

University of New England

On Common Ground

Cultivating Environmental Peace: A History of the
Rainbow Region

Submitted by

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Abstract

This thesis presents an environmental history of the ecologically-conscious communities of the 'Rainbow Region' in Northern New South Wales, Australia, and asks what can this dynamic, influential and innovative region teach us about cultivating environmental peace? As humanity rapidly propels itself into the Anthropocene, the era of human-induced global environmental change, it is more important than ever that we seek ways to mitigate our environmental impacts and cultivate truly sustainable societies and cultures of environmental peace. Our very survival depends upon our ability to do so. The Rainbow Region stands at the forefront of dynamic, grassroots environmental action and activism, and therefore can provide demonstrated and effective examples of how we might make the changes necessary to confront the Anthropocene. Yet to date, there have been few histories produced of this remarkable region. Amending this is one of the key aims of this thesis.

Rooted in the emerging multidisciplinary field of the environmental humanities and drawing on the disciplines of peace studies and history, this thesis also aims to make contributions to the critically important environmental humanities as well as furthering understandings within the similarly emergent field of environmental peace. It uses the methods of historical-comparative analysis and oral history to investigate the changing relationship between people and place over time. From the deep spiritual connection of the Bundjalung people, to the discomfort and disconnect of the earliest colonists, to the emerging sense of place felt by early conservationists, and to the very deep connection forged by the largest countercultural community in the Southern Hemisphere, these seemingly disparate stories start to flow together as it becomes apparent what they share in common – a sense of place and a desire to belong that transcends temporal and cultural boundaries. The thesis then applies peace studies theory so as to best understand how these findings can be understood from a peace cultivation perspective. Findings include the importance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK); the significance of values in the shaping of our attitudes towards the environment; the importance of environmental education; place attachment as a motivator for environmental action; the cultivation of activist techniques and experiments in sustainable living; and finally, weaving through and connecting these approaches, the power of community and common ground.

As we face the overwhelming environmental challenges before us we look for ways forward. The roadmap already exists, clearly written upon the places we inhabit. Despite our different expressions of belonging, we all seek connection to the places we call home, and in this we stand on common ground. The communities of the Rainbow Region demonstrate that community-led environmental peace cultivation is not only effective, it provides one of the best hopes that we have of surviving the Anthropocene.

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the work contained in this dissertation is my own work.

I certify that the contents of this thesis have not already been submitted for any degree and are not currently submitted for any other degree.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge I have acknowledged any help I received in writing this thesis, and due acknowledgement and reference have been made for all sources used.

Vanessa Bible



4th April 2016

Publications and Presentations Arising from this Thesis

Publications

Vanessa Bible, 2013, 'Men and a River: Richmond Rivers District 1828-1895 [Book Review]', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 15, pp. 235-236.

Vanessa Bible & Johanna Garnett, 2013, 'Why an Education for the Environment is an Education for Peace', *Nucleus*, vol. 1, no. 7, September, p. 19.

Presentations

Vanessa Bible, 2013, 'Aquarius Rising: Terania Creek and beyond', paper presented at 'Aquarius and Beyond: 40 Years On' Conference, Nimbin, 23-24 May.

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Dedicated to the Earth, my one true love

and

In memory of Aquarius Songman, Paul Joseph, and his extraordinary contribution to the Rainbow Region, 1949 - 2015. May the longtime sunshine upon you.

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Chapter One

Introduction

It is increasingly accepted that humanity have now entered the geological epoch of the Anthropocene, the era of human-induced global environmental change.¹ Around the world, many scientists, scholars, activists, politicians and community members are responding to this critical situation through academic discussion, activism and grassroots campaigns. This thesis aims to contribute to such discussion by enquiring into the environmental history of a region that stands at the forefront of such efforts. The Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, Australia, is known for its beautiful landscape, vibrant alternative culture and passionate history of environmental awareness and activism. The 'Rainbow Region', as it has become known, has been the site for a great deal of innovative and influential grassroots environmental thought, action and sustainability. The communities of the Rainbow Region, who have already provided a great deal of instruction in the ways of environmental action and activism globally, have yet more to offer.

This thesis investigates the environmental history of the Rainbow Region to ask, what can these communities teach us about cultivating environmental peace? Despite the remarkable history of the region, it has attracted very little academic attention. Not only does this thesis therefore address a significant gap in the literature, it also looks at the history from a unique perspective. Multidisciplinary in approach, this history is embedded within the emerging field of the environmental humanities, which represents a scholarly response to the Anthropocene. It also draws on peace studies concepts, specifically the notion of environmental peace, which essentially can be understood as peaceful human-nature relations which uphold the biological integrity of the Earth for the benefit of the environment and humanity alike. Using an historical-comparative methodological approach, the thesis draws both on primary sources

¹ Paul Crutzen, 2002, 'Geology of Mankind', *Nature*, vol. 415, no. 6867, 3 January, p. 23; Will Steffen, Paul Crutzen & John R McNeill, 2007, 'The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?', *Ambio*, vol. 36, no. 8, pp. 614-621; Noel Castree *et al.*, 2014, 'Changing the intellectual climate', *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 4, September, p. 763.

where possible as well as oral history interviews, to document the changing landscape of human-nature interactions and subsequently the changing relationships between people and place. It looks at how different dominant groups interact with the land and the consequences of these interactions, both for the land and the people who inhabit it. In exploring this changing history, what becomes evident is that the need to feel an attachment with the natural environment transcends time and culture. From the Bundjalung people, to the early colonists and conservationists, and to the alternative communities of the 1970s and beyond, each group of people have written their expressions of belonging upon the land and have helped create the unique culture of the region. The thesis then applies peacebuilding theory to the history findings, so as to understand how we can take the lessons from the Rainbow Region and understand them from a peace cultivation perspective, offering suggestions as to how we might proceed into the age of the Anthropocene.

This introductory chapter will cover the background of the global environmental crisis and the concept of the Anthropocene, as well as a discussion of the environmental humanities, environmental history and of peace studies, and their suitability to the nature of this thesis and its enquiry. It will also provide some background to the Rainbow Region and the approach taken in the investigation of its history. It will then place the thesis within the context of existing literature, identifying the gaps in the knowledge that will be addressed. A discussion of the methodological approach will follow, as well as a statement of aims, scope and limitations, followed by a brief chapter overview.

Background

Earth, humanity's only belonging place, is in environmental crisis. We are arguably in the age of the Anthropocene, the era in which human activity is the dominant influence upon the condition of the natural environment.² There is no shortage of alarming facts and statistics that should be shocking us in to action. There are regions on earth, increasing in number, that are so contaminated by human-made

² Crutzen, 'Geology of Mankind', p. 23; Steffen, Crutzen & McNeill, 'The Anthropocene', pp. 614-621.

pollution that they are too dangerous for human habitation.³ Every one of the major oceans has at its centre a swirling vortex of plastic debris, some larger than the entire continent of Australia.⁴ Biodiversity loss is occurring at an alarming rate, with estimates that the current rate of species extinction is 100-1000 times the natural rate.⁵ We are now on the brink of losing keystone species, which will result in the collapse of entire ecosystems.⁶ Even the most basic of resources such as food and potable water are not readily accessible to a great many of the world's people; environmental change and degradation frequently compound the issue, inducing resource wars and challenging environmental security.⁷ Many climate scientists tell us that beyond 350 parts per million (ppm) of atmospheric carbon dioxide we face catastrophic and irreversible climatic change.⁸ In May 2013, in Hawaii, the atmospheric carbon dioxide level reached 400ppm for the first time in 3 million years.⁹ There can be no doubt that if we are to continue on our current trajectory, we will be threatening the very survival of the human race.

The last few decades have seen increasing calls from academics, activists, philosophers and scientists, asking us to reconsider the cultural assumptions and attitudes towards our natural environment that are used to justify such destruction. At the heart of these assumptions is the anthropocentric idea that we as humans are a separate entity to the rest of the natural environment, as if we exist in a safety bubble, excluded from the damage we deal to an external, inanimate earth. Environmental philosopher Neil Evernden describes the process of reconceptualising the world from a living thing to 'passive porridge to be rearranged by human dictate' as one the most important revolutions in human history, granting us the justification to consume and

³ See for example the multiple examples provided in David E. Nye & Sarah Elkins (eds), 2014, *The Anti-Landscape*, New York.

⁴ Marcus Eriksen *et al.*, 2013, 'Plastic pollution in the South Pacific subtropical gyre', *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, vol. 68, 15 March, pp. 71-76.

⁵ Johan Rockström *et al.*, 'A safe operating space for humanity', *Nature*, vol. 461, no. 7263, 2009, p. 473.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 473.

⁷ Simon Dalby, 2009, *Security and Environmental Change*, Cambridge; Richard A. Matthew *et al.* (eds), 2010, *Global Environmental Change and Human Security*, Cambridge.

⁸ Rockström *et al.*, 'A safe operating space for humanity', p. 473.

⁹ NASA, 2014, 'Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet', <http://climate.nasa.gov/400ppmquotes/>, accessed 24 January 2015.

manipulate the natural environment.¹⁰ The earth is now suffering the cumulative damage of exploitation as a resource base for short-term gain, with little thought given to the illogicality of the concept of exponential growth on a finite planet. Drawing on such realisations, it was scientist Paul Crutzen who argued that this damaging relationship between human and natural environment has brought us into the geological epoch of the Anthropocene, a term that has now entered into common usage.¹¹

As briefly discussed above, the environmental humanities has arisen as a response to the Anthropocene.¹² Deborah Bird Rose *et al.* argue that the environmental humanities have grown as a 'response to the environmental challenges of our time',¹³ while Noel Castree *et al.* describe one of the field's aims as to 'illuminate people's complex and divergent understandings of life – human and non-human – on Earth'.¹⁴ Addressing the Anthropocene requires dealing with the inherent anthropocentrism of the current era by changing the values, structures and institutions that support the perpetuation of ecological violence (a self-explanatory term that will nonetheless be explained below). Leading environmental humanists Hannes Bergthaller *et al.* argue,

...the ecological crisis is not only a crisis of the physical environment but also a crisis of the cultural and social environment – of the systems of representation and of the institutional structures through which contemporary society understands and responds to environmental change (or fails to do so: hence the crisis).¹⁵

The emerging field of the environmental humanities is rich with opportunity for research and multidisciplinary scholarship. By reconsidering our place and role within

¹⁰ Neil Evernden, 1981, 'The Ambiguous Landscape', *Geographical Review*, vol. 71, no. 2, pp. 147-157.

¹¹ Crutzen, 'Geology of Mankind', p. 23; Castree *et al.*, 'Changing the intellectual climate', p. 763.

¹² Castree, Noel 2014, 'The Anthropocene and the Environmental Humanities: Extending the Conversation', *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 5, pp. 233-260.

¹³ Deborah Bird Rose *et al.* 2012, 'Thinking through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities', *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 1, p. 1.

¹⁴ Noel Castree *et al.*, 'Changing the Intellectual Climate', p. 765.

¹⁵ Hannes Bergthaller *et al.*, 2014, 'Mapping Common Ground: Ecocriticism, Environmental History, and the Environmental Humanities', *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 5, p. 262.

the natural environment, such scholarship holds the hope of contributing towards the cultivation of environmentally peaceful futures.

Bergthaller *et al.* argue that the multidisciplinary approach of the environmental humanities means that complex environmental issues can be contemplated with new insight. They acknowledge that it is not easy to overcome disciplinary boundaries, but to do so in a 'spirit of experimentation' can, among other outcomes, produce 'usable' knowledge that 'can shape how people engage with the places they inhabit'.¹⁶ This is a key aim of this thesis. It is based primarily in environmental history, a discipline that challenges the anthropocentric biases that can permeate traditional history.¹⁷ Environmental history is one of the key fields from which the environmental humanities has arisen.¹⁸ Environmental historians focus their attention largely on nature/human interactions – Timo Myllyntaus explains, the discipline is 'essentially focused on analysing problems in humans' relationship with the environment'.¹⁹ Donald Worster, one of the key voices in the establishment of environmental history as a distinct discipline, claims that it is the role of the environmental historian to participate in the great public debates of our time, including not least of all, 'the future of the earth'.²⁰

The discipline of peace studies forms the other half of this thesis' multidisciplinary approach. Leading peace studies scholar David Barash argues that it a discipline that is inherently and unashamedly biased, overtly favouring peace over conflict, and ecological sustainability over environmental degradation.²¹ Like environmental history, peace studies is open to non-anthropocentric (or ecocentric) approaches to the humanities. Bert Jenkins and Marty Branagan argue that in order to

¹⁶ Bergthaller *et al.*, 'Mapping Common Ground', p. 273.

¹⁷ Tom Griffiths, 2003, 'The Nature of Culture and the Culture of Nature', in *Cultural History in Australia*, Hsu-Ming Teo & Richard White (eds), Sydney, p. 76; Donald J. Hughes, 2008, 'Three Dimensions of Environmental History', *Environment and History*, vol. 14, p. 5.

¹⁸ David E Nye *et al.*, 2013, 'Background Paper: The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities', MISTRA – The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research, Stockholm, p. 5; Deborah Bird Rose & Libby Robin, 2004, 'The Ecological Humanities in Action: An Invitation', *Australian Humanities Review*, Issue 31-32, April, unpaginated.

¹⁹ Timo Myllyntaus, 2011, 'Methods in Environmental History', in *Thinking through the Environment: Green Approaches to Global History*, Timo Myllyntaus (ed.), Cambridge, p. 3.

²⁰ Donald Worster, 1993, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, New York, p. ix.

²¹ David P. Barash (ed.), 2000, *Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies*, New York, p. 3.

cultivate positive peace,^{*} there must be an 'acknowledgement that all life on earth is interconnected'.²² Central to the cultivation of a peace culture is the encouragement of healthy relationships that nurture and sustain both people and the natural environment in which they live.²³

Peace studies also shares aims with the environmental humanities – one of the key ways in which peace practitioners attempt to transform conflict is by addressing its root cause, namely the social and cultural structures and institutions in which violence is embedded.²⁴ Furthermore, environmental humanists are urged to look for practical ways in which their scholarship can contribute to addressing the issues of the Anthropocene.²⁵ By drawing on peace studies theory, it is possible to not only understand how the history of the Rainbow Region can inform environmental peace cultivation methods, it can provide an understanding of how demonstrated and effective examples of environmental action and activism may be translated into concrete approaches to environmental peace. While history can look to the past to shed light on the human condition and to help us understand the path that has led us to the current day, peace studies seeks to transform society in positive, peaceful and sustainable ways.

The merging of these two environmentally focused disciplines offers an opportunity to produce a powerful environmental history that examines the changing relationship between people and the natural environment. This thesis will consider how attitudes towards the natural environment have changed, evolved (or devolved) over time as different groups of people with differing cultures, ideologies, political and economic structures impose their own expression of belonging upon the land itself. In

^{*} While negative peace refers to the absence of conflict, positive peace refers to the deliberate cultivation of peaceful relations – the concept will be discussed in further detail below.

²² Bert Jenkins & Marty Branagan, 2014, 'Introduction', in *Cultivating Peace: Contexts, Practices and Multidimensional Models*, Helen Ware et al. (eds), Newcastle upon Tyne, p. 14.

²³ Lisa Schirch 2004, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding: A Vision and Framework for Peace and Justice*, Intercourse, p. 9; Elise Boulding 1998, 'Peace Culture: The problem of managing human difference', *Cross Currents*, vol. 48, no. 4, p. 445.

²⁴ See for example, Johan Galtung, 1990, 'Cultural Violence', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 291-305; John Paul Lederach, 2003, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, Intercourse, pp. 28-33.

²⁵ This was the subject of the 'Environmental Humanities on the Ground: Materiality, Sustainability, and Applicability' conference held in Shanghai, 6-8 November 2015.

doing so, what is revealed is a gradual coalescence of various expressions of belonging, leading to the creation of the dynamic and active region of communities of the modern day. The communities of the Rainbow Region are making influential and innovative contributions towards transforming the culture of their society into a culture of environmental peace and sustainability. The way forward may already be evident, clearly written upon the places we inhabit, the environments we alter, and the legacy we leave imprinted upon the earth.

The Rainbow Region

Located within the Northern Rivers Region of north coast New South Wales, the Rainbow Region is not easily geographically definable. One of the earliest theorists on the significance of place, Yi-Fu Tuan argues that it is direct phenomenological experience that transforms space into a meaningful place. 'Region', he argues, 'is therefore primarily a construct of thought'.²⁶ Citing Tuan, Maria Lewicka goes further, asserting that many regions have 'fuzzy borders and diffused identity'.²⁷ This assessment is particularly true of the Rainbow Region, a region with a strong and proud cultural identity; in fact so much so that notions of what it is to belong to the region have warranted their own book. *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, edited by Helen Wilson, explains that even the locals do not have a unified sense of the region's boundaries. While the major centres of alternative culture such as Nimbin, Mullumbimby (or 'Mullum') and The Channon are 'definitely included', residents are less sure about more 'ordinary' towns such as Ballina, Casino and Kyogle.²⁸

It is therefore the place of the author to define the boundaries of this history. My interpretation of what constitutes the region is based on an academic as well as an empirical understanding of the region, having had a long-standing interest in its history as well as an experiential understanding of the region based on frequent visits and a period of short-term residency. For the purpose of this thesis the Rainbow Region

²⁶ Yi-Fu Tuan, 1975, 'Place: an experiential perspective', *Geographical Review*, vol. 65, no. 2, p. 158.

²⁷ Maria Lewicka, 2010, 'Place attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years?', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 31, p. 212.

²⁸ Helen Wilson, 2003, 'Introduction', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 2.

denotes the more alternative communities of Lismore, Nimbin, Uki, Mullumbimby and all of the villages and communities in between, however its influence frequently reaches outside these borders. It must also be noted that many would be loath to exclude the major tourist centre of Byron Bay from the Rainbow Region. While it does have a distinctive countercultural element, the town's significantly different history and extremely tourist-oriented modern-day character necessarily exclude it from this thesis for the purposes of both consistency and brevity. This thesis, will, however include discussions of the coastal town of Ballina, the place from which the Richmond River flows inland and through the heart of the Rainbow Region. Maps of the region are provided in Appendix A.

A significant part of the historical narrative takes place with forest as the backdrop, and much of the history is played out in the forests and the agricultural land carved out of them. The chosen geographical area largely coincides with the verdant green land upon which the 'Big Scrub' once stood – a vast stand of remnant Gondwanan rainforest, sheltered within the caldera of the ancient shield volcano revered for a great many years as Wollumbin by the Bundjalung people, and more recently known as Mount Warning. Wollumbin lies at the geographical and spiritual centre of Bundjalung Country. While the Rainbow Region comprises only a small proportion of Bundjalung Country, at least three different language groups of the Bundjalung Nation were sustained by and coexisted with the forest for many centuries.^{*} Its fertile green mountains and valleys were first sighted by Cook and Banks during their expedition of 1770, but the dense subtropical rainforest was considered impenetrable by a people more accustomed to the relatively lightly-wooded forests of Britain.²⁹ The waters of the Richmond River flowed through the rainforest, and while its mouth lay hidden for 70 years, the river eventually yielded its secret, allowing

^{*} While language group borders are blurred and contested, the Big Scrub formed part of (at least) the traditional Country of the Widjabul/Wiyabul, Arakwal and Githabul peoples of the Bundjalung Nation.

²⁹ John Cawte Beaglehole (ed.), 1964, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery, vol. 1: The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*, Cambridge, p. 317; 'The Lismore Stations, *Empire*, 6 Oct 1855, p. 6.

passage to European ships and revealing the rainforest full of highly-prized exotic timbers.³⁰

With the discovery of ‘red gold’, the cedar-getters opened the way for squatters, and later, farmers. The landscape was radically changed by the Europeans, who lacked an understanding of the unique Australian environment. ‘Settling’ the region was a matter of trial and error for the early settlers. They discovered the hard way that the climate was unsuitable for a range of agricultural pursuits including sheep, wheat and cotton, before establishing highly successful dairy, banana and sugarcane industries.³¹ While many bemoaned the conditions of the harsh, humid and flood-prone environment, some voices cautioned against the rapid and widespread destruction of the forest.³² Yet the dominant culture of resource extraction prevailed, and by the 1970s less than 1 per cent of the forest remained.³³ Stripped of vegetation, the shallow rainforest soils soon lost their fertility and the agricultural enterprises built out of the clearing of the Big Scrub went into rapid decline, as did land value.³⁴

Coinciding with the growing Australian counterculture movement, reduced property prices led to a significant demographic shift as tree-changers and alternative lifestyleers bought up the cheap land. The student-organised Aquarius Festival, held in Nimbin in 1973, drew a crowd of thousands – many of whom were so taken with the natural beauty of the region, and the power of the community they had established during the festival, that they decided to call the region home. Many of these ecologically conscious ‘Aquarians’ played a major role in establishing the region as the largest countercultural centre in the Southern Hemisphere, home to a great many

³⁰ Louise Tiffany Daley, 2011 [1966], *Men and a River: Richmond River District 1828-1895*, 2nd edn, Lismore.

³¹ Gainsford McCurdy, c. 1958, *Notebooks of Gainsford McCurdy, Settlement of the Richmond River*, Richmond River Historical Society Archives, Lismore, p. 6; Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 110; Arthur Cousins, 1933, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Sydney, pp. 51-63; Malcolm Prentis, 1972, ‘Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, 1825-1881’, Sydney, p. 286; Maurice Ryan 1998, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, Nimbin, p. 2.

³² Charles Jarrett, 1894, ‘The pioneers’, *Ballina Pilot*, p. 8; ‘Quartpot and Ruby Creeks Revisited’, *Armida Express and New England General Advertiser*, 9 November 1872, p. 2.

³³ Tony Parkes *et al.*, 2012, ‘Big Scrub: A cleared landscape in transition back to forest?’, *Ecological Restoration & Management*, vol. 13, no. 3, p. 212.

³⁴ Len Webb, 1987, ‘Foreword’, in *Earth First*, Jeni Kendell & Eddie Buivids (eds), Sydney, p. 10.

successful intentional communities (or ‘communes’) based on ecological principles.³⁵

Today, the Rainbow Region is known for its dynamic community spirit as well as its innovative and influential environmental activism. It is also home to a powerful movement against unconventional gas; supported by Bundjalung people, farmers and the alternative community alike, the community alliance achieved great success in preventing a gas development on farmland at Bentley in May, 2014.³⁶

What this short overview does not reveal is the importance of the relationship between people and the environments they call home. This relationship has radically changed since the colonialist invasion of the Rainbow Region in 1842, bringing significant consequences for both the natural environment and its human and non-human inhabitants – first through the dispossession of the Bundjalung people and more recently with the countercultural influx. The region’s history reveals a strong and passionate connection and reaction to land. While many Aboriginal people resisted European invasion of their homelands throughout Australia, the Bundjalung people are recognised as mounting a particularly strong defence of their Country.³⁷ Many of the early Europeans, too, had a strong connection to land – not the alienating land of the New World, but to their homelands – resulting in the attempted transformation of the region into a more recognisable form.

After the opening up of the forest, tension between squatters and selectors turned into conflict as each group sought possession of the best sites on the plains of the Richmond River.³⁸ Voices of people with the beginnings of a conservation ethos lamented the loss of the natural beauty of the region – just fifty years after the

³⁵ Vanessa Bible, 2010, *Aquarius Rising: Terania Creek and the Australian Forest Protest Movement*, Honours Thesis, The University of New England, Armidale, The Change Agency, www.thechangeagency.org/tag/forests/, accessed 3 February 2016.

³⁶ See for example Yvonne Hartman & Sandy Darab, 2014, ‘The Power of the Wave: Activism Rainbow Region-Style’, *M/C Journal*, vol. 17, no. 6, <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/865>, accessed 7 August 2016, however much of the discussion of Bentley in Chapter Six is drawn from the author’s personal observations and reflections based on four weeks at the blockade.

³⁷ Heather Goodall, 1996, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*, St Leonards, p. 299; Rob Garbutt, 2011, *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond*, Bern, p. 165.

³⁸ Bill Gammage, 1990, ‘Who gained, and who was meant to gain, from land selection in New South Wales’, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 94, pp. 110-111; Richmond River Historical Society (n.d.), *A Short History of the Richmond River*, Lismore, pp. 10-11.

European discovery of red cedar in the region, cedar-getter Charles Jarrett exclaimed, 'now extinct is the echo, destroyed the beautiful foliage, exterminated are near all the graceful cabbage tree palms, torn down and burnt the clinging beautiful flower-bearing vines and tendrils.'³⁹ When protestors made history at Terania Creek in 1979, mounting perhaps the first successful forest blockade in the Western world and saving one of the last remnant patches of the original Big Scrub, there was a great deal of tension between protestors and the logging industry.⁴⁰ The loggers felt driven out of the forests that had provided them and their families with their livelihoods, made worse by the fact that many of the protesters were new to the region and therefore not considered local – it was not their (literal) place to have such a powerful say over the fate of the forests.⁴¹

While this history reveals competing notions of belonging and the resultant tension, what is also revealed is the passionate connection to the places these people call home. This thesis will focus on peace cultivation, not conflict. The tension that has arisen from competing notions of belonging in the region is one area where the literature has been well-covered.⁴² Furthermore, this thesis argues that rather than using such connection to place as a dividing force, it can be used as common and fertile ground on which to build community. The history of the region is to an extent one of conflicting land values; however today there is a much more cohesive sense of community that springs from a common and shared sense of place. There is great value in the exchange of knowledge that is grown from the land. For example, the Widjabul people of the Bundjalung nation work collaboratively with Rous Water, one of the local water authorities based in Lismore, sharing 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge' and respecting different approaches to water management.⁴³ A born-and-bred local farmer, once suspicious of the radically alternative Nimbin community, had

³⁹ Charles Jarrett, 1894, 'The pioneers', *Ballina Pilot*, p. 8,

⁴⁰ Bible, *Aquarius Rising*; Nigel Turvey, 2006, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, Brisbane; Ian Watson, 1990, *Fighting Over the Forests*, Sydney.

⁴¹ This argument has also been made by Jo Kijas in Johanna Kijas, 2002, 'Moving to the Coast: Internal Migration and Place Contestation in Northern New South Wales', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Technology Sydney.

⁴² See for example Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*; Watson, *Fighting over the Forests*; Garbutt, *The Locals*; Kijas, 'Moving to the Coast.'

⁴³ Rous Water, 'The Water Walk at Rocky Creek Dam: A Users Guide to the Far North Coast Water Cycle', www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au/page.asp?f=RES-JDD-22-06-77, accessed 25 February 2016.

his barriers broken down when he used a homeopathic remedy on his cattle and found it to be highly effective – he now enjoys regular social trips to the village.⁴⁴

Furthermore, as discussed above, the five-month Bentley blockade that concluded in May 2014 was built on the collaborative efforts and approaches of Bundjalung Elders, local farmers and the alternative (and ‘non-alternative’) community, united in their common concern about the environmental impacts of tight sands gas mining and the consequences for their local natural environment.

The need to respond to the environmental threats of the Anthropocene, while not necessarily framed in such terms, is acknowledged more so in the Rainbow Region than in many other places either in Australia or globally. While the fierce defence of their beloved homelands is often local in focus, many of the region’s environmentally conscious citizens also have a concern for global environmental issues. Innovative environmental activism is an important regional export, having an influential and successful impact both throughout Australia and internationally as will be discussed.⁴⁵ A history of the region allows us to consider methods and approaches to environmental peace cultivation based *both* on some of the lessons that can be drawn from examining human-nature relations, as well as the environmental action and activism to come from the region. The communities of the Rainbow Region, in cultivating approaches and techniques for use in resolving environmental issues, have forged methods and approaches that can contribute to the evolving concept of environmental peace, offering a set of grounded, demonstrated and effective methods and approaches.

Literature Review

As a multidisciplinary work, this thesis draws on multiple bodies of literature, some of which coalesce and overlap. It makes sense therefore to first examine broad themes before focusing on the specific. While the environmental humanities have already been briefly discussed, this review will further examine the evolution, purpose

⁴⁴ Rob Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 31 May 2012, in author’s possession.

⁴⁵ Bible, *Aquarius Rising*, pp. 56-58; Marty Branagan, 2013, *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence: The Art of Active Resistance*, Basingstoke, pp. 128-129.

and approaches of the field, including its links with environmental history, thus identifying areas for further research. It will then examine the development of environmental concerns within the peace literature, revealing how environmental peace has grown as a sub-field of peace studies. It is also necessary to engage briefly with historical concerns over land, place and belonging in Australia, followed by the well-established body of place literature, before turning to the literature of the Rainbow Region.

Environmental History

As noted, the environmental humanities have grown largely out of environmental history scholarship. Environmental history can be defined as an interdisciplinary enquiry into the relationships between culture and nature through time. Like traditional history, it aims to uncover the path that has led us to the modern day so as to better understand the current state of the world – but unlike traditional history, it is also forward-looking, making suggestions as to the ‘problems and opportunities of tomorrow.’⁴⁶

Environmental history first emerged as a distinct branch of history in the late 20th century, however Tom Griffiths argues that the foundations had already been laid well before then, with Aldo Leopold’s call for an ‘ecological interpretation of history’ in his 1949 work, *A Sand County Almanac*.⁴⁷ Donald Worster also cites Leopold’s influence.⁴⁸ Worster, who is widely considered to be the ‘father’ of environmental history, explains how he came to establish the foundations of the discipline – from the 1970s, he noted of the vast majority of history seminars and works that there was ‘no nature in their history’:

no sense of the presence and influence of the land on past human experience, no soil, no countryside... Historians seemed to have forgotten completely that, until very

⁴⁶ Stephen Dovers (ed.), 2000, *Environmental History and Policy: Still Settling Australia*, South Melbourne, p. 10. See also Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, p. viii;

⁴⁷ Griffiths, ‘The Nature of Culture and the Culture of Nature’, p. 73. See also Aldo Leopold, 1949, *A Sand County Almanac*, New York.

⁴⁸ Donald Worster, 1990, ‘Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History’, *Journal of American History*, vol. 76, no. 4, March, p. 1087.

recently, almost all people lived as intimately with other species and with the wind and weather as they did with their own kind.⁴⁹

Worster published extensively on the distinct field of environmental history, and by 1980, the discipline was fast gaining popularity.⁵⁰

Many environmental historians, as well as environmental humanists, take issue with the Enlightenment-influenced nature/culture divide, also referred to as Cartesian dualism,⁵¹ which sees the separation of people and nature. Worster explains:

Nature is set apart from culture... This division has worked to balkanise our various university departments and professions, our intellectual loyalties, and even our scholarly languages. I cannot adequately express the enormous damage that this balkanisation has done not only to our intellectual and moral life but also to the natural world... and to planet Earth. However, I can cheerfully announce that we are beginning to blaze a small pathway across the levee. The name of that pathway is environmental history.⁵²

Morris Berman and William Cronon are among the early key historians to engage with the concept of the nature/culture divide. In their respective works, *The Reenchantment of the World*⁵³ and *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*,⁵⁴ Berman and Cronon give the Earth a sentient quality by arguing that Earth and humanity need to work on our relationship, to 'reconnect', to 'reconceive' and to 'reconcile.' All of these verbs allude to a relationship once strong that now needs work – to *re-establish* a once stronger connection. Doing so can heal the imagined divide between people and the natural environment. Carolyn Merchant is another of the key

⁴⁹ Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, p. viii.

⁵⁰ Griffiths, 'The Nature of Culture and the Culture of Nature', p. 76; Nye *et al.*, 'Background Paper: The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities', p. 5. See also Donald Worster, 1977, *Nature's Economy: A Study of Ecological Ideals*, Cambridge; Donald Worster (ed.), 1988, *The Ends of The Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, Cambridge; Worster, 'Transformations of the Earth', pp. 1087-1106; Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*.

⁵¹ Named so after René Descartes, the French Enlightenment philosopher accused of engineering the divide. See for example Andreas Malm & Alf Hornborg, 2014, 'The geology of mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative', *The Anthropocene Review*, vol. xx(x), 7 January, pp. 1-8.

⁵² Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, p. 20.

⁵³ Berman, Morris 1981, *The Reenchantment of the World*, Ithaca.

⁵⁴ Cronon, William (ed.) 1996, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York.

drivers behind this developing narrative, reflected both in *The Death of Nature*⁵⁵ as well as her chapter, 'Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative',⁵⁶ which appears in Cronon's *Uncommon Ground* and will be explored in more depth in Chapter Three.

Environmental historians including Tom Griffiths, Donald Hughes, John R. McNeill and Libby Robin have continued the discussion about the need to dismantle the divide – as Hughes explains, 'humans cannot place themselves outside the principles of nature.'⁵⁷ Several journals also contribute to this discussion, including *Environment and History*, *Global Environment*, and the Oxford journal, *Environmental History*. Environmental history is therefore an ideal disciplinary platform from which to investigate the relationship between people and the natural environment in the Rainbow Region. The concept of nature/culture dualism will be explored within its relevant historical context in Chapter Three, and will be further discussed throughout the thesis.

Environmental Humanities

It is largely from these understandings of human-nature relations that the environmental humanities have emerged, but it should be acknowledged that ecocriticism is also one of the new field's primary foundations.⁵⁸ Griffiths argues, 'environmental history and ecocriticism are expressions of a renewed, reflective engagement with the physical world.'⁵⁹ A review of environmental humanities literature reads much the same as that of environmental history given their overlapping concerns, however the newer field is just that; a field rather than a

⁵⁵ Carolyn Merchant, 1980, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, New York.

⁵⁶ Carolyn Merchant, 1996, 'Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon (ed.), New York, pp. 132-159.

⁵⁷ Hughes, 'Three Dimensions of Environmental History', p. 8. See also Griffiths, 'The Nature of Culture and the Culture of Nature'; Tom Griffiths & Libby Robin (eds.), 1997, *Ecology and Empire: The Environmental History of Settler Societies*, Carlton South; Libby Robin, 2007, *How a Continent Created a Nation*, Sydney; John R. McNeill & Alan Roe (eds), 2013, *Global Environmental History: An Introductory Reader*, Abingdon.

⁵⁸ For an excellent discussion of the role that both disciplines have played in the foundation of the environmental humanities see Bergthaller *et al*, 'Mapping Common Ground'.

⁵⁹ Tom Griffiths, 2007, 'The Humanities and an Environmentally Sustainable Australia', *Australian Humanities Review*, issue 43, December, unpaginated.

discipline, and is not fixed by disciplinary expectations or approaches. It is focused entirely on addressing the environmental crises of our self-made Anthropocene, reconsidering our history in view of the intellectual revolution of the Enlightenment, and aims to not just question the nature/culture divide, but to *dismantle* the 'false duality.'⁶⁰ The environmental humanities could be considered a more evolved, multidisciplinary reimagining of what environmental history is capable of, strengthened by its focus and open approach.

While its origins may be located further in the past, the environmental humanities is a field that has been developing over a little more than a decade. In a 2004 article Deborah Bird Rose and Libby Robin, pioneers of the environmental humanities, issued an 'invitation' to the 'ecological humanities.'⁶¹ They encouraged scholars to engage in this new field that unites environmental concerns across not only the humanities, but also the sciences and social sciences. In their outline they argue that place is central to environmental history. They reason that 'place-centered histories' provide insight into both the past, and how the past manifests itself in the present. They argue that 'environmental histories are largely inseparable from place. They connect across scientific, social science, and humanities paradigms, and they have the potential to connect across Indigenous and Settler-descended peoples.'⁶² Since then, the environmental humanities have rapidly developed globally to be a major new research area, with publications, journals (at least seventeen devoted entirely to the field),⁶³ organisations and conferences coming out of Australia, Europe, North America and more recently, Asia, with particularly strong hubs in Australia and

⁶⁰ Nye & Elkins (eds), *The Anti-Landscape*.

⁶¹ Deborah Bird Rose & Libby Robin, 2004, 'The Ecological Humanities in Action: An Invitation', *Australian Humanities Review*, Issue 31-32, unpaginated.

⁶² Rose & Robin, 'The Ecological Humanities in Action: An Invitation', unpaginated.

⁶³ Nye *et al*, 'Background Paper: The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities', p. 40.

Scandinavia.* Nye *et al.*'s 'Background Paper: The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities' gives an excellent and detailed overview of the extent of the environmental humanities' global popularity.⁶⁴

While the International Union of Geological Sciences, the organisation responsible for declaring new geological epochs, has not yet formalised the term, the notion that humanity is now entering the Anthropocene is taken as an established fact in much of the environmental humanities literature⁶⁵ (however some debate the accuracy of the term, opting for other descriptors such as the 'Capitalocene', 'Plantationocene', 'Chthulucene' 'Econocene' or 'Technocene').⁶⁶ Regardless of the term, the notion is the same – human action has dramatically and irreversibly altered many of Earth's living systems, and addressing these ecologically devastating impacts must likewise come from human action.⁶⁷ Noel Castree reflects that there has been a sharp rise in the number of environmental humanists engaging with the Anthropocene since 2007: 'In a few short years a trickle of writings by environmental humanists about the Anthropocene has grown into a small stream, with the promise of much more to come.'⁶⁸ The environmental humanities, therefore, seek active ways of addressing the Anthropocene, and a number of approaches can be identified.

* Several universities in Scandinavian countries have a very strong environmental humanities focus, particularly the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. Other important centres include The Rachel Carson Centre in Munich, and in Australia, the University of Sydney and UNSW have very strong departments. The journal *Environmental Humanities* also originated in Australia. The USA is also an important centre, and scholars there tend to lean more towards an ecocritical approach. Harvard and Princeton have emerging departments, and there is a particularly strong hub in Vermont, where there has been a strong focus on humanities-based environmental studies for some time. There are also environmental humanities departments in Taiwan and Shanghai. It would be near-impossible to accurately chart the extent of the field's rapid development, as every week there is another book, paper, establishment, university course or degree, contributing to the discussion.

⁶⁴ Nye *et al.*, 'Background Paper: The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities',

⁶⁵ See for example Crutzen, 'Geology of Mankind'; Castree *et al.*, 'Changing the intellectual climate'; Castree, 'The Anthropocene and the Environmental Humanities'; Libby Robin, 2013, 'Histories for Changing Times: Entering the Anthropocene', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 329-340.

⁶⁶ Jason W. Moore (ed.), 2016, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, Oakland; Donna Haraway, 2015, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin', *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, pp. 159-165; Malm & Hornborg, 'The geology of mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative', pp. 1-8; Richard B. Norgaard, 2013, 'The Econocene and the California Delta', *San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 1-5.

⁶⁷ Rose *et al.*, 'Thinking through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities', p. 1; Bergthaller *et al.*, 'Mapping Common Ground', p. 262.

⁶⁸ Castree, 'The Anthropocene and the Environmental Humanities', p. 247. See also a special edition of *Australian Historical Studies* (2013, vol. 44, issue 3), which focused on the Anthropocene.

Firstly, as argued by Deborah Bird Rose,⁶⁹ challenging the nature/culture divide is an exercise in challenging the foundations of Western-style academia, and re-interpreting our history allows for a different reading of human-nature interactions, which can help to guide our way into the Anthropocene – this is one of the key aims of this thesis. Rose argues:

the conventions of the dominant western system of knowledge are taking us deeper and deeper into the ecological crises we face today. Destabilising this system is critical to finding ways of thinking and acting that may help us start to face these crises.⁷⁰

The notion has also been explored by Thom van Dooren, Matthew Chrulew, Stuart Cooke, Matthew Kearnes and Emily O’Gorman, who argue that the environmental humanities offer a ‘provocation’ to disciplinary boundaries.⁷¹ Bergthaller *et al.* argue, we ‘need to be jolted out of disciplinary ruts and mindsets’,⁷² while Castree explains that the field ‘pay[s] close attention to human faculties beyond cognition and reason, dealing with such things as love, trust, fear, care, commitment, devotion and loyalty’,⁷³ themes that have not traditionally been strong areas of academic enquiry. Related to this, another key approach of the environmental humanities is the effort to communicate across the academic arts/sciences divide, which could be considered to roughly coincide with the nature/culture divide, and is likewise considered to be largely a product of Enlightenment thought.⁷⁴ The environmental humanities’ aim to approach entrenched ideas from new angles therefore could be considered a methodological approach, as will be discussed in the Methodology section below.

Neimanis, Åsberg and Hedrén have identified four global environmental issues that the environmental humanities are well-placed to address, and correspondingly,

⁶⁹ Deborah Bird Rose, 2000, ‘Writing Place’, in *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narration*, Ann Curthoys & Ann McGrath (eds), Melbourne, pp. 08.1-08.13.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 08.1.

⁷¹ Rose *et al.*, ‘Thinking through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities’, p. 5.

⁷² Bergthaller *et al.*, ‘Mapping Common Ground’, p. 263.

⁷³ Castree *et al.*, ‘Changing the Intellectual Climate’, p. 765.

⁷⁴ Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Åsberg & Johan Hedrén, 2015, ‘Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities: Towards Critical Posthumanities for the Anthropocene’, *Ethics & the Environment*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 67-97; Sverker Sörlin, 2012, ‘Environmental Humanities: Why Should Biologists Interested in the Environment Take the Humanities Seriously?’, *BioScience*, vol. 62, no. 9, pp. 788-789.

four directions that the field can take. Furthermore, they argue that addressing these issues ‘is not possible *without* the environmental humanities.’⁷⁵ In brief, the four problems identified are: ‘alienation’ from the reality of environmental problems; the inadequacy of political responses; ‘the problem of negative framing’ and the problem of looking at environmental issues within narrow frameworks, or ‘compartmentalisation.’⁷⁶ Their four approaches are cultivating diverse understandings of nature that extend beyond the scientific realm (helping to deconstruct nature/culture dualism); *rethinking* the relationship between ‘humans, other animals, waters, lands, and other “Earth others”’⁷⁷ so that the nature/culture divide ceases to exist; transdisciplinary and ‘postdisciplinary’ approaches; and developing ‘citizen humanities’, bridging the gap between academia and the broader public.⁷⁸ This thesis contributes to two of these approaches – firstly, by reconsidering the relationship between people and *the rest of* the natural environment (part of the problem is talking about humanity as if we are separate from the Earth and its living systems, however using language such as ‘the relationship between people and the natural environment’ or ‘human-nature relations’, while perhaps reinforcing the divide, makes it clear that the gap is where the research is focused. Perhaps there is need here for a more accurate term to be developed that acknowledges the intrinsic interconnectedness of people and nature). Secondly, and as already explained, it is transdisciplinary in approach.

An important feature of the environmental humanities, as demonstrated by Neimanis, Åsberg and Hedrén’s article, is that it is a proactive field, looking to identify problems *as well as* to offer suggestions as to how to solve them. Castree argues:

The Anthropocene concept may soon be among the key signifiers that frame the thinking of societal decision makers. Environmental humanists can, if so minded, shape its meaning and implications directly. But this will involve more practitioners

⁷⁵ Neimanis, Åsberg & Hedrén, ‘Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities’, p. 67 (emphasis original).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-79.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-90.

interested in global environmental change operating outside the "usual" arenas, such as established disciplinary conferences and journals.⁷⁹

Nye *et al* argue that there is a 'worldwide interest in the kinds of knowledge that the Environmental Humanities create to help solve environmental problems.'⁸⁰ Rose and Robin also argue that environmental humanists are committed to addressing social and ecological change and injustice, and they believe that settler societies such as Australia have a particular duty to examine our history and its consequences for indigenous people and environments.⁸¹ Griffiths, too, argues that Australian responses to the environmental humanities offer a unique perspective, arguing that 'Australian history is like a giant experiment in ecological crisis and management',⁸² while Bergthaller *et al.* argue that the field can create 'knowledge that can shape how people engage with the places they inhabit.'⁸³

While not exhaustive, this brief overview of the environmental humanities demonstrates the strength and suitability of the field as an ideal disciplinary framework in which to situate this thesis. As stated, the thesis will engage with *place-based* history, including that of Aboriginal people and the colonial era, examining the relationship between people and environments. It takes issue with the nature/culture divide and aims to think across the divide, arguing for the necessity to resituate the human world view within an understanding of the interconnected nature of all life. A transdisciplinary exercise, it will also contribute to practical responses by drawing on peace scholarship and applying it to the history. The evolving field of environmental peace shares much in common with the environmental humanities, and offers further direction and focus as will be explored below.

⁷⁹ Castree, 'The Anthropocene and the Environmental Humanities', p. 233.

⁸⁰ Nye *et al*, 'Background Paper: The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities', pp. 11-12.

⁸¹ Rose & Robin 'The Ecological Humanities in Action: An Invitation', unpaginated.

⁸² Griffiths, 'The Humanities and an Environmentally Sustainable Australia', unpaginated.

⁸³ Bergthaller *et al*, 'Mapping Common Ground', p. 263.

Peace Studies

Peace studies is the multidisciplinary study of peace and conflict. Christopher E. Miller and Mary E. King of the University for Peace in Costa Rica define peace studies as follows:

An interdisciplinary field of study with varying themes and foci, including but not limited to analysis of conflict, management of conflict, and resolution of conflict; non-violent sanctions; peace paradigms, peace building, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement; social and economic justice; war's causes and conduct; and a variety of conceptions of international and domestic security.⁸⁴

Three key concepts of the field are of particular relevance to this thesis. Firstly, peace scholars and practitioners aim to not only resolve conflict, but to transform the conditions that lead to conflict in the first place. Johan Galtung, who is among the most influential of the peace scholars, defined these different goals as negative peace and positive peace respectively.⁸⁵ While negative peace means the absence of conflict and violence, positive peace refers to the cultivation of peaceful and harmonious societal relations, by nonviolent means, so as to *prevent* violence.⁸⁶ Negative peace is geared towards mitigation. Positive peace, on the other hand, which aims to transform conflict, must deal with the *causes* of conflict, which usually means working to actively change existing structures.⁸⁷

Cultivating positive peace means transforming the conditions that perpetuate conflict, but in attempting to do so it is necessary to understand sources of violence. The second key concept of relevance to this thesis was also developed by Galtung, who over the course of his career has developed his theories of direct, cultural and

⁸⁴ Christopher E. Miller & Mary E. King, 2005, *A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2nd edn, San José, p. 60.

⁸⁵ Johan Galtung, 1964, 'An Editorial', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Johan Galtung, 1967, *Theories of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking*, Oslo, p. 4; David Barash & Charles Webel, 2014, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 3rd edn, Seattle, p. 7; Jenkins & Branagan, 'Introduction', p. 2.

⁸⁷ Jenkins & Branagan, 'Introduction', p. 1.

structural violence, otherwise known as ‘Galtung’s Triangle’ (see figure 1 below).⁸⁸ More recently, Galtung has added the concept of ecological violence. He argues that without ‘ecological balance’, positive peace cannot be cultivated.⁸⁹ He warns against understanding ecological violence purely from an anthropocentric viewpoint, arguing that the non-human world must also be considered.⁹⁰ Ecological violence can appear as any three of Galtung’s forms of violence. For example, direct ecological violence can be seen in the physical destruction of the natural environment. Structural ecological violence could be considered as violence inflicted upon the environment through ecologically unjust laws and policies, whereas cultural ecological violence might be seen in cultural practices that are damaging to the environment.

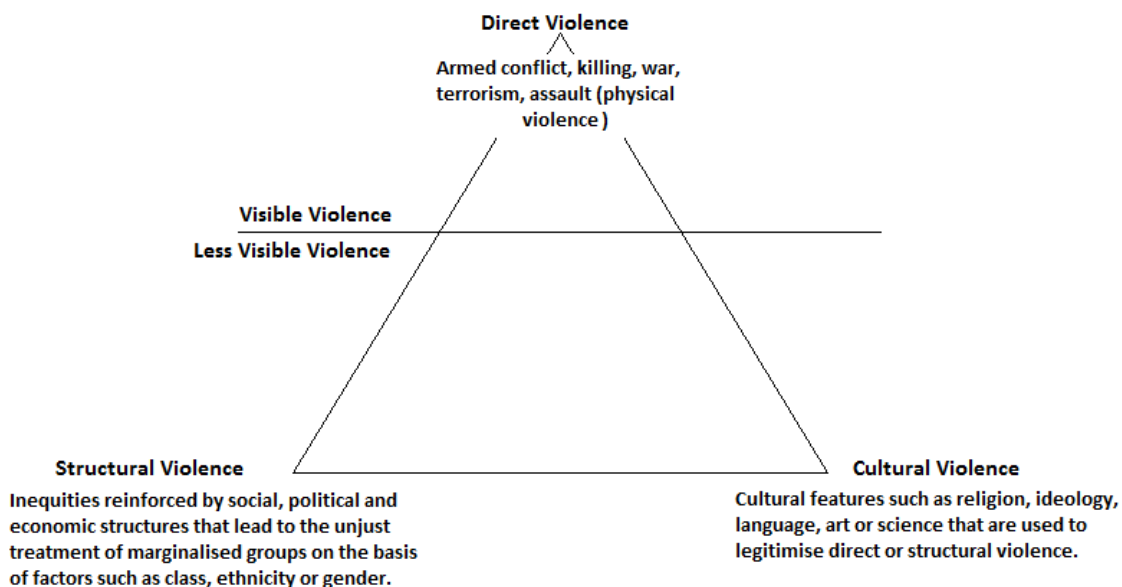


Figure 1: Galtung’s Triangle of Violence.⁹¹

It is important to note the recent addition of another concept of violence. Environmental humanist, Rob Nixon’s work *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* adds to the discussion. He argues that violence against the environment is

⁸⁸ Johan Galtung, 1969, ‘Violence, Peace and Peace Research’, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 6, no. 3 pp. 167-191; Johan Galtung, 1990, ‘Cultural Violence’, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 291-305; Johan Galtung, 1996, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*, London.

⁸⁹ Galtung, ‘Cultural Violence’, p. 292. See also Jenkins & Branagan, ‘Introduction’, p. 14.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Figure by author, based on Galtung, ‘Cultural Violence’, pp. 291-305.

often perpetrated over long periods of time, for example in the form of toxic pollution or climate change, making it even less visible than structural or cultural violence.⁹² ‘Slow violence’, he argues, is much more likely to impact upon the poorest people on Earth, who are exposed to the most toxic and degraded environments, raising issues of global justice.⁹³ While Nixon does not overtly connect the related fields, his influential work is evidence of the compatibility of the environmental humanities and peace studies.

The third concept, or group of concepts, of particular relevance to this thesis are the notions of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Peacemaking is generally applied during a conflict situation in order to mitigate and resolve the conflict.⁹⁴ It could be considered the application of negative peace.⁹⁵ Peacekeeping is applied after the conflict, and aims to prevent further outbreaks of violence – again, this is a form of negative peace.⁹⁶ Peacebuilding, however, can happen before, during, or after conflict. It can be understood as the application of positive peace and aims to transform inherently violent existing structures.⁹⁷ It is both preventative and restorative, and includes environmental protection measures.⁹⁸ Lisa Schirch argues, peacebuilding ‘empowers people to foster relationships that sustain people and their environment.’⁹⁹

For the purposes of this thesis, the term ‘cultivating environmental peace’ refers to positive peacebuilding. The notion of peace ‘cultivation’ is particularly

⁹² Rob Nixon, 2011, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Boston.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ See for example Pierre du Toit, 2008, ‘Rules and Procedures for Negotiated Peacemaking’, in *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Peace Processes and Post-War Reconstruction*, 2nd edn, John Darby & Roger Mac Ginty (eds), Basingstoke, pp. 78-93; Randall Amster, 2015, *Peace Ecology*, Abingdon, p. 7.

⁹⁵ Miller & King, *A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies*, pp. 59-60.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63, Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 7; Marrack Goulding, 2000, ‘The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping’, in Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace*, p. 115.

⁹⁷ Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 7; Miller & King, *A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies*, pp. 56-59.

⁹⁸ Jenkins & Branagan, ‘Introduction’, p. 1; Lisa Schirch, 2004, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding: A Vision and Framework for Peace and Justice*, Intercourse, p. 12.

⁹⁹ Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, p. 9. Also see Tony Lynch & Bert Jenkins, 2014, ‘Two Kinds of Peace: Concluding Reflections on Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding’, in *Cultivating Peace*, Ware et al. (eds), pp. 367-376, for a discussion of these different approaches to peace.

applicable to environmental peace. Seminal peace scholar John Paul Lederach explains his use of the term:

my efforts at peacebuilding and conciliation have led me to the metaphor of cultivator more than harvester, towards nourishment of soil and plant more than picking the fruit. The images that accompany this complementary metaphor suggest an organic connection to context, the building of relationships, and a commitment to process over time.¹⁰⁰

The Earth is victim to an ecologically violent conflict situation. Our current attitudes towards 'natural resource management' could be considered an environmental peacekeeping approach – to inflict ecological violence upon the earth with the stated intention of rebuilding afterwards, for example in the case of mining, rather than maintaining and preserving peaceful ecological systems. This thesis will consider our existing system which advocates this approach, and ask whether cultivating a strong sense of belonging and place attachment in order to maintain existing peace provides a better path to environmental peace – whether the prevention is better than the attempted cure. This thesis will therefore look at how to *cultivate* peace – how to regrow it in the bare patches we have created, how to regenerate the earth, and our relationship with it.

With key concepts established, the discussion can now turn back to the literature to trace the evolution of the field. Quincy Wright and Lewis Richardson are widely credited as the first peace scholars – working independently of one another in the 1930s, they concerned themselves with an analysis of war and the reasons for its outbreak.¹⁰¹ However, the field of peace studies was not established until the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹⁰² Carolyn Stephenson's 'The Evolution of Peace Studies' traces three major 'waves' in the field's development, and together with David J. Dunn's *The*

¹⁰⁰ John Paul Lederach, 2008, 'Cultivating Peace', in *Contemporary Peacemaking*, Darby & Mac Ginty (eds), p. 41. The notion of peace cultivation is also employed by Helen Ware, Bert Jenkins, Marty Branagan & DB Subedi in their edited book, *Cultivating Peace*.

¹⁰¹ Carolyn Stephenson, 1989 'The Evolution of Peace Studies', in *Peace and World Order Studies: A Curriculum Guide*, 5th edn, Michael T. Klare & Daniel C. Thomas (eds), Boulder, p. 13; Miller & King, *A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies*, p. 60.

¹⁰² Stephenson, 'The Evolution of Peace Studies', p. 13; Miller & King, *A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies*, p. 60.

First Fifty Years of Peace Research: A Survey and Interpretation, offers a useful overview.¹⁰³ The first wave was in response to World War II, and understandably, was largely focused on the prevention of conflict.¹⁰⁴ The second wave, arising in the late 1960s, was dedicated to peace education and critical peace research, largely in response to the Vietnam War.¹⁰⁵ The third wave, argues Stephenson, began in the 1980s and saw ‘a massive increase in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs, and a massive expansion of private and state funding for research and education in the field.’¹⁰⁶

While Galtung’s notion of ecological violence was first put forward in 1990 as discussed above, it has not been widely received in peace studies circles. The field’s first real engagement with environmental concerns was the notion of ‘environmental security’. A term relatively new to peace studies, the concept of environmental security appeared in the aftermath of the Cold War.¹⁰⁷ Roland Dannreuther explains why, arguing that during the Cold War, the all-pervading threat of nuclear war was paramount, and as such the environment was ‘simply not on the radar.’¹⁰⁸ So while environmental awareness was at a height in 60s and 70s, in mainstream peace and conflict studies the Cold War dominated. With the conclusion of the war, the focus was free to shift to other concerns.¹⁰⁹ Since then, a significant number of peace researchers have engaged with and developed the concept of environmental security, including Buzan, Wæver and Wilde,¹¹⁰ Klare,¹¹¹ Altman *et al.*,¹¹² Dalby,¹¹³ Brauch *et al.*,¹¹⁴ and Sygna, O’Brien and Wolf.¹¹⁵

¹⁰³ Stephenson, ‘The Evolution of Peace Studies’, pp. 9-19; David J. Dunn, 2005, *The First Fifty Years of Peace Research: A Survey and Interpretation*, Aldershot.

¹⁰⁴ Stephenson, ‘The Evolution of Peace Studies’, pp. 13-14; Dunn, *The First Fifty Years of Peace Research*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁵ Carolyn Stephenson, 1990, *Peace Studies: The Evolution of Peace Research and Peace Education*, Honolulu; Stephenson, ‘The Evolution of Peace Studies’, pp. 14-15; Dunn, *The First Fifty Years of Peace Research*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁶ Stephenson, ‘The Evolution of Peace Studies’, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ Roland Dannreuther, 2007, *International Security: The Contemporary Agenda*, Cambridge, p. 59; Michael Renner, 2006, ‘Introduction to the Concepts of Environmental Security and Environmental Conflict’, The Hague, p. 1; Úrsula Oswald Spring, Hans Günter Brauch & Keith G. Tidball (eds), 2014, *Expanding Peace Ecology: Peace, Security, Sustainability, Equity, and Gender*, e-book, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Roland Dannreuther, 2007, *International Security: The Contemporary Agenda*, Cambridge, p. 59.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, 1998, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder.

The term 'environmental security' is multifaceted, and there is no consensus on its exact definition, argues Renner.¹¹⁶ He does however, outline four categories:

[t]he impact of environmental change on conflict formation; violence [arising] out of a context of resource wealth; [t]he environmental impact of armed conflicts, arms production, maintaining military forces, and preparations for warfare; [and] [o]pportunities for "environmental peacemaking" that may arise out of common interests among different countries or communities.¹¹⁷

While the concept of environmental security is often framed in anthropocentric terms, based on the notion that the environment needs 'securing' for human benefit, some scholars consider the implications for human-nature relations and notions of interconnectedness. Dalby, for example, draws on the notion of the Anthropocene in his discussion of environmental security, arguing that the very concept of the Anthropocene forces a revaluation and reconsideration of our actions and approach to environmental change. It does not allow for the illusion that we are separate – engaging with the Anthropocene necessitates an understanding that we, as part of the environment, are for the first time impacting upon and altering the natural environment (of which we are a part) on a global scale.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Dannreuther argues that 'the concept of environmental security is valid and useful, not least for reminding one of the critical and fragile relationship between human beings and nature.'¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ Michael T. Klare, 1996, 'Redefining Security: The New Global Schisms', *Current History*, vol. 95, pp. 353-358.

¹¹² Dennis Altman, Joseph A. Camilleri, Robyn Eckersley & Gerhard Hoffstaedter, 2012, *Why Human Security Matters: Rethinking Australian Foreign Policy*, Sydney.

¹¹³ Simon Dalby, 2009, *Security and Environmental Change*, Cambridge.

¹¹⁴ Hans Günter Brauch *et al*, 2011, *Coping with Global Environmental Change, Disasters and Security – Threats, Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks*, New York.

¹¹⁵ Lynda Sygna, Karen O'Brien & Johanna Wolf (eds), 2013, *A Changing Environment for Human Security: Transformative Approaches to Research, Policy and Action*, New York.

¹¹⁶ Michael Renner, 'Introduction to the Concepts of Environmental Security and Environmental Conflict', p. 1.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁸ Dalby, *Security and Environmental Change*, p. 159.

¹¹⁹ Dannreuther, *International Security*, p. 61. See also Matthew *et al.* (eds), *Global Environmental Change and Human Security*.

Environmental security represents the first step in peace studies' engagement with environmental concerns, demonstrating the gradual awareness of the need to consider how environmental issues are linked to peace and conflict. In recent years these links are being increasingly explored, coinciding with the undeniable reality that we are now seeing the real impacts of climate change.* Smith and Vivekananda's 2007 study examines the links between climate change, peace and war,¹²⁰ as does Branagan's 2013 book, *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence: The Art of Active Resistance*.¹²¹ Conca and Dabelko's *Environmental Peacekeeping*, as the title suggests, develops the links between peacekeeping and environmental concerns.¹²² Verhagen examines the 'emerging field of environmental peacebuilding', and argues for the need to think beyond 'mainstream' concepts when approaching environmental issues.¹²³ Two separate volumes titled *Making Peace with the Earth* have also been recently released. The first, a UNESCO publication, recognises the critical condition of the planet, acknowledges the human role in this, and calls for the transformation of social structures including the economy, demonstrating mainstream recognition and engagement with these critically important realisations.¹²⁴ The other is influential Indian activist Vandana Shiva's, and is highly critical of the anthropocentric nature of the majority of human civilisation. Shiva calls for a future based on both human rights and earth rights.¹²⁵

A promising development is the very recent emergence of the notion of 'peace ecology', which contributes to the critically important task of understanding the intersections between environment and peace from a less anthropocentric perspective. A term coined by Kyrou in a 2007 paper, he explains:

* While a vocal minority of climate skeptics would dispute this, an assumption of this thesis is that having consensus among 99% of climate scientists constitutes undeniable reality.

¹²⁰ Dan Smith & Janani Vivekananda, 2007, *A Climate of Conflict: The Links between Climate Change, Peace and War*, London.

¹²¹ Marty Branagan, 2013, *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence: The Art of Active Resistance*, Basingstoke.

¹²² Ken Conca & Geoffrey Dabelko (eds), 2002, *Environmental Peacemaking*, Washington DC.

¹²³ F.C. Verhagen, 2014, 'Sustainable Communities: a lens for envisioning and achieving a community-based culture of social and ecological peace', *Journal of Peace Education*, vol. 11, no. 3, p. 298.

¹²⁴ Jerome Binde (ed.), 2007, *Making Peace with the Earth: What Future for the Human Species and the Planet?*, Paris.

¹²⁵ Vandana Shiva, 2012, *Making Peace with the Earth: Beyond Resource, Land and Food Wars*, New Delhi.

The paradigm of Peace Ecology applies a worldview approach to environmental peacemaking. It holistically makes a case for the long-term benefits of an environmental consciousness combined with a peace consciousness.¹²⁶

Kyrou's little-known work did not attract much recognition until the past few years. In 2014, Amster further developed the concept in his book *Peace Ecology*,¹²⁷ while the influential International Peace Research Association (IPRA) published an edited volume on 'expanding peace ecology' in the same year, signifying a broader acceptance of the term.¹²⁸ Amster's interpretation of peace ecology is the most useful and inspiring, taking a grassroots approach and linking peace and nonviolence with environmentalism and activism.¹²⁹ While these three works offer strong contributions to the intersections of environment and peace, as Oswald Spring, Brauch and Tidball argue, such concepts have not been widely taken up by schools of peace and environment studies, and need further development.¹³⁰

This review of peace studies literature is limited and has aimed to explain the field, its major themes and its engagement with environmental issues, so as to demonstrate the need for further research. It has not actively engaged with the vast body of methods and approaches to peace, as this will be done in the discussion chapter (Chapter Seven), reflectively applying peace concepts to the themes that emerge from the history. Similarly, the following discussions of both the broad body of place literature, and themes of place and belonging in Australian history, will provide an overview while more relevant literature will be explored within its proper context during the course of the thesis.

Place Literature

While human connection to place and a desire to belong are as old as humanity itself, it is only quite recently that notions of place and belonging have found their way

¹²⁶ Christos N. Kyrou, 2007, 'Peace Ecology: An Emerging Paradigm in Peace Studies', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 79.

¹²⁷ Amster, *Peace Ecology*.

¹²⁸ Oswald Spring, Brauch & Tidball (eds), *Expanding Peace Ecology*.

¹²⁹ Amster, *Peace Ecology*.

¹³⁰ Oswald Spring, Brauch & Tidball (eds), *Expanding Peace Ecology*, p. 16.

into academic discourse. Geography was one of the first disciplines to enquire into the nature of place and its effects upon individuals. Evernden's 'The Ambiguous Landscape'¹³¹ recognised the effects of aesthetics on place attachment and challenged policy makers to accept the legitimacy of 'visual resource' value as a component of natural resource management. He noted:

researchers are seldom asked to speculate about the relationships between man [sic] and environment... With care and effort landscape may be revealed as a phenomenon vastly more diverse and ambiguous than current predispositions allow'.¹³²

Similarly, Robert D. Sack's *The Power of Place and Space*¹³³ argued that geographers were only just starting to realise the power and significance of place, and to recognise that place, nature and culture were mutually constitutive. Sack believed, 'all people are geographical beings'.¹³⁴

Despite its brief history as a field of study, there has been a great deal of academic focus on the relationship between place, space and belonging. Environmental psychologists, sociologists, geographers and historians, such as Peter Read, have investigated this relationship and have argued that there exists a deep, human attachment to place. Read's work, *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places* argues that place attachment is more than just a fondness for a particular location. Humans connect themselves on a spiritual and emotional level to place. Read argues that humans *need* to turn space into place and form attachments in order to feel secure. We distinguish between one place and another in our minds and 'erect mental boundaries' to categorise them. Each individual constructs their own notion of place based on personal identity and experience, although rules and customs of culture determine the symbolism of landscape.¹³⁵ Philosopher Edward Casey argues that the relationship between people and place is so inherent in human nature that we

¹³¹ Evernden, 'The Ambiguous Landscape', pp. 147-157.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹³³ Robert Sack, 1993, 'The Power of Place and Space', *Geographical Review*, vol. 83, no. 3, pp. 326-329.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

¹³⁵ Peter Read, 1996, *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Melbourne, pp. 2-3.

all live in the 'place-world'.¹³⁶ Our bodies traverse actual landscape, while real and imagined landscape can be accessed from all places by thought. The (relatively) modern concept of geography, coupled with globalisation, allows us to connect with a world landscape and as humans we mentally position ourselves on the globe.

There has also been an increasing focus on the relationship between place, belonging and environmentalism. David Seamon, in his article 'Emotional Experience of the Environment',¹³⁷ emphasises the importance of emotion in relation to place attachment. Drawing on notions from Heidegger and Relph, he argues that humans feel the need to *spare and preserve*. He quotes Relph - 'to protect and guard... environments as they are in themselves, with neither domination or subservience'.¹³⁸ Seamon discusses the phenomenological research conducted by environmental psychologists:

The result has been a recognition of the person's emotional links with environments, places and landscapes, ranging from the momentary emotional irritation one feels when a thing is out of place... to the profound sense of attachment and concern people may feel for a place they consider sacred.¹³⁹

Elaine Stratford argues similarly: 'It is the threat of loss of place that has most informed environmental politics'.¹⁴⁰

Belonging, argues Stratford, is 'fundamental' to concerns over the environment and its use. She argues that belonging also relates to its opposite – namely 'dispossession, displacement, discord, and misfit'.¹⁴¹ Like Read, Stratford looks at how a change in the way we utilise a piece of land can result in a sense of loss for those who assign value to that place. The philosophy of development justifies taking a space perceived to be of lesser value than the added value a potential development could

¹³⁶ Edward S. Casey, 2001, 'Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 91, no. 4, pp. 683-693.

¹³⁷ David Seamon, 1984, 'Emotional Experience of the Environment', *American Behavioural Scientist*, pp. 757-770.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 759.

¹³⁹ Seamon, 1984, 'Emotional Experience of the Environment', p. 757.

¹⁴⁰ Elaine Stratford, 2009, 'Belonging as a Resource: the case of Ralph's Bay, Tasmania, and the local politics of place', *Environment and Planning*, vol. 41, p. 807.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 796.

bring. Stratford argues that this implies that developers believe they have the right to 'reclassify and replace – in short, to redefine the existential status of place and belonging, but by dispossession'.¹⁴²

The reclassification of place, and competing notions of belonging and place attachment, have proved to be particularly strong sources of conflict throughout Australian history. Read's *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*¹⁴³ is one of the most important works in this area. Read looks at the deep attachment that non-indigenous Australians have developed for the Australian landscape and questions what this means for Aboriginal Australia. It was only through the land dispossession of Aboriginal people that colonial Australia was able to develop a sense of belonging. Similarly, Rob Garbutt's *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond*¹⁴⁴ looks at how white Australians have come to identify as being 'local' to a place, and what this means for Aboriginal and multicultural Australia.

While Aboriginal land dispossession, and with it, the death of a great deal of culture, has left a very dark and enduring stain on Australia's history, a substantial amount of literature argues that establishing place attachment has been a very important process for non-indigenous Australians. A great deal of historical literature has documented the sense of unease and alienation many colonial Australians experienced in this foreign and unfamiliar land.¹⁴⁵ It was only when we started to feel at ease in Australia, to recognise the beauty of the landscape and to form an attachment to the places we inhabited, that a strong sense of belonging emerged. Works such as Geoffrey Bolton's *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians making their Environment 1788-1980*¹⁴⁶ and Stephen Dovers' *Australian Environmental History: Essays and Cases*¹⁴⁷ trace this development, examining how an initial lack of understanding of the Australian natural environment and consequent environmental

¹⁴² Stratford, 'Belonging as a Resource', p. 801.

¹⁴³ Peter Read, 2000, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, Cambridge.

¹⁴⁴ Rob Garbutt, 2011, *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond*, Bern.

¹⁴⁵ See for example Geoffrey Bolton, 1981, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians make their environment 1788-1980*, North Sydney; David Malouf, 1998, *A Spirit of Play: The Making of Australian Consciousness*, Sydney, p. 32; Jeff Angel, 2008, *Green is Good: An Insider's Story of the Battle for a Green Australia*, Sydney, p. 33.

¹⁴⁶ Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers*.

¹⁴⁷ Dovers (ed.), *Australian Environmental History*.

destruction has slowly transformed into a deep respect for the landscape and a desire to protect the place we call Home. In belonging, Australians have developed a deeper relationship with our natural environment, and many have consequently sought to protect it.*

William J Lines takes this theme further in his two works, *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia*,¹⁴⁸ and *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*.¹⁴⁹ Lines' works are very important in examining the developing relationship between Australian people and place, but Lines focuses particularly on how this developing relationship led to the emergence of the highly successful and influential Australian environment movement. Our relationship with the Australian landscape, argues Lines' *Patriots*, was the building block of our national culture.¹⁵⁰ Lines argues that it is emotion, rather than intellect, that motivates environmentalists to protect the places we love. It was when we came to understand the beauty and power of this continent that we were finally at Home.

More recent works acknowledge that a strong land connection leads to environmental responsibility, but argue that we still have a lot to learn from the Australian environment. Michael Archer and Bob Beales' *Going Native: Living in the Australian Environment*,¹⁵¹ and David Horton's *The Pure State of Nature: Sacred Cows, Destructive Myths and the Environment*¹⁵² acknowledge the environment movement as well as the countercultural and other alternative movements' focus on living in harmony with this unique landscape, but argue that that concept is not yet mainstream. They argue that we need to build on this theme and learn from the Earth itself if we are to have an environmentally sustainable and peaceful future.

* There are of course exceptions – some early colonists felt a profound attachment to the Australian landscape (as will be discussed in Chapter Four), just as many modern Australian today would not express a sense of belonging to the land.

¹⁴⁸ William J. Lines, 1991, *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia*, Athens.

¹⁴⁹ William J. Lines, 2006, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, St Lucia.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁵¹ Michael Archer & Bob Beale, 2004, *Going Native: Living in the Australian Environment*, Sydney.

¹⁵² David Horton, 2000, *The Pure State of Nature: Sacred Cows, Destructive Myths and the Environment*, St Leonards.

There has also been a growing realisation that modern Australia can learn a great deal from Aboriginal knowledge – the knowledge that sustained the Australian natural environment for many tens of thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. *Treading Lightly: the Hidden Wisdom of the World's Oldest People*,¹⁵³ by Karl-Erik Sveiby and Tex Skuthorpe, asks what we can learn from Aboriginal wisdom to face today's environmental challenges. The authors examine how such wisdom was passed down through Aboriginal lore, sophisticated oral history traditions, unique education and trading/exchange systems, and effective leadership and organisational structures, keeping alive a wealth of enduring knowledge about sustainable communities, ecosystem management and ecological gathering, hunting and farming. The concept of learning from ancient wisdom has been discussed by growing numbers of scholars in recent years, and a significant number of works on 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge' have emerged, many of which are global in context.¹⁵⁴

Such knowledge is forged *of a place* as a result of human-nature interactions over many thousands of years. In recent years scholars have called for more recognition of the links between sense of place and attitudes towards the natural environment. For example Scannell and Gifford argue that there has not been enough research into the 'relations between natural and civic place attachment and pro-environmental' behaviour,¹⁵⁵ while Lewicka's 2010 review of forty years of place attachment research concluded that the 'natural environment dimension of place attachment' has been 'so far largely ignored.'¹⁵⁶ Here is another opportunity for valuable research – the concept of place attachment as one of the primary influences

¹⁵³ Karl-Erik Sveiby & Tex Skuthorpe, 2006, *Treading Lightly: the Hidden Wisdom of the World's Oldest People*, Crows Nest.

¹⁵⁴ See for example (in addition to above) Peter Knudtson & David Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders*, Toronto, 1992; Nancy M. Williams & Graham Baines, 1993, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Wisdom for Sustainable Development*, Canberra; Julian T. Inglis (ed.), 1993, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases*, Ottawa; Sarah Johnson (ed.), 2012, *Themes in Environmental History: Indigenous Knowledge*, Cambridge; Michael Hart, 2015, 'Indigenism and the Re-Cognition and Celebration of Indigenous Knowledges', paper presented at *Recognising, Reclaiming and Celebrating Indigenous Heritage*, 3rd International Indigenous Social Work Conference, 14-17 September, Darwin.

