Writing Space in the Plural: New Australian Geographies in Murray Bail's Fiction

Marie Herbillon

Abstract: Like other postcolonial writers, the contemporary author Murray Bail has manifested a persistent concern with the relationship between the notion of place, which has thematically dominated Australian literature since its inception, and the issue of cultural identity at large. In the footsteps of Patrick White, his literary mentor, Bail has, in particular, repeatedly sought to dispel the so-called myth of the Great Australian Emptiness and the various cultural stereotypes it has ramified into, with a view to demonstrating that his homeland has more to offer than the geographical and ontological blankness to which it has all too often been reduced. In Bail's work, the construction of an alternative national mythology arguably proceeds from a radical reconceptualisation of the local landscape. As a visual writer, he has notably tended to rely on the motif of the straight line (seen as a Western legacy) not only to reconfigure the Australian space, but also to position himself towards the old imperial power. In this essay, I propose to outline the paradigmatic shift apparent in Bail's fiction, from his early writings, in which his view of space admittedly remains either mythical or dual, to more recent texts that can be said to transcend previous representational stereotypes and binaries. In this context, I intend to show that while *Holden's Performance* (his second novel published in 1987) opposes—to parodic ends—highly geometric urban centres to non-linear natural environments, *Eucalyptus* (1998) and *The Pages* (2008) seem to gesture towards a more inclusive kind of spatial imagination, which strives to embrace linearity (i.e. to incorporate it into more complex re-mappings of Australia) instead of merely discarding it.

Keywords: Murray Bail, space, linearity, garden metaphor

Like other postcolonial writers, the contemporary author Murray Bail has manifested an ongoing concern with the relationship between the notion of place, which has thematically dominated Australian literature since its inception, and the issue of cultural identity at large. It can be argued that, as of times predating its European settlement in 1788, the Australian land was constructed, in the Western world, as an abstract, empty space. Yet, the process by which Australia became a figment of the European imagination was not a harmless one. The colonial myth of *terra nullius*, which, first and foremost, legitimised colonisation, had other dire consequences, many of which have persisted to this day. Instead of being conceived as a geographical palimpsest inscribed with multiple temporal layers, the Australian continent has tended to be thought of as a spatial and cultural vacuum—a land bereft of history. Not only has this mythical misconception induced a sense of ontological blankness and cultural belatedness among the descendants of the British colonisers; it has also justified the continued oppression and occultation of Aboriginal populations.

In "The Prodigal Son," his 1958 programmatic essay, Patrick White was the first to castigate what he notoriously named "the Great Australian Emptiness" (157), along with the seemingly related intellectual mediocrity characterising post-War Australia. In the footsteps of his

literary mentor, Bail has repeatedly sought to debunk this spatial archetype and the cultural assumptions into which it has ramified, with a view to demonstrating that his native country has more to offer than the geographical, spiritual and cultural barrenness to which it has all too often been reduced. Like White, he has relentlessly stigmatised—first in a parodic mode—this alleged ontological vacancy, while attempting to qualify a largely stereotypical view of his homeland. In his more recent fiction, he has endeavoured, more and more seriously, to develop a national mythology founded on a radical reconceptualisation of the local landscape. This counter-mythology, which has unhesitatingly fed on the primary myth, has gradually found expression in Bail's spatial fiction, which has consistently addressed the issue of place while testifying to the author's graphic strategies and occasional penchant for geometry: portrayed (by White himself) as "a visual writer" (see Pons 4), he has notably relied on the motif of the straight line (seen as a Western legacy and, more specifically, as a questionable emblem of European modernity) not only to reconfigure the Australian space (in the narrative representation of which the trope of linearity plays, as we will see, an important part), but also to position himself towards the old imperial power.

It thus seems possible to assert that Bail's undertaking, consisting in the redefinition of the Australian space (and cultural identity), comprises two phases. In this essay, I propose to outline the paradigmatic shift apparent in his work, from his early writings, in which his view of space arguably remains either mythical or dual, to more recent texts that can be said to transcend previous representational stereotypes and binaries. Whereas, in *Homesickness* (Bail's first novel published in 1980), the (rare) spatial descriptions of Australia merely replicate, to parodic ends, its familiar shape on the map (thereby reducing it to a caricature of itself), *Holden's Performance* (1987) sets out to counter the myth of the Great Australian Emptiness—one that is itself, of course, irreducible to sheer geographical features, as also evidenced by a text aiming to criticise a society "in which the mind is the least of possessions" (White 157). For all its deviations from received mythologies, Bail's reconfiguring of the Australian landscapes retains, in this second novel, a largely dichotomous quality, insofar as the author's reliance on parody leads him to distinguish between, on the one hand, urban centres permeated with straight lines (and satirised on this account) and, on the other, natural spaces endowed with a greater (and uncharacteristic) topological complexity. In this text, Bail's parodic deconstruction primarily concerns a number of fictional city-dwellers, mostly Adelaideans who undergo the literal effects of their city's grid map (one of the concrete legacies of colonialism—see Carter 202-29). Transformed into powerless puppets through a stylistic device that I have called "geomorphism," these pathetic victims of a sort of geographical determinism are accordingly derided. In particular, the main character, Holden Shadbolt, arguably epitomises this major helplessness and its potentially allegorical dimension. Indeed, while this physically strong but psychically blank figure clearly embodies Australia's mythical geography, his readiness to serve men of power turns this genuine anti-hero into an even broader allegory of his country, which, gigantic though it is, was long subjected to a colonial power. Moreover, the protagonist (born and bred in rectilinear Adelaide) is characterised by his straightforward trajectory through local spaces: this purely mechanical progression, which recalls that of the homonymous car (Australia's emblematic Holden), similarly seeks to parody a huge but supposedly empty nation's alleged moral weakness and lack of political agency. However, Bail's parodic practice also compels him to dismiss the line, preventing him from moving

towards an integrative stance premised on the transformation and subsequent absorption of geographical and historical legacies.[1]

In *Eucalyptus* (1998) and *The Pages* (2008), these two hitherto distinct types of space appear to be fused into settings that seem to gesture towards a more inclusive kind of spatial imagination by modulating and challenging earlier binary oppositions. Bail's third and fourth novels can thus be said to mark a new phase in his literary career, one dedicated to the serious debunking of the original myth of emptiness, but also to the construction of an alternative mythology based on a more complex approach to the national space seen in its interplay with cultural identity. In these novels, linear motifs are indeed subtly incorporated into spaces that Michel Foucault would have termed heterotopic. We will see that, with their juxtaposed historical layers, these settings operate as spatial palimpsests and, more precisely, as microcosms of Australia.

