

## **‘Settling in the Land of Wine and Honey: Cultural Tourism, Local History and Some Australian Legends.’**

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Rural mythology has historically provided an important focus for cultural explanations of Australian national identity. Since the early 1960s, however, rural myths – especially those represented through the Australian Legend -- have been subjected to searching critiques from different positions in and outside the Academy.<sup>1</sup> The adoption of theoretical models during the 1980s and early 1990s that were interested in the politics of identity exposed the racial and gender bias of the rural legends associated with key Australian writers from the 1890s in particular.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the apparent adoption of a form of identity politics in government policies related to migrants and the indigenous community, along with a simultaneous enthusiasm across the political spectrum for privatisation, deregulation, and globalisation, enabled a populist identification of the academic and intellectual class promoting these critiques with politicians, their policy advisers and the forces of global capital.<sup>3</sup>

Commentators in the metropolitan press and the academy have tended to argue that the new ‘racist’ and anti-intellectual political force mobilised by Pauline Hanson’s One Nation phenomenon represented an outdated anglo-celtic conservatism, which could be sourced to provincial cultures and their affinities with the Australian Legend. Paul Kelly, has characterised Hansonism as ‘an echo of our Anglo-Celtic origins; the claims of the once mighty bush to define the Australian Legend; a descendant of the romanticism and racism of Henry Lawson whose hold on national identity was once so comprehensive ... the latest manifestation of our reflex to distrust authority, abuse our elites and damn our leaders’.<sup>4</sup> Phillip Adams called it a ‘*mess* movement of bigotries, disappointments, indignations, resentments, neo-fascism, old fascism, Christian fundamentalism, conspiracy theories, hopelessness, hysteria and good old-fashioned belly-aching’.<sup>5</sup> Adams’ essay is rhetorically interesting because it uses the metaphor of a shopping bag lady to ridicule Hanson and her supporters and while the caricature is entertaining, it also suggests both an intellectual and a class based contempt for ‘ordinary Australians’ which poll analyses and the One Nation party itself found to be part of the problem.<sup>6</sup>

The academic response to One Nation and its claims upon the authentic traditions of the Australian Legend has sometimes taken a similar path to those in the metropolitan press by setting up an articulate ethically weighted opposition between Anglo-Celtic culture and aboriginal or multicultural Australia. The unfashionable identification of Anglo-Celtic Australia with an Australian Legend tarnished by the critiques of the 1980s and 90s has been one of the ways in which it has been found wanting at the political and ethical levels, and this has been played out rather symptomatically at the rhetorical level of discursive style – where style, as it is in Adams, is the display of a linguistic competency that guarantees the subject’s implicit claim to the forms of distinction required to participate as an intellectual in the public sphere. One of Richard Nile’s contributions to the useful (re)collection of essays *The Australian Legend and Its Discontents*, for example, rhetorically deploys Henry Lawson as a trope for a particular version of the Australian Legend which he had critiqued earlier in his stylish introduction as a repertoire of images which helped to license a narrow and outdated version of Australianness. “Tell Them that Henry Lawson is Dead” includes sub headings such as ‘He Died Without a Bottle of Beer in His Hand’ and ‘There’s Something About Henry’ and works rhetorically and logically to dismiss Lawson’s contemporary value. The argument undermines Lawson’s national reputation by describing George Robertson’s poor opinions of the writer as a man and as an Australian and by dragging both figures out of the heroic sphere of national culture and into the grubby worlds of alcoholism and commerce. Lawson seems particularly unfashionable at the moment but it needs to be recognised that arguments such as this have received regular airings from left wing nationalists and their opponents since Lawson’s earliest reception in the 1890s.<sup>7</sup> The need to discredit the Lawson Legend through exposes that take the form of biographical anecdote or rum quotation has long been a symptom of the threat his reputation has posed to preferred versions of Australianness. The longevity of the Lawson Legend has in some ways been due to repeated historical attempts to incorporate his dissident potential. The establishment’s early assessment of the need for such incorporation recognised the political significance of the rather diverse popular purchase of his reputation.<sup>8</sup> A significant omission of academic critiques of both the Lawson and the Australian legends has been a failure to adequately investigate the detailed contexts of this popular reception. Lawson’s place in the Australian social imaginary has never had much to do with a consistent logic within his oeuvre or the biographical and historical facts obscured by his myth and his symbolic significance in this

country is never going to be settled by a set of simple truths. As Ghassan Hage points out, academic logics lack the power to decide questions of social identity because identity is the fantastic product of symbolic powers.<sup>9</sup> The stature of Henry Lawson in the cultural history of Australia is due to the historical utility of his reputation for licensing different forms of social identity.

The Lawson legend remains an important part of the national imaginary for some Anglo-Celtic sections of the Australian population denied the economic, cultural or political capital required to manage the pace of change in recent Australian society. Those critics who have sought to silence the racism that has sprung from this sense of disempowerment by seeking to ridicule their reliance upon a cultural heritage insufficiently utile for a (post)modern, cosmopolitan and multicultural country involve themselves in a conflict which exacerbates the situation. Hage's analysis of the causes behind the feelings of disempowerment that have helped generate the new racism suggests that it has much to do with a shift in the forms of cultural capital required to claim a governmental authority over the national space.<sup>10</sup> His work is useful for my purposes because it understands the new racism as a spatial crisis related to the symbolic operation of social identity.

