau-Ponty explains how, despite this familiarity, acquired worlds are open to modification which can lead to a double moment of sedimentation and creativity:

These acquired worlds, which give my experience its secondary sense, are themselves cut out of a primordial world that grounds the primary sense of my experience. Similarly, there is a world of thoughts, a sedimentation of our mental operations, which allows us to count on our acquired concepts and judgements, just as we count upon the things that are there and that are given as a whole without our having to repeat their synthesis at each moment. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 131)

In using the realist mode, Hartnett relies on those engaged in the reading process to begin mining for sedimented knowledge, which is culturally specific and contingent. She then supplies new information, Gothic imagery or subtleties of tone to surprise or challenge assumptions. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of expressive cognition comprises the relationship between already acquired knowledge and this process of spontaneous creative expression. One of my objectives in writing this thesis is to demonstrate how hauntology, as part of an Australian Gothic approach, can be applied to the analyses of the primary texts to examine the ways in which Hartnett uses the realist mode to convey the Gothic elements of daily life in contemporary settings, such as the family home; for, as B. Attebery contends, a writer uses literary modes as a way of constructing the organism which is the narrative, and the ‘words, sentences, imitations, and imaginings are respectively the atoms, molecules, tissues and organs’ (4). Just as the unity of the senses is necessary for perception to be effective, so the words in a narrative work together to produce the story which is *more than the sum of its parts*. As with Hartnett’s use of tone, the employment of the Gothic in her writing can be likened to the production of an art work or piece of music where the completed composition ‘speaks’ to us on more than one level and may challenge previous assumptions. At the same time, that art work is culturally inflected by its own time and place, and so is our experience of it as active perceivers.

As a graduate of Media Studies at Melbourne Institute of Technology, familiar with storyboarding techniques, Hartnett's various representations of characters who paint draws attention to aspects of her own, very visual narrative style. In reading Merleau-Ponty's work I was similarly struck by the frequent use of painting analogies. The overt or implied references to visual art from both writer and philosopher have created a synthesis which has ultimately affected the conceptual foundation of my thesis. It has also influenced the analyses of the thesis chapters. For example, my focus in chapter three is on the figure of the artist in the topos of the country town and the dominant discourses that affect subjectivity. Ideas of place, space and temporality are given the grounding of a specific culture and locality that enables an examination of the subject within the social spheres of the family and wider community. The Gothic illumines the boundaries that have been constructed in and by those spheres, and which prevent the sensible reciprocal integration of the subject with the world. To represent normative discourses as Gothic is to make them strange, and therefore visible and open to scrutiny. From my analysis this is what Hartnett's work achieves.

As a consequence, Hartnett's novels incorporate surprising encounters including and in addition to the Gothic, which make her characters bring to 'visibility' the normative discourses that, as part of culturally sedimented language, have morphed into an invisible field. These lived encounters enable characters to produce new expressive breakthroughs. For example, when Satchel O'Rye in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* meets a Tasmanian tiger in the bush, he mines his knowledge but does not recognise the creature. On learning that the animal is supposed to be extinct and understanding the colonial history and anthropocentric ideology that resulted in bounties for its slaughter, his compassion offers a more intersubjective mode of co-existence. As defined in the introduction (see p.11), such possibility of contact that could lead to new perceptions of community is called 'intersubjectivity' by Merleau-Ponty. This way of describing intersubjectivity is different from how it has been variously referred to in the field of children's literature. R. McCallum defines intersubjectivity as multivoiced narratives which use several character focalisers or narrators (23) whereas in *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature*, M. Nikolajeva describes the concept as the assemblage of a complex character using an interplay of different voices and perspectives. Defining intertextuality as the 'production of meaning from the interrelationships between audience, text, other texts, and the socio-cultural determinations of significance' (84), J. Stephens claims that 'intertextuality is

analogous to the intersubjectivity which human individuals experience in their day-to-day existence' and 'gives shape and purpose to individual subjectivity' (84). Hartnett uses intersubjectivity in different ways: firstly, to show the possibilities for empathic connectivity and thus problematise hegemonic discourses, especially that of anthropocentrism. With reference to McCallum's definition, Hartnett uses different character focalisers to build understanding concerning how a child might become culturally lost. Nikolajeva's definition is relevant to chapter five of the thesis, for in *Surrender* Hartnett constructs an interplay of different voices for the same character to indicate the complexities and spectral qualities of mental illness. Intertextuality is also used by Hartnett as a narrative technique; to show how history repeats and is experienced by the subject, as well as through reference to cultural tropes and norms that she adapts and develops.

What these different descriptions share is the notion that the boundary of the 'I' is permeable and always situated in a changing social context. The techniques enable the sharing of different perspectives on the world. The example from *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* forms part of the hauntology that contributes to the Australian Gothic aesthetic in several ways, beginning with what Derrida describes as the spectral 'visitation' (126). The encounter is ghostly in that the Tasmanian tiger is deemed extinct. Its presence is significant in that the connection formed between the tiger and protagonist, Satchel, challenges normative anthropocentric discourse and the colonial impetus. The seemingly resurrected tiger inheres in the wild landscape of the bush, which, instead of emanating hostility or melancholy, offers hope that begins with new ways of seeing. Derrida describes the importance of gaining insight by going beyond the merely visible, for 'One must see, at first sight, what does not let itself be seen. And this is invisibility itself' (187). This integration of subject with the world is akin to Merleau-Ponty's concept of the fold which, like the turning point of the fingertip in the glove, offers an intersection of possibility. The fold is betwixt and between; the vanishing point which is also the threshold for appearance. This concept is explored in more detail in the analyses of the primary texts in chapters two, three and four. I contend that the ambiguity of the vanishing point is a key point in understanding Hartnett's deployment of liminal figures and tropes, places and spectral presences.

## The Figure of the Ghost

In the thesis, the figure of the ghost or spectre is identified and analysed as connecting Hartnett's use of the Gothic with the ideas of visibility and invisibility that pervade her corpus. As an absent presence that problematises space and place (suggesting displacement and being 'out of place') and time (disrupting ideas of history and linearity), the ghost assists with Hartnett's deconstruction of binaries. For example, *Wilful Blue* features a dead protagonist, Guy, a young artist whose absent presence is evoked in the text through the memories of those who knew him. However, he also appears towards the end of the novel as a ghost to the character of Tilly, who is sole witness to the manifestation. It is suggested that what might be deemed irrational and immaterial can manifest as a visible and substantive phenomenon. The word 'spectre' is, after all, connected etymologically to visibility and vision; connoting that which is looking (or inspecting) and that which is looked at (i.e. a spectacle). This meaning is also explored as follows by Derrida who emphasises that visibility and invisibility are features of the spectre, and that the trope signifies the future as well as the past:

The specter, as its name indicates, is the *frequency* of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible. And visibility, by its essence, is not seen, which is why it remains *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond the phenomenon or beyond being. The specter is also, among other things, what one Imagines, what one thinks one sees and which one projects – on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see. (125, emphasis in original)

In *Wilful Blue*, the ghost of Guy has his back to Tilly, and is looking outwards; scrutinising the horizon as opposed to the insular alternatives he has left behind; namely the in-fighting of his dysfunctional family and the narrow, backward-looking perspective of Harriet, manager of the artists' retreat and commissioner of Guy's final painting - a portrait of the Heidelberg School of artists. Landscape art has contributed to Australia's sense of national identity and its continued popularity suggests a retrospective rather than forward-looking perspective on young, artistic endeavour and creative expression in the modern, cultural context. As a white discourse of land possession, it facilitates the colonial erasure of Aboriginal peoples by colluding in collective forgetting. That Guy is turned away from Tilly indicates another feature of the ghost; for as M. Pilar Blanco and E. Peeren describe, the spectre as a material and non-material trace remains unknowable and ambiguous (62). It evokes that which is excluded from thought through cultural amnesia and problematises the archive as a sanctioned repository of the past.

In Hartnett's novel, belief in the ghost translates into a gesture of faith which passes from Guy's friend to Guy's sister in the form of a letter from Tilly which describes the occurrence. Hartnett therefore uses the figure of the ghost in this novel as a positive indicator, for as D. Cavallaro comments, the discourse of spectrality has constructive potential and opens possibilities:

The rhetoric of haunting invites us to reassess culturally prescribed modes of perception and to suspend our disbelief in the face of what we have been trained to consider impossible. (viii)

Representations of the ghost have appeared in literatures at different times and in a variety of cultures, fulfilling a range of roles from the signification of madness to that of harmless messenger. For example, P. Buse and A. Stott maintain that the ghost of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's play arrives to influence his son's action, thereby destabilising the notion of the past as fixed and secure and the future as uncharted (14). More recently, the ghost has become useful within the emerging field of spectral studies as an analytical tool. From the 1990s, cultural criticism began to prefer the term 'spectrality' to 'ghostliness'. As indicated in the introduction to the thesis and above, an important work in relation to this scholarship has been J. Derrida's *Spectres de Marx*, originally published in French in 1993. While Derrida's re-reading of Marx has not always been positively critiqued, the notion that the ghost should be accepted as part of daily life has been widely taken up (see Pilar Blanco & Peeren 7). If, as Derrida suggests, the ghost can be lived with and its appearance and signification understood, then it can be deployed as a means of critiquing dominant discourses that relate to, for example, political, economic, social and ethical tenets and values.

The figure of the ghost is a central feature of hauntology. In *Hauntology: The Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature*, Shaw utilises P. Macherey's definition of hauntology as 'a science of ghosts, a science of what returns,' (Shaw 2) because, as she explains, hauntology is concerned with the destabilisation of space and time and with other existential boundaries such as being and non-being. Thus hauntology broadens our understanding of the spectral, and Derrida's call for tolerance of the ghost is associated with a reconfiguration of its presence beyond the spooky phenomena recorded by psychical research. This resonates with Hartnett's positive representations of ghosts or ghost-like figures in her novels. In contrast with Derrida and attempting to align psychoanalytic theory with science rather than the supernatural, Freud in his essay on *The*

*Uncanny* regards the fear of ghosts as akin to the behaviour of ‘savages’. He nevertheless admits that ‘the primitive fear of the dead is still so potent in us and ready to manifest itself if given any encouragement’ (149). Freud claims that an uncanny effect occurs ‘when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary’ (150). To illustrate his point, he refers to the example of a story he read in the English *Strand Magazine* which features a table with crocodiles carved in the wood, which are seemingly re-animated, and which haunt the occupants of a flat. Freud dismisses the story as naïve but acknowledges that its effect was uncanny. Freud’s dismissal of ghosts and then his recourse to a ghost story as exemplar for the uncanny is interesting. To experience the uncanny, one must have superseded or repressed such beliefs through education and the process of learning rational thought and societal norms. In other words, the rational subject learns to disbelieve in ghosts and the Gothic challenges this positioning through the witnessing of ghostly appearances by characters. In *Wilful Blue*, when Hartnett positions Guy’s ghost so that Tilly sees him, she confronts the human tendency to explain phenomena through rational thought, choosing instead to complicate this belief using visual perception. In doing so, she raises interesting questions concerning the reliability of accounts through bearing witness, compared with the supposed accuracy of historical and scientific discourse. The figure of the ghost as a visual phenomenon is described by Hartnett in an intriguing entry at the back of an untitled and undated notebook, discovered when I accessed her archive in 2014. Using the style of memoir Hartnett describes an experience while visiting a friend and emphasises her interest in the unexplained as follows:

There is a ghost in my friend’s house. I saw her, not once but twice. Small, dark, a touch rotund, she was an Italian Matriarch, dressed in mourning black. Both times she snuck up behind me when my friend’s back was turned; both times she was real enough to converse with, so real that I almost rose from my chair, blushing, to meet her. I say blushing because she looked at me in no friendly way. She did not want me in my friend’s house. She’d obviously adopted him as her own. I told my friend of these strange visitations, but he laughed and said he did not believe in ghosts. I did not tell him that neither do I.

I held my peace and looked around and later thought it strange that he should not believe in ghosts because in fact his house is full of them, hanging from wire in picture frames around the walls, staring through sepia and glass, heavy browed, harshly clothed and all wearing the look of sturdy severity that everyone’s dead ancestors seem to have made perfect.

He is walled and guarded by a thousand ghosts, my friend, as, I suppose, are we all, but some stay behind the glass, while others prowl the rooms on the lookout, ready to chase the unwanted away. (n.p.)

The irruption of the ghost into the present of the material world as represented by the text, complicates constructed visions of nation and versions of the past that have become part of collective memory. In other words, the ghost as deployed by Hartnett to challenge and critique normative discourses and as a recurring conceptual metaphor, can be recruited to help theorise an hauntology that illumines and develops the Australian Gothic.

### **A History of the Gothic through Landscape**

To appreciate how Hartnett uses Australian Gothic topographies in new ways, this section briefly traces the use of Gothic landscape in literature before moving on to describe the features of the Australian Gothic as the sub-genre has been previously delineated and understood. Landscape in literature conveys a sense of place that compares with the ‘real’ world of the reader and functions metaphorically to convey affective qualities such as mood and atmosphere; sometimes to the extent that the landscape is perceived as antagonist, as with the example of the colonial Australian Gothic. Furthermore, certain settings have become associated with specific genres and are instantly recognisable as tropes. These powerful metaphors evolve so that they are deployed over time and in different places to construct, negotiate or resist the hegemonic, conformist discourses of a nation’s culture. For example, the ruined, decaying building in a European setting represents the decline of the aristocracy and is associated with the European origins of the Gothic which can be traced to the publication of Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* in 1764.

As a symbol of feudal, patriarchal power, the castle represents a monument to the past and in its ruined form is a liminal topos. This is because the ruin is at once a material and non-material trace denoting presence and absence. The architectural remains of the building suggest at the same time those traces that are absent, which as Anderson describes, include emotional spaces (10). In my article of 2015 on Hartnett’s novel *The Children of the King*, I suggest that while the ruin represents a material trace of the deterioration of wealth and power, its liminality ‘is a form of haunting representing both the accessibility and inaccessibility of history’ (42). With its dungeons, multiple rooms and labyrinths of corridors and tunnels, the structure also suggests disturbed mental states of repression, confinement, trauma, concealment or the search for meaning. In two of Hartnett’s novels, *Princes* and *Thursday’s Child*, the castle labyrinth is re-configured as a suburban cellar or,

in the latter novel, as the tunnelling undertaken by a child who rejects the encultured life on the surface for an alternative underground existence. In Hartnett's novels, young male protagonists are just as likely to suffer from psychological deterioration as women, rather than the single emphasis being placed on female hysteria, such as in the examples that follow. The Southern European setting used by Walpole was popularised by A. Radcliffe with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794. The narrative combines an isolated fortress with the threat of the Gothic heroine's psychological disintegration. The topos as representative of psychological states was developed in 1839 by the American Gothic writer, E. A. Poe, with "The Fall of the house of Usher" (Usher's sister is deemed mad and buried alive) and continued through a plethora of nineteenth century novels that feature country estates. Examples of narratives from the British Gothic that combine ideas of place with spectral presences and psychological elements are *Jane Eyre* by C. Brontë, published in 1847, in which Rochester's first wife, Bertha Mason is confined in the house through supposed madness; *The Turn of the Screw* by H. James, published in 1898, which is ambiguously a ghost story and a novel of psychological deterioration experienced by a governess; and in the twentieth century, there are the following: the absent presence of the titular *Rebecca* in the 1938 novel by D. du Maurier and the 1983 horror novella *The Woman in Black* by S. Hill, where the female ghost is deranged. The country house trope is also employed by J. Rhys in a re-writing of *Jane Eyre* which challenges colonial patriarchy. Rhys re-imagines the circumstances that culminate in the burning of Rochester's ancestral home by his Creole wife, Bertha Mason, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, published in 1966. Rhys interrogates Brontë's construction of the character of Bertha, who represents the conflation of savagery (as racial Other) and woman (as irrational Other).

The Gothic elements of the above examples use ideas of the spectral to deconstruct the normative discourse of permanency as conveyed by the built environment. They point toward the triumph of nature over culture; the inevitable reversion to entropy signalled by death, the abjection of the corpse and eventual decay. Where the triumph of culture occurs, as in Heathcliff's doomed project of revenge in *Wuthering Heights* by E. Brontë (published 1847), it explains and justifies the patriarchal status quo but also preserves the ideology of capitalism. In the example of *Wuthering Heights* this is expressed through the marriage of Hareton to the heiress Catherine Linton. Anxieties over wealth and power are at the heart of the colonial Gothic in its various forms. American writer, I. Levin, transfers these fears from the colonial Gothic to a modern context to interrogate the ideology of the American

Dream in *The Stepford Wives*. Published in 1972, the country house setting is updated to that of the modern suburb. In using the Australian suburb and country towns as Gothic topographies in which to critique normativity by focusing on the subjectivities of children and young adults, Hartnett updates colonial incarnations of the Gothic and contributes to the construction of a modern Australian Gothic aesthetic. The contemporary topographies that are represented in her novels and the ways in which she deploys the evolving trope of the lost child add to the wider literary Gothic tradition of problematising ideas of home.

In many ways the Gothic resists definition because it actively seeks to complicate disciplinary boundaries influencing architecture, literature, fashion, Goth sub-culture, music and visual media. In this vein, Punter and Byron assert that what constitutes the Gothic remains ‘a highly contested issue’ (ix), while C. Spooner, speaking of contemporary Gothic, states that the genre provides ‘a language and a lexicon through which anxieties both personal and collective can be narrativized’ (9). In the Australian Gothic the boundary between nature and culture is scrutinised and Spooner’s connection between the Gothic and cultural unease is also pertinent in this context; so too is her list of Gothic themes, below, concerning the relationship between constructions of Otherness and an inherited past in the colonial context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but which she claims are still relevant to contemporary culture:

the legacies of the past and its burdens on the present; the radically provisional or divided nature of the self, the construction of peoples or individuals as monstrous or ‘other’; the preoccupation with bodies that are modified, grotesque or diseased. (8)

In the colonial context of the literary Gothic, the past is associated with terror more than with idealism or nostalgia. Punter offers a helpful distinction between terror and horror which relates to the spectral poetics of the visible and invisible used to structure the analyses of Hartnett’s texts. Punter states that terror is associated with anticipation, a liminal state of waiting or suspension, and this intangibility is associated with the invisible. On the other hand, horror is more confrontational, involving the act of staring with shock or surprise (236), and this scopic quality connects with the immediacy of the visual and corporeal. For example, the terror associated with colonial anxiety combines traumatic events from a hidden past with the anticipation of return or retribution. From my reading of Hartnett’s work and of Gothic fiction more widely, I would agree with Cavallaro in his assertion that terror and horror interact, for:

Such narratives intimate that fear is not triggered by a single disturbing moment or occurrence but is actually a permanent, albeit multi-faced, aspect of being-in-the-world. Concrete and intangible phenomena contribute equally to its dynamics. (6)

The confrontation associated with horror and the anticipatory fear of terror, which may connect with the future or a return from the past, are combined in a spectral visitation. Although as J. Wolfreys insists in *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*: ‘The spectral or uncanny effect is not simply a matter of seeing a ghost. The haunting process puts into play a disruptive structure’ and so the phantom can also be a gap or non-material trace that cannot be reduced to a ‘stabilised representation’ (6). The terror and horror dialectic that forms part of subjective experience, fits with the phenomenological positioning that I have attributed to Hartnett, reflecting the struggles of her young protagonists to overcome their worries and fears concerning adult power that build inexorably, often with tragic consequences. Home for these young people frequently represents confinement which they try to make sense of in the wider socio-political context of a nation still coming to terms with its history: an inheritance that they experience obliquely through the discourses that circulate in their families and communities. C. Baldick’s more abstract and fluid definition of the Gothic allows for cultural and historical contingency and is also appropriate for the construction of a modern hauntology to critique Hartnett’s representations of the Australian Gothic:

A fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration. (xix)

A sense of entrapment connects with Australia’s convict past, the relatively isolated position of the continent and white anxieties concerning the perceived threat of Aborigines. Narratives of the lost white child, such as those produced by Hartnett, are symptoms of this entrapment, in which the dimensions of time and space converge at the vanishing point.

### **The Haunted Australian Landscape**

I have already explained in the introduction that an ideology of invisibility, *terra nullius*, was a fiction developed to justify colonisation because it suggested that Australia was uninhabited (see p.16). Yet the land had already been occupied by Aborigines for around 45,000 years. *Terra nullius* was a European concept used to erase Indigenous rights over the land. Connected with the legitimisation of dispossession is the creation of a discourse of nation that consolidates white Australia’s status and identity in the world. This discourse

relied on the deployment of national types and metaphoric representations appearing widely in fictional and non-fictional accounts. I have already discussed the trope of the white lost child and Tilley has examined what being lost or disappearing into the landscape might symbolise (7) or, in other words, what cultural work it performs. Tilley defines whiteness as interchangeable with the migrant coloniser or ‘an imagined community’ encompassing ‘any non-indigenous subject in the Australian context’ (17); a definition that includes a modern, multicultural Australia. Tilley draws attention to the discourse of dispossession that is embedded in white vanishing texts (44) and the displacement of Indigenous peoples which reflected white anxieties (53). Tilley explains the ambiguity of black displacement as encompassing a ‘fatal-impact doctrine’ associated with vanishing race theory and a nostalgic impulse that memorialises the perceived positive aspects of an Indigenous culture and subjectivity (56). Nostalgia is experienced as a lack or loss of the racial Other so that colonial anxieties are projected onto the natural landscape of the bush which becomes, as Steele describes, a ghostly or ‘occulted’ site (37). These white, lost child narratives elided the displacement of Aborigines while at the same time implying their absence. The indigenous landscape is therefore configured as a haunted landscape from the time of colonisation. Hartnett adapts the significations of the lost child from colonial literature as well as those of the feral child, applying the tropes to a contemporary Australian cultural context so that they take on new meanings. To understand the ways in which the Australian Gothic is constructed of absent presences, it is necessary to trace how the Gothic developed in the Australian context.

The spread of colonisation occurred from 1788 and continued into the twentieth century, whereas the settlement of major Australian cities such as Melbourne occurred in the early part of the nineteenth century. Settlement therefore coincided with the emergence of the Gothic novel as a strongly defined genre in Britain. Gelder and Weaver state that while European and American Gothic tropes were re-staged in the Australian colonial context, there was also a departure from them, enabling the development of a unique genre (3). Poe’s tale, “The Fall of the House of Usher” is referenced intertextually through the burning of the Australian outback homestead in H. Nisbet’s short story, “The Haunted Station” from 1894. The trauma of colonisation is recorded in the land but the attempted erasure of the racial Other leads to colonial guilt and anxiety, and this is reflected in the literature. In “Doomed” by E. Favenc, published in 1899, the ghosts of a murdered Aboriginal mother and her child exact revenge on the white men responsible, reflecting

fears of racial retaliation. In other tales, the Aborigine is referenced obliquely, through appearances of creatures from the Dreaming (a process through which Aboriginal culture is passed on to future generations), such as the Bunyip in R.C. Praed's short story of that name from 1891, or as part of a hostile indigenous nature. It was not until May 1967 that a referendum awarded citizenship to Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. J. Rickard comments on Aboriginal absence from white society as follows: 'Aborigines [...] were not part of the colonists' society, but rather a legacy of the conquered environment' (102). Nevertheless, Aborigines remained as real presences with agency, inhabiting white society at its margins, and haunted the literature to expose white patriarchal violence as the above reference to Favenc's short story exemplifies.

Hartnett's review of *Wolf Creek*, an Australian Gothic film referred to earlier and based on the real life Falconio murder case of 2001, focuses on the actions of a serial murderer who demonstrates an extreme, aggressive masculinity that is initially suppressed to lure his potential victims. Hartnett's novels also feature dangerous patriarchal characters, but unlike the killer in *Wolf Creek*, these men can be located not just in the bush, but in the suburbs and small country towns. They are friends, fathers, husbands, sons and neighbours and this makes them even more terrifying, especially as Hartnett's representations comprise a counter-discourse to those promoted by the nation's cultural history, as explained below.

Late colonial literature from the 1890s played an important role in creating a sense of national identity. In the introduction to *My Brilliant Career*, published in 1901 by feminist novelist M. Franklin, C. Callil names Lawson, "Banjo" Paterson of 'Waltzing Matilda' fame, and W. Ogilvie as examples of *fin de siècle* writers who were 'exuberant, masculine, openly chauvinistic both politically and sexually' (n.p.). Despite a predominantly urban population, as Callil points out, the 'real' Australian was the country bushman who possessed the code of 'mateship', independence and a sense of solidarity with the working man:

'Man' is the operative word in this ethos, and indeed it has little place for or interest in its womenfolk, except as the suffering and passive recipients of the lives allotted them by the brave men with whom they lived, and the tough circumstances of Australian bush life. (n.p.)

Franklin's female protagonist chooses economic hardship and independence over married wealth and domestic comfort, confounding reader expectation concerning the ideal outcome for the Romantic heroine. By contrast, Lawson (1867-1922) was viewed by

Democratic Nationalists as providing a myth of origin for Australian Nationalism; a cultural code consisting of social harmony, optimism and the determination to resist the harsh natural environment (Schaffer 41). Yet the presence of mentally ill women characters in Lawson's novels belies such optimism, signifying instead fears of chaos or becoming lost physically and psychologically; a condition described as 'bushed'. Whereas the bush woman is depicted within masculinist discourse as saintly and resilient, as with the example of Lawson's short story published in 1892, "The Drover's Wife", her identity (for she remains unnamed by Lawson) only has meaning in relation to her husband. To more fully understand Hartnett's representations of women, then, it is necessary to understand the types of dominant masculinity that have been used to construct ideas of national identity and which the Gothic tends to critique.

The masculinist discourse of the bushman was followed by that of the digger, which also contributed to the construction of national identity. In a recent military history article, N. Smith claims that the genesis of the word 'digger' has been debated 'for over eight decades' (1). Smith alludes to the use by Shakespeare of the term 'British diggers' in the 1600s and in the Boer War the term 'digger' was applied to Australian miners working in South Africa who were recruited to fight. Referring to a study of correspondence from World War One, Smith has discovered that Australian and New Zealand soldiers were collectively and individually referred to as Diggers by mid-1917 due to the need to dig the land and tunnel during the Gallipoli landings. They were seen to embody a resilience of spirit that had also been applied to those who participated in the Australian goldfield diggings.

In addition to the changes wrought on the natural environment through colonisation, the gold rush represented another call to conquer the land. In Hartnett's home state of Victoria, the gold rush occurred between 1851 and the late 1860s, and privileged quick access to wealth over rites of passage in the bush, with the land re-configured as a promise of utopia. Those men who participated embodied the 'digger' spirit of independence and, as Rickard explains, it 'encouraged the illusion of democracy, for all men seemed equal in the physical labour of extracting it [gold] from the ground' (34). However, fierce competition for wealth eroded the myth of mateship and led to acts of plundering, lynching and abuse. This is reflected in the Australian Gothic through perversion of character inspired by greed. The short story from 1867, "Little Liz", by B.L. Farjeon, focuses on the double-crossing of a mate over the location of riches, and this leads to a child's murder. The narrative calls into

question the suitability and safety of the goldfields as a place to raise a child. In this narrative, the lost child is the victim of patriarchy rather than the bush, initiating a reinterpretation that would be developed in Gothic narratives by J. Lindsay and Hartnett. In the 1930s Depression era novel, *Thursday's Child*, analysed in chapter four of my thesis, Hartnett re-imagines the digger mythology in the context of poverty and social class, and develops Farjeon's interrogation of parental roles and responsibilities. Hartnett also critiques the 'Soldier Settler Scheme' described by Rickard, in which State Governments provided land for soldier farms and the Australian Government provided 'start-up' funds. Rickard describes how soldier settlers 'were encouraged to take up farming on land which was often too marginal and on blocks too small to support them' (178). These factors, explains Rickard, combined with lack of farming experience, long drought and falling prices for farm products in the 1920s meant that many veterans faced debt and their farms failed. The 'digger' myth accompanied Australia's men into battle during the First and Second World Wars; the casualties incurred by Australia and New Zealand in the Gallipoli Campaign (1915-1916) constructed the national type of the ANZAC soldier, which persisted through to the Vietnam War (1955-1975). The controlling character of Griffin Willow in Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs* is a Vietnam veteran and his subsequent disengagement with society is symptomatic of the damage to the psyche wrought by his experiences and consequent disillusionment with the nation's ideals.

The constructions of masculinity that have been promoted as part of national identity were based on a myth of colonial optimism based on possession of the land that Australian Gothic writers interrogate from the time of the *fin de siècle* into the present day. Australian historian, W.K. Hancock, outlines the continuation of bush ideology to the country town and suburb, asserting that the bushman as a national type will pass on the pioneer's ideology to the pastoralists of the 1830s and then on to twentieth century businessmen (Schaffer 28). National types such as 'the bushman' and 'the digger' represent a type of masculinity that is physically strong and manly, noble, independent, courageous; likewise, the squatter representing powerful and exploitative characteristics. Wild nature, as primal mother, is located outside of the Law of the Father and the symbolic code and represents a threat to unity for masculine identity, which relies on a perceived natural order ordained by God in which man would 'have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth' (*King James Bible*, Genesis. 1.26). The absence or passivity of women in

relation to these constructions continued with the post-war discourse that encouraged women to return from their wartime duties to embrace the domestic situation of the home. Hartnett's representations of mothers and wives is a commentary on modernity in that, although the position of women in relation to the power of patriarchy has improved, there are still areas where women are under-represented and oppressed.

Women have also been absent from a good deal of the discourse of what constitutes Australian national identity, which, as Schaffer describes it, constructed 'a specifically masculinist cultural identity across class divisions and academic disciplines' (30). In reading Hartnett's oeuvre, I became very conscious of the absence or absent presence of mothers, who are represented as ineffectual or incapacitated through some indefinable illnesses, for instance, in *Sleeping Dogs* and *What the Birds See*. Sometimes they seem too busy to care properly for their children due to economic hardship, as in *Thursday's Child*, and *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, or appear uncaring, as in *Princes*, *Surrender*, or *The Ghost's Child*. This recurring pattern seems more than a simple plot device to enable children to take control and develop agency. Indeed, Hartnett's young protagonists struggle in this respect, as they suffer from a lack of agency as a consequence of the effects of patriarchal power and other discourses that also lead to an equivalent incapacity and lack of agency in the case of women.

A brief account of the position of women as represented in discourses of national identity and in the literature, which critiques these constructions, helps to situate Hartnett's work in this regard. In a feminist reading of landscape in Australia the land takes on the attributes of masculine desire. Schaffer traces the idea of a national character as taking shape from the 1930s with the publication of Hancock's historical text, *Australia*. Schaffer describes *Australia* as 'a history of land settlement', and that 'a central preoccupation of the text' was 'The idea of the land 'signified as woman, as a body to be shaped, conquered and civilised by man' (78) This pre-occupation was then translated into a discourse of possession through the activities of naming and claiming the land, which then offers a sense of identity to the subject (80). In Schaffer's opinion, national identity is established through a masculine relationship to the land and this also maintains the interests of dominant social, religious and political institutions (81). The land is constructed as a metaphor for feminine Otherness and a site of conflict in which discourses compete for power. After Federation in 1901, British authority ended but the limitations of Australian mastery were exemplified by the challenges inflicted by the natural world, such as drought, bushfires, floods and

poisonous fauna and flora. These are blamed on the 'land-as-woman' which denies full possession and challenges national identity, and, as Schaffer contends, there is a horror of threatened absorption by a pre-Oedipal mother (86). Schaffer's assertions are reflected in J. Lindsay's novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* which, while published in 1967 (the year in which Aborigines gained citizenship) is set during another key transition year: 1900. The plot centres on the disappearance of three pubescent girls and their teacher of mathematics, who are seemingly absorbed by the indigenous landscape. This primordial act denies the consummation of patriarchal desire and exceeds rational explanation. My article (Miller 2017) focuses on Lindsay's chapter eighteen, posthumously published in 1987, which emphasises feminist aspects of the text, such as the girls' discarded corsets, which are symbolic objects of confinement, and which float, like 'a fleet of little ships', suspended in the air (28). This is followed by the girls' final voluntary descent below ground. The main point here is that the conflation of women with the indigenous landscape has been problematised by the Gothic, as demonstrated in the examples that follow.

Baynton's tale, "A Dreamer" in *Bush Studies*, follows the efforts of a white woman walking through the outback to her mother's house during a storm, in which the elements conspire against her:

Malignantly the wind fought her, driving her back, or snapping the brittle stems from her skinned hands. The water was knee-deep now, and every step more hazardous. (218)

The woman's perception of the elements softens as she reaches safety, yet she has only narrowly escaped death (219). The ambiguity of the story's title suggests sympathy with the racial Other, but ideas of belonging dissipate when she reaches the homestead to find her mother dead in an upstairs room and strangers in the house. This return to the *unheimlich* atmosphere, initially generated by the storm, denies narrative resolution because the woman has estranged herself from two mothers: her own, whom she has neglected, and the primal earth mother. Ideas of 'home' are problematised for those perceived as Other, which includes women, as the following chapters discuss, and remain central to the Australian Gothic from colonial through to modern times.

Australian Gothic narratives that critique the position of women during settlement focus on white patriarchy as the most significant threat to the welfare of the nation. Thus Baynton's short story, "The Chosen Vessel", also from *Bush Studies*, presents her protagonist's husband as a bully who taunts her for her fears, while his job as a sheep shearer means that

he is frequently absent. When a predatory swagman terrorises the woman and her child, causing them to escape from the house, a passer-by ignores their peril, blinded by his Catholicism, and sees only the vision of an idealised, Madonna-like image of a woman and child in the landscape. The implied criticism of how a normative discourse such as religion can limit perception and understanding is relevant to how Hartnett, herself educated by nuns, also approaches this topic. As with the Gothic ruin, it is the cracks in the wall of the bush hut that indicate fissures in the safety and resilience of the domestic space of the home. There are similar flaws in the structure of the hut in Lawson's famous tale, "The Drover's Wife". The man of the house is absent in this tale also and it is left to the wife and family dog to kill a snake that threatens their safety. The isolated woman under siege in the bush is a theme that is developed in G. Lord's novel, *Tooth and Claw*, published in 1983, in which two men terrorise the protagonist, Beth, until she retaliates by becoming, in turn, aggressor and gaoler. In a Gothic reading, Beth's attempt to live self-sufficiently in the bush has changed her, and she has become 'unhomely', as the antithesis of the 'Angel in the House' (see p.56 of this thesis) and in the sense of Freud's theory of the uncanny, in which what was familiar and homely has become strange or *unheimlich* (see p.15). While Australian women writers from the *fin de siècle*, such as Baynton and Praed, enter the discourse from a marginalised location, they must nevertheless engage with the symbolic order by using language. Identifying with the land and the fauna against patriarchy can be re-imagined so that mastery of it (and of women) is resisted. Lord, in the modern context, complicates ideas of the helpless woman as victim in the bush setting, for her widowed and self-sufficient protagonist Beth, who leads an isolated rural existence, managing a farm, uses the natural phenomenon of a beehive to blind one of her attackers. As with Baynton's tales, Lord identifies white patriarchal figures motivated by greed as the Gothic villains, and as the main source of damage, whether physical or psychological, to women. The mothers and wives in Hartnett's novels are also damaged in a variety of ways. Their perceived powerlessness combined with the inherited normativity of patriarchal discourse inevitably impacts on the child.

In the introduction to this thesis I briefly discussed the tropes of the white child lost in the bush and narratives of white vanishing which have been a feature of the literature, fictional and non-fictional, and of Australian Gothic literature, since accounts of exploration of the continent began. That the landscape appeared to actively resist colonisation is noted by P. Conrad who states that early explorers died because they lacked the experience and skills

of Aboriginal peoples, who could identify edible roots, grubs and locate water. Because of this perceived resistance by the land, Conrad explains how difficult it was for artists to represent the landscape as emanating from within a Romantic tradition (22). As this tradition is referenced directly in Hartnett's novels, I explore the issues in more detail in chapter three. Australia's interior consists mainly of hot and inhospitable desert; its very openness is paradoxically a form of entrapment. In the Gothic it represents a fear of the void. R. MacFarlane comments, in his introduction to P. White's novel *Voss*, that it is 'a psychodrama played out on an ancient terrain' (xii). The narrative, published in 1957, is based on the expedition of Ludwig Leichardt, a Prussian naturalist who set out between 1844 and 1848 to explore the Australian interior. He and his party disappeared while attempting the first east-west crossing of the continent. This can be likened to the fate of the Burke and Wills expedition of 1860-1861 which crossed from north to south but did not return. MacFarlane concludes that White's critique of patriarchal hubris, is exemplified by the phenomenological dissolution of the subject-object divide, when the transparency of Voss' skin resembles water (xv). White does not, therefore, blame the natural landscape for white vanishings, representing the land as ambivalent rather than hostile, and this resonates with Hartnett's representations, thus challenging an accepted normativity.

For the normativity of dominant discourses to be made visible, they must also be exposed as strange within the topographies that subjects inhabit. This is the impetus for a modern hauntology which develops the Australian Gothic and in Hartnett's work this estrangement is achieved by focusing on vulnerable white children and young adults who experience such discourses and their effects in daily life, whether in rural or suburban locations, historical or contemporary timeframes. Not yet independent, they must negotiate identity within an unequal system of power relations. Recalling Baldick's definition, their world is Gothic because there is a sense of inheritance in time due to the normative discourses that are passed between generations, combined with enclosure as represented by the domestic space of the home. Children and young adults inhabit an environment of estrangement that threatens hope; a future perceived as flawed and which cannot be reconciled with a national discourse of optimism. The deployment of spectral presences is manifested by non-material traces such as memory, hallucinations, intertexts and dreams. The spectres ever present at the shoulder of young subjectivities, however, are those normative discourses that are constructed by culture and cause unease and suffering that the child struggles to articulate. In contrast, nature, in Hartnett's work, is neither feminised nor

threatening but is used by Hartnett to suggest an ambivalence that is in contrast with the anthropocentric discourse of humankind, to which it can also fall victim.

### **Place and Space**

I have described in the introduction how Hartnett attributes ideas of place as central to her corpus and to identity, even though the feeling of belonging to a place remains elusive.

Hartnett's description affirms that ideas of place are individual and contingent.

Moreover, space and place are contested terms and are continually being re-defined. For example, Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that space is 'that which allows movement', whereas 'place is pause', each concept requiring the other for definition (6). The fluidity of space accords with D. Abram's description of the invisible air as breath, which moves between world and body, connecting 'inner' with 'outer' (15). This connection is evident in those of Hartnett's novels that focus on mental illness, such as *Surrender*. She also uses this movement to de-centre anthropocentric positioning. In *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, the young protagonist and the Tasmanian tiger expel the same frosty air. This latter example reveals how a subject may open a space by producing more than is usually visible. The cold air makes the breath visible, its description forging a connection between human and non-human in different parts of the text. Merleau-Ponty grounds the subject firmly in the biosphere, stating: 'I never live entirely within these anthropological spaces; I am always rooted in a natural and non-human space' (*Phenomenology of Perception* 307). The word 'root' suggests an embodied perspective with temporal-spatial co-ordinates, even if these are temporary and contingent, but there is also a reminder in this comment that, as Hartnett's insists, the world is shared with others, whether human or non-human.

Places, whether fictional or actual locations, are sites of shifting signification that are historically and culturally contingent. Material markers such as ruins, memorials or artefacts record the presence of subjects and these form traces which in turn impact on the topography and on the subject. Non-material traces can be identified as memories (collective or individual), moods or atmosphere, which, due to their invisibility are hard to isolate and examine but can gain clarity and power when represented through discourse. A workable definition of place is necessary for the thesis and the fields of both cultural and human geography are helpful in this regard. Anderson suggests that ideas of place have been helpful in moving away from the static entity of 'landscape' to consider a wider variety of sites within culture, such as places, parks or texts as systems of representation

(29). While landscape is certainly applicable to my analyses of the artist in the country town in chapter two, the broader understanding of place enables the thesis to shift its focus from the bush to other types of locale, which fits with the thesis objectives. Cresswell states that with landscape, the subject is positioned outside of it, whereas places are things that the subject can be positioned *within* (10). For the thesis, this enables the consideration of the home and community as types of places and even the mind as an embodied topography inhabited by the subject. Cresswell also acknowledges the circulation of discourses that affect the subject's experience of place: 'Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power' (12). The reference to power recalls the fiction of *terra nullius* and in considering the dialectic of place and space it can sometimes be important to distinguish them, as C. Bradford and R. Baccolini assert, for colonised peoples have intensely local, grounded identities (37). Nevertheless, place and space, are dialectical paradigms that cannot be separated and are not separated in Hartnett's work. Cresswell's definition of place and space is therefore most relevant to the thesis.

### **The Borderland of 'Inside' and 'Outside'**

In phenomenology, evocative and affective language is used to draw attention to something specific in direct, lived experience; to make it visible and felt, synaesthetically, in a multi-sensory way. Similarly, in the Gothic, language can draw attention to lived experience to critique issues within society, making them visible to the reader. Using the Gothic within the realist mode, as Hartnett does, is just one method by which the phenomenological reading experience is achieved. Merleau-Ponty also employs Gothic metaphors as examples to underpin his philosophy and draws these examples from lived experience. For instance, he uses the trope of doubling (autoscopy) to explain how external perception is synonymous with the perception of one's own body (*Phenomenology of Perception* 212). Hartnett's metaphors are also drawn from 'the real' and elicit an emotional response so that connections are made between the world of the text and the lived world of the reader. In other words, Hartnett uses fictional experiences to create a phenomenological response. For example, in visual art, the vanishing point is a place where horizons intersect, while in collective memory, the idea of vanishing is attributed to the lost white child. Hartnett connects these ideas by frequently making her characters disappear, some to explore horizons from which they cannot return as in *Wilful Blue*, *The Ghost's Child*, *Thursday's Child* and *Surrender*, and others to re-negotiate their positioning, as in *All My Dangerous Friends*, *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, and *Golden Boys*. Hartnett uses the axis of time and

space to position the child within a location or place, as a figure in the landscape, and the teleology of the novel's plot maps a journey to a vanishing point.

I would here like to build on the idea of vanishing points in the context of the thesis. For Merleau-Ponty a perspective or 'object-horizon structure' (*Phenomenology of Perception* 70), is temporal and spatial. Just because the act of seeing involves focusing on an object, does not mean that other objects cease to be there. The horizon 'assures the identity of the object throughout the exploration' (70). Through the act of remembering the horizon of the past can alter perception in the present 'as if lived anew in their own temporal place' (23). Similarly, the imminent future will have 'its own horizon of imminence'. Just as 'Each moment of time gives itself as a witness to all the others' (71), so Hartnett uses time and place to show the cause and effect relationship between normative, hegemonic discourses and the lost white child. Merleau-Ponty's idea that 'the object is seen from all times just as it is seen from all places' (71), enables the imagining of an object when it is no longer present, or to hold in memory the immediate past. In other words, through perception, the subject can make the invisible, visible once more. In relation to the spectral, there is always more in the world than can be seen at first glance. For instance, when Hartnett uses unreliable narrators, or focalises a narrative through different characters, the reader is invited to think about how memory functions imperfectly as historical record or how culture colludes in collective forgetting. Inconsistencies when remembering reveal that memory is flawed and that attempts to fix perceptions of past events as substantive and incontrovertible are non-achievable. As Merleau-Ponty affirms, 'it is my past such as I now see it, and I have perhaps altered it' (*Phenomenology of Perception* 72). Some histories function as grand narratives and others are given insufficient attention because they are inconvenient truths. Just as an object retains invisible properties that are not seen, so there is no absolute truth of the past. However, the Gothic denies a nostalgic perspective. Place as well as time can never be visited twice from the same perspective: they form boundaries around elements of experience.

The sixth objective of the thesis is to examine how the boundaries of 'inside' and 'outside' are breached in Hartnett's work. To inform my analyses of Hartnett's novels that are concerned with mental illness in chapter four, and especially that of *Surrender* whose protagonist suffers hallucinations, I draw on Merleau-Ponty's concept of the phantom limb, which is helpful in metaphorizing the experience of an ambivalent presence rather than a representation. The phantom limb, like a suppressed memory, repressed experience or

trauma, cannot remain in the past. It is a haunting that has emotion at the heart of it. If memory and emotion can make the phantom limb come into presence, argues Merleau-Ponty, it is because they 'are equivalent with regard to being in the world' (*Phenomenology of Perception* 88). The stimulations coming from the stump reserve the place of the limb and maintain a void that the history of the subject will fill through remembered connections both psychically and through body memory. Psychological motives and bodily events overlap in a back-and-forth movement that is vital, animistic and inherent:

The psychical and the physiological can be related through exchanges that prevent almost every attempt to define a mental disturbance as either psychic or somatic. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 90)

The example of the phantom limb shows how the blurring of boundaries between mind and body occurs. Perceptions of the real and of time, which is lived through the body rather than being external to it, are complicated by Gothic experiences of phantasmagoria: dreams, suppressed memories, visions or mirages which as daydreams could be pleasant but within psychosis might be horrific. The phantom limb complicates ideas of 'inside' and 'outside' and exemplifies the embodied haunting of memory. It represents a phantom, the ghostly presence of its twin, and resonates with ideas of the Gothic double: an absent presence that is connected with the subject's experience of loss. The trope of the *doppelgänger* occurs in three of Hartnett's novels which include protagonists who suffer from mental illness. In the example of Hartnett's *Surrender*, the protagonist's hallucination represents a lack: the yearning for a best friend and co-conspirator. Melancholy in Hartnett's novels is projected onto the social and cultural sphere rather than the natural landscape of the bush, this latter representing the topos for the projection of colonial anxieties, as explained below.

The interior state of melancholy connects with colonial representations of the bush as a metaphoric place of confinement that is pervaded by an atmosphere of loss and sadness which Steele connects with colonial guilt and the associated absence of the racial other (36). M. Clarke, writing a preface for the poems of A. L. Gordon in 1876, describes his impressions of the indigenous flora and fauna and is quoted in Gelder and Weaver as follows:

In the Australian forests, no leaves fall. The savage winds shout among the rock clefts. From the melancholy gums strips of white bark hang and rustle. The very animal life of these frowning hills is either grotesque or ghostly. (3)

Melancholy involves trying to sustain a connection with that which is already lost (Steele 37). The melancholic atmosphere of the bush has been a projection of the national psyche because, as Steele describes, an insistence on the physical landscape as responsible ‘denies the part representations play in moulding European perceptions’ (43). This is re-configured by Hartnett in the modern context. Instead of landscape, it is adults and adult discourses that must bear responsibility for Hartnett’s protagonists when they experience melancholy for the loss of optimism about their futures, and lack the love, care and understanding that they need from within their own culture: from family, peers and community. Melancholy people undermine the power of the symbolic code, as Kristeva affirms in *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*: ‘melancholy people are witnesses/accomplices of the signifier’s flimsiness, the living being’s precariousness’ (20). Mental illness in the young can be perceived as part of a nation’s failure and therefore poses a threat to dominant discourses seeking to promote a positive vision going forward. For the child, the pressure to conform to normative discourses can be damaging, leading to eating disorders, mental health issues, disengagement and suicide. In mental illness, an individual may create a landscape which Merleau-Ponty describes as an ‘artificial milieu’ where hallucinations can occur (*Phenomenology of Perception* 357). In this scenario, the landscape can be located in the subject (the lost child) as well as the subject in landscape. The mind as a topography is examined in chapter five as a place of enclosure that the subject inhabits but also within chapter four as the capacity to imagine other places beyond the immediate and material.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has set out the conceptual and critical framework for the thesis and explained its relevance to the analyses of the primary texts that follow in the remaining chapters. The connections between spectral studies and phenomenology that occur in the conceptual framework are readily made because the latter is a philosophy of being and the spectre is a liminal figure of being and non-being. Daily life for the subject includes hauntings such as those included in memories, dreams, visions, synesthetic experiences, perceptions of things or non-material traces which cannot be seen in their entirety but whose form is believed in. Perception as a way of seeing and of being seen also resonates with Derrida’s explanation of the spectre as always looking or appearing through visitations (125). In Hartnett’s

novels, ways of seeing are conveyed through the various subject positions inhabited by her characters or through insights and understandings that they may or may not receive.