For instance, the New South Wales property in which *Eucalyptus* is set is a geometrically intermediate space, located halfway between the traditional English landscape garden—itself a liminal zone—and a wilder natural realm. If the garden in general has become one of the major characteristics of Englishness and often functions as a metaphor for England itself, the landscape garden, which dominated English gardening from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth century and remains associated with Capability Brown, has come to be viewed as the epitome of the English garden. Despite its manifest Englishness, the arboretum designed by Holland, one of the protagonists, is not subjected to the same parodic scrutiny as the cities and their Western patterns are in *Holden's Performance*. Bail's more serious approach may result from the fact that, although it can also be regarded as a Western legacy, the eighteenth-century landscape garden is a more hybrid type of space than the geometrical cities featured in the author's previous novel. On a continuum ranging from culture, order and the linear to nature, chaos and the non-linear, they should indeed be located in between seventeenth-century English gardens, which take their cue from French and Italian formal gardens and attempt to domesticate nature, and wild nature, which they seek to imitate. This structural in-betweenness is clearly illustrated by Holland's macroscopic garden, which is also botanically hybrid since its owner nourishes the mad ambition of planting it with every known specimen of eucalypt—each of which will have to be duly named in order to win the hand of Ellen, his beautiful daughter. Focusing on the metaphor of the garden, "an important icon or motif in Australian literature" but one whose Western "paradisial associations have … been turned on their head during the brief history of European settlement in Australia," I intend to demonstrate that this commonplace image is also a central "element … in the conceptual apparatus Europeans brought with them to Australia, the net with which they have tried to map and catch the continent" (Leer 7-8). In what follows, I will show that, as he uses an Australian variant of the English landscape garden as a setting for *Eucalyptus*, Bail complicates matters in comparison with his earlier work, and does so in at least two ways. Firstly, he suggests that Western culture and Englishness in particular can be equated not only with simplistic linearity, but also with hybridity as such. This in turn emphasises that he is probably less opposed to linearity itself than to the ideas of oversimplification and dominance associated with the straight line. Secondly, he displays a willingness to appropriate this specific hybrid legacy, which the planting of indigenous species further

---

[1] For a detailed analysis of this novel, which plays off geometrical urban spaces against non-linear natural environments, see Marie Herbillon, "Spatial Linearity and Post-Colonial Parody in Murray Bail's *Holden's Performance*." *A Sea for Encounters: Essays Towards a Postcolonial Commonwealth (Cross / Cultures 117).* Ed. Stella Borg Barthet. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 149-64.

hybridises and particularises, ultimately turning his reimagined landscape garden into a metaphor for Australia.

With hindsight, it then appears that the following statement made by the narrator of *Homesickness*, a text written almost two decades before the publication of *Eucalyptus* and describing the world in terms of a manifold *mise-en-abyme*, might help us elucidate the nature and function of Holland's arboretum:

> The world itself is a museum, and within its circumference the many small museums, the natural and the man-built, represent the whole. The rocks of Sicily, the Uffizi, the corner of a garden, each are miniatures of the world at large. (*H* 328)

It should thus be borne in mind that even as seemingly neutral a component as a patch of vegetation is somehow reflective of the larger world which contains it. In 1984, Michel Foucault depicted the garden as "the oldest example of … heterotopias," themselves defined as "counter-sites … in which … other real sites … found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (24-25). Foucault further asserted that, like the oriental garden in particular, which has had "superimposed meanings" for at least a millennium, "the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several places, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (25). On these grounds, it is even more legitimate to consider Holland's property as a world in itself, mirroring the multi-layered macrocosm it is constitutive of, namely as a microcosm of Australia. Its microcosmic quality has spatial as well as historical implications. The place is indeed depicted as "an outdoor museum of trees" (*E* 45), as if successive layers of history had been preserved and exhibited under the not-so-transparent glass case of local space. Due to the novel's numerous mythological echoes, the historical dimension of its geographical palimpsest was lost on some critics. According to Peter Craven, for instance, the novel's "setting is God-forsaken, barren Australia, some *timeless* rural Australia before the advent of Whitlam and McPhee Gribble" (88, my italics). This so-called timelessness is, however, deceptive. Rare though they may be, apparent details dotted through the narrative contribute to its historical locatedness. For example, the fact that Mrs Brain (a minor character who fell in love with her fiancé's best friend during the war) is now a "fifty-plus woman serving behind the bar" (*E* 152) of a nearby hotel—which is what a mysterious stranger tells Ellen after narrating the buck-toothed lady's story—allows us to draw conclusions about the novel's time-frame. If we assume that Mrs Brain was about twenty in the early 1940s,[2] the main part of *Eucalyptus* must be set in the 1970s.

Other critics, like Paul Sharrad, noticed that *Eucalyptus* was a historically situated text. Although Bail is seen as allowing a sense of timelessness to linger throughout the narrative (which, in Sharrad's view, obscures the novel and its inset stories' connections with the real world), the author is said to establish "his fictional setting as a family property which becomes a microcosm of both nation and a patriarchal/colonial control system of global taxonomy and collecting" (36). Sharrad also encourages scholars to go beyond the enclosed spaces of texts and into the histories of specific disciplines (including botany), asserting that, "if we wish to have anything approaching a full understanding of some fictional detail loaded

---

[2] We know that her fiancé was severely wounded "in the battle for Crete" (*E* 157) (20 May-1 June 1941), which confirms that the Second World War operates as a backdrop to the story prompted by a gum tree named Messmate.

with postcolonial significance, we need to move beyond the narrow confines of close textual readings to mess about in the wider spaces of cultural studies, sociology, politics and even botany" (34).