### **Local Claims on an Australian Legend**

I want to explore the social function of rural heritage as it is associated with the work and reputation of Henry Lawson in the New South Wales towns of Mudgee and Gulgong. This region represents a suggestive sample of the contemporary popular use of Lawson's reputation and the rural mythologies that might be articulated with it for a number of reasons. This is where Henry Lawson spent his childhood and the area provided the identifiable locations for many of his earlier works. Mudgee is a regional city supported by a number of industries including wine, agriculture, pastoralism and tourism. It also lies within the federal electorate of Gwydir, the seat of the National Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, where One Nation received 21 % of the primary vote in the last Federal election.

Local history in this region has often taken the form of a memorial to the famous writer. More recently, however, it has developed into a program for the recovery of local memory and a related affirmation of a sense of community identity. These regional values sometimes run counter to the prevailing moods and intensions of the public memories of the nation and the heritage tourism profile of the area consequently represents a process of negotiation between quite different constituencies— a theme which has been at the center of much of the recent sociological work on globalisation and localisation.<sup>11</sup> The rich connections of the local past of this region with a nationally recognised rural mythology are put to a variety of uses by the local community and while there remains much here that we would still wish to critique, there is enough social value on show to suggest some caution over summarily dismissive attitudes to rural heritage in general and its long suffering apostle Henry Lawson in particular.

A celebrated pioneering history plays an important part in the commemorative activities of the area in which the famous writer was raised. The Roaring Days of the great gold rushes represent one of the most significant chapters in the national account of European settlement. During the 1870s and 1880s the tail end of this significant historical moment combined with the picturesque qualities of a local geography to inspire an exemplary son of the region. Henry Lawson and his work are both productive of and the products of a place, and these esteemed cultural relations provide that place with important associations. During this century English speaking cultures have made a habit of preserving regions as the immortalisation of their famous writers; Stratford has its Shakespeare, Wessex has its Hardy, and New England has its Thoreau. It is in this tradition, that Erunderee, the area of Lawson's youth and the subject of his work, has been remade as one of Australia's most sacred settler sites.

Lawson's habit of drawing upon the topography and social history of his youth in the Mudgee area has provided the region with rich cultural-historical associations. These associations allowed this space to achieve a particular place in debates over the status of the national culture in the period between the wars. After Lawson's death, the Lawson Societies, the Fellowship of Australian Writers, public intellectuals, and left wing political interests were involved in campaigns to consecrate 'The Lawson country'. The Lawson societies, the F.A.W., and public intellectuals such as the Palmers, were motivated by a perceived need to respond to public and

professional perceptions that Australia lacked the historical traditions required to sustain a sophisticated national culture.<sup>12</sup> The promotional impetus provided by Lawson's State Funeral, the Domain Memorial Campaign, and his still significant public popularity, made him an ideal figure upon which to base a case for the national culture, and when the cultural nationalist's cause involved the national poet they were able to secure aid from left wing political figures for whom Lawson remained a useful political weapon.<sup>13</sup>

Until recent years, cooperation with initiatives from Sydney represented the characteristic mechanism of the Mudgee region's involvement in the preservation of its Lawsonian associations. In fact, the need to recognise a local connection with the celebrity of Lawson initially stemmed from a sense of abashment caused by mistaken admiration from the metropolitan press. In 1921, when Mudgee opened Lawson Park as a memorial to William Lawson (no relation), the first European to stumble across and settle upon the land of the Wiradjuri people, it was incorrectly seen by some as a progressive recognition of Henry Lawson. In an editorial entitled 'The Other Lawson: Mudgee's Duty to Its Poet A Centenary Obligation', the *Mudgee Guardian* sought to extricate its reading public from the civic embarrassment caused by this mistake:

We have been thought to be more mindful of our obligations to literature than we are, and have been given credit for a consideration of our poet that we do not deserve. ... we were acclaimed as noble and cultivated souls, salt savouring a Philistine world, and were held up as examples to be emulated by the great cities that lacked our cultivated appreciations. The praise that has been given us is not yet deserved, but there is no reason why it should not be.<sup>14</sup>

The local paper is quick to point out that it was fit and proper to recognise a dead explorer-settler before a living poet. The 'relative unimportance' of letters when compared to the 'finding and development and settlement of the Mudgee lands', and the 'gold ... sheep ... grain ... and the fortunes that have been made', meant that the *Mudgee Guardian* could safely reassure its readers that 'nothing so ambitious as an obelisk or a statue' need be contemplated. Not at least until the poet was actually dead.

### **Past Carin': The Social Purchase of Local History**

Some 60 years later another generation of Mudgee residents appeared to register the reluctance of the local establishment to recognise a poet while wine and honey were bringing in the money that really counted. Norm McVicker, Brendan Dunne, Betty McLean, Peter Mansfield and Carl Werchon formed the Erunderee Provisional School Foundation, Inc in 1989 to restore the small timber school, which now occupied the site of the famous Old Bark School in which Lawson had been educated in the 1870s, as a memorial to the famous writer and the local community in which he was raised.<sup>15</sup> ‘Much of his best works were related to here,’ McVicker told the local press, ‘and we ... wanted to save that’.<sup>16</sup> The restoration was staged and conducted as a significant community event and it used volunteer labour and local donations of money, material and historical artefacts. In this way the one room school was restored to its ‘original’ Federation colours and an interior display established to represent the three important periods in its history, 1876, 1900 and 1970. Although the building housed school memorabilia, McVicker was keen to distinguish it from a museum: it was to be a place that would permit the school children of today to ‘imagine’ themselves in the different historical periods, which have formed the district and the generations that have constituted its communities (p.10).