As well as using tropes that are seeming spectres, such as the Tasmanian tiger in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, or Guy, the ghost fixated on the horizon, from *Wilful Blue*, the novels are also haunted by different temporalities, such as Australia's colonial past, which contributes to collective, cultural forgetting, or futures that are uncertain, lost or rejected. The anachronic experiences that Hartnett constructs by juxtaposing different timeframes and revealing that places are haunted by material and non-material traces affirms, like Derrida, that the strange is actually the norm, for 'synchrony does not have a chance, no time is contemporary with itself' (139). Instead, it is those discourses that seek to privilege hegemony as a normativity that must be scrutinised. This critique relies on the subject understanding how they are positioned in relation to place and time. Derrida insists that 'this non-presence of the spectre demands that one takes its times and its history into consideration, the singularity of its temporality or of its historicity' (126). This chapter has therefore explored the context for Hartnett's novels, paying attention to the history of the Gothic and the Australian Gothic, the construction of national identity and the idea of Australia as a haunted landscape due to the perceived erasure of the racial Other. As Hartnett is positioned as a woman writing in a culture initially constructed as masculinist, it has also been relevant to trace the construction of gender stereotypes that constitute 'Australianness' within the culture and explore how other women writers have challenged these representations by using the Gothic as a form of critique. While referring to the ways in which Hartnett has contributed to these interrogations, the focus of the analyses remains on how Hartnett develops the trope of the lost child through her representations of the subjectivities of her young characters, and how she reveals the ways in which the inhabitation of modern Australian culture is, for them, a haunted experience.

In the chapters that follow, I will analyse Hartnett's texts using an hauntology constructed from the concepts I have included in the critical framework discussed above. The chapters are structured thematically, and so different aspects of the framework will be privileged accordingly. Each chapter examines how Hartnett's lost or feral children reach their respective vanishing points and shows how Hartnett brings to visibility those normative discourses that haunt Australian culture and turn every day places, such as the suburban home and country town, into Gothic topographies. In Hartnett's novels, the figure of the ghost is re-configured as a positive manifestation that makes visible and calls attention to

those discourses and ways of being that require critical scrutiny. Merleau-Ponty's concept of the fold offers the opportunity of a liminal and discursive borderland space between the visible and invisible; the material and the non-material; and, as with the literary text, provides a point of contact and a place for possibilities and encounters. The fold as applied to an Australian Gothic approach represents the conflation of a pivotal moment in time with the physical co-ordinates of place. Hartnett's novels utilise the timeless quality previously exploited by her predecessors, such as in J. Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, where all clocks stop when the schoolgirls disappear. The rest of Lindsay's plot focuses on working out what might have caused the disappearance. Similarly, Hartnett's narratives that focus on individual subjectivity enable close scrutiny of those harmful discourses that cause her young protagonists to be lost in culture rather than nature.

## Chapter Two ‘The Snicker of a Closing Front Door’: The Suburb

This chapter conceptualises the suburb topos and examines how Hartnett re-locates the trope of the lost bush child to the locale of the suburb, re-configuring the trope to show how children can be lost within culture. It then briefly traces the development of Hartnett’s suburban novels from her first, *Trouble All the Way*, published in 1984, to identify the themes and ideas that recur in her later work, ending with in-depth analyses of the two primary texts.

Instead of becoming physically disoriented and displaced in wild nature, the child can lack the social and emotional capacity to survive or thrive within civilisation, as represented by the built environment of the suburb and despite the protection of the nuclear family unit. Here the hauntological approach developed in this thesis establishes that the specific geography of the Australian suburb is used by Hartnett to initiate her own blend of Gothic tropes. The visible topography of the suburban setting signals underlying pressures and anxieties that threaten the assumed solidity of its foundations. The detailed analyses of *What the Birds See* (2003) and *Butterfly* (2009) draw on Merleau-Ponty’s ideas concerning perception and perspective to examine Hartnett’s representations of the transitional states of childhood and adolescence and to identify those aspects of modern culture that appear Gothic or macabre to young subjects. Attempting to evaluate and understand the ‘inner’ world of the psyche and the body in relation to ‘outer’ or social and environmental influences at key transition points is challenging but without the appropriate support and guidance, Hartnett’s young protagonists are at risk of not achieving healthy subjectivity. In addition, the representation of the suburb as a Gothic environment for the child reinforces the positioning of Hartnett’s work within the sub-genre of the Australian Gothic.

### Conceptualisation of the Suburb Topos

Hartnett’s early life experiences clearly influenced how she represented the Australian suburb in her novels, as explained in the thesis introduction (see p.19). Her memories indicate how the physical environment and childhood perceptions of adult society operate within a dialectic and how these elements contribute to the construction of a sense of self.

Understanding the wider role of the suburb in the formation of national identity provides a contextual framework which will inform the analyses of Hartnett’s novels as explained in the section that follows.

Due to the rapid expansion of building projects in the second half of the twentieth century in countries such as America, Europe, Australia and Canada, the suburb has become a feature of modern culture. J. Fiske et al. describe two sets of oppositions that characterise the Australian suburb; the first is between culture and nature, where the suburb represents a point of balance or borderland between city (urban) and country (rural). Cresswell also defines the rural as ‘the countryside’ and explains how it has been represented within culture as ‘a place away from the problems of urbanity’ (113). This assumption is explored further in chapter three (see p.87). The suburb as border can be exemplified by the suburban garden which might contain European horticulture as well as native plants, which represents the ambiguity of colonial yearning as well as withdrawal from a colonial past. The second opposition is concerned with what the suburb means to people and their lifestyle and consists of the relationship between the private, as represented by the individual, and the public, as represented by society. Most Australian housing is suburban and the ideal of home ownership is frequently blamed for the large-scale incursion of construction projects into green spaces. This ideal, claim Fiske et al., transforms ‘the homeless immigrant’ into a person of property, drawing on a ‘myth of superiority dating from the nineteenth century’ (27). The heterogeneity of suburban houses represses class distinctions which contributes to a normative discourse of egalitarianism so that the pursuit of difference can be perceived as dangerous, and, acknowledges Fiske et al., ‘unAustralian’ (32). Hartnett’s representations of the suburb as a Gothic environment use individualistic narratives that emphasise difference and complicate this discourse.

The sub-genre of suburban Gothic is more widely characterised by the home as the ambiguous repository for concealment and display. B. Murphy, speaking of the American suburban Gothic, describes how it centres on suspicion: ‘even the most ordinary-looking neighbourhood, or house, or family, has something to hide’ (2). This suggests that the opposition of private and public that the suburb represents is complicated by an impetus towards the invisible or secret while other elements of the lifestyle are ostentatiously available for public viewing. Murphy’s comments would suggest that the rapid expansion of the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s, often referred to as ‘suburban sprawl’, has left traces upon the psychological condition of residents. In consequence, it might be perceived that the suburban subject is at least as much at risk from familiar folk who are close to home, as from strangers. Murphy’s reading of the suburb as a Gothic topos undermines the potentially unquestioned normative discourse of the idealisation of the suburb as home.

With regard to secondary source material on the Australian suburban Gothic, I must emphasise that there is a paucity of scholarship in this area although I have located some online material by J. Rayner from 2017 that refers to cinema. This highlights a gap and the need for further investigation, especially as suburban Gothic readings can be applied to other writers such as H. Porter who, in *The Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony* from 1963, employs a first-person protagonist haunted by the ghostly memories of his childhood in the Melbourne suburb of Kensington and, more recently, Winton, who uses suburban settings in novels that contain Gothic elements, such as *Cloudstreet*, published in 1991, which centres on family life in a seemingly ordinary house haunted by two extraordinary ghosts. At the heart of the discourse of the suburb as the ideal mode of living, is the notion of what it means to be home; to have gained a sense of belonging. Therefore, in thinking about what makes a suburban novel Gothic when written in the realist mode, it is necessary to consider what defines home within the culture in relation to the public and private spheres.

The expansion of the suburb was accompanied by the rise of the middle class and the centrality of the nuclear family, which, from the 1950s, was defined by gender roles where, as L. Noakes contends, women were expected to find contentment as homemakers and men to resume their pre-war roles as breadwinners (311). The alienation of women in the domestic sphere is not specific to the modern literary context as this was a re-casting of the nineteenth-century division of the private and public spheres in western culture, where men were mobile in society and the wife and mother would preside over the home as 'The Angel in the House.' This term is derived from the title of a poem by C. Patmore (first published in 1851 and revised and expanded until 1852) and discussed by feminist scholars S.M. Gilbert and S. Gubar who explain that the term is based on the cultural premise that the life of a woman should be dedicated to serving a family (22). This was also the expectation of 1950s suburbia and, as Hartnett indicates in her representations of modern women, this is not the pinnacle of achievement for all. Just as nineteenth-century writers such as C. Brönte and G. Eliot questioned and critiqued cultural expectations in order to subvert them, so too does Hartnett by challenging and placing under scrutiny the post-war idealisation of such constructions.

The suburban lifestyle encouraged patterns of commuting from home to paid employment and although not confined to men, in the 1950s and 1960s this contributed to male absence from the home. This recalls early settlement when men would be away shearing or taking seasonal work. The position of women isolated in the home and the absence of men repeats these former patterns of domesticity. This forms a connection in the Gothic between the time

of settlement as represented by Baynton's *Bush Studies* and Hartnett's representations in modern settings.

In Hartnett's corpus, the disillusioned and unhappy wife and mother is not unique to the suburb and can be located in alternative topographies, such as the country town, which indicates that Hartnett interrogates constructions of gender in broader terms. Yet there are features that are specific to the suburb that simultaneously recall the Female Gothic of Victorian, European fiction *and* suggest the alienation of women in modern society. Examining the dialectic of place, space and gender, Kossew in *Writing Woman, Writing Place*, suggests that women continue to be positioned by the narratives of the past and that in Australia the literary type of the 'drover's wife', exemplified by Lawson (see p. 45) came to represent tough but vulnerable women who were idealised as 'mother to the nation and to her own family' (5). In other words, as discussed in chapter one of the thesis, this construction of women became another normative discourse that contributed to the formation of Australian national identity. Characterised by homogeneity, neat gardens and respectability, the suburb offered the promise of perfectibility that was as impossible for women to deliver as the vision of themselves constructed by national discourse. As a borderland, the suburb possesses a sense of indefinability which threatens to reveal the emptiness at the heart of modern entrepreneurial endeavour. The utopia of a perfect community disguises the diversity and divisions which could at any moment erupt from behind the smooth veneer of front doors. R. Beuka, writing about suburban expansion in America, describes the tension which is a feature of suburban topography and which reveals that the suburb complicates the perceptions that are projected by the mainstream culture:

the suburb instead emerges as a place that reflects both an idealised image of middle-class life and specific cultural anxieties about the very elements of society that threaten this image. (7)

In Hartnett's novels the suburb is revealed as having distinctly dystopian elements. The domestic home, for example, can be discerned as a microcosm of wider cultural forces and a reflection of dominant, hegemonic discourses, such as those around white patriarchy and the restrictive constructions of women described above. This concentration of forces, both internal and external to the home, that circulate within the domestic sphere enables Hartnett to re-locate the Gothic and specifically the trope of the lost child from the bush to the house. In her novels, the suburb is characterised by a sheen of respectability that aims to conceal the vacuity at the heart of its performance. Ironically the sprawling suburb is itself a haunted

cultural space; an effect engendered by the ideology of *terra nullius*, the fiction that justified the displacement of Aboriginal peoples as explained in the introduction (see p.16). Place is at once a physical and emotionally invested location and is sacred to Aborigines. More recently, it has been acknowledged and reported by N. Tabakoff that some suburban houses now occupy sacred sites (n.p.). Consequently, the construction of whiteness as a dominant normative discourse is inseparable from the problematisation of the suburb as utopia, for the topos is haunted by collective colonial memory, and this is another characteristic feature of the suburban Gothic in Australia.

The haunted liminality of the suburb is intensified with Hartnett's focus on young subjects who live there and who additionally inhabit the developmental borderlands of childhood and emerging adulthood. P. Thurschwell suggests that this insecure stage of transition is also unsettling for adults (239). As well as experiencing the challenges posed by different environments, Hartnett's young protagonists are experimenting with values and ideologies and critiquing cultural modes of representation. In so doing, they pose a seeming threat to conformity as defined by parental authority and ideas of normativity constructed by previous generations. They occupy a temporary space-time and Thurschwell argues that this fractured liminality is shared with the Gothic figure of the ghost; the latter associated with place yet also caught between the worlds of the living and the dead.

In suburban Gothic fiction the young subject located in the suburb, as Murphy affirms, is the ultimate trope of liminality:

The child or teenager under threat is a common plot trope of the suburban Gothic. So too is the destabilising spectre of the suburban youngster turned murderer and the suburban parent(s) turned vigilante. (2)

The suburban Gothic confounds cultural norms, expectations and assumptions. Young protagonists represent the anxieties of their modern parents as well as the potentiality for change. Although the Gothic tropes in Hartnett's early suburban novels appear less overt than in her later work, they nevertheless exert an influence on the social realism of the Melbourne cultural context that is familiar to her, and the following section of the chapter will provide some early examples.

### **Analysis of Hartnett's Early Suburban Novels**

In Hartnett's first suburban novel *Trouble All the Way*, she begins to examine themes that recur in her later work, such as the Gothic qualities of everyday places such as the home,

school, public bar and peripheral locations selected by young people because they are hidden from adult surveillance. Other themes include the quality of family and peer relationships, especially the neglect of parental responsibility, women's disillusionment with domestic life and their rejection of anthropocentric views. *Trouble All the Way* is focalised through a fifteen-year-old male protagonist, Tim Kimpson, who lives in 'a normal house, in a normal street, in a normal inner suburb, in a normal city (which happens to be Melbourne)' (2). The repetition of this normalcy calls attention to how it might be defined. It is later referred to in her film review of *Wolf Creek* as the 'sullen blandness' at the heart of the Australian Gothic. *Trouble All the Way* is a coming-of-age narrative which gains immediacy and freshness of tone from the fact that Hartnett was also a teenager at the time of writing. In later novels that are set in Australia, Hartnett will continue to use a retrospective timeframe that fits with that of her own youth and this creates the effect of slowing time so that timeless themes can be addressed. These 'ancient subjects' are listed by Hartnett in the Redmond Barry Lecture as follows: 'friendship, nature, family, trust, courage, loyalty' and, although she claims that she is more interested in these than in social commentary (12), all of these themes occur in specific socio-political contexts, and Hartnett has used her experience of growing up in the Melbourne suburbs to explore and scrutinise them.

### ***Trouble All the Way* (1984)**

From the outset, Hartnett is concerned with the power dynamics that young people must negotiate. Tim declares that 'a war has been going on in our house between two opposing armies: my parents and me' (13). This evokes M. Foucault's assertion in *The Will to Knowledge* that power is a system of 'force relations' (92) and is continually present because it 'comes from everywhere' (93) whether in times of conflict or peace. In this first novel, Patrick, the local scapegoat, is a character who will appear in other guises in later novels, such as Adrian in *What the Birds See* and Avery in *Golden Boys*. Hartnett is interested in the cruelty of which people are capable and the scapegoat is a trope that magnifies bullying behaviour within the peer group. In scapegoating, as J.F. Dovidio et al. explain, aggression is displaced onto innocent targets when the true sources, such as chronic social frustrations, are too powerful or threatening (12). The scapegoat, as Hartnett observes in *Trouble All the Way*, must pay the price for the wider issues in society:

Every neighbourhood has a person like Patrick [...] someone insecure and with some obvious fault that becomes the butt of everyone else's jokes. Pat spent every day trying to make a friend [...] but he was used and put down and teased and ripped to pieces. (42)

Hartnett emphasises such cruelty as a stock characteristic of being human and the phrase ‘ripped to pieces’, though used figuratively, is indicative of a savagery usually applied to animals, troubling those discourses that promote suburban living as safe and ordered. The description signals Hartnett’s destabilisation of anthropocentric perspectives found in later novels such as *Forest* and *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, which place in question the moral superiority of humans over non-humans.

The undercurrents of violence within the lives of the young characters in *Trouble All the Way* initiate Hartnett’s interest in the Gothic. Tim is rebellious but his parents’ involvement in a car crash make him curb his behaviour and he is returned to their control, in the same way that Hartnett herself remained governed at this time by the authority of the family. At the end of the novel, Tim declares: ‘I figure life is like milk being boiled [...] If you leave it unattended, it gets out of control’ (104). This simile encapsulates the Gothic tension that builds in Hartnett’s later novels, the boiling process representing the inattention that culminates in tragedy. A similar metaphor of a kettle boiling is used in *Princes* as a prelude to violence, or sometimes it is the relentlessness of the Australian heat that builds pressure, as in *Sleeping Dogs*. Hartnett’s third novel, *The Glasshouse*, is her second narrative set in the suburbs and, as described in the section that follows, is where she begins to explore the Gothic potentiality of place.

### ***The Glasshouse* (1990)**

The Glasshouse is a public house in the suburb that is characterised by danger and its name, which is also a term for a military detention centre, implies entrapment and wrongdoing. Its walls are gravelled and sharp; a structural quality which signals potential harm and the human sensibility attributed to it creates a sense of the uncanny. As a venue where friends choose to meet, it is constructed as a familiar, social space, like a second home, and yet there is a sense of personal risk that is *unheimlich* for ‘Once someone had half their scalp grated off on it [...] It was old. But its heart was young’ (7). Like those who frequent it, Sunday is needed for rest. The hotel and public bar of the Glasshouse represent a theatre ‘where scenes of pleasure and pain are played out’ (18). Hartnett’s young characters are in their early twenties, mirroring Hartnett’s age at this time, and one of the suburban houses they share is described as ‘perpetually damp with an air of sickness and slow death’ (13). Each member of the group is beset by inexplicable anxiety and anger. For example, Simon, whose mother died of cancer when he was a child, lives with an alcoholic father and their relationship is like ‘two dogs

who loathed each other but hadn't the space or spirit to fight' (15). Simon is awoken by the suburban drone of the lawnmower and feels 'a fury that seemed to lunge against his skin to get out and explode in chunky pieces across the room' (14). The emotional reaction is out of proportion to the event and is symptomatic of underlying stress in suburbia. The people on the street carry umbrellas 'like weapons against each other and against the sky' (36). As an ephemeral place of respite that is more public than private; more visited than inhabited; the function of the Glasshouse mirrors the transitory lifestyles and values of the suburban residents who call.

The impossible pursuit of the perfectibility of the suburbs is represented by a 'shy' and delicate green flower growing outside one of the houses. Designated as a weed, the plant is crushed by a shoe (91). The threat to survival in the suburban environment is reflective of the familial threats Simon encounters. Viewing the effects of drink on his father with distaste, Simon finds the strength to accuse him and this is the first of several encounters between drunken fathers and their children that recur in Hartnett's novels. Other examples occur in *Sleeping Dogs* between Griffin Willow and his son, Jordan and in *Golden Boys* between Joe Kiley and his daughter, Freya. The following scenario from *Trouble All the Way* may resonate with Hartnett's own childhood:

"You stand here slurring abuse at me, but you don't look at yourself, do you? What are you going to do if I leave? You're going to die here alone and no one will care, no one will even notice". (139)

The Gothic theme of isolation in the suburb, which in its idealised form represents community, is exemplified by Eliza, an emotionally damaged character whose desperation to be loved exceeds reasonable behaviour. The character Tory notes that 'she was speaking in this voice which he assumed was supposed to be secretive and seductive and charming, but it sounded instead like the voice of a dead thing, or a psychotic' (115). This suburban malaise is developed by Hartnett with the character of Maureen in *Butterfly*. Unable to cope with Tory's rejection of her advances, Eliza lies to her brother, Peter, complaining that Tory has mistreated her. Peter's violent attack on Tory results in one of Tory's eyes being blinded and 'inside his skull blood gushed, crackling like glass chips' (183). The violence that erupts is related to place, through the metaphorical significance of the Glasshouse, which synaesthetically functions as the fragility of the young subject's health and happiness in the Gothic suburb. Anderson explains that places used by everyone, such as the pub, can be regarded as 'hybrid' home-places for groups with differing identities and ideas (44) and while

such shared places offer opportunities for social engagement they also carry elements of risk, as discussed below.

### ***All My Dangerous Friends (1998)***

In *The Glasshouse* and *All My Dangerous Friends*, Hartnett complicates normative representations of the pub as a place of patriarchal sanctuary and respite. As a peripheral place for social gatherings in suburbia, it can also be where predators seek out the vulnerable, using the public visibility of the crowd as cover. With regard to the construction of national identity, the pub in Australian culture has represented an escape from the domestic environment and, as part of the ethos of mateship, signifies a male preserve. Historically, as Rickard explains, the pub was connected with post-Depression era hardship, in which a drinking routine at the end of each day was regarded as ‘fundamental to survival’ (174). In *All My Dangerous Friends* the pubs provide temporary locales for people from diverse backgrounds who may attend them in response to a variety of motivations, including loneliness. Despite modern efforts to cultivate an atmosphere of middle-class respectability, Hartnett represents these transitory, public places as problematic, for a nice pub does not mean a safe place, and this knowledge creates an uncanny shift in the reading experience.

Hartnett also uses peripheral places as sites for subversive activities by young people who are away from adult scrutiny, and in the novel, a wealthy gang leader, Sasha Johns, uses the pub for occasional meetings, such as recruiting the main protagonist Louie to the gang, but for the gang’s headquarters he chooses a bungalow gifted to him within the grounds of his parents’ estate. Sasha abuses the trust of his parents and uses the building for drug dealing. In exposing his delinquency in this setting, Hartnett is challenging normative discourse that suggests crime is carried out by inhabitants of poor, urban areas. Louie is prepared to commit minor criminal offences to gain acceptance from her peer group but when Sasha leads the gang to the suburbs to avenge his sister through a violent attack on her controlling boyfriend, Louie is forced to re-assess her moral and ethical position. In committing violence, Sasha crosses a line that Louie is not prepared to contemplate, and this marks a key progression in her maturation as she does not want to be defined by cruelty: ‘I didn’t want to become someone who could hurt another and find it funny. I did not want to go through life seeing danger and enemies everywhere’ (189). Louie rejects behaviours that in future novels, Hartnett will attribute ultimately to white patriarchal figures, but also to those who become implicated in controlling discourses, such as younger males and women. However, despite the reality of her experience and making positive choices for her future, when she recollects

other times shared with the gang, Louie is unwilling to adjust these more positive memories. This suggests that it is the self that can be trusted the least.

Memory, as a phenomenal experience of the past, is a spectre colluding in misinformation and indulging in nostalgia. Trigg explains that nostalgia occurs only when distance is forged between the imaginary and the real, so that the search for unity is also a search for home that occurs due to the fragmentation of experience or ‘the affective and embodied relationship we have with the past, as we experience its becoming absent’ (187). Female protagonists who engage in the search for home in future novels by Hartnett will use transitional states in which to move towards understanding and acceptance. This pushes identity towards a horizon of greater self-awareness. Examples include Harper in *Thursday’s Child* and Maddy’s narrative in *The Ghost’s Child* whose narratives employ memory (occasionally highlighting its unreliability) and mourning (which shares with nostalgia the impetus to reopen the past). Both of these novels also focus on the inequalities posed by the problematic distribution of wealth and status in society and receive detailed analyses in chapter four. Memory is a place ‘inside’ the subject that is continually reinvented but remains hidden until the subject summons those memories to consciousness. Although the suburban house is ‘outside’ and visible, it too conceals secrets behind strategically placed blinds or net curtains.

The enactment of violence takes place behind the closed doors of a quiet suburban street, for Louie remarks: ‘From the street you couldn’t hear a thing’ (188). Hartnett’s interrogation of political assumptions by focusing on the crimes committed by a white middle-class gang in suburbia raises questions concerning the association of criminal behaviour with poor, urban areas and resonates with what O. Jones has called ‘the scapegoating of immigration’ and the political focus on the crimes of the poor, such as benefit fraud. This focus disguises hypocrisy because ‘the far greater financial crimes of the rich are largely ignored’ (265) which poses questions with regard to a national discourse of egalitarianism. The absent mother, Mrs Johns, uses her wealth to grant her children the freedom she was denied but her trust is misplaced as Sasha exploits it and her daughter proves vulnerable to predatory influences. Hegemonic discourse concerning the demonization of the working class is exposed in this novel as a deception perpetrated and maintained by the rich, and it is an illusion in which the seeming homogeneity of the suburb colludes.

### **The Trope of the Lost Child in the Suburbs**

In the introduction and in chapter one, I have referred to the colonial trope of the white child lost in the bush as that which is associated with the imagined hostility of the landscape, settler anxieties and melancholy concerning the forced removal during colonisation of the Aborigine as racial Other. I have also explained Pierce's assertion, which resonates with Hartnett's emphasis, that children are lost in Australia because of abuse by adults or as a symptom of generational neglect (138). Other reasons listed by Pierce include those from outside the family such as social deprivation, government policy and assisted migration schemes such as that relating to 'orphans of the empire' (195). Pierce's examples call attention to the fact that there are other types of lost children from Australia's past than those lost in the bush and in Hartnett's representations of the suburban Gothic they continue to haunt the culture. To inform our understanding of the child lost in the suburbs it is therefore relevant to briefly explain these historical examples. The term 'orphans of the empire' refers to the British Home Children Programme, which, from the second half of the twentieth century involved the forced emigration of 130,000 children to Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Australia. The children were from impoverished backgrounds and the rhetoric of a 'better life' was used to justify what was effectively a strategy to alleviate labour shortages and provide 'white stock' for the process of settlement. A. Gill's seminal work from 1998, *Orphans of the Empire*, explores these issues in detail. Children were separated from siblings, were lied to about whether their parents were still living and often placed in abusive environments. Child migrants form a specific group of 7000 'forgotten Australians'. This term, as the Australian Human Rights Commission website explains, was used by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd during his speech of apology in 2008. These children were adopted, sent to institutions or foster care but experienced neglect and cruelty and were part of a collective national forgetting which resulted in their invisibility from the discourse of nation.

Another distressing period from Australian history involved the government programme of taking 'half-caste' children from Aboriginal families and placing them either with white families or in institutions such as missions where, as P. Knightley describes, they suffered physical mistreatment and sexual abuse' (112). This process lasted from the end of the nineteenth century until the mid-1960s. Only in 1997 with the publication of the Report 'Bringing Them Home: The Stolen Generation' were the consequences of this policy fully understood. It was this report, as the Australian Human Rights Commission website describes, that led to Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generation and their descendants. Along

with the Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families, the orphans of empire are another inconvenient truth. These collectively suppressed memories from episodes of history complicate continued representations of the white child as victim of a hostile landscape. Representations such as Hartnett's, which reveal the abuse of children in modern settings to be outcomes of white cultural cruelty, gain Gothic resonance because they highlight the continuance of a shameful legacy of displaced and stolen children. Such representations are therefore a counter-discourse to that of collective forgetting and cast shadows over the dream of suburban happiness.

In the two novels selected for analysis here, Hartnett represents the suburb through the perceptions of her young protagonists, demonstrating how complex and confusing the adult world can be for a child or pubescent subject, still learning about how to orientate the embodied self psychically and socially in the cultural landscape. For Merleau-Ponty the body exists in a perpetual 'now' where the past is incorporated into current movement and the present is already linked to the development of future moments; a process which is explained as follows:

I am not in space and in time, nor do I think space and time; rather I am of space and of time [...] The space and time that I inhabit are always surrounded by indeterminate horizons that contain other points of view [...] The synthesis of time, like that of space, is always to be started over again. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 141)

This interdependence of past, present and future connects more with Aboriginal perceptions of time in the Dreaming, than with a Cartesian discourse of linear time. The collective forgetting of the lost children from Australia's past is revealed as a fragile construction that obfuscates the connection between those children and the lost children from contemporary culture. Hegemonic discourses that are associated with the lost child persist through different time periods, and so the trope continues to circulate and evolve within the culture. Through the use of the Gothic, Hartnett illumines how the adult world, which deeply affects the young subject, contains the intolerable, but frequently unexplained, burden of the past. To assist with the discussion of subjectivity in *What the Birds See*, I draw on Kristeva's concepts concerning the figure of the deject and the semiotic, developing Muller's interpretation of the novel by relating the psychical to the spatial and to aspects of cultural memory (1). In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva describes the deject as a stray; an exile who is on a journey towards a horizon that perpetually recedes, for, 'instead of sounding himself as to his 'being', he does so concerning his place: "Where am I?" instead of "Who am I?"' (8, emphasis in original). In *What the Birds See* Hartnett develops the Gothic qualities of the suburb to reflect the

perceptions of her protagonist, Adrian, who finds everyday experiences both mystifying and threatening, and this leads to self-estrangement. The social difficulties that Adrian encounters at home, with peers and in public places constructed as protective, such as school, indicate that developing subjectivities must be supported by a combination of positive psychological, social and environmental factors.

### ***What the Birds See (2003)***

Hartnett's novel *What the Birds See* (2003) had initially been published in Australia under the title *Of A Boy* in 2002, but as British writer Nick Hornby's novel *About a Boy* had been adapted for film release in the same year, Hartnett's text was re-titled for the UK and US markets. In an interview with Achuka in 2002, Hartnett states that *What the Birds See* is her preferred title and is the one selected for this study. The connection of the title to an aerial perspective not commonly available implies that birds see things that are otherwise invisible or not usually perceived by the human eye. This would seem to be a reversal of the Judaeo-Christian assertion in Matthew 10:29 that an all-seeing God is not indifferent even to the fate of a sparrow: 'yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your father's care', implying instead that it is the natural world that possesses omnipotent awareness. In *What the Birds See* Hartnett is reluctant to place her trust in an all-seeing God and questions the abilities of humans to see when a child is becoming lost, even when that child is physically visible.

It is with the character of nine-year-old Adrian that Hartnett's interest in the trope of the lost child is foregrounded. Hartnett uses parallel narratives to compare the public attention given to a high-profile case of missing children with the plight of a nine-year-old boy who becomes lost in the sense of being neglected by those adults responsible for his primary care needs. Choosing a suburban street as the site where three fictional children, the Metfords, are last seen, Hartnett indirectly references the real-life case of the three Beaumont children, Jane (aged nine), Anna (aged seven) and Grant (aged four) who disappeared from a suburban beach in Adelaide on Australia Day in 1966 and, as Pierce records, were never seen again (95). A massive police search was also intensively covered by the media and these lost children entered the public psyche to accompany those other lost children that haunt collective cultural memory, as described above. It is of note that J. Lindsay's novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* was published soon after this event and also focuses on the loss of three white children who disappear in the Macedon mountains during a school outing. Both Lindsay and Hartnett use retrospective timeframes, 1900 and 1977 respectively, to comment on the

continual circulation of the lost child in the culture, both real and imagined, in different eras and landscapes. Instead of naming the Beaumont children in *What the Birds See* Hartnett states in the Preface that out of consideration for the parents, she will instead cite a fictional case (n.p.). The novel therefore begins with the children's trip to a suburban milk bar to buy ice cream. Although many witnesses see the children pass, there is no explanation provided for their disappearance, other than, as with the Beaumont case, a description of a thin young man of perhaps nineteen or twenty years of age who is loitering in the vicinity.

Hartnett ends her intertextual introduction and begins the first chapter with a summary of other events that are reported across the world in 1977. These include disasters on a larger scale, such as the collision of two passenger aeroplanes in the Canary Islands which killed 570 people. Events in popular culture include the death of Elvis Presley. Hartnett is drawing attention to the seemingly arbitrary choices involved in what counts as news in society at any given time and which affect the subject's perceptions of the world beyond their own visible horizon. Although acknowledging the wider context of world news, the novel instead privileges and maintains focus on an individualised narrative: the private life and perceptions of a vulnerable boy living in an ordinary Australian suburb. Adrian is the same age as Hartnett was in 1977 and intriguingly, she comments as follows on this autobiographical relevance in the Preface: 'Adrian is me in many respects, and many of the things that happen to him happened to me' (n.p.).

One of the main themes in the novel is that of isolation and in the Achuka interview, Hartnett recalls that in 1977 her friend, Penny, was sent away due to her mother's illness of multiple sclerosis. This left Hartnett feeling very lonely, especially at school. It was when she realised that 'the world was a place in which I was just a very insignificant thing who had no idea about the way it operated' (1). Such discoveries also haunt Adrian in the novel.

Adrian is displaced due to the separation of his parents; a breach which has led to him being moved from place to place until his grandmother and Uncle Rory agree to help. In the narrator's description of Adrian's feelings of insecurity, it is possible to identify the factors that influence his self-perception, and which will make his suburban existence impossible to negotiate. Adrian has a list of things that he finds 'disquieting' (15). Among these are features of the natural world, such as quicksand, tidal waves and spontaneous combustion. Turcotte notes how a Gothic sensibility has been used to speak directly or indirectly about the Australian landscape (281) and the regular threat of bush fires is internalised by Adrian who

believes that he is somehow pre-conditioned for a similar fate: 'If one is programmed to self-combust, it's going to happen eventually, regardless. It's like being born with six fingers, a curse' (33). Adrian's fears also extend to cultural environments such as being locked in a shopping centre or getting lost in a crowd, which would resemble live burial (33). He worries that his grandmother, whom he nicknames 'grandmonster' (15), will forget to collect him from school. Even in the intimate space of his bedroom he anticipates that the cupboard door will mysteriously open at night. These irrational anxieties are caused by Adrian's poor self-image and insecurities. Already displaced, he fears the additional pain of being isolated and lost:

To be lost or forgotten or abandoned and alone are, to Adrian, terrors more carnivorous than any midnight monster lurking beneath a bed. (34)

The Gothic, for Adrian, is part of daily life rather than existing just in his imagination, so his terror is exacerbated by narratives from the 'real' world. When the Metford case is reported he learns that children can be made to disappear (35). It has never before occurred to him that a child could be 'a desirable thing' (35). Most disturbing are the visual images brought to him by the mediated source of the TV because he learns that not only is the home of the missing children uncannily similar to where he lives, but that there is also a striped basketball like his own in their backyard. Without family discussion the images gain power and create an uncanny bond between himself and the Metfords that is both familiar and frightening; bringing the realisation that he is equally at risk:

He does not recognise their street, though it's only twenty minutes' drive away, but he feels as though he has seen it before. The trees, the fences, the rooftops, the clotheslines – that is middle-class suburbia, and Adrian is a suburban boy. He has been to the birthday parties of his classmates and he knows that most things everywhere are more or less the same. (34)

The homogeneity of the suburb means that for Adrian its terrors can be duplicated as well as the visual appearance of the streets. The suburb forms part of Adrian's phenomenal field, to use Merleau-Ponty's (1945) term, or 'place of living communication with the world' (53), and so is part of his identity as follows: 'And now there is this new fear, one that settles so comfortably among its myriad kin that it seems familiar, as if it's skulked there, scarcely noticed, all along' (34). There is a fatalism here that signals his lack of self-belief and agency.

Adrian's fear of being lost or abandoned is conflated with an image of abjection that circulates in his subconscious. The TV also reports the discovery of a sea monster hauled up from the depths; its flesh appears melted and it is 'a thing in ruins' (14). The abject, as

Kristeva describes it in *Powers of Horror*, disturbs ideas of identity as well as activating cultural taboos that constitute ‘transgressions of the boundaries of what is clean and proper’ (85). The corpse, as Kristeva identifies, blurs boundaries between the inanimate and inorganic; a polluted body without soul; ‘the opposite of the spiritual, of the symbolic and of divine law’ (109). These forgotten remains become conflated with Adrian’s fears, as he realises that if the Metfords are missing over a long time period, they are more likely to have become ‘*other*’ (186, emphasis in original). As with the headlines concerning the missing children, Adrian notices how the sea monster story fades from prominence over time, indicating the ultimate dissolution and erasure of individual identity. There will be a collective forgetting. This runs contrary to dominant western discourses which place the individual at the centre of modern life.

This objectification of the subject is something that Adrian feels about his own body and its perceived inadequacies. His wild blonde hair ‘tangles like it has a lunatic mind of its own’ and incurs the wrath of his grandmother, largely because it has ‘come from the father’s side’ (17). His father discharged his responsibility for the child by dumping him with his mother-in-law and announcing: ‘I need to be free’ (165). Adrian’s mother, Sookie, suffers from an unnameable illness and while trying to cope economically and being loved by her son, the authorities decide that Adrian needs taking away (102). Knowing its effect on his grandmother, Adrian perceives his hair as ‘an inescapable failing’ (17) or tragic flaw.

Another failing perceived by Adrian is his marginal location in peer groups at school. While he has inherited his Uncle Rory’s ability in art, he is uncoordinated in sport and is the last to be selected for team games, ‘left waiting with the fat boy and the immigrant’ (22). The bluntness of Hartnett’s language here shows how children themselves can collude in emotional brutality with behaviours that further undermine the subject’s self-image. Hartnett examines how even in the schoolyard, constructed as a safe cultural space, there are hidden geographies with associated hierarchies, connecting place very specifically with essentialised notions of identity. The small girls inhabit the undercroft, which is a sunken space, and the youngest play on the jungle gym and monkey bars. The bigger girls and boys play rounders or football respectively, whereas Adrian and his only friend, Clinton, share the ‘territory’ of the wall of the toilet block where they sit ‘sombre as a pair of old gents’ (23). Excluded children sit in the shadows of the playground by themselves and although they gauge Adrian’s sympathy, he will not risk his social position by befriending them. The narrator comments that the school has a ‘streak of strangeness’ running through it and this Gothic

presence is perhaps materialised through the neighbouring building of St Jonah's Orphanage, its occupants stigmatised by the other pupils. When Clinton explains that the children in St Jonah's are there because they were not looked after properly by their parents, Adrian becomes haunted by the possibility that he too is at risk of a similar fate.

One of the schoolchildren who lives at St Jonah's is Sandra, nicknamed 'Horsegirl' due to her penchant for pretending to be a horse, having seemingly abandoned human subjectivity.

Adrian worries that Sandra's wildness is contagious because his father has told him that all of his mother's family were mad. One day, Sandra climbs onto the roof of the school, and the children 'like wolves that have spotted the weakling' encourage her to jump (107). Despite being rescued by a teacher, her empty desk signifies to Adrian that social exclusion begins with displacement. 'Horsegirl' has been made to disappear.

Sandra and Adrian fit Kristeva's concept of the marginal figure of the deject where the child continues to desire the lost mother, as Muller has argued convincingly (4). Kristeva contends that the symbolic order is in many ways an inadequate substitute for such imaginary unity.

Just as Sandra retreats from the human world through her horse identity, so Adrian regresses in his journey toward subjectivity:

Like the bundle that gets handed about in the game of pass-the-parcel, he's been unwrapped and made smaller as he's been pushed from each to the next. He is haunted by the prospect of losing the last thin layer that protects him. (166)

When Clinton rejects him in favour of a new boy, Paul, and Adrian overhears his Aunt Marta suggesting that he be placed somewhere else so that he can receive proper attention (162), the final layer is torn away, and Adrian decides to run away to find his mother.

Adrian's home sickness for his mother makes him psychically decentred, as well as displaced. Having viewed the park and public swimming pool from the elevated position of his grandmother's house, he decides to play there instead. He projects his own isolation onto his perception of the park, feeling that it is 'a forsaken place, a rejected one. He wonders if everybody knows a terrible truth about this land which he alone has not been told' (49).

Adrian perceives the land as a text or palimpsest which has been put to different uses by successive inhabitants. There are cultural memories that he has yet to discover, being so young; yet he feels their Gothic affectivity.

At the park Adrian is excited to make a new friend, Nicole, the eldest of three children who live opposite to Adrian. Nicole frequently plays alone and, like Adrian, lacks her mother's

direct care, the latter being too ill. Nicole enlists Adrian's help in burying a dead bird and persuades him to take her to the swimming pools. The large pool is covered with plastic like a shell of thick ice (57). When Adrian is late home, although his grandmother is worried she still hits him hard. This reveals her incapacity to show love and a cruelty which may have affected the relationship with her children as well as with Adrian, for:

Much of what is best in her is warped on the voyage from within to without. Concern emerges disguised as cruel rage, and breeds a corrosive, truculent remorse. She will not ever say sorry. (61)

Similarly, Rory cannot engage with his nephew. He watches Adrian while the boy is drawing and wonders 'how the world looks from the viewpoint of a child but does not manage to ask' (105). He wants to advise Adrian that it is better not to feel and to have 'the nerve-endings cauterized' (143). Adrian's struggle to find his perspectival orientation is not helped by the disillusionment of his relatives and despite being physically grounded in the world, his emotional fragility means that he perceives the world as if distanced from it, as a spectre might:

He feels as though he lives between sheets of glass, unable to touch the things that happen around him. Everyone and everything exists in a world he cannot quite comprehend. He glimpses only the residue, scrapes the surface of happenings. He wonders if, when he's older, he will better understand things, or if he is doomed to live for ever as someone struggling to see. (121)

For Adrian, the ability to 'see' is connected to the need to understand, but as a child, he sees as part of a synesthetic, phenomenal awareness and cannot make sense of the normative discourses he experiences at home or through mediated sources, and his relative inexperience with other children makes him an easy scapegoat for cruelty. In other ways, Adrian's observational powers are acute. At mass, his artist's eye is quick to observe the faults in linear perspective as revealed by the church's stained-glass windows: 'Peter's head is too big for his body [and] the dove has the neck of a swan' (148). Adrian's need for friendship blinds him to danger when Nicole declares that she knows where the missing Metford children are and enlists Adrian to help her find them, as on the TV, a man with second sight, a psychic, has claimed that the lost children can be found near water.

The meeting with Nicole becomes entangled with Adrian's plans to find his mother. Adrian has a favourite object in the house, a bronze cherub, and before setting off, he packs it into his rucksack. As he runs through the park, the sky is like 'a gravestone polished with pink' and ominously appears to enclose the land (181). Nicole intones a prayer to their buried bird,

beseeking ‘*Let me see things that are hidden from other eyes*’ (182, emphasis in original). Believing that the water the psychic has referred to is the swimming pool, Nicole climbs the wire, threatening to reject Adrian if he does not follow. The water is deep at both ends: ‘The adult pool spans the horizon, impossibly long and wide’ (189). A char-headed ibis witnesses Nicole’s walk to the centre of the plastic cover. She slips between the seams ‘as though water were sand’ (193). Attempting to save her, Adrian appears transformed into a bird as he ‘flies across the plastic, towards the vanishing point’ of his own horizon (193).

The pool’s cover ‘seals the line between water and oxygen’ and as Adrian drowns, his body is described as floating in liquid ‘like something not yet born’ (194). Muller interprets the deaths of the children (both dejects) as a return to the semiotic (13). Hartnett uses poetry at the end of the novel; an artistic form discussed by Kristeva as most closely related to the semiotic, and the content of the poem appears to affirm this connection:

*Where we are, we can hear birds,  
Where we are we can see stars ...  
Here, as always we hold each other’s hands ...  
Where we are, morning wipes us clean  
We hear Mother speak our names.* (n.p. italicised in original)

This poem represents the spectral voices of lost children. The reference to ‘we’ is non-specific and might indicate Adrian and Nicole or the Metfords but may encompass other lost children from Australia’s past who are part of a collective forgetting, such as those discussed above (p.64). It suggests a positioning between layers of time and space, while in the text it is situated beyond numbered pagination and appears detached from the linear narrative. It suggests a conclusion that locates the children as lost to culture but returned to the pre-Oedipal and primordial Mother.

### ***Butterfly* (2009)**

The following analysis examines the ways in which discourses associated with the modern suburban lifestyle, such as consumerism and post-war constructions of the ideal housewife, impact on the subjectivity of a pubescent and potentially vulnerable female character in Hartnett’s *Butterfly* (2009). The protagonist, Plum, is approaching her fourteenth birthday and her search for a sense of self is exploited by her neighbour, Maureen, through abusive mentoring. As with Adrian in *What the Birds See*, Plum lacks the appropriate guidance at a

critical time in her development. The pubescent body is a liminal site in which hormonal and other development can at times overtake the preparedness of the subject for change. This sense of embodied self-estrangement connects with the Gothic. The disturbance of the homely or *heimlich* that is generated by suburban anxieties also opens up a space for the Gothic. As A. Smith describes, the success of the Gothic depends on its ability to evoke fear by ‘distorting the familiar’ (131). Issues of entrapment in the domestic space lend additional Gothic resonance to Hartnett’s critique of modernity. There is a particular focus on how tensions are negotiated at the level of human interaction with the environment, peer relationships and the family. Hartnett’s exploration of suburbia is drawn from experience, as explained above and in a speech from 2007 at the Michael L. Printz Awards ceremony Hartnett describes how, as a teenager in the 1980s, her home in Box Hill was not an aspirational place:

An ordinary kid from an ordinary Australian suburb could never be a respectable writer of books [...] Australia, and the Australian life lived by myself and my siblings and friends, was unworthy of fiction. Australia was a bland and remarkable thing. (18)

Nevertheless, Hartnett chooses to re-live this unremarkable time through her fiction, using suburban experience to explore the themes that interest her. Indeed, it is the ordinariness of the suburb that makes the Gothic aspects so disturbing. Plum’s David Bowie poster, her brother Cydar’s love of the rock band ‘The Velvet Underground’ founded in 1964 and active into the 1970s as R. Unterberger describes (n.p.), suggests a timeframe for the novel of the mid-1970s or just beyond, which would accord with Hartnett’s own childhood. Hartnett’s film review of *Wolf Creek*, discussed earlier (see p.20), reveals that even at eight years old, Hartnett was assimilating impressions that would inform her work. The use of this timeframe for her novels indicates a preference for using the text to create a contemplative, retrospective space that is also haunted. M. Dines describes the suburban Gothic’s characteristic feature of ‘a banal unhomeliness’ and goes on to explain how the development of suburban Gothic in American fiction and visual media has been in accordance with negative rhetoric about suburban expansion:

Thus it seems reasonable to generalise that works of fiction and films such as *The Stepford Wives*, *Blue Velvet* and *The Virgin Suicides* make use of the Gothic principally to critique a white middle-class dream of home-owning prosperity and security. (959)

As with the American Gothic, Hartnett deconstructs the modernist claim for the sprawling suburban frontier but instead foregrounds a young subjectivity as the site for conflict and change.