A productive way of historicising our reading of *Eucalyptus* might consist in looking at the novel through the metaphoric lens of the garden. In *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*, Robert Pogue Harrison contends that "more often than not in Western culture … the garden, whether real or imaginary, … has provided sanctuary from the frenzy and tumult of history" (ix). Before the Fall, the Garden of Eden, or the garden of gardens in Judeo-Christian civilisation, epitomises this state of temporal suspension: it is only after eating the legendary apple that Adam and Eve lose their innocence (thus learning the difference between good and evil from the eponymous tree's forbidden fruit) and are forced to leave the Arcadian stasis of "the garden to which all gardens must refer, whether they want to or not" (Kincaid 172) in order to enter history. As a result of the so-called "original sin," God's punishment consists in expelling the first human beings from his earthly paradise, leaving them no choice but to face "history's deleterious drives" (Harrison x) together with their own mortality. Jean Weisgerber similarly emphasises that being chased away from Eden amounts, for Adam and Eve, to a Fall into history (see 30). In other words, there is a thin line between gardens (even the most archetypal, seemingly isolated ones) and temporality. As "an enclosed space marked by borders" (Harrison 57) a garden is—in accordance with its own etymology—characterised by its spatial insularity. In this respect, Harrison points out that "almost all the words for 'garden' in world languages have etymons linked to the idea of fence or boundary. A garden is literally defined by its boundaries" (Harrison 56). However, this insularity is deceptive insofar as gardens, through their very borders, can also reach beyond the enclosure they form. The porousness of these boundaries, which "keep the garden intrinsically related to the world that they keep at a certain remove" (Harrison 56-57), indeed allows for an interplay with the historical reality from which gardens are, at first sight, separated. As Harrison puts it, "gardens are vital to the degree that they open their enclosures in the midst of history, offering a measure of seclusion that is not occlusion" (57). In *My Garden (book)*, Jamaica Kincaid also asserts that "the world cannot be left out of the garden" (59). Therefore, even when they appear to exist out of time, gardens are profoundly historical narratives, which have "their own developing plot[s]" (Harrison 7).

Even though they often symbolise paradise (whether terrestrial or celestial),[3] gardens tend to operate, in the postcolonial context, as metaphors for colonisation and settlement, all the more so since England itself has come to be identified with a garden (not least in English literature). It could only be expected that the nation's metaphorical identification with the garden (and, therefore, with the notion of paradise), which stems both from its insularity and pastoral tradition, would be fiercely contested in postcolonial countries and literatures. In *Reading the Garden: The Settlement of Australia*, a study that "traces the ways garden-making has enabled and carried out the physical and ideological work of Australian colonialism" (4), Holmes et al. hold that "there [is] an integral relationship between colonisation and gardening" (8) insofar as gardens have played "a central … role in the continuing non-Aboriginal settlement of Australia" (165). As previously suggested, the colonial myth of emptiness, through which Australia had been "represented [as an] unpeopled … '*un*land'" (Holmes et al. 23), had legitimised the process of colonisation. Yet, it subsequently turned out that the antipodean continent was not a "'virgin wilderness'—a place

---

[3] The terms *garden* and *paradise* are, in fact, etymologically related. In this regard, Weisgerber remarks that the Greek word *paradeisos* derives from an Avestan term meaning "enclosure" (27).

just waiting to be taken and possessed" (Holmes et al. 23): "Aboriginal land management practices [had] shaped the landscapes that the colonists, unaware of their history, [had] imagined as 'pure nature'" (Holmes et al. 3-4). Gardening, which "was one of the earliest activities undertaken by the new arrivals to the Australian colonies" (Holmes et al. 3), then became a way of further "justify[ing] the activity of colonisation" (Holmes et al. 19) and the appropriation of Aboriginal land. Indeed, "cultivating the soil" aimed at "reflecting a higher stage of civilisation than the Aboriginal people whose land had been taken" (Holmes et al. 19). In colonial times, the act of gardening on such "contested ground" (Holmes at al. 6) was thus "implicitly and explicitly a white endeavour: under white settlement the wild land of the Aborigines would become a garden" (Holmes et al. 17). However, Australian gardening has not only consisted in importing Western horticultural models and practices; it has also taken part in the process of "making a home in [a] new country," which, for the settlers, "involved transforming the ground on which they had landed" (Holmes et al. 9) "into images of their own making" (Holmes et al. 15). Through the use of European plants and the subsequent "adoption of indigenous vegetation" (Holmes et al. 47), "they developed a borderland between the familiar and the strange, the old and the new" (Holmes et al. 4) even as they came to terms with their "deep yearning for belonging" (Holmes et al. 6). By allowing the colonists to "actively engage" (Holmes et al. 41) with the new place, the creation of gardens helped them to evolve "a sense of attachment to this strange and unknown land" (Holmes et al. 27) and to invest it—more or less imaginatively—with new significance.

At the beginning of the novel, Holland rather emerges as a victim of the colonial myth of emptiness. His reliance on eucalyptus trees is a clear attempt to compensate for his sense of inner blankness. As Holland himself declares, "before the trees I didn't have a clue about anything much. The eucalypts gave me an interest" (*E* 78). This interest is as intellectual as it is practical, insofar as it materialises as a garden redolent of historical and symbolic connotations. In the first place, Holland's garden can be viewed as a negation of the desert and its supposed (yet crippling) determinations: as he "gradually … fill[s] in the landscape" (*E* 43), the protagonist indeed appears to be countering—in a very visual way—his country's mythical geography with a view to renegotiating a sense of belonging with the place.

In this, he greatly differs from his predecessors on the property, who provide a "major point of comparison with Holland" (Ackland 165). Although they are portrayed as early-twentieth-century-landholders, this father and his three bachelor sons simultaneously allegorise Australia's "original settlers" (*E* 6). As Michael Ackland convincingly contends, these four men "enact in miniature the founding white conquest and settlement of the new land" (165). Ackland further argues that "their methods are characterised by extreme violence against nature" (165), as if they were determined to annihilate the local flora. Importantly, the four of them had indeed "gone mad with ring-barking" (*E* 6), a technique consisting in girdling trees so as to cause their death and aiming at clearing the land:

> Steel traps, fire, and all types of poisons and chains were also used. On the curvaceous back paddocks great gums slowly bleached and curled against the curve as trimmings of fingernails. Here and there bare straight trunks lay scattered and angled like a catastrophe of derailed carriages. By then the men had already turned their backs and moved on to the next rectangle to be cleared. (*E* 6-7)

Even if "the desolation to the landscape which clearing brought about seemed so contrary to what was considered attractive in England" (Holmes et al. 11), land-clearing as practised by

the first settlers was originally British. Richard Mabey, for example, describes Britain as the "site of the earliest and most thorough forest clearance in Europe" (5). The purpose of this practice was mostly utilitarian: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, clearing was used "to make land available for growing food for the expanding population" (Mabey 89). With similarly pragmatic intentions, this methodology was transplanted to Australia in early colonial times—and occasionally resorted to later on. Robin Doughty observes that "over the past two hundred years, European colonists and their descendants have cleared native eucalypts to make room for crops and pastures" (12). At a deeper level, the practice of clearing came to symbolise the act of settling itself, which, more often than not, involves the taming of an unfamiliar, hostile landscape and the exclusion of indigenous populations. Along these lines, Holmes et al. maintain that, "for so many settlers, clearing appears to have been an activity which was synonymous with settlement; every tree felled was a step closer to their vision of a civilised and domesticated landscape" (13). Since "they saw [the land] as wild and uncivilised, almost undistinguishable from the Indigenous inhabitants," "clearing [it] was also a form of protection against these threatening strangers" (Holmes et al. 11). Ultimately, the act of clearing, which reflects the then "prevailing settler attitude to local vegetation" (Holmes et al 11), can be said to derive from a desire for territorial possession. In Holmes et al.'s words, "it is as if a purging of the landscape needed to happen before it could be truly possessed and remade in a more familiar image" (11-12). For Ackland, "white male proprietorship is [similarly] identified with wanton destruction of fauna and the landscape's primal sentinels" (165-66), i.e. the eucalypts. In visual terms, the consequences of the former owners' life-destroying strategies are obvious: unlike Holland, they artificially reinforce the land's emptiness, thereby contributing to the endurance of the colonial myth.