¹⁵⁵ Leila Scannell & Robert Gifford, 2010, 'The relations between natural and civic place attachment and pro-environmental behavior', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 30, pp. 289-297.

¹⁵⁶ Maria Lewicka, 2010, 'Place attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years?', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 31, p. 214.

upon the relationship between people and the natural environment is one of the main themes of this thesis.

Local Histories

Despite the Rainbow Region's remarkable history, there are few academics histories that focus on the region, and (while less surprisingly), there exists no environmental history of the Rainbow Region.

There are a small number of Aboriginal histories that tell the story of the Bundjalung people. The most notable are *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country*¹⁵⁷ by Jennifer Hoff and Ruby Langford Ginibi's *My Bundjalung People*.¹⁵⁸ By virtue of Aboriginal culture itself, these histories do reflect upon place attachment, belonging and the relationship between people and Earth to a greater extent than the white histories. These histories therefore offer insight into the unique and ecologically sustainable connection that Aboriginal people share(d) with the Australian environment. While this connection has been lost in places, severed and forcibly removed in others, there is still a very strong tradition in Aboriginal culture of maintaining a connection to Country – the belonging places of their ancestors.

There do exist some outstanding colonial histories, of which Louise Tiffany Daley's *Men and a River* is the most well-known and comprehensive.¹⁵⁹ While anachronistic and very much a 'history from above', it has been constructed with such meticulous detail based on an immense volume of primary sources, making it an instrumental resource for this thesis. While Daley does not look at the relationship between people and environment directly, the great volume of primary sources she provides, in combination with an invaluable 1938 copy of the *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*,¹⁶⁰ have been read from a modern-day 'green' perspective.*

¹⁵⁷ Jennifer Hoff 2010, *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country*, Lismore.

¹⁵⁸ Ruby Langford Ginibi 1994, *My Bundjalung People*, St Lucia.

¹⁵⁹ Daley, *Men and a River*.

¹⁶⁰ *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, 1938.

* While I would like to say that this is an ecocritical approach, I have avoided directly saying so or including this in my methodology as this thesis is already vast in scope and approach, and ecocriticism has a wide field of literature and methods - I do not wish to further complicate my work.

There has been a significant number of post-colonial era histories written about the region, however a great deal of them have been produced and published by locals, achieving only a limited audience. These include *Out of the Big Scrub: Bangalow*,¹⁶¹ *Roundabout at Bangalow*,¹⁶² *Around the Channon*,¹⁶³ *Wollumbin*,¹⁶⁴ *Richmond Recollections*,¹⁶⁵ *Nimbin Centenary 1882-1982*,¹⁶⁶ *The Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*,¹⁶⁷ *The Sunkissed Playground*,¹⁶⁸ and *Kyogle, New South Wales*.¹⁶⁹ These histories are traditional histories and aim to tell the story of the development of people and places, but they do not enquire into the nature of place, and only limitedly and indirectly reflect on how place itself has shaped its inhabitants; nor do they reflect on how new notions and expressions of belonging impose upon and dislocate existing notions and expressions. Charles Norman Keats' *Wollumbin does however* distinguish itself by providing a very sympathetic history of the Bundjalung people.¹⁷⁰

While the region's colonial history has attracted considerable attention, there is a near complete absence of literature on the early conservation movement as it unfolded in the region. While not entirely local in context, there are discussions of the region's conservation campaigns in local environmentalist Jim Somerville's *Saving the Rainforest*,¹⁷¹ as well as in Kendell and Buivids' *Earth First*,¹⁷² and the Colong Committee's *How the Rainforest was Saved*.¹⁷³

The most surprising absence in the region's literature is that of the Aquarius Festival, the countercultural migration and environmental activism. As local historian Jo Kijas comments, 'they brought the most obvious cultural diversity into the region,

¹⁶¹ L. C. Furnell, 1981, *Out of the Big Scrub: Bangalow*, Casino.

¹⁶² Shirley Walker, 2001, *Roundabout at Bangalow*, St Lucia.

¹⁶³ Pauline Barratt, 1999, *Around the Channon: A History of its Places and People*, Ballina.

¹⁶⁴ Norman Charles Keats, 1988, *Wollumbin*, Point Clare.

¹⁶⁵ St Carthages Senior Parishioners, 1987, *Richmond Recollections*, Lismore.

¹⁶⁶ Jenny Dell (ed.), 1982, *Nimbin Centenary 1882-1982*, Nimbin.

¹⁶⁷ Maurice Ryan, 1999, *The Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, Nimbin.

¹⁶⁸ Harold W. Denning, 1973, *The Sunkissed Playground: An Historical Manuscript of the Tweed, Mullumbimby and Byron Bay areas*, Murwillumbah.

¹⁶⁹ Eve Keane, 1956, *Kyogle, New South Wales*, Sydney.

¹⁷⁰ Keats, *Wollumbin*.

¹⁷¹ James Somerville, 2005, *Saving the Rainforest: The NSW Campaign 1973-1984*, Narrabeen.

¹⁷² Jeni Kendell & Eddie Buivids, 1987, *Earth First*, Sydney.

¹⁷³ The Colong Committee, 1983, *How the Rainforest was Saved: The Inside Story of the 10 Year Battle*, Sydney.

but have had very little academic attention.¹⁷⁴ Hudson and Bolton remarked in 1997 that there is a near-complete lack of academic engagement with the region's globally-significant Intentional Community movement, while in 1998 Jill Roe remarked, 'Nimbin awaits its historian'¹⁷⁵ – nearly twenty years later, this is still the case.¹⁷⁶ There has been more of an interest in the region's post-1970 history in the recent past – in 2013, the 'Aquarius and Beyond' Conference commemorated the forty year anniversary of the Aquarius Festival, exploring the many legacies of the festival.¹⁷⁷ A follow-up special edition of *M/C Journal* focused on the Australian counterculture, and many of the journal's articles were a product of the Conference.¹⁷⁸ Despite these valuable contributions, to date there still does not exist a comprehensive history of the Aquarius Festival or the region's counterculture movement.

While not written as a history, *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*,¹⁷⁹ edited by Helen Wilson, is another invaluable resource for this thesis. The book brings together the reflections of fifteen 'locals', offering differing notions of place attachment and expressions of belonging. It is a testament to the strong feelings of attachment locals feel to their home towns and villages. These reflections cut across competing notions of belonging, offering Aboriginal, countercultural, environmentalist and 'tree-changer' perspectives. Unfortunately there is no voice to represent the story of those who work closely with the land, the farmers or loggers, a significant group of people in the history of belonging to place in the Northern Rivers. This is another gap in the literature I aim to fill.

In providing an environmental history of the region, this thesis works towards covering some of the gaps in the region's history, including the evolving conservation movement, the countercultural movement and the sense of belonging experienced by

¹⁷⁴ Johanna Kijas, 2003, 'From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region: Cultural Perspectives on the NSW North Coast*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 33.

¹⁷⁵ Jill Roe, 1998, 'Dayspring: Australia and New Zealand as a setting for the 'New Age', from the 1890s to Nimbin', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 16, p. 185.

¹⁷⁶ Wayne Hudson & Geoffrey Bolton (eds), 1997, *Creating Australia: Changing Australian History*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁷ 'Aquarius and Beyond: 40 Years On', Nimbin, 23-24 May 2013.

¹⁷⁸ See Rob Garbutt, Jacqueline Dutton & Johanna Kijas, 2014, 'Counterculture', *M/C Journal*, vol. 17, no. 6, <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/issue/view/counterculture>, accessed 7 August 2016.

¹⁷⁹ Wilson (ed.), *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*.

farmers and loggers. As an environmental history it will also provide a unique perspective on the colonial history. However, the history provided in this thesis is limited, and the region still requires a great deal more academic engagement – inexplicably, Nimbin *still* ‘awaits its historian.’

Methodology

While this thesis works across a range of disciplines, an historical analysis of the relationship between people and the natural environment forms the methodological approach to the question of how we confront the Anthropocene. The use of history as a methodology in itself is a common approach of the environmental humanities – Griffiths argues that one of the techniques of environmental humanities research is ‘to observe change over time.’¹⁸⁰ This thesis uses an historical/comparative approach, which is used to observe change across temporal and cultural boundaries, making it an ideal framework in which to base this thesis. Historical/comparative research seeks to discover how processes change over time, and can trace the development of changing social norms, institutions, ideas, or any other aspect of human societies and cultures.¹⁸¹ This thesis examines the changing relationship between people and place, and therefore includes discussions of how this is affected by changing values, laws, institutions, social attitudes and the development of new knowledge, among other factors.

Historical/comparative research can draw on a variety of resources, including interviews, documents, and direct observations.¹⁸² While this thesis draws on all three, oral history provides the strongest evidence, allowing direct communication with participants. As Castree explains, the environmental humanities distinguishes itself from other approaches by ‘pay[ing] close attention to human faculties beyond cognition and reason, dealing with such things as love, trust, fear, care, commitment,

¹⁸⁰ Griffiths, ‘The Humanities and an Environmentally Sustainable Australia’, unpaginated. See also Myllyntaus (ed.), *Thinking Through the Environment*.

¹⁸¹ Theda Skocpol, 1984, *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, Cambridge, p. 370; Lawrence Neuman, 2009, *Understanding Research*, Boston, p. 12; James Mahoney & Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds), 2003, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge.

¹⁸² Neuman, *Understanding Research*, p. 12.

devotion and loyalty.¹⁸³ As such, oral history provides an ideal method, allowing for the interviewer to gain an understanding of the participant's subjective experience of the natural environment. Leena Rossi argues that oral history is 'irreplaceable' as an environmental history method, as 'every person has a relationship with his/her environment that is worth studying', and oral history allows for a deeper exploration of this connection between people and place.¹⁸⁴ Rossi further argues that combining background knowledge with oral history provides 'a much richer idea of (her subject's) environmental relationship.'¹⁸⁵ Oral history interviews will also be supported by documentary evidence, and in the later chapters, some direct observation.

In total, twenty three interviews were conducted. Primary participants were selected from among prominent Aquarius festival veterans, environmentalists, and community figures including Nan Nicholson, Dalian Pugh, Benny Zable, Annie Kia, Paul Joseph, Graham Irvine, and Peter Pedals. Further interviewees were selected both by their willingness to engage in the research, and based on a diversity of participants – while a number of participants identify as activists or environmentalists, efforts have been made to include farmers and 'mainstream' community members who do not identify as either. Seventeen interviews were conducted throughout the region from April-June 2012, while an additional six interviews were conducted on-site at the Bentley Blockade in April 2014. Additionally, a number of interviews conducted by the author in 2008 and 2010 as part of research into the Terania Creek blockade and the North East Forest Alliance have also been drawn upon.

One of the drawbacks of an oral history approach is that due to associated complications, no Bundjalung people have been interviewed. It is very important to follow Aboriginal protocol, and it can take some time to establish trust and seek entrée into community.¹⁸⁶ While Bundjalung participation had been sought, links established and ethics approval granted, due to time restrictions and the significant distance

¹⁸³ Castree *et al.*, 'Changing the Intellectual Climate', p. 765.

¹⁸⁴ Leena Rossi, 2011, 'Oral History and Individual Environmental Experiences', in *Thinking Through the Environment*, Myllyntaus (ed.), p. 153, p. 135.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-151.

¹⁸⁶ For a discussion of Aboriginal protocol see Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), 2012, *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies*, Canberra.

between the research area and the author's residence, this unfortunately did not eventuate. Another contributing factor was the issue of 'Nimbin time' – it can be a challenge setting solid times and dates with members of the alternative community, and this contributed to the non-eventuation of a number of interviews. Furthermore, in alternative hamlets, particularly Nimbin, there can be a suspicion of forms and procedure as they can be considered bureaucratic and contrary to the values of alternative lifestyles.[•] The necessary information sheets and consent forms required for oral history research did unfortunately act as a deterrent at times.

Another limitation of an oral history approach is that it can only provide historical evidence for the later time periods under examination, namely the Rainbow Region and Northern Rivers chapters. To remedy this, sources written in the first person have been sought out, so as to allow historical figures to speak for themselves from times past. This is particularly important of the Bundjalung history. Bundjalung woman Ruby Langford Ginibi argues that Aboriginal history should be told by Aboriginal people.¹⁸⁷ This is problematic as many of the records are European, and a lot of them misunderstand Aboriginal culture. Early records and writings are frequently condescending and based on the assumption that Aboriginal people were inferior, or are ethnographic in tone. Jennifer Hoff's recent *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country* is an excellent exception, and there are some invaluable documents written in the first person – such sources have been given considerably more weighting than European sources. Modern-day Bundjalung voices have also been drawn upon. Aboriginal people are known for their extremely strong oral history traditions, and recent research has revealed that the integrity of Aboriginal stories can often be maintained over many thousands of years, providing direct links with the past.¹⁸⁸

As discussed above, the colonial history of the region is not lacking. While colonists cannot be interviewed, there are a great deal of records, writings and reminiscences from the era, due in no small part to the work of the Richmond River Historical Society. The extensive contemporaneous records held in the society's

[•] Nimbin does also have quite a high number of paranoid residents, it must be said.

¹⁸⁷ Ryan *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ Patrick Dunn & Nick Reid, 2016, 'Aboriginal Memories of Inundation of the Australian Coast Dating from More than 7000 Years Ago', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 47, issue 1, pp. 11-47.

archives have been searched for hints of the relationship between people and the Rainbow Region, and some sources have revealed rich detail, weaving stories of place and belonging, and revealing individuals' direct experiences with the natural environment. The online repository Trove, maintained by the National Library of Australia, is another invaluable resource. It provides access to local newspapers including the *Northern Star* and the *Tweed Daily*. While in more recent years (since the 1970s) the *Northern Star* has been known to display a conservative bias,¹⁸⁹ early editions of the newspaper have provided remarkable accounts of everyday reactions to environmental issues and reveal the 'on-the-ground' attitudes of local communities.

The thesis contains many direct quotes from primary sources and interview participants. This has been done so that the attitudes, values and sentiments of individuals, and their relationship with the natural environment, can be expressed for themselves. Rossi argues that this is an important component of conducting oral environmental history research, as words and tones can help give insight into others' individual experience of the natural environment.¹⁹⁰

Aims, Scope and Limitations

The principal aim of this thesis is to address the overwhelming environmental challenges before us by contributing to discussions within the environmental humanities. It also aims to contribute to the development of environmental peace as a distinct branch within peace studies. As discussed It is a key aim of the environmental humanities to query the human role in the era of the Anthropocene, both in relation to how we have shaped the ecologically precarious world we now live in, and how we can shape a more ecologically stable and harmonious future. Peace studies, too, is forward-looking, ultimately aiming to transform societies from cultures of violence to cultures of peace. Belonging to the realm of theory and idealism, the inevitable question is asked of the environmental humanities – how can the idealistic humanities

¹⁸⁹ See Fiona Martin & Rhonda Ellis, 2003, 'Dropping In, Not Dropping Out: Evolution of the Alternative Media in the Rainbow Region 1970-2002', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), Lismore, pp. 181-187.

¹⁹⁰ Rossi, 'Oral History and Individual Environmental Experiences', p. 137.

contribute to practical real-world solutions? How do environmental humanists find a 'seat at the table' alongside traditional society-shapers such as law and governance bodies?¹⁹¹ Applying the practical language of peacebuilding allows us to consider how an earthly connection to place transmutes into a blueprint for cultivating environmental peace on Earth. This thesis aims to provide a tangible, solid set of ideas based on the real, lived experience of communities that are at the forefront of developing and implementing strong responses to the ecological crises of our times.

As a secondary but very important aim, this thesis aims to contribute to the history of the Rainbow Region and to address the lack of academic inquiry into the contribution that Nimbin, the Aquarius Festival, intentional communities and other countercultural elements have made to social movements throughout the world, but particularly to the environment movement. While this thesis provides an environmental history of earlier periods, the thesis was largely motivated by the history of the region since the 1970s. Discussions with local community members have revealed that there is a strong desire to record the history of the region, and there are several groups dedicated to this goal, including the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation and the Aquarian Archives inc., however these efforts are community-based and rarely inspire academic engagement. This thesis aims to bring this history into academic discourse where it can be given wider recognition and promotion. It is more important than ever to capture the voice and memory of the Aquarians while they can still tell the story for themselves, a sentiment often shared by ageing members of the alternative communities of the region.* Such stories of real, lived and successful examples of shaping ecologically conscious communities can inspire hope for the future, and recognition of the contribution that these people have made to history is overdue.

Another very important aim that was instrumental in the development of ideas leading to this thesis is to recognise that while people have different expressions of

¹⁹¹ As discussed at 'Environmental Humanities on the Ground: Materiality, Sustainability, and Applicability' conference held in Shanghai, 6-8 November 2015. See also Castree, 'The Anthropocene and the Environmental Humanities', pp. 255-256.

* As revealed through my discussions and engagement with local community members and Aquarian elders.

belonging, most of us have a deep desire to connect to Country/land/Earth and to create a sense of belonging to it. To come together on common ground means recognising that diverse and sometimes seemingly opposing expressions of belonging are valid. Australian history has been somewhat characterised by conflict arising out of competing notions of belonging. This conflict has been perpetuated on all sides – from the refusal to acknowledge Aboriginal ownership of land, to the farmer who is hostile towards environmentalists and believes they have ‘no idea what they’re talking about’, and to the environmentalist who fails to acknowledge the deep and enduring relationship with the environment that often exists between farmer and land, or the deep reverence for the forests that some loggers feel. The last few decades, but particularly the last decade, has seen a dramatic shift as such old, generational attitudes have given way to new alliances built on the common ground of relationship to place, as will be explored. These new understandings are central to this thesis and it is a key aim to highlight and promote the importance of a collaborative, grassroots approach to environmental issues, built on the common ground of a shared sense of place.

As an environmental history, this thesis bypasses many of the themes present in traditional history such as social, political and economic inquiry. These elements will be discussed only insofar as how they are relevant to the *environmental* history, for example how social and cultural attitudes influence the way communities interact with the earth. The parameters of this thesis are further limited by time, geography, and subject matter. While it may seem ambitious in scope to write a history of the entire period of human interaction with the natural environment from the Bundjalung people to the current era, this history is contained within a specific region and it has a specific focus on the *relationship* between humans and the natural environment and how these interactions both shape and are shaped by the Earth itself.

Furthermore, each chapter will focus on a *dominant* community group and their prevailing cultural attitudes, which have had the most influence in the shaping of the region. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that this thesis does not and cannot represent all of the communities of the Rainbow Region, such as the many ‘tree-

changers' with hobby farms, retirees, or migrants, for example, who undoubtedly have their own unique relationship with the natural environment. Furthermore it would be near impossible to provide the full account of all expressions of human-nature interactions as there are as many individual relationships to place as there are historical and modern-day residents. It does not claim to be a comprehensive history; the focus is to understand how each diverse and influential group has shaped/been shaped by the natural environment and how these layers of expression of belonging, imposed over time, overlap and coalesce into the inspirational communities of the modern day.

Chapter Outline

In addition to this introductory chapter the thesis comprises five history chapters, one discussion chapter that looks at the findings of the history, applying peace studies and other related literature, and a conclusion. Each of the history chapters focuses on one dominant group, their land ethic and their changing relationship to the natural environment. Named 'Bundjalung Country', 'The Richmond River', 'The Big Scrub', 'The Rainbow Region', and 'The Northern Rivers', the title of each chapter is one of the different names that the region is known for. The decision to name each chapter in such a way is to reflect the fact that one geographical location can be a very different place for each individual who is acquainted with it, and each name reveals something of the prevailing attitudes towards land and the relationships of each group to the natural environment. Other names for the region also include the 'North Coast' and the 'Far North Coast'. While the name 'Rainbow Region' is both the name of a chapter and the name used throughout the thesis, it is the preferred term as it is more cultural than geographic, and while representative of the counterculture it is frequently in use today, not just by one group but across different sections of society, representative of the region's embrace of this cultural identity.

Chapter Two, Bundjalung Country, looks at the Bundjalung people and their relationship *in* the natural environment. Aboriginal Australians had a land ethic that saw the careful management of the Australian landscape, based on empirical

knowledge forged over many thousands of years. Rather than owning land, Aboriginal people belong to the land. This chapter looks at the Bundjalung example, their understanding of land, the intrinsic relationship that existed between people and place, how their use of resources was moderated by their relationship with the land, and how this relationship was forced to adapt when the Bundjalung lost custodianship over their Country.

Chapter Three is concerned with the colonial environmental history of the region. It is named 'The Richmond River' after the significant waterway that was transformed into a highway upon which to export the region's resource wealth, namely red cedar, other precious timbers and agricultural produce. The Europeans brought with them a radically different land ethic, shaped by cultural values and a resource extraction mentality. Consequently, the landscape of the Richmond River District was dramatically transformed. This chapter reveals that colonists attempted to cultivate their own sense of place and belonging, imposing their understandings of the natural environment forged in a different land. It also explores how the land was shaped by colonists, as well as how colonists were shaped by the land.

Chapter Four looks at the evolving conservation ethic, of which 'The Big Scrub' is at the centre. Spanning from 1788 to the 1970s, the chapter outlines the gradual development of the conservation movement at the local level, within the context of changing national and international understandings. This chapter demonstrates that while progress was not always linear, growing conservation concerns aligned with a growing sense of place and belonging as white Australians settled into the soil. From the mid-19th Century, a small number of people cautioned against the destruction of the Big Scrub, but by the 1970s, the remnant rainforest of the Border Ranges became the site for one of the earliest grassroots conservation campaigns in Australian history.

Chapter Five, 'The Rainbow Region', focuses on the countercultural influx that the region is so well-known for. From the late 1960s and particularly with the Nimbin Aquarius Festival of 1973, the region was transformed into a haven for alternative settlers and proponents of the 'back to the land' movement, many of whom sought a closer relationship with the natural environment. This chapter looks at the region

within the context of the 60s era, the rise of environmentalism, and how environmental ideals were cultivated locally. It focuses on environmental action and activism including the establishment of Intentional Communities (ICs) and Multiple Occupancies (MOs), rainforest regeneration efforts, protest and nonviolent action, and approaches to sustainable living.

Chapter Six brings together some common themes that run through previous chapters, looking at ‘The Northern Rivers’ of the modern era and the environmental benefits of a shared sense of place. It demonstrates that there is a significant amount of environmental action and activism built on collaborative knowledge and approaches – despite differences in the *expressions* of belonging or in land ethic, a shared sense of place and connection to the natural environment provides powerful common ground upon which to cultivate environmental peace. After examining various initiatives and campaigns such as joint water-management, Landcare, and environmental education programs, the chapter turns towards the Bentley Blockade, a successful anti-gas mining protest that provides strong evidence that the common ground does indeed provide a very powerful foundation for environmental peace.

Chapter Seven, ‘Confluence’, looks at the findings of the history chapters, applying peace studies theory and other related literature so as to best understand how we may cultivate methods and approaches to environmental peace. It demonstrates that a great deal of what has been practiced in the region, much of it evolving spontaneously, organically and *of a place*, does have a considerable amount of theory to support it, contributing to the understanding of the environmental action and activism of the Rainbow Region from an environmental peace perspective. This chapter also looks at how such methods can and have been applied globally, and the importance of the need to think beyond borders.

By basing the environmental history of the Rainbow Region within an environmental humanities framework, a field that inherently seeks to address the Anthropocene, this thesis will contribute to academic scholarship by both providing a unique history of an environmentally important region, and by offering suggestions as to how we might cultivate environmentally peaceful futures. This thesis argues that

our relationship with the natural environment is critical to environmental peace. The way that we relate to the natural environment and the way we understand our place within it is absolutely key to the way we interact with it. It argues that a strong sense of place and belonging cultivates deeper respect for and understanding of the natural environment. While the history also reveals competing and conflicting notions of belonging, the significance of the power of the local communities in implementing real, effective, grassroots environmental action, awareness and activism reveals that the common ground has provided remarkably fertile ground upon which to cultivate environmentally peaceful communities.

Chapter Two

Bundjalung Country

‘We have come from a place of clay and rivers, a place where trees once outnumbered people. Where the land and its people were one. *Where the land and its people are one.*’

Fabienne Bayet-Charlton, Bundjalung woman.¹

The Bundjalung people were the first people to live in the Rainbow Region. They were therefore the first people to inscribe layers of meaning upon the landscape, to shape it, and to be shaped by it, and they did so with respect and appreciation. The relationship between people and natural environment was imbued with spirituality, reverence, understanding, and a complex set of interrelationships between people, flora, fauna and even abiotic elements such as rocks. This chapter looks the inherently sustainable, harmonious and symbiotic relationship that existed between the Bundjalung people and their Country, and how such a relationship with the natural environment shaped both people and place. It also looks at the consequences for the Bundjalung people and their Country once this relationship was severed by the invasion of their lands. While devastating for both people and place, Bundjalung people found ways of adapting to invasion and maintaining connection with Country. This chapter focuses on the Bundjalung land ethic and their perspective, following the history of these original custodians and their land up until the mid-20th century.

‘The land and its people are one’

Australian Aboriginal people belong to the oldest, longest surviving culture on Earth; a true ecologically sustainable culture so intrinsically connected to the land that this relationship cannot easily be translated into the language of Western academia. Margaret Kemarre Turner of the Akarre people of Central Australia explains;

¹ Fabienne Bayet-Charlton, 2002, *Finding Ullagundahi Island*, Crows Nest, p. 163.

Apmereyanhe, our language-Land, is like a root or a tie to us. It holds all of us. The only way that we can translate into English how we see our relationship with the Land is with the words 'hold', and 'connect'. The roots of the country and its people are twined together. We are part of the Land. The Land *is* us, and we are the Land.²

While each Aboriginal group has its own distinct and unique culture, and Kemarre Turner only speaks for the Akarre people, the significance of land, or Country, is common across all Aboriginal nations. The relationship between people and Country is the single most important aspect of Aboriginal culture, encapsulated in the modern-day Aboriginal flag – the black represents the people, while the red is both the Country beneath their feet and the blood that has been shed.³

Singing the Land

The area known today as the Rainbow Region makes up a small part of what was once known only as traditional Bundjalung lands. The region was dominated by a vast area of ancient rainforest, a Gondwanaland remnant that sat in the caldera of the once mighty shield volcano known to the Bundjalung as Wollumbin, or 'Cloud Catcher' (see figure 2). Visible from the coast, Wollumbin sat sentinel over the verdant forest and creeks and rivers that wound their way through the mountainous country and out to sea. The Bundjalung belonged to Country that was quite unlike much of the rest of Australia –the subtropical rainforest was fertile and well-watered, and a great abundance of plant and animal species kept them in very good health.⁴ The 'thick vegetation, heavy summer rains and mild winter seasons' meant that the 'whole region teemed with wildlife on a scale unimaginable today'.⁵

It is believed that Aboriginal people have lived on the east coast of New South Wales for 40 000 to 60 000 years, while estimates as to how long the Bundjalung

² Margaret Kemarre Turner, 2010, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye: What it Means to Be an Aboriginal Person*, Alice Springs, p. 15.

³ Steve Widders, 2013, 'Welcome to Country', National Day of Climate Action, Armidale, 17 October.

⁴ Marjorie Oakes, 1979, 'The First Inhabitants: Aborigines of the Lismore District', in *Lismore: The Story of a North Coast City*, Maurice Ryan (ed.), Milson's Point, p. 187.

⁵ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 37.



Figure 2: 'Cloud Catcher'. Photo by author.

people themselves resided in this Country range from 4500 to 6000 years.⁶ Over thousands of years the Bundjalung built up a rich lore of how their Country came to be. Bundjalung Elder Ruby Langford Ginibi explains;

Our ancient tribal people sat down and sang the spirits into this land, giving it physical form. White man called this our Dreamtime, a myth! Our people know it as fact. They sang the trees, they sang the mountains, they sang the valleys, the streams, all round, all round, all round. They sang life in all its vastness into this brown land and the spirit lives still!⁷

The history of the Bundjalung people's arrival in their Country is a well-known story passed down through oral tradition. While the story differs slightly depending on the retelling, most of the details align. Three brothers, Yar-birri, Ma-moom and Birr-ung and their families were sailing along the coast when they decided to rest on the

⁶ Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants', p. 187; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 37; Rory Medcalf, 1993, *Rivers of Blood: Massacres of the Northern Rivers Aborigines and their resistance to white occupation 1838-1870*, Lismore, p. 2; Norman Charles Keats, 1998, *Wollumbin*, Point Clare, p. xx.

⁷ Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 144.

beach. They landed at Evans Head and stayed a while, fishing and hunting, while their grandmother wandered off to gather some yams. The brothers decided it was time to move on, but their grandmother hadn't returned. They called out and waited, but they decided they must move on and could not wait any longer. Their grandmother was left behind. The Bundjalung name for Evans Head is Gummingarr, thought to come from the word Gummy, meaning Grandmother. They sailed north, landing a few times along the coast, until the three brothers and their families decided they should go their separate ways. One brother travelled north, the other south and the third brother west, spreading out to explore the land. Before separating however they laid down the laws by which Bundjalung people would live. Tribal laws were to be based on kindness and sharing, being self-supporting, looking after the aged, and listening to the wisdom of the Elders. They made contact with the *butheram*, the sacred beings of the mountains, and made them their gods. They learnt to climb trees for food, made spears and shields for hunting and fighting, and imitated the movement of the swift bird in their boomerang design. The land taught them how to live.⁸

Other stories detail the creation of the springs, rivers and mountains. One story tells of a woman and her lover who were promised in marriage to others, so they eloped together. The woman's father transformed himself into a kangaroo to pursue the couple. Wherever the kangaroo landed, a spring arose from the ground, creating *djurebils* (sacred sites) around the Lismore area.⁹ Another tells of the battle between the goanna, *Dirrawhun*, and Rainbow Snake. As they fought and chased one another from Nimbin to Evans Head, they formed mountains, lakes and rivers. Snake reached the coast and transformed into Pelican Island, while *Dirrawhun* laid down to wait for Snake, forming the sacred Goanna Headland at Evans Head.¹⁰ These stories are an important detail in the evolution of the relationship between people and place in

⁸ Keith Morgan, 1964, 'My Ancestors, the Aborigines', *Dawn*, vol. 13, no. 7, p. 6; David Horton, 1994, *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History, Society and Culture*, Canberra, p. 163; Malcolm Prentis, 1972, 'Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, 1825-1881', Sydney, p. 87; Roland Robinson, 1977, *The Man Who Sold His Dreaming*, Adelaide, pp. 40-44; John G. Steele, 1983, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, St. Lucia, p. 3; Keats, *Wollumbin*, p. 45; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 5.

⁹ Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, pp. 16-17; Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants', p. 192.

¹⁰ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 225; 'The Rainbow Snake and the Dreamtime', Bundjalung Nation: Dreamtime, Nimbin on the Web, www.nimbinweb.com.au/bundjalung, accessed 6 June 2012,

Bundjalung Country. To the Bundjalung people, this is the history of how their land was shaped.

The names given to places in the region often reflect the reverence felt by the Bundjalung towards their Country. Wollumbin is a very sacred site, meaning ‘weather maker’ or ‘cloud catcher’.¹¹ The place where Lismore now stands was known as Tuckurimba or ‘junction of two creeks’, while North Lismore was called Bowyam or Bunyam, meaning ‘sleeping lizard’.¹² Many Bundjalung place names live on today. Mullumbimby means ‘little round hill’ or ‘foot of the mountain’,¹³ while Nimbin, also a very sacred site, is thought to be named ‘home of the little man’ after the *wuyun-gali* or ‘clever men’ who used the site as a place to teach initiates how to ‘throw their spirits and to levitate’.¹⁴ Place names could also refer to the prevalence of certain flora and fauna, such as Goolmangar (‘water gum’), Goonellabah (‘place of the red coral tree’)¹⁵ and Ballina (or ‘Bullinah’, meaning ‘plenty of fish and oysters’).¹⁶ This indicates that over time, the Bundjalung people learnt from their interactions with the land and named the landscape accordingly, demonstrating a high degree of human-nature interconnectedness.

Belonging to the land

The Aboriginal sense of belonging to land went far beyond mere fondness for a particular chosen place, aesthetic attachment, or loyalty to the place where they were born. The Bundjalung people regarded themselves as being both part of the land itself, and related to the land – its flora, fauna, rocks, even fires and hunting grounds held relationships with people.¹⁷ Jennifer Hoff explains:

¹¹ Keats, *Wollumbin*, p. 49; Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 194.

¹² ‘Blazing the Trail: Early Days on Richmond, When Lismore was Cattle Station’, *Northern Star*, January 24 1929, p. 5.

¹³ Edwin Wilson, 2001, ‘Chincogan: muse and mountain of a Mullumbimby childhood’, *Australian Folklore*, no. 16, p. 211; Deborah Lilly, 2013, ‘Stop Woolworths!’, in *Rainbow Dreaming: Tales from the Age of Aquarius*, Harsha Prabhu (ed.), Nimbin, p. 108.

¹⁴ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 215; Jennie Dell (ed.), 1982, *Nimbin Centenary, 1882-1982*, Nimbin, p. 3; Maurice Ryan, 1998, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, Nimbin, p. 2.

¹⁵ ‘New signage creates sense of place’, Lismore City Council, June 4 2013.

¹⁶ Bonnie Paff, 1983, *Ballina, Pages of the Past: An Historic Sketchbook*, Goonellabah, p. 10.

¹⁷ Turner, *Iwene Tyerrtye*, p. 8, p. 32; Ginibi *My Bundjalung People*, p. 50.

all *Bundjalung* clans had a rich cultural and spiritual heritage, handed down through many generations, which connected them in deep and complex ways with the traditional lands they inhabited. From a young age, they learned of the... sacred dimension that permeated all aspects of existence through stories, teachings and customary laws handed down from ancient past.¹⁸

‘Bloodlines run through land’¹⁹ - the land to which they belonged was the same land that their ancestors had walked upon, connecting the memory and spirit of generations of loved ones to their Country.²⁰

Tribal laws ensured that these relationships were maintained. Michael Dodson explains of Aboriginal culture, ‘our heritage is a bundle of relationships [and] part of that heritage [is] honouring those relationships, and fulfilling the responsibilities they entail.’²¹ Rules governed who was responsible for which land, who could speak for land, and who could marry one another. Marriage resulted in further relationship connections, as people married not only each other but the land to which their partner belonged. Small extended family groups held their own territory and usually respected the boundaries of other territories. They would not hunt on another’s land or trespass on sacred sites, and they rarely wished to conquer other lands.²² It would not make sense to do so as the land would not be related to them, and they would not understand it. The relationship between people and place, therefore, maintained peace in itself.

Throughout Bundjalung lands there existed a great many places that were so strongly imbued with spiritual energies as to be considered sacred. Among these sacred sites were bora rings, initiation grounds, ancestral burial sites, significant landforms and *djurebils* (or ‘increase centres’). Some places were so sacred that the

¹⁸ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 167.

¹⁹ Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*, p. 25.

²⁰ Rose, *Living Magic*; Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*, p. 13

²¹ Michael Dodson, 1995, ‘Cultural Rights and Educational Responsibilities’, *Australian Folklore*, no. 10, p. 81.

²² Mervyn Meggitt, 1962, ‘Indigenous forms of government among the Australian Aborigines’, paper presented at the 15th Reunion of the Societe Jean Bodin pour l’histoire comparative des institutions, Brussels; Dell, *Nimbin Centenary*, p. 1.

reason for their sacredness was kept secret.²³ Langford Ginibi speaks of the sacred sites of spirit beings:

These spirit ancestors still dwell in the universe, giving life to it, and shaping it. They keep a special presence in some places; in a mighty mountain, cliff or cave, pool, tree, rock, or waterhole. These are the sacred sites. When the spirit ancestors moved over the land, they left child spirits at sites –an Aboriginal baby at birth than had a special personal link with that site. That link lasted a lifetime. After death, that person’s spirit returns to the same site and lives there as a spirit. So the person belongs to that land for all time. There are great powers in sacred sites.²⁴

Ginibi’s words demonstrate the profound relationship between people and place that is built on a sense of belonging that transcends attachment to place alone.

Some sites were strictly for men or women only, and it was thought that if these laws were broken people could become very ill.²⁵ Wollumbin was such a place, and only initiated men were allowed to climb the mountain. The ancestral beings of Wollumbin were great warriors who invoked thunder and lightning with their battles. Gashes in the sides of the mountain, claimed by ancient landslides long ago, are thought to be the wounds of the warriors.²⁶

Bora rings are found throughout Bundjalung lands, however many have been destroyed since invasion.²⁷ Used for initiation ceremonies, they consist of a raised circle of earth with an opening, some of them many metres in diameter. The Bundjalung people rarely altered the land dramatically, preferring an ecologically balanced semi-nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyle so as to avoid overexploitation and despoliation of the land.²⁸ Yet bora rings represent a deliberate alteration of the

²³ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 223; Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*; Rose, *Living Magic*; Horton, *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*; Prentis, ‘Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales’.

²⁴ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, pp. 195-196.

²⁵ Robinson, *The Man Who Sold His Dreaming*, p. 103.

²⁶ Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, p. 52; Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 194.

²⁷ Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, p. 57.

²⁸ Bruce Buchan & Mary Heath, 2006, ‘Savagery and Civilization: From Terra Nullius to the ‘Tide of History’, *Ethnicities*, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 10; Keats, *Wollumbin*, p. 12; Geoffrey Bolton, 1981, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians make their environment 1788-1980*, North Sydney, p. 6.

landscape and bora grounds within the forest were cleared and maintained,²⁹ demonstrating the significance of such sites.

Djurebils were sacred sites at which the Bundjalung people could directly communicate with the plant or animal species the *djurebil* represented. Also known as ‘increase centres’, these sites were places where people could appeal to the spirit of the *djurebil*, asking it to be plentiful and prosperous.³⁰ It was the responsibility of individual groups to maintain *djurebils*, performing ceremonies to ensure there would be adequate food in the future.³¹ This demonstrates the strong spiritual link between the Bundjalung people and their sacred sites, grounded within their Country and spiritually linked to the food their Country provides.

Living with the land

The Bundjalung were utterly reliant upon their Country for their food, water and other resources. The relationship between people and environment was one of dependence and their laws reflected this accordingly. They respected and understood the earth and its limits. The Bundjalung tribes would move on when food was short (without trespassing on another’s hunting grounds), they rarely wasted food or over-hunted, and food and other resources were sought seasonally and shared among tribes. Norman Keats acknowledges the Bundjalung people’s understanding of the Australian environment:

... these first Australians did not materially disturb the ecological balance of nature. Their presence over thousands of years, despite the fact that they were hunter-food gatherers dependent on the regional animals and plant life for sustenance and survival, proved beyond doubt that they were fully aware of the need for conservation.³²

²⁹ Rob Garbutt, 2011, *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond*, Bern, p. 21.

³⁰ Henry Reynolds, 2006, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia*, Sydney, p. 64; Prentis, ‘Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales’, p. 277; Keats, *Wollumbin*, pp. 46-47.

³¹ Prentis, ‘Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales’ p. 89; Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 26.

³² Keats, *Wollumbin*, p. 12.

A certain degree of mobility, while staying within one's own Country, ensured that the despoilation of any one area would not occur. In this way campsites (which were often substantial settlements that would be returned to annually) were kept clean and free from waste and therefore the chance of disease, and flora and fauna were not overexploited.³³

Hunted animals were treated with respect – they were killed humanely, with one blow when possible, and it was forbidden to injure an animal and leave it to die.³⁴ Children were taught from a young age about conservation measures, including that they were never to kill their totem animal, plant or tree.³⁵ When animals were killed for food the Bundjalung would try to target only the fatter males and only after the breeding season.³⁶ This demonstrates the acquisition of environmental knowledge and ecologically sound values from a young age, an important approach to environmental peace that will be further discussed throughout the thesis.

The seasons dictated when, what and where the Bundjalung could eat, influencing their seasonal movements. The subtropical environment supported a great variety of species and the Bundjalung did not face the same challenges as many other Aboriginal people throughout Australia such as drought and aridity (although the region's high rainfall and frequent flooding may well have posed other challenges).³⁷ In common with their fellow Aboriginal people however was the hot Australian climate they endured, and this made it very hard to store food. It may be that the natural environment contributed to the shaping of the strong culture of sharing found throughout Australian Aboriginal communities; food was hunted and harvested on demand, shared and eaten soon after.³⁸ Food was ideally never wasted, and when the Bunya nuts of southeast Queensland were in season every three years, hundreds of

³³ Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers*, p. 6; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, pp. 157-158.

³⁴ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 187.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Dell, *Nimbin Centenary*, p. 1; Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers*, p. 8; Harold W. Denning 1973, *The Sunkissed Playground: An Historical Manuscript of the Tweed, Mullumbimby and Byron Bay Areas*, Murwillumbah, p. 52.

³⁸ Ward, *Australia Since the Coming of Man*, p. 17.

Bundjalung people would travel north for a great feast that lasted several weeks.³⁹ Every spring, ‘from thousands of years ago into living memory’,⁴⁰ the Bundjalung would migrate to the coast to places such as Gummingarr (Evans Head) and Bullinah (Ballina) to enjoy fish and oysters.⁴¹ The rainforest provided a great deal of sustenance during winter from such sources as fruits and berries, honey, yams, birds, fruit bats, possums, freshwater mussels, small wallabies and edible plants.⁴²

So deep was the environmental knowledge gained over millennia that even poisonous plants were utilised. Time and experience had taught the Bundjalung that the Moreton Bay chestnut and cunjevoi plants, while lethal if eaten untreated, could be leached of their poisonous saponin by soaking them in running water for some time. Trusting in their animal relative’s judgement, the Bundjalung would wait until fish nibbled at the cunjevoi plant, letting them know that the saponin had been washed away. The remaining plant could be mashed and made into sought-after cakes that were shared among the community.⁴³

Sustainable land use practices were an innate way of life for the Bundjalung people, a natural expression of the relationship between people and place. Demonstrating a deep respect for life and a willingness to work in partnership with the natural environment, little was wasted, food was eaten seasonally, and all available resources were made use of and shared, ensuring that environmental equilibrium was maintained. Furthermore the Bundjalung had realised the need to occasionally burn the Australian forest to stimulate regrowth and regeneration. Langford Ginibi

³⁹ Mary Bundock 1978 [1898], ‘Notes on the Richmond Blacks’, in *Records of Times Past*, McBryde (ed.), p. 256; Clement Hodgkinson, 1845, *Australia: From Port Macquarie to Moreton Bay*, London, pp. 226-27; Oakes, ‘The First Inhabitants’, p. 188

⁴⁰ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 154.

⁴¹ Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, pp. 5-6; Oakes, ‘The First Inhabitants’, p. 188; Robinson, *The Man Who Sold His Dreaming*, p. 28.

⁴² Sharon Sullivan, 1978, ‘Aboriginal diet and food gathering methods in the Richmond and Tweed River valleys, as seen in early settler records’, in *Records of Times Past*, McBryde (ed.), p. 107; Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, p. 6; Hodgkinson, *Australia: From Port Macquarie to Moreton Bay*, pp. 226-227; Oakes, ‘The First Inhabitants’, p. 187, Denning, *The Sunkissed Playground*, p. 52.

⁴³ Russell Pierce, 1978, ‘The evidence of J. Ainsworth on the diet and economy of the Ballina horde’, in *Records of Times Past*, McBryde (ed.), p. 117; Sullivan, ‘Aboriginal diet and food gathering methods in the Richmond and Tweed River valleys’, p. 109; Bundock, ‘Notes on the Richmond Blacks’, p. 263; Oakes, ‘The First Inhabitants’, p. 196; Robinson, *The Man Who Sold His Dreaming*, pp. 70-71.

summarises this unique relationship between the people and their Country;

We always knew that there was a good spirit that looked after every living thing; and that we lived in unity with the earth, our mother, and had always done so. We never hoarded up anything for gain, and never destroyed the land. When food was getting scarce, our people back burned the land, then the grasses would grow again, and the animals came back. This is how we kept the food chain going. Our land was part of our being, and lifestyle.⁴⁴

The land also held the power to heal the Bundjalung with medicines, drugs, poultices and liniments sourced from the local plants.⁴⁵ In return, demands upon the environment were minimized not only through conservation measures but also through careful control of population growth, ‘maintaining numbers which matched the availability of resources.’⁴⁶ Bolton argues that natural contraceptives, abortion, infanticide, and leaving behind the aged in seasons of scarcity were among the methods used to maintain zero population growth.⁴⁷

It must be noted that the deep relationship between people and environment did not necessarily mean that no ecological violence was perpetrated by Aboriginal people. As noted, the forest was burned, and while there is a great deal of evidence that this was done in an ecologically sensitive way, it is unlikely that this was always the case, and it was certainly not the case for non-human beings. Bill Gammage argues that the Australian landscape, upon European invasion, was carefully maintained through complex systems of land management and firestick farming.⁴⁸ Tim Flannery makes a similar argument in his work of Australian environmental history, *The Future Eaters*.⁴⁹ In the Big Scrub, grassy clearings were actively maintained,⁵⁰ and as noted, bora rings transformed parts of the landscape through clearing and the altering of the topography. While human-nature interactions were largely harmonious, and much

⁴⁴ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 195.

⁴⁵ Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*, p. 127; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁶ Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River* p. xviii; Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers*, p. 6

⁴⁷ Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers*, p. 6

⁴⁸ Bill Gammage 2012, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*, Crows Nest.

⁴⁹ Tim Flannery, 1994, *The Future Eaters*, French’s Forest, pp. 223-236.

⁵⁰ Arthur Cousins, 1933, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Sydney, p. 35; Rob Garbutt, 2010, ‘The Clearing: Heidegger’s *Lichtung* and the Big Scrub’, *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 33.

more so than the cultures that would follow, it is unrealistic to expect that there was not also a significant anthropocentric motivation behind the maintenance of the natural environment.

Reading the land, knowing the land

The ecological knowledge of the Bundjalung meant that they were adept at reading changes in the seasons, climate and animal behaviour. While not a Bundjalung woman, Turner explains the symbiotic relationship between people and place, common across Aboriginal culture:

Treat Land good, Land treats you the same... the Land teach us, show us... it'll show you where the hills are. It'll show you where the birds are singing – that's those water birds, they'll tell you where to find water and food.⁵¹

The Bundjalung knew that the wallabies were fat and tender when yellow flowers appeared on the Casuarina trees, the flowering of certain rainforest species meant that the rivers and beaches would be full of mullet, and the movement of ants to higher ground signalled that one of the region's frequent floods was imminent.⁵² Natural indicators also served as a reminder that it was time for important gatherings and ceremonies.⁵³ The Bundjalung 'maintained such a close affinity with their natural environment' that the most subtle changes could be interpreted.⁵⁴ This close affinity with the natural environment also granted spiritual power. To the Bundjalung people the *wuyun-gali*, or clever men, held the power of foresight, healing and levitation.⁵⁵ They were thought to travel at super-human speed, command animals and spirit beings and break up dangerous storms.⁵⁶

The very way in which the Bundjalung traversed the land required a deep environmental connection. Bundjalung children were carried on the shoulders of their

⁵¹ Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*, p. 115.

⁵² Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants', p. 187; Pierce, 'The evidence of J. Ainsworth on the diet and economy of the Ballina horde', p. 117; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 169.

⁵³ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 168.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Rose, *Living Magic*, pp. 19-20; Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 196.

⁵⁶ Rose, *Living Magic*, pp. 66-67; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 232.

parents,⁵⁷ allowing them the freedom to absorb the landscape from above from an early age. Without cloven-hooved animals or the machinery of the modern age to bear them, walking and paddling necessitated a more contemplative level of interaction with the natural environment. While rivers formed natural passages for bark canoes,⁵⁸ negotiating the thick rainforest on foot required a high level of knowledge and skill that could only have come from a deep connection with Country. An early European observer noted of a Bundjalung man:

He journeyed through the trackless bush without chart, tree mark or compass, and never missed his destination. Obstacles in the shape of dense brush, tangled jungle, or rugged country, presented no serious impediment to the bush traveller.⁵⁹

The Bundjalung people were the first humans to interact with and shape the natural environment of the region. Over tens of thousands of years this relationship between people and environment grew and matured into a symbiotic relationship; use of natural resources was moderated by a deep spiritual connection and sense of responsibility to care for the land as a living relative, and in return, the land fed, healed and offered spiritual fulfillment and identity to the Bundjalung people. The people did not own the land; the people were of the land and belonged to the land.⁶⁰ This relationship remained steady during thousands of years of global change; great historical empires such as those of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans rose and fell while the Bundjalung maintained their culture of relative environmental peace and stability. They rarely took too much from the earth and never sought to conquer other tribal lands. With the colonizing zeal of the British Empire came catastrophic damage to the culture of the Bundjalung, driving a poisoned wedge between the people and their Country and imposing a radically different land ethic upon the ancient Australian landscape.

⁵⁷ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 151.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*. Peter Sutton, 1995, *Country: Aboriginal Boundaries and Land Ownership in Australia*, Canberra; Russel Ward 1982, *Australia Since the Coming of Man*, Sydney, p. 16; Ruby Langford Ginibi 1994, *My Bundjalung People*, St Lucia, p. 131.

Seventeen Seventy

For many thousands of years the Bundjalung culture was built upon the landscape, but it was yet to confront a challenge like the invasion of not only an entirely new race, but with them an entirely new land ethic. For a culture in which the smallest changes in the natural environment were noticed, the relationship between the Bundjalung and their Country was to be dramatically altered and in many ways destroyed completely by the invasion of the Europeans.

John Steele argues, 'the black and white cultures represent two different points of balance with the land.'⁶¹ European culture, based on a resource economy, 'industrialised, colonising (and) warlike',⁶² introduced a new paradigm that was far removed from anything the Australian landscape had experienced. The Europeans, on encountering Aboriginal people, did not consider them 'civilised' as the former did not understand their subtle, balanced and ecologically harmonious culture, finely tuned to the realities of the Australian environment. It was a way of life that did not require the 'modern' and 'civilised' tools of industrialisation. The Europeans brought with them a very different set of values, influenced by Enlightenment paradigms, that had drastically altered their own relationship with the natural environment since their own historic pagan times (this will be explored in the next chapter). By European standards Aboriginal people did not utilise the land and had no form of government or state.⁶³ Based on this convenient (or deliberate) cultural misunderstanding the Europeans proclaimed the land *Terra Nullius* and thus dispossessed Aboriginal people of their land, and with it their very culture and identity.

Initially, this dispossession occurred unbeknownst to the Aboriginal people, who had never waged war over land or ideology, demonstrating their relatively peaceful nature.⁶⁴ Henry Reynolds explains;

⁶¹ Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, p. xviii.

⁶² Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 37.

⁶³ Buchan & Heath, 'Savagery and Civilization', p. 15.

⁶⁴ Medcalf, *Rivers of Blood*, p. 17.

Alienation from land was not only unthinkable, it was literally impossible. If blacks often did not react to the initial invasion of their country it was because they were not aware that it had taken place. They certainly did not believe that their land had suddenly ceased to belong to them and they to their land.⁶⁵

From first contact, European commentators noted the sense of self-confidence which the Aboriginal people carried – a confidence based on their spiritual relationship with the land.⁶⁶ The new people with their pale skin were not considered a threat to their very strong and enduring relationship to Country, and Aboriginal people may have mistakenly assumed that the European invaders would respect their land as they did. George Grey, Governor of South Australia, noted in 1841,

...never having an idea of quitting their own land, (they) cannot imagine others doing it; -and thus, when they see white people suddenly appear in their country, and settling themselves down in particular spots, they imagine that they must have formed an attachment for this land in some other state of existence, and hence conclude the settlers were at one period black men, and their own relations.⁶⁷

The Aboriginal people, with no point of reference given their own culture of environmental peace, initially failed to understand the colonising, conquering ways of a culture that did not hold the same respect or deep sense of belonging to Country – a people who could leave their European homelands behind and seek new resource-rich lands to exploit.

Invasion

The first contact between the British colonists and the Bundjalung people was made by Captain James Cook on 15 May, 1770.⁶⁸ Cook and botanist Joseph Banks were sailing up the east coast of Australia when they spotted Bundjalung people carrying palm leaves on the beach south of Cape Byron.⁶⁹ The British kept their distance.

⁶⁵ Reynolds, *The Other Side of The Frontier*, p. 71.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 64.

⁶⁷ George Grey, 1841, *Journal of Two Expeditions of Discovery*, London, pp. 302-303.

⁶⁸ John Cawte Beaglehole (ed.), 1964, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery, vol. 1: The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*, Cambridge, p. 317

⁶⁹ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 6.

Observing them through a telescope, Banks remarked in his journal that the Bundjalung did not take the slightest interest in the *Endeavour*, stationed off the coast for nearly an hour.⁷⁰ The Bundjalung people continued with their lives, undisturbed - the mouth of the Richmond River lay concealed and would not attract the interest of the Europeans for another fifty years.

After their fifty year reprieve, the Bundjalung people's world changed entirely. From the 1830s, the first European people to interact with the Bundjalung were explorers, escaped convicts and cedar getters.⁷¹ These groups of people were transient, and had no immediate desire to take land from the Bundjalung people.⁷² Accordingly, relations between the Bundjalung and these first Europeans were relatively peaceful. Some conflict occurred between cedar getters and Bundjalung over the theft of tools on the Clarence River, on the southern border of Bundjalung Country,⁷³ but relations between cedar getters and the Bundjalung of the focus region were tolerant. While the Bundjalung did not initially consider the cedar getters a problem, it was not long before larger numbers of Europeans made their way up the Richmond River and the landscape of the Bundjalung people, cared for and maintained for many thousands of years, began to change. As Langford Ginibi expresses, 'the arrival of mill sawyers on the Richmond River in 1842 was the beginning of the end of the ancient Bundjalung people.'⁷⁴

Malcolm Prentis argues that the cedar getters eased the Bundjalung into European culture, helping them prepare for what was to come.⁷⁵ The cedar getters had no desire to possess land and in some ways had more in common with the Bundjalung than the squatters and pastoralists that would soon follow. Both the Bundjalung and the cedar getters led somewhat mobile lives. In common was their social isolation, high level of dependency upon the natural environment and tendency to live for the

⁷⁰ Sir Joseph Banks, 1768-1771, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks*, reproduced on Project Gutenberg Australia, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0501141.txt>, accessed 22 January 2014.

⁷¹ Malcolm Prentis 1984, 'Prelude to Dispossession? First Contacts between Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, 1770-1840s', *Journal of Royal Australian Historic Society*, vol. 70, part 1, p. 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 3, p. 15.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 75.

⁷⁵ Prentis, 'Prelude to Dispossession?', pp. 3-18.

present or immediate future.⁷⁶ This, therefore, constitutes the first instance of peaceful relations established on common ground in the region, based on a somewhat similar attitude to land (even if underpinned by radically different values).

The Bundjalung did not consider the cedar getters a threat to their land or food, and they frequently assisted the cedar getters, helping them locate new stands of cedar.⁷⁷ Jennifer Hoff argues;

These *Bundjalung* men, with their customary values of sharing knowledge and caring for their Country, could not have understood the mindset of the white newcomers who were driven by short term monetary reward and would eventually completely destroy the vast expanse of trees.⁷⁸

Prentis argues that Bundjalung life 'resumed a fairly normal pattern' once the cedar getters moved on; however the cedar clearings did not go unnoticed.⁷⁹

As the land was opened up and more Europeans heard of the fertile land of Bundjalung Country, the Bundjalung people started to become more affected by changes to their environment. By the late 1840s and 1850s, squatters and pastoralists were coming to the region in increasing numbers.⁸⁰ Herds of cattle and flocks of sheep were being driven across Bundjalung Country for the first time, polluting waterholes, damaging forests and grasslands and compacting the fragile soil of the Australian landscape with their cloven hooves.⁸¹ The cedar cutters may not have posed a direct threat to the Bundjalung way of life, but these strange new beasts and the squatters who drove them did not intend for their time in Bundjalung Country to be brief.

Unaware that such damage threatened the survival of the Bundjalung people, the Europeans were oblivious to the deep connection between the Bundjalung and their Country. As more pastoral leases were granted and more land was taken from

⁷⁶ Prentis, 'Prelude to Dispossession?', p. 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 17; Robert Leycester Dawson, 1938, 'Red Cedar', in *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 2, p. 86.

⁷⁸ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 17.

⁷⁹ Prentis, 'Prelude to Dispossession?', p. 14; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 57.

⁸⁰ Dell, *Nimbin Centenary*, p. 1; Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 45-46.

⁸¹ Rose, *Living Magic*, p. 175; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 37.

the Bundjalung, conflict arose, and the loss of traditional lands and incursion upon sacred sites and hunting grounds provoked hostility from the Bundjalung.⁸² Coastal and riverside camps were abandoned as the Bundjalung retreated, moving further into the hills and out of the region, further into the drier Bundjalung territory to the west.⁸³ With fences to exclude and annex, the landscape was carved up and claimed without any recognition of tribal territories. 'Many European colonists saw themselves as the natural conquerors and inheritors of the lands of north-eastern New South Wales', argues Jennifer Hoff.⁸⁴ Trees were felled to erect huts and stockyards, and in the process of establishing their stations, the early colonists caused damage to forests, waterways, native animals and other natural resources that the Bundjalung relied upon.⁸⁵

The John Robertson Land Acts of 1861 marked a major turning point in the environmental history of Bundjalung Country. While the squatters had previously enjoyed a certain level of power and independence, these land reforms were designed to break the squatter monopoly and open up Crown lands for free selection (Crown lands being ancestral Country taken from Aboriginal people under the 'authority of the Queen', an authority that the Aboriginals neither recognised nor consented to). As more Europeans sought to claim land, the mountainous country and dense forests fell under axe and fire. Land was cleared, burned and fenced off, crops were sown, and European and Bundjalung settlements were forced closer together under the colonial expansion.⁸⁶ Marjorie Oakes, an early colonist sympathetic to the Bundjalung people noted, 'Aboriginal life suffered a trauma when closer settlement followed the 1861 Land Act. The people were alienated from land to which they were tied by their mythology. They suffered in spirit and in body.'⁸⁷ The Bundjalung were dispossessed of not only their land, but also their long-term relationship with the natural environment.

⁸² Dell, *Nimbin Centenary*, p. 1; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 10; Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 46.

⁸³ McBryde, 'Museum collections from the Richmond River district', p. 135; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 272; Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 259.

⁸⁵ Sullivan 'Aboriginal diet and food gathering methods in the Richmond and Tweed River valleys', p. 101; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 68

⁸⁶ Sullivan 'Aboriginal diet and food gathering methods in the Richmond and Tweed River valleys', p. 102.

⁸⁷ Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants', p. 204.

That relationship now had to endure and adapt to ecological destruction, the loss of Country and its associated sacred sites and hunting and gathering grounds, the breakdown of traditional tribal laws associated with Country and the inability of the Bundjalung to maintain their ceremonies and duty of care for Country: 'Their future was at the whim of any European settler who purchased their clan lands.'⁸⁸

Dispossession

These severe consequences of colonial expansion were not unique to the Richmond district. Prout and Howitt argue that during this period of invasion from the mid to late 19th century, Aboriginal people across Australia were increasingly dispossessed of their lands and their way of life. The connection between Aboriginal people and their Country suffered in several ways, including from the increasing encroachment upon traditional lands, loss of food sources due to the impact of introduced animals and limited access to traditional lands, and the fences and settlements that cut the land up, forming physical barriers to sacred sites and traditional trade and migration routes.⁸⁹

European invasion also upset the balance between the water, vegetation and wildlife of Bundjalung Country.⁹⁰ The Bundjalung were deeply affected by the environmental destruction of their lands and their inability to carry out their sacred duty to care for their Country.⁹¹ In turn the land suffered without the care of those responsible for it. Bundjalung elder Lorraine Mafi Williams speaks for the Aboriginal people of Nimbin; 'they watched the old gumtrees, whose lives span hundreds of years, stripped of their bark and left to die in shame. With the trees' shame emerged the Aborigines' destruction.'⁹² The Bundjalung had to adapt to the dramatically changing landscape as best they could, while being pushed into marginal Country or finding their traditional lands had new names and new 'owners'.⁹³

⁸⁸ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 78.

⁸⁹ Sarah Prout & Richard Howitt, 2009, 'Frontier Imaginings and subversive Indigenous spatialities', *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol. 25, issue 4, p. 399.

⁹⁰ Bayet-Charlton, *Looking for Ullagundahi Island*, p. 164.

⁹¹ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 78.

⁹² Williams, 'Old Men of the Mountain', p. 6.

⁹³ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 43; Reynolds, *The Other Side of The Frontier*, p. 72.

Aboriginal people who found that their land had been reassigned European value and classified as a 'station' suddenly had to contend with white man's rule. Sometimes this rule had no place at all for Bundjalung people, who could be killed just for walking across their ancestral lands.⁹⁴ Violent confrontations were common in many parts of Australia,⁹⁵ and Bundjalung Country was no exception.* Other station owners had a different technique, rounding up all of the Aboriginal people on their newly acquired land and forcing them to camp near their stations. Williams explains;

Detribalised, they sought solace on properties of land that was not their own... they became aliens in their own country... As a shattered race they lived on camping grounds allocated to them by land owners. They were not to trespass on their ancestors' land, to hunt, fish, or practise their tribal customs.⁹⁶

The Bundjalung people themselves were forced to interfere in the relationship between neighbouring tribes and their Country, breaking 'carefully constructed' tribal laws that had been laid down by the Three Brothers millennia ago.⁹⁷ Faced with starvation, these laws had to be broken in order to survive in the radically altered landscape.

The introduction of non-native species upset the delicate balance that had sustained the Bundjalung people. Horses and cattle consumed edible bush foods and seeds, resulting in a lack of seed for native birds. They compacted the land with their heavy hooves, trampling soft green food plants and making it difficult for native plants to regenerate without the soft soil they required.⁹⁸ Native animals were often scared off by these strange new beasts.⁹⁹ The physical alteration of the landscape made it difficult for the Bundjalung to maintain their seasonal trips to the beaches and

⁹⁴ Williams, 'Old Men of the Mountain', p. 6.

⁹⁵ Prout & Howitt, 'Frontier Imaginings and subversive Indigenous spatialities', p. 399.

* Rory Medcalf's *Rivers of Blood* documents the little-known violent and brutal massacres of many Bundjalung people in the 19th century. While it is important to acknowledge these atrocities, a discussion of these massacres is not relevant to this work.

⁹⁶ Williams, 'Old Men of the Mountain', p. 7.

⁹⁷ Eve Keane, 1956, *Kyogle, New South Wales: 1839-1956*, Sydney, p. 12.

⁹⁸ Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*, p. 176, p. 182.

⁹⁹ Rose, *Living Magic*, p. 175; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 35.

estuaries for fish and shellfish,¹⁰⁰ and resulted in ecological damage that impacted upon the Bundjalung people's ability to hunt and gather:

The countryside became cleared and fenced. Trees were felled and with them went tree food like possums, birds, koalas and honey. The undergrowth was burnt off and away went wallabies, snakes, lizards, bandicoots and edible roots. If they tried for waterlily bulbs at their usual lagoons they were hunted off.¹⁰¹

The health of the Bundjalung suffered because of their inability to maintain their healthy, self-sufficient diets,¹⁰² revealing interconnections between ecosystem health and human health.

Competing land use interests fuelled further conflict - the Bundjalung often used dingoes to help them hunt, but station owners were concerned that they were scaring off their livestock, so they would shoot the dingoes and confiscate and burn Aboriginal weapons. It soon became very difficult to hunt near station camps and the Bundjalung found it necessary to kill cattle and sheep, bringing severe repercussions.¹⁰³ The balance between the Bundjalung and their natural environment had been irreparably damaged and the Bundjalung became dependent on European rations. New and unfamiliar food such as flour, sugar and tea led to further deterioration of the health of the once strong and vibrant race and further removed them from their earthly relationship of self-sufficiency.¹⁰⁴

Just as the European settlers were unaware of the extent of the damage caused to the traditional Bundjalung way of life, so too were they ignorant of the fact that they trespassed on ancient Bundjalung lands imbued with sacred sites. They did not understand the meaning of bora rings, *djurebils* or carved trees, and disturbed the extremely sacred burial sites of the *wuyun-gali* around Nimbin.¹⁰⁵ Sites were desecrated by European development such as road and building construction, ploughing and stock grazing, while in some cases sites they were deliberately

¹⁰⁰ McBryde, 'Museum collections from the Richmond River district', p. 135.

¹⁰¹ Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants', p. 197.

¹⁰² Medcalf, *Rivers of Blood*, p. 16.

¹⁰³ Rose, *Living Magic*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁴ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 68; Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants', p. 204.

¹⁰⁵ Keats, *Wollumbin*, p. 44; Williams, 'Old Men of the Mountain', p. 4.

vandalised.¹⁰⁶ The mountainous landscape helped to protect some sites, keeping these secrets of Bundjalung culture hidden in the rainforest or sheltered under mountains. Many stone arrangements around Wollumbin lay undisturbed until the forest was cleared and cattle trampled upon them.¹⁰⁷ Other sites would remain hidden by the rugged land until well into the 1950s,¹⁰⁸ and it was not until 1961 that sawmillers inadvertently discovered a stone pathway constructed from obsidian in very thick forest on the ridge between the Tuntable and Terania Creek valleys.*¹⁰⁹

The desecration of sacred sites had significant cultural impacts. Ceremonies could not be held and cultural obligations could not be fulfilled, and the destruction of these sites resulted in the loss of traditional knowledge. Bundjalung Elder Charles Moran explains that information about the location and purpose of many sacred sites was lost with the introduction of private farming practices, logging, mining and indiscriminate hunting.¹¹⁰

The most significant cultural impact was the combination of factors that led to a chain-reaction breakdown of the relationship between Bundjalung people and their Country. Loss of land, food, sacred sites and culture – Prentis argues that this disruption escalated with momentum;

This [cultural breakdown] in turn made it more difficult to maintain the old territorial organisation, which was already strained by the direct effects of changes in the natural environment. The stress on the territorial organisation increased. The stress and strain on the social system which resulted from these, led in turn to religious problems, thus bringing the very foundation of the Aboriginal world-view into crisis ... there were

¹⁰⁶ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 147.

¹⁰⁷ Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁸ Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 299; Isabel McBryde, 1974, *Aboriginal Prehistory in New England: An Archaeological Survey of Northeastern New South Wales*, Sydney, pp. 163-164

* This site, well hidden in rugged mountainous country, is particularly significant as it was previously believed that Aboriginal people did not construct stone pathways

¹⁰⁹ McBryde, *Aboriginal Prehistory in New England*, pp. 163-164.

¹¹⁰ Charles Harold Moran, 2004, *Talk Softly, Listen Well: Profile of Bundjalung Elder, Charles Moran*, Lismore, pp. 54-56.

more profound results from dispossession, as is to be expected in view of the organic spiritual union between Aborigines and nature.¹¹¹

The livelihood of the Bundjalung people was completely entrenched within the wellbeing of the natural environment, and Aboriginal culture understood that all life was interlinked and held in balance. As Prentis argues, the consequences of dispossession extended far beyond the mere loss of territory. The entire Aboriginal way of life, including their profound, ecologically sound connection to Country had nurtured and understood the capricious nature of the Australian environment while many human societies were still in their infancy – all of this was lost with the invasion of the Europeans.

Adaptation

Despite the terribly destructive forces the Bundjalung people faced, they continued with their traditions wherever they could and adapted their land use practices to suit the new environment. Their chances of survival in this new world were dismissed by the Europeans, who widely considered the Aborigines a ‘doomed race’ unable to adapt to the agricultural and industrial processes of capitalism.¹¹² However, Aboriginal people have a strong reputation for adaptability and innovation, and in a sense adapted better to European invasion than the Europeans adapted to the new World.¹¹³ As Henry Reynolds argues, ‘Like the white colonists the blacks were pioneers, struggling to adjust to a new world of experience and one even stranger and more threatening than the Australian environment was to the Europeans.’¹¹⁴ Gardner argues that prior to the European invasion, Bundjalung culture was shaped by interactions with other Bundjalung people and non-Bundjalung Aborigines, whereas since the 1830s Bundjalung culture has been ‘produced and transformed’ mainly by interactions with non-Aboriginal Australians.¹¹⁵ While a great deal of irreparable

¹¹¹ Prentis, ‘Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales’, p. 277.

¹¹² Colin Tatz, 2011, *Genocide in Australia: By Accident or Design?*, Clayton, p. 76.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*; Josephine Flood, 1999, *Archaeology of the Dreamtime: The story of prehistoric Australia and its people*, Sydney, p. 257.

¹¹⁴ Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ Don Gardner, 1991, ‘Bundjalung attitudes and beliefs concerning a site in East Ballina’, Report for National Heritage Studies/NSW Department of Conservation and Land Management, Canberra, p. 10.

damage had been caused to the entire Aboriginal population and their Country, the Bundjalung attempted to reshape their culture while still maintaining their profound cultural connection to Country. They maintained their cultural traditions when they could, and when they could not, they adapted by working within the new land ethic imposed upon their traditional lands.¹¹⁶

The Bundjalung sometimes adopted European technologies and sometimes disregarded them, depending on how they complemented their existing relationship with the natural environment. For example, steel hatchets and fish hooks improved their ability to hunt and fish,¹¹⁷ whereas winding roads built through the rainforest were ignored, the Bundjalung preferring to take direct routes straight through the thick forest.¹¹⁸ They appreciated the value of technology that improved their relationship with the natural environment, whereas roads, an unnecessary and destructive technology, added no such value.

One of the most significant changes in the way the Bundjalung related to the natural environment was their willingness to work the land, European-style, as labourers. Jennifer Hoff argues that they were at first resistant to white labour, while other Aboriginal groups are known to have found work ridiculous and unnecessary. The Bundjalung were reluctant to damage their Country, to which they were related like family. Cutting down the forests, fencing waterways and caring for non-native animals at the expense of their own native animal relatives did not come naturally to the Bundjalung. Yet the Europeans used the lure of food, tobacco and alcohol, and offered the Bundjalung a means of staying on in their traditional lands.¹¹⁹ This happened throughout Australia, and Turner explains the Aboriginal reasoning behind this:

¹¹⁶ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 79.

¹¹⁷ Prentis, 'Prelude to Dispossession?', p. 15.

¹¹⁸ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 45.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

If the station owners say “chop down all those trees”, they *gonna* chop down all those trees. And if the station owners say “shoot all the dogs”, well *shoot* all the dogs. Or if the station owners say “you hunt in that area, but you can’t hunt in this area”, well, you know, those sort of things might have been put on them. The reason they took those notice, because then still they can stay in their own country, in their own Land. Because otherwise they might get moved out from that station, or that area where they’re living, which is their own homeland.¹²⁰

The strength of Aboriginal land connection was so strong that contributing to its destruction, although devastating spiritually, psychologically and emotionally, was less traumatic than leaving it altogether. Ginibi confirms that such adaptation to circumstances also occurred in Bundjalung Country, where the Bundjalung worked as cedar cutters and scrub clearers (as shown below), stockmen and stockwomen, housemaids, servants and midwives.¹²¹



Figure 3: Scrub clearing. Bundjalung people clearing scrub in the late 19th century.¹²²

¹²⁰ Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*, p. 123.

¹²¹ Ginibi, 'My Belongin' Place', p. 13.

¹²² Held at State Library of New South Wales, 'McIntosh and Campbell families - photographs of cattle stations, homesteads, townships and other country scenes in northern New South Wales, 1863-1908.'

With their deeply ingrained knowledge of the natural environment, the Bundjalung proved to be excellent labourers. Their endurance and ability to track cattle made them valuable stockmen.¹²³ In the cedar industry, they took up jobs as axemen, bullock drivers, rafters and ration carriers, but of most value was their ability to locate new stands of cedar.¹²⁴ The bush skills of Bundjalung men, acquired from their deep connection to their land, included climbing, good eyesight, fast reflexes and natural athletic ability, and they used these skills to climb trees and spot the characteristic reddish-green foliage of the cedars in early spring.¹²⁵

Aboriginal knowledge of their own land was more intimate and detailed than the Europeans could possibly understand, and from the earliest days of colonisation the new settlers relied upon Bundjalung knowledge.¹²⁶ Despite their dismissive attitudes towards Aboriginal people and the fact that many considered them a 'primitive' race', European settlers trusted in their ecological knowledge, ate bush food, used bush medicines and employed Aborigines as trackers and guides. Ginibi argues that the squatters and pastoralists of the region would not have survived without the Bundjalung, who 'taught them how to live in this rugged, untamed land.'¹²⁷ The ability of the Bundjalung to know their Country so deeply that they could notice the smallest detail out of place led the Europeans to seek their help when children went missing in the bush, and 'many a lost white child' was found by a Bundjalung tracker.¹²⁸ The Bundjalung shared their botanical knowledge with the settlers, showing them how to use cunjevoi juice to alleviate the sting of a plant that grew near Teven, and how to use the same plant to make a poison with which to stun fish.¹²⁹

Despite the invaluable insight and help given to the Europeans, the Bundjalung have received little recognition for their role in developing the region. Their entire way of life was adapted to accommodate a new people and their new land ethic, yet there

¹²³ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 67.