At the beginning of *Butterfly*, Ariella Coyle, known as 'Plum' to family and friends, is contemplating what she perceives to be the monstrous metamorphosis of her body:

If her reflection is true then she has gone about in public like this – this thick black hair hugging her face like a sheenless scarf; these greasy cheeks with their evolving crop of scarlet lumps; this scurfy, hotly sunburned skin; these twin fleshy nubbins on her chest that are the worst things of all [...] and nobody has informed her of the fact that she is hideous. (1)

Plum's body is maturing and is 'not vulnerable at all' but contrasts with her mental and emotional state which is indicated by her low self-esteem: 'Look at you. *Nobody* could love you' (2). In almost the same breath as she denies God she affirms a belief in the inexplicable for 'She's starting to think there might be something supernatural about her' (2). K.

Goldsworthy describes how people in a liminal position escape cultural classification because they have not yet conformed to normative expectations and are therefore characterised by subversive potential:

Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, convention and ceremonial [...]. It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life. (55)

Hartnett uses simile to suggest the continuous presence of the Gothic in Plum's mind. For example, her brothers, Justin and Cydar, have inexplicably ceased to tease her 'and their silence rolls up Plum's spine like a hearse' (3). Plum's perception of her body is indicative of the emphasis western culture places on a woman's appearance as a constructor of identity. Women are conditioned as objects of the male gaze, as described by L. Mulvey in her essay from 1975, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. Therefore, women become commodified as bearers of their own image. The objectification of women connects with the ethos of consumerism that pervades suburban living.

Plum has been seduced by modern consumerism and hates the fact that her house, which is ‘big and humiliating’ is full of antiques collected by her parents: ‘It’s unfair that she must endure timber and stone, when all her friends know the joy of plastic and smoked glass’ (3). Plum’s birthday party must include supermarket food and ‘nothing homemade’, including the cake, which must be from an ice-cream shop (11). A portable TV is her dream gift. The most poignant signifiers of Plum’s faith in artificiality are represented by the objects that she stores in a suitcase under her bed. Here is where she keeps the sacred things. J.L. Nancy asserts that the sacred represents the separate or ‘what is set aside’ (1). To assist with her recovery from a tantrum, Plum whispers incantations for each object. A glass lamb signifies ‘*I belong*’ and the wristwatch ‘*I am more than you see*’ (13). The ambiguous significations given by Plum to these objects imbues them with what Nancy describes as a force which is an ‘energy, pressure or intensity’ (2). Plum’s ritual of consecration legitimises her transgressions and the affirmations of worth are empowering for Plum’s self-image. The aerial view of the surrounding landscape from her bedroom window invites the reader to glimpse the world from Plum’s perspective:

Spread out before her are rooftops in their scaly thousands; and church steeples, telephone poles, shopping centres, parkland. Beyond these, distance blurs suburbia into a fawn-and-green-smudge; behind the smudge rises the purple backbone of a modest mountain range. (14)

Despite the damage inflicted on the environment by suburban sprawl and the word ‘modest’ suggesting that wild nature is humble and situated at a controllable distance from the ‘civilised’, the indigenous landscape appears more permanent and clearly definable in comparison. The contrast also seeks to de-centre anthropocentric discourse.

In the absence of appropriate support and guidance, young and vulnerable subjects such as Plum are open to negative influences, and Hartnett uses the Gothic to create a sense of foreboding. Plum’s sobs attract the attention of neighbour, Maureen Wilks, and Plum experiences a frisson of fear: ‘There are no angels, but there *are* demons, and one of them has come for her’ (16). Maureen is married with a four-year-old son, David, who is like ‘a shy little calf’ (19) and a husband who often works away from home and whose occasional presence is marked by his car in the driveway. Maureen is described as ‘quite a beautiful woman, in an Ali McGraw, midday-movie kind of way’ (23); more representational than real. Maureen suggests that Plum could change her name to Aria and one day become a fashion

model. She advises her to discard her lunch to lose weight. In other words, Maureen encourages Plum to embrace the discourse of objectification that has already been absorbed by herself. Maureen exploits Plum's vulnerability because getting to know her might give Maureen extra leverage with Plum's brother, Justin, with whom Maureen is having an extra-marital affair. The secrecy in which Maureen indulges is symbolised by the suburban net curtains, for while Justin can 'see out into a grainy world, no one, outside, may see in' (60). Her falsity is mirrored by her home, which epitomises modernity; an ideal show-home:

Everything in the room matches – the smoked glass, the beige paintwork, the pair of Matisses framed in chrome – and accords with the current vogue of the middlingly classy [...]. It is a flawless but not a restful room: Justin has seen Maureen's son refuse to cross the carpet-edger. (60)

The interior of Maureen's house remains flawless because it is a study in the control of surfaces and so its appearance is deceptive. Fiske et al. describe the meaning of such ideal homes to the consumer: 'Yet everything is ordered for display, for use by the spectator not by the owners' (37) and 'As such it is 'an image of an absence of life' (39). Creative expression has been sacrificed to the gaze, but ironically no visitors call, and the house is a dead thing. Maureen mirrors her home, a smoky image of consumer ideology that recalls Levin's disturbing, feminist novel, *Stepford Wives* in which women in an American suburb are transformed into automatons; a process encouraged by the patriarchal club frequented by their husbands. Maureen is a modern-day woman turned monster. Bachelard's ideas concerning the harmonious safety and security of the house sound as dissonant chords, for topophilia is transformed into topophobia when the subject is constrained and confined, and there are serious consequences for the children who live within Maureen's sphere of influence.

A sphere that Plum must navigate outside of the domestic is that of school life. Plum has seven friends, or a coven of peers, among whom she is only tolerated (39). Her decision to change her name to Aria is greeted with amusement and the suggestion of a modelling career, with derision. Exposing this vulnerability is like 'peeling off a skin' (41) and Plum feels the rawness of her friends' reaction. As with Adrian's experience of school in *What the Birds See*, breaks are the worst part of the school routine and offer little protection from peer cruelty:

Lunchtime is never long enough, except for the days when it is too, too long, and this is such a day. Compared to sitting here, famished and wrapped in shame, a classroom would be sanctuary. (43)

The lack of adult supervision is also felt one weekend, when the girls arrange to pierce Plum's ears with ice and a needle. A locked bathroom is chosen as the venue, its frosted window, like Maureen's net curtains, complicit in hiding the bullying behaviour. Embodying the poison of the girls' intent, Plum's ears become infected, but the act reveals the extent of Plum's dependence on the group to prevent her isolation.

Although Plum is aware that the main reason for her friends' attendance at her birthday party is to flirt with her brothers, she is simply relieved they are coming. Sadly, the party is a disaster for when the friends congregate in Plum's bedroom and discover the contents of her suitcase, it is revealed that each 'icon' is an object that has been stolen from them (94). Plum has been motivated by jealousy, revenge and the need for a sense of control. The friends storm from the party and Plum reflects on how quickly the dynamic has changed:

But how fragile *power* must have been, how feeble must have been *happiness*, to have disintegrated so inaudibly, like crumbs dropped from a height. (146)

Hartnett juxtaposes the discarded shop-bought party food with the waiting appetite of the ants whose intrusion into Plum's birthday cake epitomises S. Schama's assertion in *Landscape and Memory* that 'even in a metropolitan sprawl, the boundaries between past and present, wild and domestic' can collapse together (577). The ants problematise the authority of such boundaries and the normative, anthropocentric positioning that places human law above the laws of nature and the non-human. The sudden visibility of the ants reveals that suburbia's fragile borders are precariously constructed by *homo sapiens* against the natural world:

In the bushes close to the fence, behind the festering pile of vegetable shavings and the remains of last year's autumn leaves, an ice-cream cake is melting into the soil, slumping sludgily, bleeding chocolate sauce. Around its crawling edge a million ants have gathered to drink themselves into oblivion. (157)

Abject and corpse-like, the cake also represents how easily a young and vulnerable subjectivity can disintegrate. Plum's family witness the departure of her friends with dismay but cannot talk to her about what happened: 'They can't save her, these parents and brothers who have never been able to save themselves' (156). Thus, Plum becomes, like Adrian in *What the Birds See*, another socially lost child; abandoned by friends and side-stepped by family. Plum observes 'the obscuring fog of softness' around her father; a man she hates to

disturb with the truth (7) and notes ‘a polite distance’ kept by her mother at the dinner table (6). Even Maureen, discussing the party with Plum, perceives the dysfunctional qualities of the Coyle family:

there’s a hollowness at the core of this family, a fear of discovering what it is that turns inside the hearts of one another – and that they know about this failing, and are ashamed. (169)

Maureen’s perception calls attention to the possibility that people absorb aspects of the environment they inhabit. The suburb celebrates the promise of an ideal that lacks substance. Like the ice-cream cake, the suburb is an artificially constructed, shop-bought or consumer-driven concept that could deteriorate given the wrong economic climate. An interior that consists of empty space also recalls the continent’s desert interior that is represented as uninhabitable. J. Agnew and J. Duncan cite M. Weber who makes a similar observation concerning modernity and the obsession with commodification:

Reality has become dreary, flat and utilitarian, leaving a great void in the souls of men which they seek to fill with furious activity and through various devices and substitutes. (52)

Plum is desperate to be liked but lacks sincerity. Her friend Sophie states: ‘You’re strange, aren’t you? [...] It’s like you’ve got nothing inside’ (163). Through the behaviour of her family, Plum has learned the incapacity to convey feeling, but this is also a malaise associated with suburban topography. Architect and cultural critic, R. Boyd claims in his publication from 1960, *The Australian Ugliness*, that suburbia denotes a national fear of reality and accompanying satisfaction with veneer and cosmetic effects that ends with ‘the betrayal of the element of love and a chill near the root of national self-respect’ (265). Plum’s narrative ends with hope in that she rejects falsity in favour of her true self, and Cydar sells his fish collection to buy his sister her longed-for TV; a sacrifice motivated by love that shames her into the realisation of her foolishness. Maureen’s narrative, however, does resonate with Boyd’s comment concerning the betrayal of love.

Plum’s self-absorbed, painful experiences of growing up and learning to negotiate power on her terms almost mask the plight of the other lost child in the novel, which is clever sleight of hand by Hartnett who seeks to draw attention to that which has been constructed as invisible. Maureen’s son, David, is the scapegoat for his mother’s disappointment and disillusionment with life in suburbia and her perception that all other choices and freedoms are closed to her.

Maureen's idea of a new life with Justin is a pipe-dream that inevitably eludes her, but the fantasy seemed to preclude parental responsibilities. David is the innocent victim of Justin's empty promises and his mother's wrathful frustration; the regularity of David's terror of her disturbed state is betrayed by the word 'usually' at the beginning of the extract that follows:

Usually he can hide under a table, in the garden, behind a door. Tonight he is trapped on the bed, which is barren despite the puffy pillows and the carnival-patterned sheets. 'Daddy!' he pleads, and the word infuses his mother's face with a blackness that is terrifying. (213)

Her hand weighs like a white sea creature across David's face. Hartnett's simile recalls the pale sea monster that so disturbs Adrian in *What the Birds See* (214), or the Bunyip from Aboriginal belief, who rises from the Billabong to signal death. Whiteness also signifies the coloniser and hence can be read as a question for modern Australia and collective forgetting. The momentous event of suffocating her child seems to trigger a form of release; an epiphany of realisation that all a bird desires is its wings; or, in other words, its freedom. Maureen feels a light in her mind that she perceives multi-sensorially as deafening, and as she kills her son, becomes aware that the tension of the hot summer has been broken by the fall of rain.

## **Conclusion**

Through her suburban novels, Hartnett makes the spectral presences that inhere in a place visible, revealing suburban existence as raw and animalistic for the young, which problematises anthropocentric positioning. This is reinforced by the incursion of the non-human across constructed boundaries, such as the immovability of mountains from the visible horizon and encounters with non-humans such as insects and birds in suburban places. Geographical borders can therefore be deployed to help explore the borders between civilised and wild and in Hartnett's novels this is also an exploration of the normative and non-normative, in which normativity is problematised. From *The Glasshouse* onward, Hartnett uses Gothic imagery and affect to reveal children's suffering as socially and culturally constructed, raising questions about cruelty within civilised society rather than within wild nature as described in the Australian Gothic of colonial literature. The analyses of Hartnett's novels *What the Birds See* and *Butterfly* have shown that the trope of the lost bush child can be transferred to a suburban setting and employed to critique aspects of culture and power relations in the modern cultural context. The shadow-side of family life is concealed behind a veil of net curtains and the seemingly ordered environment of tidy lawns, borders and

predictable patterns. Objectification, which the suburban show home and the male gaze celebrate, are part of cultural inheritance and are frequently gendered, as shown in *Butterfly* when Maureen persuades Plum to lose weight. In addition, women are represented as struggling with claustrophobic inertia in the domestic environment of the home while balancing a range of demands, including motherhood. Normative discourses are critiqued revealing, for example, that the false promises of consumerism can only temporarily, through possession and external display, allay the hollowness at the heart of modernity, which in the novels, whether in the settings of suburbia or the country towns, is conveyed as an incapacity for intersubjectivity. This is demonstrated by the inability to ‘see’ or understand, express emotion and relate to others. The issues and frustrations experienced by adults impact negatively upon the welfare of children and in *Butterfly* is exemplified by Maureen’s suffocation of David.

Hartnett’s focus in these novels is on how children become socially lost, indicating that the appropriate guidance at pivotal moments is a crucial factor in a young person’s development. In the novels, families or guardians are guilty of neglect through absence or self-absorption in their own unresolved issues or indifference. Hartnett’s employment of the Gothic aptly represents the confusion and floundering that her young characters experience but cannot always articulate, as they search for meaning amidst a plethora of discourses, images and influences. In *What the Birds See* Hartnett reveals the lack of adult attention given to the needs of sensitive, artistic children such as Adrian, who appear to be coping but are in fact flailing in the margin between vulnerability and resilience. Hartnett pinpoints with merciless precision the single incidents that can accumulate so that a child’s misery and sense of hopelessness escalate.

Adrian and Plum’s self-consciousness reveals their friends’ intolerance of difference, reflected in the selection process for team games and in how children engage with the environment, such as designated play areas being connected with social hierarchies. In both texts, the young protagonists are uncomfortable in their bodies, perceiving them as flawed and monstrous. These perceptions arise because of low self-esteem and are compounded by the actions of others. Both Adrian and Plum cling desperately to the few friends that stave off isolation. In her relentless interrogation of the cruelties of peers, Hartnett shows how human beings are not always as civilised as anthropocentric discourses proclaim and that such behaviour is cultural, as part of the socialisation process. Such examples show that a

normative discourse of egalitarianism is questionable. Therefore, in Hartnett's novels the impossibility of perfection in the suburbs is endorsed.

In holding up to scrutiny the social and cultural processes that cause her protagonists to become lost, Hartnett is asking how the trajectory towards the vanishing point might be prevented. The use of spatial metaphors to represent power structures shows how children's horizons become limited or expand depending on how children are positioned as subjects. That there is something beyond Adrian and Nicole's vanishing point, such as being ingrained in landscape, is an idea that Hartnett returns to in *The Ghost's Child*. Adrian is powerless in the public and private spheres and yet his heroic death demonstrates the selfless agency of which he was capable. To see what the birds see is to use the space provided by the text to reflect on individual subjectivities and bear witness to the social and cultural processes that impact on young people. Hartnett shows in these novels how there are some children who do not understand the rules and norms of the social world and this inability to read with emotional intelligence the behaviour and expectations of others means they do not conform. They do not appreciate that their non-conformity might be a strength because through their sensitivity, they feel too deeply.

## Chapter Three The Lost Artist and the Country Town

### Introduction

The focus of this chapter is Hartnett's continued interest in the trope of the lost child through her re-imagining of the trope of the misfit artist, who feels and is perceived by others as out of place. In the three novels selected for analysis, the country town topos is conceptualised as a liminal topography situated between the city and the bush. The topographies of the suburb and the country town both denote the processes of enclosure and settlement. While the ideal show home promotes suburban living, the country town connotes the rural idyll. Hartnett uses the figure of the artist and the landscape tradition in Australian art and deploys the Gothic to unsettle and interrogate the assumed security of the normative, hegemonic discourses that promote the rural as a romantic way of life. Furthermore, Hartnett represents the artist as misfit within the rural topos of the country town to interrogate how constructions of Australian national identity that rely on hegemonic and conformist discourses such as patriarchy and anthropocentric positioning impact upon the subjectivity of the young artist in the modern cultural context.

Through the construction of the creative child, Hartnett critiques the symbolic authority of the rural as it has been represented in white Australian culture from colonisation, as well as the constructions of masculinity that form part of this cultural inheritance. The connection between discourses of national identity and those of patriarchy can be exemplified by national types that the culture has sought to mythologise through forms of representation, such as the 'larrikin' or the resilient settler wife idealised as the 'Australian Bushwoman' or the 'Bush Mum', although, as Kossew describes, this latter construction of women as confined to the domestic, rather than the public sphere, 'profoundly alienated them from discourses of nation' (24). This positioned them as a silenced Other: a present absence in the culture. Hartnett emphasises the effects of such representations as stifling and devaluing the creativity and ambitions of the young, especially when talent is perceived as a threat to established power structures and ideologies.

The hauntology applied to the analyses of the novels establishes that the topos of the country town in decline, or 'ghost town', and frequently positioned 'off the map' in Hartnett's representations, reflects the marginalisation of young, creative talent in the culture. This is addressed in the analyses through an examination of the recurring figure of the artist in three of Hartnett's novels: *Wilful Blue* (1994), *Sleeping Dogs* (1995) and

*Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* (1999). The Gothic confinement of Hartnett's young protagonists is represented by the isolated rural locales and exacerbated by the continuance of patriarchal abuse demonstrated through the intolerance of difference, strategies of control, which include command of the domestic sphere and wilful damage to the eco-system. In asking questions concerning the values attributed to different forms of art, as well as the value placed on different ways of living, Hartnett draws attention to Indigenous art, invisible to the landscape tradition of the nineteenth century but which in the modern era has become more visible and collectable.

### **Conceptualisation of the Country Town Topos**

The country town is a liminal topos that is associated with rural ways of life and situated between the cities and the less inhabitable parts of the Australian bush. Cresswell describes how the rural has been constructed as a 'pure space' and contrasted with 'the problems of urbanity' such as homelessness. More recently, however, bucolic visions of the countryside have given way to economic realities and 'the increasing visibility of rural poverty' (114). E. Wright explains how the Australian country town has been represented as the antithesis of an ideal as follows:

In much contemporary Australian literature, country towns feature as venues for distorted realities and dysfunction, of the not-city, the translocation of American southern gothic narratives, the misadventures of the Australian underclass or tales of quirky characters imposed on unforgiving landscapes. (n.p.)

Hartnett uses the liminality of the country town as a discursive space to interrogate the symbolic authority of the rural and incorporates into her work the recognition that in the modern era, the more Romantic, nation-building narratives of escaping to the country for a peaceful, more authentic life have become intersected with a narrative of loss and decline that raises concerns about the future for young subjectivities. Hartnett's descriptions of these struggling economies also point to concerns regarding the sustainability of rural populations when compared with capital investment in the ever-expanding cities. However, the country town's liminal status means that there are advantages to small communities that exist on the margins and close to the bush. For example, Hartnett celebrates authentic encounters with the non-human, which can de-stabilise anthropocentric positioning, such as the discovery of a Tasmanian tiger in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, and there can be advantages in knowing one's neighbours, such as, in the same novel, the employer with a duty of care who assumes responsibility for finding alternative opportunities for Satchel, the young protagonist. However, more often the country town novels feature gifted young

people who must negotiate being treated as Other by their families, experience patriarchal abuse and disengaged mothers in unhappy marriages. These protagonists disturb established norms with talent and fresh ideas which can be perceived as threatening both at home and in the wider society. Typically, in Hartnett's narratives, the normative culture seeks to harness the young artist's creativity to maintain established ideologies, such as capitalism, or suppress talent, with the effect of destroying individual creative expression, or indeed, the artist as subject. For such reasons the country town setting is experienced by gifted young people as a dystopia.

Hartnett's dystopian representations of rural life are in conflict with the pioneering images of rural existence that as C. Driscoll et al. affirm pervaded depictions of Australian culture by the late nineteenth century (1). Tales of resilient, pioneering farming families and itinerant labourers who contributed to the creation of bush legend and an authentic sense of identity, have been used by political discourse to promote specific agendas, such as land purchase. Examples of such tales were epitomised by the nationalist literature of Lawson whose short stories favoured a discourse of mateship, humour in adversity, the normalisation of drinking and smoking as bush behaviours, men absent from the home, racism toward the Indigene, representation of the bush landscape as weird in the Gothic sense, as well as the popularisation of national types such as the honourable bushwoman in the domestic sphere, the swagman as cheery, resilient itinerant labourer, the sheep shearer and the selector. This latter is described as 'a man's man' in J. Kinsella's introduction to Lawson's *The Penguin Henry Lawson Short Stories* (ix). Lawson was published in *The Bulletin* from 1887 but died in poverty in 1922. Rickard describes how *The Bulletin* constructed itself as 'the bushman's bible' and claims that 'Banjo' Paterson had a 'rosier view' of the bush than Lawson, with both writers associating the city with social malaise (70). Schaffer claims that Paterson's poems were more popular than Lawson's work with *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses*, published in 1895, selling more copies than any other volume of poetry (39). Paterson is best known for the ballad 'Waltzing Matilda' from 1903. Male writers did not totally dominate the market, for Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* was very successful. Yet the novel's woman protagonist, who challenges the figure of the Romantic heroine by choosing economic hardship over wealth and marriage, could not usurp Lawson's position, described by Schaffer as 'the author of a tradition' (39).

In addition to the writers who constructed ideas of national identity by privileging the rural, landscape art provided by painters such as A. Streeton and T. Roberts, and whose work is

discussed in the section that follows, promoted the impression of Australia as predominantly rural. This is despite the majority of Australia's non-Indigenous rural communities being situated between the cities and the less inhabitable parts of the bush. Driscoll et al. argue that the rural ideal persists, despite increased population drift from the country to the city for over a century, with only 29% of Australians living outside the metropolitan capitals. Exploring the characteristics of country towns and the cultural representations of their growth, decline, change and heritage, Driscoll et al. contend that 'the rural remains crucial not only in economic terms [...] but also because of its symbolic authority within Australian culture and politics' (3). Early representations of the rural way of life, which were influenced by political movements such as pastoralism and comprised industries such as agriculture, mining and fishing, have provided a sense of national identity. These primary production processes and their role in wealth creation and the economy have assured a central position for the rural life in the national imaginary. Such constructions connect with power structures. For example, contemporary Australian political parties such as the Nationals have benefitted from identifying with the issues and concerns of rural Australia. One effect of problematising representations of the rural, as Hartnett does, is to question their continued proliferation in popular culture and discourse. The rural settlement was constructed as a safe and secure environment for the child in relation to the hostility of the bush, as Pierce relates, which, through its tendency to disorientate those who wandered into it, was perceived as threatening (xii). As with the flawed assumptions of safety that accompany life in the suburb, Hartnett challenges notions of a hostile nature by representing elements of the country town as damaging to child welfare. Before moving on to discuss how Hartnett deconstructs the idyll of rural life through the Australian Gothic, it is important to maintain the chapter's focus on the figure of the artist, and so the following section discusses the development of landscape art in Australia.

### **Landscape Art and the Heidelberg School of Painters**

From colonial times, art was recruited for the construction of white Australia's national identity, as well as its legends. Allen, in *Art in Australia: From Colonization to Postmodernism*, describes a range of artistic movements, from the picturesque in early depictions, the Romanticism of mid-nineteenth century representations and the nationalist work of the Heidelberg school of painters in the late 1880s, which sought to promote positive images of the Australian landscape and colonisation. This occurred, however, in

the context of the violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples and the environment as a result of the fiction of *terra nullius*. From the time of the Enclosure Acts in Britain in the 1870s, the colonial desire to possess the land and extract its resources has been accompanied by the need to create borders that indicate ownership. The physical changes in the terrain wrought by enclosure and settlement were exploited and deployed by the landscape tradition of Australia's white artists, especially as there was a demand for images of a place that resembled home. With the emphasis on landscape art as a controlling discourse for normalising the exotic but fragile fauna and flora of Australia, emerges the importance of the spectacle, a word whose meaning is explored by Derrida as the etymological root of 'spectre' or more specifically in the artistic context, the visual as performance, thereby establishing visual representation as a productive force within the culture:

Speculation always speculates on some spectre, it speculates in the mirror of what it produces, on the spectacle that it gives itself and that it gives itself to see. It believes in what it believes it sees: in representations. (183)

The productive force of the visual was evident in the colonial art of the nineteenth century, which grew from the new biological sciences and the rise of industrialisation, and where the emphasis was on re-creating a branch of European society with paintings of tidy homesteads and the imposition of order upon nature. As Allen explains, once security had been established the beauty of the land could be enjoyed safely. The natural picturesque became the dominant paradigm with the effect of protecting the subject 'from being lost in the strangeness of the new' (31). Figure painting, on the other hand, was not taught in Australia until the foundation of the National Gallery School in Melbourne. It was from here that the Heidelberg artist, F. McCubbin (1855-1917) emerged, who painted images of the lost white child in the landscape of the bush. Hartnett recruits these types of representation and adapts them for her critique of normativity in modern times.

The Heidelberg School of Painters was named after the outer suburban location of the Yarra Valley, near Melbourne, where they were located. This is close to where Hartnett was born and in the Redmond Barry Lecture she expresses a special affinity, 'given our mutual connection in the eastern suburbs' (8), having chosen to centre her novel *Wilful Blue* around the group. Emerging in the 1880s, with the work of Roberts (1856-1931), the art was perceived as a nationalist beginning and, as Bonyhady asserts, 'transformed how Australia was visualised' (22). As well as McCubbin and Roberts, the group comprised C. Conder (1868-1909) and Streeton (1867-1943). Inspired by English and French naturalist

and Impressionist painting, the artists would paint in the open air, or *en plein air*, and celebrate the virtues of rural and bush life.

An article about the Heidelberg School on the Australian Government website affirms the rising nationalistic sentiment leading up to the centenary of white settlement, amidst settler insecurities and anxieties concerning geographical isolation that provided part of the context for the federal movement of the 1890s.

We cannot [...] urge too strongly [...] how requisite it is that we should as soon as possible fill our National Gallery with representative works of our artists and our nation, its early historical scenes, and pictures of the true rude life that must have and did exist in the early days of the colony. (*Australian Magazine:138*).

The enmeshing of the work of the Heidelberg artists with the move towards Federation in 1901 is exemplified by Roberts' painting of the first federal parliament in Melbourne's Exhibition Building. Thus, bush values and the Heidelberg vision, as Rickard claims, 'began to be institutionalised in the popular imagination' (127). These values are celebrated in paintings such as *Down on His Luck* (1889) by McCubbin, which is one of the earliest portrayals of the man of the bush as a heroic figure, and in *The Golden Fleece* (1894) by Roberts, depicting a busy shearing shed. Using impressionism, to produce a characteristically Australian art, captured the unique colours and shading of the landscape but also helped to construct the mythology of the white pioneer as resilient and hard-working. This implied simplicity occluded a more complex reality, where Aborigines were largely absent from forms of representation such as the national pictures, just as they were excluded from the Australian Constitution of 1901. This elision of centuries of Aboriginal inhabitation has contributed to perceptions of early landscape art as a haunted form of representation.

### **The Australian Rural Gothic**

The country town as a degenerating topos is not unique to the Australian Gothic and can also be identified as a trope of the American Southern Gothic, especially literature set in the Appalachians. C. McCarthy's novels are important examples, such as *Child of God* published in 1973, and the more recent post-apocalyptic narrative *The Road* from 2006. McCarthy provides a useful point of comparison while identifying what is distinctive about the Australian Gothic in rural settings and how it is used by Hartnett. To begin, one parallel between McCarthy and Hartnett is that neither adopts a didactic stance, preferring instead to reveal cultural issues through choice of settings, circumstances and character behaviour.

Themes in common include exploitation of white, working-class characters, father and son relationships, apocalypse which threatens society or the self, corruption of belief in favour of self-serving agendas or biblical themes such as the deterioration of Eden and innocence. These themes are included in Hartnett's country town novels, especially *Sleeping Dogs*.

Distance of travel over a huge land mass is a topographical feature shared by America and Australia, and in the Gothic the horizontal openness of the landscape is exploited for its paradoxically claustrophobic quality. In *The Road*, McCarthy uses the exposure of isolated human figures on the open highway to increase a sense of vulnerability. Similarly, in Hartnett's *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, it is the isolation of the highway that builds tension when protagonist Satchel's car refuses to start and he needs to transport his badly injured dog to veterinary care. Remote farms or rural outposts in decline are also common to both sub-genres. Such insular communities are haunted by secrets yet feel exposure from being surrounded by open country. This results in perceived entrapment and surveillance, as discussed below in the analysis of Hartnett's early novel, *Sparkle and Nightflower*. The degeneration of the country town emphasises the impermanence of economic security and the impossibility of belonging for those who don't 'fit' with established norms. For both Hartnett and McCarthy, the deterioration of places that have become 'ghost towns' is symptomatic of their inhabitants who have frequently lost a sense of purpose. In both sub-genres, this is likely to be a consequence of economic or government policies and historical events. If characters appear flawed, then this signals the importance of scrutinising the cultural context. Having considered these similarities it is important to identify what distinguishes the Australian rural Gothic from the Appalachian Gothic to avoid conflating one with the other.

The Australian Gothic as it was first conceived in the context of colonisation is distinguished by its unique geographical and historical context. Processes of colonisation are never the same for different nations, although similarities might be noted, such as a discourse of imperialism leading to the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the exploitation of natural resources for wealth and European settlement and expansion. In Australia the discourse used to justify the oppression and incarceration of the racial Other was the fiction of *terra nullius*. The theme of entrapment recalls a convict past specific to Australia and intersects with the trope of the disillusioned wife or 'helpmate' confined to the homestead while the husband is engaged in paid employment. In Hartnett's novels entrapment is frequently associated with Australian national myths and ideologies that suppress and stifle

the hopes and creative expression of disenchanted youth. Colonial artists frequently re-constructed Indigenous land through art to fit with the national self-image and nations that relied on the images supplied by painters and illustrators to spread ideas of nation included Asia, Africa, America and New Zealand. For example, America commodified and Romanticised through art the grandeur of a sublime landscape imbued with power and moral significance from Judaeo-Christian belief, whereas in Australia ideas of the sublime were curtailed by perceptions of an antagonistic landscape and harsh conditions.

Techniques used to represent ideas of nation were different because colonisation occurred later in Australia than America. Landscape art and the camera, through what Derrida calls the '*spectral effects*' of media (67, emphasis in original), try to fix images within the memory to construct and essentialise national identity. For example, as Conrad explains, the invention of the camera meant that this technology was deployed to record, domesticate, enclose and make knowable the wildness of Australia's country (11). This is reflected in the literature when White's European explorer, Voss, makes the country his 'by right of vision' (23), thus making passive a potentially resistant subject. This is especially problematic in the context of colonial perceptions of the land as feminised or conflated with the racial Other. In Hartnett's representations, the child is also deemed passive by adult power structures. This has been affirmed by McGennissen's study of School Readers, which shows how images of the child were deployed to depict a young and blameless Australia, thus contributing to a discourse of collective forgetting (4). Challenging the power of the gaze requires a reversal of perspective so that being 'looked at' is replaced by the role of observer, or a switch from object to subject. Hartnett applies this logic in her work, by offering up to scrutiny the Australian landscape tradition and its connections with other normative discourses to expose *why* the child or young adult becomes lost. To achieve this, she highlights the young artist as a figure lost within the cultural landscape.

Another way in which power structures are made visible through the Gothic is through making whiteness more visible so as to challenge its normativity. In the American Gothic, T. Morrison, in her novel *Beloved*, published in 1987, critiques race by focusing on the legacy of slavery, once dominant in the South, with the result of exposing whiteness as a discourse that normalised the imprisonment, importation and trade of human beings. Appalachian Gothic, in McCarthy's writing, possesses undertones of Calvinism that imbue its flawed, white characters in country towns with a sense of fatalism. There is a tendency

toward profound violence born of repression or suppressed memories, complicating the myth of the American Dream and the ideology of Manifest Destiny. This latter is based on a belief in American exceptionalism and is defined by D.L. Madsen as ‘the idea that the United States was divinely destined to expand’ (51). In Australia, the country towns developed after the gold rush in the late nineteenth century because many new arrivals settled as farmers or ‘selectors’ on land previously occupied by squatters, and prior to that, by Aborigines. Allen describes the settlement phase of engagement with landscape as concerned with adaptation or accepting a new place as familiar or permanent: the *heimlich* within the *unheimlich*. Settler art thus alluded to ‘qualities of the land that seemed resistant to familiarisation, and yet which the imagination could transform into a sense of belonging’ (31). Hartnett uses these representations knowing that from its inception the country town was an uncanny place to call home, so that white patriarchal figures in her novels appear as exiles in a landscape that is indifferent at best.

A sense of exile can be deemed fundamental to the colonial psyche claims Rickard, whether expressed in real life or through representation (70). This can lead to nostalgia, which in turn can give rise to melancholy which is then perceived or projected upon one’s surroundings. Thus, in the colonial Australian Gothic the quality of melancholy has been associated with the landscape of the bush, damaged characters, the lure of the outback and spectral figures, such as ghosts and creatures from Aboriginal belief, such as the Bunyip. Hartnett uses this melancholy and transfers it to her young characters in country town settings whose ‘nostalgia’ is not concerned with looking back but in looking forwards to a future they feel has already been taken from them.

### **Analysis of Hartnett’s Early Country Town Novel *Sparkle and Nightflower* (1986)**

In this early work, a mother and father respectively bear the names of the title: a symbolic separation which mirrors the actuality of the lives they spend apart. Sarah Nightflower, who is of Aboriginal and Arab descent, moves with sixteen-year-old Sam to a dilapidated boarding house ‘not unlike the house in Hitchcock’s *Psycho*’ (4) in a remote town ‘which shall remain forever anonymous’ (1). The refusal of Sam, who is also the narrator, to locate the town by naming it or locating it on the map is indicative of the obscurity and consequent invisibility of such towns in Hartnett’s future representations. Similarly, T. Astley, in her series of connected tales *Vanishing Points*, published in 1992, describes the scene of a country town from the perspective of a bus tour for city dwellers:

Below the shallow hills the dying town was still struggling to hold itself together, buildings and townsfolk welded by memory rather than clay, as if the whole fabric – tenons, mortices, nails – were history and portions of history that linked more potently than timber or iron. Forty or fifty houses, like randomly flung dice, dotted the small grid of roads in the parched late afternoon. (40)

The opinion of the tourist is also used by Hartnett in *Sparkle and Nightflower* when the young protagonist, Sam, states that country towns are very deceptive places; even ‘downright scary’ and especially when you’re a stranger and ‘you’ve just shifted in’ (9). Hartnett uses the outsider perspective again in *Sleeping Dogs* but transfers it to the antagonist, Bow Fox.

Another example of the stranger perspective used for Gothic ‘affect’ is provided by K. Grenville’s novel from 1999, *The Idea of Perfection*, in which the protagonist, Harley, has moved from the city, and comments on the town in a manner that reinforces the stereotype, suggesting how the emptiness, rather paradoxically, creates an uncanny ‘affect’ of surveillance. This reinforces ideas of the ghostly, for as Derrida explains, using his concept of the ‘visor effect: we do not see who looks at us’ (6). Harley has forgotten how ‘empty a country town could be, how blank-windowed, how you could feel looked-at and large’ (6). The impression of surveillance increases feelings of entrapment, as discussed in the section above, which complicates ideas of homeliness and belonging.

A contrast can be made between outback heroism, in which the outback functioned as a literary topos for what Kossew describes as ‘stereotypes of daring exploits of exploration, survival and discovery’ (45), and the Gothic focus given by novelists such as Hartnett, Astley and Grenville to stories of everyday people in the ordinary sub-cultures of country towns. For Hartnett, the squalid boarding house in *Sparkle and Nightflower* dispels more positive representations of country towns that have been learned from movies and books in which ‘all the wholesome, beautiful children who live there are gently nudged by the sun’s rays and the rooster’s cries until they wake up, and it’s all hunky-dory and wonderful’ (6). The country town as Gothic locale is anti-heroic and challenges the epic Australian adventure novel. Kossew cites Malouf and P. Carey as examples of writers who exploit the latter genre (45).

In *Sparkle and Nightflower*, Sam perceives that being surrounded by open country paradoxically serves to exaggerate the sense of confinement that the town exudes, as Sam describes how ‘this place was like a prison, bordered by the river and flat, hot empty land

and bindies' (108). Bindies are prickly burrs and so, like a natural form of barbed wire, add to the impression of a penal colony. Sam yearns to escape to Sydney and eventually his mother does decide to sell up and move to the Gold Coast. The decision to move from the predominantly white community relates to Sarah's ethnicity and this is explained in the text. From the beginning of the novel it is implied that his mother's connection with the small, predominantly white community is tenuous at best:

We never stayed long enough in one place to make friends, or for me to settle into my new school, before Sarah would decide she was bored [...] Sarah claimed it was her Aboriginal and Arab ancestry. (2)

Sarah's sense of Otherness is compounded by economic difficulties which are indicated by the family's lack of material possessions and the dilapidated condition of the boarding house. Sam wonders if there is some flaw in her that means his mother cannot make a relationship work. As an older boarding house guest comments, 'I don't think that she was cut out to be a mother' (133), which resonates with the historic discourse of the White Australia policy and the ensuing forced removal of Aboriginal children from their parents by white authorities, and suggests the continuation of such prejudice. However, issues of economic insecurity, social class and emotional instability are social rather than innate, and complicate assumptions based on ethnicity. That the town offers little as a farming community for both white and Aboriginal inhabitants is explicit in the text, with the lack of physical employment invoking Gothic images of a zombie-like existence as one day's sameness merges with the next, as described in the extract that follows:

Across the road stood the inevitable pubs, where I saw my first real country people. They were an assortment of Aboriginals, and farmers who had lost their strength and were virtually useless on a farm. They sat in the shade of the pubs' big, sloping verandas, watching through milky eyes, ignoring the wooden seats around them, drinking away their weekly pensions, as silent and unmoving as victims of a taxidermist, not chasing the flies. (10)

The acceptance of apparent meaninglessness and hardship by the community focuses attention on the reasons for such inertia, which are unconnected with ideas of a hostile, rural landscape and are more to do with the withdrawal of external sources of capital and investment.

The country town is represented in *Sparkle and Nightflower* as a dying, degenerate topos that offers little hope for young subjectivities. Consequently, Sam is unhappy and unruly. At the level of the family, there is dysfunction and argument. Sam's father is absent, and

Sarah's boyfriend, whom Sam initially dislikes, is still married but separated from his wife and embroiled in a custody battle for his daughters. Sarah's decision to move on, while ostensibly a search for place, is primarily motivated by disillusionment with patriarchy and a search for inner peace and happiness. Even though Sam is aware that Sydney offers 'no chance for a job' (85) and that his own decision to go is irrational and possibly selfish, the alternative of remaining in the country town is unimaginable. Novels of Hartnett's that have been published since then, and which also use the setting of the country town, are analysed later in the chapter. From *Sparkle and Nightflower* it is possible to identify themes that are developed later, such as the degeneration of the country town topos caused by wider discourses such as those of capitalism and investment, aside from feelings of confinement and surveillance. In the context of the child lost to culture, Hartnett is already focused on the plight of protagonists who inhabit a subjectivity that does not seem to fit with that character's specific time or place.

### **The Trope of the Lost Artist in the Country Town**

Hartnett employs the figure of the lost artist character as a means of critiquing cultural norms and these include dominant constructions of masculinity which originate from iconic representations of rural life, discussed above (see p. 88). In *Wilful Blue* and *Sleeping Dogs* she achieves this by highlighting how a young artist who does not fit with established norms of representation is perceived as Other.

The creative child raised in a family that does not nurture individual talent experiences a deficit of mentorship and artistic sustenance for such a child needs a culture that supports individual creative expression. M.P.J. Bohlmann has commented on the phenomenon of the 'misfit' in relation to the gifted or talented child as follows:

Aside from children who are deemed deficient in regard to the ability and capacity of the normal child, there are those children who exceed the aptitudes of the normal child. The prodigious child with technological, scientific or musical talents indicates precocity, which renders this child closer to the adult than the child. (xvii)

These gifts, as Bohlmann explains, serve to destabilise the boundary between adult and child and that which separates the human from the divine (xvii). However, if the gifts can be harnessed to suit the demands of the capitalist system, then the child can be welcomed into the adult world. The gifted child and the child star are 'extraordinary children' (ix) who can be perceived as posing a threat to received ideologies. As such, their transgressions will be punished (xviii). Another type of difference is gender non-

conformity. Signs of alternative masculinities and femininities work against cultural norms of assuming all children are not only straight but asexual (xx). Thus, misfit children occupy a betwixt and between cultural space. They complicate notions of blood inheritance as they sometimes deviate from the norms within their own nuclear family. This can lead to conflict when parents fight their own sense of worthlessness and insignificance by seeking to control the lives of their children. The projection of patriarchal fears onto children is critiqued by Hartnett in the novels selected for detailed analyses in this chapter. In another essay within the Bohlmann text, M.C Schwenk comments on the attitudes of fathers and the issue of accepting parental responsibility:

In cases of accidents or injuries, for instance, parents, that is, fathers in particular, distanced themselves from the responsibility for the incidents (e.g. for not supervising their children) and avoided any deeper emotional distress for their children's fate. Instead, they regarded the accident as providential admonishment to their own persons. (12)

This recalls the assertion from Judaeo-Christian belief in Numbers 14:18, where the Lord is described as long suffering and of great mercy, forgiving transgressions but still holding the guilty responsible by 'visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation'. In the Australian context colonial guilt also forms part of this warped inheritance. The Law of the Father is thus inflected with guilt that is displaced onto children, and especially those children who are perceived as different to familial norms. Inherited guilt therefore leads to the construction of children as misfits before God and the community. In my analysis of *What the Birds See* I have shown how the unruly hair of artistic child Adrian, confirms his status as a misfit, expressed through his grandmother's daily wrestles with it. The denial of family responsibility for the misfit child, as described by Schwenk, and displayed by Adrian's family in the novel, results in Adrian's death. Similarly, in the analyses that follow, fathers sidestep caring for the misfit child and do not nurture difference expressed through talent, choosing instead to exert pressure on the child to contribute to the family's economic position and conform to familial norms.

### ***Wilful Blue* (1994)**

The figure of the young artist lost to culture and perceived as misfit is chosen by Hartnett as the protagonist in *Wilful Blue*. As the young artist is already dead the text is imbued with spectral aspects which are central to my thesis. In addition the image of the rural idyll of 'The Artist's Camp' as an inspirational locale for creativity, as represented by the

Heidelberg School, is explicitly problematised by Hartnett's depiction of an artist's retreat as a Gothic boarding house in the modern context. Once a functioning monastery, the setting is used by Hartnett to show how material and non-material traces can inhere in a place, troubling the present with the past and affecting subjectivity. The disused Catholic chapel, re-purposed as a painting studio, signifies a redundant faith which enables Hartnett's characters to engage in a dialogue that raises questions about art and religion as philosophical truths. As with British writer D. du Maurier's Gothic novel *Rebecca*, in which the most prominent character is dead but haunts the text, so Hartnett uses a temporal shift to evoke the character of a young artist, Guy, who has committed suicide but is present in the text through the memories of other characters. Guy remains enigmatic: an assemblage of impressions formed by his peers, and ultimately the reader. Guy, a gifted artist, deemed misfit, resists essentialising narratives by withholding aspects of his identity. The use of temporal shift shows how time is experienced as anachronistic, and therefore in spectral ways by the subject and contributes to a theme of vanishing and return that resonates with lost child narratives. The analysis that follows is sub-divided into three sections which reflect important themes in the novel: the idea of spectral return and the buried past, the power of fire to destroy and cleanse and the inaccessibility of the self.

In *Wilful Blue*, seven young men attend an artist's retreat in Sanquedeet, a small town situated on the Ocean Road, not far from Geelong, near Melbourne. In the Redmond Barry Lecture, Hartnett describes how the setting is 'a remembered version of Apollo Bay, a town in which I'd once holidayed as a teenager' (8), demonstrating once more how experience of place influences Hartnett's work. Two of the group, Guy Defoe and Jesse McGee, are commissioned by the owner to paint a tribute to the Heidelberg artists and so boost the marketability of the retreat. The idea of seven artists may allude to the '9 by 5 Impression Exhibition' in 1889, so called, as Allen explains, due to the dimensions of the 185 wooden cigar box panels that were used by the Heidelberg group as canvasses for the paintings (68). The group of four, McCubbin, Roberts, Conder and Streeton, had been joined by a sculptor and two art students, and this membership is similar to Hartnett's representation. In addition, Guy and Jesse use 1889 as the timeframe for their painting of the Heidelberg group. The '9 by 5' exhibition received mixed critical reviews inciting the artists to write to *The Argus* newspaper, defending their right to freedom of choice in subject and technique, without repeating what others had done before. One of Streeton's most famous paintings from 1889 is of a benign farming landscape that is partly in light

and partly in shade, titled *Golden Summer, Eaglemont*. The painting captures a hedonistic period prior to the outbreak of war in 1914. Hartnett uses, in her prologue, a letter from Conder to Roberts from 1890, suggesting that *Wilful Blue* also represents a collection of memories about a singular and fleeting summer:

I feel more than sorry that (those) days are over, because nothing can exceed the pleasures of that last summer, when I fancy all of us lost the ‘Ego’ somewhat of our natures in looking at what was Nature’s best art and ideality. Give me one summer again with yourself and Streeton – the same long evenings, songs, dirty plates, and the last pink skies. (n.p)

Using such narrative techniques as spatial and temporal shift, Conder’s Romanticism is undermined by Hartnett’s modern re-telling of the Heidelberg artist camps of the late nineteenth century, which is at once a Gothic reversal of them, as well as a critique of those normative discourses that seek to influence artistic endeavour, such as those celebrating the power of the market economy. The summer at Sanquedeet, for example, is ‘one of the coldest on record’ (18). As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that Hartnett’s representation of the young artist in modern culture critiques the nostalgic *fin de siècle* discourse offered by Conder, revealing instead a parasitic culture that seeks to control and, in consequence, constrain the talents of its youth. The rejection of Romanticism is reinforced by these few possessions of Guy which include T.S Eliot’s post-war poem, *The Wasteland*. C.B. Cox and A.P. Hinchliffe refer to Eliot’s response to a comment that in this poem he had expressed the ‘disillusionment of a generation’, where he states that he may have ‘expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned’ (26). This can be read as a point of relevance to Guy’s artistic frustration with an inherited conservatism that persists beyond the post-war era.