Holland resorts, first and foremost, to "the practice of planting trees [in order] to prevent desertification" (Cloke & Jones 57). In this sense, his garden is an antidote to the process of vegetal annihilation effected by the previous owners of the property. In the novel, one of the main functions of trees is "to instruct the eye" (*E* 38). In Mabey's words, "they are what dry land aspires to become" (5). In the narrator's, "trees were better than nothing …; this wasn't the Sahara" (*E* 38). They can then "worm their way greenly into the mind" (*E* 113) so as to modify not only the landscape itself, but also its mental representation(s), i.e. the mindscape. Compared to his predecessors, Holland thus "clearly represents a later phase in the ongoing taking possession of the continent" (Ackland 167). Since the allegory affecting them also applies to him, Holland, whose potential to allegorise his homeland is established from the outset,[4] can be seen as *doubly* archetypal: it can be argued that while he is likened to a recognisable national archetype, namely the Australian-born white settler of the twentieth century, (and delineated as a character taking part in a story set, most probably, in the third quarter of the same century,) he allegorically stands for a settler of the first half of the nineteenth century. Although Holland straddles two time-frames (spanning about one century and a half), he remains, in both cases, "situated at the intersection of standard white responses to the alien land" (Ackland 166). More exactly, he opposes an (aesth)ethics of creation (and a milder domestication of the landscape) to the early settlers' systematic (and rather typical) destruction of their environment. As Ackland rightly notes, "much as Holland is a mixed

---

[4] Holland's archetypality is established by at least two factors. Firstly, his unusual surname——his Christian name remains unknown——makes him instantly representative of his native country since, as Bail himself reminds us in "Imagining Australia," the land that came to be known as the Australian continent was "called 'New Holland'" (1330) in early colonial times (and well into the nineteenth century). Secondly, Holland is associated with *E. australiana*, the eucalyptus species that gives its name to the chapter in which the protagonist's story is told by a fairly sober narrator (Chapter 3).

figure, so is his property" (167). Indeed, his transformed estate, which conflates a landscape garden and a botanical one, reflects his ontological ambivalence, poised as it is between nature and culture, Englishness and Australianness, the linear and the non-linear, the old and the new.

To some extent, all gardens are hybrid insofar as they constitute an intermediate zone between nature and culture (or art). Holmes et al. express—with John Dixon Hunt—this idea as follows:

> All gardens … are 'liminal' spaces—spaces on the cusp. Though not actually at the boundary between 'civilised' and 'wild' space, they represent that boundary. [They] are wilderness in the city, but order in nature. Garden historian John Dixon Hunt calls gardens 'third nature,' spaces which resolve the 'ancient antithesis of art and nature.' (Holmes et al. 130)

As Weisberger points out, the tension between these two forces is nonetheless very variable: it is a matter of "dosage" (39, see also 25-26) between the "natural" and the "cultural" that determines the type of garden one is dealing with. The seventeenth century, for instance, exemplifies "the prevailing taste for formal French gardens" (Wulf 10). According to Andrea Wulf, these classical baroque gardens, in which "no branch or flower head [was] allowed to grow unruly" (91), "sought beauty in geometrical splendour rather than movement and colour" (8), which highlights their closeness to the "cultural" pole of the nature-culture continuum. Created by André Le Nôtre, the gardens of Versailles epitomise this highly formal style, which culturalises nature to the utmost (see Egbert 90). Wulf further explains that at the time,

> England had never led the fashion; instead, gardeners had imitated Continental fashions such as … marching avenues lined by rows of stately trees. They had copied French grand baroque gardens such as Versailles, in which trees were shaped into rigid walls of hedges and symmetry reigned over nature. (8)

The next century "heralded a new era, in which England came to lead gardening fashions [and] English gardens were being copied across the world" (Wulf 15). The English landscape garden, which was created in 1720 (as a reaction to the continental model) by the English poet and gardener Alexander Pope but owes its fame to Lancelot "Capability" Brown (see Egbert 89 & 94) is, in more ways than one, a product of the Enlightenment. The eighteenth-century reverence for the natural world led, in the first place, to the rejection of the formal baroque garden and the excessive order it imposed on nature. Instead, it was recommended to eschew intricate arrangements (including topiary art, artificial ornamentation and exceedingly stylised or symmetrical shapes—see Egbert 92 & 106) and to give nature pride of place: "With the Enlightenment and man's growing knowledge of the natural world, gardeners embraced the idea of letting nature reign" (Wulf 93). More generally, the informal landscape garden was designed so as to mirror the period's widespread belief in a freedom that was not only nature's. In this sense, it was conceptualised as

> a reflection of the political ideas of the time. English thinkers praised their country as the seat of liberty and, if absolutism was concomitant with the geometrical patterns and clipped shapes of Louis XIV's formal gardens at Versailles, then English gardeners should invite nature into the garden as if liberty was to be allowed back in. (Wulf 94)

This also mirrors the philosophical beliefs of the period. While the formal garden reflected Cartesianism (and the fact that, for Descartes, any irregularity could be subsumed into a rule), the landscape garden was conceived as a reflection of John Locke's empiricism, according to which geometrical order cannot possibly encompass all irregularities.[5]

However, landscape gardens are less exact replicas of nature than human, or "cultural," compositions. On the one hand, they seek to merge with the surrounding countryside (which is why they are sometimes called "natural" gardens) but on the other, they offer a subtly augmented version of nature (a kind of "supernature"). For example, landscape gardens retain "formal elements … such as straight canals and avenues,"[6] which coexist (or even blend) with irregular and non-linear features. These gardens are thus characterised by their stylistic ambivalence. As attested by their *seemingly* accidental patterns and the baroque (or neo-classical) relics they contain, they are liminal spaces hovering between the (impossible) reproduction of nature and its (controlled) cultural domestication. They take their cue from wild nature and its serpentine lines[7] but do not entirely discard the straight line which nature abhors.