¹²⁴ Prentis, 'Prelude to Dispossession?', p. 13.

¹²⁵ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, pp. 19-30; Dawson, 'Red Cedar', p. 86.

¹²⁶ Reynolds, *The Other Side of The Frontier*, p. 106; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 73.

¹²⁷ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 72.

¹²⁸ Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants' p. 191.

¹²⁹ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 25.

is very little mention in the historical record of Bundjalung participation in the cedar industry or of the various roles they fulfilled on stations.¹³⁰ The Bundjalung helped build the very system that would be used against them. George Morgan argues:

In establishing the places that became the towns and cities of Australia, the European colonisers imposed a system of organising land that was alien to indigenous people. They constructed houses, streets and public buildings. They divided space into public and private. They forged enclaves of ‘civilised’ settlement on the traditional lands of hunter-gatherers both through symbolic and physical labour. The exclusion of all disturbing traces of Aboriginality was central to the process of settlement.¹³¹

When ‘all disturbing traces of Aboriginality’ could not be erased, the Bundjalung people were once again forcefully divorced from their Country. In the years of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many men, women and children were taken off their traditional lands and herded onto missions and reserves.

Aboriginal reserves and missions

When place is so inherently tied to culture, the dislocation of people from their place of belonging is equivalent to the destruction of their entire culture. Belonging is a subjective experience – we cannot be told where we belong, and where we do not belong. With the establishment of Aboriginal missions and government reserves, Aboriginal people were effectively told that they no longer belonged to their Country. They were often compulsorily relocated, without consultation or consent. On many of the missions and reserves they were forbidden from hunting, practicing their cultural traditions and speaking their native language, forced to assimilate to the European land ethic.¹³² Bayet-Charlton recounts the story of her grandfather, Jack Freeburn:

[he] knew his land but he could not live on it. He could not walk his country according to the laws and the rules of his own people. He could not sustain his family according to the cycle of the seasons. He could not walk as a free man. Instead he was allowed

¹³⁰ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 19; Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 72.

¹³¹ George Morgan, 2006, *Unsettled Places: Aboriginal People and Urbanisation in New South Wales*, Kent Town, p. 14.

¹³² Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p.254, p. 260.

an island in the middle of a river... something that could be called home in this breakdown of his world, but only if he tilled it, turned it, lived from it, ate off it, according to white man's rule.¹³³

Denied of their spiritual land connection, Bundjalung people were coerced into rejecting their ancient and earthly spirituality and replacing it with European Christian values.¹³⁴ Ginibi explains that the impacts of this policy had a disastrous effect on her Bundjalung people; 'It was a dispossession that we have never recovered from, even today.'¹³⁵

The Aborigines Protection Board (APB) was established in 1883 to manage Aboriginal land reserves, and several missions and reserves were established throughout Bundjalung Country.¹³⁶ From 1887 the APB established reserves at Modanville (also known as the Terania Creek reserve, Dunoon road reserve, or *Dirang*, established 1887), Ballina (1888), Mullumbimby (1891), Dunoon (1903), Byron Bay (1908), Cabbage Tree Island (1917), Cubawee (also known as Tuncester, 1932), and Evans Head (1963).¹³⁷ Only limited documentation exists for some of these places, however there remains obvious evidence that the Bundjalung people resisted attempts to deny them of their self-determination and worked to maintain their land connection as best they could.

Hoff argues that during this period of segregation, some Bundjalung Elders still held corroborees and other ceremonies to ensure the preservation of their cultural heritage and to pass on sacred knowledge to the next generation.¹³⁸ Marjorie Oakes recalls that in 1910 at the Modanville reserve a 'huge' corroboree was held, attended by Europeans as well as hundreds of visiting Aboriginal people. The performance was a retelling of the Three Brothers story, the ancestors who established the Bundjalung presence in the region.¹³⁹

¹³³ Bayet-Charlton, *Looking for Ullagundahi Island*, pp. 168-169.

¹³⁴ Williams, 'Old Men of the Mountain', p. 7.

¹³⁵ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. xvi.

¹³⁶ New South Wales Department of Community Services, 1998, *Connecting Kin: Guide to Records*, Sydney, p. 341.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 342-367; Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants', p. 202; Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 143.

¹³⁸ Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 244.

¹³⁹ Oakes, 'The First Inhabitants', p. 202

The story of Cabbage Tree Island is a strong example of Bundjalung resistance to the dispossession of their land and culture. According to oral tradition, a group of Bundjalung people walked from Wyrallah to Cabbage Tree Island in the 1890s with the intention of clearing the forest and establishing cane farms.¹⁴⁰ These independent and successful Bundjalung farmers were among the first Aboriginal people in NSW to plant crops.¹⁴¹ While farming was not traditional Bundjalung practice, it allowed them to have an independent connection to land away from the missions and reserves, and away from European demands. In 1893 the APB seized control of the Island, declaring it a reserve, and in 1911 it was declared an Aboriginal station, under the supervision of a white manager.¹⁴² Bundjalung Elder, Uncle Lewis Cook recalls;

The people on the island years ago, they were self-sufficient you know, they had their own cattle, own orchards, they'd their own cane farms, used to grow bananas and whatever. Beans and peas and things, I mean, they didn't want [for food] then, until the manager came in and then the manager brought his own cattle there, he had about fifty head and they just wiped the cane out, everything.¹⁴³

The Bundjalung people were not allowed to leave or access the island without permission from the manager.¹⁴⁴ Once again, Bundjalung efforts to maintain their connection to Country were thwarted.

However, some traditional expressions of belonging to Country endured; *Aboriginal Women's Heritage: Ballina & Cabbage Tree Island* offers a collection of twelve interviews conducted with Bundjalung women who grew up on Cabbage Tree Island.¹⁴⁵ They reveal many examples of a continuation of traditional practices. Despite the fact that the Island was not their traditional Country, all twelve women speak of Boundary Creek (a waterway bordering the island) with fondness. It is clear that the Island community formed a special attachment to this place. At Boundary Creek they

¹⁴⁰ Uncle Lewis Cook, 'Interview, 26 January 2005, Boundary Creek', www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nswcultureheritage/cabbagetree.htm, accessed 21 January 2014.

¹⁴¹ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 36; Moran, *Talk Softly, Listen Well*, p. 83.

¹⁴² Heather Goodall, 1990, 'Land in our own Country: The Aboriginal land Rights Movement in South-Eastern Australia, 1860-1914, *Aboriginal History*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴³ Cook, 'Interview, 26 January 2005, Boundary Creek'.

¹⁴⁴ Ashley Moran, 2007, *Aboriginal Women's Heritage: Ballina & Cabbage Tree Island*, Sydney.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

could catch fish and turtles, gather pipis, berries and pig face, and meet around the campfire at night – it was a favourite and special place. Isabel Bolt recalls her childhood in the 1930s;

We'd go fishing down the river bank and hunt for bush tucker every day. We'd catch wallabies and kangaroos and cook them on the open camp fire... they were the good times. The old people were very smart, teaching us the various methods of how to hunt in the bush.¹⁴⁶

While the Island residents were given rations, they supplemented their diets by hunting, foraging and gardening. Not only was this of economic benefit; it allowed the Bundjalung to maintain their connection to Country. Alongside respect for the teaching of Elders, a very strong sense of community and a natural inclination to always share whatever resources were available - these cultural practices found continuation at Cabbage Tree Island, and through them they forged a new sense of belonging. Sandra Bolt expresses, 'I have a spiritual connection to the island. My spirit is connected here.'¹⁴⁷ In 1959, the Bundjalung people took back control of the Island, and established 'Numbahging' - the first Aboriginal co-operative in New South Wales.¹⁴⁸

Indigenous peoples demonstrate a remarkably strong correlation between place attachment and environmental responsibility. The Bundjalung people have never given up on their relationship with Country – it is a part of their very being. Bundjalung Elder Aunty Millie Boyd remarked in the 1980s, 'We are the light end of the feather... the Aboriginal people. You see, they take the land but they can't take our butherah (spirit). It was made in the water. It was made up in the mountains. It's strong in the land. They can't take it'.¹⁴⁹ In recent times, non-Aboriginal Australians have started to acknowledge the importance and value of Aboriginal traditional ecological

¹⁴⁶ Moran, *Aboriginal Women's Heritage: Ballina & Cabbage Tree Island*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁸ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. 37; Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 301.

¹⁴⁹ Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p. xii.

knowledge.¹⁵⁰ This knowledge has long been taken for granted by the European settlers of Bundjalung Country who learnt a great deal from the Bundjalung people, including how to survive in a new and (to them,) hostile environment. The relationship between Aboriginal people and their traditional lands, forged and perfected over thousands of years in this often harsh environment, has endured great challenges and change. Recognition of and appreciation for the wisdom of Aboriginal knowledge and their intimate connection to land can enrich our sense of what it is to be Australian. There is much that can still be learnt about how Australians can better understand, relate to, and achieve environmental peace in this country to which we belong. While this chapter only looks at the Bundjalung relationship with the natural environment up until the mid 20th century (and only then in a limited way), further discussion of the Bundjalung people continues in the following chapters, as their story coalesces with other peoples, and other expressions of belonging.

¹⁵⁰ Karl-Erik Sveiby & Tex Skuthorpe, 2006, *Treading Lightly: the Hidden Wisdom of the World's Oldest People*, Crows Nest.

Chapter Three

The Richmond River

‘WE have received an account of a river, said to be newly discovered, called the Richmond... the water is quite fresh, and eleven feet deep. The land on the banks is described as being very fine, and abounds with cedar and pine. We have reason to believe that this river has not been entered from the sea. If it be a new discovery it is a very important one.’

Sydney Herald, 5 March 1842.¹

1842 was the year that Bundjalung Country would begin to face rapid environmental transformation under the influence of colonisation. Earliest European accounts of the region describe the land in utilitarian terms, enthusiastically stressing the significance of the region’s natural ‘resources’ and the economic opportunity these coveted resources promised. They knew it as the Richmond River District: a new, European expression imposed upon the landscape, and with it, the cultural values, understandings and practices of a people vastly different to the Bundjalung.

This chapter examines how environmental knowledge forged in a distant land was incompatible with the Australian environment. Based on a sense of alienation and disconnection from the land, the colonists sought to impose their own expression of belonging upon the natural environment, attempting to transform it into a vision of Europe, and to make untamed land productive. The Richmond River District would be near-unrecognisable in a matter of decades. But while the colonists attempted to shape the environment to suit their needs, they themselves were shaped *by* the environment to a far greater extent. Patterns of settlement, modes of transport, the selection of crops and other agricultural enterprises were all dictated by the Richmond’s waterways, topography, vegetation and climate. Over time, the identity of the Australian bush dwellers was shaped by, and was a product of, the environment

¹ ‘New River’, *Sydney Herald*, 5 March 1842, p. 2.

itself. However, a developing colonial Australian sense of belonging further erased the Bundjalung landscape. While this chapter focuses on the resource extraction mentality that blinded many to the region's outstanding beauty, Chapter Three will commence at the same point in time, and will focus on the growing environmental concerns that would lead to the development of the conservation movement both in the region and throughout Australia.

Colonisation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Richmond River District and the verdant green forest that stood upon the landscape was first sighted by Cook and Banks during their journey up the east coast of Australia in 1770. Cook wrote in his journal on May 16th that he spotted Wollumbin – unbeknownst to the sacredness of the mountain, he gave it a new name, and with that, came the start of a new understanding of the environment. With that renaming, the landmark became utilitarian. He called it Mount Warning, so that sailors would recognise the landmark and know to be wary of the offshore reefs nearby.² It must be noted, however, that Cook did consider the landscape to be 'well-wooded and beautiful.'³ From the earliest days, some Europeans appreciated the beauty of the region and expressed concern at the destruction that would follow, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

When James Henry Rous and Governor Darling sailed down the coast from Moreton Bay in 1827, again the European eye noted the fertile qualities of the land and hypothesised that there must be significant water resources in the region, standing in contrast with the withered brown drought-affected landscape in the south of New South Wales.⁴ While the fabled river was known to exist, the Richmond River mouth however did not easily yield the secret of its location, and it was not until 1828 that Rous found the Richmond estuary guarded by a treacherous sandbar. On 26

² John Cawte Beaglehole (ed.), 1964, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery, vol. 1: The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*, Cambridge, p. 317.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Louise Tiffany Daley, 2011 [1966], *Men and a River: Richmond River District 1828-1895*, 2nd edn, Lismore, p. 9.

August 1828, Rous anchored at what was then known as Bullenah, at the mouth of the river he named Richmond.⁵

Just as the river mouth protected the landscape from the environmental impacts of colonisation, so too did the mighty tangle of forest. The 'Big Scrub', named as such because the ancient Gondwanan rainforest was considered to be little more than an inconvenient obstacle in the path of 'improvement', covered an area of 700 square kilometres,⁶ with forest so dense that the Richmond and her tributaries offered the only access inland. The forest did, however, have one significant redeeming feature, encapsulated in the epithet for *Toona Ciliata*, or Australian Red Cedar – 'red gold'. The Clarence River to the south was selectively logged for cedar and other precious rare timbers since 1838, but an insatiable need for timber drove sawyers and cutters to seek out the rumours of the Richmond.⁷ In the spring of 1842, Stephen King and his companions found, 'to their delight... cedar trees growing almost everywhere.'⁸ The overhanging vegetation was so thick that at times it had to be cut away to aid the passage of ships, but what they found 'exceeded their wildest expectations.'⁹ News quickly spread to the cedar-getters further south; the exceptional quality of Richmond River cedar was renowned in Sydney and Melbourne, and so commenced the rapid and extensive clearing of the Big Scrub.¹⁰

The remote location of the region acted as a filter for the motivations of settlers – in fact many of these early European arrivals had no intention of settling at all. Itinerant workers, often living in complete isolation, sought only the wealth that

⁵ Maurice Ryan, 1979, *Lismore: The Story of a North Coast City*, Milson's Point, p. 9.

⁶ Rob Garbutt, 2010, 'The Clearing: Heidegger's *Lichtung* and the Big Scrub', *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 33.

⁷ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 16.

⁸ Richmond River Historical Society, revised 2001, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, Lismore, pp. 6-7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9; Malcolm Prentis, 1984, 'Prelude to Dispossession? First Contacts between Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, 1770-1840s', *Journal of Royal Australian Historic Society*, vol. 70, part 1, June, p. 11.

¹⁰ Gainsford McCurdy, c. 1958, *Notebooks of Gainsford McCurdy, Settlement of the Richmond River*, Richmond River Historical Society Archives, Lismore; Bonnie Paff, 1982, *Lismore, Pages of the Past: An Historic Sketchbook*, Goonellabah, p. 38.



Figure 4: 'Scrub Felling'. The Big Scrub, 1900, photo by Archibald James Campbell.¹¹

red gold could provide (and perhaps the adventure).¹² The cedar getters gradually spread from the banks of major waterways to minor tributaries and inland in their quest for wealth. In 1843, timber-cutter camps were established at Lismore (which was not named at the time), Bexhill and Terania.¹³ The precious timbers seemed inexhaustible - more than 190 000 metres of cedar were exported in 1845, and in 1847, a government official claimed that the cutters and their three kilogram axes could not

¹¹ Held at State Library of Victoria, Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, Members' Papers, MS 9247.

¹² Arthur Cousins, 1933, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Sydney, p. 38; Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 5; Sharon Sullivan, 1978, 'Aboriginal diet and food gathering methods in the Richmond and Tweed River valleys, as seen in early settler records', in *Records of Times Past: Ethnohistorical essays on the culture and ecology of the New England tribes*, Isabel McBryde (ed.), Canberra, p. 101; Jennifer Hoff, 2006, *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country*, Lismore, p. 17.

¹³ Peter Joseph Hurley, 1948, *Red Cedar: the Story of the North Coast*, Sydney, p. 199; 'European Settlement', Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015.

clear the forest for another five or six centuries.¹⁴ However, Geoffrey Bolton counters that 'within thirty years selectors were farming the same country.'¹⁵ There was still plenty of cedar to be sought, and in the 1850s, camps could be found on Duck Creek at Uralba, Emigrant Creek at Tintenbar, and at Gundurimba.¹⁶ The first mill was built at Ballina in the early 1850s, and a larger mill at Wyrallah in the early 1860s.¹⁷ But as they advanced into the forest, the clearings left behind them were filled with squatters who sought a second source of wealth – fertile soil.

The existing grasslands, carved out of the rainforest by the Bundjalung, were among the first pieces of land to be settled.¹⁸ The European-made clearings followed. There is contention over the exact date that Lismore Station was established but there seems to be a consensus that William and Jane Wilson and their six children occupied the property from 1844 or early 1845.¹⁹ By 1848, the main squatter stations included Lismore, Tunstall, Tuncester and Blakebrook, and in 1855 Lismore was proclaimed a village.²⁰ Widespread clearing was at this stage more unusual than selective harvesting given the legal restrictions surrounding settlement, but the John Robertson Land Acts of 1861 would signal another change of direction for the fate of the forests. The land acts, designed to encourage an agriculture-based economy, allowed selectors to claim a plot of land on the condition that they clear it, build on it and cultivate it.²¹ Clearing produced far more timber than the settlers could use, and so it was usually piled up and burnt.²² The virgin soil, fertilised by the ash of the Big Scrub, proved to be remarkably productive farmland and was put to cultivation.²³ Local archivist Margaret

¹⁴ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 36; Geoffrey Bolton, 1999, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy: The Bush Shapes Australia', in Gregg Borschmann (ed.), *The People's Forest: A Living History of the Australian Bush*, Blackheath, p. 29.

¹⁵ Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 29.

¹⁶ Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁸ Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; Hurley, *Red Cedar*, p. 199; Ryan, *Lismore*, p. 11.

²⁰ Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 3; Garbutt, 'The Clearing', p. 33.

²¹ Richard Waterhouse, 2006, 'Agrarian ideals and pastoral realities: The use and misuse of land in rural Australia', in *The Great Mistakes of Australian History*, Martin Crotty & David Andrew Roberts (eds), Sydney, p. 65; Margaret Henderson, (n.d.), 'Our heritage: archive', Richmond River Historical Society, Lismore, unpaginated.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ J. Gollan, 1938, 'The Agricultural and Pastoral [sic] Developments of the Mid-Richmond', *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 70; Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 128.

Henderson explains that life was challenging and many early selectors 'gave up and left';²⁴ however, many more migrated to the region and the Richmond River district experienced rapid growth. A population boom encouraged the development of civil society. Schools and churches were established, and in just nine years the population of the district rose from 1300 in 1861 to 4000 by 1870.²⁵

The frenzied expansion of agricultural and natural resource-based industries continued – carving their way further into the Big Scrub. Alstonville was established in 1865. Sugar was a lucrative industry in the late 1860s, and the Richmond proved to be ideally suited to the crop, at least temporarily. By 1870, sugarcane could be found 'on the hills and flats from Casino to Ballina' and in 1881 a sugarmill was built at Broadwater.²⁶ During the 1870s, rarer timbers such as hoop pine were sought, and Bolton estimates that for each year of the early 1870s, more than 1 676 000 metres of pine and ash and 1 066 000 metres of cedar were hewn out of the forest.²⁷ Ever deeper into the forest the cedar cutters ventured, and by the late 1880s the last bastions of precious timbers were sought out. Nimbin was selected around 1883, Rosebank in 1884, Repentance Creek in 1886 and Mullumbimby was declared a village in 1888.²⁸

When Oliver Fry, Commissioner of Crown Lands, proclaimed in 1847 that the Richmond possessed 'deep, rich soil – the best possible land',²⁹ he could not have known that rainforest soil only has a nutrient-dense top layer, relying on its vegetation

²⁴ Margaret Henderson, 'Our heritage: archive', unpaginated.

²⁵ J. Adam, 1938, 'A brief review of the development of educational facilities in the Richmond River District', *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 107; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 78.

²⁶ Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 12.

²⁷ Geoffrey Bolton, 1981, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians make their environment 1788-1980*, North Sydney, p. 40.

²⁸ James Hamilton Frith, 1938, 'Early Days of Nimbin', *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 65; 'European Settlement', Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015; Harold W. Denning, 1973, *The Sunkissed Playground: An Historical Manuscript of the Tweed, Mullumbimby and Byron Bay areas*, Murwillumbah, p. 33.

²⁹ Oliver Fry, 1847, 'Commissioner of Crown Lands to Select Committee on the Minimum Upset Price of Land, 16 August, 1847', *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales*, vol. 2, p. 542.



Figure 5: 'Lismore, NSW'. The town in 1900, photo by Archibald James Campbell.

to keep it fertile and to prevent the erosion of nutrients.³⁰ The soil was becoming 'exhausted' by the heavy demands placed upon it, particularly from sugarcane, and so again the Richmond settlers changed direction in their pursuit of profit.³¹ It was dairying, more than any other industry thus far, that would bring great wealth to the region.³² From the 1890s and well into the new century, the villages of Alstonville, Bangalow, Dunoon, Rosebank, Mullumbimby, Clunes, Nimbin, Uki and several others became centres for the record-breaking dairying industry, that some claim was 'without par.'³³ Refrigeration issues initially held the industry back, but were overcome with the importation of new technologies and the consolidation of smaller dairies into the North Coast Co-operative Company (NORCO) in 1895.³⁴ While this resulted in the

³⁰ Jim Charlie & Bryant Richards, 1977, 'Mineral Cycling in Rain Forests', in *Rain Forests*, Wendy Goldstein (ed.), Sydney, pp. 26-31; J. Gobat, M. Aragno & Matthey, W. 2004, *The Living Soil: Fundamentals of Soil Science and Soil Biology*, Enfield, p. 32.

³¹ Gollan, 'The Agricultural and Pastoral [sic] Developments of the Mid-Richmond', p. 72.

³² Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 68; Malcolm Prentis, 1972, 'Aborigines and Europeans in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales', Sydney p. 286.

³³ Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, pp. 63-64; Frank McCaffrey, c.1958, 'First Century of Dairying in NSW', in *The Notebooks of Gainsford McCurdy*, Gainsford McCurdy, p. 37; Hurley, *Red Cedar*, p. 197.

³⁴ Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 157-158.

end of several of the smaller dairies, the industry remained very strong well into the 1920s and 1930s.³⁵

During the 1900s the clearing of the Scrub continued, as timber-getters sought out the last of the cedar as well as the giant hardwoods on the highest peaks and ridges of the Nightcap Range, Minyon Falls and Rummery Park.³⁶ Manning Clark writes that by the early 1900s, most of the trees were gone, and ‘from end to end, the Big Scrub was destroyed, some of the land being wanted for sugar cane, some for dairying, but eventually practically all the land... was used for dairying.’³⁷ The next industry boom followed; from the 1920s, banana plantations could be found growing on the sides of the cleared hills and mountains from Nimbin to Mullumbimby and beyond.³⁸ These successful industries – timber, dairying and bananas, would face serious economic decline by mid-century, leaving behind a radically altered and environmentally-degraded landscape.³⁹ The Richmond had endured swift and widespread environmental change, perhaps more so than during any other period since the explosion of the Tweed shield volcano some twenty million years ago created the very environmental conditions that were so heavily exploited.

A Colonial Mindset

Australian environmental historian Tom Griffiths makes the insightful point that it is an unfortunate coincidence of timing that Australia ‘experienced colonization [sic] and industrialization [sic] almost coincidentally, a compressed, double revolution.’⁴⁰ Underpinning the colonisation of the Richmond and the subsequent environmental devastation was a powerful set of values and cultural assumptions, reinforced by one

³⁵ Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 157-158; Johanna Kijas, 2003, ‘From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity’, in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region: Cultural Perspectives on the NSW North Coast*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 29.

³⁶ ‘European Settlement’, Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015.

³⁷ Manning Clark, 1976, *A Discovery of Australia*, Sydney, p. 69.

³⁸ ‘European Settlement’, Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015; Maurice Ryan 1998, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, Nimbin, p. 1.

³⁹ Ryan, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Tom Griffiths, 1997, ‘Introduction: Ecology and Empire: Towards an Australian history of the world’, in *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, Tom Griffiths & Libby Robin (eds), Carlton South, p. 4.

another, interlocking to create a world view dominated by a resource extraction mentality. Cultural values inevitably contribute to the relationship between people and the natural environment; European cultural paradigms, based on Enlightenment thought, Judeo-Christian tradition and notions of colonisation and empire had at their foundation the notion that humans and the environment, or culture and nature, are separate and divided concepts. This nature/culture dualism, which many argue denies the interconnectedness of all life on earth, allowed for the most terrible environmental violence to be perpetrated.

The predominant religion exported out of Europe and eventually into the Richmond was Christianity and its various denominations, and these belief systems exerted a strong influence over settlers in the district.⁴¹ In 1967, Lynn White Jr famously charged Christianity as responsible for ‘the roots of our ecological crisis.’⁴² ‘The most anthropocentric religion’, he argued, Christianity encourages the domination of humans over their environment as a literal God-given right.⁴³ A significant point is that the humanities-based article appeared in *Science* – therefore making it, according to environmental humanist Kate Rigby, one of the earliest works to address the nature/culture divide.⁴⁴ While older spiritual traditions are nearly always characterised by a great reverence for nature, such as that of the Bundjalung, the Bible promoted a radically different land ethic:

...God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you."⁴⁵

Several other scholars such as Carolyn Merchant and Roslynn Haynes have further explored the links between Judeo-Christian belief and attitudes towards an external

⁴¹ St Carthages Senior Parishioners, 1987, *Richmond Recollections*, Lismore; Ryan, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*.

⁴² Lynn White Jr, 1967, ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’, *Science*, 10 March, pp. 1203-1207.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 1206.

⁴⁴ Kate Rigby, 2014, ‘Cultures, Ecologies, Ethics: A Field Guide to the Environmental Humanities’, Public Lecture, University of New England, Armidale, November 5.

⁴⁵ The Bible, Genesis 1:28-29, New American Standard version.

‘nature’. In contrast with Eden, ‘wilderness’ is land associated with sin and banishment.⁴⁶ The process of converting wild country into tamed, productive land equates to a reclamation of the garden of Eden.⁴⁷ While wilderness is representative of darkness, Don Watson points out that the ‘clearing’ of the Australian Bush is representative of the opposite - ‘clearing’ comes from the Latin *clarus*, ‘meaning light or brightness, which is the condition of seeing the truth and the way forward.’⁴⁸ As Merchant argues, ‘[a]s a powerful narrative, the idea of recovery functioned as ideology and legitimation for settlement of the New World.’⁴⁹

Merchant follows the above statement with the argument that capitalism, science and technology enabled the transformation of the *material* world.⁵⁰ The lens through which the New World was seen was heavily influenced by Enlightenment thought. Thinkers such as Galileo, Copernicus, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon and René Descartes ‘brought about the shift away from the medieval worldview toward the mechanistic-materialistic worldview of the modern era.’⁵¹ Descartes is frequently cited as one of the primary philosophers responsible for the nature/culture divide; what is now known as ‘Cartesian dualism’ is his notion that there is a separation between body and mind (and by extension nature and culture, the earth and humanity).⁵² While such ideas were conceived of by Greek philosophers, Descartes grounded the theory within Enlightenment paradigms. Such a way of thinking allows us to externalise nature, allowing humanity to operate as if damage dealt to an external, inchoate environment (and the consequences of doing so) has nothing to do with us (or our well-being). Thomas Berry argues that as a result of this philosophy, Descartes ‘killed the Earth and

⁴⁶ Roslynn Haynes, 2003, ‘From Habitat to Wilderness: Tasmania’s role in the politicizing of place’, in *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies*, David Trigger & Gareth Griffiths (eds), Aberdeen, p. 84. See also Bill McKibben, 1989, *The End of Nature*, New York, pp. 63-66.

⁴⁷ Carolyn Merchant, 1996, ‘Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative’, in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon (ed.), New York, pp. 132-159. See also David S. Trigger, 2003, ‘Disputed territories: Land, culture and identity’, in *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies*, Trigger & Griffiths (eds), pp. 1-27.

⁴⁸ Don Watson, 2014, *The Bush: Travels in the Heart of Australia*, Melbourne, p. 207.

⁴⁹ Merchant, ‘Reinventing Eden’, p. 137.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Ralph Metzner, 1999, *Green Psychology: Transforming our Relationship to the Earth*, Vermont, p. 100.

⁵² See for example Morris Berman, 1981, *The Re-enchantment of the World*, Ithica, who was among the first to make this argument – it has since been considered established fact in Environmental Humanities circles.

all its living beings.⁵³ As a product of the Enlightenment, it could be argued that Cartesian dualism affects only Western thought and attitudes towards nature, and the impact of this discord can likewise be seen strongest wherever Western ideology has left its mark upon the earth.⁵⁴ Several scholars argue that this binary has caused damage to both people and environments – a divide that essentially drives an anthropocentric wedge between (Western) people and environments.⁵⁵ The rapid and widespread destruction of the Big Scrub and the associated environmental impacts (which will be explored in more detail below) stand as a case-in-point.

Another of the Enlightenment heavyweights was John Locke, who famously stood for ‘life, liberty and property’.⁵⁶ While Lockean philosophy has undoubtedly contributed to the establishment of egalitarian political systems, the darker side of his philosophy – the right to possess the earth and manipulate it to serve human will – is another of the key influences upon the colonialist mentality.⁵⁷ Locke stated that ‘the intrinsic natural worth of anything consists in its fitness to supply the necessities or serve the conveniences of human life.’⁵⁸ He argued that land has no worth until it is possessed and ‘improved’ through labour, laying the foundation for the justification of the radical alteration of natural environments to suit human needs. Given the influence of this heady mixture of European values and principles, it is little wonder such paradigmatic translations of the natural environment permeated the colonial mentality and the understanding of the New World, including Australia, and the Richmond.

⁵³ Thomas Berry, 1991, ‘The Ecozoic Era’, Eleventh Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures, Great Barrington, October 19.

⁵⁴ Emilio F. Moran, 2006, *People and Nature: An Introduction to Human Ecological Relations*, Oxford, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Berman, *The Re-enchantment of the World*; Metzner, *Green Psychology*, pp. 98-113; Moran, *People and Nature*; Donald Worster, 1993, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, Oxford, pp. 211-212.

⁵⁶ John Locke, 1924 [1689], *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, London.

⁵⁷ Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, pp. 215-216, Merchant, ‘Reinventing Eden’, p. 136.

⁵⁸ John Locke, 1696, *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money*, cited in Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, p. 215.

The Enlightened Richmond

Evidence of these layers of cultural understandings and how they have been inscribed upon the earth can be seen in the colonists' attitudes towards Aboriginal people and their land ethic, in writings and descriptions of environments, and in the implementation of government legislation. Lockean ideology, in particular, has been heavily implicated in European approaches and responses to Aboriginal Australians. Seemingly, many colonists could not comprehend a land ethic based on respect and care for the Australian environment. A great many scholars have argued that Aboriginal people were (incorrectly) thought to have not *worked* the land – supposedly they did not till the soil and so therefore, they did not possess it.⁵⁹ Locke explicitly made this argument of the Native Americans; 'they had not fully exploited the land... and therefore could not be said to have ownership of land.'⁶⁰ While manipulating landscapes was an indicator of 'civilisation', a seemingly pristine landscape was a sure sign of 'savagery'. Aboriginal people were considered to be a part of nature, erasing their humanity from the landscape and locating Aboriginal people on the opposite side of the nature/humanity divide (arguably, unwittingly acknowledging that an interconnected relationship with the natural environment dismantles the binary). This 'failure' to manipulate the environment to serve human interests is one of the justifications used in proclaiming Australia *Terra Nullius* and for the subsequent invasion.⁶¹

Accordingly, early colonial accounts of the Richmond and its landscape are often purely descriptive, and the Bundjalung people are described in the same way as other 'natural' elements. The first recorded impressions of the Richmond River are those of Captain Rous upon his exploration of the river in 1828:

⁵⁹ See for example Robert L. Nelson, 2011, 'Emptiness in the Colonial Gaze: Labor, Property, and Nature', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, vol. 79, special issue 1, pp 161-174; Colin Tatz, 2011, *Genocide in Australia: By Accident or Design?*, Clayton, p. 19; Merete Borch, 2001, 'Rethinking the origins of *Terra Nullius*', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 117, pp. 222-239;⁵⁹ Bruce Buchan & Mary Heath, 2006, 'Savagery and Civilization: From *Terra Nullius* to the 'Tide of History'', *Ethnicities*, vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 5-26; Stuart Banner, 2005, 'Why *Terra Nullius*? Anthropology and Property Law in Early Australia', *Law and History Review*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 95-131.

⁶⁰ Buchan & Heath, 'Savagery and Civilization', p. 8.

⁶¹ *Ibid*; Nelson, 'Emptiness in the Colonial Gaze', pp. 161-174; Tatz, *Genocide in Australia*, p. 19, Banner, 'Why *Terra Nullius*?', pp. 195-131.

The *Richmond* is lat. 28 deg. 53m. long 153 deg. 33 m. fills the opening in *Flinders'* chart about 14 miles to the southward of Cape *Byron* – you steer in due west between two sand banks, on which there is a heavy surf... the main body running W. by N $\frac{1}{2}$ N... it was explored in that direction about 20 miles... the general outline of the neighbouring country appeared to be flat open forest on the west bank and thick jungle to the eastward with fine timber, and as you ascend the river the tea tree, mangrove, and swamp oak give place to Morton pines, cedar, yellow wood, palms and gum trees... on the whole it appeared remarkably flat country. Many natives were seen, and a few huts...⁶²

In the four pages of Rous' description of the Richmond, Clarence and Brunswick rivers, there appears not a single adjective that is not a utilitarian descriptor, and there are certainly no aesthetic sentiments or emotional responses to the beauty of the place. Much of the description is cartographic, concerned with 'discovering', naming and mapping, and creating a blank slate – now part of Queen Victoria's Empire, the Richmond is made ripe for exploitation. As Simon Schama writes in *Landscape and Memory*, 'The very act of identifying... the land presupposes our presence, and along with us all the heavy cultural backpacks we lug with us on the trail.'⁶³ David Malouf similarly argues that much of the early history of Australia was about the 'conquest of space', and in the process of naming and mapping, this acquired knowledge gave a deeper sense of ownership.⁶⁴

Preeminent Richmond colonial historian Louise Tiffany Daley laments the fact that Rous did not record his impression of the natural environment, but she does tell us that Rous' 'greatest ambition' lay in agricultural development and animal breeding.⁶⁵ 'His description was businesslike and accurate',⁶⁶ Rous' motivations, as with many other men who leave their written impression of the region, are entirely

⁶² James Henry Rous, 1828, 'A Description of the Rivers Clarence and Richmond', *Australian Quarterly Journal of theology, literature and science*, no. 4, October, p. 354.

⁶³ Simon Schama, 1995, *Landscape and Memory*, New York, p. 7.

⁶⁴ David Malouf, 1998, *A Spirit of Play: The Making of Australian Consciousness*, Sydney, p. 10.

⁶⁵ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 11.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

resource-based. Hoff juxtaposes the poetic sentiments of Joshua Bray with those of Charles Tindal, arguing that Tindal's impression was skewed by the fact that he sought good grazing land for his cattle.⁶⁷ Tindal writes, 'I could not get to the beach itself on account of the very large swamps, which were quite impassable. The whole of the country was bad, almost a dead level.'⁶⁸ He dismissed the land as 'bad' because it did not suit his purposes. When the Reverend Coles Child visited the parish in 1850, he wrote to his sister of the vegetation: 'the beaches lined with dense brush to water's edge – and in some parts pine trees 100ft. high – but not the least value.'⁶⁹ Such descriptions indicate that the colonial gaze sought opportunities for wealth creation and prosperity, not a place to belong, and accordingly they demonstrated no emotional ties to the land. Positive descriptions of the region boast of its economic potential. John Dunmore Lang wrote in 1848, 'there is a sufficiency of land of the most astonishingly fertile nature, in the valley of the Richmond, to afford ample scope for the entire surplus population of Britain.'⁷⁰ While in 1880, a Commission Agent from Sydney said 'nowhere have I found anything even to approach (it) in the richness of its resources.'⁷¹

Such a glowing report from a Commission Agent could potentially attract new settlers. The acquisition and 'improvement' of land was considered an ideal way of attaining wealth and social mobility, and brought more opportunities than a city job could offer.⁷² From the earliest days, advertisements appeared in city newspapers encouraging migration to the region. On 7 June, 1848, a Sydney-based entrepreneur could read the following;

RICHMOND RIVER.-This river is about fifty miles to the northward of the Clarence, and is almost entirely unknown. It is a very fine river, navigable for nearly a hundred miles,

⁶⁷ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 14.

⁶⁸ Letter from C.G. Tindal, 15 June 1848, *The Daily Examiner*, 17 September 1932, quoted in Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ Letter from Reverend Coles Child to his sister, January 5 1850, quoted in A.P. Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, Australasian Medical Publishing Company Limited, Glebe, 1955, pp. 426-427.

⁷⁰ John Dunmore Lang, 2013 [1848], *Cooksland in North-Eastern Australia: The Future Cottonfield of Great Britain*, London, p. 55.

⁷¹ Patrick Hogan, Commission Agent from Sydney, 1880, quoted in Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 162.

⁷² Waterhouse, 'Agrarian ideals and pastoral realities', p. 64.

and the banks have plenty of cedar, and the soil is rich. The advertiser, who is well acquainted with the river will be glad to assist any gentleman in forming stations.⁷³

For over fifty years, similar advertisements for real estate and stories promoting new settlements in the region would appear in city and local papers,⁷⁴ without aesthetic descriptors or incentives for permanent settlement. Firmly embedded in these attitudes was the Lockean notion of possessing the land through cultivation and converting wasteland to garden; in 1854 a parliamentary committee heard, 'by their energy and the expenditure of their capital, [squatters have] done more than any other class of individuals to bring the wastelands into existence.'⁷⁵

The primary motivation for relocating to the Richmond was to seek one's fortune from the land – the relationship between people and the natural environment was an economic arrangement based on extracting resource wealth from an inanimate earth, so much so that it was enforced through government policy. Initially, itinerant workers were prohibited by law from settling in the region. Squatters licenses restricted the cultivation of land or the building of permanent dwellings.⁷⁶ Cedar getters lived in the dense forest in rough slab and bark huts.⁷⁷ Hoff describes the cedar getters as 'naïve but hard working', and postulates that some were recent European migrants who were willing to take up the dangerous work in the hope of making quick money.⁷⁸ Up until the mid-1850s, most of the district residents 'had not even a home to call their own',⁷⁹ but Daley claims that many did not want one: 'land meant nothing to the cedar cutters', as they chose not to purchase freehold land when it became available – they had no attachment to the places in which they worked.⁸⁰

⁷³ 'Richmond River', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 1848, p. 4.

⁷⁴ See for example 'The Lismore Stations', *Empire*, 6 October 1855, p. 6; 'Land at the Richmond River', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 25 January 1873, p. 7; 'To the Editor', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 15 February 1873, p. 24; 'CHANNON', *Northern Star*, 8 May 1905, p. 3.

⁷⁵ 'J. Dobie to Select Committee on Crown Lands', 9 November 1854, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1854*, vol. 2, pp. 1236-7.

⁷⁶ Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 38; Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, pp. 5-7; Sullivan, 'Aboriginal diet and food gathering methods in the Richmond and Tweed River valleys', p. 101; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 17.

⁷⁷ 'European Settlement', Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015.

⁷⁸ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 17.

⁷⁹ Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 74.

The introduction of the John Robertson Land Acts of 1861 brought a shift in settler rights, but with them came further policies that would shape human-nature interactions. Under the acts, settlers were allowed to buy land at a pound an acre – no less than 40 acres and no more than 640.⁸¹ The acts were highly controversial and favoured the wealthy, and a great deal of Crown land was transferred to private hands, further reinforcing the significance of land ownership in Australia.⁸² In relation to the acts, Bill Gammage cites Ernest Scott who famously argued in 1924 that land settlement is ‘the fundamental subject in Australian history.’⁸³

As a condition of purchase, settlers were required to occupy, clear, cultivate and ‘improve’ the land.⁸⁴ The John Robertson Land Acts constituted a resource/utilitarian land ethic ingrained in law and tied to the conditions of ownership, dictating the way that Australians would interact with and shape the land for many decades to come. While the acts encouraged more permanent settlement, there is still evidence that settlers sought only wealth; Robert Leycester Dawson, in his 1938 ‘Recollections and Character Sketches’ of early settlers, concluded that while they were ‘honourable, upright men, and in every way reliable’,⁸⁵ the district saw them achieve a substantial amount of wealth and yet they did not invest any of this wealth into the local community. Dawson surmises that these pioneers felt that it would not be in their best interests to do so, as the building of community infrastructure could bring more settlers and with them, pressure on their ability to hold onto their acreage. This indicates that these ‘honourable men’ had more interest in profit than in building a sense of community in the place.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 10; Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 48; W.S. Campbell, 1922, ‘Discovery of, and Later Developments in, the North-Eastern Portion of New South Wales’, *Royal Australian Historical Society Journals and Proceedings*, vol. 8, part 6, p. 309.

⁸² Bill Gammage, 1990, ‘Who gained, and who was mean to gain, from land selection in New South Wales’, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 94, pp. 104-122.

⁸³ Ernest Scott, 1924, ‘Introduction’, in *History of Australian Land Settlement, 1788-1920*, Stephen H. Roberts, Melbourne, p. x.

⁸⁴ Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 10; Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 48.

⁸⁵ Robert Leycester Dawson, 1938, ‘Pioneer Squatters, Richmond River: Some Recollections and Character Sketches’, *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 37.

⁸⁶ Dawson, ‘Pioneer Squatters, Richmond River’, pp. 27-37.

Shaping the Land

Coupled with a land ethic that sought to extract monetary value from the earth was a severe lack of understanding of the Australian environment, and consequently a failure to comprehend the impacts of environmental change.⁸⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter, the land was cleared, burnt and fenced off, and the introduction of cloven-hooved animals led to the pollution of waterholes, damage to grasslands, erosion, and potentially the compaction of Australian soft soils.⁸⁸ The Europeans applied environmental understandings that had been acquired in a very different place. People selected land with little knowledge of what to do with it – but the motivation was the *idea* of land, and all that it entitled one to, rather than any love of place, sense of belonging or notion of stewardship. Mary White explains:

When the first European settlers arrived in Australia they had no way of knowing that their land-use would have a profound effect and cause rapid degradation of the soil and water resources on which they depended. They saw the continent as a vast, empty land of unlimited opportunity waiting to be tamed and rid of the useless bush and ‘vermin’ which it supported. They had no true concept of Australia as the driest vegetated continent, a fragile land in which 75% is under arid regimes... and only 15%... is reasonably well-watered. They did not realise that only about 6% of the continent’s soils are arable... it is only recently that scientists have come to understand the delicate balance which exists between the native vegetation and ecosystem stability.⁸⁹

Ecological damage was widespread, but the Richmond district, with the Big Scrub as its heart, offers a particularly poignant example of the consequences of not knowing the land. Local historian Douglas Johnston argues, ‘[t]here have been few more rapid and

⁸⁷ A common argument – see for example Len Webb, 1987, ‘Foreword’, in *Earth First*, Jeni Kendell & Eddie Buivids (eds), Sydney, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Ronald Rose, 1957, *Living Magic: The realities underlying the psychical practices and beliefs of Australian Aborigines*, London, p. 175; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 37, p. 68; Sullivan ‘Aboriginal diet and food gathering methods in the Richmond and Tweed River valleys’, p. 101.

⁸⁹ Mary E. White, 1998, ‘The Crying Country: Environmental Degradation’, in *Bush Lives, Bush Futures*, Sheridan Burke (ed.), Sydney, p. 15.

complete ecological disasters in Australia's long history of thoughtless destruction of resources.⁹⁰

Even before the forest was cleared, selective logging inflicted 'massive damage' upon the surrounding Scrub; narrow tracks were forced open by bullock teams, leaving wheel ruts and trampled earth behind them, while the snigging of logs took delicate loose soil with them, causing erosion when it rained.⁹¹ When land was cleared for pasture, many trees were ringbarked and left to die, and red cedar nearly disappeared from the landscape entirely.⁹² Other species, too, faced near extinction, such as pademelons, which were hunted due to their fondness for vegetable gardens and newly-planted crops – it is thought that in 1899, 200 pademelons were killed in one hunt.⁹³ Invasive species and exotic crops and animals spread quickly, and were particularly hard to manage once the forests were cleared.⁹⁴ Environmental change was noted by locals – A.A. Leycester recalled that when he first settled at Bentley, kangaroo grass was the dominant species, but in the 1850s cattle ate the seed heads and other grasses 'spread with great rapidity.'⁹⁵ Leycester also noted the severe erosion at Bentley. Small gullies became 'great ravines' and fences were 'completely buried by erosion from the gully' just 20 years after they were constructed.⁹⁶ Another local observer noted that in 1874, he crossed a gully 3 feet deep - 'some years later I crossed it by a bridge about twenty feet long and fully ten feet over the bed.'⁹⁷

Based on Aboriginal knowledge and recollections, occurrences of drought, fire and flood also increased in the wake of the clearing of the forest.⁹⁸ The settlers' 'thirsty agricultural and industrialized practices' and ignorance of cyclical weather patterns

⁹⁰ Douglas Johnston, 1987, *Rich Heritage: The Story of Eureka & Its People*, Eureka, p. 25.

⁹¹ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 31.

⁹² Ryan, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, pp. 66-67; Prentis, 'Prelude to Dispossession?', pp. 11-12.

⁹³ 'European Settlement', Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015

⁹⁴ *Ibid*; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 52;

⁹⁵ Robert Leycester Dawson, 1938, 'The Richmond in Pioneering Days: Pastures and Physical Features', *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 20.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹⁷ George H. Daniell, 1938, 'Reminiscences of Early Lismore: The Town that has Never Looked Back', *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 51.

⁹⁸ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 57; Shé Mackenzie Hawke, 2012, 'Water Literacy: An 'other wise', active and cross-cultural approach to pedagogy, sustainability and human rights', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, p. 237.

(which were relatively extreme, compared to Europe) amounted to a water crisis, argues Shé Mackenzie Hawke.⁹⁹ By 1915, Spring Grove, just west of Lismore, faced drought so severe that many cattle died as a result.¹⁰⁰ Cunningham Henderson recalls the reply he received in 1902 when he asked a Bundjalung man what caused drought:

Long time ago, Boss, before white man come, no drought, plenty grass, plenty water, plenty kangaroo, possum, bear, plenty duck, everything plenty. Then white feller, him come along. Him bringum bullock and jumbuck. They eatum all the grass and drinkum all the water. God him no cobbon (takes no notice). Bullock and jumbuck nearly all die (and everything the white man did made no difference).¹⁰¹

Fire, too, was a significant issue – while Bundjalung firestick farming was locally informed and ecologically sensitive, squatter attempts to rejuvenate grassland resulted in great fires that killed native animals and vegetation.¹⁰² William Taylor recalls, ‘the roar of the fire could be heard for miles, while the smoke was visible for still greater distance.’¹⁰³ From the early to mid-1900s, significant fires affected newly-cleared scrub at Koonorigan, The Channon and Terania Creek.¹⁰⁴ In 1926, fires broke out throughout the district; Lismore newspaper *The Northern Star* reported that ‘palls of smoke hang over every town on the North Coast, and large areas of the country are ablaze.’¹⁰⁵ Already a flood-prone region, instances of flooding also increased as a result of clearing, causing ‘havoc on the lowlands.’¹⁰⁶ In 1870, 1890 and 1893, devastating floods resulted in the loss of 900 cattle.¹⁰⁷

The European influence on the natural environment involved more than the consequential impacts of their imported practices; settlers also actively altered the landscape. As George Seddon explains, ‘we modify the environment to make a better

⁹⁹ Hawke, ‘Water Literacy’, p. 237.

¹⁰⁰ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p.52.

¹⁰¹ Cunningham Henderson, n.d., ‘Interference with Nature’, Clarence River Historical Society typescript, Grafton.

¹⁰² Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 69.

¹⁰³ William Arthur Taylor, 1938, ‘An Historical Review of Lismore, 1877 to 1887, *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 57.

¹⁰⁴ ‘European Settlement’, Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Countryside Burning: Bush Fires Sweep North Coast Areas’, *Northern Star*, 14 October 1926, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 73; Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁷ Gollan, ‘The Agricultural and Pastoral [sic] Developments of the Mid-Richmond’, p. 70.

fit between it and our perceived needs.’¹⁰⁸ When soil fertility decline affected crops and settlers turned to dairying, they found that native grasses were unsuitable. In 1901, paspalum grass was introduced to the region, followed by kikuyu in 1906.¹⁰⁹ While both grasses are now considered invasive weeds, at the time they were highly praised. James Hamilton Frith rejoiced in 1938 that ‘the introduction of paspalum... proved to be the greatest benefactor to this district.’¹¹⁰

Australian scholars in recent times have been quick to condemn the impact of European land practices, and justifiably so, given the ‘horrifying concentration of environmental damage and (associated) cultural loss.’¹¹¹ One of Australia’s leading environmental scientists, Dr Tim Flannery, explains:

Our European heritage... left many Australians unable to see the subtle beauty and biological richness of the land, and what they could not understand they strove to destroy as alien and useless... Much of this terrible history reads as a rush towards ‘development’, which was then – and often still is – just a soft word for the destruction of the Australian resource base. That arrogant colonial vision left a fearful legacy, for it actually made people feel virtuous while they dealt the land the most terrible blows.¹¹²

Flannery’s assessment, alongside many others such as that of Sir Keith Hancock’s ‘The invaders hated trees’¹¹³ are, however, possibly too harsh. It is unsurprising that scholars would respond in such a way, and is perhaps a reaction against the immense amount of literature that triumphantly proclaimed the successful subjugation of the Australian environment. One such example is that of B.C. Harkness who wrote in the preface of Cousins’ *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales* in 1933, ‘To-day we can see the success of work worthily done; but it was achieved through an incalculable

¹⁰⁸ George Seddon, 1983, ‘The Man-Modified Environment’, in *A Nation Apart: Essays in honour of Andrew Fabinyi*, John McLaren (ed.), Melbourne, p. 29.

¹⁰⁹ Denning, *The Sunkissed Playground*, p. 10; ‘European Settlement’, Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015;

¹¹⁰ Frith, ‘Early Days of Nimbin’, p. 67.

¹¹¹ Tom Griffiths, 2007, ‘The Humanities and an Environmentally Sustainable Australia’, *Australian Humanities Review*, issue 43, unpaginated.

¹¹² Tim Flannery, 2002, ‘2002 Australia Day Address – Dr Tim Flannery’, Sydney, 26 January www.australiaday.com.au/whatson/australiadayaddress2.aspx?AddressID=1, accessed 25 October 2009.

¹¹³ Sir Keith Hancock, 1930, *Australia*, London, p. 30.

amount of hardship, suffering and oft-times failure. Thus industry, courage and wisdom gained a well-earned victory.’¹¹⁴

Another common argument among Australian historians is that the ‘pioneers felt no emotional ties with the land.’¹¹⁵ The degree to which such statements are true is questionable; while there can be no doubt as to the devastating extent of ecological violence perpetrated against the Australian landscape, the perpetrators were acting within culturally imbedded understandings and their actions can actually be read as a desire to create a sense of belonging. Flannery does acknowledge, ‘the feelings that motivated people to do this were not evil – indeed they may have been such noble sentiments as love of home and childhood memories.’¹¹⁶ The Europeans absolutely did have an emotional connection to land, it was just a *different* land that they were emotionally tied to, and that was the problem. There is a great deal of evidence of the attempted transformation of Australia into the image of Europe. Reacting against a sense of isolation and alienation in a new and strange land, they did not ‘seek to destroy’ as much as they sought to belong.

Expressions of Belonging

The overwhelming sentiment expressed by many Europeans in their first encounters of the New World was one of discord, in response to a ‘disorienting’, ‘topsy-turvy’, ‘disturbingly unfamiliar’ new land.¹¹⁷ Many considered Australia to be unattractive, desolate, ‘gloomy and weird.’¹¹⁸ In 1822, lawyer Barron Field declared: ‘There is a dry harshness about the perennial leaf, that does not savour of humanity in my eyes. There is no flesh and blood in it; it is not of us, and nothing to us.’¹¹⁹ This statement can be read as a longing for the familiar, and reveals a sense of loss for those leaves that are *something* to them. Similarly, Marcus Clarke complained in 1876

¹¹⁴ B.C. Harkness, 1933, ‘Foreword’, in *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Cousins, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ William J. Lines, 1991, *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia*, Athens, p. 96. See also Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers*.

¹¹⁶ Tim Flannery, 1994, *The Future Eaters*, French’s Forest, p. 355.

¹¹⁷ (in order of quotations) Malouf, *A Spirit of Play*, p. 32; Seddon, ‘The Man-Modified Environment’, p. 30; Sheridan Burke, 1998, *Bush Lives, Bush Futures*, Sydney, pp. 7-8.

¹¹⁸ Read, *Returning to Nothing*, p. 139.

¹¹⁹ Barron Field, 1822, cited in Jeff Angel, 2008, *Green is Good: An Insider’s Story of the Battle for a Green Australia*, Sydney, p. 33.

of Australian mountain forests, 'their solitude is *desolation*. They seem to stifle, in their black gorges, a story of sullen *despair*. No tender sentiment is nourished in their shade,'¹²⁰ strongly suggesting that his experience of the Australian landscape was one of isolation and loneliness. Similar language is used in early descriptions of the Richmond. In *The Northern Star* of 24 January 1929, a Mrs Flick recalls her mother's memory of Lismore as a cattle station;

I have often heard my mother say that on many nights on that wild, lonely trip, with the strangeness of the bush all around and the quiet broken only by the howl of the dingo, the cry of the curlew, the screech of the owl, or the cries of the other wild animals, she would lose heart and feel that she was doomed to die in the wilderness.¹²¹

Mrs Flick's mother would seem to have suffered considerable psychological stress as a result of her inability to relate to the natural environment. Mary Bundock was one settler who, evidence suggests, did have a sense of attachment to place, as we will see in the next chapter. Yet she still describes the rainforest of the Big Scrub using haunted language; she refers to it as 'semi-tropical jungle' that 'closed in around' her, a 'shadowy world' with 'claw-like barbs',¹²² indicating an uneasy relationship with the rainforest. Given the psychological distress that can arise from a lack of connection to place, it is understandable that settlers would seek to transform a threatening landscape into something familiar and in doing so, forge a sense of belonging.

One such expression of belonging can be seen in the naming of places - European names were transferred to a particularly un-European landscape in an attempt to establish a sense of the familiar. Some of the first places to be named and reassigned, such as Cape Byron by Cook and the Richmond River by Rous, imposed the names of distinguished English gentlemen as if possessing the land by virtue of the greatness of such men. Stations and settlements were named after European places; the Bundjalung name 'Bullenah' sounded conveniently like 'Ballina', allowing for the

¹²⁰ Author's emphasis added. Marcus Clarke, 1876, cited in Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 29.

¹²¹ 'Blazing the Trail: Early Days on Richmond, When Lismore was Cattle Station', *Northern Star*, January 24 1929, p. 5.

¹²² Mary Bundock, cited in Garbutt, 'The Clearing', p. 32.

harbour settlement to adopt the name of the Irish town in County Mayo.¹²³ Casino was named after a town in Southern Italy, and Lismore was named after an island in Loch Linne by Jane Wilson, who was reminded of her honeymoon destination in the Scottish Highlands upon first seeing the landscape of her new home.¹²⁴ A Miss Armbruster named her home 'Lindendale' because a particularly beautiful tree that grew near her house reminded her of the European linden tree, and Dunoon was named by a Scotsman who proclaimed upon sighting the land, 'call it Dunoon, the place in Bonny Scotland where I was born.'¹²⁵

Interestingly, many places kept their Bundjalung names. In a semantic sense, the region was part-Bundjalung, part-European, revealing a possible tension between the Old World and the New. Some places even returned to their Bundjalung names; Bangalow was known as Byron Creek for a brief while, before returning to its former name, and Wiangaree was re-named by Edward Ogilvie after the Bundjalung word for the place.¹²⁶ Although we might well expect to see the imposition of European place names in an attempt to erase Aboriginal expressions of belonging from the land, the fact that Bundjalung names were frequently maintained perhaps indicates a further sense of unease – it suggests that these places are not *European* places, they are *Aboriginal* places.

While not related to any sense of belonging, further evidence of a utilitarian mentality can be observed in the descriptive naming of places after the environmental resource or service they provide, such as Main Arm behind Mullumbimby (as the main arm of the significant waterway, the Brunswick river), or the grassy plains used for grazing, such as Chilcott's Grass and Lagoon Grass on the outskirts of Lismore. Several local place names ending in 'shoot' such as Coopers, Possum, Skinners and McLeod's

¹²³ Bonnie Paff, 1983, *Ballina, Pages of the Past*, Goonellabah, p. 10.

¹²⁴ Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 34; Paff, *Lismore: Pages of the Past*, p. 8; Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 88.

¹²⁵ Alex Clark (Cornstalk) 1925, 'The Big Scrub: Some Interesting Incidents, Early Selectors, Record of Tragedy and Comedy, Origin of Names', *Northern Star*, 22 July, p. 16.

¹²⁶ Denning, *The Sunkissed Playground*, p. 7; Eve Keane, 1956, *Kyogle, New South Wales: 1839-1956*, Sydney, p. 9.

Shoot were so named because logs were sent 'shooting' down steep hillsides to the flatter land below, or to the nearby ocean wharves.¹²⁷

The importation of European flora and fauna species further indicates an attempt to anglicise the Australian landscape.¹²⁸ David Trigger cites an example of a cattle station owner who could only feel a sense of belonging once European species were introduced:

horses, cattle and dogs... without these animals, the landscape remains, for her, undomesticated. As she puts it in one particularly revealing passage, 'country without cattle... (is) like an untenanted house'... it is the introduced herds of cattle and horses, together with the planting of certain flora, such as mango trees and other 'cuttings', that 'turn wilderness into a property', making a 'home' amid the bush.¹²⁹

In an attempt to maintain their European lifestyle, William and Jane Wilson transported a milk cow, a piano, and lantana up the Richmond River on a raft to their property at Lismore in the mid-1850s.¹³⁰ Mrs Wilson has been held personally responsible for the introduction of lantana, a terribly invasive and destructive weed which was well-established throughout the region by 1870.¹³¹ Early colonists attempted to replicate their English gardens, oblivious to the environmental threats their potted plants posed.¹³²

High praise was given when a landscape successfully reminded settlers of Europe. John Dunmore Lang visited Tunstall station around 1850 and remarked, 'the cottage is beautifully situated on rising ground overlooking a large extent of clear land... The garden is beautifully laid out and kept in prime order. It is more like an English home than any other place I have seen in Australia.'¹³³ More than a century later, comparisons were still being drawn; while Denning's work of 1973 describes the

¹²⁷ Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 65; 'Coopers Shoot', *Bangalow Heartbeat*, no. 104, May 2007, p. 10.

¹²⁸ Seddon, 'The Man-Modified Environment', p. 27.

¹²⁹ Trigger, 'Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity', p. 7.

¹³⁰ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 46.

¹³¹ Penny Mears, 1985, *Women Down the Valley*, Lismore, p. 61.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Cited in Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 44.

region as a 'sunkissed playground', the cultural baggage seemingly remains. He says of Bangalow, 'it is a picturesque setting, a setting that has reminded some of scenes of rural England.'¹³⁴ While the bush was 'scrub' and 'wasteland', clearing it for pasture made for an idyllic European scene in which settlers could find beauty and a sense of belonging, again suggesting that the environmental destruction of the region was in part motivated by a deep need to belong.

Shaped by the Land

Of the Australian landscape, poet and environmentalist Mark Connor has remarked, 'Europe is the planet disguised as human possession, neatly parcelled out into farms and meadows. But most of Australia... was not designed for easy or wilful human use. It has resisted most attempts to Anglicise, allegorise or humanise it.'¹³⁵ While colonists in the Richmond attempted to shape the natural environment to suit their needs, they were (perhaps unknowingly) shaped *by* the environment in the process. Living in such a close relationship with the earth, their sense of place and with it their emerging colonial identity was heavily influenced by the environment. Although initially this was a relationship that brought great hardship, there is a great deal of rhetoric about taming, conquering and mastering the land, but they *lived* the land in a very close sense, and in time adapted to it and worked with it.

The relationship between people and environment during the colonial era was very challenging for the early Europeans, who experienced the environment in a very confronting and unfamiliar way. They found it hard where the Bundjalung thrived because they did not have a relationship with the land, and did not possess place-based environmental knowledge of seasons, cycles, food, flora and fauna. Consequently, mistakes were made out of ignorance, some perilous; settlers got lost in the Scrub, some died of snakebite, and houses built too close to waterways were washed away due to the region's frequent flooding.¹³⁶ Unaccustomed to heavy, 'cyclonic' rain, the lives of humans and livestock alike were lost, and precious cedar

¹³⁴ Denning, *The Sunkissed Playground*, p. 6.

¹³⁵ Mark O'Connor, 1999, 'Goodbye to the Bush Republic?', in *The People's Forest: A Living History of the Australian Bush*, Gregg Borschmann (ed.), Blackheath, p. 4.

¹³⁶ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 43; D. McFarlane, 1930, *The Big River*, Lismore, p. 5.

was washed out to sea.¹³⁷ For many, their introduction to the region involved waiting for weeks aboard ship for conditions to improve at the river mouth before it was safe to enter through the notorious Ballina sandbar.¹³⁸ Others who were not so lucky found themselves shipwrecked among the 'mass of wreckage',¹³⁹ either option giving settlers a negative impression of the environment before they so much as entered the Richmond River.

The Big Scrub itself was so thick it was initially considered 'impenetrable', and cedar cutting was 'a most difficult proceeding.'¹⁴⁰ Daley describes the sense of daily life presented in diaries, letters and memoirs:

...one senses the sights, the sounds, the smells which form the background: the humid heat, the pelting tropical rain, the bright warm sunshine in winter, the moan of the rivers in flood, and the wild roar of the sea which could be heard twenty miles inland when the storm winds blew from the southeast.¹⁴¹

The treacherous sandbar also meant that regularity of supply could not be assured, sometimes leaving people at 'starvation point.'¹⁴² Without adequate knowledge of bush food, sustenance was very limited, again reinforcing a sense of loneliness; 'eating little else but cured meat and tea and sugar on one of nature's more Gothic sets can hardly have nurtured gentle understanding', argues Watson.¹⁴³ Anyone who managed to catch some fish or other wild game was highly praised.¹⁴⁴ Pressure on food sources became a health risk, and some of the first white children to be born in the region died of malnutrition.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁷ Gollan, 'The Agricultural and Pastoral [sic] Developments of the Mid-Richmond', p. 70; Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 127.

¹³⁸ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 40.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 19; Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 36.

¹⁴¹ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 99.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁴³ Watson, *The Bush*, p. 199.

¹⁴⁴ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁵ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 212.

Health, both physical and mental, was influenced by the environment. Cedar getters and their families lived and worked deep in the wet and humid forest, encountering deadly snakes and 'biting insects of all kinds.'¹⁴⁶ Charles Taylor recalled:

as for fleas, I never anywhere saw such monsters. They were in swarms, and bred in the soil. These, with the addition of intermittent visits from ticks, leeches, scorpions and centipedes from the old timber, made one keep his eyes open.'¹⁴⁷

When the Reverend Coles Child saw their living conditions, he remarked, 'men, women and children, all in the brush and under immense trees – women and children are quite pale with a yellowish tint.'¹⁴⁸ The Scrub also brought psychological distress; in addition to the sense of alienation previously discussed, which in the Big Scrub left cedar getters 'fearful and mentally unable to cope with their alien environment',¹⁴⁹ came a deep sense of isolation. While many New South Wales colonists who suffered from homesickness had relatively easy access to the city and the comforts it could grant, the Richmond was a particularly remote settlement by East Coast standards. Over 700 kilometres from Sydney and without roads or rail, it was accessible only by water, and access was dependent on good weather.¹⁵⁰ During times of flood, squatters and settlers could be rained-in for months at a time without contact with the outside world.¹⁵¹ In the early days of colonial Nimbin, some women went five years without visiting Lismore, just 30 kilometres away, due to 'indescribable' road conditions.¹⁵²

Daley suggests that this isolation and loneliness, coupled with the humid and energy-draining sub-tropical climate, was 'their most subtle enemy.'¹⁵³ Due to the risk posed by stinging leaves and hooks, tick bites, scratches and splinters, men wore heavy protective clothing; such clothing exacerbated the heat, especially when soaked from

¹⁴⁶ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Taylor, 1924, 'First Buildings in Lismore', *Northern Star*, 8 November, p. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Reverend Coles Child to his sister, January 5 1850, quoted in Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, pp. 426-427.

¹⁴⁹ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 91.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68; Hurley, *Red Cedar*, p. x.

¹⁵¹ Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁵² Frith, 'Early Days of Nimbin', p. 68.

¹⁵³ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 43.



Figure 6: 'Settlement in the Big Scrub.' Jiggi Creek, c. 1908.¹⁵⁴

the 'continuous pour' of rain.¹⁵⁵ Gainsford McCurdy provides a harrowing description of life for the cedar getter:

His vision was bounded by living walls of scrub. He worked beneath a fervid sun in a perpetual vapour bath, ever plunging deeper and deeper into carnivorous recesses of the scrub, where the ghostly shadows were people by unnatural creatures of his own and blacks' superstitions, and when if a comrade was lost he died not of hunger and thirst but of horrid madness born of the gloom and of whispering stillness of those vast unpeopled solitudes.¹⁵⁶

In examining the relationship between people and the natural environment, one must consider the active role that nature plays. Such experiences of the environment as the one described above are constructed in an adversarial manner; the Richmond colonists set out to tame and subdue the earth, just as many other narratives of the Australian frontier talk of 'unpredictable nature being subdued... and harnessed.'¹⁵⁷ Elyne

¹⁵⁴ Photographer unknown, From 'Settlement in the Big Scrub', www.northtothebigscrub.org/welcome.htm, accessed 4 June 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, pp. 23-24; Charles Taylor, 1924, 'Travelling Between the Richmond and Clarence Rivers', *Northern Star*, 15 November, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ McCurdy, *The Notebooks of Gainsford McCurdy*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ Sarah Prout & Richard Howitt, 2009, 'Frontier Imaginings and subversive Indigenous spatialities', *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol. 25, issue 4, p. 396.

Mitchell argues that this mentality came about as a result of a scientific understanding of the earth as a 'merely automatic mechanism', or to return to Neil Evernden's words, 'passive porridge.'¹⁵⁸

However, this is contradictory, for in positing the earth in an adversarial role and using words such as 'subdue' and 'harness', a high degree of agency is granted, and with it must surely come an understanding that the earth itself has agency and is much more than mere 'porridge.' Val Plumwood talks of the need to discuss 'nature in the active voice' and argues that this grants the earth agency;¹⁵⁹ it would seem that this is something that humanity has done historically, when we lived in much closer contact with nature, but not so much in more recent times. Geoff Levitus argues that when the earth is 'used as a setting for the unfolding of human drama, it is often interpreted as malevolent because we admit to loss of control over it.'¹⁶⁰ When humans live in close contact with the natural environment, for example in an historical context without the comforts and insulation of modern life, they are much more likely to feel a sense of loss of control. Positing nature as an external 'enemy' in a sense legitimises her agency, and therefore in a sense leads to a deeper acknowledgement of the potential power of such agency, and with it, a deeper understanding of the Earth.

Active Nature

The natural environment exerted a high degree of influence over the lives of squatters and settlers, shaping their actions, patterns of settlement, modes of transport and choice of agricultural pursuits (and very state of mind, as discussed above). They had a very close relationship with the environment in that they were dependent on the land in a way unlike today. While food was an issue initially, in time, settlers gained everything they needed from the land. Maurice Ryan describes life in colonial Nimbin, writing that settlers grew their own food and 'supplemented their diet with scrub turkeys, pigeons, parrots, wallabies, pademelons and fish.' Fruit trees were

¹⁵⁸ Elyne Mitchell, 1946, *Soil and Civilisation*, Sydney, p. 36.

¹⁵⁹ Val Plumwood, 2009, 'Nature in the Active Voice', *Australian Humanities Review*, issue 46, May, unpaginated; Val Plumwood, 2001, 'Nature as Agency and the Prospects for a Progressive Naturalism', *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, vol. 12, issue 4, pp. 3-32.

¹⁶⁰ Geoff Levitus, 1997, *Lying About the Landscape*, Sydney, p. 11.

established on farms, and they 'made their own butter, jam, bacon, ham, bread, soap and candles... they plaited, knitted, sewed, hewed, carved, tanned, cured and preserved their home grown products and those of the forest.'¹⁶¹ They *felt* topography, having to traverse landscapes before transport was mechanised, and they *felt* climate, unable to escape the humidity; in many ways, the land was much more *lived*. Hurley reflects, 'there was romance of a kind in their way of life. It was a romance of remote places and of lonely communion with natural forces in the rough and in the raw.'¹⁶²

The very settlement of the region was due to the influence the environment exerted over coastal passers-by; as previously discussed, Rous and Darling en-route to Sydney noted the apparent fertility of the land, a bright green beacon during a time of drought. Rather than resisting unavoidable environmental conditions, squatters and settlers were compelled to learn to work *with* the environment, at least in some respects. Given the density of the forest, the extensive waterways became the roads in and out of the region, with the Richmond as the highway. Settlements were formed on the river's edge, and after the land acts of 1861, selectors claimed the river flats first, both for the rich alluvial soil as well as for the convenience of transport.¹⁶³ Every river settler had their own wharf and row-boat, and floating stores would visit wharf-to-wharf.¹⁶⁴

While flooding brought serious consequences, the reliability of floods was used to the cedar cutters' advantage. Logs had to be transported to market, and this was not an easy task in the thick scrub. In an ingenious method of working with nature, the cedar cutters would mark identifiers onto their own logs and pile them up on the nearest river or creek bank awaiting the next flood. Daley explains;

with the first drop of rain, the excitement in the cedar camps rose as the sawyers got ready for the 'running out'... when the flood came with a roar, they sprang to life and

¹⁶¹ Ryan, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, p. 15.

¹⁶² Hurley, *Red Cedar*, p. 202.

¹⁶³ Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 104-105, pp. 146; Robert Leycester Dawson, 1938, 'History of Occupation of District by the Squatters', *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, pp. 22-26.

¹⁶⁴ Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 11; Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 146.

shoving the logs into the swift-flowing current, they plunged in afterwards to guide them downstream. Clinging to the branches on the banks or riding the logs stride-leg, they eased them over the snags or pushed them out from the overhanging vines.¹⁶⁵

The more cautious would tie their logs into rafts, or follow their bounty by boat.¹⁶⁶ Downstream at wharves and markets, chains were strung from one side of the river to the other, waiting to catch the logs. As the deep river at Lismore made it the most suitable place to stretch chains across the water, the town became one of the centres of the cedar industry.¹⁶⁷ A cedar getter recalled, 'often, some thousand feet of cedar would be held in midstream in this way until the flood waters went down enough to allow work to proceed.'¹⁶⁸ But when floods were particularly heavy, chains could not withstand the pressure, washing the logs out to sea.¹⁶⁹ As this was a very dangerous method of transport, 'a lonely grave in the Big Scrub was the end of many men.'¹⁷⁰

Other methods of working with the natural environment were also employed by the cedar getters, such as the use of 'driver trees.' Using the natural slope of the land, one particular tree would be selected near the top of a slope. Trees below it would be partially cut, overhanging vegetation cleared, and then the driver tree would be felled, taking the trees in its path with it as it careened down the slope.¹⁷¹

While settlers came to the region intending to grow certain crops and raise certain animals, they learned the hard way that the natural environment could not be so easily coerced into accommodating their chosen industries. Among the first agricultural enterprises attempted in the region were sheep, wheat, corn and cotton. They 'soon ascertained the land and climate was unsuitable for (sheep)' who suffered from footrot as a result of the moist earth.¹⁷² Likewise, the high rainfall meant that

¹⁶⁵ Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁶⁶ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, pp. 20-21; Mr Greenhalgh, 1922, cited in Elizabeth Bray, *A Cedar Getter's Life*, The Greenhalgh Papers, Richmond River Historical Society, Lismore, p. 15.

¹⁶⁷ Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, p. 40.