The Opening day celebrations were marked by a specially illustrated gold lift out in the *Mudgee Guardian*, which recalled the history of the restoration process as well as those of Lawson, the School, and the district. ‘Thank you all -- it was a great community effort’ trumpeted a tan sub header judiciously placed above a list of the Foundation’s achievements and a speculative letter of support from the long dead poet himself:

Dear Friends,

Some of my ‘most happy days’ were spent in Erunderee. They were rich and fulfilling -- as I later related in my poems and stories.

It was at ‘The Old Bark School’ on that opening day, October 2, 1876 that John Tierney, the first schoolmaster, began the task of teaching 27 boys and 18 girls. We were a motley band -- the children of farmers, miners, vintners, labourers and store-keepers.

There were Buckholtz’s, Wurth’s, Snelson’s, Roth’s, Roe’s, Bones’, Muller’s, Harvey’s -- and others, as well as the Lawson’s...

Let it be known that I am ‘most happy’ to return as a symbol of the Erunderee, I always loved and understood.

Yours truly

*Henry Lawson*<sup>17</sup> {Note :Brush Script MT is the script used by the paper but it’s a bit hard to read. Reformat as required.}

'Henry Lawson' is concerned to name the local pioneering families and catalogue their occupations and this is a characteristic emphasis of the Foundation's commemorative activities. Lawson is valuable because of his national celebrity and the potential tourist dollars associated with his fame, but he is also valuable as a repository of the area's forgotten social history. Fame can provide a powerful stimulus for local memories. Celebrity gives quotidian things an alternative significance and often leads to the recollection of events more usually considered forgettable. Lawson's careful preservation by a national metropolitan, a regional, and a number of interconnected familial cultures can thus be used by the locality to recover its own lost references. Through Lawson, Erunderee might recover an authoritatively local sense of *its* past. Commemoration is therefore a familiar affirmation of the local settler history of pioneering families and their establishment, against the odds, of a civil community.

The interest initially generated by the project led to a weekly column by McVicker in the *Mudgee Guardian*. Entitled 'Tales From the Wallaby Track... In Search of Henry Lawson's Erunderee', the column regularly reported the progress of the Foundation's restoration of the school complex and its rediscovery of the social history of the area. Writing in the column in November of the inaugural year, McVicker summarises the interests of the Foundation and its community activities: 'Our entire field of endeavour has been to establish and document the facts about Henry Lawson's Erunderee years, the inter-relationship of the pioneer families and their association with Erunderee as Lawson knew it and wrote about it'.<sup>18</sup> This mission is often interpreted as a monument to Lawson within whose work Erunderee is itself commemorated for posterity:

Erunderee is full of Lawson associations, *its reality* reinforced by the stories and poems which he wrote about the little world he knew. 'Erunderee', itself is his 'Memorial'. When our identifying signs are in place, Erunderee will finally be recognised as 'The Real Henry Lawson Country'. (Emphasis added)

This shift in emphasis from Lawson to Erunderee is a feature of the local initiative. Lawson and his work are memorials for Erunderee. Remembering Henry Lawson thus adopts the form of the historical recovery of a local community history and 'The Wallaby Track' accordingly thanked local residents and widely dispersed expatriates for their regular donations of authentic artefacts, which had been safely preserved through the generations of a family. Newer residents were also able to write themselves into the history of the area through their support for the Foundation and

their respect for the community value of their places. On one occasion, for example, McVicker gives a brief account of the pioneering Wurth family, before approvingly describing the restoration of their family home by more recent residents who were nevertheless keen supporters of the Foundation's activities: 'another part of *our* heritage has been saved'.<sup>19</sup> One of the more interesting features of this recovery is a welcome sense of the multicultural character of original settlement, although it needs to be said that that character remains European and hence fails to upset the articulation of local heritage with Whiteness and its custodial role over the spatial imaginary.

The Erunderee Provisional School Foundation, Inc and the weekly 'Wallaby Track' column together orchestrated an ongoing community interest and initiative in the recovery of the forgotten stories of its past. They provided an occasion for remembering and a safe haven for artefacts, records, and oral memory. Often the Foundation republished well known texts which it then recontextualised as the signs of the significant locale now safely in its keeping. Lawson's poems 'The Roaring Days', 'The Lights of the Cobb & Co' and 'Erunderee', together with the story 'The Loaded Dog' were represented in a tourist pamphlet as markers of the area.<sup>20</sup> The national celebrity of Henry Lawson and his associated geographies are thus represented in local terms according to local interests. In this way the citizenry of the region can acquire a particular type of local authority, which well arms them for any disagreements with the metropolitan expertise of professional historians and educators. When a staff writer for the *Sydney Morning Herald* chided the people of Mudgee for their belated recognition of Lawson he drew a non-committal response. When the writer accused them of attempting to 'sanitise his life story', however, he was promptly rebuked. 'We are proud of what the Foundation has achieved...' wrote McVicker, 'we have documented and recorded only facts'. An important part of his defence was the restatement of the Foundation's purely local interest. Other agents have concerned themselves with Lawson's later life, the 'entire field of endeavour' of the Foundation has been to 'establish and document the facts about Henry Lawson's Erunderee years, the inter-relationship of the pioneer families and their association with Erunderee as Lawson knew it and wrote about it. Nothing more -- nothing less'.<sup>21</sup> Reporting on the Henry and Louisa Lawson conference, which was held in 1991 at the Prince of Wales Opera House in Gulgong under the auspices of the Center for Australian Language and Literature Studies at the University of New England, McVicker was again concerned to position local authority in relation to professional discipline.