It should be added that the eighteenth-century landscape garden was not only structurally but also botanically hybrid. Whereas seventeenth-century

> continental … gardens, laid out as formal pleasure grounds consisting of straight walks, sharply clipped hedges, turf patterns and repetitive arrangements of topiary, with a few specimen plants, required only a limited cultural knowledge, … English gardens [demanded more] botanical expertise. (Wulf 232)

They were indeed characterised by a far greater botanical and "arboreal diversity" (Wulf 94) which was a direct consequence of imperialism. Wulf stresses that "thousands of new species … had been introduced to England as her merchants plundered the globe" (15) and denied colonised populations the freedom she cherished for herself. It is this ambiguous "horticultural and botanical revolution [that] laid the foundations of the English garden" (Wulf 4). If "Enlightenment thinking found its visual expression" (Wulf 93) in the landscape garden, the latter thus also illustrates the former's darker side insofar as its growth was closely interconnected with British imperial expansion. The fact nonetheless remains that one of the gardens' most salient features was the amount of foreign species they contained: "By the mid eighteenth century American trees were flooding into Britain, changing the landscape forever, and by the end of the century [Joseph] Banks had added thousands of plants from Africa, Australia and the Far East" (Wulf 5). European interest in Australian flora was sparked by James Cook's voyages of discovery: just like subsequent expeditions to the South Pacific, they greatly contributed to the further transformation of the English garden, which had been initiated by the settlement of America. The future director of Kew Gardens and of

---

[5] See Egbert 96 and Weisgerber 194. In the nineteenth century, this opposition was extended by the conflict between two conceptions of the garden (and thus of Englishness). Eventually, the wild garden, i.e. the inheritor of the eighteenth-century landscape garden, overpowered the formal garden (deriving from the seventeenth-century continental model on which the English garden was first fashioned) as the ultimate emblem of Englishness (see Egbert 30).

[6] See Wulf, caption to the plate representing Thorndon Park (one of England's most famous landscape gardens), unnumbered page.

[7] See Weisgerber 189. The most prominent advocate of the serpentine line was, of course, William Hogarth—see *The Analysis of Beauty*. Ed. Ronald Paulson. 1753. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997.

the Royal Society, the British botanist Joseph Banks, took part in the first of these voyages, namely the *Endeavour* expedition (1768-71), thanks to which "the genus *Eucalyptus*" (first described in 1788 by Charles Louis L'Héritier de Brutelle) was "brought … to world attention" (Doughty 24). In *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850*, Bernard Smith remarks that "five years after the foundation of the Colony a considerable interest in the cultivation of Australian flowers had already developed in England" (122) and that "Australian plants continued to fascinate English connoisseurs of horticulture during the 1820s" (205) and, in fact, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Yet, if only because they had been introduced into England several decades earlier than Australian species, American trees remained—ironically enough—"the most important ingredient of the English garden" (Wulf 231) and have dominated the English landscape to this day.

In brief, it can thus be argued that British imperialism has thoroughly shaped both the English garden and landscape, along with the nation's obsession with gardening. By the late eighteenth century, Britain had become "the largest colonial power in the world" (Wulf 156), London "a city of gardens" (Wulf 132) and "gardening and horticulture … a defining part of the English way of life, much more so than on the Continent" (Wulf 132-33). Wulf argues that, "as the new century dawned, ownership of a garden" and, indeed, the landscape garden itself, "came to be seen as [synonymous with] Englishness" (240)—a view that has survived to this day since this particular type of garden is still perceived as one of the main traits of English identity.[8] However, this deeply hybrid garden was a product of colonialism: it is the imperial project that nurtured, enriched and hybridised it, before exporting it (together with the related gardenmania) across the globe as a quintessentially English model, "making England, for the first time, the leading garden nation in the western world" (Wulf 136).

For these reasons, the English garden came to emblematise colonial power: in *Sex, Botany and Empire*, Patricia Fara maintains that "by the early nineteenth century, gardens had become a standard symbol of colonial conquest" (Fara 140). Although English landscape gardens subvert the simplistic equation between Europe and culture (since, on the first axis of the centre-periphery opposition, i.e. the culture/city-nature/countryside axis, they are closer to the second pole), they thus remain associated with the first (i.e. "centre") pole of this dichotomy insofar as England's identification with "the garden of the world" enhances, if anything, the sense of political superiority from which imperialism germinated and expanded in the first place (see Egbert 30). To a large extent, this symbolism has persisted, as has the impact of British colonialism on the garden and the world at large. In Wulf's words, "the garden revolution of the eighteenth century is still alive in the English landscape, and ingrained in the nation's psyche today" (Wulf 242), just as it is in the rest of the globe's.

Similarly, Holland's garden, which remains an emblem of colonial power, is laden with historical, political and aesthetic significance. However, Holland's appropriation of the landscape garden involves a creative transformation of this British legacy, which, in turn, encodes a statement about the formation of Australian identity. Every garden is a creation and, like English landscape gardens, Holland's is a hybrid one on several levels. Firstly, it oscillates between nature and culture: although it primarily aims at "reproducing the randomness of true harmony, demonstrated so casually in nature" (*E* 39), it also, inevitably,

---

[8] Discussing the topic of national identity, Egbert distinguishes between Englishness and Britishness, i.e. between cultural and political identity. It is, of course, the construction of the former, which can be more easily explored, acted upon and reimagined, in which the development of the landscape garden (and the debates on its aesthetics) has participated since the early eighteenth century (see 10, 23-24, 59).

gives it *shape*. On the one hand, Holland's garden preserves untamed areas, in which specimens left untouched by the original settlers grow together with "other species … distributed by wind and chance, each different from the rest" (*E* 39). On the other hand, "the straight line, [which] is immediately sharply human" (*E* 94), is not obliterated from the landscape and contradicts the estate's alleged lack of design (see *E* 34). These linear features include—next to rectangular paddocks[9]—various "mass formations" on which Holland concentrated before turning to "individual species, planted singly" with a view to "avoid[ing] duplicates" (*E* 43). For example, a windbreak, which grew from 110 seedlings "planted … in scientific formation" "parallel to the house," forms an "elongated geometry" (*E* 40). The "uniform" (*E* 41) rubber plantation located near the river consists of "rectilinear formations" (*E* 139) of trees, the "impassive trunks of [which have] the same diameter and the same grey-green smoothness" (*E* 42). The estate's "ornamental avenue" (*E* 43) displays a comparable geometrical regularity: this "green artery of plane trees" "lead[ing] the eye from the road up to the homestead" is lined with different eucalypts "set to each the same height" (*E* 42).