¹⁶⁸ Greenhalgh, cited in Bray, *A Cedar Getter's Life*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39; Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 7; Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁷⁰ Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁷¹ Ryan, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, p. 16; 'European Settlement', Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015

¹⁷² McCurdy, *The Notebooks of Gainsford McCurdy*, p. 6.

conditions were too wet for wheat and cotton, and despite some success in corn, the isolation and slow transport saw corn sprouting in bags, and cockatoos pillaged the crops.¹⁷³ Initially, the dairy industry struggled as well; butter and cheese would melt and turn sour before it could be exported, ending in financial ruin for some, but this was overcome in time with the introduction of refrigeration technology.¹⁷⁴ The eventual establishment of highly successful dairy, banana and sugarcane industries only came about as a result of learning from the land and adapting to suit environmental conditions. Environmental knowledge was acquired *of a place*. This history reveals a developing understanding of environmental conditions and an acceptance that environmental agency cannot be ignored or ‘tamed’ away. Daley articulately describes the transformation:

[a]s the newcomers clung to their native customs and old-world traditions, they were, in fact, not unlike actors on a stage who suddenly discovered that, somehow or other, the lights had changed... the backdrop was the soft-flowing river, the tall, gaunt gum trees with their pendulous leaves, and the howl of the dingoes, instead of the familiar scenes at home. But they, the actors, were the same – or were they? Had they changed too?¹⁷⁵

Robin argues, ‘Living in a place requires negotiation, much of it unconscious.’¹⁷⁶ The significance of the land, and particularly the bush, in the creation of an Australian national identity has long been a common theme in Australian history, from Francis Adams’ *The Australians* in 1893, to Russel Ward’s *The Australian Legend* in 1958, or more recently, Libby Robin’s 2007 work, *How a Continent Created a Nation*.¹⁷⁷ It has been strongly argued that a significant part of our cultural identity has been influenced by the land itself, and itinerant bush workers have provided a particularly strong influence upon the shaping of the identity of the rugged, independent Australian

¹⁷³ McCurdy, *The Notebooks of Gainsford McCurdy*, p. 6; Cousins, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, pp. 51-53; Richmond River Historical Society, *A Short History of the Richmond River*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ C.H. Anderson, 1938, ‘Early Settlement and Subsequent Pastoral Development of The Richmond River District, 1840-1890’, *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 98; Daley, *Men and a River*, pp. 157-158; Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 83.

¹⁷⁵ Daley, *Men and a River*, p. 86.

¹⁷⁶ Robin, *How a Continent Created a Nation*, p. 213.

¹⁷⁷ Francis Adams, 1893, *The Australians: A Social Sketch*, London; Russel Ward, 1958, *The Australian Legend*, Melbourne; Libby Robin, 2007, *How a Continent Created a Nation*, Sydney.

'Bushman.'¹⁷⁸ Given the high number of itinerant workers in the region, it could be argued that the land not only helped shape and mould local identity, but it also contributed to a burgeoning national identity.

The coming of the Europeans marked a significant turning point for the land previously known only as Bundjalung Country. Bringing with them a resource extraction mentality influenced by dominant cultural paradigms, the environmental destruction wrought in the name of progress and development was a consequence of cultural practices and understandings developed in a distant land. A sense of belonging eluded most, as this, too, was rooted in a distant land, causing distress and a lack of understanding of the unique conditions of the Australian environment. Over time, however, the lived experience of the Richmond brought some understanding. The squatters and settlers of the Richmond, keen to create a sense of comfort and belonging, eased into their new surroundings, adapted to and learnt from the land, their emerging sense of belonging a product of the place itself. This period of history demonstrates that the human desire to belong to place is very powerful. It offers a cautionary tale, warning that environmental knowledge is forged *of a place* and cannot be easily transferred to a new setting, and that the influence of environmental agency can be more significant than those who seek to shape the environment may be aware of.

¹⁷⁸ Ward, *The Australian Legend*; Richard Waterhouse, 2000, 'Australian legends: representation of the bush, 1813-1913', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 31, no. 115, pp. 201-221.

Chapter Four

The Big Scrub

‘Now silenced forever is the old magic echo which flung its weird crescendo and diminuendo from bank to bank of the river; destroyed is most of the beautiful foliage, and near extermination the graceful cabbage-tree and bungalow-palms; torn down and burned the clinging vines, with their aerial tendrils and fantastic flowers; hunted down and shot the birds of rare plumage; silenced the gentle cooing of the green and pink-headed doves... All are gone, hunted or torn from Mother Nature’s bosom, never to be replaced or restored.’

James Green, 1910.¹

Just as the Big Scrub and the resource wealth it provided was central to the story of the colonisation of the region, so too were responses to its clearing at the heart of growing conservationist concerns. Despite the dominance of a resource extraction mentality and the overwhelming influence this exerted over the relationship between people and environment, from the start of European settlement there also existed some appreciation for the natural beauty of the region and a growing concern over the fate of the forest. Accordingly, much of this chapter focuses on the Big Scrub, its remnants, and responses to the loss of the forest, starting with the first hints of concern within the context of 19th century attitudes, and extending through to the powerful and influential conservation movement of the 1970s. While the other chapters are more focused on a specific land ethic or attitude, for example the previous chapter focused on a land ethic embedded within a resource extraction mentality, this chapter looks at the growth of the conservation movement in the region within the context of national and international developments.

Conservation is a word that evades a neat definition. Frequently located in the tension between a resource extraction mentality and a growing aesthetic appreciation, the evolution of the conservation movement moves from one pole to the other and beyond, eventually arriving at a less anthropocentric and more holistic understanding

¹ James Green, 1910, *The Lost Echo: The Story of the Richmond*, Sydney, p. 180.

of the environment. This chapter looks at the development of the various expressions of conservation and how this evolved over time in the region, both as a result of shifting global scientific and philosophical paradigms but also as a consequence of forming a sense of place attachment and as place-based knowledge is acquired. The chapter is broad in scope, as it is necessary to understand the gradual process of how attitudes towards the environment were transformed from colonial understandings to the region's characteristic radical environmentalism of the late 1970s and today. Furthermore, this chapter also provides a local context for the development of the Australian conservation movement, the region providing another exemplary narrative of the growth of environmental awareness in Australia. It will demonstrate the importance of environmental knowledge and the significance of place attachment to the creation of a sense of environmental responsibility. Most significantly, conservationist concerns in the region arose as an expression of belonging, a natural response to the destruction of places that are now homes, not just places that are to be exploited for their resource wealth.

The Beginnings of a Movement (1770-1840)

The European colonisation of the Big Scrub occurred considerably later than much of the settlement of the rest of the East Coast of Australia, some 72 years after Cook's initial expedition of 1770. By the time policy makers, squatters and settlers would begin to shape the environment of the region, significant shifts in European, American and Australian environmental understandings were underway. While a resource extraction mentality exerted the most dominant influence over attitudes towards the environment, from the earliest days of Australian colonisation there were also those with conservationist concerns. Albeit with an anthropocentric attitude largely concerned with the protection of natural resources as financial assets, these concerns nevertheless demonstrate the necessary starting point in the evolution of the conservation movement. Environmental laws were enacted from 1788, 'predictably utilitarian' in nature and motivated by a desire to ensure the sustainability of food sources.² Forestry was one of the first industries to be established in New South Wales,

² Tim Bonyhady, 2000, *The Colonial Earth*, Carlton, p. 5.

and after thirty years of 'indiscriminate felling' of forests a report by Governor King reveals evidence of the growing realisation that such practices were unsustainable and 'efforts should be made to regulate their exploitation.'³ Russell Kelly, in his analysis of the Big Scrub and surrounds as a 'mediated forest', points out that by 1802, permits were required to fell cedar, demonstrating an understanding of the need for long-term resource management.⁴

Tim Bonyhady, in his influential work *The Colonial Earth*, argues that from 1788 there also existed genuine environmental concerns.⁵ Bonyhady claims that the first plan of Sydney to be drawn up by Governor Phillip was not only based on utilitarian considerations, but also 'aesthetic and symbolic' concerns. According to the plan (which was abandoned after three months), houses were to be generously spaced at one house per block on sixty metre wide streets, for the sake of aesthetic uniformity as well as for the benefit of human health.⁶ Contrary to the common view that the first colonists were oblivious to environmental impacts, Bonyhady argues that 'while many colonists were alienated by their new environment, others delighted in it.'⁷ Although in the minority, such colonists were perhaps influenced by subtler Western paradigm shifts, and would help other Australians come to terms with what belonging in this new place meant.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Tom Griffiths makes a strong argument that the Australian environment suffered the consequences of the 'unfortunate' timing of a 'compressed, double revolution' of industrialisation and colonisation.'⁸ However, at the same time, less visible cultural developments and understandings were emerging, which would likewise have an impact upon understandings of the New World. From the early 19th Century, the natural sciences started to attract interest and

³ Governor King, 1803, cited in Stephen Martin, 1993, *A New Land: Perceptions of Australia, 1788-1850*, St Leonards, p. 33.

⁴ Russel Kelly, 2003, 'The Mediated Forest: Who Speaks For The Trees?', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region: Cultural Perspectives on the NSW North Coast*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 105.

⁵ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸ Tom Griffiths, 1997, 'Introduction: Ecology and Empire: Towards an Australian history of the world', in *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, Tom Griffiths & Libby Robin (eds), Carlton South, p. 4.

gain prominence, and the field of biology came into being in the early 1800s with the publication of *Biologie, Oder Philosophie der lebenden Natur* by Gottfried Reinhold Treviranus, who established the science as the study of 'the doctrine of life.'⁹ Scholars such as Finney, Moyal and Christoff argue that scientists and naturalists were at the forefront of the earliest attempts to seek an understanding of the Australian environment.¹⁰ In the early 19th Century, scientists made efforts to establish a uniquely Australian school of natural science and in 1821, the Philosophical Society of Australasia was formed. Minutes of the first meeting reveal the organisation's motivations: 'Nature had been leading us through a mazy dance of intellectual speculation only to laugh at us at last in this fifth continent.'¹¹ Curious about the scientific wonders offered by their new surroundings, scientists set out to document and understand this new land 'where the laws of nature seemed reversed.'¹²

It was not only a change in European scientific understandings that may have exerted an influence upon colonists. At the same time, the highly influential Romantic Movement sought to challenge the nature/culture dualism of the Enlightenment, marking a 'radical shift in ethical interpretations of the 'human-other' relationship.'¹³ An intellectual movement reflected in artistic and literary circles, it was at its heart characterised by a reverence for nature.¹⁴ Poets such as William Wordsworth argued that the key to a deeper appreciation of nature lies in the emotional experience.¹⁵ The Romantics believed that a profound connection to place exists in all people, and this connection must be triggered if humanity is to understand the significance of our

⁹ Robert J. Richards, 2002, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe*, Chicago, p. 4; Colin Michael Finney, 1993, *Paradise Revealed: Natural History in Nineteenth-Century Australia*, Melbourne, p. 131.

¹⁰ Finney, *Paradise Revealed*; Ann Moyal, 1993, *A Bright and Savage Land: Scientists in Colonial Australia*, Sydney; Peter Christoff, 2000, 'Environmental Citizenship', in *Rethinking Australian Citizenship*, W. Hudson & J. Kane (eds), Melbourne, pp. 200-214.

¹¹ Minutes of the Philosophical Society of Australasia, 27 June, 1821, Mitchell Library, Sydney, cited in Moyal, *A Bright and Savage Land*, p. 71.

¹² Moyal, *A Bright and Savage Land*, p. 70.

¹³ Drew Hutton & Libby Connors, 1999, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, Melbourne, p. 26; Roslynn Haynes, 2003, 'From Habitat to Wilderness: Tasmania's role in the politicizing of place', in *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies*, eds David Trigger & Gareth Griffiths, Aberdeen p. 84.

¹⁴ Christopher Casey, 2008, 'Grecian Grandeurs and the Rude Wasting of Old Time', *Foundations*, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 33.

¹⁵ David Seamon, 1984, 'Emotional Experience of the Environment', *American Behavioural Scientist*, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 757-770.

existence as part of a wider whole. It cannot be taught, however; it must be acquired empirically by building relationships with the Earth itself.¹⁶

Such sentiments formed the basis of the emerging conservation movement in the United States, and were further built upon by transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau (who had anarchist leanings) and Ralph Waldo Emerson.¹⁷ Thoreau and Emerson cultivated a burgeoning interest in US forests, promoting public awareness and encouraging Americans to seek relationships with the country's natural heritage.¹⁸ In 1836, Emerson's *Nature* was one of the first works to critique the inherent anthropocentrism of humanity, arguing that a more ecocentric approach can facilitate a stronger relationship between humans and nature.¹⁹ The beginnings of a search for a more environmentally peaceful relationship with the Earth was taking shape.

It was during this era of new ideas that Europeans considered the landscape of the Big Scrub for the first time. While a great many squatters and settlers looked upon the land as a resource base, a small number of recollections reveal an instant appreciation for the natural beauty of the region. In 1823, John Oxley explored and named the Tweed River. John Uniacke accompanied Oxley, and made the following account of the view towards Wollumbin:

The view [was] altogether beautiful beyond description. The scenery here exceeded anything I had previously seen in Australia—extending for miles along a deep rich valley, clothed with magnificent trees, the beautiful uniformity of which was only interrupted by the turns and windings of the river, which here and there appeared like small lakes, while in the back ground, Mount Warning... reared its barren and singularly shaped peak, forming a striking contrast with the richness of the intermediate country.²⁰

¹⁶ Seamon, 'Emotional Experience of the Environment', pp. 757-770.

¹⁷ Teresa Kwiatkowska & Alan Holland, 2013, 'Dark is the world to thee: a historical perspective on environmental forewarnings', in *Global Environmental History: An Introductory Reader*, J.R. McNeill & Alan Roe (eds), Abingdon, p. 29.

¹⁸ Donald Worster, 1993, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, Oxford, pp. 103-104; p. 200.

¹⁹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1836, *Nature*, Boston. See also Ralph Metzner, 1999, *Green Psychology: Transforming our Relationship to the Earth*, Vermont, p. 83.

²⁰ John Uniacke, 1825, 'Narrative of Mr. Oxley's Expedition to Survey Port Curtis and Moreton Bay', in *Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales*, Barron Field (ed.), London, p. 38.

As one of the very first European descriptions of the region, it is notable that the landscape elicited such a response, perhaps indicative of its unique beauty. Uniacke does, however, also note the apparent richness of the soil and quality of the timber.²¹ Understandably, the powerful cultural paradigms of the time meant that despite an appreciation of the natural environment and a growing awareness of the need to 'conserve' nature, most were unable to break away from a resource extraction mentality when looking upon the environment. The early conservation movement in Australia was therefore focused on the wise use of resources, and would have a long way to go before it resembled an ecologically sensitive environmentalism.²²

Shifting Attitudes (1840-1870)

During the mid-19th century the Romantics continued to play a leading role in shifting environmental understanding. It is the work during this era of thinkers such as Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh and John Muir that have earned them their reputation as the founders of modern environmentalism.²³ They continued to advocate for a closer relationship with nature and linked human wellbeing to ecosystem wellbeing, although not worded as such, as the science of ecology was only conceived of in 1866 by German biologist Ernst Haeckel.²⁴ Ecological awareness was being cultivated in varied expressions. Muir argued that 'wilderness' is good for human health.²⁵ Thoreau's famous dictum, 'In wildness is the preservation of the world', was written in 1862, while in 1864 Marsh's *Man and Nature* connected human action with ecological degradation, arguing that it was the job of humanity to heal the damage: 'in reclaiming and reoccupying lands laid waste by human improvidence or malice... the task is to

²¹ Uniacke, 'Narrative of Mr. Oxley's Expedition to Survey Port Curtis and Moreton Bay', p. 38.

²² James D. Proctor, 1996, 'Whose Nature? The Contested Moral Terrain of Ancient Forests', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon, (ed.), New York, p. 287; Giovanna Di Chiro, 1996, 'Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice', in *Uncommon Ground*, Cronon (ed.), p. 300.

²³ Bill McKibben, 1989, *The End of Nature*, New York, p. 53.

²⁴ Catherine Knight, 2013, 'The Conservation Movement in Post-War Japan', in *Global Environmental History: An Introductory Reader*, McNeill & Roe (eds), p. 400.

²⁵ Jules Pretty, 2007, *The Earth Only Endures*, Sterling, p. 37.

become a co-worker with nature in the reconstruction of the damaged fabric.’²⁶ *Man and Nature* had an influential impact in Australia, and Hall argues that the book ‘strengthened demands for economic conservation measures, especially in the dwindling forest lands.’²⁷

Such demands led to the introduction of legislation in New South Wales focused specifically on conservation, in contrast with the ‘environmental laws’ made in 1788. In 1866 the *Game Protection Act* was introduced in response to dwindling numbers of previously abundant species, as well as a result of social pressure to reduce levels of animal cruelty.²⁸ In the same year, Australia’s first nature reserve was established at Fish River Caves, now known as the Jenolan Caves.²⁹ Bonyhady argues that in the second half of the 19th century, increasing numbers of settlers described the Australian environment as a ‘heritage’ and a ‘national estate.’³⁰ Again, contrary to popular narrative, Bonyhady argues:

The settler’s attachment to the colonial landscape was matched by the desire to preserve it. The protection of the continent’s native fauna and flora, pollution of its rivers, degradation of its pastoral lands... preservation of beauty spots... were all major issues of the colonial era.³¹

As the population increased, so too did the number of settlers who rejoiced in the Australian environment, and naturalists enthusiastically collected specimens of all kinds.³²

At Lismore Station, William Wilson made a hobby of collecting ‘geological specimens, stones, fossils, minerals and petrefecations’ from around the family homestead, particularly from a dry lake bed near Gundurimba, and at one point sent a

²⁶ Henry David Thoreau, 1862, *Walking*, p. 224, reproduced in ‘The Thoreau Reader: Annotated works of Henry David Thoreau’, <http://thoreau.eserver.org/walking2.html>, accessed 19 December 2015; George Perkins Marsh, 1864, *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, New York, p. 35.

²⁷ Colin Michael Hall, 1992, *From Wasteland to World Heritage: Preserving Australia’s Wilderness*, Melbourne, p. 89.

²⁸ Christoff, ‘Environmental Citizenship’, p. 209.

²⁹ Hall, *From Wasteland to World Heritage*, p. 91.

³⁰ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, p. 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³² Finney, *Paradise Revealed*, p. xi.

sample of his collections to the United States for exhibition.³³ Indicating an obvious interest in his surroundings, Wilson was not alone in his appreciation for the local natural environment. James Ainsworth, after whom Lake Ainsworth at Lennox Head is named, was one of the first settlers in the region. He recalled that in 1847, the river at Ballina was 'just as nature had planted it. Forest and scrub crowded unbrokenly to the water's edges on each side, offering a foliage that was unsurpassed in its semi-tropical beauty.'³⁴

In 1863, cedar getter Joshua Bray ventured to the south side of Wollumbin with Grasshopper, a Bundjalung man, and remarked:

Some of the scenery was wildly grand. I sat down for half an hour to admire the Magnificent Panorama that lay stretched around me. All away to the West rose tier after tier of mountains grouped in every variety of majestic outline, and almost above me was Walumban ... Here and there were mingled glimpses of the Tweed River its glassy [sic] surface green and over-hanging verdure, adding beauty to the scene. To the north and south were black-looking forests and mountains, it was really grand, and altogether calculated to impress one with an idea of vastness, and absorb every other feeling in an overpowering feeling of awe.³⁵

Hoff theorises that Bray may well have been the first white man to ever see the sacred mountain up close, only permitted to do so as a guest of the Bundjalung.³⁶ Bray's description differs markedly to other European interpretations of the landscape. It reveals a sense of wonder and respect, and trees are evaluated by their beauty rather than their resource value. Perhaps Bray, seeing the landscape from an Aboriginal perspective, was able to gain a different understanding of the environment. This seems very possible, given that other locals who had a positive relationship with the Bundjalung people also shared a reverence for the land.

³³ Robert Leycester Dawson, 1938, 'Pioneer Squatters, Richmond River: Some Recollections and Character Sketches, *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, p. 32.

³⁴ James Ainsworth cited in Jennifer Hoff, 2006, *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country*, Lismore, p. 15.

³⁵ Letter from Joshua Bray, 29 August 1863, cited in Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 13.

³⁶ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 13.

The story of the remarkable Ogilvie/Bundock family is unique in the colonial history of the region. Edward Ogilvie initially established a run to the south of the Big Scrub in 1840, adopting the Aboriginal place name of Yulgilbar and learning the local Bundjalung language. Ogilvie 'allowed' the local Aboriginal people to hunt on the property and made efforts to maintain a positive relationship with the Bundjalung people.³⁷ Captivated by the beauty of the region, he also claimed land further north, again giving it the Bundjalung name for the place - 'Wiangaree'.³⁸ Ogilvie's nephew would later write of his uncle's first impressions of Wiangaree at sunset, recounting, 'he said that as he looked at it he thought it was the most beautiful sight he had ever seen in his life.'³⁹ Ogilvie offered the property to his sister Mary and her husband, William Bundock, who took up residence in residence in 1846.⁴⁰ Like her brother, Mary expressed an extreme fondness for the land. She described the Richmond River as 'a beautiful stream of clear water running over clean sand and pebbles, an ideal of beauty and purity not surpassed anywhere',⁴¹ and regretted her decision to introduce non-native water hyacinth to the natural lagoon on the property.⁴²

Edward and Mary had grown up in the Hunter Valley, where they had a close relationship with the local Aboriginal people, the Wonnarua. Mary encouraged her children to do likewise, and the Bundock children grew up speaking the local Bundjalung dialect and learning Aboriginal cultural values.⁴³ Mary's daughter, also known as Mary Bundock, gained an intimate understanding of the local environment, its topography and the healing properties of its native vegetation from Bundjalung Elders, bringing her knowledge of bush medicine to Aboriginal and white people alike.⁴⁴ Both mother and daughter were known as painters, producing landscape portraits of the local environment, and Miss Mary published articles on the culture

³⁷ George Farwell, 1973, *Squatter's Castle: The Story of a Pastoral Dynasty, Life and Times of Edward David Stewart Ogilvie*, Melbourne.

³⁸ Eve Keane, 1956, *Kyogle, New South Wales: 1839-1956*, Sydney, p. 9.

³⁹ CW Bundock, 1922, 'Old Wyangarie Station – Days When Food was Short', *Casino & Kyogle Courier*, Diamond Jubilee Supplement.

⁴⁰ Louise Tiffany Daley, 2011 [1966], *Men and a River: Richmond River District 1828-1895*, 2nd edn,, Lismore, p. 88.

⁴¹ Don Watson, 2014, *The Bush: Travels in the Heart of Australia*, Melbourne, p. 195.

⁴² Penny Mears, 1985, *Women Down the Valley*, Lismore, p. 76.

⁴³ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, pp. 262-263; Mears, *Women Down the Valley*, p. 76.

⁴⁴ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 263; Bundock, 'Old Wyangarie Station'.



Figure 7: 'Greenwood, Wyangarie'. Aboriginal stockmen on horseback at Wyangarie Station, between 1863 and 1908.⁴⁵

of the Bundjalung people.⁴⁶ Hoff makes the link between the relationship with the Bundjalung and a connection with the natural environment, claiming of Mary:

[H]er life is a paradigm of what settlers could learn and enjoy from their friendships with local *Bundjalung* clanspeople. Mary's extended family formed a deep emotional attachment to the pastoral lease at Wyangarie.⁴⁷

The Ogilvie/Bundock family was seemingly ahead of its time in terms of both their relationship with the Bundjalung people and with the natural environment; meanwhile, the conservation movement still had a way to go before it approached the same level of insight and respect.

⁴⁵ Held at State Library of New South Wales, 'McIntosh and Campbell families - photographs of cattle stations, homesteads, townships and other country scenes in northern New South Wales, 1863-1908.'

⁴⁶ Isabel McBryde, 1993, *Miss Mary, ethnography and the inheritance of concern : Mary Ellen Murray-Prior*, Carlton; Mary Bundock, 1978 [1898], 'Notes on the Richmond Blacks', in *Records of Times Past: Ethnohistorical essays on the culture and ecology of the New England tribes*, Isabel McBryde (ed.), pp. 261-266.

⁴⁷ Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, p. 262.

National Parks, Science, and The Bush (1870-1900)

The National Parks movement in the United States was led primarily by the Romantics, including Thoreau and Muir, whose sustained efforts led to the establishment of the world's first National Park, Yellowstone, in 1872.^{*} While a great achievement, the National Parks movement was primarily a white, male movement.⁴⁸ In contrast with an indigenous land ethic, conservation in this era was characterised by a fear that we need to protect nature, perceived as an external system, from our own human impacts. Raymond Dasmann has linked the desire to regulate wild places with a desire to control one's inner-self; wilderness needed to be 'tamed', and National Parks were constructed primarily for human benefit.⁴⁹ 'Nature' was a place that men could retreat to, to learn something of themselves, and to achieve a sense of freedom in wide open spaces. Romanticised in the late 1800s, 'space had become the common symbol of freedom in the western world.'⁵⁰ As the domain of the rugged naturalist, National Parks were places where men could hunt and play sport. A 'sportsman's' publication, *Forest and Stream* magazine was one of the primary voices for the National Park movement.⁵¹ ♦

Wilderness is a Western concept that is problematic for Australian Aboriginal people, who argue that the notion excludes human habitation and erases Aboriginality – while 'pristine' environments are considered the pinnacle of wilderness, it is unlikely that any place in Australia was unknown to Aboriginal people.⁵² However, although deeply anthropocentric and not without its criticisms, the conservation movement was

* Another contributing factor to this successful campaign was the gifting to US Presidents of romantic artists' depictions of the region, including artists Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran.

⁴⁸ Catrin Gersdorf, 2000, 'Ecocritical Uses of the Erotic', in *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, Glynis Carr (ed.), Lewisburg, p. 177; Carolyn Merchant, 2003, 'Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History', *Environmental History*, vol. 8, no. 3, July, pp. 382-383.

⁴⁹ Raymond Dasmann, 1975, *The Conservation Alternative*, New York.

⁵⁰ Peter Read, 1996, *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Melbourne, p. 137.

⁵¹ Barbara McMartin, 2004, *The Privately Owned Adirondacks*, Lake View Press, Canada Lake.

♦ The divide today between environmentalists and shooters, fishers and four wheel drive groups demonstrates just how much the conservation ethic has changed.

⁵² Fabienne Bayet-Charlton, 2003, 'Overturning the doctrine : Indigenous people and wilderness - being Aboriginal in the environmental movement', in *Blacklines: contemporary critical writing by Indigenous Australians*, Michele Grossman (ed.), Carlton, pp. 171-180; Strider, 1984, 'Kakadu in Context', in *Fighting For Wilderness: Papers from The Australian Conservation Foundation's Third National Wilderness Conference, 1983*, J.G. Mosley & J. Messer (eds), Melbourne, pp. 96-106.

progressing away from a purely utilitarian land ethic and was encompassing more emotional responses to the environment.

In 1879, the world's second National Park was established – Royal National Park, in New South Wales.⁵³ Increasingly, Australians were arguing for greater environmental protection and awareness. From the 1870s, Australian natural science was taught in schools, and although initially focused on topics such as native fauna and the treatment of snake bites, the curriculum expanded as knowledge of the Australian environment increased.⁵⁴ By 1884, the Moreton Bay fig, a common species of the Big Scrub, appeared as the frontispiece of a school textbook on Australian botany (see figure 8). Science education also extended to higher education; German-born botanist Baron von Mueller was among the first of the 'professionally trained resident Botanists' in Australia.⁵⁵ This knowledge gave him a different perspective, and in 1879, von Mueller proclaimed, 'let us regard the forests as an inheritance, given to us by nature, not to be despoiled or devastated, but to be widely used, reverently honoured and carefully maintained.'⁵⁶ Hall argues that Mueller's sentiments were a product of the Romantic Movement, 'an eloquent aesthetic argument for forest conservation, clearly influenced by a Romantic vision of nature.'⁵⁷

From 1880 Field Naturalists' Clubs were formed in Victoria and New South Wales, and natural history societies dedicated to birdwatching and botany were established in major cities. By 1890, these 'scientific societies' were using their knowledge to advocate for more National Parks, alarmed at the rate of species decline.⁵⁸ Colonial governments responded to community sentiment, and during the 1880s 'conservators of forests' were appointed in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania.⁵⁹ However, these conservators had limited powers and

⁵³ Hall, *Wasteland to Wilderness*, p. 92.

⁵⁴ Finney, *Paradise Revealed*, pp. 116-120.

⁵⁵ Moyal, *A Bright and Savage Land*, p. 147.

⁵⁶ Geoffrey Bolton, 1999, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy: The Bush Shapes Australia', in *The People's Forest: A Living History of the Australian Bush*, Gregg Borschmann (ed.), Blackheath, p. 29.

⁵⁷ Hall, *Wasteland to Wilderness*, pp. 83-84.

⁵⁸ Finney, *Paradise Revealed*, pp. 124-126; Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 29; Hutton & Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 30.

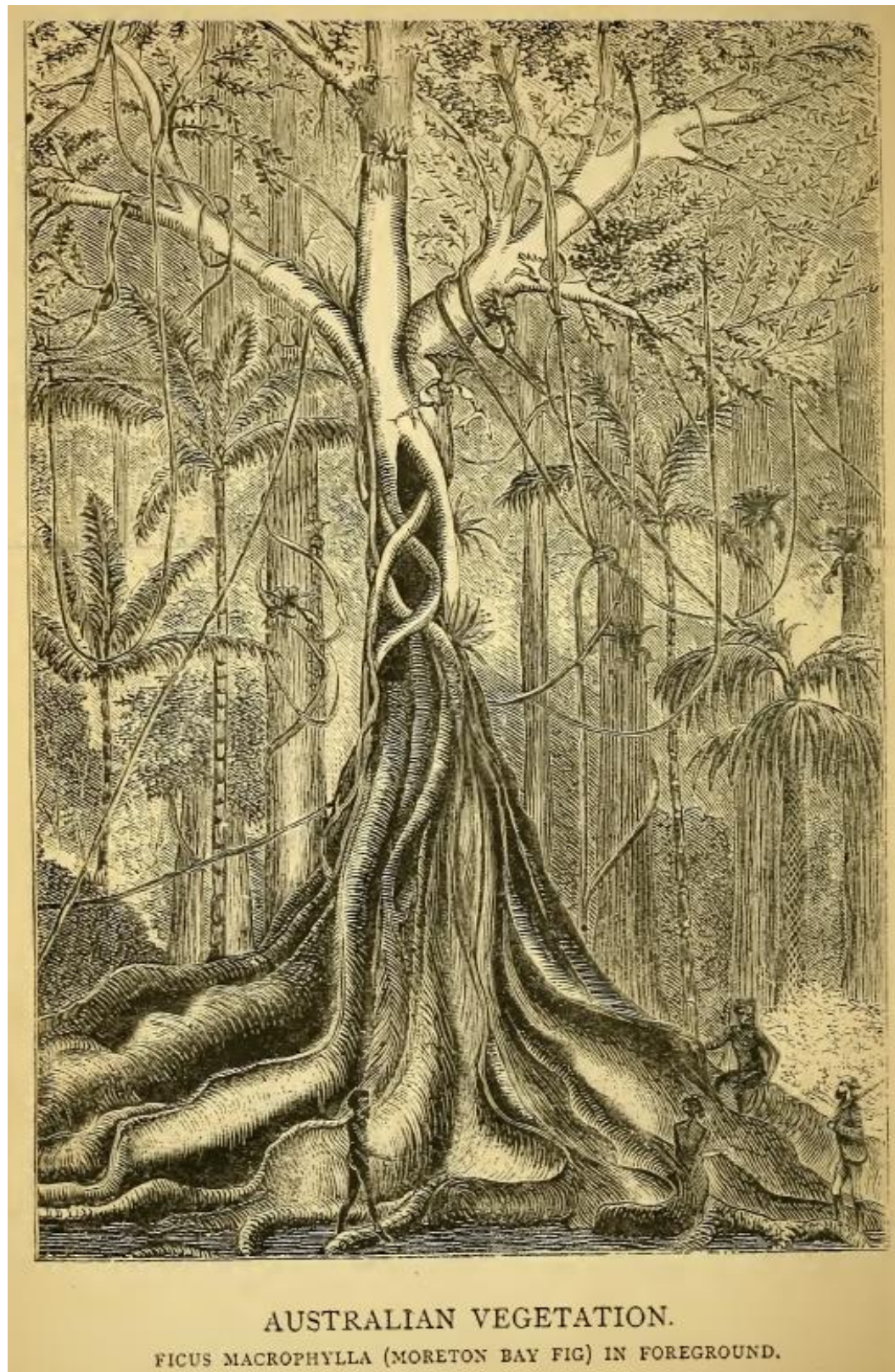


Figure 8: 'Australian Vegetation'.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ WR Guilfoyle, 1884, *Australian Botany: Specifically Designed for the Use of Schools*, Melbourne, p. ii.

unregulated clearing continued. At the higher Government level, the entrenched resource extraction mentality prevailed. While commissions of inquiry concluded that action needed to be taken, the terms of reference were entirely utilitarian, arguing that forests needed to be 'managed and harvested so as to allow for renewal and regeneration.'⁶¹

In the Nimbin valley to the north of the Big Scrub, the Nimbin Rocks were 'preserved' in 1882, and the site was declared a reserve.⁶² Nimbin itself was only selected in 1883, seemingly indicating that the Department of Lands Immediately recognised something special about the unique geological formation, so sacred to the Bundjalung. There is evidence of a growing aesthetic appreciation for the region during this era, and in 1886 there was already a sense of loss for what the Big Scrub once was:

A land where, in the old days, as full and perfect a beauty dwelt as man's mind could conceive. Not at all like your ideas of ordinary Australian land... The Richmond River before ever white man paddled over its waters flowed between banks rich with all the luxuriance of tropic growth... and above the scrub rose cedar, and pine, and beach, and fig, two and three hundred feet: Beautiful blossoming vines trailed down from their limbs, and in the high boughs marvellous orchids made great clusters of bloom.⁶³

The region is recognised as having a unique beauty distinct from the rest of 'ordinary' Australia, also reflected in the sentiments of visitors to the region who immediately make the same distinction. In 1872, a journey through the Border Ranges evoked the following response:

There is here one of the finest forests I have ever seen... fine old trees, apparently coeval with the mountains—their stately trunks growing to a wonderful length without a branch. These should be shown to the Sydney tourist... It is a proof that hereditary prudence has subsisted in families in older countries where old ancestral forests maintain their ground, for a spendthrift proprietor would have put them all in his pocket, and left nothing but a harvest of underwood for his successors... The

⁶¹ Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 30.

⁶² 'Local and General News', *Northern Star*, 25 November 1882, p. 2; Maurice Ryan, 1999, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, Nimbin, p. 4.

⁶³ 'Pictures of Crime', *Globe*, 28 April 1886, p. 8.

destruction of fine trees, with their bark stripped and left standing bleaching in the air, calls for some interference on the part of the Crown.⁶⁴

The author seems to pay respect to the Bundjalung land ethic that protected the forests from greed, calling on the government to do the same. By the late 1800s, 'in the wake of the rapid disappearance of the Big Scrub', government concern for conservation was growing.⁶⁵ A government representative was sent to the region in 1886, tasked with the job of reporting upon the agricultural industry. While his report predictably described the fertility, climate and water resources, aesthetic landscape descriptors were also used, including 'magnificent', 'blessed', 'beautiful' and 'wonderful.'⁶⁶ These increasing descriptions of the aesthetic virtues of the land demonstrate the evolving nature of the conservation movement, progressively more focused on the beauty and grandeur of the Australian environment. Hall argues that this aesthetic argument, influenced by the Romantic Movement, led to Australia's 'cult of the bush.'⁶⁷

As touched upon in the previous chapter, the 'Bush Legend' was influential in early notions of Australian identity. Despite a largely urban population, the romantic rural lifestyle was promoted as quintessentially Australian, and by the end of the 19th century, the rural experience of the Australian environment was at the heart of an emerging Australian culture.⁶⁸ By this point, the majority of Australians were 'native-born.' David Malouf argues that one's place of birth is a significant factor in the relationship between people and environment, arguing:

We can all learn to appreciate kinds of landscape other than the one we grew up with, to see what is unique and a source of beauty in them. But the landscape we most

⁶⁴ 'Quartpot and Ruby Creeks Revisited', *Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser*, 9 November 1872, p. 2.

⁶⁵ Johanna Kijas, 2003, 'From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Helen Wilson (ed.), p. 28.

⁶⁶ W.S. Campbell, 1922, 'Discovery of, and Later Developments in, the North-Eastern Portion of New South Wales', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journals and Proceedings*, vol. 8, part 6, pp. 311-312.

⁶⁷ Hall, *Wasteland to World Heritage*, p. 85.

⁶⁸ Martin Mulligan & Stuart Hill, 2001, *Ecological Pioneers: A Social History of Australian Ecological Thought and Action*, Cambridge.

deeply belong to, that connects with our senses, that glows in our consciousness, will always be the one we are born into.⁶⁹

Australians felt more at home in their environment and were taking the opportunity to explore their growing sense of place, argues Bolton.⁷⁰ In art, melodrama, literature and the mass media, expressions of belonging to Australia could be found.⁷¹ The Heidelberg School art movement in Melbourne attempted to accurately represent the true appearance of the Australian landscape, in contrast with earlier works of art, many of which were Anglicised.⁷² The poems of Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson, appearing primarily in Sydney's *Bulletin*, evoked passionate and poignant images of the Australian bush (while Paterson's could be considered romanticised, Lawson's were often darker and one can sense the poet's uneasy relationship with the bush).⁷³ Malouf argues that poetry was used as an early expression of place, revealing the growing connection between people and environment.⁷⁴ The 'cult of the bush' helped to raise further awareness of the unique Australian environment, and was also used as a vehicle for conservation. Lawson was particularly passionate about water conservation. He expressed concern over the misuse of water resources, arguing that '[e]very spare penny should be spent on water conservation', and to not do so would be 'a national crime.'⁷⁵ The need to conserve water resources was acknowledged in the Big Scrub, and in 1891 Rocky Creek Dam and its catchment area were declared a water reserve.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ David Malouf, 1998, *A Spirit of Play: The Making of Australian Consciousness*, Sydney, p. 49.

⁷⁰ Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 30.

⁷¹ Richard Waterhouse, 2000, 'Australian legends: representation of the bush, 1813-1913', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 31, no. 115, pp. 201-221; Christoff, 'Environmental Citizenship', p. 207.

⁷² William Splatt, 1986, *The Heidelberg School: The Golden Summer of Australian Painting*, South Yarra.

⁷³ Waterhouse, 'Australian Legends', p. 204; Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 30.

⁷⁴ Malouf, *A Spirit of Play*, pp. 37-40.

⁷⁵ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, p. 300.

⁷⁶ Rous County Council, 1951, 'Water: An Account of the Rocky Creek Water Scheme', Information Pamphlet, reproduced in 'Rocky Creek Dam: A History', www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au/page.asp?f=RES-MFY-03-87-58, accessed 8 August 2015.

Tension, Tourism and Trees (1900-1930)

In 1901, Muir referred to nature itself as ‘home’, indicative of the evolving link between the natural environment and notions of belonging within it.⁷⁷ In the same year, Australia became a Federation, gaining independence from British rule. Keen to assert a sense of belonging to the new sovereign nation, national symbols were fashioned after Australian flora and fauna, such as the kangaroo, emu, wattle and waratah; representations of the unique Australian environment became an integral part of an Australian identity.⁷⁸ Christoff aptly refers to this as a ‘revaluation’ of native species, making reference to a change from the common initial European reaction to the ‘gloomy and weird’ Australian environment.⁷⁹ Now, these animals and plants were seen in a different light. Attitudes towards the natural environment during this era seem stuck in a tension between the old and the new. In response to the concerns of the Linnean Society, a bird conservation group, Prime Minister Alfred Deakin announced in 1908 that bird preservation was a matter of ‘humanitarianism.’ As Hutton and Connors argue, ‘[t]he language of ecocentrism had not yet been invented and so Deakin had to express the idea that birds had a right to exist irrespective of human wants in the moral terms of his own day.’⁸⁰

Just as Australian species were ‘revaluated’ to suit the new image of Australia, so too was the experience of the past. In 1929, an article in the *Northern Star* remembered the overwhelming sense of isolation experienced by early settlers near Lismore as having ‘a charm defying explanation’, in stark contrast with the anguished and haunting sentiments expressed during the era.⁸¹ Over time, a stronger sense of place had developed. The script was re-written, and for many, the relationship between people and environment was transformed from one of alienation to one of fondness.

⁷⁷ John Muir, 1901, *Our National Parks*, Boston, p. 1.

⁷⁸ Bolton, ‘A Gum Leaf in the Billy’, p. 33; Richard White, 1981, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Sydney.

⁷⁹ Christoff, ‘Environmental Citizenship’, p. 209.

⁸⁰ Hutton & Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 25.

⁸¹ ‘Blazing the Trail: Early Days on Richmond, When Lismore was Cattle Station’, *Northern Star*, January 24 1929, p. 5.



Figure 9: 'A Beauty spot'. This photo, taken in 1900, was named 'A beauty spot' by its photographer Archibald James Campbell. Campbell took many photos of the region, and nearly all of them focus on aspects of the natural environment, including native vegetation and wildlife. This indicates an apparent interest in the beauty of the region and a subjective exploration of his relationship with place through photography.⁸²

While most of the region's writings and recollections from the early 20th century do not show evidence of significant place attachment, there are some exceptions. The writings of local residents Frank Cannane and poet Jack Moses also reveal a tension, seemingly struggling against deeply ingrained personal notions of what the environment represents to them (also see figure 9 above). Cannane recalls his experience of life at Whian Whian as a boy around 1905:

[A]t an early age I had the privilege of seeing part of the 'Big Scrub' ... in all its unspoiled splendour. Acres and acres of giant trees and vines teeming with wild life... Nature

⁸² Held at State Library of Victoria, Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, Members' Papers, MS 9247.

provided a generous menu for the birds – berries from the tobacco bush, dye berries, figs, lillipilli, cockspur, wild cherry, black apple and Quandongs... I had never seen a running creek before and I was happy to see the water, fresh from the springs of the Nightcap Range... Alas! this ‘paradise’ was already under sentence. The new settlers were moving in with brush hooks and axes... the trees were felled to ensure a good burn. It was a fearsome sight! and I was afraid. When the smoke subsided a sight of desolation remained. Stark Black stumps and smouldering logs in a bed of ashes. And a terrible silence. The birds had gone. Almost overnight it seemed that the rich, warm earth began to come to life as the grasses began to burgeon forth. Soon the hillside would be a lush pasture for the farm animals. Once again I have been privileged to see a new order born, a new beauty emerging from the ashes of the old.⁸³

Cannane’s recollection provides fascinating insight. Clearly expressing respect and awe for the beauty of the Big Scrub and its wildlife, the young boy was dismayed to witness its destruction, yet he justifies it as progress and finds beauty in the result. Moses’ poem reveals a similar tension:

I can’t forget you, Nimbin;
 You charm me like a book,
 The cattle in your valley,
 The mountain and the brook.
 The whip-bird in the ranges,
 Waking up his mate,
 And the basalt-columns standing
 Like pickets at your gate.
 You’ve dowry and you’ve beauty,
 You’ve wealth, as yet untold,
 In the orchard and the timber,
 And the streams that carry gold...
 You were nothing but a wilderness
 Just a little while ago,

⁸³ Frank Cannane, 1987, ‘The birth of Whian Whian’, in *Richmond Recollections*, St Carthages Senior Parishioners, Lismore, p. 31.

You're a town of some importance now,
It's grand to see you grow!⁸⁴

Moses expresses a sense of attachment to the landscape, formations and wildlife, but still enthuses about its resource wealth and transformation from 'nothing but wilderness' to a 'town of importance.' While expressing a deep appreciation for the natural environment, both men seem unable to escape the cultural confines of a mindset geared towards resource extraction. Cannane, in particular, does not link the clearing, burning and 'progress' with the loss of a landscape so dear to him. With some exceptions, this is characteristic of mainstream conservation at the time. The acquirement of place-based environmental knowledge brought awareness and concern, but for many, particularly at the government level, these concerns as well as aesthetic values were outcompeted by the old, deeply-ingrained cultural understandings. Again, this demonstrates the significance of values in the determination of the relationship between people and environment.

It does, nevertheless, also demonstrate steady progress towards ecological awareness. In and around the transformed landscape of the Big Scrub, the aesthetic qualities of the environment took on a new value from the beginning of the 20th century. Descriptions of the landscape frequently reveal a sense of pride in both the beauty of the transformed land and the effort that went into transforming it. Still maintaining a Lockean-inspired attitude towards ownership, the land had become a possession by virtue of the labour invested in bringing about its transformation, but its aesthetic qualities too, both of the cleared land and the rainforest remnants, were boasted of with pride. The region's inhabitants enthuse about the grandeur of the scrub and invite others to see it for themselves. The aesthetic value of the region becomes for the first time a resource and a source of income in itself; and so commenced the thriving tourism industry that still comprises a significant proportion of the region's economy today.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Jack Moses, 1923, *Beyond the City Gates: Australian Story & Verse*, Sydney, p. 97.

⁸⁵ Tourism Research Australia, 2011, *The Economic Importance of Tourism in Australia's Regions*, Canberra, pp. 4-7.

As previously noted, as early as 1872 the tourism potential of the region was recognised when a visitor to the Border Ranges remarked that the forest 'should be shown to the Sydney tourist.'⁸⁶ The first three decades of the 20th century saw the publication of a significant number of tourist guides, their content again revealing a tension between the old and the new. Demonstrating environmental attitudes in transition, Kijas argues that many of these guides focus on the loss of the Big Scrub, and while they contain 'exuberant' proclamations of the white man's triumph over nature, they also reveal 'more ambivalent tones concerned at the extent of destruction of the brush....'⁸⁷

In 1904, Thomas Coe published *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales* as a tourist 'souvenir.' The book extols the aesthetic virtues of the region, but still contains an undeniable resource extraction tone:

Few have had ocular proof of [the region's] scenic beauty...Words cannot adequately describe the charming nature of these rivers; they must be seen to be thoroughly appreciated... panoramic views of magnificent grandeur can be obtained from the carriage window. Stretching out as far as the eye can reach are rolling hills... on which are depastured the quiet dairy herds of those who have been instrumental in effecting the remarkable change which has occurred... On each side of the track from Mullumbimby to Murwillumbah are impenetrable jungles, about which great flocks of white cockatoes [sic] are to be seen climbing from vine to vine among the beautiful staghorns high up on giant trees, one by one of which are becoming prone to the woodman's axe.⁸⁸

It is somewhat difficult to determine Coe's exact thoughts. His notion of aesthetic beauty is grounded in European imagery of rolling hills and dairy farms, and he acknowledges the destruction of 'beautiful' vegetation but does not condemn it, perhaps considering it necessary to make way for the 'rolling hills.'

By the 1920s, it is easier to detect a clear appreciation for the fragments of natural environment left in their pre-Anglicised state. *Mullumbimby: The Garden of the*

⁸⁶ 'Quartpot and Ruby Creeks Revisited', p. 2.

⁸⁷ Kijas, 'From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity', p. 21.

⁸⁸ Thomas B. Coe, 1904, *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Sydney, pp. 7-13.

North Coast, another tourist souvenir, is largely pictorial and includes more scenes of the natural environment than it does the built environment, including mountains, creeks and waterways with no obvious evidence of human occupation. The author writes:

The North Coast is famous for its fine scenery... From almost any point of vantage the view is rugged and grand. Mount Chincogan stands out prominently, and further on – sentinel-like in a sea of blue – the precipitous faces of Mount Warning appear. Within easy access of Mullumbimby there are many beautiful spots ... The shallow, running streams are crossed many times where some of the most beautiful trees of the once giant scrub still grow in profusion...⁸⁹

The growing relationship between residents and their local environment is a source of pride. While also praising the pastures and homesteads, there is an ever-increasing appreciation for the region's natural beauty and the author encourages tourists to see it for themselves. The enthusiastic encouragement of tourism can be considered an expression of belonging, with residents excited about the prospect of sharing their special places and local knowledge with others in the hope that they, too, will recognise the special aesthetic qualities of the place.

Wollumbin (Mount Warning) once again exerts a high degree of agency, a significant feature granted anthropomorphic characteristics. In 1923, an article appeared in the *Tweed Daily* titled 'Mt Warning's Call'.⁹⁰ In a remarkable passage, the author writes,

Many of us possess an eye for the beautiful; others are not aware of the smiles bestowed upon our fair district by a bountiful Nature. Their sense of perception has, perhaps, been deadened by long contact with the beautiful, until familiarity has bred its contempt. But, as time goes on, the awakening will come.⁹¹

The author urges residents to connect with the beauty of the region, and strongly recommends that Wollumbin become a focal point for the tourism industry. In 1928,

⁸⁹ A. T. McDougall, c.1920, *Mullumbimby: The Garden of the North Coast*, Sydney, back cover.

⁹⁰ 'Mt Warning's Call', *Tweed Daily*, 11 July 1923, p. 2.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Mount Warning Reserve was declared a park for public recreation, and walking tracks and picnic tables were installed to facilitate tourists' experience of the mountain.⁹² •

Kijas argues that in the early 20th century there were two competing notions of resource value in the region, one favouring farming and the other, logging.⁹³ The latter proved to exert a strong influence, and government policy changes would significantly impact upon the future of the region. In 1908, New South Wales Parliament established a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Forestry – professional forestry bodies were established, and 67 state forests were declared in the 'upper north-east region' between 1913-1920.⁹⁴ The New South Wales *Forestry Act* was introduced in 1916, tasked with the 'dedication, reservation, control and use of State forests, timber reserves, and Crown lands for forestry and other purposes.'⁹⁵ With this act, the Forestry Commission was instated, and professional foresters would in time consider themselves to be Australia's 'first conservationists.'⁹⁶

In a legislative sense, perhaps they were. Aboriginal Australians were no doubt the country's first environmentalists, but the Forestry Commission were tasked with the job of conserving - in the literal sense of the word, saving and protecting the forests and their resource value for later – so that forests could continue to serve human interests. Regardless of the intent, the Act undoubtedly slowed the rate of forest clearing, and also paved the way for the introduction of further environmental legislation such as the *Wildflowers and Native Plants Protection Act*, introduced in New South Wales in 1927.⁹⁷ With precious little of the Big Scrub left, Whian Whian had been declared a state forest in 1914, and in the 1920s a forestry camp and plant

⁹² 'Mount Warning: Proposed National Park', *Tweed Daily*, 6 July 1928, p. 6; 'Mt Warning Park: Purchase of Additional Land', *Tweed Daily*, 1 September 1928, p. 3.

• White Australians were likely unaware at the time that Wollumbin was a sacred site and to climb it is to show great disrespect to the Bundjalung people.

⁹³ Kijas, 'From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity', p. 28.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Forestry Act 1916* (NSW), Act No. 55, p. 93, www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/fa1916n55166.pdf, accessed 20 December 2015.

⁹⁶ 'Conservationists... caring for our natural forests', *Northern Star*, 16 August 1979, p. 8; Anthea Howard, 2004, 'I'm a Forestry Professional Too!', *The Forester*, vol. 46, no. 2, June, p. 20.

⁹⁷ Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 31; *Wildflowers and Native Plants Protection Act* (NSW), Act No. 2, www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/wfanppa1927n2465.pdf, accessed 14 January 2016.

nursery were built at Rummery Park, deep in a patch of remnant Scrub.⁹⁸ The camp provided accommodation for foresters during the work week, and the nursery facilitated the botanical education of employees and regeneration of cleared forest.⁹⁹

Government policy did not necessarily align with the evolving attitudes of conservation-minded citizens and local concerns. Bolton argues that the appointed 'Conservators of Forests' struggled to convince politicians of the need for environmental stewardship.¹⁰⁰ In Alstonville in 1920, local councillors made the decision to prevent the felling of black bean trees in a town park, instead seeking knowledge of the local species and recommending that 'a black bean pod and a wild passion vine be sent to the Government Botanist for his opinion as to whether some are dangerous to animals eating them.'¹⁰¹ A decade earlier, clergyman James Green had felt particularly passionate about the clearing of the Big Scrub; in contrast with the praise so often given to pioneers for their hard labour, Green accused the cedar getters of a destructive and myopic attitude, arguing:

It is to be feared that the pioneer thought too little of the beauty... *He* thought only of the cedar... beautiful as the country is with its settled air of pastoral prosperity, the old onrider now looks to the past for his visions of beauty... Something is lost. Mistakes have been made. Civilisation has been cruel, ruthless, and even foolish, for this land ought to have been the paradise of the continent.¹⁰²

Green's words are highly critical and remarkably different to the prevailing attitudes of the time, demonstrating the depth of passion involved in the evolving conservation ethic. Walker argues that by the interwar period, campaigners had 'developed an ecological consciousness.'¹⁰³ In and around Sydney, conservationists such as Miles Dunphy passionately campaigned for the establishment of more National Parks and promoted a different mode of engaging with the natural environment, establishing

⁹⁸ 'European Settlement', Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015; Commonwealth of Australia & State of New South Wales, 2000, *Regional Forest Agreement for North East New South Wales*, Sydney, Appendix 2, p. 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Bolton, 'A Gum Leaf in the Billy', p. 31.

¹⁰¹ 'Correspondence: Tintenbar Shire Council', *Northern Star*, 16 November 1920, p. 7.

¹⁰² Green, *The Lost Echo*, pp. 175-179.

¹⁰³ Robin Walker 'Fauna and Flora Protection in New South Wales, 1866-1948', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 28, 1991, pp. 27-28.

bushwalkers clubs from the 1920s.¹⁰⁴ These organisations were to become vehicles for grassroots environmental campaigning, with public environmental advocacy marking another shift in Australian environmental attitudes.

Grassroots Conservation (The 1930s)

Christoff argues that bushwalking and naturalist groups exhibited characteristics of a 'nature-oriented social movement.'¹⁰⁵ Echoing the voices of American Romantics such as Muir, the Sydney bushwalkers including Dunphy, Alan and Enid Rigby, and Paddy Pallin would 'go bush' in rugged country for days on end, to 'explore the human condition as much as the landscape. This was the beginning not only of overnight bushwalking and camping but also Australia's modern conservation movement', argues Borschmann.¹⁰⁶ Enid Rigby states that one of the main objectives of the Sydney Bush Walkers club was to establish a 'definite regard for the welfare and preservation of wildlife and the natural beauty of this country, and to help others appreciate these natural gifts.'¹⁰⁷ Dunphy was the leading figure; Enid Rigby recalls, 'we all called him 'The Father of Conservation.'¹⁰⁸ Dunphy's conservation philosophy was 'inextricably linked' to bushwalking. He encouraged others to experience the bush for themselves, raising awareness and promoting action.¹⁰⁹ Harking back to the Romantics, Dunphy understood that only through direct experience of a place can we truly build an understanding of, and a relationship with, the natural environment.

Bushwalking was an activity also enjoyed in the Big Scrub. In 1937 the Nightcap National Forest was declared, and residents responded by taking the opportunity to engage with their local environment.¹¹⁰ An article in Lismore's *Northern Star* provides details:

¹⁰⁴ Gregg Borschmann, 1999, *The People's Forest*, Blackheath, pp. 226-229; Peter Meredith, 1999, *Myles and Milo*, St Leonards.

¹⁰⁵ Christoff, 'Environmental Citizenship', p. 207.

¹⁰⁶ Joan Adams, 1989, *Looking back, walking on: the Bush Club's half century 1939-1989*, Sydney; Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 227.

¹⁰⁷ Enid Rigby, 1999, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, pp. 228-229.

¹⁰⁸ Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 229.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-229; Meredith, *Myles and Milo*.

¹¹⁰ Roy Stanley Vincent, 1937, *Declaration of the Nightcap National Forest*, Sydney.

Since the official dedication ceremony of Nightcap National Park and Forest, many people from Lismore are taking advantage of Minyon Falls as a site for picnics. It was stated that more than 12 cars conveyed parties to that spot for picnics last Sunday and there was also a large number of nearby residents in attendance. Hikers find the surrounding country interesting.¹¹¹



Figure 10: Minyon Falls. Photo by author.

¹¹¹ 'Picnic Parties at Nightcap', *Northern Star*, 28 May 1937, p. 8.

It is important to note that while the forest is referred to here as a National Park, it would not become what we now consider to be a National Park, including the conservation status and management plan that comes with the title, until 1983.

The push to create more parks was almost always co-ordinated entirely by citizens – in 1932 the collective NSW bushwalker's clubs came together to establish the National Parks and Primitive [sic] Areas Council, adopting the motto, 'Progress with Conservation.'¹¹² The New England National Park was established largely through the efforts of poet Judith Wright's father, Phillip, who felt a special connection to the place after visiting it as an eight year old in 1897. From 1930, Phillip Wright lobbied state and federal politicians to protect the area until it was declared a National Park in 1935.¹¹³ In 1931, in one of the least-recognised and hitherto most significant grassroots environmental actions in NSW, a group from the Sydney Bushwalkers Club, including Dunphy and the Rigbys, found themselves face-to-face with a farmer who had a lease to clear Blue Gums in forest near Bilpin. Horrified, the group took matters into their own hands. When the government refused to acknowledge the issue, the group successfully raised £130, a significant sum of money especially during the Depression Era, to buy the lease from the farmer and save the forest.¹¹⁴ Increasingly, citizens were feeling emboldened by their attachment to the Australian environment and took action to protect the places they loved.

In 1930 in Alstonville, local residents petitioned Tintenbar Shire Council to preserve a remnant patch of Big Scrub at Lumley Park. They considered the three acres of forest to be worthy of preservation as it was representative of how the local environment looked prior to white settlement.¹¹⁵ In 1934, the park was declared a 'Preserve for Native Trees', and weeding and regeneration work commenced.¹¹⁶ A report to the National Parks and Wildlife Service asserts that this was likely the first

¹¹² Hutton & Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 67; Kelly, 'The Mediated Forest', p. 106

¹¹³ New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'The Making of a Park', informational sign, New England National Park, sighted by author in April, 2013.

¹¹⁴ Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 229.

¹¹⁵ Stephanie Lymburner, 2004, *Lumley Park: Vegetation Management Plan*, Ballina, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Lumley Park APS Landcare Group, informational sign, Lumley Park, Alstonville, sighted by author 31 December 2015.

rainforest regeneration site in Australia.¹¹⁷ Seeds of rainforest species were collected from the local area and cultivated. Weeds such as Lantana, so dedicatedly transported up the Richmond River by Jane Wilson in the mid-1850s, were now recognised as terribly invasive and ecologically destructive, and were eradicated.¹¹⁸ An article in the *Northern Star* reported:

To... those not resident in the district prior to selection and clearing, it is difficult to visualise the beauty of the Big Scrub with its many varieties of stately trees, beautiful vines reaching upward to the tree tops, and profusion of delicate ferns. With the passing of years this natural beauty has given place to grassed paddocks, and today there is very little left of the Big Scrub in its virgin state... A move was recently made by residents to beautify the remainder of Lumley Park by the removal of lantana, wild tobacco and other growths, preserve the present trees and plant others. About two acres of the reserve is of the original scrub (not second growth), and contains fine specimens of scrub trees, including white beech, black bean, red bean, stinging tree, red cedar, blue fig, teak, black pencil cedar, booyong, yellow carribeen, churnwood, black apple, black myrtle, fig, Eugenia, maiden's blush, tamarind, etc... Many specimens have been forwarded to an officer of the Botanical Gardens. Sydney, and identified. The aim of the committee is to fill up the vacant spaces with trees which will be fully representative of the original big scrub. The work of the committee and all interested is a commendable one, and in addition to beautifying the area, the work is of considerable educational value.¹¹⁹

The passage reveals significant details. There is a clear appreciation for the aesthetic beauty of the Scrub and a sense of loss for the great amount that has been cleared, which further highlights the importance of this remnant patch. In contrast with the days in which the rainforest was considered an inconvenient and 'impenetrable scrub', local residents now consider the regeneration of such species to be 'beautification.' There is an undeniable sense of place and pride in local knowledge, harking back to a time that only long-term local residents would remember. Building on local knowledge, the committee responsible for the project sought further information on the various

¹¹⁷ R.J. Hunter, 1997, *A review of rainforest restoration in nature reserves in Lismore district*, Lismore.

¹¹⁸ Lymburner, *Lumley Park*, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ 'Of District Value: Example at Alstonville, Monument That Will Last', *Northern Star*, 26 February 1936, p. 4.



Figure 11: Lumley Park. Photo by author.

species present, and the park itself is considered to be of ‘educational value.’ Worthy of protection and care, the park is a community asset, referred to in the article title as a ‘monument that will last.’ In forging a connection with the park, both as a natural environment and as a local place, the regeneration of the rainforest constitutes an expression of belonging that challenges the nature/culture divide – as the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service recognise, ‘The long term protection of the rainforest remnant at Lumley Park at Alstonville by the local community, exemplifies the "cultural significance" of the Big Scrub to the residents of the sub-region.’¹²⁰ Finally, Lumley Park provides a strong example of the strength of environmental awareness in the region, cultivated by and of the rainforest itself, and emerging as early as the 1930s.

Other Big Scrub remnants were also considered worthy of preservation during this time, although not attracting the same level of community enthusiasm or regeneration efforts as Lumley Park. Booyong Reserve, south of Bangalow, was gazetted as a flora and fauna reserve by Byron Shire Council in 1931, and a committee established to oversee its management.¹²¹ There is also evidence that local landholders

¹²⁰ New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1997, *Big Scrub Nature Reserves: Plan of Management*, Lismore, p. 5.

¹²¹ Byron Shire Council, ‘Booyong Reserve for Public Recreation and Preservation of Native Flora and Fauna’, informational sign, Booyong Reserve, sighted by author 31 December 2015.

chose to preserve stands of Scrub on their own private property, further demonstrating an evolving appreciation for native vegetation.¹²²

The 1930s also mark a significant point in the evolution of scientific understanding. In the United States, Aldo Leopold's writings were gaining prominence. Leopold, a forester, ecologist and conservationist, was also a prolific writer. Although scientifically trained, much of Leopold's writing is poetic and persuasive. He engaged with the natural sciences, but also challenged the dominant and destructive land ethic.¹²³ In arguing for a conservation ethic he was critical of the nature/culture divide, arguing that 'our self-imposed doctrine of ruthless utilitarianism' was responsible for 'the complete regimentation of the human mind.'¹²⁴

When cane toads were introduced to Australia in 1935 in an effort to curb native beetle populations in the cane fields, at least one local resident had the foresight to question the wisdom of attempting to manipulate the natural environment.¹²⁵ An article in the *Northern Star* expressed concern:

All the organisms in any given territory, together with the environment, are like so many parts of a jig-saw puzzle and it is a very easy and risky thing to upset an organised plan of Nature by introducing some new factor or interfering with existing ones. Many of our worst pests have been brought to this country by well-meaning persons who could not foresee or imagine how disastrously the introductions would affect our welfare or that of the native fauna and flora.¹²⁶

The author clearly expresses their concerns in ecological terms, acknowledging the interconnectedness of all living things and demonstrating an understanding of the fragility of this balance. March 2, 1936, marks the first time that the word 'ecology' appears in the local Lismore newspaper, but by this time, the author describes it as merely 'a new name' for 'the study of the inter-relationships of all the living organisms

¹²² Green, *The Lost Echo*, pp. 178-179; New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, *Big Scrub Nature Reserves*, p. 5.

¹²³ Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, pp. 108-110.

¹²⁴ Aldo Leopold, 1939, 'The Farmer as a Conservationist', in Susan L. Flader & J Baird Callicott (eds) *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*, Madison, p. 259

¹²⁵ Martin Kich, 2007, 'Cane Toad', in *Encyclopaedia of Environment and Society*, Paul Robbins (ed.), Thousand Oaks, p. 200.

¹²⁶ 'Giant Toads', *Northern Star*, 24 December 1935, p. 15.

in a given environment', commenting that this is just what they already know of as 'careful observing in the field or bush.'¹²⁷ These articles suggest that at least some local residents had already been acquiring ecological knowledge of their local environment through direct experience and engagement, learning from their evolving relationship with the earth itself.

The Conservation Ethic: A Growing Divide (1940-1960)

While the evolution of the conservation movement demonstrates a growth in appreciation, understanding and respect for the natural environment, local attitudes suggest that utilitarian values still exerted a strong influence during the 1940s. Peter Hurley, in relation to the end of the red cedar 'harvest', wrote in 1948, '[t]he holocaust is over, we should say. Never, perhaps, in a nation's history has such a valuable possession been so completely wiped out in such a short period.'¹²⁸ While Hurley's words are strong and his feelings about the destruction of the species are evident, he nonetheless still refers to the tree as a 'possession.' Similarly, despite an obvious depth of feeling for the Australian environment, European cultural perspectives live on. Nimbin Rocks, again demonstrating a powerful presence, commanded the following response in 1946:

Locally they are known as the Cathedral, Lady Cunningham's Needle, and the Monastery. The very names give a key to the feelings they have inspired. Of great age, in the history of the created world, they call attention to themselves as they raise their heads over the Nimbin valley... Many of us have experienced a fleeting sense of power and permanence on beholding them. They exercise a compelling attraction that has its roots deep in the past. Their power is akin to the force that permeates the ancient English monoliths and Druidic altar stones. It penetrates our consciousness with an equal and inexpressible mysticism.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ 'A New Name', *Northern Star*, March 2 1936, p. 11.

¹²⁸ Peter Joseph Hurley, 1948, *Red Cedar: the Story of the North Coast*, Sydney, p. 203.

¹²⁹ Constance Blackshield, 1946, 'The Nimbin Rocks', *Northern Star*, 25 May, p. 7.

The author, Constance Blackshield, senses the age and significance of the landmark and acknowledges their power, but in doing so she draws on her own heritage of Druidic culture, revealing that European imagery and notions of sacredness are still relied upon. England is the reference point, understanding this landscape in relation to a very different one on the other side of the world. However, Blackshield also demonstrates remarkable insight for a time when there was limited knowledge of and engagement with Aboriginal culture and heritage. She senses a Bundjalung presence at Nimbin Rocks, writing,

Who knows what rites took place in the dim caverns that exist beneath the rocks? We can picture the wild corroborees, the symbolic ceremonies, the tribal rites which have left an aura of impenetrable experience about the rocks.¹³⁰

Blackshield exhibits an understanding that this place, so special to her, also contains the memory of the Bundjalung people. Despite her reference to Druidic tradition, this acknowledgement of the intrinsic link between Aboriginal people and the Australian landscape would become central to the Australian environment movement in the decades to come.

The local shift in attitudes displayed by some residents was perhaps influenced by international developments. Leopold had continued to publish prolifically during the 1940s, taking aim at a conservation ethic that served human purposes.¹³¹ Challenging assumptions like those of Hurley, whose concern for the destruction of cedar seemed to lie in the squandering of its economic value, Leopold wrote in one of his most important passages:

Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.¹³²

¹³⁰ Blackshield, 'The Nimbin Rocks', p. 7.

¹³¹ A comprehensive collection of Leopold's essays can be found in Aldo Leopold, 1966 [1948], *A Sand County Almanac*, New York, and Flader & Baird Callicott (eds), *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*, Madison.

¹³² Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. xviii-xix.

Environmental historian Donald Worster argues that Leopold's call to redefine the conservation movement based on an acknowledgement of the interconnected nature of all life on earth was 'the single most important new idea about land we have had since we created the institution of private property.'¹³³

Indicative of a widespread international shift in the way that some conservationists understood the relationship between people and the natural environment, Australian naturalist Elyne Mitchell had earlier and similarly argued that to overcome the difficult and complex problem of environmental degradation, Australians would need to embrace 'a real love of the land – a love of the universal Australian earth and an intense love of the particular place from which each individual comes.'¹³⁴ Both authors use the powerful word, 'love', a word that would be increasingly used to describe the human relationship to the earth. Mitchell also recognised the power of place, and in the aftermath of the Second World War, seeing the Australian environment as 'a community to which we belong' took on new significance.

William Lines' book, *Patriots*, makes a compelling argument that the Second World War changed the way that Australians related to their country as we were forced to reflect on what we could have lost.¹³⁵ An article published in *Walkabout* in 1946 confirms the existence of such attitudes:

We have just finished a bitter struggle for our social freedom, but this will not be a reality until we also learn to preserve the freedom of lesser creatures that inhabit the land, the plants which adorn it, and the soils from which they arise.¹³⁶

In 'The Beautiful North', Blackshield was also making connections between the significance of place attachment and respect for the environment.¹³⁷ As her *Northern Star* article enthuses, the 'places we see most often we rarely pause to assess. But no familiarity can dim the beauty of our northern district.' Blackshield claims ownership

¹³³ Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, p. 108.

¹³⁴ Elyne Mitchell, 1946, *Soil and Civilisation*, Sydney, p. 33.

¹³⁵ William J. Lines, 2006, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, St Lucia, p. 7.

¹³⁶ Norman Laird, 1946, 'Goannas', *Walkabout*, no. 5, 1 March, p. 7.

¹³⁷ Constance Blackshield, 1946, 'The Beautiful North', *Northern Star*, 4 May, p. 7.

and authority over local species, referring to them as ‘our birds’ and ‘our flame trees’, but she also bridges the nature/culture divide, arguing, ‘[t]here is a solidity about our evergreen hills that should help to stabilise our emotions and mould our characters.’ Blackshield was expressing an undeniable sense of belonging to the unique region.

In the Border Ranges, John Lever, a generational logger, had been working in the forests since the age of fourteen – a ‘[s]elf-taught botanist, engineer and surveyor, his life ha[d] been a close communion with nature.’¹³⁸ Lever’s ecological knowledge had been acquired experientially, informed by the forest itself, and he had walked extensively and spent many nights deep within the forest.¹³⁹ Lever’s relationship to the natural environment was one of intimacy and respect; contrary to the reputation of foresters, he lobbied the Forestry Commission to spare the large, rare timber, and in 1948, Lever and two friends nominated the forest to become a National Park.¹⁴⁰ Lever’s campaign ‘came to an abrupt end’ in 1952 when the Premier ‘refused to even consider their proposal.’¹⁴¹ While this place-based, ecologically-informed style of conservation was gaining strength, ‘official’ conservation, as dictated by government and policy, was shifting further away, increasingly embedded within anthropocentric values.

Leopold argued that a conservation ethic that at its core is anthropocentric, rather than ecocentric, naturally places profit above all else.¹⁴² In 1948, New South Wales introduced the *Fauna Protection Act*, indicating a consistent response to community concerns: however other institutionalised forms of conservation favoured the economy before non-human values and ‘capitalised on nationalistic progressivism.’¹⁴³ The gap widened between the two primary industries hewn out of the Big Scrub when the agriculture industry, particularly dairy, started to experience a

¹³⁸ John Brown, 1976, ‘A Society to Fight Fire with Fire’, *Habitat*, vol. 4, no. 3, August, p. 14.

¹³⁹ Bruce Chick, 1976, ‘Campaign after Campaign’, *Habitat*, vol. 4, no. 3, August, p. 16; New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, ‘The Birth of a National Park’, informational sign, Border Ranges National Park, sighted by author on 3 January 2016.

¹⁴⁰ Jeni Kendell & Eddie Buivids, 1987, *Earth First*, Sydney, p. 28; Brown, ‘A Society to Fight Fire with Fire’, p. 14

¹⁴¹ Brown, ‘A Society to Fight Fire with Fire’, p. 14

¹⁴² Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 243-244

¹⁴³ Fauna Protection Act (NSW), 1948, Act no. 47, www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/fpa1948n47211.pdf, accessed 17 January 2016; Hutton & Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 21.

slow and painful decline in profit and productivity from the mid-1940s onwards.¹⁴⁴ The Forestry Commission, despite being charged with the responsibility of the 'wise use of the forests', increased their logging operations and several sawmills were established in the Nightcap Forest.¹⁴⁵

The language of progressivism 'emphasised human and national benefit', argue Hutton and Connors.¹⁴⁶ The 'wise use' conservation philosophy became more closely connected to progressive nationalism in the push for dams. Hurley, who as we have seen possessed significant environmental concerns, responded to the frequent flooding of the region by proposing the damming of the Richmond River. He also argued, 'When we, as a nation, become really alive to the value of our greatest asset of all – the land – maybe we will not spare any expense insuring its preservation.'¹⁴⁷ Although Hurley expressed a strong connection to the land, his relationship to the environment was still dictated by what is 'best' for humanity. In 1949, work commenced on Rocky Creek Dam, and again there was a strong progressivist sentiment. An information pamphlet produced by Rous County Council announced that the dam would be 'a scheme for which every citizen can be justly proud', and every time a tap is used, citizens will be reminded of 'the enterprise of a district that had the courage to take a step which will add to its prosperity.'¹⁴⁸

This was a form of progressive nationalism built on manipulating the natural environment to suit human needs. From the 1950s, the 'Green Revolution' saw the world-wide transformation of agricultural practices. Largely focused on increasing productivity in the 'developing' world, the 'Revolution' saw a massive global increase in environmental inputs, namely chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, as well

¹⁴⁴ Ryan, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, p. 63.