‘Some of the subject matter was, to the layman, unbelievably esoteric,’ he wrote. ‘I left the conference wondering whether Louisa and Henry would have understood the discussions...’, he added.<sup>22</sup> A University of New England academic’s account of David McKee Wright’s editorial work on Lawson’s verse was found wanting with information collected from a 1933 clipping of the Mudgee Mail: ‘this served to remind [McVicker] that academics do not always verify the facts’.<sup>23</sup>

### **Tourism and the Dark Past of the Local**

The Foundation’s efforts to recover the social history of the region always stood side by side with an affirmed commercial interest in the tourist potential of this history’s more celebrated associations. McVicker, who identified himself as a man who ‘for thirty years was closely associated with the [tourism] industry,’ regularly reported tourist news in ‘Tales From the Wallaby Track’.<sup>24</sup> In October 1989, immediately following the restoration of the school, the column reported the opening of the newly signposted ‘Wallaby Track’ by the Mudgee Shire Tourist Officer.<sup>25</sup> Two weeks later the success was announced of the first mini bus tour of the ‘Track’ with McVicker as guide.<sup>26</sup> One year later, the columnist described his assistance of many subsequent tours and the growing interest in ‘the childhood days of Henry Lawson and the pioneer doings of the early settlers in Erunderee’.<sup>27</sup>

The Foundation’s proprietary interest in the tourist value of Mudgee’s Lawson associations is partly driven by the need to convince local authorities of its potential and partly by the need to secure the identification of the Foundation with its inevitable success. It implicitly recognises that schemes for the generation of social capital need to connect with an economic bottom line if they are to secure material resources. The surprising need to establish the potential of history is due to the area’s already affirmed tourist identity as the land of Wine and Honey -- an identity which potentially restricts the flow of resources to the campaign to identify the local geography as Lawson country. This is not a case of a depressed rural town desperately turning to cultural tourism for salvation. The success of Mudgee as a wine area has drawn increasing tourism and significant development in the town and so this drive to reestablish Lawson as a complementary tourist property expresses the anxieties of certain sections of the community over the way

tourism was representing the area. The success of the campaign for recognition confirms the Federation's worth to the regional economy and legitimises the arguments it has used to justify the full variety of its initiatives.<sup>28</sup> The potential economic benefits to the region of the Lawson Country's tourist possibilities was therefore an important complementary argument to the community emphasis on the local identity to be found in the area's rich associations, and both arguments were used in the Foundation's representations for business and local government support. The subsequent success of these representations then provided social, political, and economic capital for the restoration of artifacts and the recovery of the local memories through which they might productively be re-associated.

The apotheosis of the limited multiculturalism of Eurunderee's late nineteenth century social history in the 1980s and 90s is enabled through forms of pioneering mythology, which have been widely critiqued as claims to a place which erase indigenous association. While it may have been possible to erase indigenous association without fear of contradiction in times past, however, the purchase of indigenous issues in contemporary times render such practices increasingly precarious – particularly where the local is forced to cater to the global in the interests of tourism. There are gains and losses to be had in articulating the local with the broader claims of the (inter)national estate and tourist representations seldom function for the locals in the way they do for tourists. Tourist trading of the local inevitably entails its representation for the cosmopolitan tastes and expectations of the traveler and this means that it has to register their expectations. Therefore, when McVicker organised a tour of the Wallaby Track for a group of Country Press Association Members and their wives, he was quickly confronted with the absence of indigenous reference in the Foundation's tourist narrative. The following week McVicker reported on the tour in his newspaper column:

They were interested because of Eurunderee's rightful place at the start of our literary heritage; for the earthiness of the commentary, and for the little known facts and figures of the past now being unearthed by our research. Luckily, I was able to answer some questions about the Wiradjuri aborigines who lived in Eurunderee at the time of the arrival of the first settlers. I wasn't terribly happy with my answers. More research is needed. All the 'journos' kept their map of the 'Wallaby Track'. Hopefully they will write about their Eurunderee experience sometime in the future which may bring more tourists to Henry Lawson Country.<sup>29</sup>

The Press Association member's recognition of the priority of indigenous possession and their associated curiosity in the native associations of the area contradicts the settler claims of discovery and originality that so often feature in pioneering festivals and McVicker moved quickly to produce a special issue of 'Tales From Along the Wallaby Track' on the Wiradjuri people as a response to the journalist's interest.<sup>30</sup> The Foundation's pamphlet, 'The Wiradjuri Story: Aborigines of Henry Lawson Country', represents a particularly interesting representation of black history. In some ways it might be described in the terms of the Liberal Prime Minister, the Honourable Mr John Howard, as a black armband view of indigenous history. The early settlers' violent dispossession of a 'healthy, moral' indigenous community, which was living in spiritual harmony with a Land they understood, is seen as indefensible. The affirmed ethical character of the Wiradjuri is considered a function of their sophisticated association with the local place and the Foundation's own search for local origins can thus be represented as the expression of a comparable ethical substance.