Secondly, Holland's garden is characterised by its great botanical diversity, which requires at least as much horticultural expertise as English landscape gardens. However, traditional landscape gardens are particularised by Holland's choice of a single yet highly variegated native genus,[10] namely the eucalyptus, with which he feels such "natural" "affinity" that "it never occur[s] to him to opt for *introduced species*" (*E* 38, Bail's italics). This multifarious "marker of Australianness" (Sharrad 32, see also Martin 82) allows him to redress the imbalance that the prevalence—despite a momentous craze for antipodean plants—of American species over Australian ones caused in eighteenth-century English gardens. In other words, Holland does not merely seek to plant England (or America, for that matter) in Australia or to create a "purely Australian" garden. With its informal English design and the countless Australian signifiers that fill it, his arboretum invests the Australian landscape, as well as the notion of Australianness, with new meanings, which, in some respects, contrast with those conveyed by early, mid- and late twentieth-century Australian gardens. Even though horticulturalists had been seeking "to promote the uniqueness and variety of native plants" (Holmes et al. 98) since the 1830s, these were not regarded as suitable for the garden in the first half of the twentieth century. At that time, "many Australian-born people were apt to despise the gum tree" (Holmes et al. 98) (and thus reluctant to grow it—like other indigenous plants—in their gardens) not only because it was seen as contributing to the monotony of the Australian scenery, but also because it was "still associated with the indigenous 'other,' … while the private garden was to be a civilised place, distinct from the wilderness of the bush" (Holmes et al. 97). As Holmes et al. suggest, its domestic use was thus averted in favour of more exotic species, in the hope that they would "plant over [Australia's] dirty past" (84): "If native flora were a reminder of the original owners of the land, the erasure of native plants from the garden enabled a visual dispossession, a burial of the bloody business of possession" (98). If gardens are "reflective of national pride," what they displayed in that period was less "an identity which would be proudly home-grown" than an attachment to a Britishness Australians were "not … willing to relinquish" (Holmes et al. 101). In this connection, Holmes et al. further observe that

---

[9] These are regarded as Western legacies. In *Eucalyptus*, the narrator inconspicuously remarks that "the rectangle is a sign of civilisation: Europe from the air" (*E* 34).

[10] According to Tudge, "all [species of eucalypts] but a handful are exclusive to Australia," where they "reign supreme, typically forming open, evergreen woodland" (211).

in the early twentieth century, being a proud Australian did not equate with growing native plants, although there were many horticulturalists who encouraged such activity. Indeed, white Australians were both citizens of Australia and subjects of the British Crown. It is appropriate then that the plants within the garden map were all exotics, introduced plants reflecting a history of empire and exchange. (83)

To some extent, the antipodean gardens of the mid-twentieth century still convey these (colonial) values. For example, "the front garden dominant in the 1950s" was, as Fiske et al. argue in *Myths of Oz,* "defined in other national (English) and class terms" (49). These gardens, in which exotic plants were preferred to native ones for public display, "were controlled, bordered, European, and definitely 'culture' rather than 'nature'," although they often included a "'nature strip' [which] ma[de] the nature-culture division between the garden and the verge absolutely explicit" (Fiske et al. 48). Yet, two types of outdoor living areas were kept apart in the 1950s: unlike the front garden, the backyard clearly signified Australianness. Fiske et al. further contend that, "whereas the front garden gestured towards Europe, the backyard was Australian. … The backyard, with its lack of systematic control and neglect of imposed standards of taste, came closer to an indigenous Australian discourse" (48-49). In this case, however, Australianness was not identified with naturalness (as it usually is), since "the backyard was not aspiring to incorporate nature as part of a public social display. Instead it accepted the reality of an exploitative attitude to the natural, defoliating and domesticating it to form the veggie patch, the chook run and the big kids' play pen" (Fiske et al. 49). Fiske et al. then "see the coexistence of both kinds of gardens … as a sign of the shallowness of the commitment to English values embodied in the front garden, as well as the lack of confidence in the values less consciously articulated in the backyard" (49). In these middle years of the twentieth century, white Australia's attitude to its native plants, which are "increasingly becoming symbolic of national identity" (Holmes et al. 97) (and thus help moderate an exclusive allegiance to British culture and values) but remain tied to the hostile bush and its supposedly threatening inhabitants, mirrors these cultural anxieties. In this respect, Holmes et al. emphasise that "for a new nation in search of symbols, the wattle and the gum tree were recognisably distinctive. At the same time, their association with the indigenous 'other' could cast doubt on the legitimacy on the new nation" (99). The next decades marked "a profound shift economically and politically away from British hegemony" (Fiske et al. 49), which materialised, on the horticultural front, with the successive emergence of the so-called "native" and "bush gardens." According to Fiske et al.,

> one of the important changes that have occurred within the suburban garden is this reduction of the signifiers of Englishness and the increasing sense of confidence in the developing 'canons of taste' of indigenous Australia. One of the most important factors in such a perception is the change in the sort of plants being used in gardens—the dramatic reversal of attitudes to Australian plants. (49)

Holmes et al. also note that "the call to grow more native plants … was intensifying in the 1950s" (190) and that the growing reliance on indigenous vegetation, an attempt "to absorb an 'Australian sense of place' into the garden" (79), culminated in "the invention of the 'bush garden' of the late 1960s and 1970s" (101), which "took the concept of the native garden a step further" (192). As their name indicates, "these were gardens intended to look like, and be in very close harmony with, the Australian bush" (Holmes et al. 192). Because "it was uniquely home-grown," "the bush garden was seen as a coming of age for Australian

gardening," even if "for the majority of Anglo-Australians … it proved too far removed from their cultural understanding of what a garden should look like to hold great appeal" (Holmes et al. 193); it "represented [the] Australian way of life": "relaxed, easygoing, confident enough of 'our' place in the landscape to presume our capacity to harmonise with it" (Holmes et al 192). Likewise, Fiske et al. look at this development favourably, as illustrated by the following quotation:

> The gradual infiltration of native plants into our suburban gardens, and the corresponding withdrawal of European styled gardens, suggests that a process of legitimation is being acted out that mirrors positive changes in the Australian's relation with the landscape. (30)

They nevertheless insist on the fact that

> these changes … can't be read as a simple triumph of Australian nationalism or a new easy acceptance of nature. The modern 'native' garden is more natural and Australian than the 1950s English-style front garden, but the loss of the backyard is the loss of a distinctively Australian set of meanings, which affirmed working-class and rural, if not natural, ways of living. (50)