¹⁴⁵ Commonwealth of Australia & State of New South Wales, *Regional Forest Agreement for North East New South Wales*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ Hutton & Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 21.

¹⁴⁷ Hurley, *Red Cedar*, p. 196.

¹⁴⁸ Rous County Council, 1951, 'Water: An Account of the Rocky Creek Water Scheme', Information Pamphlet, reproduced in 'Rocky Creek Dam: A History' www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au/page.asp?f=RES-MFY-03-87-58, accessed 10 January 2016.

as technological advances in mechanisation and irrigation.¹⁴⁹ This ‘human cleverness in managing and altering Nature’ led to extreme ecological violence globally, causing land degradation and soil and groundwater contamination, although at the time, farmers were seemingly oblivious to the consequences of the use of deadly chemicals such as the pesticide, DDT.¹⁵⁰

The *Northern Star* shows evidence of widespread use of the chemical, which in the region was promoted for all manner of uses, from cattle dips to industrial use and to backyard gardening, including advertisements and stories suggesting the best DDT recipes for use on food crops.¹⁵¹ In 1950, however, the same newspaper ran a story on how the chemical had been partially banned in the US for use on dairy farms or crops intended for cattle, due to the risks it may pose to human health.¹⁵² Seemingly, the news story did little to curb the use of the chemical in the dairy-focused region. It is evident by this point that the manipulation of the environment, and ‘wise use’ of resources, no longer constitutes ‘conservation’ as we know it today; it is this fracture in the meaning of the word and its association with anthropocentric values that has led to many modern-day environmentalists’ hesitation to call themselves ‘conservationists.’¹⁵³

Further damage was done to the title of conservationist with the mechanisation of the forestry industry from the 1950s. Hutton and Connors argue that Forestry Commissions throughout Australia were ‘captured by the industry they were supposed to be regulating, [and] rapid changes in technology, industry organisation

¹⁴⁹ Mary E. White, 1998, ‘The Crying Country: Environmental Degradation’, in *Bush Lives: Bush Futures*, Sheridan Burke (ed.), Sydney, p. 16; Jim Derrick & Paul Dann, 1997, ‘Soils and Agriculture’, in *Human Ecology, Human Economy: Ideas for an ecologically sustainable future*, Mark Diesendorf & Clive Hamilton (eds), Crows Nest, pp. 185-186; Emilio F. Moran, 2006, *People and Nature: An Introduction to Human Ecological Relations*, Oxford, p. 54.

¹⁵⁰ White, ‘The Crying Country’, p. 16; Ruth A. Eblen & William R. Eblen, 1994, *The Encyclopedia of the Environment*, New York, pp. 311-312.

¹⁵¹ See for example ‘D.D.T. for Orchard Pests’, *Northern Star*, **3 April 1945**, p. 5; ‘Formula to Destroy White Ants’, *Northern Star*, 16 January 1950, p. 7; ‘Time for Cabbage Sowing’, *Northern Star*, 1 February 1950, p. 7; ‘French Bean Fly Control’, *Northern Star*, 15 February 1950, p. 7; ‘Your Garden: Keep Place for Vine Crops’, *Northern Star*, 13 November 1954, p. 6; ‘Poor Standard of Banana Growing Causes Concern’, *Northern Star*, 15 November 1954; ‘Grady’s Creek Area Free from Ticks’, *Northern Star*, 18 November 1954, p. 6.

¹⁵² ‘Partial banning of D.D.T. in U.S.’, *Northern Star*, 8 March 1950, p. 6.

¹⁵³ Proctor, ‘Whose Nature?’, p. 287; Di Chiro, ‘Nature as Community’, p. 528 (endnote 6).

and forestry policy were ensuring that vast changes were occurring' in the forests, blurring the line between government and industry.¹⁵⁴ In the Big Scrub, chainsaws, trucks and tractors 'marked new patterns on the forest landscape.'¹⁵⁵ Increased efficiency led to the centralisation of local sawmills, reducing the time that loggers and sawmillers spent in the forests.¹⁵⁶ Watson argues that with this change, the 'north coast hardwood mills... went from family businesses into modern corporations', and modern machinery resulted in a more '*impersonal*, mass-production management method.'¹⁵⁷ This mechanisation arguably damaged the relationship between forester and forest – in addition to spending less time in the forest itself, loggers no longer required as much intimate knowledge of the forests when logs were sawed through much faster, and forests were traversed by motor vehicle.

This change in the attitude of the forestry industry is evidenced by the dismay displayed by some foresters, who lamented that the industry was not what it used to be. Just as Lever had passionately opposed the destruction of the forest 'patriarchs', so too did other foresters start to question the wisdom of the 'captured' Forestry Commission.¹⁵⁸ Alex Floyd, who would become one of Australia's foremost rainforest botanists, started his career with the Forestry Commission in 1951 and was assigned to the forests of the North Coast in 1956. He recalls:

[t]he definition of conservation in those days was the wise use of natural resources. Those were the words. That was conservation. It meant that we weren't wasteful of timber... we weren't looking towards conserving some areas in their natural state as such... The problem of course was that you had commitments to sell this timber to various people. You could come up with ideas but if they were more expensive and if they reduced the amount of timber available for harvesting, then you were creating problems.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Hutton & Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 149.

¹⁵⁵ John Dargavel, 1994, 'Constructing Australia's Forests in The Image of Capital', in *Australian Environmental History: Essays and Cases*, Stephen Dovers (ed.), Melbourne, p. 90.

¹⁵⁶ Ian Watson, 1990, *Fighting Over The Forests*, Sydney, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ Author emphasis added. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

¹⁵⁸ Brown, 'A Society to Fight Fire with Fire', p. 14; Hutton & Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 202.

¹⁵⁹ Alex Floyd, 1999, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 100.

Floyd also recalls the impressive knowledge of local forester Harold Hayes, who lived in the forests and whose knowledge came from his direct experience of place. Hayes had a deep reverence for the forests that sustained his livelihood, and Floyd recollects that Hayes did not need to look upwards – he could distinguish trees from among 300 species simply by the bark, such was his intimate forest knowledge.¹⁶⁰ Another of his methods was to cut into a tree and to either examine the colour, smell it, or taste it, creating what environmental humanist Stacy Alaimo refers to as a transcorporeal experience of nature.¹⁶¹ One of the key elements of Alaimo's concept describes the process by which external elements of nature enter the human body, in Hayes' case, through smell and taste, creating a purely interconnected experience in which the boundaries between the corporeal and elemental nature are diffused. Only an intimate relationship with and understanding of the forest could facilitate a transcorporeal experience, altering one's very sense of self through a direct experience of nature.

With the forests under threat from a Forestry Commission increasingly dominated by commercial interests, the New South Wales National Parks Association was formed in 1957 by citizens who aimed to bring the National Parks together under one authority, and to pressure politicians to implement effective environmental legislation. However, the governmental body known as the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), tasked with overseeing the management of National Parks, would not be formed until 1967.¹⁶²

The Dawning of an Age (The 1960s and 1970s)

Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, the Australian agriculture industry and natural resource industries such as forestry, sand-mining and dam construction sought to greatly increase their productivity and profits.¹⁶³ Many Australians

¹⁶⁰ Alex Floyd, 1999, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 100.

¹⁶¹ Stacy Alaimo, 2010, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self*, Bloomington. For further discussion of transcorporeality also see Astrida Neimanis & Rachel Loewen Walker, 2014, 'Weathering: Climate change and the "thick time" of transcorporeality', *Hypatia*, vol. 29, no.3, pp. 558-575.

¹⁶² James Somerville, 2005, *Saving the Rainforest: The NSW Campaign 1973-1984*, Narrabeen, p. 11; Hall, *Wasteland to Wilderness*, p. 124.

¹⁶³ Hutton & Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 145.

responded with concern and action, and agricultural policy academics called for 'conservation, the prevention of degradation, and sustainability of existing cropland.'¹⁶⁴ Crucially, this concern was also influenced and informed by an international, widespread shift in environmental understanding, brought about in no small part by the radical ideals of the social movements of the 1960s, originating in the US and Europe.¹⁶⁵ With the publication of seminal environmental texts such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, Barry Commoner's *The Closing Circle* in 1968, Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* in 1971 and the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* in 1972, the focus shifted from conservation to ecology as environmental issues struck closer to home.¹⁶⁶ New kinds of environmental issues were discovered 'in our earth, in our skies, in our waters, in our homes, and... in Vietnam.'¹⁶⁷ Such a dramatic shift in environmental knowledge coincided with the first ever images of Earth from space. Captured by the Apollo 12, beautiful pictures highlighted the fact that the planet is a complete biosphere in suspension, resulting, argues Christoff, in the 'birth of the new environmentalism.'¹⁶⁸

Much of this new environmentalism heralded a radical change in direction for environmental campaigning and protest techniques, heavily influenced by countercultural ideals and New Left politics.¹⁶⁹ In Australia, the Big Scrub region would be at the very forefront of this new environmentalism, forging a uniquely Australian,

¹⁶⁴ Richard Waterhouse, 2006, 'Agrarian ideals and pastoral realities: The use and misuse of land in rural Australia', in *The Great Mistakes of Australian History*, Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts (eds), Sydney, p. 76.

¹⁶⁵ See for example Robin Gerster & Jan Bassett, 1991, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia*, South Yarra.

Verity Burgmann, 1993, *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society*, St Leonards; Daniel Snowman & Malcolm Bradley, 1989, 'The Sixties and Seventies', in *Introduction to American Studies*, Malcolm Bradley & Howard Temperley (eds), New York, pp. 267-295.

¹⁶⁶ Rachel Carson, 1987 [1962], *Silent Spring*, Boston; Barry Commoner, 1971 [1968], *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man & Technology*, New York; Paul Ehrlich, 1971, *The Population Bomb*, New York; Donella Meadows et al., 1972, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for The Club of Rome's Project on The Predicament of Mankind*, London.

¹⁶⁷ Andrew Jamison, 2001, *The Making of Green Knowledge: Environmental Politics and Cultural Transformation*, Cambridge, p. 82.

¹⁶⁸ Christoff, 'Environmental Citizenship', pp. 202-203.

¹⁶⁹ See for example Students for a Democratic Society, 1962, 'The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society', <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/huron.html>, accessed 20 May 2010; Richard Gordon & Warren Osmond, 1970, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', in *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy*, Richard Gordon (ed.), Melbourne, pp. 3-39; Margaret Smith & David Crossley (eds), 1975, *The Way Out: Radical Alternatives in Australia*, Melbourne.

innovative and influential movement, as we will explore in the next chapter. But for now, the conservation movement continued campaigning ‘within the system’,¹⁷⁰ using the polite, ‘almost genteel’ methods of Dunphy and Alan Rigby.¹⁷¹

The bushwalkers of the 1930s, who had not lost their passion for conservation, were instrumental in the establishment of the National Parks Association.¹⁷² Dunphy, in particular, had continued to campaign for the creation of reserves and National Parks, and by the late 1960s, fourteen of his proposals had been enacted. Myles’ son, Milo Dunphy, followed in his father’s footsteps, becoming active in the successful campaign to save the Colong Caves in the Blue Mountains from the mining interests of the Blue Circle concrete company. Peter Meredith argues, ‘During the Colong campaign conservationists – for the first time in Australia’s history – severely rattled the complacent belief among bureaucrats and industrialists that nature existed for their exploitation.’¹⁷³ The Colong Committee lived on to challenge future environmental travesties.

Throughout the 1960s, conservation journals such as *Wildlife* and *Walkabout* actively promoted the notion that Australian flora, fauna and landscapes should be embraced as an important part of our national identity, and the Australian Conservation Foundation was established in 1965.¹⁷⁴ Lines argues that during this time, increasing numbers of Australians felt a connection with the environment, and their sense of belonging not only propelled the conservation movement, it also helped shape Australian identity. Lines explains,

In founding and joining civic organisations and acting collectively, citizen conservationists became more aware of themselves as loyal custodians of the Australian continent. Australia was the part of the earth they felt most deeply connected to, the one place they were properly at home... the one place most requiring defence and preservation.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ Meredith, *Myles and Milo*, p. 6.

¹⁷¹ Borschmann, *The People’s Forest*, p. 229.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Meredith, *Myles and Milo*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁴ William Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia’s Natural Heritage*, St. Lucia, 2006, p. 58.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

In the Border Ranges, the National Park campaign started by John Lever in 1948 was reignited, now stronger with the weight of over twenty years of conservationist knowledge and experience. In 1969, Lever again proposed the creation of a National Park. Again the proposal was ignored, and the Forestry Commission continued carving up the forest into allocations for local timber mills – the campaign to save the forest would become a conflict between forestry and conservation interests.¹⁷⁶ Adding to the forestry industry's argument was the decline in agricultural productivity in the region, which by this stage was resulting in negative population growth, increasing the pressure to maintain more economically viable industries such as logging.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, conservationists were up against a primary-industry dependent population. While the average number of workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing in NSW in 1971 stood at 5.9%, in the Richmond-Tweed the figure stood at 22.5%.¹⁷⁸ The relationship between locals and the natural environment was, for many, one of economic dependence, and challenging this relationship caused anger and conflict.¹⁷⁹ While the way in which the opposing sides related to the environment differed radically and were often based on contrasting views of the environment, both sides nonetheless had a passionate connection to the forests.

However, it was not as simple a matter as conservation interests clashing with primary industry. The campaign had been initiated by a logger, and was further advanced by a farmer, highlighting the way in which expressions of belonging can differ. Grazier Jim Gasteen had been trying to raise awareness of the environmental consequences of land clearing since the early 1960s.¹⁸⁰ When Gasteen noticed that orchids, which grew high on the trees at the back of his property at Mebbin Rock, were disappearing, he was dismayed to discover the cause – 'the Forestry cut the trees

¹⁷⁶ Ronald Monroe & NC Stephens (eds), 1976, *The Border Ranges: A Land Use Conflict in Regional Perspective*, St. Lucia, p. 1.

¹⁷⁷ Peter Standen, 1976, 'A Planning Perspective – The New South Wales Position', in *The Border Ranges: A Land Use Conflict in Regional Perspective*, Monroe & Stephens (eds), pp. 67-78; Ronald Monroe, 1976, 'The Border Ranges – A Land Use Conflict', in *The Border Ranges: A Land Use Conflict in Regional Perspective*, Monroe & Stephens (eds), pp. 79-81.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁷⁹ See for example Watson, *Fighting Over the Forests*; Nigel Turvey, 2006, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, Carindale.

¹⁸⁰ Lines, *Patriots*, p. 150.

down for them! As a result we became upset.¹⁸¹ Gasteen soon learned of the Forestry Commission's plans to construct a road to the top of the Border Ranges to assist logging operations: 'I prickled like an old scrub pig with the dogs behind him and immediately started an all-out effort to halt the road.'¹⁸² 'Honorary Ranger' with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Russ Maslen was also dismayed and in 1972 with three other members, he formed the Border Ranges Preservation Society.¹⁸³ When the Colong Committee heard of the campaign, they too got involved, as did the National Parks Association – due to the significance of the forest, the local cause received substantial support from the city.¹⁸⁴

Predictably, aesthetics played a key part – Lever's connection to the forest was inspired by 'the extraordinary natural beauty... with its glorious mountain scenery, its unique rainforests, the enchanting scenery of the numerous creeks and waterfalls, [and] the wild but beautiful gorges', while Ronald Monroe argued, 'scenically it is one of the most beautiful regions in Australia.'¹⁸⁵ The campaign marked a significant turning point for conservation values in the region. However, it was during this era that environmental scientists started to distinguish this unique form of forest from other dry forests, and with this realisation, Australia discovered 'rain forests.'¹⁸⁶ One of the key campaigners, Jim Somerville recollects,

Although it is now a motherhood word with everyone understanding the need to protect what little remains, this was not the case in Australia when this campaign began. Apart from those involved in forestry, the word "rainforest" was virtually unknown. Even in the embryonic conservation movement there was no public awareness in the early 1970s.¹⁸⁷

The first botanical survey of New South Wales' rainforests was not conducted until Alex Floyd was commissioned to undertake the task in 1976, and as knowledge was gained, concerns were raised: 'it was obvious to most people that the rainforests were

¹⁸¹ Jim Gasteen cited in Somerville, *Saving the Rainforest*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁸² Gasteen cited in Kendell & Buivids, *Earth First*, p. 31.

¹⁸³ Somerville, *Saving the Rainforest*, p. 14; Lines, *Patriots*, p. 150.

¹⁸⁴ Meredith, *Myles & Milo*, p. 268.

¹⁸⁵ Chick, 'Campaign after Campaign', p. 16; Monroe, 'The Border Ranges – A Land Use Conflict', p. 79.

¹⁸⁶ Wendy Goldstein (ed.), 1977, *Rain Forests*, Sydney.

¹⁸⁷ Somerville, *Saving the Rainforest*, p. 8.

rapidly disappearing. People felt we were losing something which we didn't fully understand.¹⁸⁸ One of the main arguments made in favour of the Border Ranges National Park was precautionary – without adequate knowledge of rainforest ecology, the impacts of logging were unknown.¹⁸⁹ Ecologists warned of the risks of trying to manage logging operations, arguing, 'we will be attempting to manage one of the least understood and most complex ecosystems in existence.'¹⁹⁰ Once the significance of the ancient Gondwanan rainforest remnant was understood, this non-anthropocentric value became another argument for preservation, and conservationists called for the protection of rainforest biodiversity.¹⁹¹ Milo Dunphy recalls the Colong Committee's decision to take on the campaign: 'when we decided to go for rainforests it was basically on biological conservation grounds. It was a move from recreation to biodiversity.'¹⁹²

No longer utilitarian or purely aesthetic, the conservation movement had grown and learned from the Australian environment. Conservationists expressed their concerns in increasingly ecocentric terms. Rainforest ecologist Len Webb argued, '[m]an [sic] and nature are indissolubly linked in many dimensions as parts of a continuum. This essential interdependence was realized [sic] in the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate', referring to the Whitlam Government's inquiry that for the first time sought to acknowledge the centrality of the Australian landscape to our cultural heritage.¹⁹³ Wendy Goldstein acknowledged the role of imported European values that had overseen the destruction of the Big Scrub from 1842, arguing that despite 'Judaean-Christian ethics of dominion over nature there is a growing belief that all organisms should co-exist on earth and the taking of one

¹⁸⁸ John Brown & Vince Morris, 1976, 'Floods, Erosion and Weeds', *Habitat*, vol. 4, no. 3, August, p. 20; Floyd, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 100.

¹⁸⁹ Monroe, 'The Border Ranges – A Land Use Conflict', p. 80; M.S. Hopkins *et al.*, 1976, 'An Ecological Basis for the Management of Rain Forest', in *The Border Ranges: A Land Use Conflict in Regional Perspective*, Monroe & Stephens (eds), p. 57.

¹⁹⁰ Hopkins *et al.*, 'An Ecological Basis for the Management of Rain Forest', p. 57.

¹⁹¹ University of New South Wales School of Town Planning, 1978, *The Border Ranges National Park Proposal: an economic and environmental evaluation*, Sydney, p. ii; Alison Louise Taylor, 1981, *Retreat or Advance: New Settlers and Alternative Lifestyles in the Rainbow Region*, Armidale, p. 25.

¹⁹² Meredith, *Myles and Milo*, p. 269.

¹⁹³ Leonard Webb, 1977, 'Rain Forests in the 21st Century', in *Rain Forests*, Goldstein (ed.), p. 97.

resource, should not destroy the rest.’¹⁹⁴ And demonstrating a desire for intergenerational justice, a local logger pleaded,

Go and stand on the end of the Pinnacle... Because if you don't do that, I don't think you've lived. That you've got to go up there and walk through that forest... that's what the Border Ranges is there for. It's for those things to be available for my kids and their kids and their kid's kids.¹⁹⁵

While the New South Wales Government rejected the National Park proposal in 1976, the campaign had transformed the relationship between the people and the environment they fought so hard to protect, and the Border Ranges helped teach the rest of Australia what rainforest was. The forest would be declared a National Park from 1979, but only as a result of the efforts of an entirely new style of environmentalism, which built on the work of conservationists yet marked a radical shift in motivation, approach and techniques.

The Border Ranges campaign was one of the first campaigns to highlight the beauty and ecological significance of rainforests in Australia. Just as local citizens had come together at Lumley Park in the 1930s in perhaps the first instance of citizen-initiated rainforest regeneration in the country, residents whose lives were built on the clearing of the Big Scrub grew to understand the consequences of their occupation of land claimed from the devastated ancient forest. From before the European colonisation of the Big Scrub to the 1970s, the conservation land ethic matured as new understandings were gained. While this was partly a result of philosophical and scientific developments, most importantly, the conservation movement was largely a citizen-led response to settling in to a new land, growing roots and forming a sense of attachment and belonging to the Australian landscape. Evident in this evolution of attitudes and understandings is a tension as people struggled against an old mentality, confronted by a growing fondness for place. The acquisition of place-based knowledge

¹⁹⁴ Wendy Goldstein, 1977, 'Postscript-Management Implications', in *Rain Forests*, Goldstein (ed.), p. 99.

¹⁹⁵ Watson, *Fighting over the Forests*, p. 81.

paralleled growing concern over the ecological violence inflicted upon the environment, indicating that through both place attachment and environmental knowledge come a desire to protect and look after the earth, and knowing and living the land strengthens the relationship between people and environments.

Chapter Five

The Rainbow Region

Let's go down through the forest,
Let's go seek the counsel of the trees,
Let's gaze in wonder in the forest,
And bathe in a million years of peace...

Let's all go down to the forest,
Let's go save our old friends the trees,
Learn to live together with the forest,
And save some for our children please.

Paul Joseph, c.1976.¹

From the late 1960s, the Border Ranges campaign revealed a strong and growing sense of place and with it a desire to protect the natural environment using public and vocal methods. At the same time, in the void left by serious agricultural decline, significant demographic shifts were underway which would bring an entirely new and different understanding of the natural environment. Initially this change was subtle, but in the wake of the Aquarius Festival in 1973, there could be no doubt that the region was undergoing a dramatic transformation. Influenced by countercultural ideals and seeking to come 'back to the land', a population boom followed as abandoned dwellings, farms and even a whole village were taken up by new settlers, many of whom identified as 'alternatives' or 'hippies.' With these new settlers came a radically different land ethic, influenced by 1960s ideals but also inspired by the Australian landscape, and particularly by the rainforests of the region.

This chapter looks at the period of history in which the Rainbow Region came to be. Whether the name was inspired by Rous' Ship *The Rainbow*, the great number of rainbows that grace the high-rainfall region or the colourful hippie lifestyle of the alternative communities (in the US there was already a growing association between rainbows and the counterculture), the name has endured, and so too have the

¹ Paul Joseph, c. 1976, 'Let's go Down to the Forest', song composed for the Terania Creek campaign.

communities.² It was during this era that the cultural identity arguably most associated with the area was cultivated - one of strong environmental awareness and action and a desire to live accordingly, the influence of these ecologically-sensitive communities cannot be underestimated. The establishment of intentional communities; radical and innovative activism and protest; ecosystem rehabilitation; the use of the arts as a celebration of place and environment; ecologically sound food choices and practices, and community markets are just some of the expressions of belonging in the Rainbow Region, a region that has inspired environmental awareness, activism and change globally. As such, the history of the region has a great deal to offer by way of lessons on the cultivation of environmental peace.

The Spirit of the 60s

The environmental understandings arising out of the 1960s led to a deeper understanding of ecology and a widespread concern about the extent of ecological violence in Australia, as discussed in the last chapter. However, the political and social movements of the 1960s also created other currents of thought that would influence a more radical form of environmentalism. The counterculture that the era is so famous for was a subversion of cultural norms and assumptions, motivated by social issues and left-wing politics, and expressed through music, literature, theatre, poetry, fashion, drugs, sex and sexuality.³ From the mid to late 1960s and into the early 1970s, protest exploded in America, Europe and eventually Australia, as many forms of social injustice were challenged, including civil rights, racism, sexism and war, and at the very centre of the movement were the values of 'peace and love.'⁴ The counterculture was very

² Helen Wilson, 2003, 'Introduction', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region: Cultural Perspectives on the NSW North Coast*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 2; Janie Conway Herron, 2003, 'Metaphoric Landscapes: Writing the Rainbow Region', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), p. 168.

³ Theodore Roszak, 1969, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, New York, p. xii; Milton Yinger, 1977, 'Presidential Address: Countercultures and Social Change', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 42, no. 6, December, p. 833.

⁴ Robin Gerster & Jan Bassett, 1991, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia*, South Yarra; Verity Burgmann, 1993, *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society*, St Leonards; Daniel Snowman & Malcolm Bradley, 1989, 'The Sixties and Seventies', *Introduction to American Studies*, Malcolm Bradley & Howard Temperley (eds), New York, pp. 267-295; Paul Monk, 1998, 'The Sixties: Remembrance of Things Past', *Quadrant*, May, p. 31.

much led by youth; protest became an integral part of student life, and by 1969-1970, 750 000 American students identified with the philosophy of 'New Left' politics.⁵

Peace and Environment

The movement was slower to take hold in Australia, and it was not until the early 1970s that the counterculture became a visible and influential force.⁶ Initially, the Australian movement attempted to replicate British and American models, much to Australia's embarrassment when a Civil Rights solidarity rally was strongly criticised for ignoring our own parallel in the treatment of Aboriginal people and migrants.⁷ The emergence of the Australian counterculture grew largely from both the peace and environment movements, which were closely interconnected, and youth and surf cultures also played a significant role.⁸ Charles A. Reich's *The Greening of America* was a strong influence, calling for the emergence of a new environmental consciousness and arguing that the counterculture had the power to create community and to inspire a revolution that would reject violent values and institutions.⁹

While the Civil Rights movement is often considered to have been the catalyst for the 'radicalisation' of American society, in Australia, the Vietnam War took that honour.¹⁰ In the 1970s anti-war protests 'became a symbol of dissent.'¹¹ It was a war that for many created an awareness of environmental destruction, with images of

⁵ Gerster & Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*; Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*; Burgmann, *Power and Protest*; Maurice Isserman & Michael Kazin, 1989, 'The Failure and Success of the New Radicalism', *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, Steve Fraser & Gary Gerstle (eds), Chichester, p. 213.

⁶ Burgmann, *Power and Protest*, pp. 189-190.

⁷ Sean Scalmer, 2002, *Dissent Events: Protest, the Media and the Political Gimmick in Australia*, Sydney, p. 14; Munro-Clark, *Communes in Rural Australia*; Richard Gordon & Warren Osmond, 1970, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', in *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy*, Richard Gordon (ed.), Melbourne, pp. 3-39.

⁸ See for example Kristin Lawler, 2008, 'Radical: The Image of the Surfer and the Politics of Popular Culture', PhD Thesis, City University of New York, pp. 1-50, 245-248.

⁹ Charles A. Reich, 1970, *The Greening of America*, London.

¹⁰ Peter O'Brien, 1970, 'Some Overseas Comparisons', in *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy*, Richard Gordon (ed.), Melbourne, p. 229.

¹¹ Gerster & Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, p. 34

napalm-ravaged rainforests beamed directly into people's living rooms.¹² Renowned environmental activist and Nimbin resident Benny Zable recalls:

You could see graphically during the Vietnam War, what it was doing on television, you know. That really woke up a lot of people. They could see what war is and what it's doing. And also the destruction of the environment was filtering through to the mainstream through the media...¹³

Many other Rainbow Region residents similarly cite the Vietnam War as being a major influence in the formation of their environmental activism.¹⁴

The merging of the peace and environment movements was given the name 'eco-pax' by Jan Pakulski, and has been noted in the Australian movements by Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy.¹⁵ Marty Branagan has further developed an understanding of the coalescence of the movements, arguing that eco-pax also incorporated wider social justice issues and contributed to the foundations of the development of an Australian style of nonviolent direct action (NVDA) used in defence of the natural environment.¹⁶ Dudley Leggett played a central role in environmental activism and community building in the Rainbow Region. With his roots in the peace

¹² Drew Hutton, 1987, 'What is Green Politics?', in *Green Politics in Australia*, Drew Hutton (ed.), North Ryde, p. 1; Fred Cole, 1975, 'The Moratorium as the Catalyst of World Wide Cultural Change', in *The Way Out: Radical Alternatives in Australia*, Margaret Smith & David Crossley (eds), Melbourne, pp. 130-133; Ken McLeod, 1975, 'The Anti-War Movement and Radical Political Alternatives', in *The Way Out*, Smith & Crossley (eds), pp. 137-143.

¹³ Benny Zable, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 30 May 2012, in author's possession.

¹⁴ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, in author's possession; Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 7 March 2010, in author's possession; Annie Kia, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, The Channon, 1 May 2012, in author's possession; Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Byron Bay, 10 May 2012, in author's possession; Robyn Francis, 2011, 'Healing the Rifts: Building Intentional Community', in *Permaculture Pioneers: Stories from the New Frontier*, Kerry Dawborn & Caroline Smith (eds), Hepburn, p. 41.

¹⁵ Jan Pakulski, 1991, *Social Movements: The Politics of Moral Protest*, Melbourne, pp. 158-159; Malcolm Saunders & Ralph Summy, 1986, *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History*, Canberra, pp. 68-69.

¹⁶ Marty Branagan, 2008, *We Shall Never Be Moved: Australian Developments in Nonviolence*, Köln, pp. 59-74; Marty Branagan, 2013, *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence: The Art of Active Resistance*, Basingstoke, p. 75.

movement, Leggett brought nonviolent techniques to forest protest in the late 1970s.¹⁷ Leggett recalls:

these movements, they're not in isolation from one another... they're all very much the same people... There's the environmental, directly environmental demos, but of course I've been very involved in various anti-uranium and peace movement things as well...¹⁸

Johnny Allen, a countercultural proponent living in Nimbin in the early 1970s, argued that the local community had diverse ways of 'seeing the place' yet they nonetheless shared collective goals. Citing a Newsletter of the Programme of Peace and Conflict Research at Lancaster University in 1974, he believed that the 'general agreement' was to put 'men before machines, people before governments, practice before theory... wholeness before reductionism, organic materials before synthetic ones, plants before animals....'¹⁹ By the time the counterculture took hold in the Rainbow Region, there had already developed a confluence of peace activism, nonviolence and environmentalism, creating ripe conditions for the cultivation of environmentally peaceful communities.

Back to the Land

The 'back to the land' movement was a strong and common expression of 1960s-era environmental awareness.²⁰ In the US, Britain and (again, occurring later in) Australia, many urban-based people made the deliberate choice to relocate to rural environments in an attempt to live closer to nature and in more environmentally peaceful ways.²¹ This was often done in collaboration with others, and 'communes', known in the Rainbow Region as Intentional Communities (ICs) or Multiple

¹⁷ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible; Dudley Leggett, 1987, 'Building Communities: The Green Alternative', in *Green Politics in Australia*, Drew Hutton (ed.), Sydney, pp. 220-229.

¹⁸ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁹ Newsletter of the Programme of Peace and Conflict Research, Lancaster University, United Kingdom, March 1974, cited in Johnny Allen, 1975, 'Nimbin: Myths, Dreams and Mysteries', in *The Way Out: Radical Alternatives in Australia*, Margaret Smith & David Crossley (eds), Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, p. 31.

²⁰ William Metcalf, 1995, *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality: Cooperative Lifestyles in Australia*, Sydney, p. 128.

²¹ See for example Alicia Bay Laurel, 1970, *Living on the Earth*, Berkeley; Sonya Rudikoff, 1972, 'Oh Pioneers! Reflections on the Whole Earth People', *Commentary*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 62-74.

Occupancies (MOs), were established (with a great deal of effort, conflict and legal negotiation)²² to facilitate the creation of environmentally conscious and communitarian ways of living. Ghandi's self-sufficient villages were an important influence, and it was not uncommon for those who identified as 'hippies' to undertake a pilgrimage to India, demonstrating a desire to seek out non-Western concepts and values.²³ In the US, The Farm was one of the most well-known ICs, and it provided a powerful example for back to the landers in Australia, including Graham Irvine, who would become instrumental to the establishment of communities throughout the Rainbow Region.²⁴

While frequently associated with the counterculture, the movement also included couples and families escaping city life and environmentally-minded people who did not identify with the counterculture.²⁵ Furthermore, the movement was somewhat motivated by a survivalist element. In the context of Vietnam and the Cold War, the threat of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' and the 70s oil crisis, there was a 'real sense of urgency that things needed to change.'²⁶ Rhonda Ellis recalls,

...a lot of people came because of the Oil Crisis, the idea that oil was going to run out and people went, 'Oh bugger it, I'm going to the bush.' And these kinds of things raised our awareness about environmental issues. And Silent Spring had already been published, it was not new, we knew about global warming, we knew about holes in ozone layers...²⁷

The story of the cultural transformation of the region lies largely in environmental factors. Just as the back to the land movement was gaining strength in Australia, an abundance of cheap land became available locally. As discussed in

²² Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible; Graham Irvine, 2003, 'Creating Communities at the End of the Rainbow', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), pp. 63-82.

²³ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible; Peter Pedals, interview by Vanessa Bible, Nimbin, 6 June 2012, in author's possession; Children's Future (pseudonym), interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 12 June 2012, in author's possession.

²⁴ Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 31 May 2012, in author's possession.

²⁵ Frank Wigham, 1975, 'Communities on the North Coast of New South Wales', in *The Way Out*, Smith & Crossley (eds), p. 33; William J. Metcalf, 1984, 'A Classification of Alternative Lifestyle Groups', in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 20, no. 1, March, p. 67.

²⁶ Francis, 'Healing the Rifts', p. 43.

²⁷ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 13 April 2010, in author's possession.

Chapter Two, the lush green landscape of the Rainbow Region unexpectedly had poor fertility just a short while after it had been ‘tamed’ into productive agricultural land, a result of the environmental ignorance of European settlers. While colonists had adapted and turned to new crops and industries such as bananas and dairy, these too faced declining productivity from the 1940s. Coupled with a post-World War II loss of trade and the exclusion from the subsidised Sydney Milk Zone, ‘the once great North Coast dairy industry [was] on its knees.’²⁸ Between 1958-68, 50% of dairy farmers left the region, and 38% of dairy farmers ceased production from 1960-69.²⁹ Mullumbimby was famous for its bananas until substantial crop failure in the 1960s, and many farmers had to sell or abandon their farms.³⁰ Adding to agricultural decline was the loss of employment in the forestry industry, further exacerbating the negative population growth trend and resulting in plummeting property values.³¹

While cheap land was appealing to new settlers, the region also offered other advantageous environmental conditions. Adding to its appeal, the region was aesthetically beautiful, encompassing both beaches and lush green hinterland. High in rainfall and mild in climate, it provided semi-tropical conditions in which to grow food and live a sustainable lifestyle. Political factors also exerted an influence – many seeking to come ‘back to the land’ wanted to settle to the north, but the conservative Bjelke-Petersen Government in Queensland acted as a deterrent, resulting in a high number of new settlers ‘bunched up on the border.’³² Prolific activist Dailan Pugh, son of renowned artist Clifton Pugh, recalls:

I wanted to live near rainforest... but I wanted to avoid the extremes of Queensland, both political and weather, so North East NSW was the spot to come. Plus at that time there was all that counterculture movement – go live in the bush, build our own

²⁸ Maurice Ryan, 1999, *Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, Nimbin, p. 63; Peter Standen, 1976, ‘A Planning Perspective – The New South Wales Position’, in *The Border Ranges: A Land Use Conflict in Regional Perspective*, Monroe & Stephens (eds), pp. 68-69; John Brown & Vince Morris, 1976, ‘Floods, Erosion and Weeds’, *Habitat*, vol. 4, no. 3, August, p. 20.

²⁹ Alison Louise Taylor, 1981, *Retreat or Advance: New Settlers and Alternative Lifestyles in the Rainbow Region*, Armidale, pp. 29-30.

³⁰ Peter Cock, 1979, *Alternative Australia: Communities of the Future?*, Melbourne, p. 195.

³¹ Standen, ‘A Planning Perspective’, pp. 68-69.

³² Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, in author’s possession.

house, grow our own vegies, you know, live a self-sufficient lifestyle. There was a bit of paranoia I suppose about the way the world was going.³³

Pugh was one of thousands of new settlers that migrated to the region over the next few decades, lured by ideal conditions in which to cultivate a 'self-sufficient lifestyle.'³⁴

Nimbin is widely considered to be the heart of the Rainbow Region – the countercultural epicentre from which the vibrant alternative communities it is known for grew. However, while Nimbin was still a dairy town trying to salvage itself, up to one hundred counterculturalists, back to the landers, and self-labelled hippies were busy populating the hills behind Mullumbimby, on the opposite side of the Nightcap Range to Nimbin.³⁵ Mullumbimby, like Nimbin, was a town facing rapid economic decline with the failure of the banana industry, resulting in extremely cheap land – new settlers could live for \$2 a week, and in some cases for free, in abandoned farmhouses and banana sheds at Main Arm and Upper Main Arm.³⁶ From the late 1960s, the hills behind Mullumbimby attracted new settlers looking for land to establish ICs, and in 1970 the first known Community of the Rainbow Region was established there.

Fleeing the violence of the city and threats of nuclear war, Paul Joseph headed north – 'we had to find land where we could belong.'³⁷ In 1970 Joseph eventually found his way to Upper Main Arm, where he became involved with an experiment in living communally and peacefully. While short-lived, it was to be the first of a great many ICs in the region. Known as Kohinur Commune, the Community was founded by Colin Scattergood and from the start, environmental factors influenced their choice of place:

³³ Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2012.

³⁴ Johanna Kijas, 2003, 'From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region Cultural Perspectives on the NSW North Coast*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, pp. 30-33.

³⁵ Paul Joseph, 2008, 'Paul Joseph: Aquarian Songman', Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, www.rainbowregion.com.au, accessed 1 December 2008.

³⁶ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 29 April 2012, in author's possession; Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

³⁷ Paul Joseph, 'Paul Joseph: Aquarian Songman'.



Figure 12: Kohinur Hall, Upper Main Arm. The Jacaranda tree still standing (centre right) at Kohinur Hall, 2014. Photo by author.

We were attracted to the land by this magnificent tree in full bloom, growing right by the roadside. It was a jackaranda [sic] with a bouganvillia [sic] vine growing through the centre of it. An amazing splash of purple with an incredible crimson core... it felt like we had discovered paradise.³⁸

The aesthetic beauty of the region exerted a powerful influence over new settlers, many of whom quickly formed a strong emotional attachment to the natural environment. The same forests that were capable of bringing so much despair to early colonists had very much the opposite impact on many of the new settlers, who had deliberately sought out a forested landscape (without a motivation to profit from them). Pugh states, 'I loved rainforest ... that's why I came up here', while Leggett concurs, 'Those with our aspirations had logically been drawn to settle close to the most natural (untouched or wild) environments that we could manage...'³⁹

³⁸ Paul Joseph, 'Paul Joseph: Aquarian Songman'.

³⁹ Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2012; Leggett, 'Building Communities', p. 223.

The 1960s could really be considered to have arrived in Australia with the election of the left-wing Whitlam Labor government in 1972. Gough Whitlam embodied many of the 60s values – extremely progressive and concerned about a wide range of social issues, Whitlam’s reforms sought to address imbalances in health, education, welfare, gender equality, Aboriginal rights and environmental issues, among others, and his Prime Ministership also brought the end of Australia’s involvement in Vietnam.⁴⁰ Allen remarked of Whitlam’s government, ‘this is the stuff that fantasy is made of.’⁴¹ With renewed hope, the back to the land movement sought to strengthen its message, and it was in this spirit that Allen, along with others from the Australian Union of Students, used a government Arts grant to stage the Aquarius Festival in Nimbin in 1973.⁴²

The Age of Aquarius

The Aquarius Festival was to be a complete countercultural happening, ‘a prophetic vision of the world we would wish to live in.’⁴³ Irvine recalls that the ‘...organisers were strongly imbued’ with the back to the land ethos, as supported by the event’s official statement known as the May Manifesto.⁴⁴ The Manifesto called for a ‘Whole Earth theme’; ‘an experience in living in harmony with the natural environment’ that would ‘not be destructive to the land’, and would focus on ‘survival on earth.’⁴⁵

The festival was sustainable from the outset – University of Sydney architecture lecturer Colin James had suggested to festival organisers that they ‘recycle’ a town for the event.⁴⁶ With the help of recent Rainbow Region arrivals such as Joseph, the organising committee set their sights on Nimbin. Allen recalls, ‘Nimbin sort of naturally

⁴⁰ See for example Mike Rann, 2014, ‘Gough Whitlam: A Man Who Changed Australia’, *Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 103, issue 6, pp. 599-600.

⁴¹ Allen, ‘Nimbin: Myths, Dreams and Mysteries’, p. 28

⁴² *Ibid*; Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁴³ Graham Dunstan, 1975, ‘Nimbin: The Vision and the Reality’, in *The Way Out*, Smith & Crossley (eds), Melbourne, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Irvine, ‘Creating Communities at the End of the Rainbow’, p. 66.

⁴⁵ Dunstan, ‘Nimbin: The Vision and the Reality’, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible; Wigham, ‘Communities on the North Coast of New South Wales’, p. 33.

suggested itself.⁴⁷ The small village had been a renowned dairying centre in the 1930s, and now many shopfronts stood empty. In an attempt to revitalise their town, the Nimbin Progress Association voted overwhelmingly to allow the festival to be held in the rural farming community, and so organisers set about transforming the town for the event. The committee collectively bought several shuttered shops ranging from between \$500 - \$1000 each, painting them with bright psychedelic patterns, colours and statements, effectively buying their way into the place and imposing their own expression of belonging upon it.⁴⁸

The *Northern Star* reported that the festival had transformed the town into a 'trial centre for new lifestyles.'⁴⁹ Considered an overwhelming success by many, estimates of the number of participants involved in the ten-day event range from 5000-10 000 in the 'first obvious expression of a national alternatives movement.'⁵⁰ The festival had an incalculable impact on the region. Not only was it the largest and most significant expression of the 'Age of Aquarius' in Australia, its influence would also continue.⁵¹ So powerful was the sense of community and the success of the 'experiment' conducted in Nimbin that many festival-goers chose to stay on in the town and maintain the experience they had collectively created. Six weeks after the festival, one hundred attendees were living locally in fifteen to twenty communal houses, while many others went home to settle their affairs before returning to the region permanently.⁵² Linking place with the experience of the festival, key organiser Graham Dunstan expressed in 1975, 'Nimbin is powerful magic. The word has entered the language of the land; it has become a reference point in its culture; it is a word that resonates with myth.'⁵³

⁴⁷ Johnny Allen, cited in Damien Murphy, 2013, 'Where have all the hippies gone?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁴⁹ 'Festival c'tee \$22,000 "in the red"', *Northern Star*, 21 May 1973, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; Michael Hannan, 2003, 'From Blockades to Blue Moon: Musical Cultures of Nimbin', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), p. 249; Metcalf, *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality*, p. 128; Jill Roe, 1998, 'Dayspring: Australia and New Zealand as a setting for the 'New Age', from the 1890s to Nimbin', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 16, pp. 170–187; Cock, *Alternative Australia*, p. 47.

⁵¹ Roe, 'Dayspring', p. 184.

⁵² Cock, *Alternative Australia*, p. 120; Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 33.

⁵³ Dunstan, 'Nimbin: The Vision and the Reality', p. 19.



Figure 13: The Aquarius Festival. Nimbin, May 1973. Photos by Harry Watson Smith, Canberra. Reproduced with permission from author.

Like earlier settlers, the Aquarians had brought their cultural and environmental understandings with them – not developed of a place, but imposed upon a place. In contrast with many of these same colonial settlers however, their values were radically different, being of a different era and more ecologically informed. Irvine's extensive reading on countercultural ideals and ecological values exerted a powerful influence over his decision to return to Nimbin after the Aquarius Festival:

I read all these books that said you need to be living a sustainable lifestyle, which I wasn't in the city, you need to grow all your own vegies, do all these things, and that's what I wanted to ... I lived on as little as I could as a philosophical thing... voluntary poverty... the metaphor now is 'treading on the earth lightly.'⁵⁴

The new environmental understandings of the era also reinforced a strong sense of interconnectedness, acknowledging the science but also increasingly expressed in more emotional terms. Leggett's scientific background did not deter him from going by his feelings, refusing to discount the possibility that forests could possess consciousness.⁵⁵ Local 'hippie' Phil Mitten expresses, 'We come *out* of the earth, and out of that 14.5 billion years of existence', questioning the widespread assumption that humanity is the 'crowning achievement of it.'⁵⁶ Another local, who chose the pseudonym 'Children's Future', speaks: 'We recognised back then... that if we don't look after the environment, we're doomed. You know, we're so interconnected.'⁵⁷

As noted above, many new settlers' first impressions of the region evoked a very strong reaction to the natural beauty of the environment. They did not need to take time to warm to the place in order to feel a connection with it – in fact quite the opposite was often true, and many attribute a powerful degree of agency to the landscape itself, talking of a 'pull', an instant connection, sense of place or even an immediate sense of belonging. Jilly Jackson recalls the feeling she experienced the first time she visited the region. She was 'suddenly hit, rather like Saul on the road to Damascus, with this amazing feeling that this is my place, this is the place where I have

⁵⁴ Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁵⁵ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁵⁶ Phil Mitten, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 30 April 2012, in author's possession.

⁵⁷ Children's Future (pseudonym), interview by Vanessa Bible.

got to be.’⁵⁸ Jackson left her fiancée in Sydney and moved to Nimbin. Similarly, David Bradbury recounts his experience of finding his belonging place near Mullumbimby: ‘I felt a comfort enter my soul that I’d lost... and fell in love with the land immediately. It was just what my harassed soul wanted.’⁵⁹ For Maxx Maxstead, the region gave him a previously absent sense of place itself. ‘As far as land use was concerned I didn’t have any connection or understanding... of place, connection to place, until I came up here.’⁶⁰ Finally, demonstrating a passionate sense of place and connection to the environment inspired by the region, Pugh remarks of a stand of rainforest located across the road from his first home in the region,

[I]t was a very special place for me and still is. It’s that feeling that I would never allow them to devastate it. It would be over my dead body, literally.⁶¹

For many, a sense of belonging was rooted in both the land and the growing alternative community as well. Ellis recalls,

[I found] that it had a lot of people with cultural ideas similar to mine. So I fitted in fairly quickly with the loose non-renters, squatters, whatever you’d call them in the sheds in Coopers Lane, and then of course the issue of self-sufficiency and the environment was very strong... we were pretty strong on protecting the environment.⁶²

Mitten moved to Nimbin in 1973 specifically to be a part of the active alternative community, as did Irvine, who felt that Nimbin was ‘the perfect place’ for him.⁶³

Interestingly, not all of the new settlers were even aware of the like-minded community developing around them. Maxstead recalls that only after he moved to The

⁵⁸ Jilly Jackson, 2008, ‘My journey’, Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, www.rainbowregion.com.au, accessed 1 December 2008.

⁵⁹ David Bradbury, cited in Cathy Henkel, 2003, ‘Emerging Screen Industries in the Northern Rivers Region: A Documentary Film-maker’s Perspective’, in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), pp. 213-214.

⁶⁰ Maxx Maxstead, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 1 June 2012, in author’s possession.

⁶¹ Dailan Pugh cited in Gregg Borschmann, 1999, *The People’s Forest: A Living History of the Australian Bush*, Blackheath, p. 212.

⁶² Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁶³ Phil Mitten, interview by Vanessa Bible; Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

Channon did he ‘discover... this amazing nascent conservation movement’, while Nan and Hugh Nicholson, who had moved to Terania Creek in the early 1970s, were unaware of the region’s attractiveness to the back to the land movement: ‘[N]one of us grasped the national demographic shifts that had converged many young people of similar philosophical outlook into one area within a few months.’⁶⁴ From 1970 to the early 1980s, migration rates were far greater than national averages, and in the Byron Shire the population nearly doubled in just one decade.⁶⁵ This growth appears to be a direct result of the counterculture and back to the land movements.⁶⁶ Together, the community’s common concerns for the environment grew stronger, sharing knowledge and ideas and reinforced by ever-larger numbers of ecologically-minded migrants. Marking another significant shift in the environmental history of the region, a new land ethic had reached a critical mass, and would be written upon the landscape in powerful ways.

Expressions of Belonging

The desire to live peacefully and in a close relationship with the natural environment resulted in the implementation of a number of practical methods and lifestyle choices in the region, such as the establishment of ICs, the use of activism to protect the natural environment and the employment of other low-impact ways of living. These expressions of belonging offer practical ways of cultivating environmental peace. While the terminology is used here, it was not used or even considered at the time; the significance and impact of the new settlers’ pioneering methods was unbeknownst to them. Zable reflects, ‘we didn’t know it then, but we were sustainability trailblazers.’⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Maxx Maxstead, interview by Vanessa Bible; Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible; Nan Nicholson, 2009, ‘Terania Creek: Nan’s personal perspective on the 30th anniversary of the Terania blockade’, *Terania Times*, August-September.

⁶⁵ Kijas, ‘From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity’, p. 21; Fiona Martin, & Rhonda Ellis, 2003, ‘Dropping In, Not Dropping Out: Evolution of the Alternative Media in the Rainbow Region 1970-2002’, in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 188.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 28; D. J. Walmsley (ed.), 1990, *Change and Adjustment in Northern New South Wales*, Armidale, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Benny Zable, cited in Murphy, ‘Where have all the hippies gone?’, p. 9.

Intentional Communities

One of the most significant legacies of the Aquarius Festival was the establishment of a high number of successful ICs in the region. ICs provided a setting where a utopian eco-experiment could be actualised in collaboration with like-minded people, many of whom shared a similar relationship with the natural environment. They were the very manifestation of a back to the land ethos, and additionally, they undermined the notion of individual land ownership. One of the primary instigators of ICs in the region, Irvine describes the intention: ‘They were formed as a conscious countercultural statement of rejection of the consumerist suburban culture of the cities, and espousal of ecological sustainability and living harmoniously with nature.’⁶⁸ The Tuntable Falls Community, the largest and oldest surviving IC in the region and perhaps Australia, grew out of the post-Aquarius spirit.⁶⁹ A meeting was held to determine how the sense of community created during the festival could be maintained, and the result was Tuntable. Joseph, who was central to the creation of the community, recalls:

We had to get the registrar of co-ops to agree to us being allowed to form a co-op... There’d been co-ops formed to produce butter and distribute the butter, and cheese, and dairy co-ops... there’d never been a co-op formed before to own land.⁷⁰

Tuntable set a precedent as the first legal land-sharing cooperative. Distributed among 1000 shareholders at its height in the late 1970s, the community still endures today with around 200 active members.⁷¹ A proliferation of communities soon followed Tuntable, including Nimbidgi, Bodhi Farm, Siddha Farm, Billen Cliffs, Blue Springs, Crystal, Free Cloud, Paradise Valley and Moondani – Irvine estimates that in total, about twenty Communities were established in the year after the festival and, like

⁶⁸ Irvine, ‘Creating Communities at the End of the Rainbow’, p. 63.

⁶⁹ Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Allen, ‘Nimbin: Myths, Dreams and Mysteries’, p. 28; Margaret Burin, 2013, ‘Hippy counterculture communities thrive 40 years on’, ABC North Coast, 24 May, www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/05/24/3766963.htm, accessed 27 May 2013.

Tunable, many of them still exist today.⁷² While many Communities around the world ultimately failed, the Rainbow Region is exceptional; its ICs are 'known around the world as role models in the development of alternative lifestyles.'⁷³

Dharmananda was established by Dudley and Carol Leggett at Terania Creek before the festival, in 1972.⁷⁴ Local historian Pauline Barratt describes their experience:

They started the ongoing process of learning how to care for the land as well as basic farming skills – vegetable growing, bread-making, milking and caring for cows, fixing fences, raising chickens, cooking on a wood stove, keeping bees and horses and many other new and challenging activities.⁷⁵

The founding ideology for ICs varied – Dharmananda had a spiritual basis, as did Bodhi Farm, while other Communities were based primarily on the political principle of land sharing, or the ecological principle of sustainability. While the region's ICs were not necessarily full of individuals who would describe themselves as environmentalists, many, if not all, had a strong environmental focus and actively considered their impact on the surrounding natural environment.⁷⁶

Latona's 1978 study of ICs in the Bathurst/Orange district found that land sharing facilitated the implementation of native conservation values.⁷⁷ The same is true of the Rainbow Region – a significant amount of Tuntable was set aside as a 'wilderness' area, and no form of development was allowed on the reserved land.⁷⁸ Kohniur had a similar policy: a 160 ha property that was mostly rainforest, Scattergood declared it a wildlife sanctuary in order to prevent the local council from spraying weeds, and he bought the timber and mining rights to protect the property from

⁷² 'Tunable Falls Community: Rainbow Region, NSW', Rainbow Region Community Noticeboard, www.byronevents.net/frameset.htm, accessed 31 January 2016; Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁷³ Cock, *Alternative Australia*, p. 126; Wigham, 'Communities on the North Coast of New South Wales', p. 32; Irvine, 'Creating Communities at The End of The Rainbow', p. 63.

⁷⁴ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁷⁵ Pauline Barratt, 1999, *Around The Channon: A History of its Places and People*, Ballina, p. 146.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*; Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁷⁷ Ken Latona, 1978, *Rural Residence, Hobby Farm, Rural Retreat Study in The Bathurst-Orange Growth Centre*, Bathurst.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 34.

resource exploitation.⁷⁹ Native wildlife was an important consideration. Many communities had a limit on domestic animals, and 'their love of the bush led them to treat the ecological system with a type of religious respect. They tended not to kill snakes, but let them go their way.'⁸⁰

A significant statement on the considered relationship between people and environment, Irvine claims that many ICs were established on abandoned and denuded land, or on land that could not be utilised more appropriately.⁸¹ He explains,

most of the MOs, the ICs, are... constructed or they live on marginal lands like the sides of hills. Not down in the valley where the soil is good, back on the ridges where the soil is no good. And it's not good for anything else. That's a more responsible attitude to locating... That's why we bought that up there [Moondani].⁸²

This wise-use philosophy and respect for the land also extended to improving degraded environments. Taylor's study of the ICs of the Rainbow Region concluded that as a result of their ecologically conscious lifestyles and choices, human impacts on the environment were lessened, and that this new land ethic 'would ultimately be far less environmentally damaging than previous land uses imposed by European man.'⁸³

In 1985 Lismore City Council commissioned a survey of thirteen of the twenty-two ICs within its Local Government Area.⁸⁴ The survey revealed a high degree of self-sufficiency and environmental awareness. Only two were connected to mains power, the rest utilising renewable energies such as solar and wind.⁸⁵ All Communities used the land to cultivate food self-sufficiently using organic farming methods.⁸⁶ Every Community had an environmental policy aimed at repairing the resultant damage inflicted by ecological violence. Measures included the reforestation on steep slopes and erosion sites, natural regeneration and active reforestation of logged areas, and

⁷⁹ Cock, *Alternative Australia*, p. 99.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113; p. 108.

⁸¹ Wigham, 'Communities on the North Coast of New South Wales', p. 32.

⁸² Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁸³ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 78.

⁸⁴ Sue Barker, & Stephanie Knox, 1985, *Findings of a Survey of Attitudes of the Dwellers of Multiple Occupancies: Working Paper of the Multiple Occupancy Research Project*, Lismore.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

timber harvesting was only allowed with prior consent of the Community.⁸⁷ There had also been a significant amount of forest regeneration on nearly every property since it had been purchased. Furthermore most had determined a population limit for social as well as environmental reasons, every community had restrictions on the placement of houses and more than half of the dwellings were made from second-hand or hand-made materials, such as mud-brick.⁸⁸ Most importantly, every IC had a very strong sense of community and were overall, very 'happy with life.'⁸⁹ There could be no doubt that for these Communities, the ecological experiment was proving to be a great success.

Despite this positive report there had been a great deal of tension between local ICs and government departments, and Communities had fought hard for their right to Multiple Occupancy.⁹⁰ However in 1988, State Environment Minister Bob Carr acknowledged the significance of local pioneering efforts, stating that he had:

a very strong impression that MOs contribute to environmentally sound practices. I'd like to think they are the wave of the future for much of NSW and that what's happening now will be in the history books in 100 years, 200 years' time as examples of people coming together and pioneering a much more responsible land use of our continent.⁹¹

As an expression of belonging both to the natural environment and to community, the ICs of the Rainbow Region have proven to be powerful examples of what can be cultivated from a desire to live in environmentally peaceful ways.

Environmental Activism

As discussed in the previous chapter, the conservation movement evades a neat description, as what it means to be a conservationist is somewhat subjective - representing different, sometimes overlapping, sometimes coalescing sets of values,

⁸⁷ Barker & Knox, *Findings of a Survey of Attitudes of the Dwellers of Multiple Occupancies*, pp. 25-26.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19; p. 21.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁹⁰ See for example Irvine, 'Creating Communities at the End of the Rainbow', pp. 63-82.

⁹¹ Bob Carr, 1988, cited in Irvine, 'Creating Communities at the End of the Rainbow', p. 70.

the movement had grown to encompass concerns based on economic, scientific, aesthetic, recreational, biological and ecocentric considerations. The conservation movement, both globally and locally, had by the 1970s evolved to the point where concerned citizens felt it necessary and appropriate to directly challenge the authority of government and institutions. However, the style of campaigning had not dared to move beyond polite and 'genteel' methods. The Rainbow Region and its communities, inspired by a strong relationship with the natural environment and a deep passion for place, would bring about the turning point between the old methods and values of conservation and the radical, direct action style of modern day environmentalism.

Terania Creek

While the Border Ranges campaign was underway, another stand of significant ancient rainforest was under threat just a few dozen kilometres away. At Terania Creek, new settlers had discovered the Forestry Commission's plan to grant logging rights for the clearing of the last remaining rainforest in the Basin at the end of Terania Creek Road. The Border Ranges conservationists, including the Colong Committee, were reluctant to divert energy away from their campaign for the sake of what they considered to be a relatively unimportant patch of forest.⁹² A new community of people who had moved to the area specifically for the forest, however, disagreed. Leggett, who lived at Dharmananda on Terania Creek Road, recounts:

when the forests were about to be logged, we saw we'd come there particularly for that forest. To be close to that forest. And then suddenly that critical ingredient was going to be taken away. There was this natural uprising against that, being something that wasn't tolerable.⁹³

With no choice but to take the issue on themselves, local residents mobilised to wage a campaign to save Terania Creek, and the Terania Native Forest Action Group (TNFAG) was formed in 1974.

⁹² The Colong Committee, 1983, *How the Rainforest was Saved: The Inside Story of the 10 Year Battle*, Sydney; Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁹³ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.

From the start of the campaign, the motivations expressed by TNFAG marked a contrast with most previous conservation campaigns, with the possible exception of the Border Ranges. While aesthetics certainly played a major role, there was also an expression of ecocentric values, including the ‘ethical or spiritual’ notion that flora and fauna have an inherent right to exist as well as an often undefinable emotional connection to place.⁹⁴ Pugh explains his desire to protect the rainforest:

Why? Because it’s magnificent and complex and has a right to exist and we need to protect it for its own sake. And to try and provide it [with] a viable future. I have an attraction to the natural environment that is in part inspired by aesthetics, but it’s also inspired by – I dunno, it’s just a feeling, I think, but I just love it.⁹⁵

Commenting on the contrast between the formidable Dunphys and TNFAG, Meredith argues that the notion of saving rainforest ‘for its own sake’ marked a new direction in environmentalism. He also points out that ‘Sydney conservationists were deeply impressed by the strength of feeling, not to mention the organisational skill, of the Terania protesters.’⁹⁶

For five years, TNFAG waged a campaign to prevent the logging, issuing press releases, lobbying politicians and even producing a television advertisement, considered to be the first time an environmental group had ever done so.⁹⁷ Nan Nicholson states, ‘it seems advertising now for green groups is so run-of-the-mill, but at the time it was a really radical thing to do.’⁹⁸ In the process they also gathered a great deal of information and scientific knowledge, learning about and developing a deeper understanding of the rich natural ecosystem they were seeking to protect. The Nicholsons owned the property at the end of Terania Creek Road, closest to the rainforest. Nan Nicholson had already developed an understanding of and relationship with the rainforest before she learned of its proposed destruction:

⁹⁴ Len Webb, 1987, ‘Foreword’, in *Earth First: The Struggle to Save Australia’s Rainforest*, Sydney, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2012.

⁹⁶ Peter Meredith, 1999, *Myles and Milo*, St Leonards, p. 268.

⁹⁷ Ian Cohen, 1997, *Green Fire*, Sydney, p. 18.

⁹⁸ Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.



Figure 14: Terania Creek. Photo by author

We spent a lot of time in the early days in the forest just walking and looking. We didn't know a lot about it. It seems like fairyland to me, it was so beautiful. I thought it was essential for us to get our roots down, to really know the place that we were on. I felt this was the real me, putting my roots down really deep on a fantastic place. I had this very strong relationship with my land, this whole area that I could see.⁹⁹

Nan reveals a significant sense of belonging and accordingly, was 'appalled' to receive news of the threat to the forest; the Nicholsons were among the founding members of TNFAG.¹⁰⁰ They enlisted the help of rainforest ecologists Len Webb and Alex Floyd, and as was the case in the Border Ranges, the group began to gain an understanding of exactly what rainforest was.¹⁰¹ Ellis believes that the wider communities of the Rainbow Region provided opportunities to gain environmental knowledge by virtue of the high concentration of ecologically minded citizens: 'if you weren't educated around

⁹⁹ Nan Nicholson, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁰ Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*; Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.

the environment, you got educated.’¹⁰² The same was true at Terania, and for many, Terania Creek provided their first experience of rainforest. Lisa Yeates remembers, ‘[w]hen I was at Terania we were learning words like revegetation, reforestation, this was a language that none of us knew... rainforests, biodiversity, all of these words we didn’t know’,¹⁰³ while activist John Seed concurs, ‘in the process of finding reasons to protect Terania, we discovered what rainforest was.’¹⁰⁴

Despite a strong and public campaign, in August 1979 the logging was scheduled to proceed. Instead, what occurred was the first known successful forest blockade in the Western world (the only other known use of direct action in defense of trees being the Chipko movement in India in the early 1970s).¹⁰⁵ A last-minute rally was held at the site in an attempt to show politicians how much support the campaign had.¹⁰⁶ Leggett explains the response as logging equipment came rumbling down Terania Creek Road, threatening the natural environment that had grown so dear to them:

We didn’t know what to do... There was nothing else we could do. We’d tried every level of argument and discussion and here we suddenly had a bulldozer which you can’t talk to, we had a bulldozer driver that was just working... and we heard them coming and we just all rushed out and stood in the road so they couldn’t proceed... We were really completely spontaneous. And everybody just clogged the road to argue with the guys, to say ‘don’t, you can’t do this, it’s not ok.’ And of course they couldn’t proceed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2012.

¹⁰³ Lisa Yeates, quoted in Andy Parks, 1999, *Environmental Protest Songs of North East NSW 1979-1999*, Lismore, p. 47.

¹⁰⁴ John Seed, cited in James Bennet-Levy, ‘James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed’, Rainforest Information Centre, www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/levy.htm, accessed 1 December 2008.

¹⁰⁵ See Ramachandra Guha, 1990, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, Berkeley, pp. 152-184; Haripriya Rangan, 2000, *Of Myths and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History*, London.

¹⁰⁶ Bren Claridge, ‘The loggers are coming’, *Nimbin News*, no. 76, 1979, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.



Figure 15: Nonviolent Direct Action at Terania Creek. Rhonda Ellis in front of bulldozer, Terania Creek, August 1979. Photo by David Kemp. Reproduced with permission from author.

With this impulsive response, the notion of the forest blockade was born.¹⁰⁸ Many of the protesters felt a deep emotional reaction and connection to the natural environment, a response which sustained the blockade for a month. Ellis recalls crying when she witnessed a bulldozer knocking over a palm tree: 'I felt as though something had been murdered.'¹⁰⁹ Seed, a deep ecologist, expresses his transcorporeal experience:

I suddenly understood that it wasn't me trying to save the rainforest but that I realised that I was actually part of the rainforest protecting itself, that it was a sense of connectedness with Nature, with the world through the rainforest.¹¹⁰

Seed's transformative understanding of the natural environment came about as a direct consequence of his involvement at Terania, and his experience of the place – he 'felt reborn into the understanding [he] received there in the forest.'¹¹¹

For the next month, organic and spontaneous blockading and obstruction techniques were employed until NSW Premier Neville Wran called for the logging to cease while an inquiry was conducted; originating in the forests of Terania and grown of a place, a great many of these techniques such as vehicle obstruction, tree-sits and 'black wallabying'* have since become basic tactics in forest blockades across Australia and around the world.¹¹² As former Greens MP Ian Cohen eloquently states,

Terania has been synonymous in the environmental movement with the birth of radical action in defence of the forest. It has echoed down the years at succeeding forest actions. The spirit of Terania lives on. People move across the face of the earth spreading the message of that birthplace of Australian eco-activism. So overpowering was the draw of those trees that people risked their lives... It was an event which

¹⁰⁸ Vanessa Bible, 2010, *Aquarius Rising: Terania Creek and the Australian Forest Protest Movement*, Honours Thesis, The University of New England, Armidale, in The Change Agency, www.thechangeagency.org/tag/forests/, accessed 3 February 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2010.

¹¹⁰ Seed, cited in Bennet-Levy, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed'.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

* Black wallabying is basically a game of hide and seek in the bush, designed to let loggers etc know that you are in the forest, but the aim is to not be captured by police.

¹¹² Bible, *Aquarius Rising*.

inspired many who were pioneering a new way in their lives. The year was 1979, and Terania had lit a green fire.¹¹³

Cultivating Peace

Inspired by the peace movement, the Terania campaign operated on a strictly nonviolent, consensus decision making model.¹¹⁴ Acts of civil disobedience, influenced by Gandhian philosophy, were at the core of the protest. Some protesters stood while others lay down in the path of bulldozers.¹¹⁵ Many were arrested for 'obstructing the passage of a vehicle', with forty-three arrests in total during the four-week blockade.¹¹⁶ It must be acknowledged that there were a small number of individual acts of sabotage against felled logs and machinery, however these actions were strongly condemned by TNFAG.¹¹⁷ Leggett explains the importance of nonviolence, making critical links between ecological violence and peace building:



Figure 16: Creating History: The Terania Creek Blockade. August, 1979. Photo by David Kemp. Reproduced with permission from author.

¹¹³ Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 17.

¹¹⁴ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible; Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹¹⁵ Mark D Hayes, 1979, 'Greenies and government at loggerheads', *National Review*, August 30, p. 775.

¹¹⁶ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2010; Dailan Pugh, 'My involvement in forest campaigns', unpublished article, in author's possession.

¹¹⁷ Tim Bonyhady, 1993, *Places Worth Keeping: Conservationists, Politics and Law*, St Leonards, p. 48.

...peace, or nonviolence, was a critical part of Terania. I could see that nonviolence and democratic processes, consensus processes are critical to sustainability.... to life on earth... We had to confront this destruction of the natural environment but we needed to do it in the proper way. Otherwise it would be counterproductive. And so whether it's directly violence against the environment or it's violence against one another, it's all the same story... the most important thing for us to survive on this planet, is to treat each other and all things as sacred. With respect for all things. And there'll be no more war and there'll be no more damage to the environment and to other creatures.¹¹⁸

Leggett's insightful approach to environmental activism focuses on the need to both maintain and build peace, making it an ideal framework for successful environmental peacebuilding. This is not to ignore the conflict that arose, and it is important to acknowledge that environmental protest almost inevitably generates some level of conflict between the opposing values of stakeholders. The protest led to bitter disputes between protesters, the forestry industry and communities that Turvey and Watson argue were dependent on logging; particularly the more conservative towns of Lismore and Murwillumbah.¹¹⁹ In keeping with their commitment to peace the protesters at Terania Creek intuitively understood the need to reach out and establish common ground. Despite their resentment towards the loggers' activities, they did not hold the same level of resentment towards the loggers themselves.¹²⁰ Nan Nicholson's experience led to a powerful and necessary understanding:

I find with all these people, when I'm in a sort of confrontational situation with loggers or police... mostly they're not listened to nearly enough, so if you're actually willing to listen – be quiet and listen to what they want to say, you can get a long way. More often what you find is you both have a similar point of view. And I've spoken to many loggers who have said 'We're just the meat in the sandwich. We know this stuff won't last but I've got a family to maintain, so I've gotta keep logging this. But I know it sucks...' I have a lot of sympathy for these people. And mostly when you talk to just

¹¹⁸ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹¹⁹ Nigel Turvey, 2006, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, Brisbane; Ian Watson, 1990, *Fighting over the Forests*, Sydney.

¹²⁰ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible; Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2010; Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

about anyone, including the most vehement opposition, you can see their point of view is pretty much similar to your own in lots of ways, same sort of elements that are important for each person.¹²¹

The protesters did not allow their judgement to be misplaced, understanding the critical importance of maintaining peace at environmental actions.



Figure 17: Negotiations at Terania Creek. Dudley Leggett (right) talking with loggers, Terania Creek, August 1979. Photo by David Kemp. Reproduced with permission from author.

Also of critical importance was the need to maintain peaceful communication between protesters and police. Again, TNFAG understood this before the days where the role of police liaison has become an essential element of any protest or action, and in fact there is strong evidence that this core role came about as a result of the Terania Creek campaign.¹²² The protesters made efforts to calmly explain their actions to the police and why they felt the need to protest. They also talked about shared interests such as children and family in an attempt to establish common ground, and some protesters offered massages to police, which were gratefully accepted.¹²³ Just as

¹²¹ Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹²² Bible, *Aquarius Rising*, p. 42.

¹²³ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible; Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

conversations with loggers can reveal shared interests, values and concerns, so too can conversations with police. Nan Nicholson recalls an incident in which she was travelling in a vehicle with Ian Cohen at a forest protest at Mt Marsh, south of Lismore:

a cop flagged us down and I thought ‘Oh no, we’re in trouble.’ And he just leaned in and said to Ian, ‘Are you Ian Cohen?’ in an awestruck voice. And Ian said ‘Yes, and the cop said ‘Well I just want you to know, I’m a member of Greenpeace. And I’m on your side.’¹²⁴

Establishing the common ground in the face of competing and conflicting values is vitally important to cultivating environmental peace, and can also strengthen the sense of community, uniting previously divided groups of stakeholders as will be further demonstrated in chapters six and seven.

Competing Notions of Belonging

Just as it is important to acknowledge conflict between stakeholders, it would be unrealistic to ignore the inherent clashes and competing notions of belonging, which can be an obstacle to cultivating peace. Local Lismore academic Rob Garbutt questions the very notion of what it is to be local and cautions that the concept can be used to erase other forms of belonging to place – white colonial Australians in particular, he argues, have used a sense of ‘autochthony’, to be of the land itself, to justify their occupation of Aboriginal land and yet at the same time exclude other expressions of belonging, particularly those of migrants.¹²⁵ On the surface, the Terania Creek campaign ignited competing and clashing notions of belonging. A particularly strong source of resentment was the feeling that the new migrants to the area, being ‘non-local’, did not have the authority to speak for the place, the community or the forests.¹²⁶ The protesters disagreed. Ellis herself uses the concept of autochthony, arguing:

There was a kind of adopted autochthony, that’s the only way I can describe it, among all the people at Terania... I think that a lot of people who were at Terania really felt

¹²⁴ Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹²⁵ Rob Garbutt, 2011, *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond*, Bern.

¹²⁶ See for example Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*; Watson, *Fighting over the Forests*.

close to the land, that it was their responsibility to look after it, and so although we weren't born here... I really think that we had adopted it... Just because someone was born somewhere... or their family has lived there for generations doesn't necessarily mean that they have a responsible attitude towards it.¹²⁷

Nan Nicholson also challenges the authority of localness, arguing that she had an intimate relationship with and understanding of the rainforest of Terania Creek that the 'local settlers' did not have: 'some of them that lived down in The Channon hadn't even been up, driven up this end of the valley, let alone walked in the forest.'¹²⁸

The *Northern Star* was particularly critical of the protesters, and since the Aquarius Festival it had featured a high volume of negative stories about the radical non-locals.¹²⁹ Associated Country Sawmillers of NSW published advertisements in the paper, harking back to the era of wise-use conservation and proclaiming themselves to be the 'true conservationists', while an editorial remarked, 'If groups such as those at Terania Creek were allowed to go unchecked chaos would be upon us, and the economy ruined.'¹³⁰ However, while the issue of who can speak for a place undoubtedly aroused tension, these concerns seem more focused on economic factors than on any sense of allegiance to the place. It could be argued that environmental conflict is far more often situated in the tension between various environmental concerns and economic growth and 'development', of which forestry workers and farmers have too often been unfairly placed on the wrong side. Nan Nicholson recalls,

the local sawmiller at Nimbin was a plant nut, he grew rainforest plants. Barry Walker... he was fantastic. And all the loggers I've got into deep conversations with, they say the same thing as us, that we're running out of timber and we're flogging the place, but what can we do, we need to stay alive, and that's all reasonable. In the end

¹²⁷ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2012.