Tony Bennett has argued that in recent times aboriginal sites and artefacts have been officially appropriated so that the national time might be extended into a deeper and hence more legitimate past.<sup>31</sup> The Foundation's pamphlet can certainly be seen as an attempt to consolidate the local claim to its place by appropriating the legitimacy of the indigene and it needs to be said that for all its good intentions the Foundation fails to connect the indigenous history with the claims of a contemporary indigenous population.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, the booklet reverts to the Prime Minister's tactic of consigning settler atrocities and their undeserving victims to the past: 'Their lands, their kinsmen and their lifestyle had been ruthlessly destroyed by greed. In the wake of despair came the diseases of the white man, alcohol – and finally death. By 1850 the Wiradjuri had been completely dispossessed and were virtually extinct'.<sup>33</sup>

The discourse of nostalgic lament has been a feature of the liberal response to indigenous genocide since the nineteenth century and the Erunderee Provisional Foundation's representation of the local indigenous claims to place ultimately remain conservative.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, they stop a fair way short of the forms of red-necked regional racism that we saw associated with Hansonism's Anglo-Celtic Conservatism. We are no longer living in the nineteenth century and indigenous claims are now regularly represented in the mainstream media as a part of an ongoing active political struggle. The EPF's acknowledgement of the ethically desirable local

associations of the Wiradjuri are there to be claimed by interested political agents. The potential for the reconciliation process of the conjunction of interest in erased indigenous places and lost settler associations has been a theme of recent work by Australian historians. Peter Read's investigation of the function of lost places in personal, familial, and regional situations suggests that the widespread experience of lost place which characterises immigrant cultures is a resource which might more productively be used in this way.<sup>35</sup>

Heather Goodall's work on rural community history reveals some willingness by pastoralists to reconnect their history with those of indigenous Australians in a self-interested effort to enable their own ongoing struggles with rival industries and environmental disasters.<sup>36</sup> The need for local Mudgee interests to cater for a cosmopolitan taste in order to confirm the tourist value of their heritage paves the way for a similar recognition of native association. The articulation of the indigenous past with the local project of reclaiming the lost settler history also associates the Foundation's activities with the moral legitimacy of the increasingly powerful metropolitan narrative of indigenous dispossession.<sup>37</sup> This is important, for in the sphere of tourism at least, the boot is on another foot, and the regional settler identities which have so often erased native association are now themselves being cheerfully consigned to the cosmopolitan nation's colourful past.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the tourist's interest in the Wiradjuri is not reported in 'The Wallaby Track' column because it is thought to disable the local claim to originality. It is used to confirm the importance of the Foundation's search after local truths. This is why McVicker is careful to point out that the trip was not a 'junket', but a genuine expression of real interest in authentic local origins. The need to make this argument is of course an expression of anxiety. The tourist presentation of the local social history is inevitably directed towards its involvement in the originating moment of the national literary heritage and the mention of this origin is primary. The authentic origin of a national celebrity is the grand narrative and it is only through the articulation of the local with such a narrative that local social memory is *capitalised for the tourists*.

### **The Country as another Time**

In discussing the tourist promotion of the historical Rocks redevelopment in Sydney, Bennett argues that the area has been transformed into a 'center of origins in the sense of being not merely the first area of settlement but one which contains the seeds of future and broader developments'.<sup>39</sup> The transformation of the Rocks adopts the rhetorical forms of 'consensus nationalism which, in overlaying the various objects and buildings encountered, enables them to function as origins of the subsequent unfolding of the nation's history told as the gradual rise of a free, democratic, multicultural citizenry' (p. 227). If there is a comparable rhetoric for the transformation of the Erunderee area into the Lawson country it is the liberal pioneering myth. The Foundation gives little emphasis to the class struggle which was expressed through the battles over the Land acts throughout the late nineteenth century, and the pioneering myth tends to work in conjunction with the conservative nationalist version of Australian literary culture to redeploy the political struggles of the settlers as a more familiar contest with isolation and environment. The densities of local memories and their multiple authorial locations partially protect the local from the loaded forms of erasure practised by the official institutions of the public culture, but the local is not immune from the flattering imaginings of a pioneering legend and its idealisation of quotidian struggles. The local's use of Lawson to get at local memories is reversed for tourists who are presented with local memories as signs of the national celebrity. This reversal can shed the complicated idiosyncrasies of the local account and allow the easy consumption of the region by the rhetorical forms of the national memory.

As recent studies of tourism and globalisation have shown local significance can seldom function for the tourist in the ways that it might for the local citizenry. To make a tourist commodity out of a local past requires the adoption of the rhetorical tropes of the national heritage and these tropes, as Bennett describes them, are there to be found in both the literature of the local Tourist Information Center and the Foundation's packaging of local memories for tourist consumption. Chief amongst these is the nostalgic use of the past as peaceful place or site of adventure, to which the tourist is encouraged to escape from the pressures of modernity:

Mudgee is a town steeped in history, a town nestled in a soft, green valley with clear streams and rivers, lush vineyards and gentle grazing slopes for sheep and cattle ....Only 3.5 hours drive from Sydney, Mudgee is the perfect place for a short break to 'recharge the batteries' and discover a much more relaxed, enjoyable way of life, a way of life no longer found in our major cities.<sup>40</sup>