As for Holmes et al., they underline that, although the wish to convey "a sense of national pride" is "evident" in the "bush garden,"

> the call to save [botanical] richness and diversity was also central to the language of the post-war native garden advocates: expanding suburban development was seen as a direct threat to bushland and its unique botanical heritage, as was clearing, by some people at least. (192)

Yet, they also observe that, beside their emphasis on botanical diversity, these gardens took part "in the cultivation and promotion of the bush as central to national identity, an identity which, like the native garden movement, was Anglo in origin and vision" (192). As they gesture towards a pre-colonial landscape, bush gardens thus run the risk of obliterating (or at least downplaying) the damage done by colonisation, both to the land and the Aborigines. The authors of *Reading the Garden* point to this danger in the following excerpt:

> The impulse behind such an approach seems to be to re-create the pre-invasion landscape, to decolonise it, as if to pretend that the violence done to the land and its original inhabitants can be healed. Such an approach perhaps seeks to assuage the guilt felt by many over the practices of colonisation. In practice, it can become a form of 'botanical cleansing,' a rigid imposition of a particular idea of the garden which is as culturally and historically shaped as that which its proponents seek to eradicate. (194)

In *Eucalyptus*, Holland appears to epitomise (or even anticipate)[11] this (horti)cultural shift towards the "Australian" and the "natural." However, his arboretum fuses the meanings of previously distinct spaces, i.e. the front garden and the backyard of the 1950s, more fully than the "native" garden of later decades. As he grafts Australian trees on an English garden-

---

[11] Indeed, he starts creating his garden when Ellen is still a little girl, i.e. ten to fifteen years prior to the unfolding of the main plot (presumably set in the 1970s——see supra).

design in a space that is both natural and cultural, he seems to be moving towards a more inclusive definition of national identity which would not necessarily exclude European values. As suggested by his motto "nothing is one" (*E* 42, 84 & 241), the sense of Australianness he cultivates is as plural as the genus he reveres, i.e. at a remove from the singular icon that could legitimise nationalism. In the process of growing this hybrid garden, Holland also collapses the commonplace dichotomy based on "the idea that Europe (or England) is culture, and Australia is nature" (Fiske et al. 50), and exposes "the counter-ideology affirming nature over culture [as] one of the enduring myths of Australia" (Fiske et al. 43). However, Holland's patriotic glorification of the eucalyptus, even if it contributes to redefining Australian identity, is premised on the appropriation of an Aboriginal emblem, namely the bush. Like other bush gardens, his is thus likely "to recuperate a damaged, colonised landscape" (Holmes et al. 125) even as it naturalises the toxic effects of colonialism (a tendency that seems attested by the protagonist's patriarchal relationship with his own daughter). In this sense, his native plantation resembles all other Australian gardens, "those enactors of settlement, heavy with meaning in relation to belonging and nationhood" (Holmes et al. 221): it plays a part in the country's "narratives of settling" (Holmes et al. 221) and remains, on this account, a "definitive site of white Australianness" (Holmes et al. 79).

Even though the garden metaphor is not elaborated on in *The Pages* as it is in *Eucalyptus*, Holland's arboretum displays undeniable similarities to the mixed space of the family estate in which Bail's fourth novel is set. Characterised by its hybridity, diversity and complexity, the Antills' property, to which the protagonist, Wesley, returns (after more than two decades spent in Europe) in order to produce his philosophical life-work, could then also be regarded as a metaphor for Australia as a whole. Although its "khaki-trouser dryness" (*TP* 126) and laconicity-inducing vastness[12] are typical of Australia's mythical geography, it can by no means be reduced to the "drought landscape" (*TP* 142), glimpsed in a Swiss museum, which triggers homesickness in Wesley and, "for the first time, … thoughts of returning home" (*TP* 143). Beyond its proverbial dimension, the property indeed seems to be "implying the presence, surely, of patterns and *complexities* to be traversed" (*TP* 31, my italics). It is, first of all, divided into two parts: a wilder, "rougher" (*TP* 172) area, located to the left of the homestead, contrasts with a less "natural," or more domesticated, one—it includes "an unexpected garden" (*TP* 31)—on the right. Human (or "cultural") history is subtly inscribed in the palimpsest-like family grounds, which—mostly on the right hand side—are saturated with signs ("barely decipherable, as if under water" (*TP* 88)) from previous temporal layers. Among those are the traces left by Wesley's English ancestors including a chimney ("the only thing left of a hut"), as well as "ironbark posts as grey as newsprint" (*TP* 88) which seem to cry out for interpretation. Ancient agricultural implements are also rusting away:

> Machinery and buildings no longer used on sheep stations are left where they are. Over the seasons they change colour and subside, attracting rust, weeds and patient shadow, as they return to earth, though not entirely. (*TP* 94)

Even the old woolshed Wesley elects as his place of work used to be part of "the original property" (*TP* 87): it was abandoned "in the mid nineteen thirties" when it was "replaced by a much larger one positioned at a good distance from the house" (*TP* 94). The place also teems with natural life and Erica Hazelhurst (the academic philosopher who is called upon to appraise Wesley's philosophy after his sudden death), as she takes a walk on her own, is

---

[12] During Wesley's London days, the narrator even appears to voice the protagonist's remembrance of "the irreducible spaces between things in the wide-open landscape he grew up in" (*TP* 124).

struck by the "many new shapes" (*TP* 90) (including all kinds of animals, such as birds, ants and even a fox) she sees. Moreover, foreign *and* local varieties of trees are planted around the homestead:[13] while the avenue leading to the house is "lined with imported poplars" (*TP* 31), "a tall pale-grey eucalypt" (*TP* 39-40) is growing in front of a window. If this single specimen may seem outnumbered by the "darker cluster of pines, elms [and] cedars" which surrounds it, it might not take long before "the simple strength" (*TP* 40) of the domestic species strikes a new vegetal balance. On the still "treeless scene" bearing witness to Wesley's mad attack on a grove of red gums, "fresh shoots had erupted from the stumps and in the spaces in between" (*TP* 109).