¹²⁸ Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹²⁹ For a discussion on the anti-counterculture stance of the *Northern Star* during this era see Martin & Ellis, 'Dropping In, Not Dropping Out', pp. 181-187.

¹³⁰ 'First Here, and we'll be the last to leave', *Northern Star*, 15 August 1979, p. 24; 'Conservationists... caring for our natural forests', *Northern Star*, 16 August 1979, p. 8; 'Terrorism charges ridiculed', *Northern Star*, 5 September 1979, p. 2.

we're all on the same side. It's the big bureaucracies and the big governments that everybody hates.¹³¹

Speaking from an industry perspective, former forest ranger Robert Kooyman concurs, explaining that he has spoken to 'many, many' logging operators, marketing foremen and other forest workers who have revealed that they regret the damage done to the forests. He concludes, 'if you get a bushman, they also have a love of the bush. Most times it is economic pressures that drive people to become so bloody minded.'¹³²

Russell Kelly argues that there were actually a significant number of local residents who had been 'quietly arguing' with authorities over environmental concerns, who were consequently empowered by the arrival of the new settlers, willing to speak out in less-than-quiet ways.¹³³ An ABC Radio program also recalls the attitudes of long-term locals, stating that 'the Stewarts and Nowlans were relaxed about the "hippies" stopping the logging' because the loggers were "outsiders" coming to destroy the valley.¹³⁴

Despite the common assumption that environmentalists will always be on the opposing side of farmers, loggers and others whose livelihoods are tied to the land, it is critically important to acknowledge that expressions of belonging and place attachment can vary widely, and often, those perceived to be at odds with environmental concerns are not necessarily the 'enemy.' As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Border Ranges campaign provides strong evidence that despite common perceptions environmental conflict is not as simplistic a matter as 'greenies' vs primary industries. The campaign had been initiated by a logger, and was advanced by a local grazier, challenging assumptions about the way in which loggers and farmers relate to the land - this is a significant detail, and increasingly, academics are acknowledging the deep ties that *can* (but do not necessarily *always*) exist between

¹³¹ Nan Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Terania Creek, 5 May 2012, in author's possession.

¹³² Robert Kooyman, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 91.

¹³³ Russell Kelly, 2003, 'The Mediated Forest: Who Speaks For The Trees?', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 113.

¹³⁴ Terry McGee, 2014, 'Reconsidering Nimbin 40 years after the Aquarius Festival', Ockham's Razor, ABC Radio, 5 May, transcript online, www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/5431260, accessed 10 May 2014.

loggers and farmers and the natural environment, which frequently include an empirical understanding of seasons, cycles, soils and other knowledge required when working closely with the land. As Garbutt argues, we cannot and should not attempt to 'assimilate different forms of belonging onto the one plane.'¹³⁵ While the expressions of belonging may differ, the common ground is a deep connection to place and environment, and as we will see in the next chapter, the environment movement in Australia is increasingly inclusive of a much broader social base than in the past; today it is not uncommon to see dreadlocks next to Akubras at environmental protests.

The North East Forest Alliance

The Terania Creek inquiry took two years to conclude that logging should proceed.¹³⁶ However in the meantime the Nightcap Action Group (NAG, who later changed their name to the Nomadic Action Group), having been encouraged by the success of direct action, were mounting a blockade at Mt Nardi, adjoining Terania Creek. It was during this campaign that NSW Premier Neville Wran ordered a moratorium on rainforest logging in NSW.¹³⁷ The Border Ranges campaign was finally won too, but only as a result of the radical new land ethic espoused and put into action by the new settlers.¹³⁸ NAG took their unique style of protest, cultivated in the rainforests of the Rainbow Region, to other blockades including the Daintree, the Franklin River and Roxby Downs.¹³⁹ NAG was not the only offshoot of the Terania Creek campaign; a great many of the protesters were so deeply inspired and transformed by their experience that roots spread from Terania, across both Australia and the rest of the world.¹⁴⁰ Just a small number of the many reflections include 'It started me off on a green path', 'it really played an important part of how my life and thinking starts [in relation] to the world around me', and 'it changed my consciousness

¹³⁵ Garbutt, *The Locals*, p. 218.

¹³⁶ Roslyn Taplin, 1992, 'Adversary Procedures and Expertise: The Terania Creek Inquiry', in *Australian Environmental Policy: Ten Case Studies*, Ken Walker (ed), Sydney, pp. 156-172.

¹³⁷ The Colong Committee, *How the Rainforest was Saved*, p. 125.

¹³⁸ Don Watson, 2014, *The Bush: Travels in the Heart of Australia*, Melbourne, p. 83.

¹³⁹ Cohen, *Green Fire*, pp. 59-81.; Branagan, *We Shall Never Be Moved*, p. 72.

¹⁴⁰ See Bible, *Aquarius Rising*, pp. 46-54.

completely... I lost my ignorance.¹⁴¹ The protesters had acquired a deep, often spiritual connection with the earth as a result of campaigning to defend it from a land ethic rooted in a resource extraction mentality.

One of the most significant offshoots from Terania was the creation of the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA). Pugh was concerned about claims that the rainforest had been 'saved' – while that was the official word, he was aware that logging of rainforest as well as old growth forest continued, on both private and public property.¹⁴² Pugh continued the campaign for the rainforests after the success of Terania, eventually establishing NEFA with John Corkhill in 1989.¹⁴³ Still active today, NEFA was built on the same passionate sense of place and radical land ethic as Terania and particularly NAG, but was more autonomous and less bound by the strict nonviolence and consensus model of Terania. While based in the Rainbow Region, NEFA mounted forest blockades throughout North East NSW, demonstrating a sense of place cultivated in the region but extending to encompass other places as well. Among environmental activists of this era there is an increasing articulation of a different kind of sense of belonging, rooted more in the natural environment itself than one particular location. Pugh responds to the question, 'where is your belonging place?':

...as to a particular place, it's hard to say. I think my home is the North Coast, but... it's not just one particular place. I think it's just the natural environment, is where I'm wedded to. And it can be any aspect of it... but I would think that rainforests still grab my heart as being the key, and probably most rainforests, probably not any particular one, but I also like big old eucalypts, you know...¹⁴⁴

Nimbin Environment Centre member Phil Mitten responds simply with 'The Earth', Peter Pedals describes himself as a 'person of the Earth', while Zable answers, 'I'm sort

¹⁴¹ Bert Jenkins, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Armidale, 4 March 2010, in author's possession; Geoff Box, quoted in Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 155; Dee Grebner, quoted in de Blas, 1999, 'Terania Creek 20th anniversary', Earthbeat, 21 August.

¹⁴² Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Byron Bay, 13 April 2010, in author's possession.

¹⁴³ John Corkhill, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Toonumbar, 22 December 2008, in author's possession.

¹⁴⁴ Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2012.

of a planetary citizen. I AM a planetary citizen, right?’¹⁴⁵ Zable is a Nimbin local, but rather than being rooted to any one place, he has travelled extensively, exhibiting a profound commitment to environmental activism. Zable’s protest installation ‘Greedozer and Co.’ is a powerful image known in activist circles around the world (see figure 18 below). Perhaps the most committed activist in Australia, Zable lives without an income; his life is dedicated to raising awareness of environmental and social justice issues globally, travelling from NEFA blockades, to protests at Roxby Downs uranium mine in South Australia, and to the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York.¹⁴⁶



Figure 18: Benny Zable. The Channon Markets, February 2012. Photo by author.

¹⁴⁵ Phil Mitten, interview by Vanessa Bible; Peter Pedals, interview by Vanessa Bible; Benny Zable, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁴⁶ Benny Zable, interview by Vanessa Bible; Personal observation.

Challenging the theory of the NIMBY (not in my back yard), the accusation that many environmentalists only care about their own places, to feel a global sense of belonging means that any environmental destruction anywhere on Earth is an assault on one's home. Accordingly, Rainbow Region activism has extended to all corners of the globe.¹⁴⁷

A unique aspect of NEFA-style activism was the development of techniques that worked with the natural environment, utilising the lay of the land and the resources available such as tress and logs.¹⁴⁸ Blockades were strategically placed on cutting roads and bridges, making steep slopes and waterways part of the defence strategy. Louise Mathieson recalls a blockade at Mummel Gulf:

It was the sense of looking at the place, and going 'well, how are we going to stop people from getting into here', you know, what's the geography of it, what's the lay of the land, and looked at the cattle grate and went well, that's the narrowest point, the choke point, essentially. And it's big and heavy, and it's something we can use to create a blockade... quite often, it was a matter of looking at the situation and the place and being opportunistic and designing something that would work in that place.¹⁴⁹

This way of approaching blockade construction reveals a certain degree of 'thinking through the environment', a term recently adopted by environmental humanists to describe the realignment of humans and nature, or rather, the place of humanity *within* nature.¹⁵⁰ NEFA actions to protect the environment were also *of* the environment, diffusing the nature/culture divide.

NEFA blockade structures were built to prevent access for as long as possible. Tim Thorncraft explains,

¹⁴⁷ Bible, *Aquarius Rising*, pp. 46-58.

¹⁴⁸ Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 195; Sean O'Shannesy, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Toonumbar, 21 December 2008, in author's possession.

¹⁴⁹ Louise Mathieson, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Toonumbar, 21 December 2008, in author's possession.

¹⁵⁰ See for example Timo Myllyntaus (ed.), 2011, *Thinking through the Environment: Green Approaches to Global History*, Cambridge; Deborah Bird Rose *et al.*, 2012, 'Thinking through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities', *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 1, pp. 1-5.



Figure 19: 'Chaelundi: Bush team erects the Star of David. 'Chaelundi forest blockade, 1991. Photo by Tony Grant, from Ian Cohen's *Green Fire*. Reproduced with permission of author.



Figure 20: 'Chaelundi: Frontline Totem'. Chaelundi forest blockade, 1991. Photo by Tony Grant, from Ian Cohen's *Green Fire*. Reproduced with permission of author.

...it was a sort of weird engineering principle, just making things strong enough to be stable, but building a certain amount of precarious dangerousness into them so the cops had to take lots and lots of time and trouble to pull them down.¹⁵¹

This dangerous but highly effective tactic demonstrates the strength of feeling experienced by activists, often risking their lives for the sake of the forests.

Another way in which the commitment of NEFA activists to the environment can be seen is the lengths of time activists spent in the forest. Nearly always an isolated location, activists would dedicate their lives to the cause, spending weeks and sometimes months living in the forest through heat, cold and rain.¹⁵² NEFA activist and academic Aidan Ricketts has argued that these blockades cultivated a forest sub-culture, born of the environment, based on a sense of belonging, and strengthening communities.¹⁵³ He argues,

...the feral lifestyle in the old-growth forest involved a symbiosis between the forest itself (which was threatened with destruction) and the inhabitant (who was there to protect it). This symbiosis provided a real intellectual and spiritual sense of belonging.¹⁵⁴

The goal of the blockade was to prevent forest destruction while NEFA's legal team took the Forestry Commission to the Land and Environment Court; this highly successful combination has seen over 880 000 hectares added to reserves in north east NSW, as well as over 310 000 hectares declared protected from logging within State Forests.¹⁵⁵ NEFA have been a formidable force, having influenced policy and politics, and have informed protest techniques around the world in their own right, building on methods pioneered at Terania Creek.¹⁵⁶ NEFA's engagement with politics and policies will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

¹⁵¹ Tim Thorncraft, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Toonumbar, 21 December 2008, in author's possession.

¹⁵² Branagan, *We Shall Never Be Moved*, p. 73; Louise Mathieson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁵³ Aidan Ricketts, 2003, 'Om Gaia Dudes: The North East Forest Alliance's Old-Growth Forest Campaigns', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), pp. 121-148.

¹⁵⁴ Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes', p. 145.

¹⁵⁵ Dailan Pugh, 'My involvement in forest campaigns', unpublished article, in author's possession.

¹⁵⁶ Bible, *Aquarius Rising*, pp. 55-58; Branagan, *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence*, pp.128-129.

Restoring the Scrub

As discussed above, many of the new settlers moved to the Rainbow Region to be closer to its forests. This appreciation for Australian native vegetation led not only to protest over its continued destruction, but also saw efforts to rehabilitate the once mighty Big Scrub. As soon as environmental scientists gained an understanding of the significance of rainforests, there were calls to re-establish forest on old pasture land.¹⁵⁷

Kooyman had taken as a job as a forest ranger at Murwillumbah in 1976. After seeing the devastation of forests that he felt so connected to, he decided that his own personal and economic welfare was not as important as the trees: 'my spiritual self and all of those things were intrinsically tied to the forest. That was what moved me.'¹⁵⁸ Kooyman had a deep understanding of rainforest and set about regenerating forest from pasture land on his own property, achieving seven to eight metre growth in three or four years. Thousands of people have come to observe his remarkable efforts, including students, scientists and others wanting to cultivate rainforest themselves.¹⁵⁹

The desire to regenerate forest as an expression of one's relationship with the Earth also extended to others not trained in ecology or forestry. Maxstead explains,

I want to leave the Earth in a better state than when I found it, physically... and I did that at The Channon, and I've done that here [Nimbin]. I mean I improved the land by feeding it, putting in a variety of plants so that we get a bit more biodiversity... I'm part of it, I'm in it...¹⁶⁰

The Nicholsons' lives were transformed by the Terania Creek campaign to such an extent that they became conduits for the forest itself. Hugh explains that the protest 'led to a whole change of life for us in that our whole life now revolves around rainforest and knowledge of rainforest.'¹⁶¹ They have since become experts in the field of Australian rainforest species, having established a nursery and published

¹⁵⁷ Ronald Monroe, 1976, 'The Border Ranges – A Land Use Conflict', in *The Border Ranges: A Land Use Conflict in Regional Perspective*, Monroe & Stephens (eds), p. 80.

¹⁵⁸ Kooyman, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁶⁰ Maxx Maxstead, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁶¹ Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

extensively. Their knowledge comes from their interactions with the place they love so dearly, again demonstrating the significance of acquiring environmental knowledge both experientially and *of a place*.¹⁶²

Regeneration efforts were widespread; as previously noted, forest regeneration was also a central policy for all twelve ICs surveyed for Lismore City Council in 1985.¹⁶³ Zable notes the transformation since his time in Nimbin, contrasting the days of ‘grey, dead trees’, ‘landslips’ and a ‘knocked about’, extensively cleared environment with the post-1973 landscape: ‘it's all come to life. Tree plantings, I mean it's unrecognisable from those days, that's for sure.’¹⁶⁴

Healing Land, Healing People

Taylor commented in her study of Rainbow Region ICs and the regeneration work conducted that it was ‘beneficial to both participants’, acknowledging that the exchange between people and environment is a two-way flow.¹⁶⁵ A Nimbin resident known as Pat has conducted extensive weeding and regeneration work for a number of years along Gungas Rd on the outskirts of the village. It is entirely voluntary, and she benefits immensely from it; having had a troubled past, Pat reveals that her close relationship with the natural environment has healed her.¹⁶⁶ India Morris grew up on Tunttable Community and still has a deep connection with the place. She recalls a healing experience:

I went through a period where I had really really high anxiety. It was a post-traumatic sort of thing and I couldn't get out of it. I felt like that for a couple of months... [I was under] intense stress. And I got in my car and I was driving to Tunttable and I hit this certain part of the road, this is after months of terrible, terrible anxiety and it just all went away. And I noticed it and it was just the most amazing, profound experience and I know that it had to do with the landscape.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Hugh Nicholson, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 112.

¹⁶³ Barker & Knox, *Findings of a Survey of Attitudes of the Dwellers of Multiple Occupancies*, pp. 25-26.

¹⁶⁴ Benny Zable, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 58.

¹⁶⁶ Pers. Comm. With Pat, Nimbin, April/May 2012.

¹⁶⁷ India Morris, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 20 June 2012, in author's possession.

Lillian Rock resident Nemi Nath also believes in the healing power of the land. Having felt that her experience of living in the Blue Mountains had healed her trauma, Nath devoted her life to healing others. She feels that her property has special qualities:

At the front you've got Mt Warning. And the energy is much more kind of physical an output. Then you come to this part of it, and you go into the womb. So this little part is amazing for healing... So it's absolutely conducive to what I'm doing. That's my connection with it.¹⁶⁸

It is commonly accepted among the more alternative communities of the Rainbow Region that the landscape itself seems to be imbued with a special quality. Nimbin resident Julie Crisp comments, 'I think it's a very powerful place, this whole area.'¹⁶⁹

The Arts

Just as the arts were employed by colonial Australians to express their feelings of belonging to place, so too have they been used in the Rainbow Region, as a joyful expression of countercultural ideals, an integral element of activism, and as a medium through which to experience the land. Since before the Aquarius Festival, Paul Joseph and his band The White Company travelled the county, promoting the festival through theatre and song.¹⁷⁰ Joseph became known as the songman of Aquarius and later wrote protest songs that were used at Terania and following actions.¹⁷¹ Maxstead's standout impression of Terania was:

the healing and magically cohesing power of music. Paul Joseph (*sings...*) that was one of the strongest impressions I have of the whole thing. We had a connection through song. Through the emotive release through song.¹⁷²

Likewise, Peter Pedals' strongest memory of the Aquarius Festival was Joseph's daily rendition of 'May the Longtime Sunshine Upon You' - playing the flute each morning, Joseph the 'pied piper' would gather a trail of singers behind him as he weaved

¹⁶⁸ Nemi Nath, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lillian Rock, 13 June 2012, in author's possession.

¹⁶⁹ Julie Crisp, interview Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 18 June 2012, in author's possession.

¹⁷⁰ Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*; Parks, *Environmental Protest Songs of Northern NSW*.

¹⁷² Maxx Maxstead, interview by Vanessa Bible.

through the camp.¹⁷³ Music is a central part of the ecologically conscious culture of the Rainbow Region and has been used to both build community and as a fundraising tool for environmental campaigns.¹⁷⁴ It also serves as an expression of emotion, which, Cohen argues, is central to environmental protest: ‘we very much rely on the emotional response, and one of the biggest factors in that emotional response is music.’¹⁷⁵

Music, as well as theatre, have also been employed to maintain peace at environmental actions. Branagan has written extensively about the use of the arts in environmental protest, and cites an example at an anti-nuclear demonstration at Roxby Downs where music and performance were used to diffuse tension between police and protesters – Branagan argues that this is an ‘extremely important function of protest arts.’¹⁷⁶ A similar event occurred at the Terania protest. Local performer and activist Brendan ‘Mookx’ Hanley recalls:

We were singing Paul’s ‘Forest’ song and we came to a bend just as Paul bellowed at full throat “They’re taking more than they need!” Around the bend and heading downhill towards us about 20 or 30 metres away were six armed cops in single file. Peej and I shared an anxious glance and I intuitively went into a fast bluegrass lick on my 5-string banjo. The lead cop took off his cap and slapped his thigh with it, shouted “Yee Hah!” and jumped, heel-kicking-hillbilly-style, off the track. The other cops followed suit. Peej and I grinned and we all marched straight through singing our heads off. To me, this moment was always a sign of the turning point in the Terania battle. Music and love would prevail!¹⁷⁷

Lisa Yeates was also a performer at Terania, and she was aware that music could be used to keep the peace, expressing otherwise angry and frustrated sentiments in cheerful ways.¹⁷⁸ This method of communication, argue both Yeates and Leggett, is also far more likely to receive positive media attention and consequently, will deliver a

¹⁷³ Peter Pedals, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁷⁴ Children’s Future (pseudonym), interview by Vanessa Bible; Alexandra de Blas, 1999, ‘Music of Protest’, *Earthbeat*, 18 December.

¹⁷⁵ Ian Cohen, cited in de Blas, ‘Music of Protest’.

¹⁷⁶ Branagan, *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence*, p. 202.

¹⁷⁷ Brendan ‘Mookx’ Hanley, 2015, ‘Peej ‘n’ Me’, *Nimbin Good Times*, November, p. 8.

¹⁷⁸ Lisa Yeates, cited in de Blas, ‘Music of Protest’.

more positive message to the mainstream community. Leggett recalls the use of theatre at Terania: 'we knew that you have to be creative to get people's attention. Or violent, and we didn't want to be violent. So we wanted to be colourful, and entertaining...' ¹⁷⁹ Nonviolence is also at the heart of Zable's 'theatre of protest', using performance, costume and banners to 'communicate to people in a peaceful, nonviolent way.' ¹⁸⁰

Levitus argues that the Rainbow Region provides an exception to the common adversarial and antagonistic relationship between people and land, and argues that the region 'still resonates from the impact of the Aquarius Festival of 1973, and the psychedelia of the Nimbin shopfronts sometimes finds its way into local landscape painting.' ¹⁸¹ As a deeply personal and subjective expression, some local environmentalists also use the visual arts to communicate their relationship with the natural environment, and in doing so gain a better understanding of the environment. Crisp explains her relationship with the Earth as 'spen[ding] time *with* it', drawing detailed pictures of the forest down to the veins on leaves, gaining an understanding of the forest in micro detail through art. ¹⁸²

Pugh is a talented and prolific artist, and feels that his love of art has cultivated his love for the environment:

you're sitting in the forest, you're drawing these trees, you're seeing glimpses of animals through the trees and stuff and you want to start knowing about them... I can't draw something without knowing what I'm drawing, and learning about what I'm drawing makes me concerned when I know that it's going to be cut down the next day, or something terrible is going to happen to it... I find that drawing has been part of my environmental awareness and part of my activism and forced me down, in a way, an activist path that I may not have otherwise taken. ¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁸⁰ Benny Zable, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁸¹ Geoff Levitus (ed.), 1997, *Lying About the Landscape*, Sydney, p. 8.

¹⁸² Interview with Julie Crisp, Nimbin, 18 June.

¹⁸³ Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2012.

For Pugh, his relationship to the natural environment and with it his prolific activism are a result of directly knowing the environment through his subjective experience of places. The arts can provide a powerful way of cultivating both environmental peace and community, as will be further discussed in Chapter Seven.

Sustainable Living

At the heart of many new settlers' values was a desire to live a sustainable, low-impact life, minimising ecological violence and actively cultivating a positive relationship with the natural environment through their lifestyle choices. Again, this is something that the residents of the Rainbow Region have excelled at. While many were attempting to put their inherently environmentally peaceful values into action, they were at the same time often leading the way in practical solutions to the problem of environmental impacts.

Energy

As noted above, by 1985 renewable energies such as wind and solar were used to provide electricity to eleven Communities in the Lismore LGA.¹⁸⁴ While renewable energies are common now, they certainly were not at the time, demonstrating the commitment to less pollutive ways of living. Peter Pedals embraced alternative technologies, transporting his pedal-powered printing press to the Nicholsons' property to churn out press releases during the Terania Creek campaign (while his real surname is not Pedals, he has long been officially known by this name due to his fondness for all-things-pedal-powered).¹⁸⁵ In 1986, Pedals and a few friends took renewable power sources to local markets, and the Rainbow Power Company (RPC) was born.¹⁸⁶ He reflects, 'I created something [because] I saw there was a great need

¹⁸⁴ Barker & Knox, *Findings of a Survey of Attitudes of the Dwellers of Multiple Occupancies*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁵ Peter Pedals, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁸⁶ Peter Pedals, 1996, 'The Rainbow Power Company: Energy from Nature', in *For a Common Cause: Case Studies in Communities and Environmental Change*, Graeme Bishop & Meg Bishop (eds), Canberra, p. 68.

for it, and it would send society in a better direction.’¹⁸⁷ Ten years later, the RPC was *the* major specialist company in renewables.¹⁸⁸

Food

A significant element of the back to the land movement was the desire to grow one’s own food, but to do so using ecologically sound techniques such as organic, chemical free and permaculture methods. Organic and small-scale methods were employed to avoid further degradation, improve soil fertility and replace lost vegetation cover.¹⁸⁹ Very few chemicals were used by any of the new settlers, and when the Weeds Authority conducted mandatory spraying on private properties it led to bitter dispute and protest.¹⁹⁰ By the early 1980s, a health food shop and food coop had been established in Mullumbimby, and Nimbin was home to three cafés and shops specialising in vegetarian and whole foods products.¹⁹¹

Permaculture is an agricultural system that developed out of the ideas of the time; working ‘with nature, rather than against it’, it took hold (and was largely pioneered) in the Rainbow Region.¹⁹² By 1985 permaculture principles were in use locally.¹⁹³ In 1991, Robyn Francis established permaculture hamlet Djanbung Gardens in Nimbin, as well as the adjoining Jarlanbah Community. Francis developed her own blueprint for the establishment of the Community based on permaculture principles. Her inherently environmentally peaceful ‘Eco-Social Matrix’ considered the balance of human settlement and ‘their relationships to watersheds, land, networks and regional demographics.’¹⁹⁴

New settlers frequently articulated a relationship with the environment that developed as a consequence of working with it and cultivating food from it. Seed remarked of the wisdom that develops from ‘taking a seed and putting it into the

¹⁸⁷ Peter Pedals, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁸⁸ Pedals, ‘The Rainbow Power Company: Energy from Nature’, p. 68.

¹⁸⁹ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 76.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52; Kim Curtis, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author’s possession.

¹⁹¹ Martin & Ellis, ‘Dropping In, Not Dropping Out’, p. 187; Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 52.

¹⁹² Bill Mollison, 1988, *Permaculture: A Designer’s Manual*, Tyalgum, p. 15.

¹⁹³ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 53.

¹⁹⁴ Robyn Francis, 2000, ‘Jarlanbah Community: A Community treading lightly on the earth’, *Permaculture International Journal*, no. 75.

ground and growing a tomato, and taking a seed out of that tomato', while Irvine describes the discovery of being able to grow food as 'magical.'¹⁹⁵ Taylor notes in her study of ICs that food cultivation led to the development of a deeper understanding of nature, the seasons and the influence of the moon, noting both the extensive gardens near dwellings in addition to larger crops elsewhere on the Communities.¹⁹⁶ For Francis, permaculture was a way of implementing her land ethic, an ethic based in a spiritual understanding of the Earth. She explains, '[i]t was that earth-based spirituality; being one with the whole universe, the whole planet and a whole system; seeing and recognising the life in everything.'¹⁹⁷

Local Economies

The counterculture and back to the land movements were very much aligned with left-wing philosophies, including the rejection of socially unjust economic systems and institutions.¹⁹⁸ New settlers frequently align capitalist and materialistic values with ecological violence, rejecting values systems that drive a resource extraction mentality. Leggett saw that the movement was motivated by a desire to 'reconnect the soul and soul's needs which had been so denied by becoming so materialistic.'¹⁹⁹ 'Children's Future' recalls, 'that whole capitalist, consumerism, a lot of us agree [it's not in] our best interests. In fact it's gonna kill us if we don't manage to turn it around.'²⁰⁰ Accordingly, the region saw the development of alternative and local economies. Irvine recalls the LETS (local exchange trading system) schemes established in Nimbin, Mullumbimby and the Tweed in the mid-1980s. The Nimbin Skills Directory was compiled in 1992, listing the skills of 2200 residents of Nimbin Valley. Based on the non-monetary exchange of skills, trades and services, Irvine states, '[w]e wanted to get

¹⁹⁵ Seed, cited in Bennet-Levy, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed'; Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁹⁶ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 96.

¹⁹⁷ Francis, 'Healing the Rifts: Building Intentional Community', p. 47.

¹⁹⁸ Gordon & Osmond, *The Australian New Left*.

¹⁹⁹ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²⁰⁰ Children's Future (pseudonym), interview by Vanessa Bible.

away from the financial system that the capitalists had developed in Australia, and have our own system based on trust and local produce, local energy.’²⁰¹

The Channon Craft Market was established in 1976 out of a desire to create a forum for the exchange and barter of handmade goods and home-grown produce.²⁰² Adopting the slogan ‘make it, bake it, grow it’, the market has made a significant contribution to the regional economy; with over 5000 people attending each month in the late 1990s, the figures remain the same today.²⁰³ The market has also acted as a forum for environmental issues, raising funds for environmental causes and providing a venue for discussion.²⁰⁴ It was also a major vehicle for the promotion of the Terania Creek campaign, mobilising the critical mass needed for the impromptu blockade.²⁰⁵

Connecting with Country

This chapter has so far focused on the various means by which a desire to live in environmentally peaceful ways were enacted. As a consequence of acting upon a land ethic that resists the nature/culture divide, for many this relationship between people and place further developed based on empirical understandings and experiences. There is strong evidence, for example, that new settlers quickly adapted to the region’s frequent flooding. Of the ICs surveyed for Lismore City Council, ‘the majority’ of respondents did not feel the need for ‘flood free access to their properties.’²⁰⁶ Cock notes a similar attitude among the Communities between Mullumbimby and Upper Main Arm: with eight creek crossings between the two settlements, properties could be isolated for several weeks at a time. Accepting it as a part of living in the region, ‘[t]heir mutual interdependence caused by these regular

²⁰¹ Graham Irvine, 2013, ‘Stories from the Age of Aquarius’, Episode 4, ABC Open, 3 July, <https://open.abc.net.au/explore/50040>, accessed 5 July 2013.

²⁰² Barratt, *Around The Channon*, p. 151.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 153; ‘History’, The Channon Craft Market, updated 2016, <http://thechannonmarket.org.au>, accessed 20 January 2016.

²⁰⁴ Barratt, *Around The Channon*, p. 153; ‘History’, The Channon Craft Market, updated 2016, <http://thechannonmarket.org.au>, accessed 20 January 2016.

²⁰⁵ Nan & Hugh Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible; Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²⁰⁶ Barker & Knox, *Findings of a Survey of Attitudes of the Dwellers of Multiple Occupancies*, p. 36.

winter floodings in itself stimulated a sense of community.²⁰⁷ From the Nicholson's property at Terania Creek, a waterfall can be seen through the rainforest:

[w]hen that's really really big you can gauge whether you can get out or not, if it's right the way across you think 'ok, don't even try to get out.' Because you won't get over those bridges.²⁰⁸

Nan Nicholson had started to learn how to read the environment itself, just as the Bundjalung were adept at reading the same landscape. As noted above, Garbutt argues that notions of autochthony can erase Aboriginality. He argues that in the Rainbow Region, the construction of the 'local' has excluded Aboriginal people.²⁰⁹ Peter Read's *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* also raises questions about the consequences of displacing others through forging one's own sense of place and belonging. Read questions the moral implications of white Australians forming a passionate relationship with a land stolen from Aboriginal Australians.²¹⁰ For the alternative communities of the Rainbow Region, a significant part of settling into the place has been a recognition of the inherent Aboriginality of the land, perhaps providing an exception to much of the rest of the country.

An Aboriginal Landscape

Just as Joshua Bray's and the Ogilvie/Bundocks' sense of place had been informed by a Bundjalung land ethic, many of the new settlers sought to understand Bundjalung culture. And just as Constance Blackshield sensed an Aboriginal presence at Nimbin Rocks, Ruby Langford Ginibi believes that it was the same presence that drew the new settlers:

Nimbin had an invasion from down south. All the hippie-type people landed looking for spirituality in places like the Rainbow Café. The spirituality these people were looking for was Aboriginal spirituality: Nimbin is a very sacred place to my people, the

²⁰⁷ Cock, *Alternative Australia*, p. 95.

²⁰⁸ Nan Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²⁰⁹ Garbutt, *The Locals*, pp. 148-150.

²¹⁰ Peter Read, 2000, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, Melbourne.

Bundjalung tribes, because the Nimbin Rocks was the place where our clever men (we-angali) were buried.²¹¹

Ginibi's theory is supported by Dunstan's acknowledgement that 'the feel of Nimbin and its mysterious rocks was magical.'²¹² Other Aquarius Festival organisers similarly felt the Aboriginality of the land, and decided to seek out Bundjalung Elders before holding the festival.²¹³ Joseph recalls,

By going and seeing these Elders we were the first white people to fully recognise the ownership of the country with respect. And we built tremendous relationships... [Dickie Donnelly] came and sang, did a Welcome to Country at the Aquarius Festival, and it was probably the first ever Welcome to Country [performed for white people in modern times].²¹⁴



Figure 21: Nimbin Rocks. Photo by author.

²¹¹ Ruby Langford Ginibi, 2003, 'My Belongin' Place', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), p. 15.

²¹² Dunstan, 'Nimbin: The Vision and the Reality', p. 22.

²¹³ Vernon Treweek, cited in cited in Murphy, 'Where have all the hippies gone?', p. 9; Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²¹⁴ Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

A sense of and appreciation for the Bundjalung land ethic is frequently articulated among new settlers. Irvine states, ‘they say... the land doesn’t belong to us, we belong to the land. And I kind of feel the same way.’²¹⁵ Maxstead feels that ‘Bundjalung Country is my Country’, while Nath comments, ‘The land in Australia oozes spirituality. 60 000 years of total spiritual, tribal existence.’²¹⁶ New settlers also respond to Wollumbin, with ‘a number of people’ remarking of its mystical power and significance.²¹⁷ A deep awareness of the Aboriginality of the land is frequently evident in Nan Nicholson’s articulation of place and belonging:

[I] have a very strong attachment to land. It is a very basic human relationship and it feels as strong as a lover or partner or spouse relationship to me. It’s got to be faithful, it’s got to be one to one, it’s got to be reciprocal, you’ve got to acknowledge your dependence – it’s all of those things... imagine how powerful your feelings must be when it’s your religion, it’s provided absolutely everything for you and it’s your ancestry. We’ve just got no concept of what the ties must be like to the land.²¹⁸

Nicholson also refers to a land ethic based on colonial understandings as ‘incredibly shallow and childish’ compared with the Bundjalung relationship with the land.²¹⁹

Aboriginal rights and the environment movement

Increasingly, the Aboriginal land rights movement has coalesced with the environment movement as environmentalists have grown to understand the significance of the relationship between Aboriginal people and the Australian landscape, and Aboriginal people have recognised the passion for the land expressed by white Australians.²²⁰ This has not been a linear trend; as noted in chapter four, the term ‘wilderness’ so often used by environmentalists, is offensive to Aboriginal people as it implies natural environments free from human habitation, ignoring the reality of

²¹⁵ Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²¹⁶ Maxx Maxstead, interview by Vanessa Bible; Nemi Nath, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²¹⁷ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 35.

²¹⁸ Nan Nicholson cited in Borschmann, *The People’s Forest*, p. 111.

²¹⁹ Nan Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²²⁰ Burnum Burnum, 1987, ‘Aboriginal Australia and the Green Movement’, in *Green Politics in Australia*, Drew Hutton (ed.), North Ryde, pp. 91-104.

the pre-European history of Australia.²²¹ Campaigning for National Parks has also been problematic, as often (but less so in recent times) Aboriginal people have been prohibited from practicing cultural rites and traditions on their own land.²²² During the Franklin River blockade, environmentalists were criticised for campaigning on aesthetic and 'wilderness' grounds, ignoring the threat posed to Aboriginal cultural heritage in the potential loss of Kutakina Cave, a site indicating at least 20 000 years of human habitation.²²³

The Terania Creek Campaign again demonstrates a depth of understanding ahead of its time. It was acknowledged by the National Parks and Wildlife Service that the forest contained several sacred sites, including a site for male initiation ceremonies.²²⁴ Elders were approached by TNFAG during the campaign.²²⁵ The protest was considered 'unique' in its collaboration of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people challenging authority, in contrast with the more familiar situation of Aboriginal people being challenged by white authority.²²⁶ Aboriginal activist Burnum Burnum referred to the protesters as the 'new Aborigines', acknowledging the deep display of place attachment exhibited during the fight for the forest.²²⁷

The collaboration between Bundjalung people and environmentalists continued after Terania. Joseph notes, '[b]y Terania we were proving to them that we truly cared for the country, and that they could link with us. By Mt Nardi, they were leading us.'²²⁸ NEFA also drew on the strength of this collaboration, and the Bundjalung Alliance was formed in the early 1990s. When the NSW Parliament attempted to implement a series

²²¹ Fabienne Bayet-Charlton, 2003, 'Overturning the doctrine : Indigenous people and wilderness – being Aboriginal in the environmental movement', in *Blacklines: contemporary critical writing by Indigenous Australians*, Michele Grossman (ed.), Carlton, pp. 171-180;

²²² Strider 1984, 'Kakadu in Context', in *Fighting For Wilderness: Papers from The Australian Conservation Foundation's Third National Wilderness Conference, 1983*, J.G. Mosley & J. Messer (eds), Melbourne, pp. 96-106.

²²³ Burnum Burnum, 'Aboriginal Australia and the Green Movement', p. 95.

²²⁴ Jeni Kendell & Eddie Buivids, 1987, *Earth First*, Sydney, pp. 41-42; Griff Foley, 1999, *Learning in Social Action: A Contribution to Understanding Informal Learning*, London, p. 29.

²²⁵ Nicholson, 'Terania Creek: Nan's personal perspective on the 30th anniversary of the Terania blockade.'

²²⁶ Marlene J. Norst, 1999, *Burnum Burnum: A Warrior for Peace*, East Roseville, p. 44.

²²⁷ Milo Dunphy, 1979, 'Climbing the Political Tree', in *The Message of Terania*, Stephen Brouwer (ed.), Lismore, p. 5.

²²⁸ Paul Joseph & Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible.

of bills that both members of the alliance were opposed to, the campaign was taken to the lawns of Parliament House where a four metre Aboriginal flag and a two and a half metre NEFA banner were erected side-by-side: 'by 11:00am that morning it was announced that the entire legislative package had been dropped.'²²⁹

During the forty year anniversary celebrations of the Aquarius Festival, local Bundjalung man Gilbert Laurie recalled what happened when the 'hippies' approached his grandfathers, wanting to buy land at Tunttable Falls. He remembers that his grandfathers told the newcomers of the sacredness of the water, hills and caves, before passing the land on:

they accepted our culture and they accepted our protocols – the way of walking on our land... they have done well since they have been here. They've protected our water, they've saved our trees over Tunttable... They had connection to land. They lived off the land. They wanted to feel the land – they wanted to connect in the same way as us Aborigines do. So on reflecting on Aquarius, what was important for Bundjalung was the land... In welcoming a new group of people, in handing over some kind of ownership of land, conceding belonging, what mattered most – was that they respect the land, that they look after it, that they be aware of Aboriginal protocol.²³⁰

This remarkable reflection clearly demonstrates a strong understanding between Bundjalung people and the new settlers who learned from their knowledge of place and their ways of caring for Country. At the same time, some new settlers started to articulate their own spiritual understanding of the earth, influenced both by their sense of place and the earth-based spiritual belief systems that gained prominence during the 1960s and 1970s.

²²⁹ Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes', pp. 129-130.

²³⁰ Gilbert Laurie, 2013, 'Stories from the Age of Aquarius', episode 3, 31 May 2013, <https://open.abc.net.au/openregions/68lq8Lr/posts/46ef5oh>, accessed 19 June 2013.

Articulating an Earth Spirituality

Bron Taylor's exploration of 'countercultural spirituality' argues that many of the philosophical underpinnings of the counterculture movement are based on a range of spiritual beliefs that are earth and nature-based.²³¹ Of particular influence in the Rainbow Region have been Buddhism and deep ecology, spiritual belief systems that are grounded in nature and holistic.²³² At least two prominent ICs – Dharmananda, and Bodhi Farm – were founded on Buddhist principles.²³³ Zable explains the influence of Buddhism:

the Buddhism that came to Nimbin had a big impact... this is one of the first places, if not the first place where they sent a teacher up from the city to be resident here – to teach Buddhism. It was Phra Khantipalo first, and then it was the Abbott – can't think of his name at the moment. He was living here in Nimbin, and at Dharmananda.²³⁴

Taylor argues that radical environmentalism and deep ecology are 'intersecting movements' in America, and the same is true of the Rainbow Region – in fact arguably more so in the region than anywhere else in the country. Deep ecology was conceived of by Arne Naess, and is perhaps closer to a religious interpretation of the interconnectedness of all life on earth than any other belief system.²³⁵ John Seed is the 'father' of the deep ecology movement in Australia, and with Ruth Rosenhek, the two have been promoting deep ecology and running workshops around the country, from the 1970s to this day.²³⁶ Seed explains: 'deep ecology [is] a philosophy against which all of my experience resonated correctly... Deep ecology was the synthesis between Buddhism and activism. And so that was really important.'²³⁷

²³¹ Bron Taylor, 2001, 'Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I): From Deep Ecology to Radical Environmentalism', *Religion*, vol. 31, no. 2, p. 179.

²³² Seed, cited in Bennet-Levy, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed',; Phil Mitten, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²³³ Dudley Leggett, interview by Vanessa Bible; Irvine, 'Creating Communities at the End of the Rainbow', p. 66.

²³⁴ Benny Zable, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²³⁵ Arne Naess, 1973, 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement', *Inquiry*, vol. 16, pp. 95-100. See also Bill Devall & George Sessions, 1985, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*, Layton.

²³⁶ See for example <http://johnseed.net/> and <http://weekendworkshops.com.au/profile/RuthRosenhek>.

²³⁷ Seed, cited in Bennet-Levy, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed'.

Earth-based spirituality can therefore be an approach to environmental peace, promoting sets of values grounded in holistic thinking and ecological values. Cronon argues that deep ecology embodies a rejection of anthropocentric ways of thinking.²³⁸ Prominent United States activist Dave Foreman argues that ‘earth-based spirituality is about one’s felt connections with, embeddedness in, and belonging to, this living and sacred earth’,²³⁹ while Devall argues that environmentalists must acquire a ‘deep ecological consciousness’ as a foundation for effective environmental activism.²⁴⁰

Since the ‘back to the land’ movement and the Aquarius Festival transformed the Rainbow Region into a countercultural, environmental and activist haven in the 1970s, the communities of the region have been at the forefront of the cultivation of innovative techniques and approaches to environmental issues. There were many expressions of belonging written upon the land during this era, nearly all of which can still be seen today. Intentional Communities are often motivated by an attempt to live in closer harmony with nature, and at the same time, they challenge the Western notion that one can buy and own a piece of the Earth. Protest in defence of places of belonging is often spontaneous and heartfelt, motivated by deep feelings of place attachment. Revegetation cultivates forests, and cultural identities. Spirituality can be an avenue to better understanding the place of humans within the environment. This broad chapter brings together a collection of often organic, spontaneous actions and ideas that are cultivated *of a place*, yet have application outside the region, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven. But first, the next chapter looks at the continuation and ‘mainstreaming’ of many of these elements as they are embraced by the wider community. The coalescence of environmental knowledge, touched upon in this chapter in exchanges between Bundjalung people, farmers and new settlers, is strengthened and built upon in the next, providing a solid foundation for cultures of environmental peace.

²³⁸ Bron Taylor, 2001, ‘Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part II): From Earth First! and Bioregionalism to Scientific Paganism and the New Age’, *Religion*, vol. 31, no. 3, p. 226.

²³⁹ Dave Foreman, cited in Taylor, ‘Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I)’, p. 187.

²⁴⁰ Bill Devall, 1980, ‘The Deep Ecology Movement’, *Natural Resources Journal*, vol. 20, p. 302.

Chapter Six

The Northern Rivers

'We're people like water, we all flow together
 We all feel the season, we all feel the weather
 We're people like water, we're interconnected
 This land is our future, it must be protected!
 This trickle has become a creek,
 Has become a river
 Hear the Northern Rivers speak!'

Luke Vassella, 2014.¹

Luke Vassella's *River* was just one of the many songs composed to rouse support for the anti-mining movement[•] in the Northern Rivers and beyond. Like many of the ecologically conscious citizens of the Northern Rivers, Vassella does not fit the mould of a stereotypical activist. Today, the traditional characteristic distinctions between cultural groups, values, and their corresponding land ethos have been blurred; sometimes touching, sometimes overlapping and coalescing, a new expression has emerged that not only incorporates but is *strengthened* by the collaboration between Bundjalung people, farmers, environmentalists and the wider community. The Northern Rivers has evolved through the various expressions of dominant cultural groups and is now renowned as a centre of environmental innovation as well as creative, dynamic and diverse communities. A shared sense of place, as well as a shared love of place, has arisen from this process, and common ground has been established. This does not mean the homogenising of sense of place, but rather an enrichment of and a respect for its diverse expressions built on common values and concern for the environment.

While the previous chapters each focused on one specific land ethic, this chapter demonstrates that many environmental issues cut across these varied ways of

¹ Luke Vassella, 2014, 'River', *The Bentley Burn*, Audio CD, Lismore.

[•] The anti-mining movement is (for the most part) against *inappropriate* mines, particularly on prime agricultural land or near human settlement.

relating to the natural environment, even if the expression of place attachment and belonging differs. It examines the politics and policies of the modern era, both in the enactment of environmental policies and how the political arena is used as a platform for environmental advocacy. It also examines continued efforts to live in environmentally peaceful ways and to reclaim and restore the Big Scrub, as well as the environmental benefits of collaboration and sharing of ecological knowledge. Lastly, this chapter will look at the powerful and influential movement against unconventional gas, and the historic victory of the Bentley blockade. Bentley provides an exceptional example of the significance of increasing collaborations between Aboriginal people, farmers and environmentalists in the struggle against environmentally destructive mining both in the region and across Australia, and demonstrates that common ground is fertile ground on which to cultivate environmentally peaceful communities.

The Northern Rivers in Context

The previous chapters examined major changes in the relationship between people and the natural environment spanning from approximately 4000 years ago to the 1980s. To understand the Northern Rivers today it is necessary to look briefly at what has occurred since, including the international context of evolving environmental concerns, the influence of political change, and other changes brought about by further demographic shifts.

Global Politics

While considerable environmental awareness and action had been cultivated from the grassroots level during the previous decades, the 1990s saw an increasing shift at the government level, both globally and locally, and the implementation of policies that had been underway for some time. A call for the international recognition and implementation of ecological principles was first put forward at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. This seminal conference saw for the first time an internationally-coordinated response to the nature/culture divide, questioning the adverse impact of human-nature relations upon the environment and calling for measures such as the protection of wildlife,

environmental education and the planning of human settlement within environmentally sensitive boundaries.² The need for ecologically sensitive principles to be globally embraced was further stressed in the 1987 United Nations report 'Our Common Future', also known as the Brundtland Report.³ It was not until 1992 that global agreements were made at the Rio Earth Summit, where over 170 countries became signatories to the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) as outlined in Agenda 21.⁴ ESD emphasises the need for development that strikes an equal balance between environmental, social and economic considerations; however, this was swiftly criticised by a considerable number of scholars to be oxymoronic and a justification for continued ecological violence in the name of development.⁵ While therefore inherently problematic as a blueprint for environmental peace, Agenda 21 nonetheless marked globally significant progress towards environmental awareness and has exerted considerable influence over political concerns, planning policy and legislation in Australia.⁶

Originally in the background and increasingly in the foreground of global political developments over the past few decades has been the dawning realisation that the Earth is warming due to anthropogenic climate change. Since the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, climate change has been deliberated over by world leaders at the annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summits as an issue of global and critical importance.⁷ However, many feel that a strong and

² United Nations, 1972, Report on the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, www.un-documents.net/aconf48-14r1.pdf, accessed 14 February 2016.

³ United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, *Our Common Future*, Oxford.

⁴ United Nations, 1992, Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-4.htm, accessed 16 February 2016.

⁵ See for example Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, 1993 'Thermodynamics and we, the humans', in J.C. Dragan, E.K. Seifert & M.C. Demetrescu (eds), *Entropy and Bioeconomics, Proceedings of the First International Conference of the EABS*, Rome, 28-30 November 1991, Milano, pp. 184-201; Robert Jickling, 1994, 'Why I Don't Want My Children to Be Educated for Sustainable Development', *Journal of Environmental Education*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 5-8; Joan Martínez-Alier *et al.*, 2010, 'Sustainable de-growth: Mapping the context, criticisms and future prospects of an emergent paradigm', *Ecological Economics*, vol. 69, pp. 1741-1747.

⁶ United Nations, 1997, 'Institutional Aspects of Sustainable Development in Australia', 5th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/countr/austral/inst.htm, accessed 16 February 2016.

⁷ See United Nations, 2014, 'United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change', <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>, accessed 10 February 2016.

effective response is yet to be seen.⁸ As discussed in Chapter One, climate change is among the most serious threats to environmental peace, and already we are seeing issues of resource scarcity and violent conflict arising from the consequences of human-induced environmental change.⁹ The absence of an adequate response to these critically important issues further highlights the need for grassroots environmental peace.

State Politics

In NSW, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) was a landmark Act that was introduced to regulate the impacts of development upon the natural environment.¹⁰ In theory, it triggers the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) when a proposed development project is deemed likely to adversely affect the natural environment to a significant degree.¹¹ However, a problematic issue with ESD is that what is deemed an adverse environmental impact when weighed against development is open to interpretation.¹² The Act did not prevent the continuing destruction of parts of the Northern Rivers – in the early 1990s local residents, to their dismay, witnessed the further environmental transformation of the region as land was opened up for residential development and old growth forest continued to be cleared.¹³ Rhonda Ellis recalls:

⁸ See for example Danny Chivers & Jess Worth, 2015, 'Paris deal: Epic fail on a planetary scale', *New Internationalist*, December 12, <http://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2015/12/12/cop21-paris-deal-epi-fail-on-planetary-scale/>, accessed December 14 2015; Shannon Biggs & Pennie Opal Plant, 2015, 'The Paris COP21 failure demonstrates climate justice lies beyond the "Red Line"', Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature, December 21, <http://therightsofnature.org/useful/the-paris-cop21-failure-beyond-the-red-line/>, accessed January 7 2016.

⁹ See for example Simon Dalby, 2009, *Security and Environmental Change*, Cambridge.

¹⁰ *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW), Act no. 203, www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/epaaa1979389/, accessed 25 February 2016.

¹¹ Mandy Elliot & Ian Thomas, 2009, *Environmental Impact in Australia: Theory and Practice*, 5th edn, Leichhardt, pp. 145-146.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 283; Kevin Frawley, 1999, 'From Visionaries to Villains', in *The People's Forest: A Living History of the Australian Bush*, Gregg Borschmann (ed.), Blackheath, p. 46.

¹³ Johanna Garnett, Tweed resident, pers. comm., December 2015; Aidan Ricketts, 2003, 'Om Gaia Dudes: The North East Forest Alliance's Old-Growth Forest Campaigns', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region: Cultural Perspectives on the NSW North Coast*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, pp. 125-133.

there was a lot of pressure from developers, to build in flood zones, build on tops of ridges, build in all sorts of inappropriate places, knock down trees, destroy creeks, everything...¹⁴

In NSW, the Carr Labor government successfully contested the 1995 election with a platform that was pro-conservation, anti-coastal development and committed to ending the logging of old growth forest.¹⁵ Accordingly, Carr created a significant number of new National Parks and introduced several pieces of environmental legislation, including the *Threatened Species Conservation Act* 1995, the (now repealed) *Native Vegetation Conservation Act* 1997 and the *Environmental Trust Act* 1998.¹⁶ In the Northern Rivers, official efforts to address climate change have been seen since the Carr government, which took climate change seriously and introduced policies targeted at mitigating its impacts.¹⁷ The Carr government made small but significant steps toward implementing environmental policy that was more sustainable and ecologically informed than previous legislation, and was consequently more sensitive to nature/human relations. During his ten-year Premiership however, environmentalists increasingly lost faith in Carr as the ecological integrity of his policy platform waned.¹⁸

The 1990s also saw the rise of the Australian Greens. The party's origins stem from the United Tasmania Group (UTG), the world's first green political party established in 1972 in an attempt to prevent the damming of Lake Pedder.¹⁹ In Bob

¹⁴ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 29 April 2012, in author's possession.

¹⁵ See for example Jeff Angel, 2008, *Green is Good: An Insider's Story of the Battle for a Green Australia*, Sydney, p. 13; p. 161; Bruce Thom, 2012, 'The Environment', in *From Carr to Keneally: Labor in office in NSW 1995-2011*, David Clune & Rodney Smith (eds), Sydney, pp. 207-218.

¹⁶ *Threatened Species Conservation Act* 1995 (NSW), Act no. 101, www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/tsca1995323/, accessed 11 February 2016; *Native Vegetation Conservation Act* 1997 (NSW), Act no. 133, www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/repealed_act/nvca1997337/, accessed 11 February 2016; *Environmental Trust Act* 1998 (NSW), Act no. 82, www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/eta1998263/, accessed 11 February 2016

¹⁷ Angel, *Green is Good*, p. 138.

¹⁸ See for example Stephanie Peatling, 2003, 'Carr's green record disappoints lobbyists', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 January, www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/01/13/1041990230720.html, accessed 11 February 2016.

¹⁹ Pamela Walker, 1989, 'The United Tasmania Group: An Analysis of the World's First Green Party', in *Environmental Politics in Australia and New Zealand*, Peter Hay, Robyn Eckersley & Geoff Holloway (eds), Hobart, p. 163.

Brown's words, 'The seeds of the Australian Greens were sown in the Tasmanian wilderness.'²⁰ The party of the environment movement had been born of a place and a desire to protect it. Drawing strength from the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP) and state-based Greens groups during the 1980s, by 1992 the Australian Greens were established as a nation-wide political force.²¹ The 1995 election saw the Greens gain significant swings in the seats of Ballina and Murwillumbah, and Northern Rivers environmentalist Ian Cohen was elected to the Legislative Council as the first Greens parliamentary member in NSW.²²

NEFA exerted considerable political influence during the 1990s.²³ NEFA continued to blockade forests and challenge industry in the Land and Environment Court, protecting over one million hectares of native and old growth forest in NSW.²⁴ Increasingly, environmentalists became political actors, using the political arena as a platform for environmental advocacy.

Local Politics

Aidan Ricketts argues that one of NEFA's 'most enduring contributions' has been the promotion of a culture of political activism in the Northern Rivers.²⁵ High profile NEFA activist John Corkhill ran as a Greens candidate in the 1999 State election and managed to double the Greens vote from five to ten percent.²⁶ Ricketts explains that in addition to Ian Cohen, who held office for sixteen years, a number of former NEFA activists were also elected to local councils.²⁷ Additionally, two ex-NEFA activists have held the position of Mayor of Byron Shire – Jen Barham from 2004-2012, and

²⁰ Bob Brown & Peter Singer, 1996, *The Greens*, Melbourne, p. 67.

²¹ See Brown & Singer, *The Greens*.

²² Anthony Green, 1995, 'NSW Elections 1995', www.abc.net.au/elections/archive/nsw/NSW1995_Results.pdf, accessed 16 February 2016.

²³ See for example Aidan Ricketts, 2000, 'The Forest Protest Protocol: an outbreak of participatory democracy: an historic agreement between police and environmental protesters in NSW', *Alternative Law Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 68-70; Nicole Rogers, 2008, 'Activism and The Academy', *Alternative Law Journal*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 200-204; p. 208.

²⁴ Dailan Pugh, 'My involvement in forest campaigns', unpublished article, in author's possession.

²⁵ Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes', p. 145.

²⁶ Electoral Commission NSW, updated 2013, 'Lismore State Electoral District - Lismore Results 1999', www.office.elections.nsw.gov.au/results/state_elections-legislative_assembly/1999/Lismore, accessed 25 February 2016.

²⁷ Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes', p. 145.

since then, Simon Richardson, who is the current mayor. Evidence of the mainstreaming of green politics in the region, Ricketts argues that this is ‘an indication of a continuing high level of support for the deep green side of north coast politics.’²⁸

Rhonda Ellis’ decision to run for Byron Shire Council in 1990 could be considered an expression of her sense of belonging to Mullumbimby. Ellis was concerned at the level of ecological violence:

...so I became a councillor on Byron Shire. By that time, the area was mine. I was officially responsible. I had a constituency, I was representative of that constituency, and the environment was a big part of that. So protecting it from inappropriate development, tree removal, that kind of thing, became daily work.²⁹

Ellis, like Cohen and his fellow NEFA colleagues, was an environmentalist first and politician second. Motivated by their deep attachment to the natural environment, their engagement with the political arena was fuelled by a desire to protect it, and in seeking power they could also advocate on behalf of others. Ellis explains that she was not aware of all of the environmental issues in her local government area and relied upon community members to bring their concerns to her:

I was prompted by the people who got in touch with me, and said ‘you can’t pass this, this is what’s wrong with it.’ So other people had all done their homework. So many, many people worked for the environment.³⁰

In recent years, environmentally-minded people continue to seek positions of power, ecologically conscious communities continue to elect ‘green’ candidates, and environmental issues find voice through those willing to speak for the Earth. In early 2014, local residents at Bentley were alarmed to learn of gas company Metgasco’s plans to extract unconventional gas on farmland, fourteen kilometres west of Lismore. What started as a watchful presence near the site in January evolved into a camp and blockade of thousands by April and May. While the details and the significance of the

²⁸ Ricketts, ‘Om Gaia Dudes’, p. 145.

²⁹ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

historic Bentley Blockade will be explored below, here it is important to acknowledge the importance of the role of local councillors and political figures.

In 2011 when the environmental risks associated with unconventional and coal seam gas mining (csg) were first becoming known, Lismore City Council placed a moratorium on all csg-related activities on council land. Despite the fact that the moratorium had doubtful legal status, the council had 'unprecedented community support.'³¹ During the blockade, the mayors of three local government areas (Lismore, Tweed and Kyogle) not only expressed their support for the protest, they also visited the site and each mayor symbolically climbed the blockade's central tripod structure.³² Lismore councillor Simon Clough has a long history of association with the Northern Rivers, including being part of a MO at Terania Creek for over 25 years.³³ Clough played a central role in the organisation of the blockade, regularly conducting the nightly meetings, and appeared to be on site every day in the final months (see figure 28).³⁴ In 2015, Lismore City Council voted to deny Metgasco the use of council-owned roads in response to overwhelming community sentiment, sending a strong message that the company was not welcome in the region.³⁵ And in another example of the history-making efforts of the Northern Rivers environment movement, at the 2015 State election the issue of coal seam gas was directly responsible for the fall of the long-held safe National seat of Ballina to Greens candidate and fourth-generation local Tamara Smith, marking the first time a Greens MP has claimed a seat in any regional Australian electorate.³⁶ The victory was very nearly twice as significant, with fellow Greens

³¹ Dominic Feain, 2011, 'Council blocks csg testing', *Northern Star*, 19 December, www.northernstar.com.au/news/council-blocks-csg-testing, accessed 21 November 2015.

³² Samantha Elley, 2015, 'Campsite inspires our leaders', *Northern Star*, 24 April, www.northernstar.com.au/news/campsite-inspires-our-leaders/2238197/, accessed 26 February 2016.

³³ Simon Clough, 2012, 'Hello, I'm Simon', Simon Says: News from Cr Simon Clough of Lismore City Council (blog), <https://crsimonclough.wordpress.com/hello-im-simon-2/>, accessed 26 February 2016.

³⁴ Personal observation of author.

³⁵ Luis Feliu, 2015, 'Lismore denies Metgasco use of roads', *Northern Rivers Echo*, 14 October, www.echo.net.au/2015/10/lismore-denies-metgasco-use-of-roads/, accessed 21 November 2015.

³⁶ Gay Alcorn, 2015, 'In vast swaths of rural New South Wales, there's only one election issue: coal seam gas', *The Guardian*, 26 March, www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/mar/26/in-vast-swaths-of-rural-new-south-wales-theres-only-one-election-issue-coal-seam-gas, accessed 26 March 2015; Tamara Smith, 2015, 'Background & Experience', The Greens, www.tamarasmith.com.au/about, accessed 20 February 2016.

candidate Adam Guise only narrowly failing to take the seat of Lismore from long-time Nationals sitting member Thomas George.³⁷

The local politics of the region, while often motivated by a local sense of place and a desire to protect it, also has a global focus and sense of responsibility, particularly in the form of serious action on mitigating the impacts of climate change. In 2015, Lismore and Byron Shire Councils were the only regional councils in Australia (accompanying the City Councils of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth) to be recognised for their emission reduction efforts.³⁸ Lismore was the first local government to organically certify its compost, it has one of the largest uptake rates of solar power in Australia, and it has committed to achieving a 100 percent renewable energy target by 2023.³⁹ Byron Shire Council is even more ambitious, seeking to completely eliminate its greenhouse gas emissions by 2025.⁴⁰ Mullumbimby resident, ex-NEFA activist and Mayor of Byron Shire, Simon Richardson attended the 21st UN Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP 2015) in December 2015.⁴¹ Once again demonstrating the Northern Rivers' capacity to inspire positive environmental change, Richardson explained before he departed, 'I'll be involved in the cities and regions conference where representatives from around the world will be showing what we're doing and learning from each other.'⁴²

While seeking change through political engagement can, in activist circles, often seem to be unrealistic and unlikely to achieve results, the Northern Rivers example of engaging in politics as a platform for environmental advocacy proves that it can be a highly effective mechanism for cultivating environmental peace. The

³⁷ Electoral Commission NSW, 2015, 'NSW State Election Results 2015, Saturday 28 March 2015, State Electoral District of Lismore', <http://pastvtr.elections.nsw.gov.au/SGE2015/la/lismore/tcp/tool/index.htm>, accessed 25 February 2016.

³⁸ Pallavi Singhal, 2015, 'Greening from the grassroots up: Councils step ahead on climate action', *The Age*, November 16, www.theage.com.au/nsw/greening-from-the-grassroots-up-councils-step-ahead-on-climate-action-20151113-gky3mn.html#ixzz3RiRiDmEX, accessed 21 November 2015.

³⁹ *Ibid.*; Northern Rivers Waste, updated 2016, 'Organic Certification: Certified Organic Compost an Australian First', www.northernriverswaste.com.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-HFL-41-35-06, accessed 10 February 2016.

⁴⁰ Giles Parkinson, 2015, 'In Paris with the Mayor of Byron', *Inside Story*, 8 December, <http://insidestory.org.au/in-paris-with-the-mayor-of-byron>, accessed 10 December 2015.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; Simon Richardson, updated 2015, 'Past, Present and Future', Mayor Simon Richardson (blog), <http://mayorsimonrichardson.com/about/>, accessed 26 February 2016.

⁴² Singhal, 'Greening from the Grassroots Up'.

continued overwhelming support for environmentally conscious representatives is indicative of a constituency that remains passionate about the natural environment, and elected representatives are well aware of how to effect positive change. Simon Clough explains, '[t]he way to get real movement is to work from the grassroots up, working with the community.'⁴³

Native Title

Also of major significance to the political climate and human-nature relations in the 1990s and beyond were the landmark *Mabo* case and Native Title ruling. After two hundred years of the perpetuation of the doctrine of *Terra Nullius*, *Mabo* rejected the fallacy that Australia was uninhabited at the time of settlement, recognising the Indigeneity of colonised places.⁴⁴ This ruling led to the *Native Title Act* 1993, enabling Indigenous people to claim title over their Country (if they could prove direct descent), but it did not acknowledge that Aboriginal people had never ceded sovereignty over their homelands.⁴⁵ Native Title legislation facilitated Aboriginal peoples' ability to again cultivate relationships with Country. Depending on the claim, the Act could grant the 'right' to live on Country; perform ceremonies; teach law and custom; care for sacred places, and hunt and/or gather traditional resources.⁴⁶

Once again demonstrating the depth of feeling aroused by the land of the Northern Rivers, the Bundjalung people have been among the strongest voices in the Native Title process. They have fought hard to regain Country of spiritual and religious significance, of which there is a great deal in the region.⁴⁷ Indeed before the Act, in 1985, Bundjalung people successfully campaigned to reclaim the southern section of

⁴³ Singhal, 'Greening from the Grassroots Up'.

⁴⁴ *Mabo v Queensland No. 2 (Mabo)* 1992, HCA 23, 175 CLR 1, 3 June, www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/HCA/1992/23.html, accessed 10 February 2016.

⁴⁵ *Native Title Act* 1993 (Cth), www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/nta1993147/, accessed 11 February 2016; Ulla Secher, 2007, 'The High Court and Recognition of Native Title: Distinguishing Between the Doctrines of Terra Nullius and 'Desert and Uncultivated'', *University of Western Sydney Law Review*, vol. 11, p. 38.

⁴⁶ *Native Title Act* 1993 (Cth).

⁴⁷ Gary Martin, 2013, 'The Dispossession of Indigenous Australians', in *Rainbow Dreaming: Tales from the Age of Aquarius*, Harsha Prabhu (ed.), Nimbin, p. 18.

Goanna Headland at Evans Head – this was the first Aboriginal land grant in NSW.⁴⁸ In 2001, Arakwal National Park became the first National Park in Australia to be created under an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), in which park management is the joint responsibility of traditional owners and government.⁴⁹ In 2006, nine National Parks and thirteen State Forests in the north of the region also became part of an ILUA Native Title agreement, becoming the largest area of land under a Native Title agreement in Eastern Australia.⁵⁰ And in 2013, the Bundjalung people were finally successful in a claim made seventeen years prior over an area covering 2750 square kilometres of southern Bundjalung Country, gaining the right to camp, fish, hunt, protect cultural sites and gather natural resources on Country.⁵¹

Reclaiming the Scrub

The Regional Forest Agreements (RFA) were initiated by the Federal Labor Government in 1992 and formulated over the next eight years by the State Governments of NSW, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia.⁵² The aim was to formulate place-specific sustainability plans by drawing on the collaborative efforts of Aboriginal people, environment and conservation groups (including NEFA). The outcomes were widely criticised by environment groups: while the North Coast RFA saw two separate government assessments determine that one million hectares of forest be set aside on conservation and biodiversity grounds, only one third of this figure was protected, representing just five percent of the pre-European forests of the region.⁵³ However, while the RFAs are widely considered to be a failure,⁵⁴ they did see

⁴⁸ New South Wales, 1991, Legislative Council, South Evans Head Land Development Proposals Questions on Notice, 22 October, www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC19911022039, accessed 21 February 2016.

⁴⁹ Lisa Wellman, 2011, 'A collaborative pathway to Working on Country – the Northern Rivers journey', *Australasian Plant Conservation: Journal of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation*, vol. 19, no. 4, March-May, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Malcolm Prentis, 2011, *A Concise Guide to Aboriginal History*, Dural, p. 31.

⁵¹ Bruce Mackenzie, 2013, 'NSW native title claim approved', *PM*, ABC Radio National, 2 December, www.abc.net.au/news/2013-12-02/nsw-native-title-claim-approved/5129932, accessed 3 December 2013.

⁵² Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, reviewed 2016, 'Regional Forest Agreements', <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry/policies/rfa>, accessed 27 February 2016.

⁵³ Nick Fredman, 1999, 'NSW forest campaigners discuss strategy', *Green Left Weekly*, February 24, www.greenleft.org.au/node/20222, accessed 19 February 2016; Michael Archer & Bob Beale, 2004, *Going Native: Living in the Australian Environment*, Sydney, p. 176.

the conservation of precious forest, and they represented an attempt to bring stakeholders together on common ground despite differences in their underlying land ethics.

A significant amount of rainforest regeneration in the region continues to happen at the grassroots level. As noted in chapter four, the Big Scrub was shaping up as an important element of the cultural identity of the region as early as the Lumley Park restoration of the 1930s. This trend has continued – a recent study titled ‘Big Scrub: A cleared landscape in transition back to forest?’ argues that ‘[r]estoring the rainforests of the Big Scrub is a powerful restoration symbol for the regional communities of far north coast New South Wales.’⁵⁵ In addition to more recent and less anthropocentric values attributed to rainforest such as species conservation and biodiversity, there are now conversations about the significance of the Big Scrub to the survival of species in a post-climate change affected world.⁵⁶ The number of Big Scrub remnants now preserved as parks and reserves is further indicative of its importance as both part of the character of the place as well as its environmental value. In addition to the thirty two remnant sites in the region, eleven of which are deemed ‘significant’ and are protected in parks and reserves, there has also been a high degree of active regeneration through the efforts of local residents.⁵⁷

Parkes *et al.* explain that it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which the Big Scrub has been recultivated, because in addition to projects carried out by local restoration organisations, many landholders have implemented their own regeneration projects on private land – they do however offer an ‘informed estimate’ of 900 000 individual tree plantings in the last twenty years.⁵⁸ Just as Robert Kooyman took it upon himself to plant a rainforest anew on his cleared property, today the trend continues. In 1993, Stephanie Lymburner continued regeneration efforts started by her mother to restore nine hectares of land infested with lantana and camphor laurel at

⁵⁴ Fredman, ‘NSW forest campaigners discuss strategy’; Archer & Beale, *Going Native*, p. 176.

⁵⁵ Tony Parkes *et al.*, 2012, ‘Big Scrub: A cleared landscape in transition back to forest?’, *Ecological Restoration & Management*, vol. 13, no. 3, p. 212.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁵⁷ New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1997, *Big Scrub Nature Reserves: Plan of Management*, Lismore.

⁵⁸ Parkes *et al.*, ‘Big Scrub’, p. 217.

Crystal Hill. Today, the site is officially listed as a Big Scrub remnant and is protected in perpetuity.⁵⁹ At Myocum, Alan and Diana Rowe have been working on regenerating their property since the early 2000s and estimate that they have planted over 30 000 seedlings, attracting a ‘mystery’ red cedar that has propagated itself among the replantings.⁶⁰ At a nursery at Alstonville, Doug Blythe’s passion for restoring bushland has seen him make ‘the creek zone his own’, implying a sense of belonging to place.⁶¹ Blythe’s efforts are cultivated from the landscape and the culture of the region itself – half of the 6 500 seedlings planted were propagated from seed harvested in local rainforests, and Blythe uses the work of Alex Floyd to inform his project, who himself was deeply inspired by the rainforest of the region.⁶² The restoration effort is in its early stages but there are already signs of the Big Scrub springing to life once more – the creek ‘now flows properly during a rain event’, and the vegetation has attracted ‘significant fauna sightings’ including a pair of barred cuckoo shrikes and a rare Noisy Pita.⁶³

Demographic Change

Demographic change has also exerted a significant influence over the region. With the opening up of land for residential development in the 1990s came new waves of migration.⁶⁴ While ‘alternative’ people continued to be drawn to the region, the 1990s also saw an influx of sea-changers, hobby farmers and retirees.⁶⁵ Local resident Johanna Garnett recalls that the place felt ‘different’, and the first wave of new settlers was somewhat fearful of what this second wave would bring with them. Many of the settlers of the 1970s and early 1980s had been seeking a rural, ‘back to the land’

⁵⁹ Samantha Turnbull, 2016, ‘A 20-year labour of love transforms weed-infested farm back to native rainforest in northern NSW’, *ABC North Coast NSW*, 15 January, www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-13/rainforest-regeneration/7085690, accessed 15 January 2016.

⁶⁰ Big Scrub Landcare, 2011, ‘Myocum Farm Visit’, <https://bigscrubrainforest.org.au/?p=128>, accessed 28 June 2014.

⁶¹ ‘Doug digs his rainforest trees’, *The Echo*, February 17 2016, www.echo.net.au/2016/02/doug-digs-his-rainforest-trees/, accessed 22 February 2016.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Johanna Kijas, 2003, ‘From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity’, in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), p. 33.

⁶⁵ Garnett, pers. comm., December 2015; Ricketts, ‘Om Gaia Dudes’, p. 137; Kijas, ‘From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity’, p. 33.

existence, but this new wave was choosing to settle predominantly in urban centres.⁶⁶ As a result, places such as Mullumbimby and Bangalow have since become the domain of wealthy newcomers, with prohibitively expensive property prices pushing out many of the original alternative settlers.⁶⁷ Ellis laments,

I'm displaced from Mullumbimby to Lismore. And it's taken me a while to kind of get used to Lismore. I loved Mullumbimby... I'm really a Mullum person who's sort of had to run away from the high rents.⁶⁸

Places like Nimbin and its surrounding villages however, have retained their Aquarius spirit. Despite the 'dark place' that Nimbin became during the 1990s (discussed below), as any Nimbin local will recall, the town today is still the indisputable countercultural capital of Australia. Developers have attempted to open up land in and around Nimbin with at least three suburban-style subdivisions located on Alternative Way, Tulsi Lane and at Mebbin Springs, but many of these plots of land have remained empty for a number of years.⁶⁹

Despite demographic changes and the gentrification of some Northern Rivers towns, the region has nonetheless managed to retain its culture of environmental awareness and innovative approaches to environmental issues. This is perhaps in part because many people (regardless of background, wealth or career) who migrate to the area are drawn to the prospect of finding like-minded people; the reputation of the Northern Rivers precedes it. It is certainly true of Nimbin, where people go to seek out the vibrant countercultural community safe in the knowledge that activists abound there.⁷⁰ Local resident Rebecca Andre grew up in Lismore in the 1980s and early 1990s. After two decades away Andre recently returned to the region to which she feels she belongs. She reflects:

⁶⁶ Kijas, 'From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity', p. 33.

⁶⁷ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 29 April 2012, in author's possession.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Personal observation of the author.