... pause and listen. To stop is to step out of reality and back into the past....There are many things to do and see .... Stand on the side of the hill behind the school. Close yours eyes for a few seconds. Let your imagination run riot. You may hear the sounds of a Cobb & Co coach ... open your eyes and the whole panorama of Henry Lawson's Erunderee lies before you.<sup>41</sup>

In the discourses of tourist promotion which address the cosmopolitan consumer, the country becomes a pastoral form of the past that functions as a refuge from what Les A. Murray would call 'this metropolitan century'.<sup>42</sup> As Bennett puts it, 'the more the structure of the past is subject to the exigencies of tourism, the greater the likelihood that it will focus on the country rather than the city, and on the nineteenth rather than the twentieth century. It will, as a consequence tend to offer the great majority of Australians an imaginative diversion from their present conditions of existence rather than affording a familiarity with the more immediate histories from which those conditions effectively flow'.<sup>43</sup> The tourist past is a refuge, because it is disconnected from contemporary realities and politics.

That local social memories would be appropriated through their articulation with the public memory and the marketing rhetoric of the tourism industry was rendered inevitable by the Foundation's need to find a place for their Lawson narrative within the region's already established tourism strategies. The predominant tourist identity of the Mudgee area was, and largely still is, drawn from the region's distinctive rural industries: Mudgee is the 'Land of Wine and Honey'. Ruth Barcan has pointed out the way in which 'big things' (eg. the big cow, the big banana) 'create some regional identities at the cost of others, since tourist identities work best when they are distinct, relatively singular and easily reproducible visually'.<sup>44</sup> Drawing upon the work of Andrew Fretter, she argues that 'one concerted marketing message will help potential tourists and investors believe that the place has "got its act together" ... Difference gets subsumed under the marketing logic of brand recognition' (p. 37).

It is easy to discern a note of self-justification in McVicker's celebration of the tourist triumphs of the 'Wallaby Track' and the Erunderee Provisional School, which is perhaps directed towards local reluctance to accept that the land of wine and honey might at the same time be Henry Lawson Country. A sense of rivalry is clearly on display when he reports the results of a tourist survey in his column at the end of May in 1991;

As expected, wine and wineries, were the main reason for most visits. According to the graph honey and history pegged level in second place. The needs of tourists do change and to survive the industry must recognise them and change their marketing thrusts accordingly. Since the Bi-centennial year in 1988, we Australians have become more aware of the past and much more interested in preserving our heritage. Mudgee shire, which includes Henry Lawson Country, has a ‘pandora’s box’ of history just waiting to be opened. All that is needed is for the lid to be lifted.<sup>45</sup>

Parochial rivalries and local tensions aside, the importance of a discourse of time and place to the marketing strategies of the wine industry meant that Henry Lawson was always going to be easily accommodated by the vignerons.

### **‘Crisp Freshness in Great Variety’: Lawson finally makes it to the Land of Wine and Honey**

The owners of the Lawson Hill Estate Vineyard and Winery changed the name of their hill as a tribute to its original owners which did double service as a marketing strategy for their products:

**The Vineyard** is linked with Australia’s heritage, being planted on land once owned by the parents of Australia’s foremost poet Henry Lawson, and where Henry spent his boyhood. The entrance to the vineyard is situated next to the memorial to his name which is built around the chimney of the old Lawson cottage. The road to the winery leads up what was called O’Briens Hill when the Lawsons left the district. Jose and June Grace, the present owners and creators of the vineyard and winery, felt the name should be returned to Lawson’s hill as a fitting tribute to Henry’s memory.

The beautiful view of the Mudgee Valley from ‘up the hill’ now helps to inspire pianist Jose in composing music, as it must once have inspired Henry and his mother Louisa (also a writer of some note) in those early days of the history of Mudgee.

**The Wines** are a product of varied soil types on this land, with its wonderfully definite four seasons, each delightful in its own way, free of the heavy humidity of the coastal zone. Winters are crisp and bracing, sun-filled summer days with cool nights, while spring and autumn are sheer magic.

Lawson’s Hill wines are a fine example of that crisp freshness in great variety ... and there’s always a warm welcome for visitors to the winery.<sup>46</sup>

Down Henry Lawson Drive a kilometre or two from Lawson Hill Estate can be found Poet's Corner, a paddock of Montrose Vineyards which produces the Montrose Poet's Corner line of wines. The narrative of an inspirational place is also used to market these wines, but in this case there is a more explicit analogy made between Lawson's literature and the local wine. Under the Heading 'Montrose Poet's Corner Inspired Henry Lawson and Gold at the Melbourne Wine Show', the wine label explains the commodity's celebrated connections: 'Local mythology tells how Poet's Corner inspired the poetry of Henry Lawson. More recently, it inspired the judges at this year's Royal Melbourne Wine Show to award gold medals to the 1991 Poet's Corner Classic Dry Red and the 1992 Poet's Corner Classic Dry White. Rich in unique Mudgee flavours, these are inspired gold medal wines from Poet's Corner, Henry Lawson Drive, Mudgee'.<sup>47</sup>

It is the spirit of the place that was the genius of Lawson's art and that same spirit of place is now creating the award winning tastes of Montrose Wines' Poet's Corner. Wine is not a drink, it is a culture and this culture needs to be distinguished by a geography rich in natural and historical associations. The fusion of nature and culture provide a wine with a style, which it offers in the form of a taste. Style is the enabling trope of the publicity narratives of wine because it represents a superior way of life. Wine requires the connoisseur where the connoisseur is often represented as a series of affinities with Culture as prestige. The national historical and cultural associations of the Mudgee area therefore provide Mudgee wine with the deep time and the rich place of a distinguished reputation. To buy and taste the wine of Poet's Corner is therefore a form of communion with a historically significant place. Montrose wine has Mudgee and Henry Lawson in a bottle, and both the local mythologies and the national heritage are in this way transformed into a commodity for consumption and exchange.