### *Spectral returns*

The novel’s initial setting is that of a cemetery, where Walt Reeves extinguishes his cigarette on a grave. Jesse McGee, whose stride and skin tone suggest ‘a lifetime spent around horses and heat and red dust’ (7), denoting his rural upbringing, suffers from a recurring dream that recalls an artist’s retreat in Sanquedeet the previous Summer. Walt suggests that the situation is like ‘some long-winded Gothic novel’ (1). The young friends discuss memories of the retreat in which they and five other artists participated. One of the group, Guy, has committed suicide and Jesse, who worked closely with him, is trying to

reconcile his memories of the retreat with such a traumatic outcome; in short, to bury the past and move on:

But memories of Sanquedeet lurked in Jesse's skull, painful as a tumour, unshakeable as an addiction. Summer would come around again, and with it would come the thought: *Are they disinterring dead men at Sanquedeet this summer? Or have they had enough?* (1, italics in original).

Although the dead are supposedly part of the buried past, they do not remain so in phenomenal experience, for Guy's death is haunting Jesse's present. This is reinforced when the young men feel someone watching them at Guy's grave, and as she approaches, Jesse is disturbed to see Guy's features on the girl's face and detects shared mannerisms. The physical resemblance of Grere Defoe to her dead brother, Guy, constitutes a Gothic doubling and another form of haunting. When Grere asks why girls were not invited to the retreat, Walt replies that they did not fit with the Romantic tradition (36), which resonates with the exclusion of women from discourses of nation. Sanquedeet is represented as a site of disease or malaise, revealing how experiences of place become internalised as part of the subject, intersubjectively shaping him or her. Jesse's Gothic reflections are the antithesis of Conder's nostalgic and Romanticised letter to Roberts in 1890, discussed above.

Hartnett's representation of Sanquedeet as a Gothic topos is revealed through Jesse's subjective recollections. As Trigg explains, memories of place are a phenomenal experience that enables the subject to view place as both an objective reality and as socially constructed:

The memory of place forces us to return to the immediacy of our environment and to all that is absorbed, both familiar and strange, within that environment. In doing so, not only do we *feel* the measure of time pass through our bodies, but through attending to the phenomenon of place, we catch sight of how memory forms an undulating core at the heart of our being. (xvi, emphasis in original)

Hartnett emphasises that memories are formed within a social context, but she also uses sudden and frequent shifts in temporalities and settings to signal that memories are also inherently spatial. For instance, Sanquedeet is a dilapidated building with a peeling skin of 'bilious green' paint which repels the eye (10) and fits with the Gothic trope of degeneration. Its construction is unsuitable for the climate, being long and flat with a tin roof that absorbs the heat and rusts from the effects of salt and rain 'like a slug from an alien world' (11), suggesting how poorly the climate was understood during settlement.

With its spiny thistles, scrubland, black spiders and nests of snakes (11) the bush is reclaiming Sanquedeet. The retreat is close to the ocean that is ever present through sound and smell and whose beach represents wildness as ‘untamed’ (12). The adjective ‘untamed’ connects the ocean with the rest of Australia’s wild landscape. However, in contrast with the heat of a desert interior, the water of the Bass Strait, which separates the coastline of Victoria from Tasmania, is described as ‘ice-white Antarctic water’ (13) and serves as a reminder that despite Australia’s seeming isolation, the continents are connected. Guy, who perceives this connection, can be found on a plateau of rocks ‘staring fiercely at the horizon’ (16), for his yearning to travel cannot be fulfilled due to his family’s economic constraints. He describes his entrapment as mapped by the coastline, which ‘forms the limit of our confines’ (17). Yet a border also represents the possibility of a crossing and ideas of departure and return.

As the lost child of the novel, Guy consciously chooses his moment to leave modern culture to become absorbed by the sea he yearns to cross. In so doing Guy escapes what he perceives as his cultural and economic entrapment. This removes wild landscape from scrutiny and places capitalist discourse at the heart of white Australian anxieties. Guy is described as having died ‘as Shelley might have’ (4), recalling the similar death by drowning of the young British Romantic poet in 1822; both deaths are reported as accidents. Recalling also the crucified Christ, Guy describes P. Shelley as suffering in order to thrive, or to achieve a higher state. While Guy’s body is visibly unmarked, he has suffered on the inside, for his emotional and psychological well-being has been damaged and it is this element that haunts Jesse through a series of spectral returns.

Despite being ravaged by a bush fire, the surrounding vegetation has returned as if, Guy ponders, it thrives on suffering (27). This is a reversal of Christ’s suffering in order to thrive, which is part of being mortal and ‘happens all the time’ (109). Sanquedeet reminds Walt of the Bates Hotel (12) from Hitchcock’s film *Psycho*, referencing how the ‘boarding house’ trope is adapted by Hartnett for the Australian context. Once home to trainee priests and monks who had farmed the land in the ‘pristine grey-green isolation of the bush’ (11), Sanquedeet retains the etchings of saints on hearth tiles, a rusted bell that once rang for services, stained glass and crosses above doorways. On Guy’s wall hangs a picture of ‘a willowy, blond, sap-faced Jesus hovering above a lake’, inscribed with a quotation from Corinthians: ‘*Absent in body, but present in spirit*’ (12, emphasis in original). This also reflects Guy’s spectral presence throughout the novel. Sanquedeet is a transitory place, a

temporary home for those who pass through and a conduit for discussion concerning the role of the modern artist.

The proprietor of Sanquedeet, Harriet, is absorbed in a game of cultural flirtation with the young male artists and is in pursuit of the resurrection of a Romantic ideal of nationhood. Guy's suicide, which is of itself tragic, is catastrophic for Harriet's publicity and symbolically is a form of resistance to modern culture's reluctance to support the gifted child's progressive ideas. When the retreat commences, Harriet intends that Sanquedeet will have youth as its heart and 'its blood will be the ideas and dreams of the young, to filter out and feed the organs of society' (23). The vampiric metaphor of the exploitation of young talent to feed capitalist ambition is monstrous with regard to the Gothic and is intensified by Sanquedeet's religious past, in which services would celebrate the sacrament of Christ's body and blood as a living sacrifice to atone for the sins of others.

The chapel setting, which contains an icon of the crucified Christ, has been selected as the studio and exhibition venue for Guy and Jesse's portrait of the Heidelberg School, an artistic movement explained earlier (see p.89). Unable to reconcile herself to modern art, Harriet would like Jesse and Guy to re-create the mythologised landscape of the bush, using a campfire setting. Jesse bemoans that she has selected artists so commonly known, 'whose work hung in dreadful frames in suburban home too numerous to count' (24). Harriet's perspective is a form of artistic entrapment or cultural abuse that compounds Guy's economic situation and personal estrangement from divorced parents who 'passed the time beating the crap out of each other' (114). The imposition of normativity has caused Guy's and Jesse's disillusionment and suppressed their creative expression. Jesse claims that he paints things as they are because it is the only way he can do it, whereas Guy says that he paints things as they are because he no longer sees the point of painting things as they are not. Guy's rejection of normativity is implied by his fondness for the chapel's altar cloth, on which is inscribed the nineteenth-century poem, 'The Wanderings of a Pilgrim', by David Harsha. This proves to be prophetic for Guy as the following lines indicate:

*Nothing on earth I call my own –  
A stranger to the world unknown  
I all their Gods despise  
I trample on their whole delight  
And seek a country out of sight –  
A country in the skies. (36, italics in the original)*

Slowly, as the painting takes shape, the dead artists return ‘like ghosts, Jesse thought, coaxed from the void’ (69). Walt’s sister, Emma, remarks that the work is like ‘digging them up from their graves’ (106), which disturbs Guy, for this artistic disinterment is occurring within a religious space founded on an ideology of resurrection. Guy’s faith has been replaced by hollowness and that ‘leaves me nothing at all’ (62). Guy does, however, have confidence in his artistic collaboration with Jesse, dispelling the latter’s doubts that the work will be finished on time.

Although Guy and Jesse have changed Harriet’s nostalgic setting from bush to coast, the life-size figures of the Heidelberg artists emerge through the portrait to re-assert their dominance within the cultural sphere, while Guy incinerates his earlier art work and leaves it in a suitcase. The wilful destruction of the artist’s past and ultimately of his embodied self, as the new painting emerges, recalls Merleau-Ponty’s observation in *The World of Perception* that the artist frequently vanishes as the work of art asserts itself, such as when a piece of music eclipses the musician (99). In other words the creative product would normally *exceed* and *encompass* its source. As the Heidelberg painting simply reproduces the traditions of the past, the creative impulse and the possible future which Guy’s portfolio represents is flattened and extinguished. In *Wilful Blue* the vanished artist is tragic, throwing into sharp relief the nationalistic discourse of the past which the painting of the Heidelberg artists represents and its re-assertion at the expense of young talent. Guy has already demonstrated that he is a strong swimmer and so his death by water is a shock. When Guy appears as a spectre to Matilda (or Tilly, as she is known), he stands barefooted on the rocks gazing at the ocean’s horizon, ‘looking as if he had been born to stand there’ (152). Guy complicates ideas of linear perspective or, as Merleau-Ponty (1948) might describe it is ‘interrupting the normal process of seeing’, using space to form a connection that the subject feels as part of perceptual experience (53). Matilda writes to Guy, declaring ‘He was there and not there [...]. He was real and he was a dream’ (153), affirming the liminal status of the misfit artist who resists being defined by normative cultural expectations.

### *The Intervention of Fire*

The seven artists work to bring their projects to completion, including Steven, whose sculpture of the extinct Apex predator, the Tasmanian tiger, obliquely references Sanquedeet’s connection with the bush and the vanished racial Other. When a game of

‘fiery footy’ takes place during an unusual ‘pristine darkness’ in the elemental landscape, a petrol-soaked football flies through the door and destroys the sculpture. Unlike the indigenous eucalypts that return stronger after a fire (109), there is no resurrection for Steven’s art work. Steven is a bully and shows a lack of respect for non-human life, having already scalded a spider to death for no reason. It seems fitting that the Tasmanian tiger, a totemic animal from Aboriginal belief, will not make a spectral return under Steven’s hands and that he should not profit from the work. The fire’s trajectory could be perceived as a form of revenge emanating from the bush to punish Steven’s hubris:

how black the blackness was, how supreme an unsullied night could be. It was a blackness to be lost in, a blackness in which to lose your way. A good blackness in which to kick fire. (128)

Blackness is associated here with ideas of becoming lost and recalls the Aboriginal children of the stolen generation, removed from their families by force and absent from white discourses of national identity, as described earlier (see p.68). As Jesse watches the fiery football vanish into the light of Sanquedeet he muses, ‘Perhaps that’s what happens to people who are lost and never found, perhaps the night simply takes them away’ (129). While a seeming abdication of responsibility, Jesse’s thought might also reference the lack of any visible trail for families seeking to be reunited with their children. The fiery football is an abnormality in the night sky that further sabotages Harriet’s Romantic enterprise. Persisting through different temporalities, memories and material traces assert their uncanny and spectral influences and, in Hartnett’s novels, place is revealed as more than a meaningful location and part of a dialogic, phenomenal process that continues to evolve.

### *The Inaccessibility of the Self*

Hartnett uses the spectral experience of memory and the wilfulness of the suicide figure to show how the subject can only be partially constructed by others and that aspects of the self are withheld from scrutiny. This recalls Merleau-Ponty’s assertion that it is impossible to see an object in its entirety: ‘I do not have the object in its fullness’, for, when we try to take hold of the past it can only be ‘my past as I now see it, and I have perhaps altered it’ (*Phenomenology of Perception* 72). Memory is both subjective and partial, and therefore unreliable. For Hartnett, the act of suicide frequently eludes the understanding of those who knew the victim, as she explains via a press release by Penguin publicist, Kate Armstrong in 1994, the year in which *Wilful Blue* was published:

The issue of suicide interests me: it has given romantic and fashionable overtones which are both dangerous and misguided, for those who take their own lives would reject both labels. It is an act so far beyond the understanding of 'normal' society that we lose the right to judge people who suicide in any way – they have become alien to the world, and the world alien to them. (Hartnett Archive, n.p.)

The inexplicability of suicide is the central idea in Hartnett's short story "The Death of Us" in the collection *There Must be Lions: Stories About Mental Illness*, published in 1998. The story is set in 1994 and, unusually for Hartnett, uses the second person, addressing the persona of twenty-six-year-old Luke, a friend who has been battling mental illness. After sharing a New Year drink when he appears hopeful, the bluntness of shock is conveyed via the revelation that, five weeks later, 'your car ploughed into a lightpole' (12). It is difficult to separate this story from *Wilful Blue*, for in both narratives a friend is haunted by speculation that the lost friend will re-appear. Whether the short story is based on biographical truth is difficult to decipher, except that the narrator recalls how Luke once took each one of her five siblings for a ride in his car, 'zooming up and down the Eastern Freeway for a treat' (7), and this echoes the number of siblings in Hartnett's own family. The impotent strivings for understanding of Guy's friends and sister in *Wilful Blue* indicate the limitations of memory, depending on the perspective of the person remembering and the manifestation of memory as a continual re-invention. Memories are described by Jesse as 'frozen droplets' (34): a stasis which is illusory but, like portraiture, instils a sense of melancholy heightened by the inaccessibility of the past. Hartnett's unannounced temporal and spatial shifts in the text facilitate the phenomenal experience of vanishings and returns.

Although reported as suicide, Guy's death raises unanswered questions for his sister, Grere, exacerbated by regrets, and her memories of his deep and terminal melancholy are difficult to bear:

She had not known what reflections conjured up his strange and beautiful paintings; she did not know which was his favourite flower, film, book, poem, animal, item, ice-cream, season, gemstone, fairytale, language, she did not know if he was ticklish or what made him laugh. (9)

Grere reflects that having the same history does not prevent gaps in knowledge from appearing (119). This is also true of histories beyond the personal. Gaps and absences in the knowledge of events mean that understanding can only be partial. Hidden histories, whether private or in the wider world are, as Merleau-Ponty asserts, 'just as certain as the visible ones' (*Phenomenology of Perception* 26). Guy's spectral re-appearance at the end of the novel serves as a reminder that daily life consists of belief in the invisible.

The varying perceptions of Guy raise issues concerning the border of the 'I' as essentialised and show instead how the subject is permeable, constructed through the beliefs and opinions of others in a changing social context. Both Walt and Guy are not equipped with the necessary social resilience, having what Guy describes as 'a hitch, a warp in their personality' (91). Walt performs being confident, following a childhood in which he was teased at school. However, he is strengthened by a supportive family, whereas Guy's troubled home life and self-imposed isolation make him conclude that he is 'unloving' (92, emphasis in original). The text reveals this opinion as a flawed perception based on low self-esteem, offering instead examples of Guy's selflessness, such as his decision to act the fool so that Walt's sister would be more attracted to Jesse and his generosity in leaving Jesse his precious paint brushes.

This analysis has shown how Hartnett critiques Romanticism, as a normative discourse for artistic representation, in order to defend the position of young artists who refuse to compromise their art to suit the market. *Wilful Blue* ends with a thunderstorm 'like a rampaging god, a great fierce roaring rumbling thing cracking across the sky', with the rain pounding at windows and roads 'as if determined to immerse them all and scour from the earth everything ever made' (155), after which the storm clears. However, the novel leaves unanswered questions and this, I believe, is Hartnett's intent, for not everything that happens can be explained. Matilda's letter is undated so that Guy's ghostly appearance seems to exist between temporal and spatial frames. Similarly, the history of the cultural representation of Australia can be read through the metaphor of the spectre: as a series of traces and returns that comprise the subject's embodied experience of it. The analysis that follows examines the position of the young artist deemed a misfit within a controlled, patriarchal setting. In *Sleeping Dogs* this is intensified by the Gothic trope of the boarding house being revived as the farm and caravan park.

### ***Sleeping Dogs* (1995)**

In the film review of *Wolf Creek* (2011), Hartnett's account of a family holiday on a farm in Gippsland when she was eight years old, is key to understanding her focus on white patriarchy in *Sleeping Dogs* (1995) and her recurring interrogation of dominant forms of masculinity in her corpus. Low budget holidays were the norm for Hartnett's family at that time and, although Hartnett's father was often left behind, on this occasion he joined them unexpectedly and his presence was deemed oppressive (1), as explained in the introduction

to my thesis (p.20). Hartnett recalls her experiences on the farm, which include seeing the bloated, festering body of a dead cow, chained, barking dogs, unmarked electric fences that electrocuted two of her sisters, her ‘untrustworthy father, my seething mother, the hot air gusting’ and chasing chickens only to see one decapitated on a block by the farmer who ‘hadn’t told us the game would end like that’ (2). The only respite for Hartnett was reading and watching some black puppies. When one of the puppies was offered as a prize in a fancy-dress competition, Hartnett desperately put together an outfit. That night the bonfire cast strange lighting, there was a smell of smoke and meat, music emanated from a cassette player and dogs were barking, but her most vivid memory is the farmer’s enjoyment of power as he raised the selected pup to the crowd:

He was in command. This world was his – he knew it, he owned it, it lived and died as he desired. The terrible dogs would jump to his word. He had brought us here, told us how we must behave. The fire was his, he’d built it, he could consign anything he wished to the flames. (3)

That Hartnett uses this memory to critique constructions of national identity in her novels is indicated by her comment that the scene spoke to her:

It told me there was power and weakness in the world, sanity that masked insanity, kindness which concealed rage. It was no ground-breaking discovery, yet it felt like finding a key. Understanding was like the donning of armour. (4)

Hartnett’s moment of insight provides the motivation for the exposure in her novels of such dissembling by those who work to conceal harmful agendas. The farmer is later represented in *Sleeping Dogs* as Griffin Willow, the abusive ex-Vietnam veteran whose obsession with control and addiction to alcohol causes family dysfunction. In this novel, as L. Kokkola asserts, the social taboo of incest is deployed to question the morality of a society that would punish two siblings, Jordan and Michelle, for seeking comfort from their father’s violence (185), yet enables patriarchal abuse to evade proper scrutiny and legal processes. As with *Butterfly*, Hartnett uses the heat of summer to build the tension ‘until it seems the land must surely burst open at any moment, gasping and gagging for air’ (95). The inescapability of the heat intensifies Jordan’s sense of entrapment, while the text emphasises Griffin’s controlling mindset. The shocking conclusion prompted Cormier to state that ‘the terrible truths’ of Hartnett’s vision push ‘the boundaries of YA literature to its outer edges and perhaps beyond’ (sleeve of book, n.p.). The analysis that follows identifies which truths are regarded by Hartnett as problematic and the reasons within the

culture that lead to the loss of another artist figure. Initially, I explore the types of masculinity from the national discourse that are critiqued by Hartnett.

Hartnett describes the serial killer in *Wolf Creek* so that he can be recognised as ‘horribly local’ (16); a Gothic inversion of the bush hero from early representations, dressed in a broad-brimmed hat, unwashed flannel and jeans, he fits the construction perfectly:

He has a weathered face, sideburns, stubble, the feeling of strength and capability carried by the working man. From his broad Aussie accent and turn of phrase we recognise him as the larrikin, the good bloke, the one who doesn’t suffer fools yet who has a heart of gold. His face, when he smiles, is endearing. (16)

Hartnett’s message here is that it is not the misfit that should be perceived as Other; rather, suspicion might rest with those who appear to *fit* with normative discourses but are concealing darker motivations and who are as likely to appear in the suburb as the country town or on the main highway. Hartnett draws a comparison between ‘the lost child of Australia’ and the young victims in the film, by qualifying the trope’s unique features: ‘the lost child can be anyone possessing the childlike attributes of inexperience and ignorance’, explaining that the trope has evolved because there are many who ‘should have been safe among others, amid *civilisation* – yet were lost’ (18, emphasis in original). By extending the lost child to ‘childlike’ descriptors, Hartnett is proposing, as Tilley has asserted, that the victims of vanishing can be of any age. However, like Pierce, she is insistent that children can be lost in culture, in places constructed as safe. Similarly, as Hartnett describes in *Wolf Creek*, the figure of the larrikin, can be read metonymically as ‘the good bloke, the one who doesn’t suffer fools yet who has a heart of gold’ (16) and by Rickard as part of a masculinist tradition that romanticises the urban or bush hero as ‘smart aleck’ (260). However, in Gothic representations the reliable qualities associated with this figure are used to conceal the shadow side of normative patriarchal behaviour such as narcissism, repressed violence and predation, searching out childlike vulnerability and inexperience. *Sleeping Dogs* features not only the controlling patriarchal figure of Griffin Willow but also the stranger and landscape artist, Bow Fox, whose business is supplying consumers with Romanticised views of Australia, who feeds on weakness and is lethal when cornered. Hartnett begins *Sleeping Dogs* with three separate, yet thematically connected descriptions, designed to unsettle the reader: the first concerns a pack of chained dogs that are bored and watchful; the second is a description of intimacy between Michelle, one of the Willow children and her brother, Jordan; and the third is the slaughter of a sheep by Edward,

Griffin Willow's eldest son. Twenty-year-old Jordan, a gifted artist and scapegoat for his father's aggressive physical abuse, assists Edward in the grim task. The slaughter, ordered by Griffin, is almost ritualistic in its precision and suggests a thematic connection with the killing of innocents. The scene problematises any nationalistic idealisation of the bush mythos and is the antithesis of Roberts' pastoral evocation in his painting *Shearing the Rams* (1890), making visible to the eye of the imagination the abject horror of the abattoir. Although the scene appears to share with Roberts' work the focus on self-sufficiency and hard work by a rural proletariat engaged in building the nation's wealth, Griffin's 'Bonaparte Farm' is an economic failure.

Hartnett, writing in the modern context, challenges previous Romanticised representations of the country town. Her deconstruction of rural mythology is initiated by the sheep's death and followed by her interrogation of the dysfunctional existence and economic difficulties endured by the Willow family. The blood of the sheep conveys an abject seepage through borders in stark contrast with the imposed logic of the symbolic order. Such borders are policed by the Law of the Father. The novel's title is drawn from the proverb 'Let Sleeping Dogs Lie' and Hartnett questions the moral codes that society imposes on families while allowing other abuses, such as domestic violence, to go unpunished.

Jordan Willow is perceived by his father as visually Other due to his blonde hair; a genetic anomaly which contrasts him with his black-haired siblings and makes his father question whether the boy is really his. Jordan is loved by his mother, Grace, but she is ineffectual and neglects his welfare. Having once taken the child to have a nose bleed checked by the doctor, she is shamed by the bruises on her child's body and, instead of facing up to her husband's violence, decides not to keep the next appointment. Grace is emotionally and mentally scarred herself, having suffered Griffin's aggression and escapes her entrapment by journeying into herself:

In her chair her mind travelled and travelled until it reached a quiet, dim place that she found greatly to her liking. She has stayed in this place for many years. Beyond the walls of the big house the farm carries on without her: trees grow, animals are born, crops are raised and felled. She has forgotten the weather, the town, the world. (15)

Grace has found her own island of peace and is an absent presence on the farm, but the victims of her withdrawal are her children who are left to bear Griffin's temper. She is like the colourless Miss Havisham from British novelist Dickens' *Great Expectations*, who withdraws from culture, allowing the spiders to multiply in her once grand, mouldering

house. However, whereas Miss Havisham is damaged because she was jilted by her fiancé, Grace suffers because she marries hers. Further, Griffin has deliberately isolated her from her previous family, helping her to see ‘how narrow-minded and oppressive’ they were for opposing the marriage (67). Her illness suggests the continuation of the lack of optimism faced by the nationalist figure of the noble bushwoman into the modern context. This has been discussed in chapter two with reference to the suburban housewife (see p.80) and Baynton’s *Bush Studies*.

While Grace is incapacitated, Griffin ensures that the farm operates according to his rules. As with E. Turner’s classic tale of 1894, *Seven Little Australians*, there are seven members of the Willow family. In both novels the families are headed by a patriarchal ex-military figure. Griffin’s experience of war has justified ‘his burgeoning contempt for humankind’ (67). Having adopted the performative qualities of the larrikin, Griffin can play to a crowd but at home insists that idiosyncratic rules are obeyed, such as his insistence that the children read one novel per month and discuss it. Somewhat ironically, as Griffin dropped out of his Law Degree, the book for December is F. Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* which also chimes with the novel’s message about moral behaviour and the emphasis on crime and punishment per se.

Into this precarious dynamic arrives the trickster and ‘swagman’ character of Bow Fox, dubbed ‘The Artist’ (24), searching for the small town which he thinks might be ‘something made up to fill a blank spot on the map’ (24). Bow Fox’s perception underscores the plight of the country town and its insignificance is reinforced by its anonymity in the text. The town comprises a library, supermarket, pool, theatre, three hotels and a war memorial. Bow Fox is interested in the scenery, but his interest is purely commercial as his objective is to sell landscape paintings that reinforce popular, nationalistic representations. He seeks Romantic, idealised features of the pioneer’s life such as huge trees, ‘fallen branches, and, he dares to hope, some kind of waterfall nearby, and maybe even a ramshackle hut or two’ (24). His customers ‘never look twice at a real tree’ (37). However, the ramshackle farm and failing caravan park that he descends upon are the epitome of the anti-pastoral. Initially attractive in their promise of freedom and escape from the imperial centre, such marginal places, as Shields explains, can also be places of entrapment:

Marginal places, those towns and regions which have been ‘left behind’ in the modern race for progress, evoke both nostalgia and fascination. Their marginal status may

come from out of the way geographic locations, being the site of illicit or disdained social activities, or being the Other pole to a great cultural centre. (3)

It is the peripheral location of the town and Griffin's farm that enables transgressive behaviour to remain hidden. This same isolation enables the siblings Jordan and Michelle to meet in secret. It is Griffin's violence toward her brother that first encourages Michelle to offer comfort for 'their closeness brings solace and companionship and seems only just' (59). Jordan describes her body as naturally 'harmonious' with his own (60). In contrast, there is nothing harmonious about Griffin's relationship with nature, for nothing will grow for him (62). His land is bordered by electric fences and a cliff edge with jagged rocks beneath, symbolic of the fear and pain with which he encloses his family. In the town, the local people treat the Willow children with distrust, perceiving their closed existence as a snub and their aloofness 'chilling' (48), but Griffin has warned them not to mingle.

Like Harriet in *Wilful Blue*, Griffin and Bow Fox have a common vampiric quality, for, as the youngest boy, Oliver observes, they can get people to pay for other people's dreams (38). Griffin offers holidays to families on low budgets, so that he doesn't have to work. He also lives off his children's labour as he has taught them to do things that are useful on the farm. He hates the fact that Jordan has taught himself to draw, a skill that he can neither control nor exploit. Bow Fox is not a great artist but recognises the talent in Jordan's exquisitely detailed and beautiful pen and ink drawings of birds that cover his bedroom walls. He feels 'a sick pang of envy' realising '*This country boy is better than me*' (53, emphasis in original) but due to his own narcissism, cannot admit this openly.

Bow Fox epitomises the male, patriarchal gaze and, in the same way that he views landscape as scenery he can possess, so he projects his possessive, sexual fantasies onto Michelle, even when his attentions are not reciprocated, and he comes to understand the nature of her relationship with Jordan which he perceives as follows:

he hears it in their silence, sees it in their dark glances they give before they turn their heads away – he is proud that he has shaken this miserable family, for he likes to make an impression everywhere he goes. (96)

However, Bow Fox has not accounted for the fact that the Willow children are capable of forming allegiances against an external threat. They use the Christmas Day hunt, one of their father's precious traditions, to punish him. The pack of dogs is given a lure with Bow Fox's scent and follow it to where he is painting, on the cliff edge. His dog phobia results in an abject loss of control over his bodily functions. In terror, he loses control of his

bladder, vomits and cries. Instead of realising that he is being punished for his interference, he blames Jordan for what was Edward's idea, describing Jordan using the rural Gothic stereotype of 'a backwoods freak with an unnatural and dangerous mind' (115). Yet Bow Fox is the danger, writing in secret to Griffin informing him of Michelle and Jordan's relationship, justifying his action with the assertion 'A savage must be treated savagely' (116). Later, he admits that the letter was the action of 'a furious child' (130), which demonstrates a flawed, narcissistic masculinity.

Jordan, on the other hand, represents an alternative, empathic and non-aggressive masculinity, who feels pity for Bow Fox and his fear. When Edward retorts that the family must be ruthless to survive, Jordan wonders how deeply their father's ideology runs in them and reflects on how each sibling seeks a sanctuary within him or herself, often through dreams and secret desires. Jordan's dream is of a sailing boat and sometimes he dreams of catching a bus to escape Griffin. He could knock Griffin down in a fight if he chose but does not do so for Michelle's sake. When Griffin reads the letter, he invokes God for the first time in Michelle's memory: 'A sin against God! Filthy sinners, filthy disgusting animals, spitting in God's eye' (122). As a foundling child, Griffin might have been raised in a religious institution and the ideology thus potentially erupts from his unconscious. He finds Jordan in the vegetable garden and first shoots Jordan's dog, Applegrit, and then his son through the chest. Much later, Bow Fox visits the farm with a fabricated excuse, to find the place deserted. The Willows have moved on. K. James comments that incest is punished but the abusive father is not (84), but this is precisely Hartnett's point. The horror is that Griffin and other seeming larrikins continue to circulate without being apprehended.

There is evidence then, in *Sleeping Dogs*, for Hartnett's claim that the tropes of the Australian Gothic run parallel with those of its American cousin but that the description is not a perfect fit. This is because the mythos that Hartnett is deconstructing is identifiably Australian and its critique is centred on modern culture. The lost artist, Jordan, like Guy in *Wilful Blue* is involved in creative expression based on observation and a phenomenal relationship with the world, seeking freedom from tradition and representational constraints. They share unhappy family backgrounds and are misfits in their own environments. They attract hostile attention from characters who display bullying behaviours but who are really blighted by their own failures. Both Guy and Jordan are sensitive to others but perceived as Other, and entrapped by circumstances, cannot develop

their potential and so experience an inevitable solitariness, which is culture's loss. In *Sleeping Dogs*, Hartnett demonstrates that creative talent can reside anywhere and within anyone, irrespective of social class, geographical location, age or any other factor, but the gifted artist needs support from family, friends and the wider culture. She is arguing that young people should not mould themselves into flawed models of the past but develop creative expression that celebrates new ways of interacting with the spaces and places inhabited by modern and contemporary culture. One of these possibilities is explored in Hartnett's novel *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* which, as the following analysis shows, privileges the celebration of local encounters and non-anthropocentric positioning.

### ***Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* (1999)**

First published in Australia in 1999, *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* is described by the British novelist K. Crossley-Holland as a 'deeply moving' text that 'prints itself indelibly on the mind' (book sleeve, n.p.). The comment fits with Hartnett's use of the conceptual metaphor of the extinct Tasmanian tiger. Vividness of detail combined with emotional 'affect' enables the imagination to resurrect the dead creature while at the same time the uncanny improbability evokes a sense of loss. In this novel, the seventeen-year-old protagonist, Satchel O'Rye, is not an artist figure. Instead, the position of the artist is explored through the self-absorbed character of Satchel's father, William O'Rye, who suffers from mental illness and, when he is not regaling the family with Biblical quotations rattled out 'like ammunition' (48), paints miniature religious figures. The most disturbing aspect of this hobby for Satchel, is that the figures of Christ and his family resemble the O'Rye family members. Satchel feels stifled by his father's need to control until he meets an unusual animal in the bush.

Satchel's encounter with the Tasmanian tiger or thylacine represents a deconstruction of the lost-in-the-bush myth, for Satchel is empowered by his secret and is thereafter able to secure a positive journey of maturation. The absence that has always been associated with the bush is revealed as a presence. The entry of the thylacine into myth enables it to function effectively as a freely floating signifier in the literature, conveying the anxieties or hopes of a culture or community. Examples of other writers who have used the trope of the thylacine are G. Crew and M. Wilson in their picture book *I Saw Nothing: The Extinction of the Thylacine*, published in 2003, which focuses on the guilt of a child who is unable to rescue a thylacine being taken into captivity, and J. Leigh's 1999 novel, *The Hunter*, about

a hunter who tracks a thylacine to extract its DNA to sell on to a company. This latter was made into a film. In each incarnation, including Hartnett's, the thylacine functions as a trope that scrutinises humankind's motivation for eradicating or failing to prevent the extinction of another species. Extinction constitutes another form of vanishing and connects with guilt concerning anthropocentric positioning and controversy regarding the eradication of another species. Concepts from visual art, such as the vanishing point and the horizon, have been used to inform the analysis of *What the Birds See* in Chapter Two. The analysis that follows examines how Hartnett uses aerial perspective and ideas of miniaturisation to interrogate patriarchal and anthropocentric discourses, tourism and the lack of opportunities for young people created by economic investment focused on the city at the expense of small-town communities.

In *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, the bush represents a positive, transformative space compared with the small country town that Satchel inhabits. There is a lack of economic opportunity and the sense of entrapment is heightened by the patriarchal control exerted by his father. Satchel can remember a time before the main highway and how the plan to bypass the town brought protests. The town apparently has 'a proper name' but this is not revealed by the text because soon the town will not exist, as explained in the extract that follows:

But the people who lived there were sunk by the dislocation that the new road had caused, by the feeling that they and their town were no longer of any necessity [...]. On maps it was the smallest speck that a place could be, a mark the size a pin would leave if its tip was dipped in ink. (34)

Considered in miniature, the town ceases to be significant in the context of such a huge land mass. It could be consumed by urban sprawl from the big town, which is twenty minutes' drive along the highway. The flour mills are dilapidated, the houses motley and seven stores stand 'sour and abandoned' (50). Satchel notices that as the small town diminishes, for the bank, doctor's surgery and real-estate agents have all closed, the big town swells on a diet of cars and money. The decline fits the trope of the ghost town explored above (see p.91). The bush that surrounds the town is described as 'empty land', recalling the fiction of *terra nullius*, and is initially configured as hostile. The high silvery grass can 'shear skin from a finger with its edges' and 'puncture flesh with its points' (12). Sometimes the wind is like a hurricane and water cannot soak deeply through the topsoil, turning it into slime. Recalling the trope of the lost child, there is a warning that 'if you were lost in this place, you would die as surely as if you were lost in a desert of sand' (12).

The mountain beyond is an extinct volcano which is 'blunted like a nib;' a simile that connects the landscape with text, suggesting layers of meaning, like strata. It is also like a living thing, crying with gutters of water 'on its hide' and walking tracks that indicate where it has been 'tamed'. However, much of it remains 'unconquered, picturesque and treacherous', with people coming not to walk on it 'but to scatter ashes at its base' (15). Combining the lure of the picturesque with the primeval and Gothic, it is an unpredictable, spectral place. Yet the wild side of the volcano with its 'graveyard' of redgum trunks and summit that reveals what lies beyond the town, offers Satchel a perspective that opens up his future. Hope and a remarkable encounter with a thylacine suggest possibilities for new, intersubjective ways of seeing.

Hartnett cannot return the extinct thylacine, but she can resurrect the idea of it and through creative expression, secure its endurance as a conceptual metaphor. The desire for sightings of the thylacine represent colonial guilt and the desire for the lost Other. Hartnett's narrative has an omniscient narrator but uses empathic vocabulary as if focalised through the animal, which is not immediately identified but slowly revealed. For example, its coat is thick but short and it has deep eyes and great, wide jaws. It is vulnerable, a warm-blooded mammal waking in the cold just before dawn. Its warm breath in the cold air takes form and swirls as if it is 'an echo like a memory of the animal itself' (10). As the description builds, the creature takes form in the imagination. Hartnett then makes an intersubjective connection between human and non-human, for the protagonist, Satchel, also wakes at dawn. Like an animal concerned primarily with survival, he is instantly alert: 'he knew where he was and who he was and what he had to do that day' (11). Satchel is sympathetically described as 'a country boy' who knows about 'traps and crops and drenching and guns, about the meaning of a pinky sky and about tending an orphaned lamb' (63). He loves to take his dog, Moke, out in the station wagon. His friend, Leroy, before leaving for the city, exclaims that Satchel will die in the small town and 'just disappear into thin air' (122). Satchel visits Gosling, his employer, who represents a softer version of mateship than the Gothic larrikin, having feminine eyes with long lashes that balance his 'otherwise lined, blokey face' (37). Gosling's offer of finding Satchel work elsewhere is genuine. He is derisory, however, about the hypocrisy of the new cultural centre in town, which aims to sell Aboriginal artefacts, even though Indigenous culture was not initially promoted as part of the discourse of nation. Unlike Satchel's father, who wants

to keep Satchel at home so that the boy can contribute his income, Gosling has Satchel's longer-term interests at heart:

“The people who built this town booted out the Aborigines. Give us your land, they said, and get the hell out. Take your sticks and boomerangs with you. If you come back, we'll shoot you. All changed now, though. Now it's *look at this, look at that, this is genuine and original, it'll be fifty dollars thanks.*” (37, emphasis in original)

Hartnett draws attention to how Indigenous art has been commodified in modern society, and to the appropriation of Aboriginal culture by white Australians to satisfy consumer demand and encourage tourism, an industry that offers a lifeline to small communities.

Satchel initially encounters the thylacine in scrubland, and describes his sighting to the flawed, outcast character of Chelsea Piper, who, at twenty-one is still haunted by the ‘abyss of ridicule’ (52) she endured in her teenage years. In the town there are few opportunities for girls who tend to be sacked at eighteen from shop work by bosses unwilling to pay an adult wage (107). As the school bus driver, and bored with her work, Chelsea enjoys researching Satchel's unidentified creature and becomes the conduit for Hartnett, imparting information about the thylacine. Suspected of sheep killings, a bounty was placed on thylacine scalps over a twenty-one-year period by the Van Dieman's Land Company, with raised payments for greater numbers killed. The last captive thylacine died in Hobart zoo in Tasmania in 1930. The thylacine as trope also represents something that everyone thinks is lost and functions obliquely as a metaphor for the Stolen Generations evoked in Chelsea's plea, which suggests the need for the national apology made in 2008 by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and which the novel's publication precedes:

It would be a thing of such *hope*. It would mean that the world is a better place – at least, that it's not as bad as it seems. That *we're* not as bad as we seem. It would be like – *forgiveness* for some of the things we've done wrong. (117)

Hartnett's novel was published after the 1997 ‘Bringing Them Home’ Report (Australian Human Rights Commission) and before Rudd's apology for the grief, suffering and loss inflicted on ‘our fellow Australians’ (*The Australian* 2008). Thus Chelsea's comment highlights how the actions of previous generations continue to impact on contemporary lives through inherited guilt. However, as Chelsea's certainty about the thylacine grows, she divulges plans to cage and commodify the animal, making it a tourist attraction. Chelsea is short-sighted in that she wears glasses but also in terms of her lack of insight. Satchel describes her as having ‘the soulless eyes of a fish’ (109). Like the myopic and self-absorbed William, she does not ‘see’ in the sense of understanding how important it is

to protect the thylacine from exploitation. Disappointed, Satchel denies everything with the assertion, 'That was just a dog I saw' (145). This constitutes his rejection of Chelsea and everything that her greed represents. Chelsea's gesture of allowing Satchel to commandeer the bus when Moke is seriously injured, is simply an attempt to recover something already spoiled. Satchel's rejection of anthropocentric positioning is affirmed by his close relationship with Moke and his willingness to do anything to pay the vet's fees, for Satchel 'hardly ever thought of her as an animal' (25).

Hartnett contrasts William O' Rye's obsession with painting miniatures with Satchel's view of the country town in miniature from the top of the mountain, to show how important it is to broaden the horizons of young adults and facilitate independence. William paints as a form of art therapy for he is 'not infantile, but ill' (86). After abandoning the family business of running a service station, he adopts the philosophy that 'God will Provide' (73). However, it is Satchel's mother who works extra shifts in a care home, cleaning to pay the bills. Her hands, like stigmata, are raw with reactions to the chemicals she uses. Meanwhile, William paints on thick, expensive paper and uses a magnifying glass because he will not admit that he needs glasses (25). Described as 'floundering helplessly below the surface of reality' William's absorption in his miniature figures is perhaps a strategy to counteract the stares of the townspeople, who see him as a curiosity or 'specimen to be inspected under the harshest light: they would peck him, if they could, to death' (85). This is a recurring metaphor in Hartnett's novels, for Oliver in *Sleeping Dogs* has watched chicks peck repeatedly at an injured chick in the brood (81). Hartnett problematises ideas of the 'civilised' by showing how the natural law of the survival of the fittest also operates in the cultural sphere. William constructs an alternative reality so that the omens that 'polluted' the life of Jesus might be identified and avoided in William's family (39). A further explanation for William's fascination with miniatures and use of the magnifying glass can be supplied by Bachelard as follows:

The man with the magnifying glass – quite simply – bars the every-day world. He is a fresh eye before a new object. The botanist's magnifying glass is youth recaptured. It gives him back the enlarging gaze of a child. With this glass in his hand, he returns to the garden. (155)

Bachelard hints at the return to the play of childhood and the re-capturing of lost innocence, which fits with William's detachment from the 'real' world of the text. Satchel too is continually represented as a child, timeless and pure, which signals his father's discouragement of his son's need to leave home to seek independence.

The turning point in Satchel's development occurs when he stands up to his father's patriarchal authority to protect his mother from violence. She has confessed that she sometimes accepts payment for William's odd jobs in the community, which is in defiance of William's religious principles. Satchel heads for the bush and walks the unmarked track to the mountain. From the station wagon he notes the miniature aspects of Australian wildlife usually invisible to him, such as greenhood orchids, swarms of midges and tuft fungus. Climbing the mountain, described by Hartnett as 'a beast that feels the feet of a fly tickling a sensitive spot' (184), he expects to be shaken off, a miniscule figure against its 'hide' (184) but he is determined to ascend. The rock leaves traces of itself in his palms; imprints as if his skin is a parchment or palimpsest on which the indigenous landscape's text is inscribed. His sense of perspective at the summit has altered because the town which has seemed so inescapable, appears to him in miniature 'as a meek, faltering little town, with no reason to exist anymore, hated more and more deeply by each generation born into it [...]'. It was waiting for people to move on, to give up on it, or to die' (187). Satchel decides to leave the town for the ocean, where the perspective 'gave you no sense of how far you needed to go before you finally got somewhere' (197). Satchel is rewarded with another encounter with the thylacine and, this time, he sees that she has a pup. He sidesteps the temptation to take such a vulnerable creature, realising that he must find his own inner resources. This is a moment of 'soaring joy' and as he walks home in the dark he does not stumble because, 'like an animal, he could see' (202). Not only has Satchel gained insight but in his encounter with the vanished thylacine, he has found a new focus for his future.

### **Conclusion**

The analyses of these three primary texts have shown the importance to Hartnett of artistic representation as a normative discourse that must be critiqued if creatively gifted Australian children are to find hopeful futures at home and in the wider culture. In *Wilful Blue*, Hartnett interrogates the negative consequences of trying to mould a young person's talent simply to suit the demands of the market, whereas in *Sleeping Dogs* the Gothic caravan park is evoked to demonstrate that artistic ability is not dependent on family background, age, or other factors. However, not all adults can be trusted to foster such talent, and through jealousy or their own inadequacies, they might pose a threat. There is an imperative in this novel to consider carefully the nature of personal secrets, the nurturing of talent and the sharing of information, because information can be used for good or to exploit others, such as Oliver's misplaced trust in Bow Fox. Knowledge can

alternatively be employed to maintain an outward-looking perspective, for Oliver will escape the Willow farm through education. If Jordan had followed his dream of travel he would surely have survived. Satchel's perspective on his country town from the mountain top recalls Freud's concept of the uncanny because it provides the experience of being in place and out of place simultaneously. As K. Gelder and J. M. Jacobs describe, the possibility of reconciliation and the impossibility of reconciliation coexist and flow through each other in an unstable dynamic (24). While the implied connection between the extinct thylacine and a vanishing race is potentially problematic, especially as this belies the fact that Aboriginal people and their culture survive, Hartnett's priority is to use the metaphorical trope of the lost thylacine to interrogate the capacity of humankind to demonstrate empathy rather than intolerance or exploitation. In its association with Satchel's abandonment of normative discourse, as represented by patriarchy and the country town, the encounter with the thylacine serves as a re-articulation of hope for reconciliation with human and non-human in a shared bio-sphere. For as Derrida states, questions concerning 'so-called "animal" life' as part of history will become 'massively unavoidable' (106). This imperative reinforces the importance of the Australian Gothic approach as a frame for understanding Hartnett's corpus.

## Chapter Four Vanishing Points: the Child Lost to Culture

### Introduction

Having argued in chapters two and three that Hartnett develops the trope of the lost child by locating her protagonists in modern culture, using the settings of the suburb and country town respectively, I will now examine how Hartnett uses the concept of ‘the feral child’ to critique normative discourses. Examples include white patriarchy, social class, anthropocentric positioning in which wildness is deemed Other, military heroism through ‘the digger’ motif and the exploitation of the land for financial gain. I consider further in this chapter how Hartnett, as artist/writer, uses perception and perspective to layer narratives with meaning and thematic complexity; specifically, how spatial and temporal dimensions are experienced phenomenologically by the embodied subject as a means of cultural orientation. To discuss these experiences, I will use Merleau-Ponty’s concepts of depth and breadth. This latter concept, if viewed from an omniscient perspective, is ‘equivalent to depth’ (*Phenomenology of Perception* 266). I am separating these concepts in the analyses by referring to the depth horizon and the horizon of distance. The type of hold that the gaze can exert on the situation of the object is affected by distance (273). The depth horizon is described by Merleau-Ponty as the subject’s embodied orientation in time and space. The depth horizon can encapsulate histories, counter-narratives and memory, as Merleau-Ponty explains:

In every moment of focusing, my body ties a present, a past and a future together. It secretes time, or rather it becomes that place in nature where for the first time events, rather than pushing each other into being, project a double horizon of the past and future around the present and acquire an historical orientation. (249)

I interpret the second dimension of the double horizon as a horizon of distance that also represents the future. The subject creates time by making a past and a future exist in the present. However, with every attempt to re-create the past or re-imagine the future, the truth of the object changes and so remains evasive. Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis here is on the fact that time exists only for a subject. Historical discourse, for example, while constructing versions of events as objective truths, is dependent on the subject for their continuance because there would be no present if perception did not ‘preserve a past in its present depth’ (288). In *Thursday’s Child* (2002), the depth horizon is represented by the novel’s historical setting of the Depression era of the 1930s, the chthonic topos of the underground as the preferred living space of the feral child, Tin, and the excavation of memory as child narrator, Harper Flute (Tin’s sister), shares her biographical account. In

*The Ghost's Child* (2007), the horizon of distance is represented by the vanishing point which is observed by the main characters, Matilda and Feather (who are lovers), as the point furthest away from the perspective of the beach, where the ocean meets the sky. However, distance is also perceived as time in this novel, thereby conflating the dimensions and exposing the subject's uncanny experience of past and future in the present. Hauntology is relevant to the discussion of these dimensions because both past and future dimensions are spectral in their hauntings, containing dangers, or monsters, that the subject must negotiate as part of gaining orientation. Just as re-living the past is impossible, so the future offers the invisible as a lure of possibilities not yet realised and withheld from sight. In *The Ghost's Child* the island topos is employed as a site of speculation that proposes isolation as an alternative to community and the complexities of social and economic integration. Additionally, Hartnett uses myth to re-examine archetypal questions concerning communities, ideas of belonging, the nature of truth, responses to death, journeys and returns. *Thursday's Child* complicates ideas of the heroic return celebrated within the Western literary tradition, as the following section explains. The boy character, Tin, chooses not to return from his descent narrative, choosing a feral rather than a cultural mode of living, which suggests a critique of the discourses that circulate above ground. Before moving on with the analysis of *Thursday's Child*, it is important to understand how the novel fits within the context of descent narratives and how the wild or feral child has been represented in culture.