⁷⁰ Geoff Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 31 May 2012, in author's possession; Julie Crisp, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 18 June 2012, in author's possession.

when I came back here I started to feel alive again, and I think if you feel alive again, and I think if you feel inspired, if you are around other people who are constantly talking... in evolved ways, it kind of snowballs and manifests and it grows, and then people will come out and speak up... [since the early 90s] you're getting a different kind of person coming... but... it hasn't really changed that much. There's just more people. And I think what eventually does happen to people here is they get that sort of North Coast thing happen to them anyway.⁷¹

Ted Hodinott was employed in the oil and gas industry when he first moved to Barkersvale, but now actively protests against the environmental impacts of the unconventional gas industry. He believes that the Northern Rivers does not attract those seeking material gain: 'You come here for a lifestyle. Clean water, clean air and a wonderful community.'⁷²

Nimbin Today

Nimbin endures as a living testament to the success of the counterculture experiment and requires particular attention. It has not been an easy road, however; it must be acknowledged that Nimbin experienced serious social problems during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and some of these problems still exist albeit on a smaller scale today. India Morris believes 'its strengths are its weaknesses'⁷³ – Nimbin's tolerance and acceptance of social diversity, locals say, has meant that people suffering from addiction and mental illness come to Nimbin because they are not accepted elsewhere, resulting in a disproportionate number of Nimbin residents with significant health issues and/or antisocial behaviours.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Rebecca Andre, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author's possession.

⁷² Ted Hodinott, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 19 April 2014, in author's possession.

⁷³ India Morris, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 20 June 2012, in author's possession.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; Geoff Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible; Judy Canales, 2001, *Nine Years in Nimbin: Autobiography of a Cannabis Crusader*, Nimbin.

In addition to drug raids and police brutality experienced in the late 70s and into the 90s,⁷⁵ Nimbin's attitude of permissiveness towards drugs also resulted in a localised variety of the widespread heroin epidemic of the 1980s, and death by overdose in the streets was not uncommon. Morris reveals, 'My best friend when I was growing up got hold of heroin when we were 14.... He's dead now.'⁷⁶ Ellis lost her oldest son, stating 'Heroin. Nimbin.'⁷⁷ The dark history has a reputation and those few words are all that need to be said for the meaning to be understood. It must also be noted that the 'countercultural experiment' was not always a success, and could have serious impacts upon children.⁷⁸ The era of 'free love' saw an attempt to break away from nuclear family structures, which while not inherently bad, led to the breakdown of many family units, and there were considerable sexism and gender issues.⁷⁹ Sexism within the environment movement is an area for further research that needs exploring.

Today, Nimbin still has a reputation; many tourists visit the village for the express purpose of buying cannabis, which is very easy to come by.⁸⁰ The drug culture however is often overrepresented in mainstream media and used to discredit the village as a 'drug haven' full of 'dole bludgers'.⁸¹ Cannabis culture is a significant aspect of the village's identity, but it is not representative of the whole community, and should not be used to dismiss the remarkable degree of environmental awareness and activism that still emanates from Nimbin and surrounds. However, for some it is

⁷⁵ See for example Carol de Launey, 2003, 'A Cannabis Economy', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), pp. 83-100; Judy Canales, 2001, *Nine Years in Nimbin: Autobiography of a Cannabis Crusader*, Nimbin.

⁷⁶ India Morris, interview by Vanessa Bible. See also Michael Hannan, 'From Blockades to Blue Moon: Musical Cultures of Nimbin', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Wilson (ed.), pp. 249-250.

⁷⁷ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁷⁸ India Morris, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁷⁹ Nan Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible; Peter Pedals, interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁸⁰ This is a commonly known fact by anyone acquainted with the village, but for a detailed explanation see de Launey, 'A Cannabis Economy', pp. 83-100.

⁸¹ See for example Hamish Broome, 2013, 'Sh*ttsville in the sh*t over CSG program', *Northern Star*, 18 July, www.northernstar.com.au/news/joe-used-no-laughing-gas/1949467/, accessed 26 February 2016; 'Australia's drug capital an open market', *A Current Affair*, NBN Television, aired July 24 2014; Geoff Chambers, 2015, 'Welfare, weed and crime flourish in Greens enclave of Nimbin and Lismore', *Daily Telegraph*, March 31, www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/welfare-weed-and-crime-flourish-in-greens-enclave-of-nimbin-and-lismore/news-story/b2f80821b2ff27e97e89f90cf0c2f03e, accessed April 2 2015. See also Marty Branagan, 2006, 'Volunteerism and Learning in the Eco-pax Movement', *New Community Quarterly*, vol. 4 no. 3, Spring, pp. 28-30.

also a statement *of* their environmental consciousness. In addition, while the annual Nimbin Mardi Grass is a celebration of this particular enduring element of the counterculture, it is also as much about campaigning for the legalisation of medicinal cannabis (which was achieved on 24th February 2016), as well as the promotion of hemp as a strong and sustainable natural fibre and the many varied environmental benefits it can provide.⁸²

Local farmer Leigh Shearman has lived twenty kilometres south of Nimbin her whole life. She describes the Nimbin of today compared with the past:

Nimbin lost its community. It has a community now, and it's getting better... it has a nice community that is different now... it was for a long long time just a place where people that were dropping out or whatever could go.⁸³

Nimbin's post-1990s revival was largely the result of a community-led effort to rehabilitate the village by people like Robyn Francis of Djanbung Gardens, who comments:

I'm passionate about being engaged with my community, I see myself as a part of a greater community, a bioregion. For me that's a really critical thing. I'm concerned about my community's wellbeing, its future.⁸⁴

In 1994, Francis played a central role in the coordination of a community survey aimed at cultivating a shared sense of place and building upon it. Titled 'Nimbin: Sense of Place, Designing our Future', the survey revealed that the number one concern in the community was 'drugs, particularly heroin/junkies.'⁸⁵ A great deal of positivity and optimism also came through, including a very strong sense of belonging to the surrounding natural environment, and a desire to protect it. A key concern was that despite the maintenance of brightly coloured shopfronts painted during the Aquarius Festival, the streetscape was not reflective of the environmental values of the village

⁸² 'Mardigrass', 2016, www.nimbinmardigrass.com/, accessed 26 February 2016.

⁸³ Leigh Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Goolmangar, 13 June 2012, in author's possession.

⁸⁴ Robyn Francis, 2011, 'Healing the Rifts: Building Intentional Community', in *Permaculture Pioneers: Stories from the New Frontier*, Kerry Dawborn & Caroline Smith (eds), Hepburn, p. 45.

⁸⁵ Permaculture Systems Design and Consulting, 1994, 'Nimbin: Sense of Place, Designing our Future', Nimbin, p. 4.



Figure 22 : Nimbin Streetscape. Photo by author.

and there was a strong desire to see tree plantings along the road – evidence of a response to this need can clearly be seen today in the Nimbin’s now-characteristic verdant streetscape (see figures 22 and 23). Not a single chain store exists in the village – instead, some of the offerings on the main street include an organic food co-op,

organic café, an apothecary, retail shops offering ‘hippie-style’ and second-hand clothes and sustainable living goods, an alternative bookstore, the School of Arts, the ‘Hemp Embassy’, and the Nimbin Environment Centre.

The survey’s summary of findings reveal an inherent awareness of the significance of place-making and a respect for the various manifestations of place:

Residents of the Nimbin district have expressed a strong and clearly defined “sense of place”, in terms of the village character, its natural surroundings, its Bundjalung significance and the ‘heritage’ of the Aquarian/alternative lifestyle movement. There is

also a 'pride of place' particularly regarding the... natural beauty of the valley, its surrounding ranges, sacred sites and rainforests.⁸⁶

Today, the village of approximately 500 residents has a very strong sense of place. Residents communicate a deep feeling of belonging to both the natural environment and the community, and the desire to protect the environment and to cultivate environmental peace continues.⁸⁷ A strong sense of place as well as a pride in place was until recently, on public display in the heart of Nimbin. The colourful and unconventional Nimbin museum was more of an art installation, guiding tourists through Nimbin's history and acknowledging the various manifestations of the place. From room to room, people could explore the Bundjalung history, through to the cedar getters and farmers, into the Aquarian era complete with original props, posters and protest paraphernalia. While the Nimbin Museum and three surrounding shops burnt down in August 2014 at great loss to the community, there are plans to rebuild – just one month after the fire a fundraiser was held to 'restore the heart of Nimbin.'⁸⁸

The community also recently came together to fundraise and jointly purchase a dilapidated house with the intention of converting it into a 'sustainability house.' Known as the 7 Sibley Street project, the concept came out of a 2011 community forum that was similar to the 1994 survey. The aim is to promote local knowledge and encourage environmentally peaceful ways of living.⁸⁹ The uniqueness of the village makes it difficult to communicate the all-pervading sense of ecological awareness and environmental responsibility, and the great many organisations and initiatives – but an examination of just one page of the local paper, *The Nimbin Good Times*, gives some indication. It includes a story on bush regeneration at Nimbin Rocks, informed by

⁸⁶ Permaculture Systems Design and Consulting, 'Nimbin: Sense of Place, Designing our Future', p. 27.

⁸⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, 'Census: 2011 reference & information', www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/2011information?opendocument&navpos=310, accessed 27 February 2016; Julie Crisp, interview by Vanessa Bible, Children's Future (pseudonym), interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 12 June 2012, in author's possession; Phil Mitten, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 30 April 2012, in author's possession; Graham Irvine, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 31 May 2012, in author's possession; Peter Pedals, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 6 June 2012, in author's possession; Maxx Maxstead, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 1 June 2012, in author's possession; Thorsten Jones, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 31 May 2012, in author's possession.

⁸⁸ Darren Coyne, 2014, 'Nimbin on track to restore its heart', *Echo.net Daily*, September 22, www.echo.net.au/2014/09/nimbin-track-restore-heart/, accessed 23 September 2014.

⁸⁹ See 'Nimbin's Sustainable Living Hub: 7 Sibley Street', www.sevenonsibley.com/.



Figure 23: Nimbin Environment Centre. Photo by author.

Bundjalung Elders and including ranger training and rainforest species propagation; a story on a seed exchange network in Nimbin to ‘activate bioregional self-reliance in Nimbin to ensure our community’s food security’, and a story on a permaculture open day at Djanbung Gardens – this randomly-chosen page is by no means an exception.⁹⁰

The Nimbin Environment Centre (NEC) promotes local and global issues, acts as a support base for local activists and coordinates transports to protests throughout the region and the country.⁹¹ From their website, the NEC states:

Our history is rooted in the successful battles which saved Terania Creek and The NightCap [sic] Forest. We are very conscious of our continuous role as custodians of this land, hand in hand with its first people: The Bundjalung nation. We [are]... fearless in our work to defend, protect, preserve and enhance the environment. Our work takes us to remote areas in Australia and overseas. We are one with the words of the

⁹⁰ *Nimbin Good Times*, 17 November 2009, p. 9.

⁹¹ Phil Mitten, interview by Vanessa Bible; Alan Roberts, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author’s possession.

Bundjalung Elders as displayed in Cullen St Nimbin: We belong this country We look after this country Don't do wrong around here this country We belong this country.⁹²

This statement is evocative of the Nimbin of the modern era – a pride in the place's achievements, a recognition of the place as Bundjalung land, and a connection to the natural environment that is often inspired by the local environment but transcends borders – this powerful combination has seen the flourishing of Nimbin into a community that continues to lead the way in the cultivation of environmental peace. Francis explains:

I really feel blessed and privileged to live in the community that I am in, because it's very proactive. I've given presentations about my 'eco-neighbourhood' over in the States. They were completely blown out. Even the Transition Town people say, "Actually you're light years ahead of us".⁹³

Nimbin hosts a very high percentage of people who act upon their deep relationship with the natural environment and it remains an epicentre for environmental consciousness. However the same grassroots energy and spirit, while not in such a concentrated form, can be found right across the Northern Rivers region.

Action and Activism

The pioneering of new approaches such as organic, biodynamic and sustainable agriculture, renewable energies and bush regeneration, once seen as 'alternative' and belonging to a specific land ethic and identity, have now been 'normalised'; 'the term "alternative" no longer applies in a binary opposition to the mainstream.'⁹⁴ Benny Zable reflects on what he considers to be the most important outcome of the Aquarius Festival:

we were able to tune into this area as a community of people to develop alternatives or new ideas, to develop ideas, to have the world we want to have, you know? And so

⁹² Nimbin Environment Centre, 'About this group', <http://nimbinenvironmentcentre.org.au/>, accessed 27 February 2016.

⁹³ Francis, 'Healing the Rifts', p. 45.

⁹⁴ Helen Wilson, 2003, 'Introduction', in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 4.

we boogied around that... oppose[d] the bad things, and demonstrate[d] against them, and [kept] on pushing the alternatives, which are now mainstream.⁹⁵

Many of today's environmental issues are likewise now mainstream issues that cut across old battle lines, uniting those with traditionally opposing views. As demonstrated above, the continued success of political candidates running their campaigns on environmental principles is indicative of a broad-based concern for the environment and a desire to elect those who will protect local belonging places.

There also continues to be a great deal of environmental action and activism from the grassroots up. 'Children's Future' describes his home:

I'm doing everything at home to have simple, sustainable, low-impact systems and technologies. All my greywater ends up on the garden, the bucket from the toilet goes into a long term composting system to go onto fruit trees, I use water really wisely, so we're not wasting water, I'm getting my own off-grid power system together slowly.⁹⁶

Ecologically sensitive building practices such as earth or straw bale houses and solar passive designs have been associated with the Northern Rivers for decades, and people look to the region's architecture for inspiration.⁹⁷ Often 'earthy' and organically shaped, many buildings attempt to disappear into the landscape, diffusing the sharp distinction between the built and natural environment and indicative of the search for a more interconnected relationship between people and place.⁹⁸

Renewable energies continue to be at the centre of local efforts to cultivate environmental peace, reducing air pollution as well as the demand for fossil fuels, and making steps towards implementing the kind of widespread structural change required to mitigate the impacts of anthropogenic climate change. Self-sufficiency is also an important factor – Morris explains:

⁹⁵ Benny Zable, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 30 May 2012, in author's possession.

⁹⁶ Children's Future (pseudonym), interview by Vanessa Bible.

⁹⁷ ABC Radio National, 2013, 'Not Quite Square: the story of Northern Rivers architecture', 25 September, www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bydesign/the-panel3a-northern-rivers-architecture/4966274, accessed 11 November 2015.

⁹⁸ Personal observation of author.

... if things do fall apart, I could go to someone I know. People are set up. If the electricity ran out tomorrow, there'd be some people out there whose lifestyle wouldn't even change.⁹⁹

At Billen Cliffs, 95 per cent of homes are powered by renewable energy, and only five out of 110 homes are connected to the electricity grid.¹⁰⁰ The Rainbow Power Company continues as an example of the region's innovation and global influence, exporting 30 per cent of its products, and the company recently won a tender to supply renewable energy to 49 villages in Papua New Guinea.¹⁰¹ A renewable energy company of a different variety has also just established itself in the Byron Shire – inspired by the anti-fossil fuel stance and the community spirit of the Bentley Blockade, Enova Energy is Australia's first community-owned renewable energy retailer.¹⁰² Motivated by the desire to lead by example, Alison Crook, the company Chair, explains:

the environment [is] worth protecting. Renewable energy is the way to go to do that. If we can demonstrate within this community that it's possible, then other regions are already saying to us, "If you can do it, we can follow it. If you can create a model, we'll use it."¹⁰³

The Northern Rivers BioHubs Consortium hosts regular workshops of bioenergy, aiming to educate and encourage locals to create their own renewable energy systems on their own properties.¹⁰⁴ Some local dairy and sugarcane farmers are using their farm waste, including methane and cane mulch, to generate their own electricity.¹⁰⁵ Increasingly, the stereotypical distinctions between identities and assumptions about their land ethics are breaking down, and a great deal of the action and activism taking

⁹⁹ India Morris, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁰⁰ Terry McGee, 2014, 'Reconsidering Nimbin 40 years after the Aquarius Festival', 5 May, www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/5431260, accessed 10 May 2014.

¹⁰¹ McGee, 'Reconsidering Nimbin 40 years after the Aquarius Festival'.

¹⁰² Samantha Turnbull, 2016, 'Australia's first community-owned renewable energy retailer Enova to open its doors in Byron Bay', *ABC North Coast NSW*, 5 January, www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-05/australia-first-community-owned-energy-retailer-enova/7068420, accessed 5 January 2016.

¹⁰³ Kerry Brewster, 2014, 'New Age Energy', Lateline, ABC Television, 26 November, www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2014/s4136878.htm, accessed 18 November 2015.

¹⁰⁴ North Coast Energy Forum, 2015, 'Bioenergy in the Northern Rivers', 13 October, <http://ncef.net.au/bioenergy-in-the-northern-rivers/>, accessed 27 February 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Brewster, 'New Age Energy'.

place in the Northern Rivers is not only collaborative but is also strengthened by collaboration.

A Shared Sense of Place

Place is a subjective experience, and one physical place is composed of the expressions of many different imagined places. David Malouf makes the argument that new understandings of place and the natural environment do not and cannot erase previous notions. Referring to the imposition of a European land ethic upon the Aboriginal landscape, he argues:

This supplemented what was already there but did not replace it, and cannot do so as long as any syllable of that earlier knowledge exists... a land can bear any number of cultures laid one above the other and set side by side.¹⁰⁶

It must be acknowledged that overlapping and competing notions of place and belonging can and have generated considerable conflict in the region, particularly when environmental issues are concerned, as demonstrated in the previous chapter.¹⁰⁷ But at the same time, the region demonstrates how building on these layered foundations of place and establishing common ground offers the possibility of cultivating a shared sense of place, leading to a deeper understanding and respect for the opinions, values and approaches of others.

Despite the considerable level of conflict arising from these competing notions of belonging as well as a strong sense of localness at the exclusion of 'others', Garbutt suggests that to be 'local' is not based on difference, but rather on a common identity arising from shared experiences and practices. He cites the work of Elizabeth Grosz:

'what we are' she says, 'is determined to a large extent, not by who recognises us, but by what we do, what we make, what we achieve or accomplish.' The position of being

¹⁰⁶ David Malouf, 1998, *A Spirit of Play: The Making of Australian Consciousness*, Sydney, p. 51.

¹⁰⁷ See also Ian Watson, 1990, *Fighting Over The Forests*, Sydney; Johanna Kijas, 2002, 'Moving to the Coast: Internal Migration and Place Contestation in Northern New South Wales', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Technology Sydney; Nigel Turvey, 2006, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, Brisbane.

a local, therefore, is a place that citizen-subjects of a vast array of types might act from.¹⁰⁸

Today the communities of the Northern Rivers are strengthened by what they have ‘done, made, achieved and accomplished’ together. Collaborative approaches to environmental issues can draw on different sets of empirical knowledge and expertise gained *of a place*. In the process, this builds respect between people with seemingly opposing views and cultivates a sense of community.

Collaborative Knowledge

Bundjalung Knowledge

As discussed above, ILUAs combine Aboriginal, place-specific cultural knowledge with modern-day environmental science in a collaborative approach to the management of parks and reserves. Lisa Wellman’s study of the effectiveness of this approach across four ILUAs in the region argues that it is of great benefit to the natural environment as well as local communities.¹⁰⁹ It allows for Bundjalung people to maintain connection with Country – ‘working on country rangers’ oversee the environmental management of biological assets, weed control, pest management and ecosystem rehabilitation.¹¹⁰ Wellman further argues that ‘[t]ying science with cultural connection and spirit has enhanced the knowledge of local people.’¹¹¹

Not only do educational signs in parks and reserves attempt to increase visitors’ knowledge of the environment, there is evidence that they also lead to a deeper appreciation for Aboriginal cultural values. A NPWS sign at Wollumbin for example requests that visitors respect Bundjalung lore and refrain from climbing the sacred mountain. While many still do, a considerable number of people are aware of the need to respect Wollumbin and would never climb it.¹¹² Furthermore, NPWS staff have been approached by non-Aboriginal community members who wish to see the

¹⁰⁸ Rob Garbutt, 2011, *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond*, Bern, p. 219; Elizabeth Grosz, 2005, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*, Crows Nest, p. 86.

¹⁰⁹ Wellman, ‘A collaborative pathway to Working on Country’, pp. 7-9.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹¹² This is apparent from my many conversations with locals and visitors regarding Wollumbin.

implementation of management activities that draw on Aboriginal knowledge.¹¹³ The deliberate use of ‘traditional ecological knowledge’ as an environmentally sensitive approach is increasing globally, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

A similar collaboration exists between traditional owners, the Sustainable Futures Australia organisation, and Rous Water, the water authority for the Lismore area. The Water Walks projects at Rocky Creek Dam and Emigrant Creek draw on Bundjalung ‘multigenerational knowledge’ to educate the community about past mismanagement of resources and makes suggestions as to how a sustainable future can be cultivated.¹¹⁴ Another important aim is to raise awareness of the significance of water as a finite resource in a climate change-affected world.¹¹⁵ While facilitated by Sustainable Futures Australia, the wisdom of Bundjalung Elders takes precedence – one member of the organisation commented, ‘We need to recognise that the Aboriginal people we are working with are our teachers in this field.’¹¹⁶



Figure 24: ‘Custodianship and Stewardship’. © Rous County Council.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Wellman, ‘A collaborative pathway to Working on Country’, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ Shé Mackenzie Hawke, 2012, ‘Water Literacy: An ‘other wise’, active and cross-cultural approach to pedagogy, sustainability and human rights’, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 238-240.

¹¹⁵ Rous Water, ‘The Water Walk at Rocky Creek Dam: A Users Guide to the Far North Coast Water Cycle’, www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au/page.asp?f=RES-JDD-22-06-77, accessed 25 February 2016.

¹¹⁶ E. Bragg, W. Brennan & T. Velasco, 2006, ‘Garima!: The importance of aboriginal involvement in sustainability education’, Learning for Sustainability Conference, Melbourne, 2–4 August.

¹¹⁷ Figure from Rous Water, ‘Custodianship and Stewardship’, www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-CHS-78-63-44, accessed 3 April 2016.

Water Walks provide participants with oral history, signage in the Widjabul language (the local language group within the wider Bundjalung nation), worksheets, and the opportunity for ‘meeting the place with ‘head (thinking) heart (feeling) hands (doing)... It is a walking, listening, breathing, discovery project that requires conscious and embodied participation.’¹¹⁸ Such an approach to environmental education and sustainability building serves (at least) two functions. It creates a transcorporeal experience of nature and therefore disassembles the nature/culture divide, and it again demonstrates how building respect between cultures can have environmentally peaceful outcomes. Aunty June Gordon reflects, ‘[i]t’s about reaching out and working together for the future’,¹¹⁹ while Aunty Irene Harrington concurs:

I hope that this project is the start of a longer relationship with the Widjabul people and Rous Water to acknowledge and respect each other’s perspectives on the management of water and land.¹²⁰

Andre notes the visibility of Bundjalung culture and wisdom today, in contrast with the 1980s - ‘There’s a lot more of a voice from the Bundjalung people now from when I was a kid, which I really like.’¹²¹ There is also strong evidence of a grassroots understanding of the significance of Aboriginal culture to environmental peace. ‘Children’s Future’ comments,

I hope as I go down the track in the future that I become more connected to the Indigenous people of this area and more understanding of what they have to offer, and what they know and learn from them more about caring for the environment and living in harmony and you know, bush foods and all of that stuff.¹²²

Throughout the region, bush food is promoted as a local, organic and sustainable food source. At Kyogle Public School, Wiradjuri man Shane Runciman has transformed the

¹¹⁸ Hawke, ‘Water Literacy’, p. 240.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Irene Harrington, cited in Rous Water, ‘The Water Walk at Rocky Creek Dam’, p. 16

¹²¹ Rebecca Andre, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹²² Children’s Future (pseudonym), interview by Vanessa Bible.

canteen menu, eliminating processed foods and utilising bush foods to provide children with a healthy and balanced diet.¹²³

Children also learn about bush food through environmental education centres in both Federal and Dorroughby. *Bush Food for Kids* is a collaborative program conducted by Dorroughby Environmental Education Centre and the Bundjalung Elders Council.¹²⁴ Thought to be the first of its kind in Australia, it is used in several of the region's schools and provides knowledge of local native food and medicinal plants.¹²⁵ Cultivating and harvesting bush food requires a certain level of understanding of and interaction with the local natural environment. At the Federal Community Children's Centre, teachers and Bundjalung custodians have transformed a weedy patch of land into a 'living classroom' for children to engage with and learn from.¹²⁶ Such a project cultivates environmental peace in a number of ways: it promotes environmental education from an early age, it builds community through the collaboration of environmental knowledge, and it has resulted in the rehabilitation of lantana-infested land with the planting of over 400 local rainforest species.¹²⁷ The centre has also published a book called *Bush Food for Children of the Northern Rivers* to complement the project, using photos from Nan and Hugh Nicholson's collection.¹²⁸

There have also been increasing collaborations between Aboriginal people and farmers. As discussed in Chapter Two, Bundjalung people were instrumental as a labour force on early pastoral runs. This relationship, however, was more exploitative of local Aboriginal knowledge than it was collaborative, and the significant Aboriginal

¹²³ Samantha Turnbull, 2015, 'Kyogle school canteen's healthy transformation with bush tucker', *ABC North Coast NSW*, 16 June, www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2015/06/16/4255701.htm, accessed 18 June 2015.

¹²⁴ See Dorroughby Environmental Education Centre, updated 2015, www.dorroughby-e.schools.nsw.edu.au/home, accessed 23 February 2016.

¹²⁵ Justine Frazier, 2009, 'Bush foods at school', *ABC North Coast NSW*, 1 July, www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2009/07/01/2613069.htm, accessed 13 February 2012; Amanda Sproule, 2009, 'Book food for thought', *Northern Star*, 6 July, www.northernstar.com.au/news/book-food-for-thought/265046/, accessed 13 February 2012.

¹²⁶ Samantha Turnbull, 2015, 'Pre-school creates living classroom from bush tucker plants', *ABC North Coast NSW*, 25 September, www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2015/09/25/4319573.htm, accessed 25 September 2015.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Rachel Heaton, 2015, *Bush Food for Children of the Northern Rivers*, Federal.

contribution to the growth of Australian agriculture is frequently overlooked.¹²⁹ In the last few decades, and particularly since the Wik decision in 1996 that determined that pastoral leases and native title could coexist on the same land, there has been an increasing recognition of the environmental benefits of Aboriginal knowledge and a deliberate cultivation of co-operative relationships between farmers and Aboriginal people (but this is not to underestimate the considerable level of tension resulting from ongoing dispossession and native title claims on pastoral lands).¹³⁰

In the Northern Rivers, many local bush food species are cultivated by farmers, including macadamias, 'Davidson's plums, native raspberries, finger limes, lemon myrtle, midgen berries, brush cherries, sandpaper figs and tamarind.'¹³¹ Kim Curtis grew up in a farming family and is now a small-scale farmer as well as a local weeds authority officer. She enthuses about her newly-gained knowledge of Aboriginal Australia:

I now have an understanding of Country, which I never had before. They've sat down and explained that there's lots of countries all around Australia, and this is just one of many countries around here...¹³²

Curtis is just one of many farmers who collaborated with Bundjalung Elders as well as environmentalists to protect farmland at the Bentley Blockade, discussed shortly.

Farmer Knowledge

The Northern Rivers has also seen growing collaborations between farmers and environmentalists since the time of the back to the land movement in the 1970s. Back to the landers recognised that living a self-sufficient lifestyle, like that of many of the

¹²⁹ Ruby Langford Ginibi, 1994, *My Bundjalung People*, St Lucia, p. 72; Jennifer Hoff, 2006, *Bundjalung Country: Bundjalung Yugun*, Lismore, p. 21.

¹³⁰ *Wik Peoples v Queensland (Pastoral Leases case) 1996, HCA 40; (1996) 187 CLR 1; (1996) 141 ALR 129; (1996) 71 ALJR 173, 23 December*, www.austlii.edu.au/cgibin/sinodisp/au/cases/cth/HCA/1996/40.html?stem=0&synonyms=0&query=wik, accessed 10 February 2016; Tony McAvoy, 1998, 'Western Lives After Wik: Aboriginal Access and Native Title', in *Bush Lives: Bush Futures*, Sheridan Burke (ed.), Sydney, pp. 29-32; Rick Farley, 2003, 'Building Relationships to Care for Country', in *Dreams of Land*, Julianne Schultz (ed.), Sydney, pp. 163-170.

¹³¹ Don Watson, 2014, *The Bush: Travels in the Heart of Australia*, Melbourne, p. 212.

¹³² Kim Curtis, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author's possession.

original farmers, resulted in a closer relationship with the natural environment.

Maurice Ryan comments:

the early selector in his log hut with his family crowded for warmth around the family hearth... was not so different from the modern 'hippie' who has turned his back on the materialistic world and returned to the lifestyle of the old pioneers...In a peculiar twist of history the last wave of settlers to Nimbin, the alternative society folk of the post 1973 years, aspire to the life style that the early settlers experienced.¹³³

Some farmers offered their environmental knowledge to new settlers at The Channon – Pauline Barratt writes that while many locals 'looked upon them with amusement', they were 'very willing' to assist when cows were calving.¹³⁴ They also shared their place-based knowledge of fruit tree cultivation in the sub-tropical climate, and the Ivan family taught new settlers how to make cheese, handing down a hundred-year old family recipe.¹³⁵

Taylor finds similar occurrences in her analysis of ICs, noting that one farmer assisted new settlers with advice, shared his knowledge of local history, and loaned his draughthorse to assist in the planting of new crops.¹³⁶ Taylor reports:

[New settlers] in some cases even use the same tools and methods these farmers originally used themselves. Friendly advice and assistance often actively pursued, tends to establish good relationships between these two groups.¹³⁷

This demonstrates that 'good relations' were cultivated by a shared sense of place. Despite seemingly opposing land ethics - farmers presumably sought their livelihood in the profit made from food cultivation, as opposed to new settlers who sought a livelihood through self-sufficiency – farmers were happy to share their place-based knowledge; the common ground resulted in positive relationships despite seemingly opposing land ethics.

¹³³ Maurice Ryan, 1999, *The Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, Nimbin, p. 2; p. 15.

¹³⁴ Pauline Barratt, 1999, *Around The Channon: A History of its Places and People*, Ballina, p. 146.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Alison Taylor, 1981, *Retreat or Advance: New Settlers and Alternative Lifestyles in the Rainbow Region*, Armidale, p. 92.

¹³⁷ Taylor, *Retreat or Advance*, p. 35.

As discussed in Chapter Five, despite a history of bitter clashes between farmers and environmentalists in Australia and regardless of the underlying land ethic of individuals, it is increasingly evident that many farmers possess a deep reverence for the natural environment. Leigh Shearman grew up in Jiggi before moving to the neighbouring valley of Goolmangar, where she still lives today. A generational dairy farmer, Shearman expresses a deep connection to her property, and despite living her whole life in the Northern Rivers, her sense of belonging is to the local land itself and to the practice of farming rather than to the region.¹³⁸ Well aware of the criticism that farmers often attract from environmentalists, she is sensitive to claims that farmers are environmentally destructive, and demonstrates surprise and gratefulness at the acknowledgement that farmers have a deep understanding of and reverence for the environment.¹³⁹ She explains:

Farmers know the balance between the land, between trees for shade for animals, between keeping the banks healthy, so... you don't lose half your farm to erosion, and so that cows don't slip down a steep bank and all of that... yes they might have taken away the Big Scrub, and that was probably the wrong thing to do. But in their time, that was what they had to do, to actually make a living.... You get a lot more farmers now that care for the land properly, and that are environmentalists than ever before, than ever before.¹⁴⁰

Shearman's land ethic runs more deeply than merely safeguarding her land for economic profit, and her relationship with the natural environment is one of deep understanding:

It takes years to learn what a lot of farmers know. Because they've grown up with it. And we don't realise the knowledge we've got... to look after the land. It's in us and it's in our blood.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Leigh Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹³⁹ This was revealed in conversation between Leigh and myself before the formal interview commenced.

¹⁴⁰ Leigh Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Shearman also expresses a desire to protect the land for future generations, demonstrating a strong sense of intergenerational justice, a critical component of environmental peace.¹⁴² Ted Hoddinot, a self-described hobby farmer, also remarks:

I think farmers really are the penultimate in environmentalists. I think you talk to any farmer ... they would all consider themselves environmentalists because they're doing things that are sustainable... That nexus between greenie and farmer, environmentalist, there's a play on juggling different terminologies. But all farmers, I think if they've got the best interests in passing it on to future generations, they're environmentalists...¹⁴³

Dismantling stereotypes, Meg Neilsen is another Northern Rivers farmer and a National Party voter (traditionally the political party of choice for conservative country voters).¹⁴⁴ Neilsen enthuses about the abundance of native wildlife on her cattle property and her love for all species (with the possible exception of cockroaches, although she does nonetheless believe that they possess 'very cute' faces).¹⁴⁵ She remarks,

I'd say in the last 10 years I've really got to feel more at home with nature, more at home here... That's my real connection I think and that's where I really feel at home – more so with wildlife and nature than with people... I think it's that stewardship of the land. I think it's an extension of caring for something... caring for the life. I mean, I love the cows – I love them. And to make their lives as good as I possibly can and look after the pastures... look after the trees, that's just so important.¹⁴⁶

In 1989, Landcare Australia was established as a partnership between the National Farmers Federation (NFF), the peak national body representing agricultural interests, and environmental organisation the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF).¹⁴⁷ Landcare is a powerful government-funded volunteer movement aimed at

¹⁴² Leigh Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁴³ Ted Hoddinott, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁴⁴ Alcorn, 'In vast swaths of rural New South Wales'.

¹⁴⁵ Meg Neilsen, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author's possession.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Landcare Australia, 2016, 'Who is Landcare Australia', www.landcarelife.com/learn/who-is-landcare-australia, accessed 23 February 2016.

rehabilitating degraded land and promoting sustainable land management.¹⁴⁸ In 1998, 43 percent of farmers were participating in Landcare, and one third of farmers considered themselves conservationists.¹⁴⁹ By 2004 this first figure dropped slightly, but a significant 40 per cent of farmers were still engaged in the program.¹⁵⁰ Martin Holdgate argues, 'there is no doubt that Landcare has been successful in developing a conservation ethic among a large cross-section of the Australian community.'¹⁵¹ In the Northern Rivers, Richmond Landcare represents and supports over 120 community groups, including 'Dunecare, Rivercare, Landcare, Coastcare, SoilCare and farming groups.'¹⁵²

Local Landcare initiatives have also actively sought to incorporate Aboriginal knowledge – in 2010 the Banyam/Baighnam Landcare Group was established to oversee the regeneration of Slater's Creek in North Lismore. The project, named 'Reconnecting to Country', draws on the Bundjalung memory of place. The group includes:

descendants of the original Aboriginal families whose knowledge of the site has been invaluable... Our aim is to replace the weeds and exotic grasses with a range of native species known to have been here before it was cleared in the late 1800s. We know there was a large wetland and open paperbark forest with kangaroo grass, and rainforest along the creek.¹⁵³

Landcare projects have also been responsible for the restoration of koala habitat, much of it replanted by farmers.¹⁵⁴ Leigh Shearman recalls their efforts:

¹⁴⁸ Landcare Australia, 'Who is Landcare Australia'.

¹⁴⁹ Sheridan Burke (ed.), 1998, *Bush Lives: Bush Futures*, Sydney, p. 10; Asa Wahlquist, 1998, 'Falling off the Sheep's Back: Agricultural Economics', in *Bush Lives: Bush Futures*, Burke (ed.), p. 21.

¹⁵⁰ Archer & Beale, *Going Native*, p. 332.

¹⁵¹ Martin Wyatt Holdgate, 1996, *From Care to Action: Making a Sustainable World*, London, p. 241.

¹⁵² Richmond Landcare, 'Welcome to Richmond Landcare Inc.', www.richmondlandcare.org/member-groups.html, accessed 11 February 2016.

¹⁵³ 'Big Plans for Slaters Creek', *Lismore Echo*, 18 November 2010, www.echonews.com.au/news/new-landcare-group-has-big-plans-for-slaters-creek/699948/, accessed 12 November 2015.

¹⁵⁴ 'European Settlement', Rosebank, New South Wales, Australia, <http://rosebank.ws/history-2.html>, accessed 21 November 2015.

The Tuckean forest, where the koalas are, was planted by farmers... they put all the trees and they looked after it, and they spent many many weekends down there getting the trees up and everything.¹⁵⁵

Environmental Knowledge

Shearman's comment that today there are more environmentally-minded farmers 'than ever before' is due in no small part to advances in environmental knowledge and the influence of environmentalist concerns. Many farmers have indeed come a long way in acknowledging the mistakes of the past. Just as a significant number of the loggers discussed in Chapter Five look back with regret on the ecologically violent practices upon which their livelihoods depended, so too are farmers reflecting upon old methods. Tim Duddy of the NSW Irrigators Council feels that if he had his time again, there are some things he would 'never ever' repeat.¹⁵⁶

Mary White acknowledges the damage wrought by the imposition of European land practices, arguing that '[i]n our land-use ethic we should be Australian, not European, to have any chance of achieving sustainability.'¹⁵⁷ White also notes that attitudes have started to shift with the realisation that 'land itself set[s] the parameters and shapes[s] its management', and that farmers must work with the land rather than against it.¹⁵⁸ This is an evident truth as revealed in Chapter Three – the natural environment exerted a powerful degree of agency over the Richmond River colonists, and failed crop choices were transformed into successful industries once colonists learned to adapt to the land. White concludes, 'our survival' as humans on this Earth 'depends on accepting this truth.'¹⁵⁹

Environmental education has given farmers methods and approaches to remediate the consequences of ecological violence. Former Governor General Michael

¹⁵⁵ Leigh Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁵⁶ Tim Duddy, 2013, 'Mining and Farmland Protection', paper presented at the Mining in a Sustainable World: Environmental, Social and Political Economical Issues Conference, 13-15 October 2013, University of New England, Armidale.

¹⁵⁷ Mary White, 1998, 'The Crying Country: Environmental Degradation', in *Bush Lives: Bush Futures*, Burke (ed.), p. 17.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Jeffery now heads Soils for Life, an organisation that promotes regenerative landscape management and environmental innovation in farming practice.¹⁶⁰ The organisation frames the need to take action in terms that also coalesce with the aims of environmental peace, covering issues such as global food security, the challenges of land and water degradation, and climate change, giving farmers a global and holistic outlook.¹⁶¹ Farmers are increasingly observing the impacts of damaging environmental practices for themselves and many are adopting this new knowledge.¹⁶² Reading the land, Tim Wright saw that his Northern Tablelands property was 'in trouble' due to overuse of superphosphates and overgrazing. Consequently he adopted 'a holistic 'working with nature' framework', marking a 'radical departure from conventional farming practice.'¹⁶³ Despite initially attracting scepticism and ridicule from fellow farmers, now Wright and his family have been recognised as 'trailblazers.'¹⁶⁴

Throughout the Northern Rivers a significant number of farmers have embraced sustainable, holistic, biodynamic and/or organic methods. Don Watson observes,

[t]he word you see everywhere in the district is 'sustainable', along with 'organic', 'local', 'biodynamic', 'regional', 'community'... More than 20 per cent of Northern Rivers produce is organic... and the figures are rising.¹⁶⁵

Much of this organic produce is bought and sold locally. The first Australian organic market to sell certified organic produce, Lismore Organic Farmers Market, has been running for sixteen years and has since helped establish over thirty associated markets throughout the region.¹⁶⁶ Co-founder David Roby recounts that the motivation for

¹⁶⁰ Soils For Life, 2012, 'About Soils For Life', www.soilsforlife.org.au/about.html, accessed 24 February 2016.

¹⁶¹ Janene Carey, 2013, 'Grassroots Change', *R.M. Williams Outback*, issue 90, August/September, p. 31.

¹⁶² See for example eight stories of farmer environmental innovation in Burke (ed.), *Bush Lives: Bush Futures*, pp. 33-76.

¹⁶³ Carey, 'Grassroots Change', p. 31.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁵ Watson, *The Bush*, p. 212.

¹⁶⁶ Marc Stapleberg, 2015, 'Lismore Organic market turns 16', *Northern Star*, 1 December, www.northernstar.com.au/news/lismore-organic-market-turns-16/2859266/, accessed 1 December 2015.

establishing the markets was to reduce food miles and to enhance the sense of community by maintaining the 'knowledge line' between farmer and consumer.¹⁶⁷

Watson theorises that there are strong links between organic farming and connection with the natural environment, arguing that 'organic farming appears to satisfy some half-forgotten need to work more intimately with nature, to work with it rather than against it, to find the rhythms.'¹⁶⁸ Local fruit farmer Alan Roberts's approach supports Watson's theory. Roberts discusses his approach to organic farming - working with the natural lay of the land he describes how there are 'three main shelves where the three layers of volcanic lava were deposited – so you've got shelves that you can farm... It's a farm that works in with the environment.'¹⁶⁹ Roberts describes his relationship with the natural environment as being 'pretty much part of it.' He explains, 'I've got no windows... there's not a real separation between me and nature. And it's really lovely, it's good for your soul.'¹⁷⁰

Local farmers also reflect on the influence of new settlers upon their land ethic and practices. Curtis recalls her first day on the job as a weeds officer in 1987. Local renters were opposed to chemical spraying on their leased properties, and Curtis was tasked with the job of preventing the 'ferals' access while four spray trucks used a back entrance. She recalls that the renters were crestfallen when they discovered that their homes had been sprayed:

I actually empathised with the protesters in that... and so slowly my whole job for the last 26 years is to turn that whole thing around with the us and them... and I think now I have a really good working relationship with everybody in the community, the farmers, and the alternate community...¹⁷¹

Curtis now travels around the area providing instruction in chemical-free weed control.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Stapleberg, 'Lismore Organic market turns 16'.

¹⁶⁸ Watson, *The Bush*, p. 212.

¹⁶⁹ Alan Roberts, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁷⁰ Alan Roberts, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁷¹ Kim Curtis, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Leigh Shearman's brother, Geoff, also recounts a remarkable transformative experience. Like his sister, Shearman grew up on dairy farms in the region and became a farmer himself. Initially suspicious of the alternative community at Nimbin, he explains that he used to be the 'opposite' of an environmentalist. His relationship with his Goolmangar farm was based entirely on what value he could extract from it: 'I owned it. Very much disconnected... I was just getting what I can out of it.'¹⁷³ That was until one inspiring individual challenged his views and encouraged him to adopt alternative farming methods based on homeopathics. Initially sceptical and resistant, Shearman allowed his partner to try the remedy:

it was just so good... and we ended up doing courses for local farmers... so I went from allopathy [homeopathic term for mainstream medicine] to naturopathy for the animals, about 95%, and it was just such an improvement with the animals... I even started treating the land with homeopathics... I started to look at fertilizers as poisons. I started questioning everything on the farming side.¹⁷⁴

Shearman now lives at nearby Rosebank and enjoys regular social trips to Nimbin village. He credits his growing sense of belonging to the environment as a result of his change in attitude, and he is now 'extremely sympathetic' towards environmental issues and feels that he is 'heading towards activism.'¹⁷⁵

The Shearman family are exemplary of the shift in farmer attitudes; Leigh and Geoff's father, Bruce Shearman, had been a member of the National Party for fifty years and was the president of the local branch.¹⁷⁶ However, Geoff notes a change in his father's attitudes, particularly since the growing awareness of the ecologically violent consequences of coal seam gas mining in the region:

some of his good friends are local greenies. And to watch that evolve over the years has been quite amazing. They do differ... in what they do and how they approach things... but they give give, from both sides.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Geoff Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Alcorn, 'In vast swaths of rural New South Wales, there's only one election issue'.

¹⁷⁷ Geoff Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible.

While there are still deeply ingrained political and cultural divisions in the region, just as there are throughout Australia, there is growing evidence that common environmental threats are bringing people together. Geoff Shearman concludes, ‘the us and them is very, very difficult to take away. But if you look around today, the Greens and the farmers are living together beautifully.’¹⁷⁸

A Shared Love of Place

The Northern Rivers of the modern era demonstrates an evolved and shared sense of place that can draw people together on common ground. Recurrent themes run through this evolving history, but there is one powerful and deeply emotional sentiment expressed with greater frequency as increasing numbers of people form an attachment to the land. What is revealed is not just a sense of place, or a connection to place, but a *love* of place. It is not surprising for the word to appear in the hippie sentiments of a land ethic aligned with the values of the ‘peace, love and brown rice’, but this powerful human motivator can be observed crossing temporal and cultural boundaries, demonstrating the depth of connection between people and the place-specific natural environment.

Steele suggests that the Bundjalung people, so connected to place, possessed an inherent love of land that white Australians did not:

We are still learning... to love the very earth and the rocks so that we exploit them more wisely and less wastefully. We can learn so much from the Aboriginals of the subtropical coast.¹⁷⁹

In contrast, expressions of love were made by some of the first prominent white people to voice alarm over the destruction of the Australian landscape. Elyne Mitchell understood that love of place could cultivate environmental peace, arguing in 1946 that the key to addressing environmental degradation is to nurture ‘a real love of the land – a love of the universal Australian earth and an intense love of the particular

¹⁷⁸ Geoff Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹⁷⁹ John G. Steele, 1983, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, St. Lucia, pp. xviii-xix.

place from which each individual comes.’¹⁸⁰ In 1954, Sir Keith Hancock revealed that his concern for the destruction of the land came from a deep love of ‘his’ country, suggesting a sense of belonging and ownership that comes through love.¹⁸¹ The influential Aldo Leopold also used the expression in his discussion of ‘The Land Ethic’, arguing an ‘ethical relation to land’ cannot ‘exist without love.’¹⁸²

In the Northern Rivers today, the word ‘love’ can frequently be heard when discussing one’s relationship to place and sense of belonging. Annie Kia, anti-gas activist explains:

I would say that my sense is that if you love a place, and its ecology, and its aesthetics, all of those things, then you belong. So I think belonging comes with loving.¹⁸³

A love of place is frequently articulated as a love of *all* places on Earth, and a love for all life. In 1964 Erich Fromm coined the term ‘biophilia’, literally meaning ‘love of life.’¹⁸⁴ Harvard biologist Edward Wilson popularised the concept in his 1984 book *Biophilia*, arguing that humans have an ‘innate tendency’ to seek connection with the natural environment, specifically life itself and living things.¹⁸⁵

A deep, biophilic connection to living things appears to be a strong motivator for environmental action and activism. Francis expresses her motivations as an environmentalist: ‘I’m motivated by concern, but that comes from a very, very deep love, the love of life, the love of nature.’¹⁸⁶ Fellow permaculturalist, Geoff Lawton of the Permaculture Research Institute at The Channon, expresses ‘a love for natural systems and the wild.’¹⁸⁷ Phil Mitten of the Nimbin Environment Centre is a self-described ‘hippie’ who articulates what could be considered an extension of biophilia – beyond a love of life, his philosophy is that love *is* life, and that everything is

¹⁸⁰ Elyne Mitchell, 1946, *Soil and Civilisation*, Sydney, p. 33.

¹⁸¹ William Keith Hancock, 1954, *Country and Calling*, London, p.122.

¹⁸² Aldo Leopold, 1949, *A Sand County Almanac*, New York, p. 261.

¹⁸³ Annie Kia, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, The Channon, 31 May 2012, in author’s possession.

¹⁸⁴ Erich Fromm, 1964, *The Heart of Man*, New York.

¹⁸⁵ Edward O. Wilson, 1984, *Biophilia*, Cambridge, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ Francis, ‘Healing the Rift’, p. 51.

¹⁸⁷ Geoff Lawton, 2011, ‘Thinking Big’, in *Permaculture Pioneers: Stories from the New Frontier*, Kerry Dawborn & Caroline Smith (eds), Hepburn, p. 88

interconnected through love. He also believes that love is essential to the cultivation of peace: 'I've been involved in the peace movement... love is central.'¹⁸⁸ Bentley farmer Meg Nielsen expresses a profound, all-encompassing love of life that she likens to a 'religious experience.' In relation to the protection of farmland against unconventional gas mining, Nielsen professes:

when I say I Love life, with a capital L, I mean quite literally I Love *everything* and nothing gives me more joy than to look up and see the sky with its green trees silhouetted against it and the reddy-brown of the branches and the birds flitting through it. That, to me, is infinite joy... So, without exaggeration, I would quite happily die to stop this. If I thought I could die to stop this happening to the Earth I would do so.¹⁸⁹

For many Northern Rivers residents, loving the land translates into wanting to protect the land, just as Mitchell had hoped in 1943. Forest blockader Dailan Pugh professes a love for the rainforest, Terania Creek veteran and ex-Byron Shire Councillor Ellis believes that love develops once one decides that an environment is worth protecting, and local farmer and Bentley Blockader Rosemary Joseph comments on the cohesive power of love: 'we all feel so much the same, no matter where we come from really, we just love the Northern Rivers.'¹⁹⁰

Some consider their relationship with the natural environment to be the same as the relationship between lovers, inherently challenging the nature/culture divide. Highly influential in deep ecology and activist circles, Johanna Macy's work, *World as Lover, World as Self*, is described as a 'love poem to the planet.'¹⁹¹ Drawing on Buddhist tradition, Macy believes:

¹⁸⁸ Phil Mitten, interview with Vanessa Bible.

¹⁸⁹ Meg Nielsen, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author's possession.

¹⁹⁰ Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Byron Bay, 10 May 2012, in author's possession; Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible; Rosemary Joseph, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author's possession.

¹⁹¹ Johanna Macy, 2007, *World as Lover, World as Self: Courage for Global Justice and Ecological Renewal*, Berkeley.

Just as lovers seek union, we are apt, when we fall in love with our world, to fall into oneness with it as well. We begin to see the world as ourselves.¹⁹²

Macy argues that if humanity cannot form a deep, interconnected relationship with the Earth, we risk our own destruction. Nan Nicholson provides a good example of the power of cultivating this relationship. Her relationship with her place of belonging inspired a decades-long engagement with environmental action, including protest and rainforest regeneration:

I had this very strong relationship with my land... I felt that it was a moral and spiritual relationship and if we didn't respect that, we were going to be in big trouble... it is a very basic human relationship and it feels as strong as lover... to me. It's got to be faithful, it's got to be one to one, it's got to be reciprocal, you've got to acknowledge your dependence – it's all of those things.¹⁹³

The Nicholsons still live on their Terania Creek property, and a love of the place, the Earth, and a fierce desire to protect it has been passed down through generations. The Nicholsons were an active presence at the Bentley Blockade, joined by both their daughter as well as their grandchildren. In an emotive display of the power of the Northern Rivers environment movement, over 40 years after the Terania Creek blockade, the Nicholsons' granddaughter could be seen atop the Bentley tripod. The anti-gas movement of the Northern Rivers represents the strongest and most significant environmental campaign in the region since Terania Creek – however unlike Terania, the movement is built on the collaborative efforts of Bundjalung Elders, farmers, environmentalists, and the wider community.

Gasfield Free

The Lock the Gate Alliance (LTG), established in 2010, has played a major role in the uniting of farmers and environmentalists against the environmentally destructive impacts of the fossil fuel industry on agricultural land in Australia. Originating in the gas fields of Queensland and growing to encompass and support localised anti-coal

¹⁹² Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self*, p. 27.

¹⁹³ Nan Nicholson, cited in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 111.

mining groups, the now Australia-wide alliance cuts across differing land ethics, giving voice to a coalescence of environmental concerns.¹⁹⁴ Farmers and environmentalists alike understand the significance of food, water and community security – from the LTG website:

The **mission** of the Lock the Gate Alliance is to protect Australia's natural, cultural and agricultural resources from inappropriate mining and to educate and empower all Australians to demand sustainable solutions to food and energy production.¹⁹⁵

So strong are the perceived environmental threats to agricultural land that increasingly, farmers have been engaging in direct action tactics, previously the realm of environmentalists alone. A rural newspaper reports:

[w]hen conservative rural people take law-breaking lessons from seasoned environmental activists, some ancient order of things has been overturned... Non-violent direct action isn't new, Mr Phillips observed, pointing to the examples of Jesus and Gandhi. But it's a concept that's very fresh to Australian farming communities.¹⁹⁶

This phenomenon is not restricted to LTG members and supporters – the growing alliances between farmer and environmentalist can be seen in a number of ways, from wheat farmers running as Greens candidates in elections to a farmer prioritising the rights of koalas and Aboriginal heritage concerns over the loss of his own livelihood in his reasons for speaking out against a coalmine on the Liverpool Plains.¹⁹⁷

The Northern Rivers, however, as is the case with so many environmental issues, has been at the forefront of the anti-gas movement. *The Guardian* reports: 'the spiritual heart of opposition to CSG in NSW is in the Northern Rivers region, centred in Lismore.'¹⁹⁸ From 2011 Gasfield Free Northern Rivers (GFNR) conducted extensive

¹⁹⁴ Lock the Gate Alliance, 'About Us', www.lockthegate.org.au/about_us, accessed 10 February 2016.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* Bold emphasis original.

¹⁹⁶ Matthew Cawood, 2013, 'Rural Activism Rising', *The Land*, 7 September, www.theland.com.au/news/agriculture/general/news/rural-activism-rising/2670203.aspx, accessed 12 September 2013.

¹⁹⁷ Catherine Clifford, 2013, 'Penny Blatchford nominates as Greens candidate for Senate', *ABC News*, 13 August, www.abc.net.au/news/2013-08-13/penny-blatchford-nominates-as-greens27-candidate-for-senate/4882126, accessed 21 February 2016.

Thomas Fisher, rally attendee, pers. comm., 15 February 2015.

¹⁹⁸ Alcorn, 'In vast swaths of rural New South Wales, there's only one election issue'.

door-knocking surveys to determine the percentage of locals opposed to CSG – percentages range from 87 per cent in Lismore to 99 per cent at The Channon, averaging 95 per cent across the region (see figure 25).¹⁹⁹ In a symbolic gesture, in April 2012 at The Channon oval, GFNR offered their declarations for a gasfield free region to Lismore mayor Jenny Dowell. Annie Kia recalls:

...that event was so amazing. It was a transcendent sort of experience, to be on that oval with hundreds of people from this community... making a statement that they were saying no to coal seam gas mining. That's very special – I mean it was a really humbling kind of experience to be part of such a community that's got that strength... you couldn't live in a better place than this. I mean that is social capital, plus plus plus. It really is quite amazing. So that's – I can't remember your question now, but I think it was about... why do I belong here, and I think that's a fantastic reason.²⁰⁰



Figure 25: The Northern Rivers Gasfield Free Movement. Photos by author.

¹⁹⁹ Alcorn, 'In vast swaths of rural New South Wales, there's only one election issue'.

²⁰⁰ Annie Kia, interview by Vanessa Bible.

In May 2012, an anti-CSG rally in Lismore drew a crowd of 7000 people (in a city of less than 30 000).²⁰¹ Leigh Shearman demonstrates the significance of the broad-based event:

...to get 7000 people walking against CSG in a rally in Lismore, and I can assure you that if 10% of them were radicals, that would be an exaggeration. They were farmers in their sixties and seventies that have never done anything like that ever before in their life, and they felt strong enough that they did that.²⁰²

Despite overwhelming community opposition, gas companies proceeded with unconventional gas drilling projects in the region. In 2012 and 2013, residents of the Northern Rivers mounted blockades against the drilling of gas wells at Doubtful Creek and Glenugie (while Glenugie is close to Grafton, approximately 150 kilometres south of Lismore, a considerable number of activists present were of Northern Rivers origin, reinforcing the transportability and beyond-boundaries concern of Northern Rivers activism).²⁰³ Numbers at these protests were relatively small, however, and the protesters were ultimately unsuccessful. Despite these blows to local communities, a fierce determination prevailed – Nan Nicholson enthuses:

... it's a very euphoric feeling. We're part of a whole bunch and we're going to win this one. I'm loving being mates with people I that wouldn't have been able to get to know, and that's the exciting thing of course, we realise we've got all these things in common. And love of land, gosh, who can't relate to that!²⁰⁴

Metgasco's audacious decision to attempt to drill for gas right in the heart of the Rainbow Region resulted in a very different outcome. The threat to the region evoked a strong, passionate and collaborative response from Bundjalung Elders, local farmers, environmentalists and the mainstream community alike.

²⁰¹ Stephanie Turnbull, 2012, 'Show of force against coal seam gas, *ABC North coast NSW*, 14 May, www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2012/05/14/3502097.htm, accessed 28 February 2016.

²⁰² Leigh Shearman, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²⁰³ See for example Rodney Stevens, 2013, 'Four charges against Glenugie csg protestor dismissed', *Northern Star*, 7 September, www.northernstar.com.au/news/four-charges-dismissed/2012840/, accessed 21 January 2016.

²⁰⁴ Nan Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Terania Creek, 5 May 2012, in author's possession.

The Bentley Blockade

In early 2014 Metgasco were preparing to drill for tight sands gas on farmland at Bentley. While not coal seam gas, the tight sands would require hydraulic fracturing, or ‘fracking’, to release the gas.²⁰⁵ Fracking is the practice of injecting a high-pressure combination of water, sand and (often highly dangerous) chemicals deep into the earth to fracture a coal seam or tight gas sands in order to release gas reserves.²⁰⁶ The practice is highly contentious and has been linked to the release of highly toxic and carcinogenic chemicals; increased incidence of earthquakes; subsidence of water tables and the contamination of aquifers; the release of dangerous levels of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, along with other significant environmental impacts.²⁰⁷

The Bentley Blockade was built not only out of the culmination of decades of experience honing protest techniques to a fine art, but also on the evolution of a shared sense of place and *respect* for place, creating a powerful community spirit. Echoes of Terania could be seen in the camp organisation, use of the arts, police liaison, a television advertisement and strict adherence to nonviolent direct action.* And just as Terania had, the blockade drew together an impressive set of collaborative skills – local activists played a major role on the blockade site, constructing a formidable tangle of obstacles at the access gates of the proposed site and risking their safety by climbing blockade structures (figure 26, below). Community leaders knowledgeable in sustaining community, logistics and communication put great effort into the running of ‘Camp Liberty’, the basecamp for the blockade that saw thousands of ‘protectors’ come and go over the months. Well-spoken farmers and GFNR representatives worked hard lobbying politicians, and Bundjalung Elders imparted knowledge of local sacred sites and explained to the camp the significance of land and water to Aboriginal culture. Many in the wider community offered whatever support

²⁰⁵ Gasfield Free Northern Rivers, 2014, ‘Bentley Blockade: General Information’, <http://csgfreenorthernrivers.org/rosella/>, accessed 12 February 2016.

²⁰⁶ Robert W. Howarth, Anthony Ingraffea & Terry Engelder, 2011, ‘Natural gas: Should fracking stop?’, *Nature*, vol. 477, pp. 271-275; Peter Aldhous, 2012, ‘Drilling into the Unknown’, *New Scientist*, vol. 213, no. 2849, pp. 8-10.

²⁰⁷ See for example Howarth, Ingraffea & Engelder, ‘Natural gas: Should fracking stop?’;

* It must be noted that the Terania Creek blockade was not entirely nonviolent – there was a rumoured tree-spiking incident, and one night felled logs were sawed into short lengths by a protester, rendering them useless to the logging industry.



Figure 26: Tripods at the Bentley Blockade. Bentley, May 2014. Photo by author.

they could, donating food and other resources, and informing the camp of any developments in relation to police movements or large bookings for accommodation or catering services that could indicate an amassing police presence.²⁰⁸

After months of tense blockading and multiple threats to send in eight hundred riot police, early one morning an announcement came that Metgasco's license had been suspended pending an inquiry into the company's seemingly inadequate community consultation process. More than eighteen months later, after argument, court appeals, threatening rhetoric from Metgasco and the fall of a strong Nationals seat to the Greens, the NSW Government bought back the company's petroleum exploration license (PEL) in November 2015.²⁰⁹ In a true testament to the theory of cultivating peace from a coalescing sense of place and the resultant common ground, the community was put to the test and succeeded in spectacular fashion, leading to the eventual withdrawal of every gas company in the region and the government buy back of every PEL – the region is now indeed gasfield free.

²⁰⁸ Personal observation of author after four weeks at the blockade and camp.

²⁰⁹ Eve Jeffery, 2015, 'CSG fighters celebrate – Metgasgone?', *Northern Rivers Echo*, 3 November, www.echo.net.au/2015/11/csg-fighters-celebrate-metgasgone/, accessed 21 November 2015.

Cultivating Community

While the history of the Northern Rivers up until Bentley has demonstrated increasing collaborations between traditionally opposing groups of people, Bentley added something new to the common ground – a deep and self-aware cultivation of community. A seemingly confusing yet common sentiment at the blockade was an expression of gratitude towards Metgasco. Meg Nielsen explains,

I think it's good that Metgasco is trying to drill, because it makes us all come together and evolve and say that's enough... when something happens like this, it gives people the opportunity to bring out of themselves what they didn't know was in there.²¹⁰

Hodinott concurs, adding that despite the 'agony' of the situation, the blockaders shared 'so much joy as well because [they had] become so close.'²¹¹ Soon after the suspension of the company's license, well-known deep ecologist Ruth Rosenhek thanked Metgasco and the politicians who approved the project for creating such a



Figure 27: 'Gate A', Bentley Blockade. Bentley, May 2014. Photo by author.

²¹⁰ Meg Nielsen, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²¹¹ Ted Hodinott, interview by Vanessa Bible.

terrible crisis that united the community, ‘heads and hearts and hands.’²¹² To return to Grosz’s theory, it was the shared experience that shaped the blockaders’ identity as a community under siege from threats of ecological violence. Aidan Ricketts observes:

It remains an incredibly amazing story because there’s no historical precedent that I can think of in Australia where an entire region has stood up on an issue like this right across the board. Business people, farmers, indigenous people, tree-changers, mayors climbing tripods, Anglican Ministers being there.²¹³

The phenomenon of a sense of community arising from disaster is a promising sign given the environmental challenges humanity faces, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

The blockade also helped to bring people even closer together on common ground, in expressions of love and gratitude. Curtis recalls her defensive reaction to Minister for Resources and Energy Anthony Robert’s assumptions that the blockade was ‘full of ferals’:

...after he spoke to us, I think he was humbled a bit. Because he didn’t realise, it’s not ferals, there were ten of us. Ten farmers, from around here. And I said to him, and even if it was ferals, so what? I love them. They’re protecting our [land]– so what? What have you got against them? ²¹⁴

Rosemary Joseph was another of the group of ten that Curtis refers to, and she reveals, ‘I felt totally despairing and alone, but I can say that some of the best experiences of my 67 year life were spent here.’²¹⁵ Another two in the group were Meg and her husband Peter Nielsen. Meg reveals something that her third-generation dairy farming husband said to her: ‘my husband said “I’ve never really felt I’ve belonged with any group of people and since this awful thing has happened I suddenly feel like I belong

²¹² Ruth Rosenhek, 2014, ‘Go Forth Gently (Reflections on the Aftermath of Bentley)’, May 19, <http://freefall23.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/go-forth-gently-the-aftermath-of-bentley/>, accessed 22 May 2014.

²¹³ Aidan Ricketts, cited in Mick Daley, 2014, ‘B Day at Bentley – a political solution, or a democratic hand grenade?’, May 27, www.mickdaley.com/b-day-at-bentley-a-political-solution-or-a-democratic-hand-grenade/, accessed 10 November 2015.

²¹⁴ Kim Curtis, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²¹⁵ Rosemary Joseph, cited in Luke Vassella, ‘Gently Bentley’, *Songs of the Bentley Blockade*, Audio CD, Lismore.



Figure 28: Common ground at the Bentley Blockade. (standing l-r) Bundjalung man Gilbert Laurie, Lock the Gate coordinator Ian Gaillard (with microphone), daughter and mother Terri Nicholson (green shirt) and Nan Nicholson (red shirt), and Lismore councillor Simon Clough (blue shirt). Bentley, May 2014. Photo by author.

with them”.²¹⁶ And in a powerful speech that evoked an emotional response from many, Bundjalung elder Yilla expressed his gratefulness to the crowd at camp Liberty upon Metgasco’s license suspension. Moved to tears of gratitude, he concluded with ‘I love you all.’²¹⁷

So powerful was the sense of community cultivated at Bentley that just like the Aquarius Festival, there was a real sense of loss at the conclusion of the camp, and an unwillingness to leave the site. This was partially overcome by community meetings centred around discussions of how the community spirit could be kept alive. In the aftermath of Bentley, there have been celebratory concerts and gatherings; the release of a music compilation of protest songs including the Bentley ‘anthem’, *Gentley Bentley*; a Facebook page called ‘Beyond Bentley’ to facilitate ongoing discussions and collaborations, and an outwards dissemination of energy with a

²¹⁶ Meg Nielsen, interview by Vanessa Bible.

²¹⁷ Personal observation of author.

significant number of people venturing out to other protests and blockades, such is the power and determination of the community created.

The Bentley victory has emboldened communities across Australia and the world, and likely has been responsible for increased pressure on coal seam gas companies in NSW – not only has the Northern Rivers been declared gasfield free, but other companies have also withdrawn across the state, including major company AGL. Santos is now the last major gas company remaining in NSW and is based in the Pilliga Scrub, the largest stretch of semi-arid woodland left in NSW.²¹⁸ The company has been found guilty of incidences of ecological violence including significant chemical spills, water contamination and the venting of large quantities of methane.²¹⁹ Demonstrative of a connection to the environment and a sense of belonging that transcends one's own 'backyard', several Bentley protesters including Benny Zable, as well as a shipping container full of resources from Camp Liberty, are now at the 'Pilliga Push' camp, taking a stand against Santos' activities. Meg Nielsen's answer to confronting the environmental challenges of the present and future is simple:

Exactly what we are doing here. I think if we can maintain this wonderful connection with community and spread out in the ripple effect, I think we can change the world.²²⁰

The innovative and influential environmentalism of the Northern Rivers region today is a product of the collective voices of those who stand on common ground. While competing land ethics may not always be compatible and issues resulting from this clash are likely to continue to generate conflict, the history of the region demonstrates the significance of the evolving and coalescing sense of place. The union of historically radically different groups has shown that feelings of belonging and attachment to place are common to us all, even if expressed in different ways. The relationship between people and the natural environment in the Northern Rivers is

²¹⁸ Kerry Smith, 2016, 'Pressure mounts on coal, coal seam gas companies', *Green Left Weekly*, www.greenleft.org.au/node/61143, accessed 1 March; Kerrie Thomas, 2011, 'Coal seam gas: rural NSW says no', *Green Left Weekly*, www.greenleft.org.au/node/48189, accessed 22 February 2015.

²¹⁹ Coal seam gas news, 2013, 'Contaminated sites and accidents related specifically to CSG in Australia', <http://coalseamgasnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Contaminated-sites-and-accidents-related-specifically-to-CSG-in-Australia.pdf>, accessed 22 February 2016.

²²⁰ Meg Nielsen, interview by Vanessa Bible.

often expressed in terms of the strongest and most powerful human emotions, and love of land is frequently extended to love for community. The significance of collaborative environmentalism and the understanding and respect that arises from this process and the community that it can create, offer powerful and demonstrated lessons in cultivating environmental peace. The next and final chapter will build on these lessons to ask, what more can the unique region offer to alleviate the ecological violence inflicted upon the Earth, and how can this knowledge be used to inform existing peacebuilding methods?

Chapter Seven

Confluence

‘Moving towards an environmentally sustainable Australia will depend not only on our knowledge of ecosystems and resources but even more on our ability to initiate, advocate and absorb radical shifts in desired lifestyles, values and technology. Indeed, we may already have the knowledge to make such a transition - but are we prepared to act upon it?’

Tom Griffiths, 2007.¹

The Rainbow Region provides valuable insight into how we can ‘initiate, advocate and absorb [the] radical shifts’ necessary to make a transition towards an environmentally peaceful future. The region offers more than a contribution to theory – it has itself proved to be fertile ground for the evolution and application of successful environmental peace cultivation in practice. This chapter will place the Rainbow Region of the modern day within the context of environmental peace theory so as to understand how we can cultivate peace in the Anthropocene.

The region today is situated at the confluence of previously separate, even disparate, streams of knowing and understanding the Earth, which today frequently flow together and meet on common ground. In seeking an understanding of the lessons provided by the evolving relationship between people and the natural environment, this chapter will look at the common streams that run through the historical landscape. While there are many, this chapter will focus on the key themes that arise in each era and proceed to cross temporal boundaries, establishing streams that flow to the present day. These themes include the recognition of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK); the significance of values, environmental knowledge and sense of place/belonging as determinants of the relationship between people and the natural environment; grassroots action, activism and nonviolence as ‘infrastructures for peace’; and the acknowledgement of the common ground as central to the cultivation of environmentally peaceful communities. Lastly this chapter will recognise

¹ Tom Griffiths, 2007, ‘The Humanities and an Environmentally Sustainable Australia’, *Australian Humanities Review*, issue 43, December, unpaginated.

the complex issues of environmental justice and the need to think collaboratively and beyond borders if true environmental peace is to be established in the murky Anthropocene. While the challenges are many, several of the peace cultivation strategies identified not only have the capacity for global application, but have achieved demonstrated success in both Western and non-Western countries. The Rainbow Region, local in context, has global significance.

Key Themes/Common Streams

Bundjalung Country

Chapter Two explored the inherently interconnected nature of the relationship between the Bundjalung people and their Country. The most significant aspect of this relationship was the completely interwoven sense of self and sense of place - as explained in Chapter Two, the relationship defies definition in Western, academic language. Deferring to an Aboriginal language offers some insight into the complexity of the relationship:

It's the same for all Aboriginal people, no matter where they are. *Apmere apanpe* is like 'a place everywhere', 'everywhere is a place'... Like a big Land itself, the whole Land, not just one land, the whole country, the living spirit of the Land... forty thousand years ago, this whole country belonged to the Aboriginal Ancestors. The whole country, the whole Australia, you know?... the places everywhere... was joined together, their roots holding each other in relationship.²

This profound connection which oversaw the respectful care for, and sustainable management of, the Australian landscape and its people was severed with the imposition of a radically different land ethic grounded first and foremost in a resource extraction mentality. As discussed in Chapter Three, Aboriginal wisdom was exploited by colonists, who used Bundjalung knowledge to locate food sources, Bundjalung guides to locate red cedar and Bundjalung labour to build up pastoral properties. Advice was also sought when colonists endeavoured to understand the increased

² Margaret Kemarre Turner, 2010, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye: What it Means to Be an Aboriginal Person*, Alice Springs, p. 115.

incidence of drought, flood and fire, a consequence of the oppression of the Bundjalung land ethic by European understandings forged of a different place.

The evolving history also reveals the appreciation of and respect for the natural environment that so frequently accompanies an understanding of an Aboriginal land ethic. Joshua Bray and the Ogilvie/Bundock family, as discussed in Chapter Four, saw the land from an Aboriginal perspective, and their deep connection with the natural environment markedly distinguished them from the prevailing attitudes of the colonial era. Chapter Five revealed that the Aquarius Festival organisers wanted to acknowledge the Indigeneity of the Nimbin landscape. They consequently sought out Bundjalung Elders, leading to perhaps the first Welcome to Country performed for white Australians and setting a powerful precedent for the acknowledgement that the Australian landscape is an Aboriginal landscape. During the Aquarius era the Bundjalung land ethic exerted considerable influence over the way in which new settlers understood the landscape. In the modern era, Aboriginal knowledge of bush food, native species and land management is not only recognised, it is also deliberately sought out and used to cultivate environmental awareness and community.

This history demonstrates a gradual cyclical process - a dominant land ethic lasting many generations becoming largely subterranean when faced with a fundamentally different set of attitudes and values, slowly re-growing in the light of increasing recognition of its inherent virtues (and likewise, in increasing recognition of the inherently destructive nature of a resource extraction land ethic).³ Today, this land ethic is recognised as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and is considered to be a powerful tool for building sustainability (and hence for the cultivation of environmental peace). TEK embodies ecological knowledge of a place, springing from a coevolution of people and environment, refined over many thousands of years. In his discussion of the 'making of an Australian consciousness', David Malouf comments, 'we now recognise that Aboriginal people, having lived here a long time, understand

³ Geoffrey Bolton, 1981, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians make their environment 1788-1980*, North Sydney, p. 9; Michael Dodson, 1995, 'Cultural Rights and Educational Responsibilities', *Australian Folklore*, no. 10, pp. 79-83; James F. Weiner, 2011, 'The appropriation of an Aboriginal landscape in northern New South Wales', *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 189-202.

the way Australia works.’⁴ A number of Australian historians now recognise the failure to appreciate the Aboriginal land ethic and the resultant and avoidable ecological violence inflicted upon the land.⁵

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Karl-Erik Sveiby and Tex Skuthorpe write in *Treading Lightly*, one of the key works on TEK:

*Australian Aboriginal society’s model for sustainability has the longest proven track record on earth. While societies outside Australia emerged, prospered and went under, Aboriginal society withstood and proved its sustainability over tens of thousands of years of dramatic events, until the Europeans’ arrival in 1788. It is an extraordinary achievement, especially considering that this is something humanity is now struggling with: the way to build a truly sustainable society on this earth.*⁶

In recent years there has developed a great interest in the wisdom of traditional societies in both academic and non-academic circles. There is a considerable amount of literature on the subject,⁷ and high profile figures including environmentalist David Suzuki and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau have publicly stated that the knowledge of Indigenous people is crucial to confronting environmental issues such as climate change.⁸ TEK has also been recognised as an ‘approach to peace’ – Richard Falk argues that the ‘rift’ created by the nature/culture divide is now being mended as

⁴ David Malouf, 1998, *A Spirit of Play: The Making of Australian Consciousness*, Sydney, p. 55.