Tourist maps of the district's wineries are thus inscribed upon the historical map of Lawson Country, and the tourist cannot only travel, survey, imagine, feel, and experience the national heritage, they can taste it as well. It is therefore no surprise that the local wine industry has come to the Henry Lawson party as a prominent sponsor of the historical and cultural activities of the Erunderee Provisional School Federation and the Henry Lawson Society of N.S.W., which is based in the nearby town of Gulgong. Montrose Wine's publicity narrative was printed on the back page of the entry form for the annual Henry Lawson Society of N.S.W. and Montrose Wines Poet's Corner's Award for the best poem based upon a contemporary Australian subject

or theme. The judging and the exhibition of entries was held at the Montrose Winery during the 1994 Mudgee Wine Festival in September of that year. Prize money totalled \$1000 and the winners surrendered first publication rights to the Society and the Winery. This complementary relation between wine and culture is one that the 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' column comes increasingly to encourage as History is gradually admitted into the tourist profile of the region.

## Conclusion

The role played by mythological figures such as Henry Lawson and pioneering myths similar to the Australian Legend in the constitution of contemporary Australian identities have much more to do with the strategic conditions in which local spaces encounter the cosmopolitan cultures of postmodernity than with privileged professional readings of the discursive detail of particular textual estates. It is the strategic detail of these local contests that we are going to have to deal with if we are to follow David Carter's call to find ways to make 'pluralism as popular as populism' and this study suggests that we are going to be much more successful at this if we find a way of engaging with a cultural heritage which provides a proportion of our citizenry with the symbolic capital required to feel a part of the imaginary nation.<sup>48</sup> There is a disturbing correspondence between the ways in which the local volunteer society consigned the native claim to place to a regrettable past and the manner in which cosmopolitan Australia represents the times and places of its regional and rural cultures. The question of race, place and identity is always a question of capital and if we are going to alleviate the racial tensions in this country then we are going to have to find an innovative and productive way of capitalising the diverse forms of identity now party to the Australian social contract. For a politically significant number of Australians that is going to mean a dynamic, creative and more specific critical engagement with rural mythology, the Australian Legend and maybe even poor old Henry Lawson.

<sup>1</sup> Includes the New Left (Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), the neo-liberalists (Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Ringwood: Penguin, 1964, and Peter Coleman, ed, *Australian Civilisations: A Symposium*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1962), from feminists (Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1988; Susan Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines: Gender, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing, 1880s-1930s*, St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995; Susan Rowley, Susan Magarey and Susan Sheridan, eds, *Debutante Nation*, St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1993) and multiculturalists (Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O Longley, eds, *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992), not to mention

(post)structuralists (Graeme Turner, *National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of Australian Narrative*, North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986) and postcolonialists (Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*, North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Schaffer, *Women and the Bush*; Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*.

<sup>3</sup> Judith Brett, 'Representing the Unrepresented: One Nation and the Formation of the Labor Party,' *Two Nations: The Causes and Effects of the Rise of the One Nation party in Australia*, Nadine Davidoff, ed, Melbourne: Bookman, 1998, pp 26-37; Michael Wooldridge, 'A Pathology in the Political Process,' *Two Nations*, pp. 178-92; Jon Stratton, *Race Daze: Australian identity in Crisis*, Annandale: Pluto, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Kelly, 'Hanson—Symptom of a Deeper Problem,' *Two Nations*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Adams, 'Pauline and Prejudice – It's in the Bag', *Two Nations*, p.22.

<sup>6</sup> Murray Goot, 'Hanson's Heartland: Who's for One Nation and Why,' *Two Nations*, pp. 51-73; onenation.com.au.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the early reception see, for example, Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush*; Christopher Lee, 'The Emasculation of Henry Lawson', *Meridian* 13.1 (1994): 3-14. For an example of later debates within the left see the ALP's *The Standard Weekly* January-February 1945 and many contributions to *Communist Review* during the 1950s.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Lee, 'Pomp and Ceremony: The Political Funeral of Henry Lawson.' *Overland* 152 (1998): 17-22, and 'Bronzed Aussie: The Memorialisation of Henry Lawson'. *Land and Identity: Refereed Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, 1997*. Jennifer McDonnell and Michael Deves, eds. Canberra: ASAL, 1998. 202-208.

<sup>9</sup> Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, Annandale: Pluto, 1998. pp. 184-85.

<sup>10</sup> Hage, pp. 192-93

<sup>11</sup> Scott Lasch and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space*, London: Sage, 1994; John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, London: Sage, 1990; Derek Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985; Nigel Featherstone, ed, *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*, London: Sage, 1990.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Darby, "'A National Literary Shrine': Attempts to Save the Henry Lawson Family Home, 1935-46,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 74.3 (1988), p.244. An infamous public moment of this debate occurred in the series of essays on Australian Literature which were published by *The Age* newspaper in 1935. For a discussion of these see Dale, *The English Men*, pp.151-54.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Darby, "'A National Literary Shrine': Attempts to Save the Henry Lawson Family Home, 1935-46,' pp.250-54.