### **Descent Narratives**

In *Thursday's Child* Hartnett's representations of wildness and the underground topos signify a transformative potential for the subject who seeks alternatives to cultural norms. Underground or subterranean space is termed 'The Lapsed Topos' by J.S. Carroll and, along with abandoned houses, chthonic spaces such as tombs and ruins form topographical connections with the past (133). Known to the ancient Greeks as *katabasis*, descent narratives in the Western tradition have tended to feature border crossings, such as the threshold between life and death and transition points between temporalities and cultures. Such borderlands provide spaces for the enactment of brave deeds and testing. *Katabasis* is defined by R. C. Clark as 'a Journey of the Dead made by a living person who returns to our world to tell the tale' (in K. Vaclavik 2). 'Our world' in this sense, means the cultural world. Examples from Greek mythology include the labyrinthine encounter between Odysseus and the minotaur, and the journey of Orpheus to the Underworld to retrieve his

wife, Eurydice. The underground has been configured as Hell in stories of pilgrimage in Judaeo-Christian belief, such as Dante's *La Divina Commedia* {*The Divine Comedy*} from 1472, whereas J. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, inspires the story pattern of rebellion against authority. This is retold by modern writers who use descent narratives, such as British novelist P. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy from 1995-2000, and in 2007, *Runemarks* by J. Harris. Such texts connect the internal, psychological and emotional development of the protagonists with the epic, physical journeys they undertake.

*Thursday's Child* and *The Ghost's Child* differ from these previous examples in that for Hartnett's feral characters there is no triumphant return to culture because each finds a sense of belonging in the wild environments they prefer to inhabit. Tin escapes from culture using the horizon of depth and Feather using the horizon of distance. Neither uses the symbolic code of language to relate their stories. Instead Harper and Matilda, who remain positioned within the culture, fulfil the role of narrator. As the examples provided below indicate, *Thursday's Child* and *The Ghost's Child* resemble katabatic narratives in proposing mythic, fantasy or alternative worlds that offer opportunities for critiquing problematic aspects of the societies and cultures that function above ground.

The underground topos portrays alternative modes of existence and can therefore interrogate the geographical alterations wrought in the landscape by economic and social change. In the nineteenth century, with the growth of the British Empire, topographical changes were caused by the identification of the underground as a source of wealth, exploited by industries such as mining, the railways and archaeology. In the colonial Australian context, the indigenous landscape was similarly damaged by industries such as mining; one example being the gold rush (1851-c.1914). Rickard comments on mining's appetite for timber, leading to the loss of forest resources (64). New towns grew around the search for riches and the land was transformed by new transport infrastructures as well as systems of enclosure, as agriculture responded to the growing needs of a rapidly expanding settler population. Rickard describes how the gold rush caused the population in Victoria, Hartnett's future home, to rise dramatically (34). The underground thus became more visible and accessible in various ways. In consequence, the topos was metaphorically reconfigured as a repository for truth, and sometimes unwelcome truths emerged about the process of change. British writer H.G. Wells in his novel *The Time Machine* from 1895, takes to its metaphorical limit the concept of social submersion by speculating that the degeneration of the working classes would lead to genetic mutation as well as

topographical, social and economic separation. Genetic alteration resonated with evolutionary theory and the publication in 1859, of C. Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. In Wells' narrative, the Morlocks, a race from the future that works and lives below ground, emerge at night to capture and eat the childlike, surface-dwelling Eloi. As a cannibalistic act, this fills the travelling inventor with horror. Prior to the publication of Wells' novel, the Salvation Army founder W. Booth's work from 1890, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, introduced the term 'the submerged tenth', which refers to an underclass, the ten per cent of the population living in poverty (6). While seeking to assist the impoverished, Booth's term reinforced an image of the working classes as held down or functioning beneath other social strata. In *Thursday's Child*, the dysfunctionality of the Flute family takes them below the normal struggles of the working classes in the Depression so that they become part of the submerged tenth. The young Tin Flute, whose physical appearance begins to change when he elects to live in his tunnel network, would resonate with Wells' tale of degeneration, except that Tin flourishes in his new domain and continues to selflessly help his impoverished family on the surface, disrupting the conflation of wildness with regression.

### **The Island Topos**

In *The Ghost's Child* the wild character of Feather travels beyond the horizon of distance to choose an island as his spiritual home. Within the Western literary canon, islands have been represented in various ways, such as a paradise in T. More's *Utopia* published in 1516, and as a dystopia in W. Golding's 1954 novel, *Lord of the Flies*, in which child castaways demonstrate the extremes of controlling, cruel and co-operative behaviours learned from their socialisation into adult culture. In the Australian historical context, K. Downing describes convict accounts that associate the island topos with visions of the future, facilitating regeneration and recuperation as a respite from the effects of civilisation. For example, in the nineteenth century Norfolk Island in the Pacific Ocean was described as a retreat or 'habitation for the soul' for the dreamer, idealist or 'some wild Rousseau' (83-84). Australian novelist Winton writes in his biographical *Island Home: A Landscape Memoir* about how Australia as an island continent affects his perception not only at home but also when he travels abroad. Winton speaks of his experience of Australian topography as phenomenal and embodied, and describes what he terms 'the tectonic grind' as follows:

Australia the place is constantly overshadowed by Australia the national idea, Australia the economic enterprise. There's no denying the power of these conceits. I've been shaped by them. But they are hardly the only forces at work. I'm increasingly mindful of the degree to which geography, distance and weather have moulded my sensory palate, my imagination and expectations. The island continent has not been mere background. Landscape has exerted a force upon me that is every bit as geological as family. (10)

Certainly, in Hartnett's novel, Feather perceives his island as a replacement for family and a retreat from culture, but Hartnett also questions such an extreme response that entails sacrificing the healthy aspects of community, such as human love and companionship. In both *Thursday's Child* and *The Ghost's Child*, the feral characters' affinity with the land is transformative but also displaces them from their human relationships. The novels explore whether wildness and culture are mutually exclusive, and, recalling Satchel's decision to protect the re-discovered thylacine in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, whether it is possible for the subject to negotiate a reciprocal relationship.

### **The Feral Child**

In both *Thursday's Child* and *The Ghost's Child* the feral characters prefer, and are associated with, wild landscapes such as the land and the shoreline respectively. In children's literature more widely, wilderness is often manifested through a figure or person, as Carroll observes (25). This figure is a *genius locus* or spirit of the topos connected with a feature of the landscape. Carroll cites various incarnations of Pan in British literature using such exemplars as Puck in R. Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* from 1906, Pan in *The Wind in the Willows* by K. Grahame, published two years later (in which Pan is a God figure for the animals), the character of Dickon in *The Secret Garden* from 1911, by F. H. Burnett and Mr Tumnus in the 1950 novel, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, by C.S Lewis. Late twentieth and twenty-first century wild spirits are complex in different ways and can symbolise the more uncontrollable areas of the psyche. For example, in D. Almond's novel *The Savage*, published in 2008 and illustrated by D. McKean, the feral child is an imagined figure created by a boy as he grieves for his recently deceased father. Constructing the feral child serves as a form of catharsis that enables the boy to deal with deep emotion and develop agency. The feral boy's underground home is a cave below a ruined chapel; a chthonic topos which signals the workings of the protagonist's unconscious as well as death. The feral child withdraws from speech while the boy protagonist writes, and this reflects how grief can be inexpressible and go beyond the symbolic code for, as Almond's protagonist reflects, there are

sometimes ‘no words that can say how I really felt’ (50) is reflected in that this is an illustrated novel. The inexpressible is portrayed through the images where words are inadequate. In Hartnett’s *Surrender*, the feral child as hallucination is symptomatic of mental illness and so the power of the visual over the oral is repeated. Wildness in these representations is an energy that is not Other to ‘civilised’ but part of the subject living within culture.

The historic timeframes used by Hartnett for *Thursday’s Child* and *The Ghost’s Child* signal a critique of the culture and the temporal displacement enables points of comparison to be drawn between the past and contemporary society. M. Newton asserts that historic accounts of feral children reveal more about the societies that regarded them as curiosities than the children themselves, because what the wild child symbolises is ‘a desire to escape the human condition through a return to the origins of childhood and the primitive’ (237). At the same time ‘the civilised’ subject rejects those origins because their existence ‘threatens to unravel the fragile unity of the self’ (237). In his collection of six historic accounts of feral children from 2002, *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children*, Newton explains that these are stories of pursuit by those who seek a form of truth about identity, language and the human condition (xiii). In contrast, it is the treatment of feral children by the culture that one is left pondering after reading such accounts. Newton cites the classic tales of children raised by animals, such as Romulus and Remus, nursed by a wolf and reflects that they also raise philosophical matters (25) which makes them useful as a literary trope. Newton offers a definition of the ‘wild’ or ‘feral’ child that is helpful in relation to Hartnett’s interrogation of anthropocentrism because it demonstrates how children can develop in isolation from human contact:

over the last few centuries these words have been applied to children who have grown up alone in the wilderness, lost in the woods and forests. More strangely the same phrases are also used for those few children who have lived through another, perhaps crueller kind of loneliness, locked for years in solitary confinement in single rooms.  
(xiii)

Newton is puzzled that a child victim of adult cruelty, an act which of itself could be judged more ‘savage’ than ‘civilised’, is given the same label of ‘feral’ as those children who have lived freely and away from society. Citing the example of John Ssabunnya, who had instinctively run off into the Ugandan bush after his father had murdered his mother (13), Newton argues that the escape to the wild can represent safety and sanctuary when contrasted with the threats posed by patriarchal violence. There is the sense of a lost self

but also a paradoxical rejection of that kinship because of the threat it poses to identity. Newton suggests that children who survive in isolation in the wild not only represent the modern subject's 'deepest terror' of being alone but embody 'a primal solitude' that provokes a disgust for the 'merely corporeal' (237). This explains why such children are frequently endowed with mythical qualities, for they have transformed abandonment into self-sufficiency and resilience.

Human beings, claims D. K. Candland, use myths as a shorthand way of describing events and these are retold and circulated because they describe the environment in ways that are critical to understanding the self. In his 1993 study, *Feral Children and Clever Animals: Reflections on Human Nature*, Candland describes how myths are accommodated and adjusted within the human psyche to form a sense of reality (90). Tin, in *Thursday's Child*, and Feather, in *The Ghost's Child*, possess mythical qualities that are related to their wild natures. Tin, as the analysis discusses (see p.124), is almost wholly absent from the domestic home, but possesses an uncanny ability to understand when his presence is required, while his body changes to reflect his underground home in ways that suggest an evolved hybridity. Similarly, in *The Ghost's Child*, Feather inexplicably appears to save Matilda, his partner, from drowning and, as he swims, she glimpses the flash of 'a seal's sleek skin' and 'the arrowheads of a wing' (110). Both feral characters, Tin and Feather, electively prefer their wild domains as ways of being and, as the analyses that follow examine, Hartnett shows that these are not irresponsible choices for their individual subjectivities.

### ***Thursday's Child* (2002)**

Focalised through the child protagonist, Harper Flute, and using the retrospective timeframe of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the narrative of *Thursday's Child* follows the trials of the Flute family as they struggle to negotiate a variety of hardships. At the time of publication Australia was suffering from drought with water restrictions operating in Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere, and farmers were suffering crop failures.

Contemporary experience therefore connects with cultural memory as the fictional Flute family's economic deprivation is compounded by oppressive heat and difficult agricultural conditions. While these factors might suggest a hostile landscape as represented by the colonial Australian Gothic, the nation's natural climate is disassociated from the root cause of the family's problems, which, though equally beyond their control, is a hostile economic

climate or recession caused by global markets. Hartnett questions why those living in poverty must suffer increased austerity because of the irresponsible actions of those in power. Utilising the trope of katabasis, or story of descent, and concepts such as the depth horizon inspired by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, I argue that the trope of the wild or feral child as represented in *Thursday's Child* challenges normative discourses of anthropocentrism, the land as a resource for exploitation, capitalism and constructions of social class, 'the digger' myth as a form of heroism and the reliability of the archive as historical record. The metaphor of digging, which is deployed in the novel in a variety of ways, is used as a structural motif.

At the beginning of *Thursday's Child*, Harper is twenty-one years old and is recalling how, as a child, she has taken her four-year-old brother, Tin, to a creek to play, while their mother is in labour with their fifth sibling (9). The six-year-old Harper becomes fascinated by a shoal of fish and when she looks around for her brother she notices that the creek bank has caved in and Tin has disappeared (13). A space within the roots of a stringybark tree protects the child during the mud-slide. It is as if the earth is re-birthing Tin as Harper's father drags his son from the mud, 'shiny with slime' and 'blinking at the light' (17), having made a terrible bargain that Tin be saved in favour of the new baby (16). Initially Tin lives beneath the Flute home where he listens to family conversations. He overhears the wealthy farmer, Vandery Cable, speaking with Tin's father and refusing to pay Devon Flute's wages for what he claims is shoddy work. This upsets Devon, Tin's elder brother, and 'Tin suddenly started digging for all he was worth' (57), to the extent that the house is eventually swallowed up by the network of hollows beneath its structure. The shanty implodes when the family are absent and its collapse coincides with that of the stock market, forming a metaphorical connection between poverty at the level of the family and the workings of capitalism. Tin's behaviour, though tolerated by his family, has awakened the prejudices of the local community who variously describe him as 'unnatural', attention-seeking and a 'wild child' (45). After the collapse of the family home, Tin incurs the wrath of his father and disappears within his labyrinth of tunnels; yet the new family dwelling, built from wood donated by Cable, is a vast improvement on the old shanty. Despite Tin's absence, his loyalty to his family remains unwavering, whereas his father's commitment to the family's welfare is questionable.

Hartnett deploys the First World War metaphor of 'the digger' to interrogate patriarchal responsibilities to family and the land. The family's shanty was built by a gold prospector

whose digging in the echoing mine shaft had never unearthed a reward. Rickard relates how soldier settlers were encouraged to take up farming on land which was ‘often too marginal and on blocks too small to support them’ (178), with falling prices leaving them particularly vulnerable to debt and bankruptcy. In *Thursday’s Child* the land has been given to the Flute family by the government as a result of Court Flute’s war service. Connected with ideas of mateship, the digger or soldier is described by Rickard as ‘a symbol of Australia itself’ and was fleshed out in C.E.W. Bean’s *Official War History*. Published in twelve volumes between 1921 and 1941, this people’s history attempted to represent the war from the perspective of the ordinary soldier. Rickard adds that the digger as a national type was characterised by his resourcefulness, independence and egalitarianism; qualities derived from his experiences in the Australian bush (123). This image was affirmed by the verse published in 1918, of poet C.J. Dennis with the eponymous hero of *Digger Smith*, who seeks independence on the land.

These myths complemented the ritualised remembrance patterns of ANZAC, which commemorates the contribution of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps to the war effort. In *Thursday’s Child* Court Flute has served in France, ordered to enlist by his father who was jealous of his son’s business success (68). Court describes how the mud in no-man’s land could suck down both men and horses (25). The war time General Sir Ian Hamilton had purportedly written to General William Birdwood, the commander of ANZAC in Gallipoli, advising the men to ‘Dig, dig, dig, until you are safe’ (42 in *Thursday’s Child*), but as Court explains to Harper, though skilled with a rifle and able to jump a wire, Court could never develop a skill for digging. It is Court’s belief that Tin is digging to be safe, but Tin is digging to help his family as well. Instead of sowing crops, Court buys a horse for his elder son, along with two heifers, a decision that is greeted with derision by his wife and by Cable. An educated man, Court is too proud to admit his errors and, as with Griffin Willow in *Sleeping Dogs*, and William O’ Rye in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, relies on the efforts of his older children to earn money which Court frequently spends on drink. The elder son, Devon, rejects a patriarchy that appears entitled to control a family without taking responsibility for that family’s economic welfare. He leaves home to find work and later sends money to ease the family’s poverty. Court’s neglect turns to tragedy for, although he arranges for a well to be sunk, he does not fill in the bore holes and it is into one of these that Caffy, his son, falls.

Court's initial suggestion to lower Harper in by her feet to pull out Caffy is greeted with horror by his wife Thora, who, after the loss of Caffy, becomes 'ghostly' (128); a spectral presence in the narrative. Harper recalls that 'when I reached for her she could not take my hand because she was no longer able to touch' (128). Thora has reached the limit of her endurance, thus joining the ranks of Hartnett's other incapacitated, disillusioned mothers, as discussed in chapters two and three:

Mam became a ghost at the mouth of the well and she stayed that way a long time. In evenings on the veranda she talked of how things had been when she was a girl, stories I had never heard before [...]. She might be doing something, something usual like stirring or pegging the clothes, and she would stop. She would walk off and disappear for hours, wandering the creek bed, the scrub and the hills. (135)

The distraction of domestic duties is insufficient for the depth of Thora's grief. One of the neighbours, commenting on Court's carelessness over the bore hole, remarks that 'he can't sink any lower than he is' (132), suggesting that Court is still hopelessly mired in the mud. Harper calls on Tin to help and he completely devotes himself to the task. As Tin digs, Harper observes how his body reflects his wildness, or his Otherness. Sadly, despite Tin's efforts on the 'white hot windless day' (133), Caffy is already dead when Tin reaches him and the reader is reminded of Court Flute's bargain with the land to "Take the new one instead" (16). It must be noted that Caffy dies in a machine-made hole rather than in one of Tin's tunnels and the care of Caffy had been delegated to his older sibling, Harper, implying carelessness. Failure to dig responsibly is shown to have negative consequences for all strata in society. Court's refusal to dig and cultivate the land indicates what happens at the local level when humans abdicate responsibility for the land. Further, his lack of resourcefulness problematises the myth of 'the digger' hero. For eight years, Court has supported his family by trapping and selling rabbits, claiming that the land given to him by the government is poor and exhausted. However, Cable criticises him for not taking responsibility, suggesting that Court could learn farming skills and teach his children (48). Hartnett's interrogation of 'the digger' myth from Australian national identity is a strategy that fits with historiographic metafiction, which, as L. Hutcheon describes, seeks to 'disperse stable narrative voices (and bodies) that use memory to make sense of the past' (118). Cable, who could be described as possessing the digger qualities, is represented as the community villain who seeks to exploit a vulnerable family. However, in doing so, he does not consider the subversive and agentic figure of Tin, the feral child.

Tin's assimilation with the wild is described in terms that resonate with the historical accounts of wild or feral children, discussed above. As Newton observes, wild children from European cultural history have been recorded as possessing specific characteristics. Examples include Victor, also known as the Wild Boy of Aveyron, discovered in the woods and brought to post-revolutionary Paris in 1800, and Genie, a girl imprisoned in her bedroom by her family for thirteen years in a suburb of 1960s Los Angeles. Such characteristics include an existence outside of language and the system of signs, the experience of a continuous, sensorial present, heightened sensory ability and, for Victor, speed of movement. These perceived differences or gifts encourage the perception of mythical qualities as well as the construction of Otherness, as with the misfit child, discussed with reference to Bohlmann in chapter three (see p.97). Perceptions of difference position these children as external to culture and the Law of the Father, represented by the symbolic code. Ironically, this enshrines their stories in cultural memory. Tin's wildness, as described below, emphasises his perceived Otherness.

Tin's hands are like 'two curving claws', his eyes have lost their blueness and they are ringed with 'thick, protecting lashes'. The tips of his ears are folded over like a dog's and his skin has become 'translucent', 'loose' and 'almost waxy' for 'warding out the damp' (129). Although Tin understands human language he never speaks. Additionally, Tin seems to have a reciprocal affinity with the land. He sniffs it 'as if gauging the mood of the ground' and 'puts an ear to the earth' and closes his eyes, 'listening to the dirt's soundless tune' and, finally, he smears dirt across his lips and chin (128). As he digs 'the earth did what it could to encourage him' (129). The feeling of belonging that Tin develops is evocative of Indigenous belief. An article by J. Korff on the Creative Spirits website cites Yankunytjatjara elder, Bob Randall, who describes a connectedness to the land where 'every living thing is connected to every other living thing' (n.p.). Tin's digging represents a hope for a phenomenal and spiritual reconciliation with the land that is denied to his father, whereas Harper's digging embraces the symbolic code to signify a form of excavation that relates to memory and text.

Digging in relation to writing implies an archaeology of the text; a search for meaning which is related to depth. Whereas Tin digs with his bare hands, the novel's child narrator, Harper, digs with her pen which is, as J. Armstrong has suggested (163), like the Irish poet, Seamus Heaney. The writing of autobiography as well as the grand narrative of history is constructed and contingent as Harper warns from the first page: 'Memory is eccentric and

subjective, how it stalls when it wants to', and, as she tries to recall detail, she notes that the way in which time is experienced is erratic. Memory is 'ragged-edged' and 'riddled with cavernous holes' (36). Harper explains to her mother that she told Tin not to go near the mud-slide but the text reveals this as a lie because she has earlier admitted 'I took no notice of him' (13). She is similarly neglectful of Caffy just before he falls into the bore hole, but this is because her elder sister, Audrey, has delegated responsibility to the ten-year-old. The sisters punish themselves with guilt and yet do not consider that their father was neglectful in leaving the bore hole exposed or why Caffy is not in the care of a responsible adult. *Thursday's Child* is, at the time of writing, unique in Hartnett's novels in featuring a first-person narrator and so Harper's revelation of dishonesty is a strategy designed by Hartnett to jolt the reader and serve as a reminder that personal narrative, including witness testimony, is constructed and therefore not always reliable.

After the family's livestock has been stolen by itinerant labourers and Harper's older siblings leave home to find employment, Harper must rely on her own resources and, in her solitude, she begins to write. The creative and imaginative digging is Harper's escape route as she fills her pages with stories of valiant girls. She draws on this bravery when she accompanies her father to the house of Vandery Cable. Court is seeking revenge on Cable who has assaulted Audrey while she was in his employ as housekeeper. Alarmed that Court has taken his gun, Harper follows her father to Cable's house and finds a trail of blood leading to a shed or 'hanging-room' containing the suspended carcasses of pigs. The blood is fresh and as Harper ponders this she falls through a trapdoor hewn into the wooden floor and into one of Tin's tunnels, which is a Gothic experience. In the labyrinth she is deprived of sensory information. It is pitch dark and her only scent is of the earth. Harper realises that Tin has killed Cable to avenge Audrey and is suddenly afraid of Tin's wildness. His touch and pursuit (whether 'real' or imagined) force her towards the open air.

Unlike the static space of the bore hole, Tin's tunnels are built for movement. S. Rowley has commented that the journey motif is a common metaphor in critical studies of Australian national identity (135). Tin's alternative methods suggest that subjectivity can be formed via diverse routes. Eventually Harper re-emerges into the sunlight but cannot dismiss her trauma. The Gothic portal of the trapdoor is representative of a psychic journey into the unconscious, revealing a past that contains memories and secrets that will haunt Harper forever. The *katabasis* in this novel is Harper's as she does emerge into the light but the depths she has traversed have been forced upon her and so she does not find

resolution upon her return to culture. When Tin finds the huge, gold nugget that enables the sisters to leave home, it appears as if the family's problems are solved but Harper complains that this 'was a coward's way of ending the story' (215), admitting at the end of the novel that 'I will never truly feel safe [...]' (203). Court becomes obsessed with digging for more gold and Devon is digging tunnels in the next war. Although Tin's hands are dirty Harper bemoans the fact that her hands can never be clean. This is because she has actively conspired in the secret of Cable's murder by helping her father to bury the body. Making his daughter complicit in this crime is another of Court's failings as a parent. Harper's life writing is not an act of record but a cathartic digging which is healing for her sense of self. Harper's journey towards maturation is thus interrogated by Hartnett as a complex labyrinth containing pitfalls of forgetting and painful recall which are continually re-played and re-constructed by the subject in the longer term.

This analysis has examined the various ways in which normative discourses are interrogated by Hartnett's deployment of the metaphor of digging and representation of the feral child in a modern, post-war setting, featuring a working-class family. Tin Flute complicates W. Cronon's assertion that the escape to wilderness is a 'flight from history' (17) or an abdication of responsibility, because responsibility can be neglected within culture at the level of family as well as within national discourses. Instead, Hartnett's representation of the agentic wild child recalls G. Snyder's definition of wilderness as 'a place where the wild potential is fully expressed, a diversity of living and non-living beings flourishing according to their own sorts of order' (12). Hartnett contrasts humankind's ancient relationship with the land, as represented by Tin, with the destructive consequences of economic exploitation at the global level. Hartnett also problematises cultural representations of 'the digger' through the construction of the patriarchal figure of Court Flute who, despite his ANZAC experience, remains inactive during his family's poverty at a time of national and local crisis. Court waits until Audrey is attacked before deciding to confront Cable, even though Court distrusts the farmer. This shows the moral depths to which Court will sink to obtain easy money. However, Hartnett's representation of Court is not wholly unsympathetic. The promise of the government to safeguard Court's future after his contribution to the war effort is revealed as hollow when that offer translates into one of poor land, explaining why some war veterans become disillusioned, which then has an impact upon families. Court has been damaged physically and psychologically by his experience of war and is not responsible for the financial crash. Hartnett is therefore

suggesting that responsibility for children lost to culture must be borne at the level of national discourse, and that the issues of identity that intersect with these discourses, such as social class, must be considered. The central message in the novel is that it is children who are furthest removed from the causes of global issues such as war and economic recession and yet it is they who are made to suffer. Harper feels a sense of responsibility for the issues that she was always too young to feel guilty about and her feelings of being unsafe translate into a lifelong, generational legacy.

The hauntological approach to this reading of *Thursday's Child* has focused on issues of responsibility that have been revealed by the mythic trope of the feral child. According to Hartnett, these responsibilities include the construction of cultural memory, the welfare of children, stewardship and conservation of the land and its resources thereby developing an interconnectedness with all things, places and temporalities.

### ***The Ghost's Child (2008)***

This analysis of *The Ghost's Child* (2008) examines how Hartnett uses one character's memories of her life to propose that the subject can feel lost through emotional trauma. The trope of the feral child is deployed to explore whether resilience can be gained through isolation from society or through public service and integration with a community. Aspects of magical realism, such as the ability to converse with sea creatures, stretches the suspension of disbelief so that the story is revealed as more than the mere re-telling of events. The protagonist, Matilda, relates her story as an adult, and shows how creative expression extends beyond childhood; or, indeed, that the imaginative child still resides within an adult subjectivity. Imagination is a resource that the subject can draw on for creative purposes and for reasons of well-being, or as escapism to protect the subject from pain. In relation to the Australian Gothic trope of the lost child, Hartnett's text proposes that the adult subject retains childlike vulnerabilities, complicating the adult/child binary and suggesting that the lost child can reside within all subjectivities of whatever age or background. The horizon of distance is measured in relation to time as Matilda recalls her life as a journey, in relation to place and space in the form of physical voyages, as well as a mental and emotional sojourn of self-discovery, for which no map exists. The structure of the analysis follows these different conceptualisations of distance, with concepts from an hauntological approach applied to examine the spectral aspects of the text, such as the representation of Death as a lost child, the figure of the ghost as narrator, the hauntings of

memory and Gothic topographies such as the non-indigenous forest and the Island of Stillness.

Initially, Hartnett proposes that age as a phenomenal experience is temporary and contingent. The novel begins with the seventy-five-year-old protagonist Matilda arriving home to find a boy she has never met before, sitting in her suburban lounge room. Matilda judges he is around eleven or twelve years of age, rather flimsily dressed for a damp, cold day and is a youth who would prefer outdoor adventures, like ‘a boy from the illustrations in an annual’ (11). The simile suggests that he is representative of a boy rather than a boy ‘in reality’. When he announces that he has some bad news, Matilda seems to intuit what the boy will say, and his otherworldliness is indicated when Matilda asks if he is warmer after the fire is lit, and he shakes his head. Instead he asks her how she feels about being old. Matilda bites her lip, expecting a ‘momentous fact’ from the boy which foreshadows an unspoken purpose for his presence (15), for it is Matilda who is to become the ghostly narrator of the tale.

As Matilda reflects on being young and old and what these concepts mean in the context of knowledge and experience, the boundaries that they construct collapse into each other. She ponders how, when she was young, she had sometimes felt old and, growing older, ‘she had often felt as inexperienced and easily fooled as a toddler’. This leads her to conclude that ‘Time and wisdom were tricky things’ (18). This complicates ideas of the maturation process as a linear progression through time. Much later in the narrative she also comments that the qualities of independence, keeping one’s own counsel and resilience can be developed from childhood, for there are things that parents do not need to know irrespective of one’s age and that, throughout life, ‘there are things you must do without help or advice, things you can only do by yourself’ (128). Matilda’s account incorporates the errors, moments of inexperience and setbacks that she has encountered and learned from. Matilda views age as reaching a mountain peak from which she can view the way she has come, and this aerial perspective is one of empowerment:

I see the wrong turns I took, places where I tripped, places where I skipped and sang and ran. I can see for years and years. To have such a view, you have to be standing on top of a mountain. (19)

This view recalls Satchel’s panorama of his country town from the mountain, but Satchel’s is the perspective of youth, and so instead of looking back, he looks forward and outward,

perceiving the possibilities for his horizon as a life he has yet to live and one that extends beyond his present confines.

Information from the Japingka Aboriginal Art website describes how aerial views which are characteristic of desert Aboriginal art, allow ‘the artists’ imagination to hover over the country and observe both naturalistic forms of the landscape as well as metaphysical markings – these are the Songlines or Dreaming tracks laid down in the Creation time by the spirit Ancestors’ (3). There may be practical knowledge included in Aboriginal aerial paintings such as water and food sources to assist a hunter and gatherer people ‘who read the earth closely for signs of life, for tracking animals and recognising recent events’ (3). While not appropriating Aboriginal belief or artistic technique, Hartnett is suggesting that viewing one’s life as a topographical chart that acknowledges human interconnectivity with people, non-humans, places and temporality, is conceptually useful and helpful for subjectivity. The advantages offered by an aerial perspective, as presented by Hartnett, offer some explanation for the repetition of bird motifs across her corpus. Her memoir *Life in Ten Houses* affirms that she has used a similar way of seeing to reflect on her own biographical topography. In *The Ghost’s Child*, Matilda’s perspective, from her metaphorical mountain, encompasses those she has loved, her mistakes, moments of happiness and, although she lives alone, there is a sense of a life lived in full. Distance is expressed as time, and as with age and youth, such concepts are perceived as dialectical and co-dependent. M. Preston’s psychoanalytic analysis of the novel depicts Matilda’s life as comprised of loss and sadness (40), and yet the mountain top view is one of strength and positivity, which belies this interpretation.

Another metaphor that Matilda uses to describe her past is also drawn from nature. She describes her positioning as a young adult as being between an acorn and a tree. Extending the metaphor to that of an oak tree with different branches to depict the variety of subject positions that she has occupied, Matilda explains how, through her memory, she continues to occupy such positions and temporalities simultaneously (21). In her lounge room the boy points to a photograph of a girl in a boat and asks if Matilda had been a sailor and she replies that she had also been a searcher looking for the answer to a question, and had come to realise that sometimes answers begin rather than end a quest. Matilda’s narrative shows that philosophical truths are evasive and ongoing, problematising ideas of quest fulfilment and a heroic return. The limitations of the past are constructed as pathways, for once a path has been chosen, this becomes the visible road and alternative routes remain as ‘ghost

roads, ghost journeys, ghost lives, and they are always hidden by cloud' (22). The spectre is invoked here to represent the haunting of the subject by future possibilities that are later obscured by decisive acts.

Hartnett represents Matilda as a complex character whose perceived wildness makes her stronger than she at first appears. Just as Matilda has described perceptions of age as complicated by the requirements of experience, so Hartnett uses a temporal shift to move between Matilda's adult and childhood experiences. As Matilda Victoria Adelaide carries the national mythology associated with 'Banjo' Paterson's song 'Waltzing Matilda' from 1903, as well as names of an Australian State and city respectively. She is known as 'Maddy' and, although appearing delicate, the omniscient narrator assures the reader that such an impression is false. This would be in keeping with the Germanic Gothic origin of the name 'Matilda' which is translated by the Behind the Name website as 'Mighty in Battle'. This is the second novel in which Hartnett has used the name, shortened to 'Tilly' in *Wilful Blue*. Tilly, unlike the active Maddy, has mobility difficulties, which is ironic in the context of Paterson's song. However, Tilly is the character to whom Guy appears as a ghost. Maddy certainly travels but prefers to sail. The 'Matilda' of the song refers to the swagman's belongings, and Maddy, who becomes an independent medical professional, certainly complicates the objectification of the woman as chattel that her name connotes. Like Tilly, who is attracted to Guy and does not want the artists to leave her town (152), Maddy also attempts to imprison the things she loves. On mistakenly giving away her father's first gift, a toy giraffe, Maddy vows that she will henceforth hold tight to all she loves (25). This is in the context of parents who are distant. Her father has an important and demanding job and her mother is involved in the charitable cause of raising money for founding children. Maddy's relationship with her is volatile, seeming to 'teeter forever on the crumbly threshold of fury' (26). Maddy worries about how to make friends at her boarding school because she is sensitive, shy and nervous, and these qualities, compounded by her perceived wealth, mean that she remains distant to her contemporaries. As with Guy and Tilly in *Wilful Blue*, Chelsea Piper in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, Adrian in *What the Birds See* and Plum in *Butterfly*, Maddy perceives herself as a misfit child who is out of place socially, lacking 'the complex magic' (29) that leads to friendship. Yet she is resourceful and inventive when acting independently. This detachment from cultural norms estranges her from social expectation and, by default, endows her with a perceived quality

of wildness that connects with the indigenous landscape in which she prefers to play, as well as intertextually connecting her with classic tales of children raised by animals:

She had a perfect right to exist, and she was perfectly made in every way ... but she seemed not-quite-right for the world, as if she'd been raised by monkeys or wolves. (30)

Unlike Hartnett's other misfit protagonists, Maddy has self-belief, and knows that she is a good person who simply does not share her peers' priorities of parties, whisperings and games. An only child, she is self-sufficient and fascinated by the indigenous landscape and the animals she sees there:

She watched crabs digging their evening homes, knelt on the pier to see stingrays sweep the shallows. On scorching afternoons, she roamed the hills, pressing her hands to the trunks of eucalypts, picking cockatoo feathers from the grass. She watched bull ants marching off to battle and mahogany snakes sleeping on stones. Rabbits thumped the cracked earth, the hot air tasted like medicine. The gum trees were friendly to her, nodding their olive heads. (30)

This is the antithesis of the landscape as antagonist and represented as threatening to the lost child from the colonial Gothic. Maddy is at home in the wild landscape and her childhood friend is the nargun, from Aboriginal belief. The nargun is a fierce part-stone and part-human creature and, in P. Wrightson's novel *The Nargun and the Stars*, is represented as threatening to the settler homestead. In *The Ghost's Child* the nargun feeds on bullocks and 'unpleasant young ladies', a tendency that no doubt provides solace to Maddy's imagination in her friendless state (31). Maddy feels socially alienated by the normative expectations of her boarding school friends, and by the ambitions of her mother, which include a wealthy husband for her daughter. However, Maddy's refusal to conform and her subsequent resourcefulness are qualities that serve to interrogate the value and effectiveness of such behavioural norms. Maddy comes to accept her differences and welcomes them as part of her identity.

Maddy's identification with aspects of wildness is also indicated by her answer to her father's question when she is sixteen, concerning her idea of what constitutes the world's most beautiful thing (34). She replies that for her the most beautiful things are sea-eagles. The Beauty of Birds website describes how the White-Bellied Sea-Eagle is the most spectacular Sea-Eagle found in Australia and would be the species referred to here. In the year of the novel's publication the same website indicates that the White-Bellied Sea-Eagle joined the advisory list of threatened vertebrae fauna in Hartnett's State of Victoria. As

with the Tasmanian tiger, the decline of the species is due to humankind's interference, which occurs through the disturbance of nesting sites and the removal of trees. Matilda's choice of this bird therefore fits with ecological concerns expressed through Hartnett's prior use of emblematic species to complicate assumptions of anthropocentric positioning. In relation to Maddy the Sea-Eagle's threatened status is conflated with Maddy's positioning as Other, which potentially places her at risk. Furthermore, like the tiger, the White-bellied Sea-Eagle carries totemic significance in Aboriginal belief and is said to foretell danger (Beauty of Birds website). Maddy, as discussed above, has been 're-viewing' her life from a mountain top, which is an eagle's eye view and a positioning which pinpoints the times that she was endangered. Maddy's affinity with the sea-eagle draws attention to the risks posed by normative discourses to the vulnerable, as exemplified by children and animals.

Unlike the lost characters of Guy in *Wilful Blue* and Jordan in *Sleeping Dogs*, Maddy's family can finance the global 'working expedition' (36) proposed by her father when she is sixteen. Maddy and her father's mode of travel is the steam ship. As the era for steam ships in the Pacific and Far East begins circa 1866, then the period prior to Federation in 1901 serves as an indicative timeframe. Maddy decides that she will lock the adventurous, patient version of her father in her heart and preserve his memory, as a flower is pressed within a book (40). After seeing many wonders in other lands, Maddy declares that there is 'nothing that is lovelier than everything else combined' (45). This appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things is phenomenological and indicates Maddy's perception of the world as an interdependent eco-system. With this discovery and her father's gift of a mirror to show that, for him, she is the world's most beautiful thing, Maddy gains confidence from accepting who she is. Maddy's father offers an alternative model of masculinity to dominant modes in the Victorian era because he supports the positioning of women outside of the domestic sphere and enables his daughter to independently investigate her values and beliefs. This is reinforced when he allows Maddy to select a completely unconventional partner whose characteristics are more wild than cultured, like the sea-eagle she so admires.

When the eighteen-year-old Maddy first meets Feather on the beach, she describes his hair as dishevelled and the colour of a palomino's tail. Except for 'a dusting of dry sand', the young man's chest, arms and shins are bare. He wears a pair of tatty, faded red trousers cut off at the knee. He says that he comes from "Here and there" (59) and 'He might have had

a proper name, but she always called him Feather' (61). The perceptions of Feather as a former feral child are reinforced by this indeterminacy and lack of an origin story, like the foundlings that Maddy's mother supports, but also by his mythic qualities. Maddy notices 'his peculiarities, his smokiness, his featheriness, the glint of his skin. There was something impossible, unexpectable, about him' (59). The uncanny resemblance of Feather to Guy from *Wilful Blue* and Jordan from *Sleeping Dogs* seems more than coincidental, and this is discussed again in the conclusion (see p.195). In *Wilful Blue*, Guy's friend Jesse views Guy's body on the beach and describes his hair blowing in white quiffs, his tattered shorts, bare chest and his skin 'dusted all over with the finest sprinkling of sand' (151). In *Sleeping Dogs* Jordan is described as 'raggedy' by his brother, Edward, and is usually 'bare-chested and probably bare-footed' with the grey eyes and black eyelashes (59) that Feather in *The Ghost's Child* also shares (58). In *Sleeping Dogs* Michelle describes Jordan as resembling a wild boy 'with no name who lives out here with the birds and the trees' and notices that he smells of milk and hay (59), and in *The Ghost's Child* Maddy will later observe the 'fresh-hay scent' of Feather, who, even years later remains 'tinged with the wheatfield smell of him' (162). All three melancholic characters possess bird-like characteristics. Feather has an affinity with birds and a petrel brings him a fish (70). Guy leaves Sanquedeet quietly, 'as if he had wings' (135), and Jordan from *Sleeping Dogs* wonders about ocean birds while painting and observing birds on the farm (43). The recurrence of these features in different characters and texts is too striking and detailed to be unrelated. Given that the trope of the child lost to culture is repeated in Hartnett's work, it is reasonable to suppose that Hartnett has constructed a counter-type or trope which is perpetuated through different novels, settings and historical timeframes. These spectral returns constitute a haunting that disturbs and unsettles the patriarchal norms and myths of nation that persist within modern culture and its Gothic topographies.

Hartnett uses the topography of the European forest transposed onto the landscape of the bush to show how such a landscape is antithetical to ideas of the homely or *heimlich*. After spending time with Feather, Maddy is thrilled when he offers to stay. However, his obsession with studying the horizon makes her uneasy, for there is something miraculous about him, 'like a living bird inside a lifeless shell' (69). Her mother regards Feather as a savage, but her father, appreciating Maddy's seriousness, agrees to the union on condition that Feather becomes 'civilised' and quits his wild ways (82). Seeking to avoid society as much as possible, the couple set up home in a cottage surrounded by pine trees, which is 'a

place in which nobody had lived for many years' (85). The implied emptiness and the location of a 'forgotten field' recalls the fiction of *terra nullius* as well as, ironically, the alliteration of the lines in British war poet R. Brooke's poem 'some corner of a foreign field/That is for ever England' from 'The Soldier', published in 1914. Further, the garden is 'overrun' and this reversion to wilderness indicates the temporary nature of settled habitation (85). The cottage as locale intersects with fairy tale through its timeless and liminal position in relation to the coastal town. Instead of gum trees and bushland, the European pine forest that encloses them is Other to the indigenous Australian landscape. Carroll has commented that green spaces in the Western literary tradition have been associated with insight and renewal (75). As a green space the forest can be perceived as a divided topos because, although seemingly benign, it conceals the raw violence of survival and death. Whereas gardens represent the original Edenic space, the non-indigenous Gothic forest in *The Ghost's Child* is associated with a dark pastoral and constitutes an unsafe place for children and non-humans:

No animal eats the acrid needles, so apart from wasps in their high, thrumming nests, nothing makes its home in the branches. No Dreamtime creature prowls the shadows, no sprite skitters, no thylacine sniffs from tree to tree. Nothing is born or hunted here. The conifer forest is alive, and yet it is not. It is an unaltering landscape, a live painting. It is a living thing that doesn't draw breath. (114)

This Gothic image of the forest as undead, combined with Feather's otherworldliness, are portents for the tragedy of Maddy's miscarriage. The couple call their newly conceived child, 'the fay' (103), and 'fey' is another word for faerie in folklore. However, the dictionary definition of 'fey' includes the archaic meaning of 'fated to die' (Oxford Dictionaries Online). When Maddy perceives that the child has stopped moving she tries to drown herself but is saved by Feather, who seems transformed into a hybrid creature, suggestive of the selkie from Gaelic folklore (111). After nursing Maddy through her grief, Feather states that he must leave. Maddy's pain is so great that she cannot think and describes herself as inside a white box, which could indicate a breakdown. Eventually, though, she decides that she wants answers from Feather and hires a man from the harbour to build a little white sailing boat, of the kind that Jordan in *Sleeping Dogs* dreams about (59). Called the *Albatross*, the boat in *The Ghost's Child* is Maddy's companion and, unlike the namesake of the 1798 poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by S.T. Coleridge, who shoots and kills the albatross, Maddy will respect the sea creatures she encounters on her voyage.

The narrative technique of magical realism is used by Hartnett to privilege Maddy's non-anthropocentric inclusivity regarding indigenous fauna and flora, which is in sympathy with postcolonial positioning. Maddy's quest is also anti-colonial in that it is personal, non-aggressive and unrelated to economic gain. It is related to her suffering which is so great that realism is insufficient as a means of representation for the radical de-stabilising of the subject. As Maddy sails towards the horizon her rationality informs her that it will always recede, but she is undeterred, for she has watched Feather gazing determinedly at the same horizon, as follows:

He was standing barefoot on the rocks and staring out to sea. There was surely something out there – Maddy couldn't see it, but she knew Feather could. Inside himself, he saw something to which she was blind. He looked at it more devoutly than he ever looked at her. Of all the things that were important to him, this thing was immortal. (94)

To find Feather Maddy must place her faith in something beyond the horizon of distance that is not available to ordinary sight. Similarly, Tilly and Jesse in *Wilful Blue* have their faith tested by Guy's spectre which also stands on the rocks gazing out to the horizon with the wind tugging at him 'as if that was all the wind was ever meant to do' (152). In *The Ghost's Child* Maddy converses with a turtle, shark and sun fish as she sails, eventually being advised by a hump-backed whale to speak with the west wind, Zephyrus. The wind takes Matilda beyond the fearsome battle between the Leviathan and the Kraken, where she is in danger of being sucked into a whirlpool. Despite this turmoil, Maddy comes to the realisation that Feather has left her to fight alone. With this insight the sailing boat 'inexplicably' and 'Against all logic' heads for clear water (149). Hartnett's use of magical realism also takes the text beyond the rational, representing a crisis in Maddy's mental survival and her realisation that only she can save herself, which influences her will to live. The mythological topography shows how resourceful the mind can be in co-opting ideas of place to navigate unmapped emotional terrain. The variety of mythical and folkloric sources draws attention to the colonial imagining of Australia as a 'new' country, and the problem of which mythologies are co-opted to represent important transitions for subjectivity and to make sense of experience. This is compounded by the 'loss' of applicable myths by a settler nation when the landscape and environment does not match the source of 'home nation' mythology, for as P. Hunt explains, 'There were attempts to introduce the traditional figures of European folklore, mermaids, witches and dragons, but

these never really took root' (326). Zephyrus takes Matilda to Feather on his Island of Stillness, where, Zephyrus explains, a person is granted their greatest desire.

The Island of Stillness is a Gothic topos that represents the end of a spiritual quest for Feather. His privileging of the spiritual complicates perceptions of the feral youth as being without faith. Feather's destination poses questions concerning his actions towards Maddy and, more widely, his refusal of community. As with Guy in *Wilful Blue*, Feather rejects Romanticism whereas Maddy has a Romantic expectation of Feather's island, just like she had of their relationship. She expects palm trees and azure waters, but instead the island has craggy, ochre rocks and a 'pallor of deadness' (155). Feather's perception of his island is more utopian than Maddy's, for she simply cannot see it as he does. This recalls the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the land, because in early mythologies, as K. Armstrong explains, people were taught 'to see through the tangible world to a reality that seemed to embody *something else*' (17, italics in original). Maddy's irritation indicates a growing awareness that she has never fully understood Feather's wants and needs. In *Wilful Blue*, Guy has described himself as 'empty as a drum' (123) and, similarly, in *The Ghost's Child* Maddy perceives of Feather that 'His love had been mediocre: her love had been a hawk' (160). For Maddy, Feather's exile is futile, but she finds comfort when they agree that having known love means that, even after loss, a person can continue to live (163). This is a message of hope in Hartnett's tale. Maddy's sailing boat is a metaphor for how she lives the rest of her life, not in stillness, but in movement, for as Zephyrus informs her, 'life is for going, not stopping' (169).