If linearity appears under discreet guises, such as "lines of fence wire" (*TP* 88), "no sharp lines of black" (*TP* 109) criss-cross the different zones and layers of this particular space: this "was a curvaceous part of the earth, displaying the most natural declivities" (*TP* 88). In other words, no starkly polarised binaries succeed in undermining the "gradualness" (*TP* 109) of this globally "meandering landscape" (*TP* 87), in which potentially conflicting elements (the mythical and the non-mythical, the natural and the cultural, the tamed and the untamed, the old and the new, the endogenous and the exogenous, the linear and the non-linear) blend, instead, in "casual harmony" (*TP* 88). Inevitably, this harmonious landscape is also imbued with Aboriginal interpretations, which white settler populations have inconspicuously tended to naturalise. For example Roger (Wesley's younger brother), noticing that, on the property, some natural elements resembled body parts (as he later tells Erica, "we have hills here that look like a woman's bum" (*TP* 88)), "pointed [these eye associations] out to [his] brother" (*TP* 89), who replied: "The trouble is you're not the first in the world to notice this. It follows that as an idea it becomes reduced to the ordinary" (*TP* 89). Wesley's answer, which constitutes the novel's sole hint at Aboriginal culture, could be construed as a slightly provocative way of acknowledging the related world-view and, by extension, of denouncing cultural appropriation. Indeed, if Roger's idea is "ordinary," it follows that its original version is owned by others, namely by Aborigines. This reading thus suggests that white Australians should develop their own spatial imagination instead of appropriating the indigenous populations' anthropomorphic view of the local landscape.

Eucalyptus, with its extended garden metaphor, and *The Pages* thus provide Bail with an opportunity to problematise simplistic equations since the author's new spatial paradigm not only endeavours to include the line, but also refrains from reducing Europe to culture and linearity or, for that matter, Australia to nature and non-linearity. The movement towards complexity characterising his later work is, therefore, double and transcends the dichotomy between the linear and the non-linear. Through their palimpsest-like settings, these late novels clearly strive to embrace linearity (i.e. to incorporate it into more complex re-mappings of the so-called "ghost-continent") instead of merely repudiating it. In this sense, they play a crucial part in a large-scale redefinition of Australia's landscapes, which sets itself the ambitious task of correcting geographical myths (not least that of the Great Australian Emptiness, among other cultural stereotypes) in an effort to modify the world's simplistic perception of the author's homeland. By reimagining archetypal spaces as hybrid, these mental products arguably aim—like all major artworks—at challenging well-established yet stereotypical conceptions. Indeed, in Salman Rushdie's words, "redescribing a world is the first step towards changing it" (14). As a literary cartographer or a patient

---

[13] Even the homestead's dining room has a hybrid quality with its "fine English table, … Persian carpet" and local "floorboards [made of] bare, dark jarrah" (*TP* 33).

gardener, Bail thus cultivates an alternative vision which has the power to change Australia's shape on the map—and in the mind.

Works Cited
Ackland, Michael. *The Experimental Fiction of Murray Bail*. Amherst MA: Cambria, 2012.
Bail, Murray. *Eucalyptus*. 1998. London: Harvill, 1999.
---. *Holden's Performance*. 1987. London: Harvill, 2000.
---. *Homesickness*. 1980. London: Harvill, 1999.
---. "Imagining Australia." *Times Literary Supplement* (27 November-3 December 1987): 1318, 1330.
---. *The Pages*. London: Harvill Secker, 2008.
Carter, Paul. *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*. 1987. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988.
Cloke, Paul & Owain Jones. *Tree Cultures: The Place of Trees and Trees in Their Place*. Oxford: Berg, 2002.
Craven, Peter. "Murray Bail: The Homemade Modernist Finds a Heart." *Heat* 9 (1998): 75-91.
Doughty, Robin. *The Eucalyptus: A Natural and Commercial History of the Gum Tree*. Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000.
Egbert, Marie-Luise. *Garten und* Englishness *in der Englischen Literatur*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006.
Fara, Patricia. *Sex, Botany and Empire*. Duxford: Icon, 2003.
Fiske, John, Bob Hodge & Graeme Turner. *Myths of Oz: Reading Australian Popular Culture*. Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987.
Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Tr. Jay Miskowiec ("Des Espaces autres," 1967). *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 22-27.
Harrison, Robert Pogue. *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008.
Herbillon, Marie. "Spatial Linearity and Post-Colonial Parody in Murray Bail's *Holden's Performance*." *A Sea for Encounters: Essays Towards a Postcolonial Commonwealth (Cross / Cultures 117)*. Ed. Stella Borg Barthet. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 149-64.
Hogarth, William. *The Analysis of Beauty*. Ed. Ronald Paulson. 1753. New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1997.
Holmes, Katie, Susan K. Martin & Kylie Mirmohamadi. *Reading the Garden: The Settlement of Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 2008.
Kincaid, Jamaica. *My Garden (book)*. London: Vintage, 2000.
Leer, Martin. "Imagined Counterpart: Outlining a Conceptual Literary Geography of Australia." *European Perspectives: Contemporary Essays on Australian Literature*, *Australian Literary Studies* 15.2. Ed. Giovanna Capone. St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1991. 1-13.
Mabey, Richard. *Beechcombings: The Narratives of Trees*. London: Chatto, 2007.
Martin, Susan K. "The Wood from the Trees: Taxonomy and the Eucalypt as the New National Hero in Recent Australian Writing." *JASAL* 3 (2004): 81-94.
Pons, Xavier. "Australia Takes on the World: Identity and Representation in Murray Bail's *Homesickness*." *Commonwealth* 14.1 (1991): 1-8.
Rushdie, Salman. "Imaginary Homelands." *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. 1991. London: Granta, 1992. 9-21.
Sharrad, Paul. "Estranging an Icon: Eucalyptus and India." *Interventions* 9.1 (2007): 31-48.

Smith, Bernard. *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1960.

Tudge, Colin. *The Secret Life of Trees: How They Live and Why They Matter*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2005.

Weisgerber, Jean. *La Muse des jardins: Jardins de l'Europe littéraire (1580-1700)*. Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2002.

White, Patrick. "The Prodigal Son." *The Vital Decade: Ten Years of Australian Art and Letters*. Ed. Geoffrey Dutton. 1958. Melbourne: Sun, 1968. 156-58.

Wulf, Andrea. *The Brother Gardeners: Botany, Empire and the Birth of an Obsession*. London: William Heinemann, 2008.

Marie Herbillon holds a "licence" (four-year degree) in Germanic languages and literatures from the University of Liège, Belgium, where she also gained a master's degree in translation (English-French) and another one in English Studies. First an FNRS (Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique) research fellow, she has then worked as an assistant at the University of Liège, teaching literature in the English department. She recently completed, under the supervision of Professor Marc Delrez, a Ph.D. entitled "Beyond the Line: Murray Bail's Spatial Poetics" which focuses specifically on the metaphor of linearity in the writings of this contemporary Australian author.

marie.herbillon@ulg.ac.be