<sup>14</sup> 'The Other Lawson: Mudgee's Duty To Its Poet A Centenary Obligation,' *Mudgee Guardian*, 21 March 1921.

<sup>15</sup> The year of the relocation of the current building is sometimes given as 1934. See Norman McVicker, *Henry Lawson Country: More than Just a Name*, (Mudgee: Erunderee Provisional School Inc., 1991).

<sup>16</sup> McVicker qtd in 'Erunderee Provisional School Opening,' *Mudgee Guardian*, 29 September 1989, p.10.

<sup>17</sup> 'Along the Wallaby Track,' Special Coloured Liftout, *Mudgee Guardian*, 29 September 1989, pp.15. The Lindsay etching of Lawson's profile from the ten dollar note sits adjacent to the signature.

<sup>18</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: The Erunderee Years,' *Mudgee Guardian*, 1 December 1989, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.

<sup>19</sup> Emphasis added, Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'The Wurth Family,' *Mudgee Guardian*, 16 June 1989, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.

<sup>20</sup> 'Three Selected Poems and One Funny Story,' (Mudgee: Erunderee Provisional School Foundation, Inc., n.d.).

<sup>21</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: The Erunderee Years,' *Mudgee Guardian*, 1 December 1989, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.

<sup>22</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'The Lawson Legacy', *Mudgee Guardian*, 4 October 1991, Newspaper Clipping supplied by Olive Lawson.

<sup>23</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'Back to Basics', *Mudgee Guardian*, 4 October 1991, Newspaper Clipping supplied by Olive Lawson.

<sup>24</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'Tourism,' *Mudgee Guardian*, 11 January 1991, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.

<sup>25</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'The Wallaby Track', *Mudgee Guardian*, [c. October 1989], 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.

- <sup>26</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'Wallaby Track -- First Mini Bus', *Mudgee Guardian*, [c. October 1989], 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.
- <sup>27</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'Country Press', *Mudgee Guardian*, 2 November 1990, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.
- <sup>28</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: Tourism.'
- <sup>29</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'Tourist Lesson,' *Mudgee Guardian*, 2 November 1990, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.
- <sup>30</sup> See Tony Bennett's discussion of the importance of tabula rasa to the discourse of origins which characterises public representations of the Rocks in 'History on the Rocks,' *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed John Frow and Meaghan Morris, ( St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993), pp.222-40.
- <sup>31</sup> Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, pp. 148-53.
- <sup>32</sup> Heather Goodall argues that this is a feature of contemporary rural use of local indigenous history. Heather Goodall, "'Fixing' the Past: Modernity, Tradition and Memory in Rural Australia", *UTS Review* 6.1 (2000): 20-40.
- <sup>33</sup> Norman McVicker, *The Wiradjuri Story: Aborigines of Henry Lawson Country*, Tales from Along the Wallaby Track, Mudgee: Erunderee Provisional School Foundation, 1991.
- <sup>34</sup> Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991; Ian McLean, *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.
- <sup>35</sup> Peter Read, *Return to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- <sup>36</sup> Goodall, 27.
- <sup>37</sup> It is not of course very difficult to imagine how contemporary indigenous uses of the Foundation's rediscovered past might quickly become 'uncanny' in Gelder and Jacobs sense of the term. Gelder and Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia*.
- <sup>38</sup> Christopher Lee, 'Uses of the Past: Settler Culture, Regional Identity and the Modern Nation,' *Australian Studies* 13.2 (1998): 55-69.
- <sup>39</sup> Bennett, 'On the Rocks', p. 227.
- <sup>40</sup> *Visitors Guide Mudgee*, (Mudgee: Mudgee Tourist Information Centre, n.d. [c 1994]), p.14.
- <sup>41</sup> Norman McVicker, *Henry Lawson Country: More than Just a Name*, (Mudgee: Erunderee Provisional School Inc., 1991), p. [2]. See also McVicker, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track: 'Re-creating Excitement', *Mudgee Guardian*, 16 November 1990, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library .
- <sup>42</sup> Les Murray, 'Noonday Axe-man,' *The Vernacular Republic: Poems 1961-1983*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1988). p.3.
- <sup>43</sup> Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, p. 162.
- <sup>44</sup> Ruth Barcan, 'Big Things: Consumer Totemism and Serial Monumentality,' *LinQ*, 23.2 (1996), p. 37.
- <sup>45</sup> Norman McVicker, 'Tales From Along the Wallaby Track: 'Tourism Topics,' *The Mudgee Guardian*, 31 May 1991, 'Tales From the Wallaby Track' Clippings, Mudgee Municipal Library.
- <sup>46</sup> 'Lawson Hill Estate,' Tourist Leaflet, (Mudgee: Lawson Hill Estate, n.d.).
- <sup>47</sup> 'Montrose Poet's Corner,' Advertisement in 'Henry Lawson Society of N.S.W. and Montrose Wines 1994 Poets Corner Award', Entry Form, (Gulgong: Henry Lawson Society of N.S.W., 1994).
- <sup>48</sup> David Carter, 'Past and Future,' *The Australian Legend and its Discontents*, 76-77.