Maddy's decision to become a doctor or optometrist, an occupation that involves helping people to see again, and in helping those who are about to lose their sight in coming to an acceptance, emphasises the complexity of meanings of the verb 'to see', which encompasses insight and understanding. Maddy's travels have involved the visual appreciation of beautiful things, whether natural or cultural, and her own insight regarding pain and loss. These experiences have developed Maddy's empathy and intersubjective positioning for 'Maddy pretended she could see everything her patient had seen, and might one day see again' (178). Such qualities help her to become a good doctor.

This analysis has made connections with other Hartnett texts and I am mindful of Guy's comment in *Wilful Blue* on how Christ suffered in order to thrive (109). Feather does not discuss his own suffering, but it is the experience of pain that helps Maddy develop a sense

of intersubjectivity. Looking back from the mountain top of her life, she is satisfied with the view; so much so, in fact, that when her gas fire leaks noxious fumes, and Death comes for her in the shape of her lost child, she and her little dog, Peake, go with him willingly to the sailing boat that waits for her to embark on one final voyage.

### **Conclusion**

The analyses of *Thursday's Child* and *The Ghost's Child* have each focused on Hartnett's representations of the feral child and the normative discourses that the trope complicates and deconstructs. The horizon of depth has been explored through the use of three digging motifs in the analysis of *Thursday's Child*. The dysfunctional family as part of an underclass has been used by Hartnett to interrogate capitalism, the military myth of the 'digger' motif and, through Harper's unreliable narration, the fallibility and continual re-making of memory. In *Thursday's Child* the Flute family are socially and economically disadvantaged, struggling to survive the Depression era of the 1930s and their tale is narrated by family member, Harper, who relies on her fallible memory to serve as historical record for personal events. Her reconstruction of these occurrences is inevitably influenced by dominant discourses. Capitalism and the consequences of the Depression, combined with ideas of nation (as represented by the figure of the military hero), affect Harper's welfare and her perceptions of success and failure at the familial level. The lost child in *Thursday's Child* is Caffy, who dies in the bore hole that his 'digger' father has neglected to fill in. Tin is a child lost to culture but is one who goes willingly, to find his own way of being which, in the longer term, results in his discovery of the gold nugget that transforms his family's material wealth. Harper, however, reflects on the true cost of such a treasure, as the need for money has led to Audrey's assault and their father making Harper complicit in a crime. In a sense, she is also lost mentally and emotionally from the pain of the family's struggles against Cable's bullying, the economic crash, her father's drinking and neglect, her mother's withdrawal and other factors beyond her control and responsibilities.

*The Ghost's Child*, which is also a biographical narration, positions the narrator, Maddy, in the present but reflecting on her past life as a topography which she views from an aerial perspective, as one familiar and at ease with the landscape. Matilda's journey has encompassed distance and this horizon is shown to be interconnected with time. Depth is also conveyed through her experiences of loss, understanding and acceptance. Matilda has

experienced the social and monetary advantages that the Flute family lacks, but she rejects a life of privilege to pursue love for her most beautiful thing – a feral youth who resembles a sea-eagle. In *The Ghost's Child* the lost child is the 'fey' that Maddy miscarries but is also Feather whose rejection of society is symptomatic of his own inner pain and search for peace. Maddy is also emotionally lost for a time and this is represented by the magical realism of her uncharted voyage on an ocean of perils which she must navigate alone.

Though intriguing, the feral characters from both novels remain unknowable, and like the young visitor in Maddy's lounge room, are more emblematic or flat than fully rounded, which enhances their mythic qualities. Harper and Maddy's narratives, with their mix of joy, pain and moments of sure-footedness combined with slips and turns, are more grounded and human, despite, or perhaps because of, the use of myth or magical realism that each includes. Instead of fairy-tale endings Hartnett interrogates what pathways are available for the 'misfit' child and whether retreat or integration provide more effective destinations. The change and adaptation that Harper and Maddy endure help them to evolve and survive, but stasis, such as Feather's finding of eternal peace, signals death. Feather's Island of Stillness represents an extreme answer to the intolerance of difference displayed by normative discourses. Exile might help the individual for a time but communities, as Maddy finds, can only change effectively from within through processes of participation. Wildness in both novels serves to make normative discourses more visible. For example, economic policy is highlighted by the inequalities and poverty of the Depression era in *Thursday's Child* and the Foundling hospitals' reliance on charity in *The Ghost's Child*. The uneven distribution of wealth along with social conventions and patriarchy can confine and restrict individual freedom, progress and creativity of expression. Maddy, like Feather, lives alone except for her dog, but learns through love, loss and letting go, how to see through the eyes of others and how to live contentedly, according to her own perception of truth.

## Chapter Five Gothic Topographies of the Mind

### Introduction

In previous chapters I have argued that Hartnett adapts the Australian Gothic trope of the lost bush child to foreground contemporary cultural settings in which children and young adults can come to harm, thereby challenging assumptions concerning the ways in which discourses of nation have constructed identity (see pp. 83, 119, 133). In this chapter I argue that Hartnett uses the Gothic trope of doubling to interrogate such presuppositions. This is achieved by exploring the suppressed memories, traumas and anxieties that affect young subjectivities and showing how the child can become lost through untreated mental illness. Analysing three of Hartnett's novels, *The Devil Latch* (1996), *Princes* (1997) and *Surrender* (2005), I examine how Hartnett presents mental illness as a Gothic experience for the sufferer within the everyday. Just as the exterior cultural environments of the Australian suburb or country town are represented by Hartnett as Gothic settings, so too the mind, which is also embodied, constitutes a psychical and physical environment that the subject inhabits. In addition, the 'inside' is in a dialectical relationship with the 'outside' so that everyday experience is always already interactive and reciprocal. Hartnett shows how the fluidity of this dialectic affects the formation of identity which is continually being re-made. The causes of mental illness are complex and Hartnett's focus remains on the social forces that adversely affect young subjects, revealing the phenomenological experience of living day to day with an undiagnosed and worsening condition. Hartnett's scrutiny is important in an era where mental illness, as described by the British newspaper *The Guardian* in 2010, is labelled 'the invisible illness' (1) and is still not fully understood. Hartnett's narratives show that, without appropriate care, the condition of the subject will deteriorate. The mind becomes a place of confinement that puts the subject at risk and, in some cases, the community as well.

### The Mind of the Lost Child as a Gothic Topos

Social and cultural topographies such as the suburb and the country town, as well as wild areas, affect and are affected by their inhabitants, whether human or non-human, and by the material and non-material traces that inhere in spaces and places. This study has so far encompassed these various topographies to show how Hartnett is developing the trope of the lost child as the young subject who does not conform to the requirements of normative discourses. The analyses of *Thursday's Child* and *The Ghost's Child* in chapter four have

examined how Hartnett deploys the conceptual metaphors of the horizons of depth and distance to map the psychical and emotional development of the novels' protagonists. The interior lives of her characters are influenced by the physical environment, as well as social and cultural factors. This chapter develops the emphasis on interiority and uses an hauntological approach to examine how Hartnett represents the connections between mind, body and place as mutually constitutive.

The mind, as S. Greenfield asserts, offers a 'trip-wire' of definitions (91). She suggests that, as the creation of brain connections reflects the experience of individuals, the mind can be defined as the 'unique configuration of brain cell connections' (91). This latter definition fits with Hartnett's characters and the ways in which they interact with the places they inhabit and think about as well as being relevant to individual experience in relation to the phenomenological emphasis of this thesis. Greenfield adds that 'even if you are a clone, i.e. an identical twin, you will have a unique configuration of brain cell connections' (91), and this comment is pertinent to the analyses in this chapter which explore the assertion of individual subjectivity. The plasticity of what is meant by 'mind' is indicated by the existence of figures of speech that suggest movement to and from a locale, such as 'going out of my mind,' or 'being in two minds' or, even, 'in a dream world'. Memories, dreams and imaginings are experienced by those who do not have a mental illness and enable the subject to inhabit different places and temporalities at the same time; to be both 'in place' and 'out of place' simultaneously. These double or spectral time-spaces draw attention to definitions of sanity and the fragility of borders constructed between 'real' and 'unreal', rational and irrational, that are considered normative within the culture.

The concept of the mind as a landscape is proposed by Merleau-Ponty in his discussion of patients who experience schizophrenia. Merleau-Ponty claims that patients can usually distinguish between hallucination and perception because they maintain an awareness that the former is a *belief* in sensory experience and the latter *is* that experience (*Phenomenology of Perception* 351). The hallucination has the value of reality, replacing the perceived world, which is suppressed. Whereas the view of the world is usually acknowledged as belonging not just to the perception of one person but can be seen by other consciousnesses as well, the person suffering from hallucinations carves out a private world or individual 'landscape' within the real, where the hallucination takes place. Merleau-Ponty calls this fabrication an 'artificial milieu' (357) introduced earlier (see p. 55). While hallucinating a person can often see from angles that would be impossible or

can see through opaque objects (356). Nevertheless, even at the point of illusion where temporality appears to slide, the subject inheres in time and place in a position that provides the necessary frame for reflection. Therefore, knowing oneself can only be achieved in ambiguity. There is the actual experience of the world as it is lived but the hallucinating subject uses this experience to ‘carve out a private world within the common world’ (358). In order that the distinction between truth and illusion can disappear a slippage from consciousness must occur and this includes awareness of ‘actual’ time and place.

As well as hallucinatory landscapes, Hartnett uses the dialectic of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ to explore character and setting through the narrative technique of the ‘pathetic fallacy’. In other words, she deploys the fictional landscape to represent a mood or tone that is also associated with character or theme, such as the overgrown and parched suburban garden in *Princes*, which is symptomatic of the insular and dysfunctional relationship of the Kesby twins, as the analysis explains (see p.160). Wildness in behaviour is connected with the Other of the wild landscape and has been associated with madness in the Australian Gothic, especially when someone was lost in the desert or bush in the colonial era. One example is G. Boothby’s short story from 1897, “With Three Phantoms”, in which a wild man with sunken eyes, wearing ‘an indescribable garment of skins’ (196) and long, knotted beard, relates how a group of ghostly riders has led him through the desert to safety. However, the landscape is not the root cause of his demise, for having been presented with the choice of following his tracks back to Victoria or attempting to cross unexplored country for the sake of glory, he selects the latter course. In White’s *Voss* the hot desert interior does send the protagonist mad with thirst and delirium, but it is patriarchal hubris and lack of insight that motivates the doomed explorer to conquer the landscape and, despite the deaths of team members and pack animals, it is these features of his character that goad him so that he refuses to abandon the fatal mission. Similarly, in Hartnett’s novels, the wild landscape can be formidable and must be granted a healthy respect, but it is not responsible for the decisions of her characters. My analysis of *Sleeping Dogs* in chapter three (see p.107) has shown that where drought, caused by incessant heat, contributes to the building of tension, it is not the cause of Griffin Willow’s instability, which has deep, cultural causes connected with his background as an orphan, his service in Vietnam and his patriarchal desire to control, away from state surveillance. Where wildness is used by Hartnett as being synonymous with madness, it is to draw attention to

those normative, patriarchal discourses that have affected the health and wellbeing of the embodied subject. If behaviour is wild then this is symptomatic of a condition rather than being the cause.

In addition to employing imagined landscapes as a means of conveying the experience of a 'double' vision, Hartnett also uses underground spaces as conceptual metaphors for the unconscious. In my analysis of *Thursday's Child* I have argued how the feral boy, Tin, uses his underground tunnels as a form of liberation from the poverty his family suffers (see p. 131), but in Hartnett's narratives of mental illness, the underground topos can represent what is hidden in the unconscious. As the mind is part of the body then its imbalance cannot be evaded by the subject. Instead of a katabatic narrative of heroic return, the protagonist can feel confined by the illness, with its cycle of symptoms providing the only recurrences. The unconscious could be conceived as an underground labyrinth which conceals those suppressed traumas that haunt the surface or conscious mind, and which threaten to irrupt or, like a revenant, inevitably return. Hartnett speculates on the Gothic aspects of such an experience for a child feeling lost in such an inescapable topos, or being haunted by the darker, more inscrutable aspects of oneself. Such estrangement can lead to self-harm or suicide. In relation to YA fiction more widely, the darker themes of violence and death, as R.S. Trites in *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* and K. James assert, are defining features. Trites explains that in YA literature death represents an acceptance of mortality rather than the symbolic separation from parents that is typical of children's literature (118). James, in *Death, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Adolescent Fiction*, suggests that discursive exploration of the various representations of suicide may be of value because they operate as ambiguous sites of social reconstruction and tap in to cultural concerns. James argues that children's literature has the potential to 'communicate with particular clarity some of the ways in which meaning is created and shared within a society' and suggests that 'the prevalence of YA texts which thematise suicide' indicate wider concerns about 'the Western community' (177).

Hartnett's texts explore questions concerning how the subject constructs a sense of self and uses narrative as part of that construction. Instead of focusing on marginal groups, Hartnett scrutinises normative discourses of white privilege by constructing young, heterosexual, white males as damaged protagonists so that she can more effectively expose the causes of family dysfunction that exacerbate mental illness.

While it must be acknowledged that Hartnett frequently seeks to emphasise how aspects of Australian culture negatively impact upon subjectivity by constructing her mentally ill protagonists as engaged in criminal activity, the implied connection between mental health and deviant behaviour is problematic in the context of current research and the complexity of mental health issues. Before proceeding with the analyses, therefore, it is important to briefly set out the findings of scholars and organisations that have scrutinised assumptions about those diagnosed with mental health conditions. The national mental health charity, SANE Australia, comments in the online Factsheet, 'Fact vs Myth: mental illness basics' that the likelihood of developing a mental illness is influenced by genetic, developmental, neurological, socio-economic, environmental, life experience and cultural factors. SANE also states that there is no evidence to suggest that people living with mental illness are more violent, and that in fact those with complex mental or psychotic illnesses are much more likely to suffer from violence through suicide, self-harm and as victims of homicide. Risk factors for aggressive behaviour are usually independent of the illness and are listed as 'being male; being a young adult; having had a troubled childhood; having problems with drug and especially alcohol abuse' (Factsheet, 'Mental Illness and Violence,' 1). Violent behaviour can also occur through not having received the proper treatment or a lack of early intervention. Over a quarter of Australians aged sixteen to twenty-four years are experiencing a mental illness at any given time. Outside of the Australian context the World Health Organisation states that twenty per cent of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year (Mental Health Foundation UK website). In addition to counter assumptions that might be based on the white protagonists who feature in Hartnett's fictional representations, SANE Australia state that it is Indigenous Australians that experience much higher rates of psychological distress and this is exacerbated by low access to services. Other minority groups, such as those who identify within the spectrum of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual or other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, conventionally described using the acronym LGBTIQ+, are the most at risk of suicide in Australia. Instead of focusing on minority groups, Hartnett constructs young, heterosexual, white males who suffer from mental illness. This is not to distract from the true demographic breakdown of young suicides in Australia, but to critique perceived norms and interrogate the role of hegemonic discourses in an adverse future as represented by the premature demise of its young subjects. Hartnett interrogates how young sufferers may experience abuse or neglect, a lack of diagnosis or clinical treatment, the rejection of peers and isolation from community.

In emphasising the child as victim, Hartnett interrogates the social factors that can lead to transgressive behaviour by young people who are mentally ill. The novels selected for analysis in this chapter include protagonists who have been victims of violent behaviour or neglect by adults, most often their parents. Kitten Latch, in *The Devil Latch*, has been physically abused by his grandfather and abandoned by his parents. The Kesby twins in *Princes* are not emotionally engaged with their parents, to the extent that their mother cannot tell them apart, and Anwell, in *Surrender*, receives corporal punishment on a regular basis rather than being encouraged to communicate openly about upsetting issues. These examples promote closer scrutiny of discourses that normalise Western constructs of the nuclear family as a source of protection.

In Australia, corporal punishment by a parent or carer is lawful and is not considered to be child abuse if it is deemed 'reasonable'. However, the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) admits there is no consensus in the community regarding the definition of 'reasonable punishment' (n.p.). Citing research by E.T. Gershoff and A. Grogan-Kaylor from 2016, the AIFS compares the effects of physical abuse with those of corporal punishment, finding that overall, corporal punishment does not make children more compliant. The negative outcomes for the child resemble those associated with physical abuse and include mental health problems, antisocial behaviour, low moral internalisation, low self-esteem and negative parent-child relationships. Hartnett's *Surrender* explores the infliction of corporal punishment in relation to the developing subjectivity of the child and young adult to examine how such outcomes might occur.

Doubling as a narrative technique enables Hartnett to hold up a mirror to such behaviours, so that modernity (or those qualities perceived as being modern) in Australian culture may be scrutinised for both strange and familiar aspects, so that its uncanny self can be reflected as if 'through a glass darkly' (1 Corinthians 13:12). The use of the Gothic double as a form of critique is well established within the literary context and is explained in the section that follows.

### **The Gothic Double**

In Hartnett's work the Gothic double or *doppelgänger* offers a mirror to the emerging subjectivities of her young protagonists and represents the flaws and repressions of the adult society. The motif of the *doppelgänger*, an aberration of vision, connects with ideas of the visible and invisible applied throughout this study. A.J. Webber states that, above

all, the *doppelgänger* is ‘a figure of visual compulsion’ (3). The subject perceives its other self as object and conversely is perceived as object. The Other functions as a mirror whereby an idea of self is constructed. The deployment of the trope to explore issues of identity is especially relevant to YA literature and the work of Hartnett, where issues of maturation are foregrounded, especially in relation to cultural discourses connected with power (see Trites 9). A definition of the *doppelgänger* in this context has been provided by McCallum and here emphasises the intersubjective relationship between self and Other:

The double, or *doppelgänger*, is frequently used in narrative to explore the idea that personal identity is shaped by a dialogic relation with an other and that subjectivity is fragmented (75).

The terror engendered by the double signals a return to the familiar but also to that which has been repressed. In the novels examined in this chapter Hartnett’s young male protagonists all suffer from mental illness due to suppressed memories or self-blame caused by the abuse or neglect of family members, but as M. Klein believes, families are not solely responsible for damage to children (cited in J. Segal 138). Their instabilities are intensified by issues of isolation caused by normative discourses that breed intolerance for the Other. Such prejudice leaves them estranged from peers and the wider community. In Hartnett’s novels her protagonists are also influenced by their physical environment, such as the home, suburb, country town, the bush or scrubland or wherever the borderland between ‘wild’ and ‘civilised’ behaviour can be scrutinised.

Webber traces the origin of the term *doppelgänger* to J. Paul’s novel *Siebenkäs*, published in 1796. In Webber’s definition the *doppelgänger* is a spectral figure or revenant, that returns in different manifestations over time and place to haunt the literary imagination, as described in the extract below:

The *doppelgänger* [...] represents the subject as more or less pathologically divided between reality and fantasy in cases of what Hoffman diagnoses as [...] chronic dualism. As such the figure can be seen to gauge the shifting relations between realist and fantastic tendencies in writing spanning the ages of Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism and Modernism. As an enduring revenant, the *doppelgänger* returns to haunt subjectivity in more or less compelling forms. (1)

This trope is therefore characterised by its plasticity, for it is moulded in different eras to illumine the issues of specific generations and places and to comment on the wellbeing of the subject in relation to societal norms and pressures. Like the mythical Golem, an artificial creature fashioned from clay and animated to reflect contemporary anxieties, the

Gothic double represents an imagined Other. E.L. Graham explains how the Golem shape-shifts to reflect cultural concerns and its function is conflated with that of the *doppelgänger*:

The Golem functions as ‘Other’ – frequently *doppelgänger*, alien or monster [...]. It is the destiny of such fantastic creatures to haunt the imagination and have no fixed essence, but to mutate in response to humanity’s deepest aspirations and anxieties [...] a mirror to emerging posthuman hopes and fears. (108)

Hartnett re-moulds the trope of the Gothic double to serve as an indicator of untreated mental illness in young subjectivities. Ideas of the double as a symptom of mental illness can be traced in the literary context to O. Rank’s essay *Der Doppelgänger*, published in 1914, which presents a psychoanalytic theory of doubling and explores the revenant’s intertextual appearances in literature and film. Rank also believes that myth is a form of doubling that represents what culture denies, yet also sustains culture in a reciprocal relationship. Rank’s explanation can be applied to the mythical status given to wild children, discussed in chapter four (see p.127). Myth and folklore contribute to identity because they offer symbolic forms that assist the subject in constructing an external or social world, as well as an internal or psychological self-symbolism. Because the self is a complex archetype of individuation, it has a rich and varied symbolism that includes power but as psychoanalyst E. C. Whitmont explains, the process of becoming can be expressed via things, persons, journeys, places, totem animals or signs (216).

In deploying the trope of the Gothic double in the modern Australian context, Hartnett adapts the critique of masculinity that began in the *fin de siècle* with the literary precedents of R. L. Stevenson’s novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* published in 1886 and O. Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from 1890. That these novels were examining the conscious and unconscious workings of the psyche and its effects just prior to Freud publishing on the ego and the id from the 1890s indicates the depth of literary involvement in critiquing the human condition. Hartnett dignifies the child with complex motivations and the examples of peer or sibling bullying in her texts complicate essentialised Romantic constructions of innocence which portray the child as a blank slate. In Hartnett’s narratives the Gothic is not an external or alien force, but an aspect of home or the self that must be assimilated or owned. The spectral return of the double, or of suppressed memories from traumatic incidents, indicates that there is no simple resolution or restoration of balance, and that instead, space must be found to accommodate these non-material traces or revenants through the process of cultural change. In the analysis that

follows Hartnett represents mental illness as a form of inescapable haunting, initiated by an abusive or neglectful familial relationship and which constructs another lost child in a hostile cultural environment.

### ***The Devil Latch (1996)***

Hartnett chooses the settings of both the Australian suburb and country town for this early work, published one year after her powerful rural Gothic novel *Sleeping Dogs*. In *The Devil Latch* the trope of doubling is explored through demon twins that are a symptom of the young protagonist's condition. The analysis serves as an introduction to the more detailed examinations of *Princes* and *Surrender* as it focuses on three recurring themes in Hartnett's novels that explore mental illness and are discussed below in the order that follows: family dysfunction, empowerment through revenge and the inhabitation of imagined landscapes by the afflicted protagonists.

Kitten Latch is another 'misfit' child who has become mentally, emotionally and socially lost. Raised by his grandmother and an abusive grandfather after being abandoned by his parents, he is deemed Other by his peers because his home circumstances have clearly affected his behaviour. His grandfather, Paul Latch, now seventy years old, represents a dangerous patriarchal power that has become weakened and contained by his deteriorating physical condition. Once the head of a large, profitable company, he was just fifty-seven when he was afflicted by an incurable paralysis, such that 'He is helpless and vulnerable here, he, who had been a man of power' (27). Living isolated and immobile within his own house, Paul Latch has, through abuse, shaped Kitten's own solitary and antisocial existence. After his grandmother's death, Kitten's great aunt Agatha Latch becomes the resident housekeeper and carer. Reflecting on how Kitten is received by his peers, she notes that 'the children at school shied away from him, sensing his difference from themselves' and she allows him to stay at home because 'she could not bear the thought of him spending his lunchtimes by himself' (159). His teenage years were full of rage and he was spiteful because no one seemed to care for him:

To survive, he toughened himself to his isolation, and encouraged in himself the characteristics that separated him from others, his wisdom, his mutinous mind. He found for himself a stronger reality, a reality that existed before people and things: he taught himself to love the earth, the animals, the air. This gave him peace: he could sit silent and unmoving for hours and nothing reached him then. (159)

Like other misfit children in Hartnett's novels, Kitten lacks a positive adult role model to love and protect him.

At the beginning of the novel a praying mantis and a wasp are fighting while the eighteen-year-old Kitten watches. When the wasp kills the mantis, Kitten kills both insects. The impulse to destroy creatures which are no threat to him is unnerving but is explainable in the context of the boy's grandfather's assertion that he would like to crush him like a bug (9). Examples of his grandfather's abuse include making the boy feel unloved and unwanted. Physical harm remains hidden because Paul Latch 'knew how to hit so it would not leave a bruise'. He would let 'a punishment hang until Kitten would pray for it to come and be gone' (149). The idea of invisible harm resonates with the veneer of artificial surfaces, which is a feature of modern culture, while the root causes of abuse remain unchecked and untended.

As a boy Kitten had been taken to a house in the country by his father and a woman who was not his mother. His grandmother had advised him to escape his grandfather for a time, explaining that the latter's behaviour is strange and unusual (15). This foregrounds that Paul is an abuser and that the abuse was known about and managed within the family. There is a row over Kitten's forgotten pyjamas and his father leaves the house to fetch them. Kitten attempts to comfort the tearful woman, but she roars at him to get out, irreparably shaking his faith in adults and their role in the nurture and protection of children. He realises that his grandmother lied about his abusive grandfather being unusual in his penchant for cruelty:

And in that awful moment, when he stood stricken with shock and the woman despised him, he learned that innocence is the thing of fools. A woman could kill a child, a man is a beast of stomping fury. In that moment he changed forever, he knew he'd never feel that stinging loss again, and the twins came to him, and opened their eyes. (17)

The twins are demons that enter Kitten's psyche after his traumatic realisation that any adult could harm a child. One is black and the other red and they encourage him to do things. In contemplating adult behaviour, Kitten decides that 'some are dangerous and the rest are vulnerable' (18). Paul Latch, a tyrannical grandfather who becomes sick, embodies this dichotomy because his illness renders him physically passive and this belies his inner cruelty.

What, then, can be made of Aunt Agatha, who has supposedly been there to look after Kitten so that he is not alone? She admits that she is a little afraid of the boy and has not

been assertive in seeking medical help. After hearing him roaming the house ‘like a spirit haunting what it must leave behind’ (136), she wishes he would see a doctor (152), but as with Grace Willow in *Sleeping Dogs*, who fails to report her son Jordan’s abuse by his father, Agatha does not accept responsibility for Kitten’s suffering or make it ‘visible’ within society. This suggests that she is conscious of reinforcing the stigma her misfit nephew already carries. Kitten describes her as an angel, recalling the British nineteenth-century idea of the Angel in the House (see p.60), fulfilling her domestic role while remaining passive. However, her acquiescence does not help Kitten obtain a medical diagnosis, treatment or support for his condition. After he stabs himself with a fork at the dinner table, she merely offers to take him to the hospital for antibiotics. Towards the end of the novel Kitten concludes that she moved in because she was lonely after her husband’s death. In her neglect of Kitten’s illness she is complicit in the abuse he has suffered. Aunt Agatha colludes with patriarchy because this serves her own agenda for companionship. Women become implicated in patriarchal power in Hartnett’s novels for a variety of reasons which include perceived powerlessness, illness or economic dependence. Hartnett scrutinises the position of women to explore the power dynamic within families and how this impacts on young subjectivities.

The theme of revenge is repeated in novels by Hartnett that feature mentally ill protagonists but in all cases is proven to be a self-defeating strategy. Kitten enjoys tormenting his now vulnerable grandfather and, one day, he pretends to Paul that he has killed a neighbour, Curtis. The reader is positioned as Paul, accepting the story as it is related. Paul is so shocked that he dies. However, Kitten is lying, for it is he who has been threatened by Curtis. A further act of revenge is to seduce Curtis’s girlfriend, Aimee, estrange her from him and persuade her to move to a country town after Paul’s death. As with Griffin Willow in *Sleeping Dogs*, the choice of an isolated location suits Kitten’s desire to control others and avoid scrutiny from the community. As with Grace Willow, Aimee becomes separated from her own family and withdraws from the wider community to a country town that fits with descriptions of this topos in other of Hartnett’s novels. As the analyses in chapter three of this study have argued (see p.91), the ‘ghost’ town is a recurring trope in Hartnett’s work and is here also representative of a Gothic topos:

The town is not remarkable, though he’d somehow expected it to be. It is tiny and plain: it is not a place for holiday-makers, nor a place where travellers stop to rest. There are no trees, everything is brown and bent bandy: summer is strong and lingers, here. The main street has wide strips of dust and gravel along its edges, carved up by

spinning wheels. Many of the shops are vacant and have been so for years. Those that are occupied sag under the sun and dereliction. There is a bakery, a milkbar, a hotel with an empty beach out the front. There are no people on the street. (146)

Aimee's perception of this environment changes as Kitten's condition deteriorates. Initially Aimee regards the rural location as a Romantic pastoral idyll but, as she comes to realise how isolated and secluded it is (142), it transforms into a Gothic place of entrapment. When Kitten warns her to leave before she is hurt, Aimee tries to flee, but there is only the bush beyond the boundaries of the property. This shows how the relationship with place is re-assessed by the subject, depending on elements of risk, fear and insecurity.

Kitten's untreated mental condition continues to worsen and the influence of the demon twins has been replaced by the spectral voice of his grandfather, which is one of power and authority recalling the Law of the Father and perceived as 'The one that makes the devil. The one that watches. The one that makes the law' (126). The voice torments him with how Kitten's illness will cause his physical condition to deteriorate as follows:

*I am clouding your lungs. I am slowing your heart. I am thickening your veins. I am hollowing your bones. I am blackening your brain.* (140, italics in original)

Kitten apologises to his own body for his character but the monster Paul will only leave him if he declares his worthlessness. When Aimee's brother, also called Paul, turns up unexpectedly, Kitten perceives him as posing a threat. Kitten conflates the voice of his grandfather with Aimee's brother so that the second Paul represents the confrontation with a *doppelgänger*: a nightmare scenario which threatens survival. Convinced that Aimee's brother is his grandfather returned from the dead, Kitten runs from the house. Kitten reasons that, as his grandfather is once more embodied, then he can be killed. His ultimate act of revenge is to seek to destroy those whom he feels threatened by.

Described by Aimee as having snowy hair, a thin face and blue eyes, Kitten Latch is flawless like a flower and beautiful like an animal (21). This imagery connects him with flora and fauna and he does find sanctuary and comfort in wild nature, adapting to the world by allowing himself to drift away from culture (160). Although he appears visually unmarked he is deeply flawed on the invisible 'inside'. On this occasion Kitten chooses to hide in non-indigenous peppercorn trees which are described by Agriculture Victoria as an invasive species from the time of colonisation (n.p.), and, in keeping with the Australian Gothic, this does not auger well. Like the manicured grounds and building of Appleyard College in J. Lindsay's novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, they are anachronistic or out of

place and time. Similarly, Hartnett will use the non-indigenous pine forest in *The Ghost's Child* as a portent of misfortune (see p.137). As an invasive species the peppercorn trees recall colonial violence as they represent an incursion into a landscape that previously belonged to Indigenous people as well as the privileging of profit over the impact on existing vegetation. The demon twins re-assert their haunting presence to suggest a murderous plan. They decide that, as fire is a natural element and as 'Nature disposes of the unnatural', that it is the most effective way to destroy Paul (165). Although Paul's mind can travel through time and space, his flesh cannot (166). The materiality of the body as the chamber for mental illness and the use of fire as an avenging yet cleansing element are ideas that Hartnett develops in *Surrender*.

Kitten is in crisis because Aimee has provided the grounding of love and security he so desperately needs (129), but the voices tell him that he broke the devil law of always walking alone (121). His decision to leave the bed that he shares with Aimee to live underground in the concrete bomb shelter, where he sleeps in a corner, reinforces how the mind as invisible entity re-configures place as a material projection of the non-material self. Kitten is hiding, not from physical attack, but from the onslaught of his mental ill health. This invisible illness affects his interaction with the material environment, illustrating the phenomenological dialectic of 'inside' and 'outside'. Kitten retreats further into his unconscious, allowing his suppressed traumas to dominate his subjectivity.

As with Merleau-Ponty's concept of the 'artificial milieu' discussed above, Kitten conjures an interior landscape to represent his emotional and mental condition, which is described as follows:

In his mind there are many rooms and no windows or doors. The floor is made of wood which is polished and gleams, reflecting his own image. The walls are white and reach into invisibility and it is dizzying to search for the ceiling. The rooms shimmer with a rainbow of oily colours that swirl about on the edge of his vision and vanish when he looks too closely. It is quiet, and he hears each footfall echo. (135)

He describes the space as 'the warren of his mind' and finds a small room that he can call his own. He leaves the rest of the warren for Paul while, slowly and carefully, Kitten 'begins the walk back' (142) and sets fire to the house with the intention of destroying its occupants.

When Kitten awakes, he thinks he is in an impressive building of Gothic architecture, like a cathedral, and is dressed in a white smock with his wrists and ankles fastened to a bed that has silver rungs along its sides (163). A man and a woman are watching him. The woman tells Kitten he has been asleep for a long time and he feels vulnerable for ‘He is reminded, for a moment, of a small boy marooned in a strange place, caught in the company of strangers’ (164). Kitten states that the man and woman are ‘the natural parents’ (164) whom he had assumed had abandoned him. He is reassured that he is in a place where he can rest but his treatment, described as follows, seems an act of violence:

This is what they do to him: they open his head and drag out the twins [...]. The natural parents step upon the small soft bodies until the whimpering twins are silent and dead. (170)

Kitten is now an ordinary boy named Christopher. He is not told that Aimee, Agatha and Paul escaped the fire by hiding in the underground bomb shelter, thus re-configured as a place of protection not from war but from an invisible illness made visible in a final, desperate act. Their survival ensures reader sympathy for the protagonist although the final line of the novel indicates a return of the illness by suggesting that Christopher’s ordinariness will not last forever.

This analysis has examined how in this early work Hartnett begins to experiment with ideas of doubling through the demon twins and the perceived reincarnation of Paul Latch to show the impact of mental illness on subjectivity. As with *Sleeping Dogs*, *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* and *What the Birds See*, adult family members are represented as abusive or neglectful in not taking responsibility for the care and welfare of children. Using the peppercorn trees as representative of an invasive species, the violence of colonisation is revealed as a haunting, anachronistic presence in the landscape, rather than the indigenous bush. Kitten, the lost child of the narrative, relies on the bush as a place of sanctuary and belonging so that wild nature in Hartnett’s modified or ‘modernised’ version of the Gothic is not deemed hostile. Rather, it offers respite from the stresses and strains of cultural life but is otherwise ambivalent. Further, Hartnett represents the mind as a topography that can be perceived ambiguously as a place of confinement and as an artificial milieu which can be explored while the hallucinating subject remains physically grounded in time and place. These themes and motifs are later developed by Hartnett and examined in the analyses that follow.

### *Princes (1997)*

This analysis examines how Hartnett, through the example of identical twins, develops the motif of the *doppelgänger* to explore the threatened dissolution of the self in an abusive sibling relationship. Set in the Gothic topos of the Australian suburban home and problematising the notion of the nuclear family as an ideal, Hartnett shows how the contemporary tendency towards privacy enables the concealment of harm and abuse as a brother is imprisoned in a bedroom and poisoned by his identical twin. The ‘white vanishing’ trope applies to the parents as they have been missing for a year and a half when the novel begins. However, their sons are lost in other ways. The idea of the double as the monstrous reflection of the self is complicated by the use of twins because unlike Stevenson’s protagonist in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, who suffers from a divided identity, one character is not the delusion of the other. However, Hartnett still exploits aspects of Gothic doubling such as the tendency for one character to commit the dark actions that enable the other to live free of guilt. Webber explains how doubles in fiction tend to be the product of a broken home for ‘It represents dysfunction in the family romance of structured well-being, exposing the home as the original site of the *unheimlich*’ (5). As I have already demonstrated in chapter two of the thesis, the idea of the domestic as a site of uncanny experience fits well with Hartnett’s constructions of dysfunctional relationships within the family home and the modern suburban setting as Gothic. In using the example of negative relationships within a wealthy family and the subsequent dislocation of identity, Hartnett interrogates the suburban ideal and the constructions of masculinity that contribute to degeneration. By scrutinising power in a sibling relationship where one twin is visually the mirror image of another, Hartnett exposes the fluid tensions that operate beneath the visible veneer.

The close attachment between two men who are doubles suggests a narcissistic fascination with a mirror image or an erotic relationship, which, during the *fin de siècle* was also perceived as evidence of degeneration. This led to twentieth century anxieties amongst men concerning socially acceptable masculinity expressed by M. Kane as ‘a relationship of desire within the self which contradicts the notion of the self as something simple, stable and self-identical’ (21). In the Australian cultural context, the normative discourse of mateship can be perceived on two levels: firstly as extemporised through drinking and sport and on the other, as Rickard explains, through intense, personal relationships from which women were absent or excluded (174). Mateship occurs in an adapted form in

*Princes* when the dominant twin, Indigo, bars his brother, Ravel, from forming relationships outside of the home. Indigo seeks an isolationist, unilateral power and Ravel desires the plurality of community. This thematic polarity will be repeated in *The Ghost's Child* and could be read politically as the contrast between normative constructions of national identity based on patriarchy and a more inclusive, global perspective. Frequently, as the analysis argues, it is the twin who welcomes being part of a larger, diverse world who is frequently eclipsed by his power-seeking twin. In the analysis that follows I show how the identity of the younger twin, Ravel, is eclipsed in three different ways: through his positioning in the womb, his estrangement from his parents and in his brother's attempts to replace him.

Instead of engaging with the social 'outside' to develop a sense of self, the Kesby twins live a reclusive existence, choosing stories as their main mode of entertainment. The novel begins with twenty-three-year-old Indigo Kesby selecting a narrative from an anthology of a thousand tales to relate to his identical twin, Ravel. The gruesome account of a trapped pig eating a baby is preferred to tales of heroism, mercy and 'unexpected salvations' because these latter narratives do not interest the twins (11). The tale is one of several embedded narratives, each containing shocking or surprising elements. Other examples include a coroner's account of fisherman John Buff, who died from eating the Common Toad-fish and a tragic tale of escaped convicts who believed that China lay beyond the mountains. The anthology might be described as an Australian Gothic version of *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*, the latter being a collection of Middle-Eastern folk tales related by Shahrazad while living in fear of execution. The book belongs to their father, Kasbah, who is vaguely described as 'a native of the hot countries', and from whom the twins have inherited their dark and graceful features (7). Their father's storytelling always included an original, dark twist, such as Goldilocks being sent to prison or William Tell missing the apple (70). From Annie, their English mother, the twins inherit wealth, their huge, mansion-like suburban home and a tendency to cling. This proves to be unhealthy as one twin strives to eclipse the other, even before birth.

The attempted eclipsing of the identity of one twin by the other is an idea that Hartnett employs to show how important a sense of self is to the individual. Annie had been unaware that she was expecting twins because Ravel had been positioned directly behind Indigo. As the technology for detecting multiple births (ultra sound) was first used in Australia in the early 1970s, there is a clue here about the timeframe of the novel. This is

interesting in the context of post-war dreams of a suburban life and the idealism of the 1960s. The twins enjoyed the womb as their private utopia, and their subsequent withdrawal from community suggests an attempt to re-capture the intimacy of that environment:

The womb had been an idyll, a tropical island they'd been washed up on, abundant with food and warmth but secluded, deserted but for them, and they resented the loss of it when the world was hard. (7)

Ravel remained invisible to everyone, his birth disrupting the joy of Indigo's arrival. This suggests the beginnings of rivalry between the brothers and recalls the Old Testament story of twin brothers Jacob and Esau whose troubled relationship begins while growing in the womb, for 'the children struggled within her' (Genesis 25: 22-23). Jacob, the younger twin, eventually steals Esau's birth-right and their father's final blessing by disguising himself as his brother (Genesis 27: 18-28). As with the example of Jacob and Esau, the twins in *Princes* continue their pre-natal rivalry and positioning. Annie and Kasbah remain distanced from their children through the nannies and nurses employed to care for them, to the extent that parents and carers alike cannot always distinguish the twins (9). This inability to 'see' individuality in the brothers represents a further eclipse.

Being perceived as double or interchangeable threatens to erase Indigo's and Ravel's individual subjectivity. The twins cry incessantly, which affects Annie's nerves and estranges her from them, making her wonder if they had truly come from her or from outer space. Later the twins become mute and surly and, in their bond of intimacy, seem to be plotting (8). The omniscient narrator discloses that as the twins were not what she expected, Annie remains remote from them and from the idea of having another child:

Did she especially resent Ravel, the child who meant Annie would have not one, but none? Not especially. Annie, too, was accepting: she was the type that buys the charming puppy and loathes, yet feels obliged to continue feeding and tending, the rampant hound it becomes. (10)

Ravel rebels against the erasure of individual subjectivity that Indigo appears to seek. Indigo comments that identical twins have fingerprints that are extremely similar and Ravel comments that, if they were found dead, no one would be able to tell them apart. When Indigo says that it would not matter, Ravel is indignant and objects for, 'While I'm alive, I don't have to be you,' but has the disturbing thought that if buried under Indigo's name, he would be known as his sibling for eternity (71). Hartnett uses a temporal shift to explain the events surrounding the disappearance of Annie and Kasbah and to provide a context for

the transgressive behaviour of the twins. Ravel's girlfriend has recently rejected him and, turning his anger on his mother, he accuses her of not being able to tell the twins apart, and perceiving them as a single entity. Referring to the Biblical commandment that children respect their mother and father, the narrator asks rhetorically what one is supposed to do when one's parents are not worthy of respect, offering a litany of negative parental behaviours:

It's difficult, isn't it, to respect the neglectful, the untrustworthy, the dictatorial and the abusive, or the failure whose aspirations would drive a child into the ground? (32)

Hartnett's various parental characters exhibit such behaviours and, in her later novel, *Thursday's Child*, the boy Tin is driven into the ground by his father's failed aspirations. When Kasbah, in *Princes*, suggests during breakfast that the twins might like to spend time travelling, Ravel feels wounded, stating that it would be preferable if his parents went away. The kettle boils, a narratorial cliché for a crescendo of tension, and the steam provides a modern Gothic fog for 'The kitchen has filled with steam until they could scarcely see though the mist'. But, as with the intimacy provided by the environment of the womb, the twins 'didn't need to see, to know' (34). Indigo tells Ravel to wait in the garden while he returns to the house. Several hours later, he returns, but the parents are not seen after this incident and their murder by Indigo is implied. Ravel is initially pleased with the absence of their parents and lets his practical twin 'take care of everything', but later he naively wonders where his vanished parents have gone (36). Indigo asserts power by controlling discussions on this topic and, afterwards, assumes the management of the household and bank accounts. His suggestion that Ravel remain at home so that only one twin is visible to the public represents the desire of one sibling to replace the other and constitutes the third eclipse.

The twins' Otherness is related to their mutual self-sufficiency and an obsessive intersubjectivity which, as they mature, proves unhealthy in perpetuating their complete co-dependence and interiority. The twins are misfit children who, in common with other Hartnett protagonists such as Adrian in *What the Birds See* and Maddy in *The Ghost's Child*, do not make many friends at school. However, in the example of *Princes*, the brothers' separation from their peers is not because they are deemed Other but because they dislike other children (9). Their isolation is self-chosen and even when their parents did try to improve socialisation by throwing birthday parties, the twins withdrew to their rooms. They develop a mutual self-reliance that alternates between empowerment and self-

defeat, and this is connected with the difficulty of one sibling being the mirror image of the other.

The narrator explains, that being a reflection, the double has none (15). The double is intriguing because ‘in truth, we *don't know* what we look like’ (15, emphasis in original). Identical twins, suggests the narrator, do not have this problem because ‘there is no singularity in being a twin’ (15) and physical characteristics that distinguish the twins, such as scars, have violent causes. Ravel, being the second born, unexpected twin, feels inferior to his brother, despite sharing his physical beauty:

He has bleak thoughts of himself as a replica – a perfect replica, but nevertheless a replica, which, being imitation, is lesser. And that is far from being what Ravel Kesby wants. (15)

To maintain dominance and encourage Ravel’s loss of identity through fractured memory, Indigo relates a conversation with Mrs Giotto, the Kesby’s ex-cleaner, but Ravel has no memory of the woman. Indigo later presents Ravel with a silver chain, supposedly from an ex-girlfriend who is returning it before moving to a new house, but Ravel cannot recall buying the present. In a more sinister twist, Indigo presents Ravel with a lock of the girl’s hair as a farewell gesture. The slow vanishing of Ravel is orchestrated by his twin and begins with self-doubt caused by Ravel’s apparent forgetting. Ravel’s subsequent confusion reveals how memory can work to either affirm or dissolve one’s sense of identity. When Ravel announces that he is tired of being the invisible brother and wants to find a job, Indigo perceives it as a betrayal. Not wishing to upset his brother, Ravel concedes that he would not know what to do, anyway.

Indigo initially seeks to absorb Ravel rather than erase him because, as the narrator states, Indigo admires his brother’s positive qualities for ‘Indigo loved the Ravel side of himself much more than he loved the Indigo side’ (37). In this way, two subjectivities would become one, with Ravel assuming his place as Indigo’s shadow, as undetectable as he had been in the womb. Indigo is not content with the dissolution of Ravel’s memories and social life but intends his physical destruction. Mentally ill, Indigo has squandered their mother’s money so that the twins sit in candlelight, having no electricity (22). The narrator muses that with twins, there might always be one who is dominant (19) but Indigo is an aggressive tyrant who underestimates his brother. Ravel appears passive but continues to nourish a ‘camouflaged, subversive superiority’ (20) and this references, once more, his position of concealment behind Indigo in the womb.

A metaphor for their mother's body, the façade of the large suburban house is on display but the interior is invisible and cocooned from society. Taller than surrounding houses, its exaggerated vertical dimension from cellar to tower would be described by Bachelard (1958) as 'oneirically complete' or dreamlike and 'Such a house, constructed by a writer, illustrates the verticality of the human being' (25). This reinforces Hartnett's metaphoric representation of the house as body. However, being Gothic, it is also diseased and infested with rats: a chthonic enclosure that is more corpse-like than life-giving; more 'tomb' than 'womb'. The suburban Gothic is utilised by Hartnett as a conceptual metaphor to indicate the degeneracy of the twins. Since the parents vanished, the large house, like a decaying corpse, has fallen into disrepair, much like the crumbling castles and country mansions of the nineteenth-century British Gothic, which represented the fall of the aristocracy. The summer heat, which becomes more oppressive as the novel progresses, contributes a uniquely Australian Gothic characteristic to the trope:

There was a fountain in the garden, its bowl brimming with a claggy mulch of leaves, infested with worms and jumping bugs. The grass was long, overgrown, and browned off by the summer heat. Someone had left a child's shirt snagged on a pike of the wrought-iron fence and on this breezeless night it hung still. (13)

The abandoned child's shirt is a spectral object, indicating both material presence and embodied absence. It is a flag of warning concerning child safety in this neglected, anti-pastoral suburban garden that has reverted to the wild; the weeds suffocating plants that attempt to flower (21). Across the road is a park and so the actions of the Kesby twins are not overlooked even in the garden.

While in the sun-parched garden, Ravel detects a light coming from the labyrinth of disused servants' rooms that are virtually underground at the base of the house. He discovers that Indigo has been capturing and dissecting rats in a makeshift laboratory. British Gothic narratives that include doubling have also critiqued scientific discourse by portraying the scientist as a figure fuelled by hubris and therefore doomed to create monsters. M. Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and H.G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* all feature scientists whose eagerness, to use a quotation from *Frankenstein*, to 'pursue nature to her hiding-places' (55) leads to the destruction of others and ultimately themselves. Both Ravel and Indigo are graduates of science but only the latter uses his subject knowledge to carry out secret experiments on living things to serve his own agenda. Wells' Dr Moreau uses an island to function free from surveillance, while in *Princes*, the twins have exchanged the utopian island of the womb for the

suburban home that enables them to live in seclusion: on a modern, dystopian island that deceptively gives the appearance of community living. Ravel's shock at his twin's pursuit of a menacing secret life emphasises the fact that although the twins appear identical, they are opposites on the inside. Ravel is unaware that Indigo has progressed his experimentation and is proceeding with Ravel's annihilation by adding rat poison to his sibling's peppermint milk.

The spaces that the twins inhabit are metaphors for their contrasting masculinities and mental conditions. Indigo's patriarchal control is exemplified by secret experiments in the underground space of the house, which symbolises the dark thoughts of his psyche and the ways in which the unconscious operates below the surface of the conscious mind. By contrast, Ravel, who daydreams of an independent and socially meaningful life, prefers to inhabit the tower, which, as Bachelard explains, represents a more peaceful, rational solitude (19). However, in the Gothic, as Gilbert and Gubar explore, both cellar and attic are potentially claustrophobic spaces of entrapment and escape (xi), which indicates that these spaces are multiple signifiers. Ravel is the outwardly submissive but inwardly subversive shadow of his brother and so is aligned with the British Gothic female characters of the nineteenth century who were confined in attic spaces, one example being Bertha Mason from C. Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Ravel is eventually imprisoned by his brother, not in the tower, but in his bedroom. Hartnett's use of cellar rooms and the tower metaphorically connect place with different masculinities while drawing attention to the idea that identity is closely linked with topography. In drawing parallels between Indigo as the figure of the scientist and mental illness within a modern male subjectivity, Hartnett suggests that the problems of the past are re-circulating rather than being resolved. By re-locating nineteenth-century Gothic tropes to the suburb she represents Australian spatial consciousness in new ways.

Ravel's bedroom ambiguously signifies both confinement and protection, because despite being claustrophobic, it also promises re-birth, as 'the overall effect was of a cocoon, cramped, warm, and brown' (76). This enclosed environment is also a place of agency in which Ravel can reflect and plan an escape. Like the live rat in the cage, prodded by Indigo, Ravel remains stubbornly passive during his brother's visits. The heat is oppressive and drought means that Ravel cannot gather rainwater, despite the broken window caused by Indigo throwing his father's book of tales through it in a fit of pique. Ravel's agentic escape means that he is 'born a second time but singular' (123). The sheets that he knots

and fashions into a harness are an ‘umbilical cord’ that will secure him to the body of the house if he falls (124). Once out of the window and onto the roof he drops into his tower room and realises that Indigo has been creating separate piles of photographs that depict himself and his brother. Ravel notices that Indigo has made occasional errors and has confused his brother’s image with his own. This is a bitter irony for Indigo’s assertion of primacy and an error that Ravel later uses to his advantage.

Hartnett broadens her exploration of the central theme of identity in *Princes* through Ravel’s musings on the place of the individual within an infinite cosmos. This decentres anthropocentric positioning and at the same time critiques ideas of national identity as a normative perspective. This is because in the context of the universe both nation and individual subjectivity are viewed as small and interdependent parts of a biosphere called the Earth, that is in itself dependent on other planetary forces. Hartnett breaks narrative pace and tension with asides concerning how the view of the moon from earth connects all subjects, how water covers much of the planet and how humans are mostly composed of water. This recalls Hartnett’s metaphor of a tree used earlier in the novel to signify human embodiment, with the trunk (body) as the physical, visible ‘outside’ and the water being pumped through the network of branches as the psychic, invisible ‘inside’:

To see only the solidity of the tree is to overlook the truth of the tree. So it is with the events that make us who we are. On our deathbeds we must feel oddly one-dimensional. We see the solidity of ourselves: the events. Yet who we are is refined by what we say, think, and feel: the liquid of our lives. And that is what we lose. (50)

It is the invisible, fluid elements of life that define identity. Like the surface of the tree, Ravel’s physical incapacity has concealed his agentic planning and determination. In other words, although a subject might appear passive, this should not be mistaken for compliance. What makes Ravel individual is what is going on beneath the surface, in his mind and emotions. Ravel has simply been waiting for the right moment. His escape is curtailed, however, when he glimpses a child’s face at one of the windows of Indigo’s underground rooms. Indigo has abducted a child to replace Ravel: to be his lost twin. During the rescue attempt the child mistakes Ravel for Indigo and knocks him unconscious with a piece of piping. When Ravel awakes the boy has gone but Indigo has arrived. Physically weak, Ravel uses his wits and, remembering the attic photographs, confuses Indigo by calling him Ravel. The seed of doubt is sufficient to mentally and emotionally disarm Indigo. Finally, the twins lie exhausted amongst the tendrils and weeds of the garden, gazing at the night sky. For Ravel, the moon signifies intersubjectivity because he

feels a connection across time and place with others who have gazed at the planet in awe, and ‘we share something for a moment there, we almost touch ... and this is comforting’ (126). Indigo, however, lacks this sense of connection, perceiving only the ‘singular’ moon (138). He reaches out a hand to Ravel and here the novel offers an indeterminate ending. The gesture might be one of kindness or cruelty, the latter suggesting that one identity is finally eclipsed by another. The possibility of the latter is heightened by the prior use of images of asphyxiation to describe the Gothic garden, as in the following: ‘The plants thrived to the point of suffocation’ (21), ‘the rear garden began its self-suffocation, its slow smothering overgrowth’ (36). The narrator has concluded that the young Princes in the Tower of London were possibly ‘smothered, or poisoned’, and Indigo has already attempted one of these methods.

In this analysis I have argued that Hartnett connects ideas of kingship with Indigo’s unscrupulous seizure of power through the destruction of his family, showing how hegemonic discourses can have impact within the domestic sphere and at the level of the individual. In addition I have previously argued that capitalism (see pp. 45, 80) is the dark shadow in the Australian Gothic from the time of colonisation through the modern era and into the twenty-first century. It is also at the heart of this lost child narrative. Indigo’s exploitation of his murdered mother’s inheritance can be conflated with Hartnett’s metaphor of the suburban home as the female body. Indigo’s actions recall figures in colonial literature in which the indigenous landscape is feminised while plundered for resources. Violence in the pursuit of power characterises both types of representation. The act of murdering one’s parents feeds into adult anxieties concerning inherited values. The title of the novel appears to be inspired by the story of the Princes in the Tower from British history, which exemplifies the sufferings of children, lost from sight and victims of the desire of others for power. Hartnett’s more recent novel, *The Children of the King*, is set in the Second World War and features children who are evacuees. It includes the embedded narrative of the plot by Richard III to destroy the young Princes, Edward and Richard, and the boys appear to the evacuees as ghosts. Hartnett is keen to emphasise how ruthless the adult world can be and how the repetitions of such events throughout history and in different places indicate something endemic about the human condition and cultural inheritance. In *Princes* the trope of doubling works as a strategy for contrast and comparison, as one twin chooses to pursue power and privilege and so repeat history, while the other prefers to subvert it. Narratives that show how history repeats through different

eras have been described by Hutcheon as historiographic metafiction (108). In *Princes* there is a separate digression on the story of the royal Princes to emphasise the historical connection and after Indigo arranges his twin's debilitation, he triumphantly dresses in his mother's cloak and makes a crown from one of her hats, for 'He was the first-born son, the prince, the lord, the heir' (86). Abuse motivated by power is interrogated by Hartnett as an inter-generational and global phenomenon that has a negative impact upon individual identity.

### ***Surrender* (2005)**

This analysis focuses on how Hartnett develops her interrogation of the child lost within culture through her representation of the everyday experience of a boy whose suppressed memories cause him to be haunted by a hallucinatory character of his own age. In an online article in *The Conversation UK*, L. Newman, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Melbourne, claims that the suppression of memories is more common than Freud's concept of repression, where a victim remembers nothing of a traumatic event. Reports and clinical studies show that patients with suppressed memories can at least partially recall events (n.p). Hartnett's young protagonist, Anwell, resists but can recall the source of his trauma, which is the death of his brother Vernon, who represents another lost child. Anwell feels responsible for his brother's loss which prevents Anwell's healthy development, but his inner struggle is not attended to by his parents and medical help is not sought, resulting in the condition of a split personality and the ultimate dissolution of the self. The self-motivated destruction is explained by Kristeva in *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* where she discusses the state of depressive retardation. One of the underlying processes is that of 'learned helplessness', which occurs when 'animals as well as men learn to withdraw rather than flee or fight' (34). It is a defensive reaction to a dead-end situation or unavoidable shock. However, rather than playing dead, in Hartnett's novel death is embraced by the young protagonist as an agentic solution.

In *Surrender* Hartnett uses the Gothic to evoke interior terrors. Kealley, analysing the novel as a Gothic subversion of the *bildungsroman*, claims that *Surrender* reveals the horrors of postmodernity for the contemporary adolescent subject (1), referring to defamiliarisation and destabilisation of the symbolic order as effects of Hartnett's postmodern Gothic. Yet it is not only the 'postmodern Gothic' that disturbs (12) and he questions the legitimacy of the social institutions that impose hegemonic norms (2). Spooner cites modern writers such as A. Carter, who deployed the Gothic in the 1970s to

critique the aftermath of 1960s idealism (Spooner 21). Although published at the turn of the millennium, the temporal setting for *Surrender* cannot be pinpointed by the inclusion of specific technologies or events and so, as explained in the analysis of *What the Birds See* in chapter two (see p.71), could be set during the modern timeframe of Hartnett's childhood. By the time *Surrender* was published Hartnett had been deploying the Gothic as a form of societal critique for just over twenty years. My response to Kealley's critique is to note that, although Hartnett is consciously aware of techniques used in postmodern writing, such as focalising alternating chapters through different characters and historiographic metafiction, she is not specifically focused on *postmodernity* but is continuing to use the Gothic in the realist mode because she perceives the discourses of modernity and their impact on young people continuing into the millennium.

Re-locating Gothic topoi from 'outside' the subject to the psychic 'inside', Spooner explains that, in the twentieth century the Gothic chambers for the haunted subject became the heart and brain (18). In *Surrender*, Anwell's body is a Gothic topos. He notes how immobility, through being confined to bed, has made black pools of blood gather 'swampishly' in his palms (131). The image conflates notions of stigmata (or sacrifice) with the Australian Gothic trope of the swamp, in which mythical creatures such as the bunyip dwell, ready to prey on unwary travellers. Anwell's concentrated effort to destroy his body as the place that accommodates his mental illness deconstructs the mind/body dualism in which the processes of reason supposedly dominate inferior, bodily impulses. With the discovery by the community of bones buried in a forest, Anwell's memories represent a cognitive 'digging' into his past which is also confessional, so that towards the end of the novel he remarks that: 'There'll be no point to the exhumation if I do not continue it now' (197). This archaeology of the psyche further develops Hartnett's construction of the underground topos as a conceptual metaphor developed in *Thursday's Child* and, as is discussed in chapter three of the thesis (p. 124), as a characteristic feature of Hartnett's Gothic.

The spectral world of Anwell is conveyed through temporal and spatial shifts which fit with the alternating first-person perspectives of Gabriel, his 'light' persona and the 'dark' persona of Finnigan, who initially dominates the narrative as the analysis reflects. In constructing these personas as different characters, Hartnett uses the interplay of voices as an intersubjective technique to reveal Gothic duality as an everyday occurrence. This positioning means that the fragmented and questionable 'reality' experienced by Anwell is

more effectively highlighted. The temporality of the text veers back and forth between the ‘present’ of the twenty-year-old Anwell’s sick room, where he is dying and the world of his childhood memories from the age of ten. Finnigan states that, ‘It’s not my job to look back: I go forward’ (115). Gabriel’s sections of the narrative are frequently in the present tense but recalling the past. While roughly chronological, slippages in linearity mirror the protagonist’s phenomenality and his decline as he experiences it. His static position in bed is circumvented by the mind’s spectral ability to travel:

And indeed my temperature has spiked so high that in some ways I *have* left the room, left the house, left time behind. In some way I still sit with Finnigan in the angled shadows of the saleyard [...]. (47, emphasis in original)

Merleau Ponty’s (1945) concept of an ‘artificial milieu’, or an imagined topography perceived by hallucinating patients, is helpful here because of the various spatial-temporal horizons Anwell must negotiate. Although the twenty-year-old dying Anwell is rooted in the present, the narrative explores the private world of his childhood memories while also constructing the parallel world of his mental illness in which Finnigan continues to care for Anwell’s dog, Surrender, in the wild, dense landscape of the forest. Hartnett shows how perception disrupts ideas of life as a chronological progression through the omnipresence of temporal and spatial horizons that serve to question how ‘reality’ might be defined in the context of a subject’s experience as compared with normative discourse. The imaginary milieu is a creative adaptation of the forests that border Anwell’s town of Mulyan and described by Finnigan as a fringe or marginal locale: it is ‘not the place for picnics, it’s not named on tourist maps. Only creatures come here’ (49). As indigenous forest it is suitable for native creatures, unlike the Gothic pine forest in Hartnett’s later novel, *The Ghost’s Child* which, alien to the bush, does not nurture life. Finnigan is a feral figure and his positioning is non-anthropocentric so that the absence of humans in the forest is a reason for his liking it. For Anwell, the artificial milieu of the forest offers sanctuary from human harm and surveillance. Finnigan’s persona is an intrusion on Anwell’s subjectivity but it offers the illusion of physical health and the comforting companionship of his dog. Finnigan’s footsteps leave no traces and, hidden by veils of ferns, he declares, ‘Thanks to this I am invisible, I’m the shadow of a tree’ (50). As Finnigan, who is more at home in wild places, Anwell can elide time and place, perceiving his home town in miniature from a mountain peak while perched like a gargoyle. However, unlike Satchel in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* who perceives a future beyond the visible horizon, Finnigan is watching for those who might pose a threat. During Finnigan’s arson attacks on the town, Anwell shares

this all-seeing position, perceiving the farms ‘small enough to sit in a palm’ and the cattle ‘the size of square sluggish ants’ (88). The surveillance indicates a siege mentality that prevents healthy maturity and progression, but which Anwell perceives as self-protection:

All this in my eye. Beyond this, nothing. There is no place beyond this. From here I’ll see whatever comes, and I will see it before it sees I. (13)

The ‘I’ of Anwell is indeed invisible, hidden behind his two contrasting personas. Gabriel warns that he may be an unreliable narrator and not accountable for everything he says (17). The critical incident of the grave’s discovery galvanises Finnigan who decides that it is time to find Gabriel. That both Gabriel and Finnigan respond to the impending crisis of a grave being discovered indicates that the hallucinating subject maintains an awareness of the present and, for Anwell, his impending death signals a final integration of the opposing personas.

Shifts in focalisation and in the spatial-temporal frame contribute to the complexity of the text and its interpretation and so following the narrative requires effort. This is contrasted with the lack of effort made by the characters of Anwell’s parents to understand their child’s condition. Unable or unwilling to face up to their son’s deteriorating condition or admit to their own failings, they fail to seek the professional help that makes early intervention possible. Finnigan describes the family as ‘kooks’ adding that this is how they are perceived by the community. This informal term is defined by Oxford dictionaries online as ‘crazy or eccentric’ (n.p.) and simultaneously signals the family’s perceived difference. This level of non-involvement includes not attending to the disciplinary methods employed by Anwell’s parents and places in question the normative nationalist mythology of the good neighbour, epitomised by modern Australian television series such as *Neighbours* (1985 -) and *Home and Away* (1988 -). The community’s neglect of Anwell is a reversal of the colonial narratives from School Readers in which, as McGennissen relates, the rural community comes together to search for the lost bush child (148). Anwell is lost or displaced within the nightmare world of his mental illness and physical abjection. In the persona of Gabriel his illness rolls through him like a Gothic storm with lightning jaggling through his chest, rain in his lungs and his eyes as ‘hailstones’ (10).

The emphasis on punishment rather than attempting to understand and the failure to take responsibility for their actions are factors used by Hartnett to reveal the deep flaws in discourses that construct and privilege ideas of the ‘normal’ child and family. It is only when Anwell’s body is in abject and irreversible decline that he receives round-the-clock

care and his suffering calls attention to how support and resources are prioritised with regard to mental as well as physical health. The blood on Anwell's nightshirt has an outline 'like a continent, detailed at the edges' (25) implying not only an emptiness at the centre but a tendency within constructions of national identity to look outwards, which mirrors the distribution of populations in Australian coastal cities.

The family resides in Mulyan, an introspective and isolated Australian country town with its 'few thousand' (8) population and described by Anwell as 'a procession of needlers and pinchers' (9) rather than the indispensable friends and neighbours that comprise part of the national mythology of settlement, as described by Schaffer (48). As a Gothic place of 'abominable secrets and myth' (14), nobody chooses to visit the town of Mulyan. As with other country towns in Hartnett's corpus, it is isolated and conservative, which she exploits. Situated on the rise of a hill, Mulyan comprises two rows of stores, some empty, that face each other. It is a town in decline (78) where residents are intolerant of difference and prejudice can be vicious, thus complicating ideas of a civilised culture. Hartnett uses zoomorphism to show how humans behave according to animal instincts, using the metaphor that follows: 'A small town is nothing but eyes and gaping maw: it pecks at its own like a flock of vicious birds' (221).

This recalls the example of chicks pecking to death the weakest in the brood, used by Hartnett in *Sleeping Dogs* (81). In *Surrender* Gabriel describes how intimately he has mapped this environment and how it is imprinted on him, for he knows 'which gate tilts in the wind', the crops in each field and his ability to 'put a name to every rooster's cry' (9). In describing this familiarity with his hometown, Hartnett questions how at the same time he can become so estranged from it.

Hartnett explores the subject's identification with place through Anwell's fond feelings for a local girl, Evangeline, whose well-respected family name has been inscribed on local landmarks for generations, thus becoming part of collective cultural memory. Examples include the war memorial, a street and gravestones. By contrast Anwell's family of 'kooks' have no noticeable heritage and are located on the margins of acceptability. Their name is not inscribed within the town and remains absent from the text of the novel. The difference in the social positioning of the friends exposes the importance of social hierarchies and shows how some families become the fabric of small communities due to their habitation over time. Anwell feels that he 'came from nowhere' and his aunt Sarah, disowned by his

mother, is the only extended family member he is aware of, but she is a forbidden contact (132).

Anwell's loneliness is indicated by the information that, at the age of nine or ten, his parents have forbidden him to leave the back yard, except on Saturdays when he can play in the street. Despite it being considered socially acceptable for a solitary child to invent an imaginary friend, Anwell's first meeting with Finnigan signals the uncanny. Anwell's first impression, as Finnigan crosses 'the brink of my vision', is of a predator, with a gaze like a hyena (17) and fingers as brown 'as the legs of a huntsman' (19), a large spider indigenous to Australia and tropical regions. These similes connect Finnigan with the wild and his appearance signifies a border crossing. Finnigan's connection with the land is further implied by the ochre grime on his face and arms (39). The Waradah Cultural Centre describes the popularity of ochre within Aboriginal lore and explains that for some peoples, such as the Ngiyampaa Tribe, ochre represents the flesh of Mother Earth (n.p.). After asking Anwell to look after some stolen coins, Finnigan scratches his name on the paintwork of the fence. When Anwell's mother calls her son to return to the house the spectre of Finnigan vanishes, 'leaving no trace behind' (23), yet Anwell's transference of the symbolic code to his friend constitutes a visible trace that endows Finnigan with an embodied reality, so that he continues to be visible only to Anwell. Invisibility is an aspect of identity that Finnigan relishes and the persona of Finnigan enables Anwell to be transgressive and empowered:

I reign. I infect this town. I'm the unexplained noises, each mislaid bit and piece. I'm the murmur, the shadow, the creaking floor. I'm the blackout, the echo, the scratcher-at-the-door. (30)

Accused of the theft of the coins by his mother and reminded that he has done dreadful things, Anwell is thrashed by his father with the handle of a feather duster.

Through her descriptions of the punishments that Anwell routinely receives from his parents, Hartnett offers an insight into the boy's upbringing. For example, Anwell muses that 'Mulyan boys are whipped routinely' (34), implying that corporal punishment is normalised in the community. This type of correctional punishment is culturally specific and what is permissible in one community or state varies within a nation and between nations around the globe. R. McCole Wilson has stated that it reflects a desire in patriarchal society to assert the authority of the elder in comparison with hunter-gatherer cultures which rarely use corporal punishment because it would be contrary to developing

the type of personality they tend to promote as an ideal (n.p.). That Anwell's hallucinatory friend does not have an origin story within modern white culture is notable here. Wilson's comment suggests that power over the child rather than empowerment is a favoured construct for modern, Western cultures. Anwell's punishments are disproportionate in relation to his crimes. For stealing two sweets from the produce store at the age of six or seven he was banished to the corner of the backyard until midnight, 'drowsy and grey with cold' (90). For minor misdemeanours such as breaking a plate or spilling a drink, Anwell must kneel in a corridor to 'contemplate my sins' (54). For plucking rose petals from his father's plants he receives 'five cuts' (76).

As well as being Mulyan's only lawyer, Anwell's father represents the Law of the Father and is a domineering example of patriarchy characteristic of other fathers in Hartnett's novels as discussed in chapter three of the thesis (see p.109), examples being Griffin Willow in *Sleeping Dogs* and William O' Rye in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*. The quotation that follows describes the atmosphere of control that Anwell's father exudes:

Father was simply a frightening man: devoid of humour, razored of tongue, he considered none his equal, including his wife and sons. He thought me a woodheaded cretin; Vernon infinitely repulsed him. When Father spoke, what he said was law, and it was easiest to agree (95).

Anwell's father, Harry, is in denial about the deterioration of his 'crumpled home life' (157), largely ignoring its social and emotional aspects and focusing instead on caring for his roses. After unsuccessful sojourns into its environs, Anwell's mother also retreats from the community, deeming it ungrateful and unworthy and so her world contracts 'like a dying spider' (157). She becomes confined to the domestic space of the house, which Anwell describes as icy as a refrigerator.

Anwell has been instructed by his mother not to speak about the accident that occurred when Anwell was seven years old. Vernon, Anwell's older brother, lacked brain development and had limited mobility. His parents confined him to one room of the house where he lived a colourless existence: 'He was whiteness, like me' (60). Vernon would respond happily when playing with Anwell but would also weep 'for the boy-he-should-have-been' (61). The constant, defiant sound made the boys' mother loathe Vernon for she 'looked with hatred upon anything that defied her' (61). Yet in the community, concerned with appearances, she would call him her life's joy. When his mother voices that she wishes Vernon had never been born, she threatens to rub his face in his food and

deliberately runs his bath so that the temperature is uncomfortable, Anwell feels that his brother would be safer if he died. Worried that this wish might come true, he plays with and cares for Vernon, full of remorse and riven with anxiety, stating that 'At seven years old I didn't know it was possible to exist in a state other than disquiet' (63).

The parental delegation of child care responsibilities to siblings is an issue that recurs in Hartnett's texts as a form of neglect, as in Harper's tragic minding of Caffy in *Thursday's Child*. When Anwell's mother is confined to her room with a headache and his father will not break his routine of going to church, Anwell is left in charge of Vernon. Anwell tries to take Vernon to watch cartoons on a neighbour's T.V but Vernon scratches his brother. Anwell loses patience and slaps Vernon's face. When Vernon attempts to scream, fear of disturbing his mother and later being 'lectured and whipped' by his father prompts Anwell to put a cloth in Vernon's mouth (68) and place him in an unused refrigerator.

Disturbingly, when their mother rises from her bed and asks where Vernon is, her eyes follow those of Anwell to the refrigerator. She knows that Anwell tells lies when he is fearful and yet, when he states that Vernon is in the garden, all she asks is 'Are you sure?' (73). Returning to bed she murmurs that Anwell is a good boy. The implication is that she knows where Vernon is and what will happen and is content not to challenge it. The mother's tacit involvement fits with Hartnett's refusal to blame only male figures for culture's violence against children. In a later novel, *Butterfly*, the 'good neighbour' figure, Maureen, will smother her own son. The motivation shared by mothers for such behaviour is indicated in both novels by the contraction of their lives to confinement within the domestic sphere and their resulting perceptions. Finnigan voices what Anwell has reasoned, that the blame for Vernon's death rests with the parents for 'They should have been looking after him, not you' (76). The realisation that as a child he was not responsible, shifts Anwell's perspective so that he feels the injustice of having borne the guilt. As with Kitten in *The Devil Latch*, Anwell decides to take revenge on those who have caused him pain in the community enlisting the aid of Finnigan and the element of fire.

The perceived transgressions of the community against Anwell incur the wrath of Finnigan who uses arson to strike back at those who ostracise or upset Anwell. The innocent and saintly persona of Gabriel watches with fascinated horror as the subversive Finnigan causes havoc. Finnigan strikes at the town's history and landmarks such as the clubroom, the racecourse stables, the produce store, the bell tower and library as well as private

dwellings. As Mulyan's lawyer, Anwell's father sets up a vigilante group because he 'likes everything to be under his control' (100), but his precious Wolseley car burns and he denounces Constable McIllwraith as incompetent. Concern over McIllwraith losing his job finally puts an end to the fires, although Finnigan claims that the real reason for their cessation is the arrival of the dog, Surrender, when Anwell is fifteen.

Anwell allows Surrender to roam free because, in the context of the boy's own constraints, he reflects that 'A tethered thing is a dead thing anyway' (175). Unfortunately the dog frequently returns carrying traces of kill from sheep, piglets and poultry. A sheep farmer accuses Surrender of killing five goats and Anwell's father promises that the matter will be attended to. However, Anwell unchains the dog and the two head to the forest which Anwell decides is neither friend nor foe, describing it as follows:

The bush has a sound that is its own – a low, vibrant, insect buzz. It is not a welcoming, animal sound. It is the sound of indifference. (185)

Without supplies and suffering from the heat of the day, the boy realises that he must return home and feels 'more defeated than I had ever been' (190). He invokes Finnigan to leave the spirit of Surrender in his safekeeping. The dog follows Anwell home whereupon Surrender is chained, and his father orders his son to fetch a neighbour's rifle, after which Anwell is ordered to shoot the dog himself:

"You'll do it. It's your dog – it's your duty. You'll learn to face what must be done – not run away from it." (235)

Anwell loves Surrender and shooting the creature that has been his companion tips him into crisis as 'Gravel was waterfaling from my pores. I left an arid river of it behind' (236). Spattered with Surrender's blood he roams the house, estranged from ideas of home as the description that follows makes clear:

Everything seemed otherworldly, as if this dimension wasn't my own. Strange, the shape of a spoon and fork; strange, the flypaper hung by the window. Strange, the pattern on the loungeroom cushions. (237)

Anwell's mother lectures her son on the importance of taking responsibility, suggesting that even when a duty is unpleasant it represents a lesson that must be learned (238). Yet many years ago Anwell was left in charge of a sibling with complex disabilities. Anwell runs from the house in fear of Finnigan, whom he thinks will harm Evangeline.

At Evangeline's house there is a large party celebration to which Anwell's family has not been invited. Shepherding Anwell to her bedroom the girl asks him whether anything has happened. Anwell's mother arrives as he is pulling Evangeline toward the window, worried that 'he's coming to find you' (205). As the guests gather to watch them leave, Anwell's mother insists that, as he has been so thoughtless, he will face the community by collecting her medication from the pharmacy the next day. Once home Anwell is sent to his father but the sixteen-year-old youth is so unsteady that he almost refuses to fetch the silver-buckled belt purchased for punishment and not for wear (214). The extreme heat, as with *Sleeping Dogs* and *Princes*, contributes to the inability to think rationally:

The sun was impossibly bright. The heat drove claws into my neck. The concrete path seemed spongy, molten. I stopped, and sank up to my ankles. (213)

To retrieve the belt Anwell must pass by the body of Surrender. When he reaches the shed he feels detached from his actions and when he picks up the hatchet, 'I was elsewhere' (214). He swiftly buries the hatchet in his mother's neck and cleaves his father's skull. Anwell, sinking to the lino, is devoid of emotion, exhausted and peevish from the heat. There are no witnesses and like the net curtains of suburbia, the drawn blinds of the Mulyan kitchen 'said everything was the same' (215). After burying Surrender in the yard Anwell puts the bodies of his parents in the car and drives to the forest. Later, when Constable McIlwraith calls to check on Anwell, he guesses that something has happened and tells Anwell that he will take him somewhere safe where he can rest.

The transgressive act of murdering one's parents exacts Anwell's surrender to the ultimate punishment of slow suicide. His death is also about wresting control over a life that has been dominated by terror. Although he calls the nurse who offers palliative care, Sarah, after his father's sister, she is no relation. Sarah promises to shield Anwell despite the public unrest following the discovery of, what the text implies, are the bones of his parents, but Anwell muses that doors present no barrier to non-material entities, for 'they're helpless to keep out what determinedly desires to get in' (240). Finnigan has described Gabriel as being composed of 'water and feather' and presaging *The Ghost's Child* and the character of Feather, who dreams of his Island of Stillness, Anwell considers that 'I must have had horizons to reach. I must have wanted to climb a sand-dune' (241) but at the end remembers that Mulyan was always large enough for him. In his last moments the ghost of Vernon appears and writes his name on the frosted window in mirror writing, just as Finnigan scratched his name on the garden fence. Vernon smells and sounds like Finnigan

and says ‘*You have two names. So do I*’ (246), adding that he has always been present ‘*Underneath*’ (248). Anwell imagines another artificial milieu; a life that might have been had he and his brother been well and happy in the small town. However, because Vernon is also Finnigan, Anwell must let go of the darkness and, as he does so, is lifted skyward. The implication is that at the moment of death Anwell can dispel his demons. There is little comfort in this novel for young people suffering from mental illness but that is not Hartnett’s intention. Instead she has interrogated those cultural factors that are responsible for another lost child tragedy. While suicide is presented as an agentic choice, it is also the ultimate surrender when all other options have failed. K. James explains how the realist mode pits young protagonists against a variety of social issues and these experiences teach them how to grow up (7), but Hartnett disrupts this pattern by representing the ‘real’ of culture as Gothic. The parental punishments that Anwell endures mean that he internalises the values that have normalised aggressive practices, electing to ‘kill’ Finnigan to escape mental illness and, ultimately, life itself. In *Surrender*, suicide functions as an apocalypse of the self and a rejection of a community that perceives the lost child as Other.

### **Conclusion**

The analyses of *The Devil Latch*, *Princes* and *Surrender* have shown how Hartnett uses the Gothic trope of doubling in different ways and adapts it for the modern context to examine how the mentally ill child can become lost in culture. In all three novels abuse of the child occurs at the level of the family. Paul Latch, grandfather of Kitten in *The Devil Latch*, and Anwell’s father in *Surrender* are physically violent to the young protagonists and this is normalised within the home and community so that in each case it is the child who is made to feel his own behaviour is somehow responsible; that they do not ‘fit’ with family expectations, which lowers self-esteem and has a damaging effect on their developing subjectivity. The habit of concealment by the families impacts upon the children so that both protagonists try to hide their deteriorating mental health. Secrecy becomes a form of Gothic entrapment in which the imagined negative responses of the community take precedence over the health and welfare of both boys. The effort that is involved in suppressing the memories of trauma results in the Gothic doubling that both protagonists experience; Kitten with his demon voices and Anwell with the dual and divided personas of Gabriel and Finnigan/Vernon. Inevitably the continued psychological deterioration results in crisis and the risk of annihilation not only of the self but those whom Kitten and Anwell live with. In relation to the Gothic, the theme of degeneration associated with the

suburb and country town, as discussed in chapters two and three, is also evident in these novels. However, as well as being reflected in the rotting garden of the suburban home and the vacuity of the country ‘ghost’ town, it occurs within the subject to show how normative discourses experienced on the ‘outside’ operate in a dialectic with the ‘inside’ of the subject to cause harm. In other words, the effects of the secrecy or invisibility of patriarchal and controlling behaviours, which at first remain invisible within the child’s unconscious, inevitably erupt into consciousness or ‘visibility’ with potentially tragic results. In *Princes* the twins’ parents can be described as careless in submitting to their son’s reclusive co-dependency as well as in their mother’s habit of muddling the boys’ identities and their father’s suggestion that they leave home to go travelling. Hartnett comments in the Achuka interview that the characters of Daisy and Tom Buchanan in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* are ‘careless people’, adding ‘That’s my most hated type’ (Achuka, part 4, p.1). In *Princes* concealment is also a dominant theme, beginning with Ravel’s concealment in the womb, the implied murder of the parents by Indigo, the twins’ life of seclusion in the suburban mansion, Indigo’s secret laboratory, the abduction of a child and the concealment of Ravel as he is slowly poisoned by his brother. Ravel also shows when concealment can be healthy, as demonstrated in his planned bid for freedom.

Concealment forms the basis for entrapment as child protagonists cannot escape normative discourses such as patriarchal control or the pressure to maintain social appearances. These behaviours are not resisted by women, such as Aunt Agatha, or Anwell’s mother, or those in the wider community who become complicit in abuse by not acting. The imperative of concealment at all costs is tragically employed by Anwell when, at seven years of age, he hides his brother in a refrigerator because he fears the effect that Vernon’s crying will have on his mother. Her complaint could lead to a beating from his father. The topography of the mind (which is also embodied) is configured as a place of entrapment and liberation occurs either through death or the creation of hallucinations such as alternative personas or imagined topographies. Whenever revenge is used as a strategy for recovery it implodes, such that it is the ill protagonists who suffer. In my analyses of all three novels I have shown how place as an ‘artificial milieu’ or topography within the mind can function for the subject as a sanctuary from cultural anxieties. The idea of alternative topographies, such as the underground and the island, which function as refuges from those provided within modern Australian culture for the feral child, has already been explored in the analyses of *Thursday’s Child* and *The Ghost’s Child*. For Matilda in *The Ghost’s Child*, her

voyage represents a journey towards regaining her own mental health, helping her to emotionally map her feelings of grief and loss. The concealment of any illness, including a child's mental illness by adults is damaging for the subject and the family in all three novels. Sadly it is reinforced as a strategy by the young protagonists who are goaded by their own hallucinations to escape from a culture perceived as more Gothic than real.

## Conclusion

The detailed analyses of eleven novels in Hartnett's corpus (with the eleventh analysis included in this conclusion) have shown how Hartnett brings to scrutiny normative and hegemonic discourses that can be damaging to young subjectivities within modern culture. Using an hauntology the thesis has demonstrated how Hartnett has re-located the colonial Australian Gothic trope of the lost white child from the bush to contemporary settings within the culture such as the Australian suburb and country town. Connecting these topographies within a new modern Gothic enables Hartnett to interrogate discourses of power which, as part of cultural inheritance, continue to circulate. Examples include capitalism and consumerism, white patriarchal power, anthropocentric positioning and constructions of gender. The normativity of these discourses increases their invisibility and chances of dissemination, whether conscious or unconscious, from adult to child. Conformist discourses can be reinforced within families and other structures that children come into contact with, such as schools, local communities, the media, places of religious worship, workplaces and medical treatment centres. Alternatively, these structures can help children to negotiate or resist hegemony and promote independent research, critical thinking and agency. In *Power, Voice and Subjectivity*, Nikolajeva has suggested the term 'aetonormativity' for adult power over children (8) and, as the analyses have shown, Hartnett explores how this dynamic can be used to abuse and inflict harm or to empower and nurture. Hartnett's most recent novel to date, *Golden Boys*, published in 2014, can be read as a summary of the recurring tropes, themes and normative discourses that have been examined in the thesis. In concluding the study, the analysis of this primary text will provide further support for the findings of the thesis, which are summarised below. In addition to the findings from the analyses the thesis has begun to trace the Australian Gothic through the work of other writers. The role of women writers in the construction and adaptation of Australian Gothic tropes and themes invites further inquiry. Further, the decision to structure the thesis around Hartnett's use of specific themes and topographies has drawn attention to the need for scholarship in relation to the Australian suburban Gothic and the rural or 'country town' Gothic. My final comments in the conclusion will therefore address the potential areas for further study suggested by the thesis.

### **The Modern Australian Gothic**

This thesis is the first extended study to position and examine Hartnett's work within the Australian Gothic. The thesis findings show that there is more to be gained by seeking the

connections between haunted texts than by studying them in isolation. The analyses of Hartnett's novels reveal a 'ghostly communication' or 'circuitry' between the texts that would otherwise be missed (Wolfreys 139). Objectives one and two of the thesis have been concerned with the importance of developing a critical framework that enable scrutiny of the Gothic in Hartnett's work. A central concern has been to identify how Hartnett adapts and uses the Gothic within contemporary settings. To this end, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has informed and enriched an hauntology that has functioned as the critical framework for the thesis, for as Derrida affirms: 'it is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition' (5). The critical framework has also addressed Hartnett's use of artistic concepts such as perspective, depth, the vanishing point and horizon which Merleau-Ponty's work also accommodates. Such concepts call into question received ideas of perception concerning the visible and invisible, past and present, conscious and unconscious, real and unreal.

As a Gothic trope the figure of the ghost is contingent, for it is represented in ways that reflect and are in dialogue with the specific cultural context and timeframe (in which past, present and future are shown to be omnipresent). Ideas of visibility and invisibility are in alignment with features of the spectre, such as absence and presence, being and non-being and traces, whether material or non-material, that inhere in the places that subjects inhabit. These places might be on the social 'outside' or in the psychic interior of the mind and through the individual subjectivities of Hartnett's protagonists it is possible to examine this dialectic. The analyses have also highlighted Hartnett's preference for liminal places and spaces and the spectral qualities that inhere in them. Places in modern culture are shown to be palimpsests concealing past traumas that threaten to erupt into the present, such as Adrian's park in *What the Birds See* (see p.74). Temporal frames in Hartnett's narratives slip back and forth and juxtapose the era of her own childhood with that of the reader. In addition, her characters' experiences of memory, dreaming and hallucination show how she problematises a synchronic understanding of time to emphasise how time is lived and perceived as anachronic.

The analyses in all chapters have shown how Hartnett uses ideas of haunting to locate the Gothic within modern culture in a variety of ways. As well as exploring visitations from the dead such as Guy in *Wilful Blue*, Matilda's narrative in *The Ghost's Tale* and the extinct tiger in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, the extended study provided by the thesis has revealed recurring traits in different characters across her corpus as well as the return and adaptation of tropes from the colonial Australian Gothic. Through their spectral returns these repetitions

draw attention to the accompanying persistence of hegemonic discourses into the modern era and beyond. One of the first imperatives for the critical approach to the Gothic has been to research and explain the literary and other contexts that justify a hauntological approach to Hartnett's work.

### *Tracing the Cultural Context and the Australian Gothic*

In the introduction I traced the origins of the literary Gothic more widely, to show how British Gothic tropes were imported and adapted to reflect, and frequently offer counter-narratives, to the hegemonic and conformist discourses that have shaped Australia's cultural history and topography (see p.15). Discourses of nation from colonisation, expansion and settlement have sought to define 'Australianness' and through an examination of the literary and cultural context I have identified such examples as mateship, egalitarianism, ideas of the good neighbour, as well as bush heroism in the face of a seemingly hostile indigenous landscape. The atmosphere of weird melancholy that inheres in the bush is caused by the perceived absence of the Aborigine or racial Other and this haunting atmosphere represents colonial guilt and anxieties. These discourses appear as uncanny spectres within the modern times and settings of Hartnett's novels, such as within the suburb and the declining country town. Hegemonic and conformist discourses are uncanny because as part of an inherited culture they signify familiarity but at the same time their appearances are strange because they are anachronistic or 'out of joint', and especially so for Hartnett's young protagonists who experience and try to make sense of them, often without explanation from trusted adults. In Gothic representations discourses of nation have shadow sides, revealed in Hartnett's work through damaged or corrupt characters and dysfunctional behaviour, that make the promise of modern, suburban domesticity or the promise of community in rural areas somehow unhomely or *unheimlich* in Freud's use of the term. Hartnett employs a modern Australian Gothic to insist that such discourses are strange and discordant because of their collusion with power and persistence through time. Through her representations and use of narrative technique as set out below she interrogates the inter-generational effects of this inheritance.

### **The Child Lost in Culture**

In addition to identifying the ways in which Hartnett's work is situated within the Australian Gothic, the analyses have substantiated Hartnett's claim that she returns repeatedly to the tropes of the lost child and the feral child in her work (see p.22). They have also upheld Pierce's argument that the lost-in-the-bush child can be deployed in modern times, albeit

differently, to represent the child lost in culture, and without losing any of the trope's uniquely Australian specificity (see p.23). In addition, representations of the lost child remain in dialogue with actual documented disappearances, such as the example of the Metford children in *What the Birds See*. Their case represents the three Beaumont children who went missing from an Adelaide beach in 1966 and were never found (see p.71). Similarly, the film *Wolf Creek*, which Hartnett has reviewed, is based on the Falconio murder case of 2001 and includes missing tourists. The contextual research has also shown how narratives of the lost white child distracted from historical accounts and colluded in collective forgetting. This was highlighted by the 'Bringing Them Home Report' of 1997 that documented the experiences of the Stolen Generation as well as Gill's selected accounts of displaced children in *Orphans of the Empire* (see p.68) who were the victims of forced emigration. Traces of racial violence enacted in the colonial past and silences generated by the collective forgetting of lost children bear witness to the spectral, or what seems unrepresentable. Hartnett draws attention to the nation's history and the collusion in collective forgetting through the re-circulation of identifiable tropes and themes which she then makes strange or locates in modern and liminal settings. Forgotten history has the power to disturb and disrupt existing forms and structures.

'Lost' for Hartnett's young characters does not mean that they have lost their way in the physical environment and some, such as Jordan in *Sleeping Dogs*, Anwell in *Surrender* and Satchel in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, know their neighbourhoods and local terrain so well that they feel a sense of entrapment or enclosure. It is being culturally and psychologically 'lost' that frequently results in loss of life (Guy in *Wilful Blue*, Jordan in *Sleeping Dogs*, David in *Butterfly*, Adrian in *What the Birds See*), mental illness (Kitten in *The Devil Latch*, Indigo Kesby in *Princes*, Anwell in *Surrender*) or challenging life experiences (Matilda in *The Ghost's Child*, Harper in *Thursday's Child*). In focalising her narratives through the perspectives of young subjectivities, Hartnett details the occurrences and behaviours that result in a child becoming lost or disoriented in the culture. When Hartnett focuses on the artistic, sensitive young protagonist, such as Adrian, Guy and Jordan (see p.140) she uses the tragedy of their lost futures to question the validity of the discourses and behaviours that cause their suffering. While these gifted young male characters are perceived as misfits by family and friends, Hartnett shows that the 'real' misfits are the discourses that continue to infect seemingly progressive Western democracies and encourage intolerance of difference and diversity.

Hartnett's representations of the child lost in culture and the feral child will be further discussed in the sections that follow. These sections also address objectives three and four of the thesis in showing how concepts from hauntology have been employed to identify and analyse thematic connections across Hartnett's novels, and how these themes intersect with ideas of place, temporality and identity. The analyses of the primary texts in the thesis provide examples from Hartnett's work and where relevant, these are cross-referenced, but to reinforce the findings further examples from *Golden Boys* will be provided.

### **The Suburban Larrikin**

The thesis findings show how Hartnett re-uses and adapts characters from Australia's past who are recognisable within cultural discourse as representations of nation. Hartnett provides either modern equivalents or counter-types to those that already circulate in Australian culture. For example, the larrikin, the swagman and the bushwoman (as acquiescent but disillusioned 'helpmate'), are recognisable figures from bush legend which is a national discourse of the past. They are therefore problematic as contemporary presences in Hartnett's novels because they indicate a lack of cultural progress. The presence of such figures in the modern home make it *unheimlich*. The larrikin as an Australian Gothic representation, as with the serial murderer character in the film *Wolf Creek* (see p.109) conceals an unremitting patriarchal cruelty. Hartnett's suburban novel, *Golden Boys*, includes an example of Hartnett's adaptation of this cultural type.

The first three chapters of *Golden Boys* (2014) introduce the 1970s suburban setting and main characters. The book sleeve indicates that the relatively wealthy Jenson family have moved to a 'new, working class suburb' and that their difference as misfits is indicated by the reaction of residents who view them as representative of 'a family out of a movie' (n.p.). This is because they consist of types who are culturally familiar. Rex, a name that means 'King', is a dominant, patriarchal figure whose smiling charm indicates his 'larrikin' credentials. Rex Jenson also incorporates aspects of the swagman (see p.111) from bush legend. He is a middle-class professional version of the itinerant labourer because his occupation of dentist enables him to transfer his work to different locations. In this he resembles Bow Fox in *Sleeping Dogs*, the jobbing artist whose misfit presence precipitates the murder of Jordan (see p.111) by his larrikin father, Griffin Willow. The Griffin family are uprooted from the farm and displaced by the father's dysfunctional behaviour (see p.113). Similarly Jenson's eldest son, Colt, pictures his family being continually forced to move to new houses and being

‘driven on relentlessly. The ringing of the doorbell, the sour adult faces, the conversations behind doors’ (50). When Colt and his younger brother, Bastian, make friends with local children, the Kiley siblings, Avery Price and Garrick Greene, Rex Jenson is quick to encourage their visits, offering temptations in the form of popular consumer goods. Cruelty is a theme that Hartnett explores in her work, and the larrikin figure enjoys devising games as a form of control. Twelve-year-old Colt bemoans that, with his father, ‘There’s always some small cruelty, an unpleasant little hoop to be crawled through before what’s good may begin’ (1). Colt recognises with disgust his father’s strategy in detaining the boys but wills himself not to show his feelings. When Garrick rides off on Colt’s new BMX, Syd Kiley notes that Colt’s face is expressionless, like ‘a boy pulled from a cereal box, empty-eyed, enclosed in cellophane’ (42). The perceived emptiness is symptomatic of the celebration of artifice that is distinctive about modern life and indicates that hiding behind oneself has become as normalised as the use of net curtains in the suburban home (see the analysis of *Butterfly* p.76). Similarly Rex is quick to cover cruelty with a smile. While attending to Avery, who has cut his leg, Rex counters Garrick’s idle boast that he will soon receive his own BMX with a query about money, knowing that Garrick could never afford to save sufficient funds. He ‘makes a cut in Garrick’s skin’ (45) but on the ‘inside’, where the hurt cannot be seen. Syd observes that Rex’s smile is ‘broad and white as a wolf’s’, and his hands ‘are big enough to engulf the slim muscle of Avery’s calf, to cradle it in a palm’ (45). His eyes are amber ‘like the sap where prehistoric beetles are drowned’ (48). In addition to this menacing physical description, the ambience of the Jenson’s home ‘trills with nerves’ (54). Just as Rex has power over his dental patients, he seeks to control the neighbourhood boys. He does this by using his wealth to manipulate their needs and wants. In *Wilful Blue*, Guy comments that ‘It’s a strange thing’ [...] that thrives on suffering’ (27) and Hartnett focuses on the modern larrikin’s strangeness to problematise any ideas of normativity suggested by the suburban environment. Colt reflects that Rex is a patriarchal figure who exploits his power over the vulnerable and his disguise as a wealthy professional and caring, family man conceals a Gothic, shadow side:

His father spends money not merely on making his sons envied, but on making them – and the word seems to tip the floor – *enticing*. His father buys bait. And Colt is engulfed with such disorienting shame that he has to move away quickly, striding the length of the room as if he’s spotted something about to topple. (53, emphasis in original)

Colt's internal struggle of how to think about his father without betraying him is mirrored, as the analyses have shown, by characters in other Hartnett novels, such as the Griffin children in *Sleeping Dogs*, Satchel in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, the Flute children in *Thursday's Child* and Anwell in *Surrender*. Hartnett is drawing attention to the importance of questioning the behaviour of patriarchal behaviour, rather than accepting it as the norm. Colt observes his father's attentiveness and 'helping hands' (78) and thinks that if Rex were crushed, 'he would find dark, slimy threads running from his father's feet to his brain' (76). As discussed in chapter three, the Gothic larrikin is metonymic for duplicity (see p.109), and this description of Colt's dissembling father shows how monstrous Rex has become from his eldest son's perspective. Colt tries to resist his father by encouraging the boys to visit the stormwater drain, which serves the purpose of being located away from adult scrutiny, and functions as a place of sanctuary as well as subversion.

### **Mateship**

In the thesis I have referred to Rickard's description of 'mateship' as part of Australianness. This has been explored through ideas of the good neighbour in *Butterfly*, in which Hartnett uses the example of the toxic mentor, Maureen, to problematise this myth. In addition, ideas of mateship are connected with bush legend and the qualities of the ANZAC military hero. The 'digger' or soldier represented resourcefulness and egalitarianism, as I have discussed in chapter four in relation to *Thursday's Child* (see p.129). Hartnett seeks to de-stabilise this myth by representing Court Flute as irresponsible in relation to his family and to the land he has been given to farm. Similarly, Griffin Willow, Vietnam veteran, delegates the harsher, more physical duties of farming to his children. (see p.112). Both educated men, Court and Willow have become disillusioned with the nation's ideals and promises. Griffin Willow was once a lost child or foundling and so lacked a positive familial structure and Court's domineering father insisted on his joining the army. The insecurities and embitterment of both characters is partly expressed through drinking alcohol, a behaviour that is normative for mateship and which Hartnett questions. Rickard claims that mateship depended on sociability and absence from the domestic environment of the home. This meant that drinking in the pub at the end of the day was an accepted ritual within the masculinist discourse of nation, rivalled only by sport (174). In questioning the tenets of mateship Hartnett highlights drunken behaviour and how this impacts on the family. In *Sleeping Dogs* Griffin Willow becomes violent toward his family, and especially Jordan who is beaten regularly. (see p.110). My analysis of *Thursday's Child* describes how Court's neglect results in his son Caffy's fall into

a forgotten mine shaft, a fatal accident for which Harper bears much of the guilt. It is also during a drunken bout that Court's eldest son, Devon, decides to leave home, and this places the eldest daughter, Audrey, in a vulnerable employment situation with the larrikin figure of Vandery Cable. In *Golden Boys* Hartnett uses the figure of Joe Kiley to interrogate mateship. Joe's violent behaviour after drinking in the pub is also negatively judged by his pubescent and vulnerable daughter, Freya, who is beginning to question normative discourses such as the family's Catholicism and the dominance of a patriarchal ideology.

Hartnett's interrogation of mateship in *Golden Boys* is especially relevant due to the similarities between the fictional Kiley family and Hartnett's own background. As described in the introduction to the thesis (see p.19), Hartnett, like Freya Kiley, grew up in a white, weatherboard house and it is of note that, at the beginning of *Golden Boys* Hartnett dedicates the novel to her brothers and sisters. Aspects of biographical detail are evident from Hartnett's representation of the Kiley family which mirrors the size and composition of Hartnett's own. The Kiley characters, who are of Irish extraction include Elizabeth and Joe Kiley and their six offspring, Freya who is the eldest at twelve years old, Declan, the second eldest, Syd (ten), Marigold (seven), Dorrie (five) and Peter (two). Joe Kiley works in a printing firm but the family struggles economically and this is not helped by Joe's drinking. In addition, the drink alters his behaviour so that he becomes violent and abusive. This is a source of family shame that the Kiley siblings are expected to conceal from the suburban community, and which is described by Syd as 'the secret' and 'something they are supposed to keep to themselves' (132). Children are therefore made complicit in the concealment of domestic abuse and the secrecy enables it to thrive, so that the home becomes a place of fear and Gothic estrangement.

The Kiley household is suspended in a perpetual state of tension by Joe's drinking habits and his wife, Elizabeth's resentment. The damage he does is likened to a 'quicksandy pit' (65) in a hostile landscape. When Joe buys fish and chips after the family have already eaten there is a sense of waste, guilt, unfairness and greed, and to Freya these feasts represent 'the simmering lack of love between her father and her mother' (35). The tension of the family listening to their father's every move would be invisible to any 'watcher beyond the window' (57). Joe's drunken attempts to control his family recall the tape cassette playing in the caravan park of Hartnett's remembered holiday in Gippsland (see p.107), for he resembles 'a recording of something dreadful, which loops and starts again' (63). Elizabeth and Joe are alerted to Rex Jenson as being 'strange' when Declan advises Syd not to go to the Jenson

house by himself, commenting that ‘you’ve just got to keep away from him, that’s all’ (160). Rex has insisted on towelling the boys dry when they leave his swimming pool. While Elizabeth is concerned, Joe describes Rex as merely ‘*Over-friendly*’ adding that “We had teachers like that at school” (166) and that Declan should “toughen up” for there’s “Nothing worse than a dobber, either.” A dobber is someone who tells tales and so Joe uses a masculinist discourse from his schooldays, a form of mateship that normalises and therefore conceals such behaviour as a form of abuse. Syd feels contempt for his father’s response and returns to his room as if ‘drawn by the arms of a ghost’ (168) yet absorbs his father’s view. This indicates that however uncomfortable the Law of the Father feels, it remains influential when a child is still impressionable. When Syd and Declan listen to Garrick’s complaint that Rex touched him inappropriately while tucking Garrick’s shirt into his jeans, Syd advises Garrick not to be a dobber or they will be deprived of the use of the Jenson’s swimming pool and toys. Thus the discourse of mateship, including its shadow side, is passed from parent to child. Syd draws a comparison between Rex’s behaviour and Joe’s domestic violence, complaining that “no one cares about any of that, do they?”

Freya does complain to Rex about her father’s drinking, however, adding that she does not understand this or why he singles out Declan to send to bed. Rex’s reply, that “Sometimes fathers are jealous of their sons”, is astonishing to Colt, who is eavesdropping (79). Rex explains that Declan reminds Joe of someone who has not failed yet, “Somebody like the boy your father used to be. A boy who is gone, and isn’t coming back”, adding that, for some men, “love is difficult” (80). Such disillusionment caused by perceived failure recalls the attitudes of Griffin Willow and Court Flute. Hartnett is suggesting that a lost child haunts every adult and that the capacity to love is not a given or innate ability but something that is learned through cultural experience. Rex adds that through their own behaviour, a parent teaches a child how to make different choices.

When Joe next returns home without bothering to eat the meal prepared for him, Freya’s challenge that he is ‘Drunk again’ receives a collective intake of breath from the family because it is like throwing a rattlesnake to the floor (212). Unlike the Drover’s Wife from Lawson’s tale, who kills a ‘real’ snake to protect her children when her husband is absent, Freya’s snake *is* her attack on the abuse of her father. Her challenge backfires when, in an attempt to save her daughter from being hit, Freya’s mother is punched on the jaw by Joe and knocked into the wall. Freya’s siblings are traumatised. Running to the Jenson property, Freya’s fear prompts Colt to accompany her home and Rex has little choice other than to

follow his son. Rex tells Joe that he must either leave the family home or go to bed but Joe states, “You’ve been touching my kids.” (220). However, Declan, who is called upon to support the accusation but seeks revenge on his father, denies it. With her father defeated, Freya has a sudden clarity of vision concerning Rex’s deception and describes her regret: ‘as if fluorescently lit, how he has them in his clutches now, that whatever he wants they must give him’ (223).

Hartnett’s interrogation of mateship also includes the connection of this discourse with homoeroticism. Rickard describes an absence of women in colonial society, so that mateship carried ‘homosexual overtones’ and that this was ‘evident in the competition between ‘mate’ and woman for man’s affections’ (174). The ambiguity of mateship led to suspicion and embarrassment concerning overt homosexuality. Hartnett shows that such intolerance continues into the modern era and in *Golden Boys* this is explored through Garrick’s feelings for Colt Jenson. Colt’s punishment begins when Garrick steals the BMX but Avery’s revelation that ‘Garrick is in love with Colt’ (219) problematises the real source of Garrick’s anger because, ‘if it wasn’t for Colt then he wouldn’t be anywhere near Colt’s dad’ (210) and because ‘He wants to be the boss of Colt, not for Colt to be the boss of him’ (210). In other words Colt has to pay for Garrick’s feelings of Otherness that have arisen due to homosexual attraction. The lack of control that love inspires is resisted by Garrick because it does not fit with the normative discourse of heterosexuality. In an attempt to reclaim normativity, Garrick’s fear of Otherness or homophobia is expressed through violence. While Colt thinks that Garrick wants to punish him for his father’s behaviour, Garrick is using this as an excuse to reclaim his own feelings of power and control.

The two boys ride their bikes to the wasteland by the creek until the missing BMX is revealed amidst the weeds. Garrick states that he likes Colt but must punish him because, as Rex Jenson’s son, Colt knew what his father would do. Just as Declan accepted Garrick’s punch on behalf of Avery, for whom it was meant, Colt accepts that he must atone for the deeds of his father. The theme of inherited guilt recurs in Hartnett’s work and Colt’s severe beating is visceral, bloody and relentless because Hartnett wants to show the unfairness of a justice in which, to paraphrase from Numbers 14:18 in Judaeo-Christian belief, the iniquity of the fathers is visited on the sons until the third and fourth generations. Hartnett is indicating that in this modern context, Australia’s history must be made more visible through being collectively remembered, told and understood, otherwise a damaging legacy of guilt and anxiety will continue to circulate, haunt and affect future generations.

Mateship is further interrogated by Hartnett through her recurring use of wrong-footed protagonists who misread both situations and people, and who frequently make errors of judgement. There is Plum in *Butterfly* who steals from her friends; Chelsea Piper in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, who wants to find a thylacine only to profit from its captivity and Tilly in *Wilful Blue*, who pursues Guy as a romantic interest. Such characters are desperate to integrate but somehow lack the requisite cultural awareness and skills. This identifies them as Other and they are forced to inhabit the margins due to their perceived difference. This affects their sense of self-worth, and in consequence they frequently make poor decisions. Hartnett interrogates the importance of friendship to children because, when it is used as a form of exclusion or bullying, then it is revealed as another power dynamic that can be abused. This disturbs notions of ‘mateship’ that have been part of Australian national discourse.

### **Women Displaced into Landscape**

Moving on from how Hartnett adapts and updates masculine tropes from the national discourse, this section of the conclusion draws together findings concerning Hartnett’s representations of women. As my discussions of the larrikin and mateship show, Hartnett uses and adapts the continued circulation of myths about Australian national identity, but in Gothic incarnations, to show how they influence subjectivity and social life in damaging ways. Hartnett’s novels tend to represent wives and mothers as spectral presences who inhabit houses that are not homely, and whose futures have been lost or withheld through disillusionment, incapacity (due to physical or mental illness) or economic difficulties. I have already referred to Schaffer’s study which has described how women were absent from much of the discourse of nation (see p. 47) despite the embeddedness of ‘constructions of sexuality and gender-based identity’ in ‘the discourses which inform an Australian cultural tradition’ (Schaffer xii). Schaffer’s study critiques patriarchal practices and cultural representations of women and suggests how these constructions ‘continue to influence contemporary values, attitudes and beliefs’ (xii) into the modern era. The bush topos is identified as central to the construction of ideas of the feminine, especially as the relationship of man to the bush is established through the displacement of women. Women were located in a landscape which was objectified through a patriarchal desire to colonise and control. As well as using examples from the culture, including the trope of the lost child and historic accounts, Schaffer offers readings from Baynton’s *Bush Studies*, Lawson’s short stories and J. Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock* to substantiate her assertion that ‘the identity of woman is effaced through

masculine cultural appropriation of the family, the church, the law, mateship and the bush tradition' (xv). Baynton and Lindsay's texts have also been referred to in the thesis as key texts in defining an Australian Gothic (see p.48). Schaffer contends that in order to move forward from such constructions the myths must be decoded, and a new plurality of meanings sought.

In order to address objective four of the thesis which was concerned with how Hartnett uses place and temporality to negotiate and resist constructions of identity, and objective six which includes how Hartnett critiques the spectral aspects of modernity, I return to chapters two and three of the thesis in which Hartnett represents the country town and the suburb as Gothic topographies, and uses these constructions to re-locate women from the wild landscape of the bush to modern, cultural contexts. Her motivations for this are the same as for re-locating the lost-in-the-bush child, which are to make visible the discourses that impact negatively on subjectivity and shift responsibility for those effects from nature to culture, so that the perpetuation of myths and other constructions can be exposed, critiqued and re-evaluated. Hartnett scrutinises patriarchal control within the family, for example, as well as discourses at the level of nation that impact on the women and children represented in her novels.

A sense of isolation and withdrawal affects women who inhabit the ghostly topos of Hartnett's country towns. As chapter three has explained, these forgotten places, invisible to the map, are located off the main highway due to urban development and are in decline. The deserted roads and rural locations are paradoxically a form of entrapment due to their visibility and distance from the city, and this trope is also a feature of Appalachian Gothic. This isolation compounds the problems caused by unhappy marriages or the loneliness of withdrawal from the public sphere. As the analyses in chapters three and five have shown (see pp.110 & 156), Grace Willow in *Sleeping Dogs* and Aunt Agatha in *The Devil Latch* are complicit in patriarchal cruelties and manipulations through their inertia. Grace does not tell the doctor about Griffin's abuse of Jordan, and Agatha as seeming angel and carer, is worried about the stigma attached to mental illness and does not seek help from the authorities for Kitten's deteriorating condition. Hartnett is also careful to expose how such women have been weakened through patriarchal control. For example, in *Sleeping Dogs* all of Grace's children have been conceived during Griffin's bouts of drunkenness (17) and she has suffered three miscarriages (67). Griffin actively discourages her from seeing her extended family and she is therefore isolated from their support. Agatha, wishing to avoid loneliness, has moved into the Latch household to care for the abusive Paul and his grandson, Kitten. Paul's death

weakens her dependent position and, if she reported Kitten's mental crises her fragile security would be further threatened by his hospitalisation.

The sense of exile that women experience in Hartnett's country towns is replicated in the suburb. In chapter two I argued that Hartnett represents the liminal topos of the modern, suburban house as a simulacrum of the domestic happiness it had promised to fulfil.

Promoted by developers as a refuge from city life and a safe place to raise a family, the suburb in Hartnett's novels is a place of surfaces that prioritises consumerism, individualism, artificiality and appearances over collective responsibility and authenticity. In such an ancient continent the relentless suburban sprawl appears anachronic or disjunctive in relation to time and place. Hartnett adapts the myth from bush legend of the woman as disillusioned but resourceful 'helpmate' battling with the harshness of bush life, and transfers this disillusionment to the figure of the post-war suburban housewife returned to the domestic sphere. Women are an important part of the story of Australia but Hartnett explores how in modern, as well as colonial times, inequalities have left a gender gap that affects the distribution of power and potentiality within a patriarchal culture. Colonisation and control of the market place has replaced colonisation of the bush and women continue to be objectified. While this positioning as Other is familiar as it repeats constructions of gender from Australia's past, it is also strange because the home, where a subject should feel a sense of belonging, replaces the bush as a Gothic topos. As Wolfreys asserts: 'A spectre haunts modernity, and the spectral is at the heart of any narrative of the modern' (3). Disappointed and lacking the economic independence that a 'new' nation based on an ethos of egalitarianism promises to provide, the absence of Hartnett's wives and mothers from public engagement impacts negatively on their children.

While Hartnett draws attention to the disempowerment of these modern angels in the house who suffer due to economic and psychological dependency, she also questions the impact upon the child, who also perceives a lack of choice and takes, as described in *Golden Boys*, 'the tail end of the blame' (142). In *Golden Boys*, Tabby Jenson passively observes the power-play of the BMX 'game' in which her sons have to guess the colour of the bike before they can use it, 'like a mother on a television show', and Colt, who is gaining insight as he matures, reflects on 'the eerie moment when a truth breaks from the green depths into the sunlight' and that, 'if the choice is between her husband and her son', his mother will 'cling tight to the rail of the boat' (2). Like Maureen in *Butterfly* who appears like a character in a midday movie, Tabitha 'doesn't seem much like a mother', appearing well groomed and

wearing lipstick even in the house, ‘where everything is new, and nothing speaks of what’s gone before’ (72). The modern, suburban house signifies the forgetting of Australia’s past which makes the assertion of newness an artifice. Economically dependent on their husbands, Hartnett’s suburban women are not so in control of their lives as they seem. In *Golden Boys*, Colt comes to realise that his mother is not deceived by Rex but ‘He’s got the money, the house, the schooling, the meals. He’s the shirts on their backs and the boots on their feet. They need him to hold up the ceiling’ (141). Home ownership serves the discourses of capitalism and gender construction because when men earn higher salaries, if not the only salary, the position of women in the home is frequently one of powerlessness. Tabitha is ‘dulling her eyes for the sake of her children’ (141), and Hartnett questions the validity of this seeming sacrifice as it impacts negatively upon her child protagonists, calling attention to the differentiation between economic security and child welfare, raising the question about which should be prioritised.

Hartnett does construct more positive role models in her younger female characters, however. Unlike Hartnett’s male ‘lost child’ figures, Hartnett’s young female protagonists demonstrate resilience and agency, such as Louie in *All My Dangerous Friends* who breaks free from the influence of a criminal gang. Matilda (Maddy) in *The Ghost’s Child*, travels the world, survives personal loss and develops a successful career, and Harper in *Thursday’s Child*, who survives family trauma and the Depression to dig with her pen and tell her story. Even the socially inept Plum from *Butterfly*, when liberated from Maureen and the bullying of her peers, embraces puberty and her own future. Freya in *Golden Boys*, rejects controlling discourses and, although she does not espy the larrikin lurking within the subtext of Rex’s subtle charms, she is the only one of her family to defy her drunken father. Hartnett is suggesting that these young women, while still suffering the effects of conformist discourses, have also learned that there are alternative choices. Their narratives offer a more optimistic counter-balance to the plight of wives and mothers in Hartnett’s novels.

### **Gothic Disorientation**

The fifth objective of the thesis has been to consider the ways in which Hartnett uses genre and narrative technique to simulate lived experience. While her use of the Gothic has been referred to throughout the thesis and the conclusion, more could be added here on the ways in which Hartnett uses anachronic effects as a narrative technique. Hartnett is a modern writer whose choice of settings, as the analyses have proved, reflects the suburbs of Melbourne and

country towns from her own childhood experience. Exceptions are when she chooses an historic timeframe such as the Depression era novel, *Thursday's Child*. The choice of timeframes set in the more recent past of the modern era creates an uncanny reading experience. There is just enough that is familiar for the world of the texts to be relatable, but there is also a sense of estrangement because comparisons will inevitably be made between the world represented in the text and that of the reader's experience. There are also archaic words from the 1970s, such as the reference in *Butterfly* to The Velvet Underground (see p.77) which disrupt the present timeframe of the reader, and, as traces of other times, signify an anachronic haunting. Hartnett interrogates the changes and continuities since colonisation, by comparing them with the modern era, while the juxtaposition of multiple timeframes encourages the reader to identify the discourses that Hartnett has made strange, and to question their continuance into a contemporary era that appears as Gothic as its antecedents..

It is impossible to speak of temporality without also considering the subject's spatial location. The absence of clocks in the bush, as I explained in the introduction (see p. 22), meant that early settlers measured time as distance, and so it was place that provided spatial-temporal dimensions and therefore a sense of orientation. Hartnett shows through the memories and dreams of her young characters that lived experience of time is anachronic and disorientation is more likely to be caused by the impetus to conceive of time as synchronic or linear.

However, the conception of place is also 'out of joint'. Home is *unheimlich* in Hartnett's novels, and this is unsettling for subjectivity, for as Wolfreys indicates, 'haunting remains in place as a powerful force of displacement, as that disfiguring of the present, as the trace of non-identity within identity' (1). The uncanny arises not simply as the result of external phenomenon but as something indefinable within the self. The perpetuation of hegemonic discourses disturbs and displaces Hartnett's characters in the places they should feel most secure, in the domestic home. The ability of such discourses to manifest themselves anywhere and in limitless variety makes them more terrifying. Adrian, in *What the Birds See*, is afraid of the images he sees on TV, his grandmother's wrath, abandonment and of monsters under the bed, and yet home is where subjects seek a sense of self and being. In the Australian Gothic, ideas of home are further complicated by the colonial context.

The phantom structure of time and place is a feature of Hartnett's Gothic. As the analyses of the primary texts has proved, not only does haunting exist in Hartnett's modern topographies but the space and time of the modern *produce* spectres and spectral traces. In the Australian Gothic haunting disrupts points of origin and moments of narrative closure, so that past,

present and future are perceived as omnipresent. Hartnett uses temporality in a disjunctive manner as part of her narrative technique. This is a movement across boundaries that is also spatial. Identifying the Gothic in her novels includes recognising what is disorderly or anachronic within her temporal framework. There may be an apparitional event which replays itself in a loop like the tape recording she describes in her review of *Wolf Creek*, but instead of a supernatural experience, could take the form of patriarchal behaviour, horrific in its repetition, such as mateship interrogated through Joe Kiley's drinking in *Golden Boys*, as described earlier.

Hartnett focalises her narrative through different characters to create anachronic effects. In *Wilful Blue* Jesse and Walt stand at the grave of their friend, but when Guy's sister, Grere, joins them, her resemblance to her brother is ghostly in its repetition. (see p.101) Hartnett uses the Gothic trope of doubling here, and also in her novels that focus on mental illness, as the analyses in chapter five have proved. As the young men speak with Grere, the narrative of Guy's lost future is played out in a fragmented timeframe that interrogates the spectral tricks and turns of memory, mourning and dreams. Memory enacts a tension against synchronic notions of time or history, and in Hartnett's novels, as in life, is a response to the past rather than its simple restoration. Guy, as the haunting figure in *Wilful Blue*, resists corporeal availability and even as a spectral apparition, faces away from the land toward the horizon.

Continuing the discussion of anachronic effects but also referring to the sixth objective of the thesis which includes the breaching of the artificial boundaries of the psychic 'interior' and the social 'outside', I would like to return to chapter five of this thesis. The analyses were concerned, not just with the return of the past, but with the return of the repressed and the suppressed. Inexplicable aspects of the truth haunt experience, for as Wolfreys asserts, 'the comprehension of the Gothic is expanded through an understanding of the role Gothic effects have to play in the constitution of modern, fragmented subjectivity' (13) Wolfreys argues that 'if the body and the subject are fragmented and dispersed, then so too are the voices of the Gothic subject' (13). Further: 'There are always other voices, other disembodied, ghostly articulations within and against the dream of full, simple, self-evident speech to be read in any apparently stable voice, such as that desired in and for realist narrative' (13). In *Surrender*, Hartnett uses narrative form to de-stabilise ideas of an essential identity and represent the mind as a haunted topos. Implicit in the narrative are cultural anxieties concerning fragmentation. She focalises Anwell's narrative through the interplay of hallucinatory voices and personas of Finnigan and Gabriel so that the text continually slips in

relation to timeframe, setting and perspective to represent the fragmentation of Anwell's subjectivity. Anwell initially tries to be hospitable to his spectres but as they are symptomatic of his illness, he must, in the end, exorcise them (see p.179) Through Merleau-Ponty's ideas of an artificial milieu, the analyses have discussed that Hartnett represents subjectivity as a structure that can perceive an image and can therefore be described as another haunted house.

Hartnett uses the Gothic positively to open up horizons beyond conventional social patterns and rational decisions. Tin's agentic digging in *Thursday's Child*, for example, and his rejection of capitalism and conformist ways of living, transform him into a mythical phenomenon whose welfare below ground is considerably improved in relation to his family's hardships above ground. Feather, who also rejects conformity in *The Ghost's Child*, finds peace on his Island of Stillness. Maddy demonstrates courage in facing adversity and survives many struggles, including, as the text slips strangely and without warning into myth, the battle of the Leviathan and the Kraken on her cathartic sea voyage. Her own healing enables her to pursue a professional career as an eye surgeon and to look back on her life with satisfaction, as if from a mountain peak. Satchel, in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, places his faith in one more sighting of the Tasmanian tiger. Her inexplicable appearance, with her cub, and so close to him on the ancient mountain, enables him to move on from the dying country town. One surprising aspect of Hartnett's work is that she does not always write for the living. Referring to *The Ghost's Child* in the Book Trust interview she comments: 'I like the idea that the people who would see it as a contemporary book are dead and that it's a book that would speak most closely to people who are long gone' (1). Haunting, viewed in these positive and creative ways, liberates the Gothic from narrow definitions and from what Sedgwick describes as 'its ponderous conventional body' (Wolfreys 11). Reading an hauntology requires the act of making the invisible visible. If the political is to be addressed then anachronism must be attended to, for this is essential to spectrality. Haunted texts such as Hartnett's contain that which remains invisible, but which makes itself felt.

### **Indigeneity**

Racial discourse is approached by Hartnett indirectly and is expressed through the attempted erasure of Indigeneity and the critique of anthropocentric positioning. By alluding to specific fauna and flora that are either extinct, in need of protection or invasive, Hartnett critiques ideas of environmental conservation as well as acts of colonisation that continue to occur. This is evident in *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*, which questions the extinction of the

Tasmanian tiger that was driven by government policy. In the novel, Chelsea Piper's research concerning the bounty offered by the government for numbers of tigers killed, firmly connects the threat of extinction with capitalism. In the same novel, protagonist Satchel's rejection of an anthropocentric view by keeping secret the location of two returned tigers, offers hope for the planet's future. Man-made extinction as a form of violence is conflated with colonialism through the hypocrisy of building a cultural centre where Aboriginal artefacts are to be displayed. In *The Ghost's Child*, the species of the White-Bellied Sea Eagle, endangered in the contemporary era, is Matilda's favourite living thing. This is contrasted with the non-indigenous pine forest near her home which is represented as unable to nurture life.

In *Golden Boys* Hartnett makes an oblique reference to colonialism and the attempted erasure of the indigenous flora and fauna. The Jenson property was previously owned by an elderly woman and its garden is characterised by 'native brush and eucalypts, wispy and whippy, intriguingly untame' (49). The previous inhabitant was sympathetic to wild creatures, having provided a bird feeder and a wooden case for sheltering possums (49). Some of the trees and scrub have been marked by Rex for removal, a small-scale colonial act that will clear space for the swimming pool. The clearance will enable his surveillance of the children who play there and so the erasure of the indigenous is shown to work against the interests and welfare of the next generation.

While Hartnett makes frequent reference to extinct or endangered flora and fauna to problematise anthropocentrism, it is also notable that she uses zoomorphism to emphasise the uncontrollable urges and desires of humankind, suggesting that people are not far removed from non-humans in the evolutionary cycle, and to emphasise similarities rather than difference. Hartnett's use of zoomorphism has been identified in the analysis of *What the Birds See* (see p.70), in the context of the rejection of the weakest wolf to ensure the survival of the fittest. The metaphor of the weakest chick in the brood being killed by its siblings is also used in *Sleeping Dogs* (81). In *Golden Boys* the Kiley siblings form a defensive circle around their mother and against Joe Kiley's drunken aggression, suggesting how a pack of dogs might group together against a perceived threat to their safety. The point is to isolate the aggressor to defend the cohesion of the family or community.

My analysis of the character of Feather in *The Ghost's Child* (see p.200) has shown that sensitive 'misfit' characters, who are more at ease in wild nature than culture, run through

Hartnett's work as a trope. They provide another means of exploring the borders between civilised and wild through subjectivity as well as geographical location. They function in the text to interrogate normativity and serve as a counter-type to oppose white patriarchal discourse manifested through aggressive masculinities and anthropocentrism. As well as sharing physical characteristics and poor economic circumstances, Guy in *Wilful Blue*, Jordan in *Sleeping Dogs* and Feather have similar character traits. The use of these similarities that recur across different texts and in different characters, constitutes another exploration of the uncanny by Hartnett, who uses this narrative device of doubling and repetition to unsettle the reading experience. These characters are non-materialistic and seek personal liberty from the cultural context. They are exiles looking for an island of peace beyond any visible horizon and are engaged in a philosophical or spiritual search for deeper meaning rather than a concern with surfaces. This is expressed, for example, through the conceptual metaphor of digging in *Thursday's Child*. Wildness and the trope of the feral child reveal flaws in 'civilised' or cultural environments.

The feral children observe and read the behaviour of others but are content in their own company, which resists the normative discourse of 'mateship'. In *Golden Boys* this character type is reinforced as a trope through Avery Price. Avery is just eleven-years-old 'and already the world is striving to be rid of him' (20). As Guy commits suicide and Jordan is murdered, this description of Avery connects him to potential tragedy and his 'unbrushed hair' also brings to mind Adrian, the young artist from *What the Birds See*, who drowns. Avery's bird-like qualities are suggested by his name, which sounds like 'aviary', and the omniscient narrator's description that insists 'he should have wings jutting out his shoulderblades' (20). As with Jordan and Feather, the boy is 'grey-eyed and fair haired' and suffers poor economic circumstances, betrayed by his 'cheap, inadequate clothes' (20). Like Guy in *Wilful Blue*, who resembles 'a street child' (35), Avery in *Golden Boys* is a 'street cat of a boy' (136). All of Hartnett's 'bird' protagonists share tendencies towards wildness and are destined, like Avery, to follow a 'hard path through life'. As with these predecessors, Avery is labelled 'a wild child' or 'boy-without-boundaries' (20), which endows him with subversive potential.

While appearing dainty and vulnerable, Avery is wise, resilient and comfortable in his own company. He is more sociable than his previous incarnations, being friends with everyone and yet no one in particular. As with Anwell in *Surrender*, Avery has explored the local terrain. Using his bike at night he rides for hours as a release from stress, enjoying the 'brotherhood

of animals' (135). He is a liminal character, a spectre who cannot leave its allotted haunting place and is obliged 'by the natural order' to remain:

He is the child who haunts these streets, lurking in the places where pest species are found, the side door of the kiosk at the cricket ground, the bottle depot behind the Scouts' hall, the grassy veins of unowned land that divide houses here and there. (23)

Trigg discusses how haunting a place means to frequent a given location over a sustained duration of time and shows that this involves keeping a vigil over it (287). Inhabiting the suburb Avery also unsettles it as a continual reminder of its shadowy underworld, for Avery represents the presence of poverty in a capitalist system; an expression of its failure that threatens to undermine contemporary idealism. The feral children in Hartnett's novels also represent the instability of the nuclear family as a normative structure. Avery, for example, lives with his grandparents and sister due to parental neglect. He likes the Jenson household for the plentiful food and 'warm rooms full of wonders' but he prefers independence and 'judging the depth of his own danger' (136). This disconnection from parental relationships is a characteristic of Hartnett's other bird-like protagonists and reinforces the trope.

### **Capitalism's Spectres**

One of the most pernicious discourses in the Australian Gothic is that of Capitalism. From the nineteenth century tale of child murder on a goldfield, "Little Liz" (see p.201 ), through Mrs Appleyard's cruelty to orphan Sara Waybourne in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* because Sara's guardian has not paid her school fees, to the divisions of wealth and social class represented by the Jenson and Kiley families in the supposedly egalitarian environs of the Australian suburb in *Golden Boys*, the thesis has revealed capitalism to be the root cause of harm and especially in narratives concerning the lost child. The interrogation of capitalism by writers of the Gothic problematises discourses that promote neo-liberalism and 'the market' as the preferred and dominant economic paradigm.

In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida discusses the post-Cold War era as heralding the death of communism and the dominance of economic and political liberalism. He also recalls how the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was heralded by F. Fukuyama as marking 'the end of history' in that it had become difficult to imagine a coherent alternative to capitalism. Derrida problematises Fukuyama's claim because the politics of memory and of inter-generational inheritance are acts of return that remain central to any notion of the future. As well as signifying responses to the cultural moment and its anxieties, Shaw suggests that spectral

appearances offer ‘new knowledge and a new form of resistance to received narratives of the past’ (79), setting in place possibilities for a different future.

Hartnett’s spectres, as well as her spectral narrative techniques highlight the contested space and time of Australia’s history, and its systems of cultural representation such as art and literature. Guy in *Wilful Blue* resents the commodification of art, especially for the constraints that the market places on creativity and suicide recalls Derrida’s assertion that ‘These ghosts that are commodities transform human producers into ghosts’ (195). The spectral traces that Hartnett insists upon as part of the nation’s more recent, modern history cast shadows over modern Australia’s perceived progress at the turn of the millennium. One of the historical traces that has been discussed in the thesis (see p.202) is the fiction of *terra nullius*, whereby instead of the process of exchange, which is a central tenet of capitalism, the land was stolen from its owners and occupied by its Western invaders.

Wolfreys traces the etymological precision of the word ‘possession’ to the Latin, in which possession is defined ‘according to land rights and the issue of occupancy, as distinct from ownership. Thus, possession defines whoever controls the house, the home’ (130). Similarly, Derrida insists upon the relationship between spectrality and economy, from the Greek *oikos* and *nemein* which means control of the house. Economy, then, is intrinsic to the home.

At the level of the family, the analyses have proved that Hartnett challenges assumptions concerning the economic and social backgrounds of lost children. They are as likely to come from a wealthy family home as one that is economically impoverished. However, consumerism and the desire to demonstrate success through the possession of products, which as part of the critique of capitalism are important themes in Hartnett’s work, can tempt vulnerable children into the sphere of abusers and abusive situations. Inequalities are expressed through the places that people inhabit or frequent, the subject positions they occupy, the objects that they buy and display and how relationships are evaluated. Wealth bestows power which can lead to the concealment of abuse. Inaction or silence can be re-interpreted as complicity, although it must be recognised that, for those who feel disempowered, choices are limited. Further, the perceived egalitarianism of places such as the suburb, Hartnett suggests, conceals the ways in which inhabitants classify and behave towards each other based on wealth and social class.

The possession of the land in Australia is uncanny because it masks through the acts of economic possession and subsequent occupancy, the violence on which it is based. Control,

articulated through the economic act, is suppressed in the name of home and familiarity, and, through settlement, of the house and the family. Through her haunted texts, Hartnett shows that the patriarchal displacement of children and women within the home is also an act of economic violence. At the same time it represents a resurfacing of earlier acts of economic violence against the racial Other and the land itself. The past persists in the continued circulation of patriarchal tropes and hegemonic discourses, their harmful effects indicating how the endeavour to constitute family and home without dealing openly with a nation's history is doomed to repeated failure. As this study of Hartnett's novels set in Australia has found, the haunting of time and place continues to be represented within the culture by the curtailed future and absent presence of the lost child.

### **The Australian Female Gothic**

As this thesis has examined, if haunting and spectrality are to be addressed, then there must be an acknowledgement of what has already taken place and any associated spectral returns. Through the research undertaken for the thesis I have noted how Hartnett's work fits with that of other women writers whose work might be described as Australian Gothic, even when the trope of the lost child is not the main focus. This suggests how an hauntological approach might be applied more widely to read their work in new ways. E. Moers' *Literary Women* engaged with the task of adding more women writers to the literary canon and coined the term "Female Gothic" which has become part of Gothic critical discourse (Hogle 55). Gilbert and Gubar (see p.60) have also retrieved Gothic texts by female authors and offered fresh readings with the focus on cultural experiences.

This thesis has shown how research for such a study might begin with Australian School Readers and Gothic short stories from the nineteenth century to identify the main themes and tropes used by women writers. The novelist M. Franklin, while not a writer of the Gothic, was a feminist who rebelled against the chauvinistic representations of women in the national discourse of the *fin de siècle*. This subversion of nationalist and patriarchal discourse has been taken up and developed by women writing in the Gothic. Examples of writers referred to in the thesis and whose work might be described as using the Gothic to subvert dominant, conformist discourses can be traced from the nineteenth century through the modern era and beyond.

R.C Praed references colonial anxieties concerning the absent presence of the Indigene in her story "The Bunyip" from 1891 (see p.44). Praed comments on the uncanny atmosphere

created by ‘the spectral white gums rising like an army of ghosts’ around the camp fire as she describes the Bunyip from Aboriginal belief as a white sea serpent who inhabits water holes (Gelder and Weaver 117). The Bunyip functions like quicksand, drawing its victims beneath the swampy surface. Like Hartnett, Praed uses the Australian heat to create tension in an uncanny place, while a group of bushmen swap stories. The lost child is referenced through the cry of the Bunyip which ‘might be the strained broken coo-ee of a child in pain or terror’ (Gelder and Weaver 123). The bushmen’s search reveals the lost white child lying dead next to a white bottle tree with a swollen centre, simultaneously resembling a pregnant figure and a ‘sentinel spectre’ (Gelder and Weaver 125). The child has been dead for some hours and so the ending remains indeterminate as to whether the cry for help had come from the Bunyip or the child’s ghost. Praed uses ideas of a haunted topography to problematise white, patriarchal fears concerning the Bunyip (as representative of the Indigene) as well as patriarchal constructions concerning the feminised landscape of the bush, suggesting that both are sources of support in locating the missing child. Focusing instead on the harmful aspects of daily life for women in rural outposts in the *fin de siècle*,

B. Baynton uses the topography of the bush in *Bush Studies*, published in 1902, to reveal how nightmarish rural isolation could be for women. Refusing to accommodate the romanticism and humour of patriarchal bush legend, she exposes the harshness of living conditions for the bush wife. Such struggles are compounded by fears of physical and sexual attack in “The Chosen Vessel”, for example, which has been discussed in the thesis (see p.48). Baynton draws attention to the dangers of conflating women with landscape when a passer-by celebrates and romanticises the figures of a woman and child, instead of realising that they are crying for help. They are fleeing from a swagman, who is a rapist and murderer. The passer-by is Catholic and on his way to vote in the local election. Thinking that the feminised vision is a sign, he votes for the priest’s candidate, a squatter, rather than choosing a preferred alternative. The squatter, as the thesis has discussed (see pp.18, 94) represents white patriarchy. As well as depicting the vulnerability of bush women when faced with male aggression, Baynton shows how representations of women in the culture more widely, are connected with political power.

The patriarchal desire to constrain women through the enforcement of submissive behaviours is interrogated by novelist, E. Turner. While written as a novel for children, E. Turner’s *Seven Little Australians*, published in 1894 and set mainly in Sydney in the 1880s, shows how rebelliousness in girls is unreasonably punished. The wilful thirteen-year-old character, Judy,

is sent away to boarding school but runs away, and demonstrates resilience by walking home over a period of several days. When a ringbarked tree falls in the direction of her baby stepbrother, Judy sacrifices her own life to save him.

The idea of sacrifice as a feminised noble cause is, however, rejected by G. Lord in her novel, *Tooth and Claw*, published in 1983. Lord, who is best known for writing psychological thrillers, subverts the colonial representation of a feminised landscape through her strong protagonist, Beth, who uses knowledge of her natural surroundings to defend her bush homestead from male aggressors. Rejecting the stereotype of ‘woman as victim’, Beth escapes from the entrapment of surveillance and becomes both the spectral watcher and the aggressor (see p.49). The themes of K. Grenville’s novels include the haunting of Australia by its colonial past, as well as the rejection of conventional stereotypes. There are many other women writers who might join this list. E. Jolley’s work might also be included within the Gothic. One example is her novel *The Well*, in which women collude in the hiding of a murder and a body. The thesis has identified the following themes and ideas that recur in the work of the women writers discussed in the thesis, such as: representations of women in the landscape, ideas of entrapment and surveillance, isolation, the indigenous landscape as primal mother, the absence of women from discourses of nation, the haunted house and uncanny domesticity, male absence from the home, woman as ‘helpmate’, patriarchal control motivated by greed and the subversion of bush legend. In these Australian Gothic texts written by women, haunting is both a subversive force and a mechanism through which social and political critique may be articulated.

An important text in relation to women and the Gothic is J. Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock* which describes Appleyard College as ‘already, in the year nineteen hundred, an architectural anachronism in the Australian bush – a hopeless misfit in time and place’. This is a key quotation that, as this thesis has demonstrated (see pp.18, 94) could be considered foundational for the study of Hartnett’s work, and is also applicable more widely to women writers of the Australian Gothic. I have described how Hartnett uses ideas of anachronism in different ways but also the analyses have focused on child characters who are deemed misfits in their modern times and places. Hartnett reveals that it is rather the hegemonic and conformist discourses that children inherit that are ‘out of joint’. Lindsay’s decision to ask fellow writer, John Taylor to publish *The Secret of Hanging Rock* in 1987, after her death, imbues the text with a sense of haunting from the beginning. The abandonment of corsets by the girls is symbolically feminist and the imagery ‘like a fleet of little ships’ (28), connects

the control and objectification of their bodies with colonisation. The missing girls are phantoms returning from an ‘indefinable anterior future moment at which the story has not yet arrived, and yet by which it is already marked’ (Wolfreys 142). It is no wonder that Lindsay’s biography is titled *Time Without Clocks*. The chapter is a ghost returned from the future to solve an enigma from the original text. Derrida’s assertion about hauntology, that ‘Everything begins before it begins’ (202) is central to understanding the Australian Gothic.

### **Suburban Gothic and the Gothic in Australian Children’s Literature**

While undertaking research on the Australian suburb for the thesis, it was notable that existing scholarship on the suburban Gothic tends to focus on the American suburb. While some similarities might be drawn, the cultural specificity of the Australian suburban Gothic requires further scrutiny. Examples of work from other modern writers who use both the suburb and the Gothic in their novels include H. Porter’s *The Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony*. Set in the Melbourne suburb of Kensington and published in 1963, the novel begins with the statement by the narrator that he has seen two corpses in a ‘half-century of living’ and that these are his parents’ (9). Porter then creates an anachronic and uncanny affect when the protagonist, who is ‘Thursday’s child’ (9) adds: ‘In time, the woman, Mother, is six months large with me, and Dr. Crippen is hanged’ (9). As the narrator’s childhood has been spent in a country town before moving to Melbourne, both settings are used to interrogate cultural themes and ideas, as with Hartnett’s work. C. Stead has also used suburban settings and, like Hartnett, critiques the gendered division of the public and private spheres. In novels such as *The Beauties and Furies* and *The Man Who Loves Children*, Marxist allegiances and female sexuality haunt and disrupt ideas of unity based on the denial of difference. T. Winton’s novel, *Cloudstreet* is set in a suburb of Perth and uses the retrospective timeframe and modern, cultural context of 1943-63. Two ghosts, who are antagonistic in relation to each other, share the suburban home of the two working-class families, the Pickles and the Lambs, and the novel focuses on the developing relationships over the decades. S. Tan’s *Tales From Outer Suburbia* represent the perceptions of suburbia and family life through the subjective experiences and memories of childhood and includes uncanny and fantastical experiences, such as the unexplained appearance of an endangered mammal, the dugong, on a suburban front lawn. Concern regarding man-made environmental issues is a theme that Hartnett also employs. Tracing some of the similarities and divergences within these and other Australian suburban Gothic texts would provide a fruitful line of inquiry.

A recent critical text on the suburb is *Suburban Space, the Novel and Australian Modernity* by B. Rooney and published in November 2018 by Anthem Press, which examines the suburb as a modern topography and seeks to develop an understanding of its political, literary and cultural significance. The study includes readings of Australian writers of fiction such as Stead, G. Johnston (from the Melbourne suburbs), P. White and C. Tsiolkas (who scrutinises family life in his novel, *The Slap*), as well as other examples. The premise of the study is that problematic representations of the suburb should be weighed against its potentiality as a creative and productive space. Hartnett has certainly used the suburb creatively, as this study has examined. While Rooney seeks to address the predominantly negative representations of the suburb, however, this inevitably widens the scope of the study, which is also not specific to genre and uses many examples from adult fiction. Critical focus on the Australian suburban Gothic would be more exclusive in relation to genre while enabling the identification of connections and divergences in the writers' use of tropes and themes.

While the thesis has referred to A. Smith's chapter in *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders* (see pp.14, 77), the study of Gothic landscapes in Australian Children's Literature would also provide a fascinating study that would provide helpful context for scholars seeking a more nuanced approach to Australian Gothic. However, both Lindsay's and Hartnett's novels provide examples of texts that contain child and young adult characters and are more aptly described as crossover fiction, with some exceptions in the case of Hartnett, who also writes specifically for child readers.

Hartnett's stated preference is for the thoughtful reader, even if this means that a niche market affects book sales. The refusal by Hartnett to provide an 'easy read' is increasingly important for young people in the current climate of 'fake news' and media conglomerates, and for which independent, critical thinking is required. The preferred timeframe of her own childhood provides the narratorial space to address themes such as friendship and cruelty, which repeat in different eras and places. This study has established that the Australian trope of the colonial lost white child carries the potentiality for re-definition and re-location to take account of how discourses of power affect children in the contemporary era. If extended, the trope of the lost child might encompass postcolonial narratives that include representations of orphans of empire, children of the stolen generations, children of war and migrant children separated from their families.

This study has examined Hartnett's unique contribution to the Australian Gothic through eleven spectral and anachronic narratives. These novels convey her concern for the lost futures of children and the vulnerable, the return and repetition of forgotten histories, the need for bio-diversity, the protection of flora and fauna and collective responsibility. In addition, the female and suburban Gothic are two areas where Hartnett offers an explicit critique. She is fearless in her scrutiny of cultural norms, highlighting their strangeness. The construction of normativity is interrogated through the intertextuality of cultural tropes and themes and how they impact on subjectivity. Derrida describes how the 'radical critique' of an hauntology can hold power to account. Through her creative and haunting productivity Hartnett shows just how radical a revised Gothic can be.

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