⁵ See for example Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers*, p. 9; Dodson, ‘Cultural Rights and Educational Responsibilities’, pp. 79-83; Weiner, ‘The appropriation of an Aboriginal landscape in northern New South Wales’, pp. 189-202.

⁶ Karl-Erik Sveiby & Tex Skuthorpe, 2006, *Treading Lightly: The Hidden Wisdom of the World’s Oldest People*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, p. xv-xvi. Italics in original.

⁷ See for example Sveiby & Skuthorpe, *Treading Lightly*; Peter Knudtson & David Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders*, Toronto, 1992; Nancy M. Williams & Graham Baines, 1993, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Wisdom for Sustainable Development*, Canberra; Julian T. Inglis (ed.), 1993, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases*, Ottawa; Michael Hart, 2015, ‘Indigenism and the Re-Cognition and Celebration of Indigenous Knowledges’, paper presented at *Recognising, Reclaiming and Celebrating Indigenous Heritage*: 3rd International Indigenous Social Work Conference, September 14-17, Darwin.

⁸ David Suzuki, 2015, ‘Aboriginal people, not environmentalists, are our best bet for protecting the planet’, Sovereign Union, <http://nationalunitygovernment.org/content/david-suzuki-aboriginal-people-not-environmentalists-are-our-best-bet-protecting-planet>, accessed 2 December 2015; ‘Prime Minister Trudeau says Indigenous people key to stopping climate change’, *NITV News*, 2 December 2015, www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2015/12/02/prime-minister-trudeau-says-indigenous-people-key-stopping-climate-change, accessed 2 December 2015.

a result of the ‘rediscovery of human dependence on natural surroundings,’ an important step towards more humane governance.⁹ Sveiby and Skuthorpe argue that peacekeeping is a central aspect of traditional Aboriginal society, and Aboriginal law/lore was inherently peaceful, constructed in conflict-minimising ways.¹⁰ Furthermore Hawke argues that the cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary nature of collaborations between TEK and modern environmental approaches in itself helps to establish both environmental peace as well as furthering cultural awareness and human rights.¹¹

As discussed, and as demonstrated in the Rainbow Region, embracing TEK offers practical approaches to resource management. Just as Bundjalung knowledge informs Rous Water’s management strategies, local governments of the Murray Darling Basin draw on Aboriginal knowledge in their approach to managing the fragile and critically important river system.¹² And just as TEK informs National Parks management in the Rainbow Region, Libby Robin also cites the increasing influence of TEK upon ‘Australian science and land-management practices’ since the 1980s.¹³ However, Deborah McGregor warns against drawing on TEK simply to inform land management practices:

the way in which TEK is understood and implemented within a Western perspective means that the insights into the nature of the environmental crisis and approaches to its resolution that TEK offers get lost.¹⁴

There is also a risk that drawing on only the ‘useful’ parts of another’s culture for one’s own benefit is a form of cultural appropriation, but there is strong evidence that

⁹ Richard Falk, 2000, ‘On Humane Governance’, in David Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies*, New York, p. 248.

¹⁰ Sveiby & Skuthorpe, *Treading Lightly*, p. 172, p. 137.

¹¹ Shé Mackenzie Hawke, 2012, ‘Water Literacy: An ‘other wise’, active and cross-cultural approach to pedagogy, sustainability and human rights’, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, p. 241.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 244.

¹³ Libby Robin, 2011, ‘Perceptions of Place and Deep Time in the Australian Desert: Using Art in Environmental History’, in *Thinking through the Environment: Green Approaches to Global History*, Timo Myllyntaus (ed.), Cambridge, pp. 94-95.

¹⁴ Deborah McGregor, 2004, ‘Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Sustainable Development: Towards Coexistence’, in *In The Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects, and Globalization*, Mario Blaser, Harvey A. Feit & Glenn McRae (eds), London, p. 72.

McGregor's concerns are unnecessary. Much of the push to embrace TEK is coming from within Indigenous communities.¹⁵ Bundjalung elder Lorraine Mafi Williams expresses:

The Aboriginal Elders regard it as their role to help the white race understand the changes that are upon us and to begin to care for the Earth and all of humanity. At this time of chaos they teach that God is not a big man or woman in the sky, but a Being of love who wishes us to come together with respect for each other and the world we share.¹⁶

Furthermore, many recognise that the most important part of TEK is not land management, but the intrinsic relationship between people and the natural environment. Understandings of the interconnected nature of all life are central to the mission of environmental humanists in their self-appointed task of navigating the Anthropocene, as discussed in Chapter One. Moran argues that the 'Western philosophical fault line between nature and humanity at present stands in the way of resolving our environmental crises',¹⁷ while Rigby argues that traditional cultures are usually free of the anthropocentric shackles that have constrained Western thought.¹⁸

The nature/culture divide, a Western construct, was often used during colonial times to position Indigenous people on the 'nature' side of the divide, as evidenced by the use of the derogatory term 'natives' as well as, in the Australian context, the supposed 'failure' to distinguish Aboriginal people from the inanimate, 'empty' land. Repositioning all of humanity on the nature side, where we belong, automatically collapses the divide. The survival of humanity may well depend on it - Suzuki argues:

we need a radically different way of relating ourselves to the support systems of the planet. My experiences with aboriginal peoples have taught me, both as a scientist and

¹⁵ See for example Ruby Langford Ginibi, 1994, *My Bundjalung People*, St. Lucia, pp. 163-164; Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*, pp. 219-221; Anne Poelina, 2013, 'The Kimberley: Neo-colonialism, participatory planning and regional governance mechanisms', paper presented at the Mining in a Sustainable World: Environmental, Social and Political Economical Issues Conference, 13-15 October 2013, University of New England, Armidale.

¹⁶ Lorraine Mafi Williams, cited in Timothy Freke, 1999, *Shamanic Wisdomkeepers*, New York, p. 139.

¹⁷ Emilio Moran, 2006, *People and Nature: An Introduction to Human Ecological Relations*, Carlton, p. 7.

¹⁸ Kate Rigby, 2014, 'Cultures, Ecologies, Ethics: A Field Guide to the Environmental Humanities', Public Lecture, Visiting Speaker Program, University of New England, Armidale, November 5.

as an environmentalist, of the power and relevance of their knowledge and worldview in a time of imminent global catastrophe.¹⁹

Dismantling the nature/culture divide is of critical importance, as many of the environmental issues we face today may well be exacerbated by the divide.²⁰ The awareness of the interconnected nature of life itself, reinforced by an understanding of ecology and through spiritual belief systems such as deep ecology, has contributed greatly to the environment movement and are a characteristic feature of evolving understandings in the Rainbow Region.

‘We’re people like water, we’re interconnected’

One of the strongest themes in the relationship between the ecologically conscious citizens of the Rainbow Region and the place they inhabit is recognition of their interconnectedness. Again, it is an understanding that cuts across different sections of society. While inherent in Bundjalung culture, several farmers also express such a connection as discussed in Chapter Six, including Alan Roberts: ‘there’s not a real separation between me and nature. And it’s really lovely, it’s good for your soul.’²¹ The very identity of many of the new settlers discussed in Chapter Five as ‘hippies’ automatically implies an identity that is of the environment itself, an identity forged in relation to one’s sense of belonging upon the Earth. Phil Mitten explains that many hippies share a reverence for pagan and Celtic spirituality, demonstrating a seeking out of the largely lost TEK of Western culture, and Mitten himself feels an affinity for Druidism.²² As also discussed in Chapter Five, so strong was the sense of belonging and identity forged in the forests at NEFA blockades that the ‘symbiotic’ relationship between people and place gave birth to the forest-feral subculture.

Evidently, an understanding of such interconnectedness is central to environmentalism today. Rhonda Ellis laments, ‘humans are animals. They should be

¹⁹ David Suzuki, 1992, ‘A Personal Foreword: The Value of Native Ecologies’, in *Wisdom of the Elders*, Knudtson & Suzuki, p. xxxv.

²⁰ Moran, *People and Nature*, pp. 7-9.

²¹ Alan Roberts, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author’s possession.

²² Phil Mitten, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 30 April 2012, in author’s possession

part of the natural environment, but they seem to be against it.’²³ It is an understanding shared by many in the community – health worker Annie Kia believes:

to be conscious at this point in human history, to be truly conscious, must involve being aware of the life support systems... from which we derive our life and in which we're embedded... So I think being an environmentalist is to do with consciousness of other life forms and our place in the interconnected whole, that we're a part of.²⁴

Peter Pedals argues that communities need to be based on such understandings: ‘society has to be Earth based. A society that isn’t earth based is a lost society.’²⁵ Pedals further argues that when we destroy the environment, we are also destroying ourselves. This key understanding has been recognised by UNESCO as central to the cultivation of environmental peace:

we need the wisdom to champion an ethic for the future, for such an ethic must prevail if we are to make peace with Earth. This planet is our mirror image: if it is wounded, then we are wounded; if it is mutilated, humankind is mutilated as well.²⁶

The links between ecosystem health and human health have been an important element of environmental peace cultivation in recent years. ‘EcoHealth’ is a recently-emerging multidisciplinary field that examines how changes in ecosystems impact negatively upon human health, and at least two journals have been specifically established to address these issues.²⁷ The environmental humanities, too, engage with this understanding, led by Stacey Alaimo’s notion of transcorporeality, which considers

²³ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 29 April 2012, in author’s possession.

²⁴ Annie Kia, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, The Channon, 31 May 2012, in author’s possession.

²⁵ Peter Pedals, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 6 June 2012, in author’s possession.

²⁶ Koichiro Matsuura, 2007, cited in *Making Peace with the Earth: what future for the human species and the planet?*, Jerome Binde (ed.), Paris, p. xii.

²⁷ See for example the journals *EcoHealth* and *Ecosystem Health*. See also World Health Organization 2005, *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Health Synthesis: A Report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, Geneva.

how toxins in our environment enter and move through our bodies, linking humans in fundamentally biological ways to polluted and toxic environments.²⁸

Links are also increasingly made between ecosystem health and mental health. Again drawing on TEK, it is well-recognised that traditional people suffer terribly when separated from the environments they are intrinsically a part of.²⁹ Further evidence of the deep and fundamental relationship between *all* people and the natural environment, Hugh Mackay argues:

Indigenous people are not alone in experiencing profound relationship with land... I suspect that much of the uneasiness, anxiety and moral uncertainty of modern urban societies can be traced to our loss of a strong sense of continuous connection to places that help to define us.³⁰

This important common ground has been recognised by historian Peter Read, who uses Australian case studies to explore the profound psychological impact that loss of place can cause in *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*.³¹

Solastalgia is another useful concept for understanding the links between mental health (humans) and loss of place (environment). Devised by Glenn Albrecht, Solastalgia has been eloquently described by Amanda Kennedy as ‘the pain or sickness caused by the loss or lack of solace and the desolation connected to the present state of one’s home and territory.’³² The concept has been used to understand the human impacts of environmental conflict arising from mining practices in the Hunter Valley of NSW.³³ Solastalgia was successfully used in a court case against the expansion of a coal mine in the Bulga Valley, highlighting the significant mental health impacts and loss of community that could potentially arise as a result of the mine engulfing the

²⁸ Stacy Alaimo, 2010, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self*, Bloomington.

²⁹ Dodson, ‘Cultural Rights and Educational Responsibilities’, p. 81; Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*, p. 21; Lorraine Mafi Williams, 1982, ‘Old Men of The Mountain’, in *Nimbin Centenary 1882-1982*, Jennie Dell (ed.), Nimbin, p. 7.

³⁰ Hugh Mackay 2005, ‘A Place of One’s Own’, *Sydney Morning Herald: Spectrum*, p. 17.

³¹ Peter Read, 2000, *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Melbourne.

³² Amanda Kennedy, 2013, ‘David’s Defeat: Rewriting the rules to give Goliath a lifeline’, paper presented at the Mining in a Sustainable World: Environmental, Social and Political Economical Issues Conference, University of New England, Armidale, 13-15 October.

³³ Glenn Albrecht *et al.*, 2007, ‘Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change’, *Australasian Psychiatry*, vol. 15, issue 1, pp. s95-s98.

village of Bulga.³⁴ Albrecht argues that positive outcomes can arise from identifying the symptoms of Solastalgia: recognising environmental degradation as a source of distress can lead to action to remedy the source of the distress. He concludes, ‘a commitment to engage in action to support distressed people and heal distressed environments is itself a profoundly healing act.’³⁵

Albrecht is among those academics working within the environmental humanities. Bridging the environmental and social sciences, Albrecht makes a direct link between ecosystem distress and human distress, acknowledging the biotic interconnectedness that exists between people and environments.³⁶ He argues:

many people sense that something is wrong with our relationship with the planet... the intense desire to be organically connected to living landscapes is, in part, a desire to overcome solastalgia by finding an earthly home in connection with other living things on this earth.³⁷

Further highlighting the significance of interconnectedness to peace cultivation methods, Randall Amster recognises Earth agency – just as links were made in Chapter Five between people, the natural environment and healing, Amster argues in *Peace Ecology* that the Earth ‘possesses an inherent capacity to function as a healing medium that can serve to mediate human conflicts....’³⁸ Michael Fox also argues that interconnectedness, a recognition of the power of earth agency upon the shaping of the human condition, and the impact of ecosystem health on human health are all important elements of understanding peace.³⁹

Drawing on TEK, both as a land management practice and to understand the interconnectedness of life on Earth, is in itself a demonstrated and powerful method of environmental peace cultivation. Furthermore, understandings arising from the recognition of interconnectedness have reinforced people’s commitment to

³⁴ Kennedy, ‘David’s Defeat.’

³⁵ Glenn Albrecht, 2006, ‘Solastalgia’, *Alternatives Journal*, vol. 32, no. 4, p. 36.

³⁶ Glenn Albrecht, 2005, ‘Solastalgia: A New Concept in Health and Identity’, *Philosophy, Activism, Nature*, no. 3, pp. 41-55.

³⁷ Albrecht, 2006, ‘Solastalgia’, p. 36.

³⁸ Randall Amster, 2015, *Peace Ecology*, Abingdon, p. 9.

³⁹ Michael Allen Fox, 2014, *Understanding Peace: A Comprehensive Introduction*, New York, pp. 124-125.

environmentalism. They have also increased awareness of the links between human health and ecosystem health, serving to further an understanding that humans are *of* the environment. Placing such ideas within frameworks like EcoHealth and Solastalgia may create accessible approaches to environmental issues. A place-based concept that inherently rejects the nature/culture divide, there is great potential for further research into Solastalgia, particularly as a tool for understanding the loss of place experienced by traditional communities globally.

The Richmond River

From 1842 the prevailing relationship between non-Aboriginal people and place in the Rainbow Region was based on exploitation. The land ethic imposed upon the landscape was largely utilitarian, and the Richmond River was transformed into a highway upon which to transport and export natural resources. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, two significant influences upon human-nature interactions can be observed emerging during the colonial era and continue to exert an influence today. Values will be discussed firstly, followed by environmental education.

Values

It is evident that cultural values play a significant role in shaping how people relate to the natural environment. During the colonial era the importation of values shaped by Enlightenment thought had disastrous ecological consequences. Chapter Four demonstrated that as values shifted over time, from the anthropocentric to the more ecocentric, they aligned with increasing appreciation of the landscape and concern for the welfare of the natural environment. Establishing common values also proved to be a powerful way of maintaining peace during the Terania Creek blockade as discussed in Chapter Five, while Chapter Six reinforced the significance of shared values in the campaign against CSG, cumulating in the historic Bentley Blockade.

There is an increasing recognition of the need to realign our values, as much of the ecological violence inflicted upon the earth is a result of the values and assumptions that underpin our society, embedded within structures and institutions. As discussed in Chapter Six, for example, ‘environmentally sensitive’ approaches such

as ESD still have a long way to go for as long as we place a high degree of value on development and economic considerations, the root causes of ecological violence cannot be addressed.⁴⁰ As Holdgate argues, ‘while a chopped tree has a cash value and a standing tree is worthless, people will mis-use forests.’⁴¹ What is needed, argue increasing numbers of academics, activists and communities, is a fundamental change in the values that lie at the root of our culture.

One strong example is the high degree of value Western society places upon material gain and wealth accumulation, both of which are inherently ecologically destructive and serve as distractions from the reality of the present ecological crisis.⁴² Assadourian argues that we must build cultures of peace by rejecting consumerism, which is not a ‘viable cultural paradigm on a planet whose systems are deeply stressed.’⁴³ Consumerism also increases global inequity and is therefore a source of structural violence.⁴⁴ Moran also argues for a rejection of material values, countering claims that to do so is ‘bad for the economy’ by pointing out that our present economy is unsustainable – valuing community must come before valuing materialism.⁴⁵ High-profile Indian activist Vandana Shiva, in her summary of the measures required to ‘make peace with the Earth’, argues that we need a values shift away from the ‘Cartesian-mechanistic paradigm’ and the privatisation of earth ‘resources’, towards a culture that acknowledges interconnectedness and rejects consumerism culture for a conservation culture.⁴⁶ Ausubel argues that our very survival depends on a values

⁴⁰ Ted Trainer, 1998, *Saving the Environment: What It Will Take*, Sydney, p. 47. See also Brenda Almond’s discussion of utilitarian values in Brenda Almond, 1995, ‘Rights and Justice in the Environment Debate’, in *Just Environments: Intergenerational, International and Interspecies Issues*, David E. Cooper & Joy A. Palmer (eds), London, p. 6.

⁴¹ Martin Wyatt Holdgate, 1996, *From Care to Action: Making a Sustainable World*, London, p. 252.

⁴² Erik Assadourian, 2013, ‘Re-engineering Cultures to Create a Sustainable Civilization’, in *State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?*, The Worldwatch Institute (ed.), Washington, pp. 113-125; Trainer, *Saving the Environment*, p. 8; Moran, *People and Nature*, pp. 170-172.

⁴³ Assadourian, ‘Re-engineering Cultures to Create a Sustainable Civilization’, p. 113.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Moran, *People and Nature*, pp. 170-172.

⁴⁶ Vandana Shiva, 2012, *Making Peace with the Earth: Beyond Resource, Land and Food Wars*, New Delhi, p. 265.

shift,⁴⁷ while Jared Diamond's *Collapse* argues that values can determine whether or not societies succeed or fail.⁴⁸

It is evident that we must consider ways in which to shift our values away from anthropocentric concerns and cultivate values that reflect the inherent interconnectedness of our existence, and peace scholars have been actively addressing this need. Prominent peacebuilder John Paul Lederach argues the case for values-based peace cultivation.⁴⁹ He examines the differences between conflict resolution and conflict transformation - conflict resolution may resolve the immediate issue, but transformation 'centers its attention on the *context* of relationship patterns. It sees conflict as embedded in the web and system of relational patterns.'⁵⁰ In applying peace building theory to environmental peace, conflict transformation can be seen as efforts to address structural violence and build positive peace. Resolution may end the immediate environmental threat, but what is needed to *start* the process of environmental peace cultivation on a global scale is the complete transformation of the underlying *values, attitudes and cultural assumptions* that perpetuate ecological violence.

Establishing common ground is one powerful and demonstrated way of achieving such change. Maser examines environmental conflict, arguing:

When we are locked into a system that puts monetary value above all else, it is difficult to overcome conflict, because earning money is constructed as a person's "right to survival".⁵¹

The solution, argues Maser, is to bring the community together to negotiate common, shared values. Callenbach also argues that seemingly intractable conflict can be overcome by establishing common ground,⁵² while Schultz and Zelezny have argued

⁴⁷ Kenny Ausubel, 2012, *Dreaming the Future: Reimagining Civilisation in the Age of Nature*, Chelsea Green, pp. 157-164.

⁴⁸ Jared Diamond, 2005, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive*, Camberwell, pp. 523-524.

⁴⁹ See John Paul Lederach, 2003, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, Intercourse, pp. 28-33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵¹ Chris Maser, 1996, *Resolving Environmental Conflict: Towards Sustainable Community Development*, Delray Beach, p. 24.

that when environmental issues are communicated in ways that acknowledge the values of others, conflict is less likely to arise.⁵³ The extent to which this is possible was demonstrated in Chapter Five. While the economic concerns of loggers were seemingly at odds with the values of the Terania Creek protesters, below the surface it was revealed that many loggers regretted the destruction driven by economic imperatives and felt that they had no choice but to engage in such practices. As Nan Nicholson reflected, 'In the end we're all on the same side.'⁵⁴ Ex-loggers such as Alex Floyd and Robert Kooyman, upon gaining a deep sense of the non-monetary value of rainforest, then devoted their lives to rainforest conservation and restoration.

Research by environmental psychologists demonstrates that connection to the natural environment increases ecologically sensitive values. Scannell and Gifford write, '[e]copsychologists assert that a disconnect from nature is an important cause of pro-environmental inaction, and that regaining a sense of connectedness should realign our values towards pro-environmental stewardship.'⁵⁵ This argument is also supported by Roszak in his popular work *The Voice of the Earth* - Roszak puts much of the blame for the misalignment of cultural values on Cartesian dualism.⁵⁶ A recent study by Gosling and Williams demonstrated that a connection to the natural environment increased the likelihood that farmers would engage in 'conservation behaviour', and an emotional attachment to place aligned with a 'greater valuing of non-human species, and so to pro-environment behavior.'⁵⁷ They also found that when environmental values were present, farmers were more likely to consider 'non-financial values.'⁵⁸

⁵² Ernest Callenbach, 2005, 'Values', in *Ecological Literacy: Educating Our Children for a Sustainable World*, MK Stone & Z Barlow (eds), Berkeley, pp. 45-48.

⁵³ P. W. Schultz & L. Zelezny, 2003, 'Reframing environmental messages to be congruent with American values', *Human Ecology Review* vol. 10, no. 22, pp. 126-136.

⁵⁴ Nan Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Terania Creek, 5 May 2012, in author's possession.

⁵⁵ Leila Scannell & Robert Gifford, 2010, 'The relations between natural and civic place attachment and pro-environmental behavior', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 30, p. 289.

⁵⁶ Theodore Roszak, 2001, *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology*, Grand Rapids.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Gosling & Kathryn Williams, 2010, 'Connectedness to nature, place attachment and conservation behavior: Testing connectedness theory among farmers', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 30, pp. 298-304.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

Childhood influences are another very important factor in the shaping of one's values. It is a significant finding that the vast majority of those interviewed who identified as environmentalists stated that the roots of their environmentalism stem from childhood, whether through a natural affinity with the Earth, a particular experience, or parental influence. Dailan Pugh, who was raised in the bush, comments of his environmental values, 'my parents had a big influence.'⁵⁹ India Morris, who grew up on Tunttable Community, recalls:

I've always found it strange, since I was a very little child, to understand the way that we see ourselves as separate from [the Earth]... It's like people think that you can destroy your environment and still exist somehow, and I don't understand that.⁶⁰

Meg Nielsen states, 'I've always been an environmentalist... mainly because my parents are the kind of people. They were the kind of people who valued nature and I was brought up that way.'⁶¹ Similarly, Maxx Maxstead believes that childhood is the ideal time in which to instil the values necessary to bring about a shift in ecological awareness:

it doesn't take much actually to change someone's views as long as you can get them early enough...and give them a sympathetic attitude towards the earth, the mother, which starts of course in preschool... if we teach our children well... that's all that any of us can do, is teach your children well. And hope that it spreads.⁶²

Peace practitioners as well as educators are aware that childhood is an ideal time in which to cultivate values and impart environmental knowledge. Callenbach argues that all children are born with biophilic tendencies, and such tendencies should be encouraged to aid the development of ecologically sensitive values.⁶³ Suzuki argues, 'unless we are willing to encourage our children to connect with and appreciate the

⁵⁹ Dailan Pugh, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Byron Bay, 10 May 2012, in author's possession.

⁶⁰ India Morris, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 20 June 2012, in author's possession.

⁶¹ Meg Nielsen, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author's possession.

⁶² Maxx Maxstead, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Nimbin, 1 June 2012, in author's possession.

⁶³ Callenbach, 'Values', pp. 45-48.

natural world, we can't expect them to help protect and care for it.'⁶⁴ Berry also argues for the cultivation of ecologically sensitive values that are based on interconnectedness, advocating for the introduction of ecology lessons as the 'foundation of all courses, all programs and all professions.'⁶⁵ Environmental education is yet another way in which a shift in values can be brought about, and is also in itself a demonstrated approach to cultivating environmental peace.

Environmental Education

The second key influence on human-nature relations that emerges from the colonial history of the Rainbow Region is the significance of environmental knowledge (or a lack thereof). While TEK has already been discussed, this section will discuss environmental education as it applies to white Australians, gradually acquiring the skills and knowledge of the Australian landscape that were not, and arguably are still not, an inherent part of white Australian culture. Chapter Three demonstrated that only when sufficient knowledge of the natural environment was acquired did colonists start to work *with* the land rather than against it. Chapter Four saw the deliberate search for scientific knowledge in an attempt to understand the strange and alien New World. Many of the new settlers discussed in Chapter Five also sought out an education, looking to the seminal texts of the 1960s and gaining an ecological awareness that also came through empirical learning. The ecologically-aware communities of the Aquarius era also acted as places of learning, and people who were unaware of environmental issues 'soon got educated.'⁶⁶ Chapter Six discussed the influence that developments in environmental knowledge have had upon farming practices. It also looked at environmental education programs conducted through local schools, again demonstrating the importance of childhood environmental education.

⁶⁴ David Suzuki, 2010, 'Outdoor fun is good for kids and the planet', David Suzuki Foundation, www.davidsuzuki.org/blogs/science-matters/2010/07/outdoor-fun-is-good-for-kids-and-the-planet/, accessed 12 March 2016.

⁶⁵ Thomas Berry, 2009, *The Sacred Universe*, New York, pp. 129-138.

⁶⁶ Rhonda Ellis, interview by Vanessa Bible, 2012.

Deep Ecologist Arne Naess wrote in 1984 that ‘the personal identity of the small child has environmental factors.’⁶⁷ Children are particularly receptive to new knowledge, and Berry argues that one of the key strategies for raising ecological awareness in society is through ‘education, namely teaching children about the natural world, how its living systems function, and how humans fit into these systems.’⁶⁸ Environmental education has long been recognised as a powerful tool for building sustainability, and several approaches exist in Australian and international schools today, including Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainability (EfS).⁶⁹ The benefits gained from environmental education, as demonstrated by the history of the region, are not limited to children. As ecologist Paul Ehrlich argues, ‘familiarity with basic ecology will permanently change your world view. You will never again regard plants, microorganisms, and animals (including people) as isolated entities.’⁷⁰

Environmental education is critically important to the cultivation of a community’s knowledge of local places, and serves to further a deeper understanding of and connection to the natural environment. In 2000, Johnson conducted a case study of environmental learning in the Border Ranges, hypothesising that knowing the environmental history of a place can lead to a deeper understanding of it.⁷¹ Johnson assessed the relationship between people and natural environment, and found that gaining knowledge of the ‘interactions between people and place over the past decades’ did indeed increase environmental understanding as well as sense of place.⁷² Johnson concluded, ‘[t]he environmentally aware community knows its environment,

⁶⁷ Arne Naess, 1984, ‘Notes on the Politics of the Deep Ecology Movement’, in *Sustaining Gaia: Contributions to Another World View*, Papers From the Environment, Ethics and Ecology II Conference, October 1984, Clayton, p. 180.

⁶⁸ Berry, *The Sacred Universe*, p. 137.

⁶⁹ These approaches to environmental learning have been discussed and debated extensively, and it is not within the scope of this thesis to replicate such discussions here. See for example John Chi-Kin Lee & Michael Williams (eds), 2006, *Environmental and geographical education for sustainability: cultural contexts*, New York; David B. Zandvliet (ed.), 2009, *Diversity in Environmental Education Research*, Boston; Walter Leal Filho, E. I. Manolas, M. N. Sotirakou & G. A. Boutakis (eds), 2007, *Higher Education and the Challenge of Sustainability: Problems, Promises and Good Practice*, Soufli.

⁷⁰ Paul Ehrlich, 1986, *The Machinery of Nature*, New York, p. 13.

⁷¹ Ross Johnston, 2000, ‘An Environmental Education For A Local Community: Knowing the Border Ranges’, in *Environmental History and Policy: Still Settling Australia*, Stephen Dovers (ed.), South Melbourne, pp. 146-164.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

its essences and relevances, and hence its identity, the identity of those people in that place.’⁷³

Finger and Kilcoyne argue that our unsustainable societies are rooted within our culture and we must ‘collectively learn our way out.’⁷⁴ They argue that progress will be made when we can observe the acquisition of environmental awareness, knowledge and skills, collaboration, and leadership in individuals.⁷⁵ Such observations are frequently seen in the history of the Rainbow Region, particularly in the ‘learning on the ground’ acquired at Terania Creek as discussed in Chapter Five, and the sophisticated level of organisation demonstrated at the Bentley Blockade in Chapter Six.⁷⁶ Again, the region demonstrates the capacity for approaches to environmental peace to be effective when initiated by ecologically conscious communities.

The cultivation of ecologically sensitive values and environmental education are both significant and effective tools for environmental peace, most effective if acquired during childhood. While conflict can arise from conflicting values, common ground can be used to negotiate understandings and can lead to an appreciation for the views of others. Ecologically sensitive values are also fostered by a connection to the natural environment and through environmental education, which in itself is also another highly effective approach for the cultivation of environmental peace.

The Big Scrub

Chapter Four, spanning centuries, examined the evolution of the conservation movement both in the Rainbow Region and within the wider context of national and global developments. The key influence on the changing relationship between people and place over time was a growing attachment to place and sense of belonging. The

⁷³ Johnston, ‘An Environmental Education For A Local Community’, p. 162.

⁷⁴ Mathias Finger & James Kilcoyne Jr., 1995, ‘Learning Our Way Out: Indicators of Social Environmental Learning’, in *A Sustainable World: Defining and Measuring Sustainable Development*, Thaddeus C. Trzyna & Julia K. Osborn (eds), London, p. 252.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 239-254.

⁷⁶ See also Marty Branagan & Bob Boughton, 2003, ‘How do you learn how to change the world?: learning and teaching in Australian protest movements’, *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, vol. 43, issue 3, pp. 346-360; Griff Foley, 1999, *Learning in Social Action: A Contribution to Understanding Informal Learning*, London.

Big Scrub, initially an inconvenient obstacle in the path of ‘progress’, became the central focus of concern over the natural environment as the impact of its clearing, both ecologically and culturally, became evident. The loss of the Scrub, more than any other environmental factor, triggered a concern in those who had grown attached to it. As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, efforts to regenerate the scrub became an expression of belonging to the region. Chapters Five and Six also demonstrated how a strong sense of and attachment to place can elicit passionate and radical responses from communities seeking to defend their places of belonging.

Sense of Place

More than just a fondness for a particular location, humans connect themselves on a spiritual and emotional level to place. Read argues that humans *need* to turn space into place and form attachments in order to feel secure.⁷⁷ Seamon emphasises the importance of emotion in relation to place attachment. Drawing on notions from Heidegger and Relph, he argues that humans feel the need to *spare and preserve*. He discusses the phenomenological research conducted by environmental psychologists:

The result has been a recognition of the person's emotional links with environments, places and landscapes, ranging from the momentary emotional irritation one feels when a thing is out of place... to the profound sense of attachment and concern people may feel for a place they consider sacred.⁷⁸

Bott, Cantrill and Myers Jr concur, arguing that ‘relationship to place is a fundamental feature of human existence.’⁷⁹ This emotional response is a remarkably strong motivator for environmental activism and action, as demonstrated by the campaigns to protect the Border Ranges, Terania Creek and Bentley. Place attachment has been one of the most significant influences upon the environment movement in Australia –

⁷⁷ Read, *Returning to Nothing*, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁸ David Seamon, ‘Emotional Experience of the Environment’, *American Behavioural Scientist*, 1984, p. 759.

⁷⁹ Suzanne Bott, James G. Cantrill & Olin Eugene Myers Jr., 2003, ‘Place and the Promise of Conservation Psychology’, *Human Ecology Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 100.

Stratford argues, 'It is the threat of loss of place that has most informed environmental politics.'⁸⁰

Sense of place, argue both Amster and Kyrou, may be central to both the environment movement and peace cultivation, potentially offering a useful point of collaboration.⁸¹ Amster further argues:

peace scholars and practitioners have already come a long way in terms of cultivating a perspective that is holistic and cognizant of the deep-seated interconnectedness of people and place, of culture and nature, and of societies and their environments.⁸²

Fellow peace scholar, Barash, also recognises the importance of place and belonging to the cultivation of peace, arguing 'a world at peace must be one in which all living things experience themselves as being "at home".'⁸³ Increasing amounts of literature explore the links between place attachment and environmental concerns and offer suggestions as to how to use place attachment as an approach to raising ecological awareness and building sustainability, hence contributing valuable research to environmental peace cultivation methods.

Research by environmental scientists and environmental psychologists has demonstrated that sense of place is a useful tool in 'natural resource management' (NRM). Cantrill and Senecah have found that interacting with local places increases the likelihood that natural resources will be used wisely.⁸⁴ Horwitz, Lindsay and O'Connor have found that cultivating a sense of place in combination with an understanding of the interconnections between ecosystem health and human health is of benefit to local communities, recommending that the approach be used in both NRM and in the

⁸⁰ Elaine Stratford, 2009, 'Belonging as a resource: the case of Ralph's Bay, Tasmania, and the local politics of place', in *Environment and Planning*, vol. 41, p. 807.

⁸¹ Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 16; Christos Kyrou, 2006, 'Peace Ecology: An Emerging Paradigm in Peace Studies', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 73-91.

⁸² Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 19.

⁸³ Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace*, p. 131.

⁸⁴ J. G. Cantrill, & S. L. Senecah, 2001, 'Using the 'sense of self-in-place' construct in the context of environmental policy-making and landscape planning', *Environmental Science and Policy*, vol. 4, pp. 185-203.

health sector.⁸⁵ Bott, Cantrill and Myers Jr argue that sense of place is central to conservation concerns:

in short, *place-based knowledge* [original emphasis] is an essential foundation for instituting an adaptive management regime, and a person's awareness of place serves as a platform for understanding proposed changes to the environment, thus instilling a motivation for action and reaction in the policy making process.⁸⁶

Furthermore a range of research reveals that sense of place has been utilised in successful campaigns to protect local endemic species,⁸⁷ keystone species for river restoration,⁸⁸ and urban bushland remnants.⁸⁹

A shared sense of place, as strongly demonstrated in Chapter Six, can provide fertile common ground from which to cultivate environmental peace. An unexpected finding that came through the interviews was that when local residents were asked 'where do you belong?', respondents frequently replied that they belonged to the local community as much as they did to a physical location. Paul Joseph responds, for example, 'we're gregarious spontaneous animals, and we need each other. And belonging is more about social inclusion and social strength, you know? You have a part.'⁹⁰ This suggests that people's sense of place rarely exists in isolation of a shared sense of belonging, and a considerable amount of research indicates that there are

⁸⁵ Pierre Horwitz, Michael Lindsay & Moira O'Connor, 2001, 'Biodiversity, Endemism, Sense of Place, and Public Health: Inter-relationships for Australian Inland Aquatic Systems', vol. 7, no. 4, December, pp. 253-265.

⁸⁶ Bott, Cantrill & Myers Jr., 'Place and the Promise of Conservation Psychology', p. 109.

⁸⁷ A.L. Yen, 1993, 'The role of museums and zoos in influencing public attitudes towards invertebrate conservation', in *Perspectives on Insect Conservation*, K.J. Gaston, T.R. New & M.J. Samways (eds), Andover, pp. 213-229; A.L. Yen & B. Van Praagh, 1998, 'Conserving threatened species in your own backyard', *Backyard Bug-Watching*, vol. 18, pp. 18-22.

⁸⁸ R. Nickoll & P. Horwitz, 2001, 'Evaluating flagship species for ecosystem restoration: A case study involving freshwater crayfish and a river in south-western Australia', in *Nature Conservation in Production Environments: Managing Matrix*, J.L. Craig, N. Mitchell & D. Saunders (eds), Chipping Norton, pp. 557-564.

⁸⁹ M. O'Byrne, 2001, 'Community involvement in urban bushland conservation', in *Nature Conservation in Production Environments*, Craig, Mitchell & Saunders (eds), pp. 456-461.

⁹⁰ Paul Joseph, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Lismore, 29 April 2012, in author's possession.

extremely strong correlations between place, belonging, environmentalism and community.⁹¹

While this has been a naturally evolving phenomenon in the Rainbow Region, there have also been conscious attempts to draw on a shared sense of place in order to deepen environmental understandings. In addition to the Water Walks projects at Rocky Creek Dam and Emigrant Creek as discussed in Chapter Six, local artist Leonie Lane has engaged with local community members to produce the interactive Wilson River Experience Walk (WREW). Inspired by a desire to demonstrate the ‘many perspectives of such a diverse place’, the WREW is composed of different panels, each of which reveals a different expression of belonging.⁹² Not only does the project engage with the TEK of the Bundjalung people, the process itself has also cultivated peaceful interactions. Lane reveals that she needed to earn the trust of different interest groups and overcome ‘grudges’, possibly arising over competing notions of belonging. She states that these issues were successfully overcome due to the respect given to differing expressions of belonging, and ‘strong relationships with community members have developed.’⁹³

Similarly, Charlie Brennan runs a program in Australia that engages with local communities, drawing on sense of place to overcome environmental conflict.⁹⁴ Brennan acknowledges that there can be great animosity between different interest groups when it comes to environmental issues, but his research shows that when people feel free to express their sense of place privately and without judgement, what is revealed is often a profound connection to the environment. The expressions differ –

⁹¹ See for example Horwitz, Lindsay & O’Connor, ‘Biodiversity, Endemism, Sense of Place, and Public Health’, p. 257; Robert Hay, 1992, ‘An appraisal of our meaningful relationships in place’, *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 98-105; Andrea M. Brandenburg & Michael S. Carroll, 1995, ‘Your place or mine?: The effect of place creation on environmental values and landscape meanings’, *Society & Natural Resources*, vol. 8, issue 5, pp. 381-398; Avner de Shalit, 1997, ‘Down to Earth Environmentalism: Sustainability and Future Persons’, in *Contingent Future Persons*, Nick Fotion & Jan C. Heller (eds), Boston, p. 131.

⁹² Leonie Lane, 2005, ‘The Wilsons River: Personal and Public Reflections – Investigations of ‘Place’ with Visual Arts and Community Arts Outcomes’, paper presented at the Artists, Designers and Creative Communities ACUADS Conference, Edith Cowan University, Perth, 28-30 September.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Charlie Brennan, Aviva Reed & Bede Brennan, 2016, ‘Acknowledging sense of place through art innovation’, workshop presented at EcoArts Australis 2nd National Conference: Building Sustainability with the Arts’, University of Wollongong, 14-16 February.

Brennan believes that environmentalists are most pessimistic about the future, while Aboriginal people generally talk about place being *in* them, and interestingly, foresters have the ‘greenest’ expression, drawings (the project involved expressing one’s sense of place through art), and outlook.⁹⁵ Brennan’s research reveals a powerful method by which to cultivate environmentally peaceful communities that can potentially bridge different expressions of belonging yet reveal common ground.

Place-based environmental peacemaking is *of a place* and therefore inherently draws on collaborative community knowledge (however, environmental peacemaking may be strengthened by external models in the absence of active and/or innovative local action). Cultivating both environmental peace and environmentally peaceful communities may well be mutually dependent, as will be discussed below. The Rainbow Region demonstrates just how significant a shared sense of place can be to the creation of common ground, strengthened by the high numbers of ecologically conscious communities that deliberately promote and cultivate ecological awareness. This can be a cyclical process – as is the case with Nimbin as discussed in Chapter Six, ecologically conscious communities attract like-minded people, which can give those seeking such communities a sense of belonging and therefore further strengthen a community’s attempts to create an ecologically conscious place. While the environmentalism of the Rainbow Region is exceptional, a wealth of literature as discussed above reveals that this is not limited to the region and may be just as successful elsewhere if there is enough ecological awareness and community support.

The Rainbow Region

Much of the environmental peace cultivation methods discussed so far have their origins in the pre-1970s era and were part of a process of evolution – gaining environmental knowledge of a new continent, for example, was not motivated by a desire to ‘save the Earth’ and was certainly not considered in terms of environmental peace. These naturally evolving methods, it could be argued, are effective *because* they have naturally and spontaneously evolved rather than being based on theory and

⁹⁵ Brennan, Reed & Brennan, Acknowledging sense of place through art innovation’.

conscious efforts.⁹⁶ While there was some level of awareness of environmental issues before the 1960s era, it was only with the sudden widespread ecological awareness of the era that many in Western society became aware of the need to prevent ecological destruction. In response, *environmental action* became a conscious and considered act. Such deliberate efforts were the central theme of Chapter Five, however the chapter also revealed that a great deal of the activism and action to come out of the region, while informed by theory and international influence, still evolved spontaneously and became *of a place*. This combination of consciously seeking environmentally peaceful ways of living and ‘learning on the ground’ as discussed in Chapter Five cumulated into a powerful and demonstrated set of methods by which to actively cultivate peace. The innovation and influence of such methods have since been used to great success both locally and globally, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

Awareness + Activism = Environmental Peacebuilding

There has not yet been a great deal of literature that frames environmental awareness and activism as methods for environmental peacebuilding, perhaps because environmental peace and peace ecology are still new areas. Some works that do stand out include Amster’s *Peace Ecology*, which outlines ways in which environmental activism can contribute to peace, and Branagan’s *Global Warming, Militarisation and Nonviolence: The Art of Active Resistance*, which argues that engagement in nonviolent activism is vital to confronting the critical environmental issues we currently face, including anthropogenic climate change.⁹⁷ While there is also a large and well-developed body of literature that focuses on peace activism and nonviolence, there is much need for further development of the specific links between activism and cultivating *environmental peace*.

⁹⁶ Such a phenomenon was noted by Marx, who argued that theory does not develop by thought but by practice, and these understandings have informed adult learning approaches. See for example Paul Mattick Jr., 1979, ‘Theory and practice: an introduction to Marxian theory’, *Root and Branch*, no. 8; Bob Boughton, 2007, ‘Researching workplace learning and class’, *Economic Labour and Relations Review*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 157-164.

⁹⁷ Amster, *Peace Ecology*; Marty Branagan, 2013, *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence: The Art of Active Resistance*, Basingstoke, pp. 111-238.

One way forward is to frame existing peacebuilding understandings within the context of environmental peace. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the common desire during the 60s era to live peacefully and in a close relationship with the natural environment resulted in the implementation of a number of practical methods and lifestyle choices in the region, such as the establishment of ICs and MOs, the use of activism to protect the natural environment and the employment of other low-impact ways of living. In essence these approaches constitute ‘Infrastructures for Peace.’ In peacebuilding theory, Infrastructures for Peace (or I4P) are defined as:

[A] dynamic network of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, values, and skills which, through dialogue and consultation, contribute to conflict prevention and peace-building in a society.⁹⁸

I4P is also grassroots in approach and encourages peace cultivation ‘*within* communities’,⁹⁹ making it ideally suited to environmental peace. In seeking to address and overcome ecological violence these new settlers were unwittingly, without the terminology or realisation of the significance of their pioneering actions, constructing infrastructures for *environmental* peace, forging methods and techniques that would not only keep peace but also cultivate it.

Hannes Siebert describes I4P as ‘strengthening the immune system from within instead of prescribing antibiotics’¹⁰⁰ – in other words, I4P contributes to positive peace by equipping local communities with the ability to cultivate peace at the grassroots level. Tongeren argues that ‘More focus should be given to long-term investment in capacities, mechanisms and structures for sustainable peace.’¹⁰¹ Structures such as ICs and MOs, sustainably constructed buildings, food markets, and educational centres

⁹⁸ ‘Defining I4P’, The International Civil Society Network on Infrastructures for Peace, www.i4pinternational.org/infrastructures-for-peace/defining-i4p, accessed 31 January 2016. See also John Paul Lederach, 1997, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington DC, p. xvi; Paul van Tongeren *et al.*, 2013, ‘The Evolving Landscape of Infrastructures for Peace’, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 1-7.

⁹⁹ Paul van Tongeren, ‘Creating Infrastructures for Peace – Experiences at Three Continents’, I4P International, www.i4pinternational.org/files/341/vantongeren+creating.pdf, p. 91.

¹⁰⁰ Hannes Siebert, 2013, ‘Strengthening the Immune System from Within instead of Prescribing Antibiotics’, in *Peace Infrastructures: Assessing Concepts and Practice*, Barbara Unger *et al.* (eds), Berlin, pp. 31-41.

¹⁰¹ Tongeren, ‘Creating Infrastructures for Peace’, p. 121.

such as permaculture institutes all constitute physical infrastructures for environmental peace. Such infrastructures, once established, support awareness and promotion of sustainability and facilitate the cultivation of environmentally peaceful practices and approaches, as explored in Chapters Five and Six. Such I4P also have the ability to strengthen communities and improve the relationship between people and the natural environment. As Amster argues,

... when people work together to reclaim the capacity to satisfy their basic needs cooperatively, the quality of their environments and societies improve – thereby serving to mitigate the drivers of conflict at both the human-human and human-environment interfaces.¹⁰²

The concept of I4P can also be applied directly to NVDA. Tongeren argues that one of the key aspects of I4P is the adoption of ‘a cooperative, problem-solving approach to conflict, based on dialogue and non-violence.’¹⁰³ NVDA blockades such as the Terania Creek and Bentley blockades can be highly effective mechanisms for the prevention of ecological violence as demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six. Nonviolence was of the utmost importance to peace activist Dudley Leggett, who committed himself to maintaining nonviolence during the Terania Creek blockade. Leggett was also involved at the Bentley blockade, and answered with the following when asked why Bentley had been a success:

overwhelmingly, the commitment to nonviolent action. Because there is no way in this country we can get public support behind violence. That is the fundamental issue, and we’re talking violence to land, violence to proper procedure, and because we’ve demonstrated that we can amass large numbers of people, and we can take on the potential of five, six, seven hundred riot squad police and still stay in a nonviolent attitude, that speaks volumes...¹⁰⁴

Leggett’s insightful approach to environmental activism focuses on the need to both maintain and build peace, therefore constituting an I4P. It could be argued that

¹⁰² Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 71.

¹⁰³ Van Tongeren, ‘Creating Infrastructures for Peace’, p. 93.

¹⁰⁴ Dudley Leggett, in Peppercorn Project, 2014, *The Emperor Wears No Clothes – Bentley Blockade*, YouTube, uploaded 23 May, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMVhYB4EZFM>, accessed 24 June 2014.

environmental protest and activism cannot be considered so as they can potentially create conflict between one or more stakeholders: in the case of Terania the protest led to bitter disputes between protesters, the forestry industry and communities dependent on logging, particularly in the more conservative towns of Lismore and Murwillumbah, according to Turvey and Watson.¹⁰⁵ However, important to the concept of environmental peace is an acknowledgement of the inherent violence of anthropocentrism; this is not to say that human livelihoods are irrelevant, but that anthropocentric concerns should come second to ecocentric outcomes that sustain environmental integrity, and therefore also benefit humanity as one element of a whole earth system. As Aldo Leopold described of his conservation ethic, 'A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.'¹⁰⁶

Just one example of the many expressions of environmental activism that emerges during the 60s era is the issue of food. Food cultivation can also be considered an I4P. Food is a basic resource that can lead to conflict in times of scarcity, and, argues Stephanie Cubbon, it is inherently tied to peace:

peace and food are connected at every level, from the personal to the international...
our ability to cultivate food depends on ecological peace, taking care of our planet...
[Food] provides this amazing lens through which you can look at peace issues and
realize [sic] the inherent interconnectedness of life on this planet...¹⁰⁷

Cubbon is one of the founders of the PeaceMeal Project, whose slogan is 'cultivating peace through food.'¹⁰⁸ Amster also links food and peace, arguing that 'community-oriented and bioregional food systems can serve to promote the values of peacemaking (by transforming resource conflicts) and peacebuilding (by mitigating their occurrence in the first place).'¹⁰⁹ Food is another common theme that runs through the history and is a fundamental human need, bringing people together on

¹⁰⁵ Nigel Turvey, 2006, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, Brisbane; Ian Watson, 1990, *Fighting over the Forests*, Sydney.

¹⁰⁶ Aldo Leopold, 1966 [1949], *A Sand County Almanac*, New York, p. 262.

¹⁰⁷ Stephanie Cubbon, cited in Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁸ PeaceMeal Project, 'About', <http://peacemealproject.com/about/>, accessed 15 March 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 10.

common ground. The desire to grow food and be self-sufficient was one of the primary motivations of the back to the land movement. The sharing of food cultivation knowledge and skills also established peaceful relations between farmers and new settlers as discussed in Chapter Five. As demonstrated in Chapter Six, today there is a strong focus on organic and/or biodynamic farming practices and the establishment of food markets, both of which address issues of ecological violence by limiting the use of harmful chemicals and reducing the environmental impacts associated with excessive food miles (the amount of pollution generated by the unnecessary transportation of food over long distances). Again, the Rainbow Region demonstrates environmental peace cultivation theories operating in practice, providing solid examples of how successful such methods can be.

Environmental awareness and activism are expressions of the deep connection between people and natural environment, and the overwhelmingly positive benefits of action and activism were discussed in Chapters Five and Six. However it is still important to frame activism within peace studies theory to make tangible links between activism and environmental peace, and to help strengthen ties between the environment and peace movements in both practice and theory as we move ever deeper into the Anthropocene. While this discussion has only briefly touched on I4Ps as a tool for environmental peace cultivation, there is great potential for further research on the intersection of these two recently developed concepts.

The Northern Rivers

The Northern Rivers region of the modern day, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, is a place of extremely strong environmental awareness, action and activism, as well as a place where collaborations across land ethics have proven to cultivate environmental peace. Consequently, the strongest themes to come out of the environmentalism of the modern day are the importance of establishing common ground and the power of community.

Common Ground

Finding common ground, as frequently discussed throughout this thesis, is an important method in conflict resolution and can allow opposing stakeholders to empathise with one another's views. Amster discusses the significance of common ground to environmental peacebuilding, arguing that the collaborative decision making that occurs on common ground is a 'proactive method... for preventing conflict.'¹¹⁰ The Bentley Blockade provides a powerful example of how common concern for the protection of farmland can bring together people who ordinarily would not usually associate with one another. Kim Curtis contrasts her experience in the region in the 1980s with her experience of Bentley:

Environmentalists and farmers – the blokes I was working with, they were farmers, and they would never have sat down with an environmentalist and had a beer or anything or sat and talked to them. Here, you hug them all. Love them, love them! Because they're doing the right thing and they're protecting the earth and you've gotta admire them for it.¹¹¹

A shared sense of place and love of land establishes common ground in such a powerful way that it can even overcome culturally ingrained opposition to the 'other.' Rosemary Joseph comments of Bentley, 'divide and conquer tactics don't work anymore. We're one mob.'¹¹² While the history demonstrates a number of areas of common ground, this discussion will focus on one in particular, returning to the theme of love as discussed in Chapter Six as perhaps the strongest commonality of all.

The notion of love is increasingly attracting attention for its ability to cultivate peace, both in human/human interactions and human/natural environment interactions. The concept has been discussed within peace studies literature at least since the time of Gandhi, whose concept of 'ahimsa', according to Barash, translates

¹¹⁰ Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 147.

¹¹¹ Kim Curtis, interview by Vanessa Bible, digital recording, Bentley, 18 April 2014, in author's possession.

¹¹² Rosemary Joseph, cited in Luke Vassella, 'Gently Bentley', *Songs of the Bentley Blockade*, Audio CD, Lismore.



Figure 29: Feeling the Love. (clockwise from top left) Entry sign to Mullumbimby; Entry sign to Lismore, including Widjabal language of Bundjalung Nation; The Bundjalung Heart on the entry to Nimbin; and a banner sighted at the Bentley Blockade. Photos by author.

roughly to ‘nonviolent love’¹¹³ (however it is more commonly translated as the renunciation of violence against self and others, including nature, which does indeed give it a biophilic character).¹¹⁴ Barash also argues that an absence of love:

is reflected in the destructive style that characterizes so much of the interaction of people with their environment: the burning of rain forests, the clear-cutting of temperate woodlands, the gouging of the earth during strip-mining, the pollution of water and air, the extinction of plant and animal species.¹¹⁵

Peace scholars Jenkins and Branagan argue that ‘ultimately, cultivating peace embodies love and compassion.’¹¹⁶ Hulot refers to love as ‘an inexhaustible, renewable energy’ in his discussion of how we can ‘make peace with the Earth’,¹¹⁷ and an

¹¹³ Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace*, p. 167.

¹¹⁴ Christopher E. Miller & Mary E. King, 2005, *A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2nd edn, San José, p. 13.

¹¹⁵ Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace*, p. 167.

¹¹⁶ Bert Jenkins & Marty Branagan, 2014, ‘Introduction’, in *Cultivating Peace: Contexts, Practices and Multidimensional Models*, Helen Ware et al. (eds), Newcastle upon Tyne, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Nicholas Hulot, 2007, ‘An ecological pact’, in *Making Peace with the Earth*, Binde (ed.), p. 105.

academic journal has been established that is dedicated to discussion surrounding the intersections of love and peace, 'dedicated to education and research into the positive dynamics of building global peace and justice through *love*.'¹¹⁸

As evidenced by the discussion of biophilia in Chapter Six, interconnectedness can be understood in biophilic terms. Amstel also makes connections between peace and love, citing Krista Tippett: 'the other face of our pain for the world is our love for the world, our absolutely inseparable connectedness with all life.'¹¹⁹ This implies that love can be used to understand interconnectedness and as a motivator for action on environmental issues, a proposal also put forward by Deborah Bird Rose in her article, 'Love in the time of extinctions.'¹²⁰ Rose looks at the Walpiri Aboriginal community's trans-species love for the rufous hare wallaby, or mala. Just as the Bundjalung moderated the hunting of specific sacred animals that they held relationships with so as to safeguard their wellbeing as discussed in Chapter Two, Rose describes how a group of mala were relocated to a nearby island where they would not fall prey to feral cats. She describes how Walpiri elders farewelled the mala as they were loaded onto an airplane for transportation, and argues 'Indigenous people's understandings of relational sustainability bring love to the fore.'¹²¹

Just as love in practice cuts across land ethics, so too does love in theory cut across disciplines. Biophilia has been named as a potential solution to environmental challenges by Professor of Environmental Studies David Orr, who believes 'it is the best hope for our future that I know',¹²² and by natural sciences writer Janine Benyus, who explains the impact of gaining a biophilic perspective:

¹¹⁸ *The Muses Journal: Love, Compassion and Peace – The International Journal of Peace Research and Global Philosophy*. See The International Institute of Peace Studies and Global Philosophy, www.educationaid.net/homepage.html, accessed 30 June 2015.

¹¹⁹ Krista Tippett, cited in Amstel, *Peace Ecology*, p. 181.

¹²⁰ Deborah Bird Rose, 2008, 'Love in the time of extinctions', *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 81-84.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹²² David Orr, cited in Ausubel, *Dreaming the Future*, p. 62.

you enter into deep conversation with organisms, and this student-elder dialogue absolutely fills you with awe... instead of valuing what you can *extract* from her, you value what you can *learn* from her. This shift changes everything.¹²³

Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hahn takes this concept further, arguing that *only* love can save us from climate change.¹²⁴ He states, '[t]here's a revolution that needs to happen and it starts from inside each one of us. We need to wake up and fall in love with the earth.'¹²⁵ Australian bush writer Gregg Borschmann acknowledges the power of love in establishing common ground, writing 'there is no single 'nature feeling' – only many different feelings about different, specific places and times... in this lies a new form of love...'¹²⁶ While Aboriginal writer Bruce Pascoe's work *Convincing Ground: Learning to Fall in Love with Your Country* argues that loving the Australian landscape is not only of benefit to the natural environment, it also establishes a powerful point of commonality with Aboriginal people and is a step towards reconciliation.

Love of land, place or the biosphere itself is an emotional experience that is both subjective and yet at the same time is a common, shared experience. Different expressions of belonging constitute different forms of loving your land, your environment, your home, your place of belonging. When we can come together on an emotional level and understand one another with empathy, we can build communities based on love.

Cultivating Peace, Cultivating Community

Closely linked to the concept of common ground as *fertile* ground for peace cultivation is that of community – communities are support systems for peace, and are *built* on common ground. Again, peace scholars as well as voices from other disciplines are acknowledging the role of community in the cultivation of environmental peace,

¹²³ Janine Benyus, cited in Ausubel, *Dreaming the Future*, p. 47.

¹²⁴ Jo Confino, 2013, 'Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh: only love can save us from climate change', *The Guardian*, 21 January, www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/zen-master-thich-nhat-hanh-love-climate-change, accessed 3 September 2015.

¹²⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh, 2015, 'Wake up to the revolution', Lions Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time, April 8, www.lionsroar.com/wake-up-to-the-revolution/, accessed 3 September 2015.

¹²⁶ Gregg Borschmann (ed.), 1999, *The People's Forest: A Living History of the Australian Bush*, Blackheath, p. 11.

demonstrating that wide bodies of theory support what has been practiced in the Rainbow Region.

When environmental peace cultivation happens at the grassroots level and is initiated by local community, the community owns that process and is strengthened by it. Holdgate's exploration of the role of empowered communities in creating a sustainable world finds that community can be strengthened by care for the environment, and vice versa. He argues that when a local community is free to implement management strategies based on their own local knowledge, it empowers that community and provides motivation for self-regulated and sustainable use of resources.¹²⁷ Holdgate references Landcare as an example of this working in practice, arguing:

It is clear that there must be a sense of community ownership of the problems and solutions, especially among landholders... and that local knowledge, especially that of indigenous peoples, must be recognised... [Landcare has] develop[ed] community commitment by involving people and allowing them to do something positive for the environment at local level.¹²⁸

Richard Sandbrook of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) argues that environmental care must happen at the community level, and is 'fundamental' to sustainability.¹²⁹ This is also supported by Fox, who argues that a grassroots approach to peacebuilding is central to the building of a 'culture of peace.'¹³⁰ The notion of cultures of peace have also been discussed by Elise Boulding, who argues that peace cultures must be based on community and on ways of living that 'lead... people to live nurturally with one another and the earth itself...'¹³¹ and

¹²⁷ Holdgate, *From Care to Action*, pp. 226-253.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹²⁹ Richard Sandbrook, 1994, IUCN International Union for the Conservation of Nature 19th General Assembly Proceedings, Buenos Aires, 17-26 January.

¹³⁰ Fox, *Understanding Peace*, pp. 230-231.

¹³¹ Elise Boulding, 1998/1999, 'Peace Culture: The problem of managing human difference', *Cross Currents*, vol. 38, no. 4, winter, pp. 445-446.

Verhagen, who argues that local communities are the 'base, context, and point of reference' for building a culture of 'ecological peace.'¹³²

Applying this theory to the communities of the Rainbow Region again allows for the articulation of demonstrated environmental peace cultivation methods within existing peace studies frameworks. The majority of environmental action and activism to arise in the region is community-grown, from experiments in ecologically sustainable living, to environmental protest or to the deliberate cultivation of *intentional* community. As discussed above, it is important to consider whether cultivating environmental peace and environmentally peaceful communities may be mutually dependent. Hugh Mackay's exploration of notions of belonging argues:

we are not good at surviving in isolation. We rely on communities to support and sustain us, and if those communities are to survive and prosper, we must engage with them and nurture them.¹³³

As we progress further into the Anthropocene, the strength of local communities will be critical to maintaining peace, both environmental and otherwise. Several Rainbow Region residents cite the local community as central to the development of their environmental awareness and/or activism, including Seed, Zable and Nan Nicholson.¹³⁴ Nicholson explains:

you just can't do it on your own, but if you can do it with a community, it can really work. Plus, strengthening the community. So they just feed on each other and make it all better... And that of course is the critical thing now with environmentalism, that we've all realised that community is what's going to be the antidote for the big companies that are destroying the place. It's community that can fight back. In fact it's the only way, you can't do it on your own.¹³⁵

¹³² Frans C. Verhagen, 2014, 'Sustainable communities: A lens for envisioning and achieving a community-based culture of social and ecological peace', *Journal of Peace Education*, vol. 11, no. 3, p. 309.

¹³³ Hugh Mackay, 2014, *The Art of Belonging*, Sydney, p. 1.

¹³⁴ John Seed, cited in James Bennet-Levy, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed', Rainforest Information Centre, www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/levy.htm, accessed 1 December 2008; Nan Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

¹³⁵ Nan Nicholson, interview by Vanessa Bible.

As demonstrated in Chapter Six, the power and spirit of the community cultivated during the Bentley Blockade was a central factor in the success of the campaign. What was also revealed was that the community pulled together in the face of a common threat, and surprisingly, several people expressed gratitude to Metgasco for creating such a powerful community spirit.

There is a growing amount of literature that argues that strong and united communities often pull together to confront common perceived threats, a promising notion given the severity of the environmental crisis we face. Paul Gilding's recent work, *The Great Disruption*, looks to human history, particularly WWII, to demonstrate that human ingenuity is a common response in times of crisis and communities naturally unite.¹³⁶ Gilding hypothesises that while it is too late to prevent a considerable amount of ecological disruption, the looming threat of climate change will bring about an end to fossil fuels and the development of renewable technologies. Such a theory is also supported by Horwitz, Lindsay and O'Connor who argue, 'despite the negative impact, landscape deterioration and the threat of loss can lead to a greater sense of community.'¹³⁷

Furthermore, Amster's exploration of the notion of peace ecology makes a promising claim that environmental issues that have the ability to generate conflict can likewise generate peace. He argues:

when confronted with a crisis, as with hurricanes and earthquakes, recent research indicates that people are actually more likely to cooperate than they are to compete, and that instances of violence in such situations are the exception rather than the norm.¹³⁸

Amster goes on to argue that when people in a community work collaboratively to grow food or share resources; they are more likely to build trust, avoid conflict and

¹³⁶ Paul Gilding, 2011, *The Great Disruption*, New York.

¹³⁷ Horwitz, Lindsay & O'Connor, 'Biodiversity, Endemism, Sense of Place, and Public Health', p. 259.

¹³⁸ Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 8.

resolve issues non-violently. Amster claims that this simple peacebuilding approach has even diffused conflict between ‘warring parties.’¹³⁹

Initially one of the main concerns of this thesis was discovering how the relationship between people and the natural environment was influenced by notions of belonging and place. It has become increasingly evident that a sense of place or belonging is rarely conceived of as existing independently from community. People belong to *communities* which belong to natural environments, and community is strengthened when there is a shared sense of place. The history of the Rainbow Region demonstrates that notions of common ground and community constitute in themselves powerful approaches to environmental peace cultivation. What is also evident, however, is that environmental concerns can be inspired *of a place* but can also transcend the boundaries of that place.

Think Locally, Act Globally

Local academic Jo Kijas has argued, ‘[t]he Rainbow Region has cast its influence across the North Coast and beyond, providing a good example of the need for local studies within global contexts...’¹⁴⁰ Local lessons have global application. Alternative, informed and collaborative approaches to environmental issues pioneered in the Rainbow Region have effectively transformed the place into a centre for environmental innovation and awareness. However at the same time, the region has exported its unique brand of environmentalism – echoes of the Terania Creek protest for example can be seen around the world today in the form of blockade techniques, protest organisation and theatrical approaches to activism (to name but a few examples).¹⁴¹ NEFA activists, organisations such as the Rainforest Information Centre, and other environmentally minded citizens from the region have travelled around

¹³⁹ Amster, *Peace Ecology*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴⁰ Johanna Kijas, 2003, ‘From obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity’, in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region: Cultural Perspectives on the NSW North Coast*, Helen Wilson (ed.), Lismore, p. 33.

¹⁴¹ For further discussion see Vanessa Bible, 2010, *Aquarius Rising: Terania Creek and the Australian Forest Protest Movement*, Honours Thesis, The University of New England, Armidale, in The Change Agency, www.thechangeagency.org/tag/forests/, accessed 3 February 2016.



Figure 30: 'Locally, nationally and globally'. Back Wall of the Nimbin Environment Centre. Photo by author.

Australia and internationally, disseminating knowledge and effective environmental protest techniques.¹⁴²

Being inspired by a very deep connection to one place can, by extension, lead to a deeper understanding of the earth and the human place within it. Morris explains:

feeling like you belong to a place definitely gives you much more of an attachment... to the landscape... with the coal seam gas stuff it's directly affecting the property where I grew up... I feel that threat much more strongly because it's my place, it's where I belong, and... I can feel anger and sadness when it's happening somewhere else. It's not that same immediate feeling [but] I feel more empathy when it is happening in other places.¹⁴³

As discussed in Chapter Five, environmental action and activism can come from a sense of duty to protect one's 'own backyard', but activists such as Benny Zable provide a powerful example of the passionate dedication to environmental issues that

¹⁴² Bible, *Aquarius Rising*, pp. 57-58; Branagan, *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence*, pp.128-129, pp. 152-153.

¹⁴³ India Morris, interview by Vanessa Bible.

can arise from a sense of belonging to the Earth itself rather than any particular place. While taking on causes outside one's local area has attracted derision of activists as 'rent-a-crowds' or 'professional protesters',¹⁴⁴ thinking *and* acting globally is of vital importance to environmental peace. This kind of beyond-borders thinking is required if true environmental peace is to be cultivated. Environmental pollution, for example, does not stop conveniently at state or national borders, which are mentally constructed within human understandings of place. Artificial borders can also serve to constrain our compassion for 'the other', and issues of global justice are at the heart of global environmental peace as will be discussed below.

'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house'¹⁴⁵

Coming to terms with the Anthropocene requires us to actively engage with the term and understand our role in bringing about a geological epoch named after our own human impacts upon the Earth. Preventing ecological violence and cultivating positive peace requires addressing structural violence, much of which is embedded within existing structures, values and institutions.¹⁴⁶ Griffiths argues:

We often name ecological problems by their chief biophysical symptom - salinity, soil acidity, land degradation, forest loss - yet each problem actually has its origin in human behaviour... So we will have to change human attitudes, behaviour, and institutions.¹⁴⁷

While approaches such as ESD, 'natural resource management' and 'environmental security' have led to positive environmental outcomes, any approach that does not break free from anthropocentric understandings can only achieve so much, or in some

¹⁴⁴ This is a common criticism found in conservative media such as *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Australian* newspapers – for a good discussion of this see Aidan Ricketts, 2014, 'NIMBY's, blow ins, and professional protesters', Aidan Ricketts: Activist, 4 December, <http://aidanricketts.com/nimbys-blow-ins-professional-protesters/>, accessed 16 March 2016.

¹⁴⁵ Taken from the title of an essay by Audre Lorde. Audre Lorde, 1984, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Berkeley, pp. 110-114.

¹⁴⁶ Rob Nixon, 2011, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Boston.

¹⁴⁷ Tom Griffiths, 2007, 'The Humanities and an Environmentally Sustainable Australia', *Australian Humanities Review*, issue 43, unpaginated.

cases, create the illusion that action is being taken when in fact it is not.¹⁴⁸ For example, market solutions seek to address (or give the impression of addressing) environmental issues *from within the same system that created them*, and often the system profits from such action, which should automatically raise questions as to the integrity of the system.¹⁴⁹ Similarly anthropocentric, the term ‘natural resource management’ still implies a human amenity. So does ‘environmental security’, however it provides a useful framework.

One of the challenges of the environmental humanities is determining how best to communicate across disciplinary divides and convey critically important scientific understandings in language that people can relate to.¹⁵⁰ Notions of environmental security and human security allow for stronger links between traditional peace studies and environmental peace. As discussed in Chapter One, resource scarcity is increasingly recognised as an issue of national security. A recent publication by the Climate Council titled *Be Prepared: Climate Change, Security and Australia’s Defence Force* for example acknowledges that ‘[t]he links between climate change, food, water, health, migration and conflict are complex and interrelated’,¹⁵¹ and recommends that the Australian Defence Force acknowledge and prepare for the inherent national security issues associated with resource scarcity.¹⁵² There are positives and negatives to this, and like ESD, it is perhaps useful to see such approaches as an imperfect step in the evolution of human-nature relations. Framing environmental issues as a matter of national security is an approach that conveys the seriousness of threats to food and water ‘security’ and commands attention at the highest levels of government. However, the rhetoric is not ideal to the underlying goal

¹⁴⁸ Trainer, *Saving the Environment*; Ariel Salleh, 2010 ‘From Metabolic Rift to “Metabolic Value”: Reflections on Environmental Sociology and the Alternative Globalization Movement’, *Organization & Environment*, vol. 23, no. 2, June, pp. 205-219.

¹⁴⁹ See for example Sharon Beder, 1994, ‘Market-based Environmental Preservation: Costing the Earth’, *Search*, vol. 25, no. 8, September, pp. 226-228; Frank Ackerman & Kevin Gallagher, 2010, *Getting the Prices Wrong: The Limits of Market-Based Environmental Policy*, Medford, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Noel Castree *et al.*, 2014, ‘Changing the intellectual climate’, *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 4, September, pp. 763-768.

¹⁵¹ Chris Barrie *et al.*, 2015, *Be Prepared: Climate Change, Security and Australia’s Defence Force*, Canberra, p. 1.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

of either environmental humanists or environmental peace advocates,¹⁵³ and it also creates the risk of reinforcing the notion of ‘national’ issues at the expense of a more global, holistic, and interconnected outlook.

Global Justice

Influential environmental humanist Rob Nixon writes that ‘[w]e may all be in the Anthropocene, but we’re not all in it in the same way.’¹⁵⁴ Nixon’s *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* argues that ecological degradation, which unfolds slowly and is not as immediately recognisable as more overt forms of violence, impacts most heavily on impoverished populations – the global poor are most at risk of the consequences of climate change and other environmental issues.¹⁵⁵ Nixon’s theory is well-supported: it is widely recognised that the poor suffer the worst impacts of environmental degradation, largely as a consequence of existing global inequalities.¹⁵⁶ Much of the global ecological violence is perpetrated by Western nations, whose affluent lifestyles place further pressure on global resources.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, ‘[e]nvironmental problems ignore political borders.’¹⁵⁸ Global warming for example may impact all of humanity, but the poor are less equipped to deal with the consequences. This raises serious questions about global justice and highlights the need for environmental peace advocates to consider these issues.

Issues of global justice have been increasingly discussed in climate change conversations in the past few decades.¹⁵⁹ Many of these conversations have focused on distributive justice, which refers to addressing the inequitable distribution of Earth

¹⁵³ See for example Branagan’s *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence* for detailed discussion of the links between climate change and militarism.

¹⁵⁴ Rob Nixon, 2014, ‘The Anthropocene: The Promise and Pitfalls of an Epochal Idea’, Edge Effects, November 6, <http://edgeeffects.net/anthropocene-promise-and-pitfalls/>, accessed 16 March 2016.

¹⁵⁵ Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*.

¹⁵⁶ See for example Amster, *Peace Ecology*, p. 20; Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace*, pp. 164-166.

¹⁵⁷ Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace*, p. 7; Trainer, *Saving the Environment*, pp. 4-7.

¹⁵⁸ Alexander Carius, 2006, ‘Environmental Cooperation as an Instrument of Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding: Conditions for Success and Constraints’, paper presented at the Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, Berlin, 17-18 November, p. 11.

¹⁵⁹ See for example David E. Cooper & Joy A. Palmer (eds), 1995, *Just Environments: Intergenerational, International and Interspecies Issues*, London See for example Wolfgang Sachs & Tilman Santarius (eds), 2007, *Fair Future: Resource Conflicts, Security & Global Justice*, London.

resources.¹⁶⁰ In addition to the inequity issues discussed above, poverty is a ‘major destroyer of the environment.’¹⁶¹ Discussions of global justice also encompass a concern for future generations and other species: Zheng Baowei, Director of the China Center for Climate Change, has argued that climate justice must consider distributive justice, as well as intergenerational and interspecies justice.¹⁶² Intergenerational justice means considering how human action (or inaction) today impacts upon further generations. Janna Thompson provides an excellent discussion of the subject, arguing that we have a duty to future generations, and to operate as if we do not is unjust and inequitable.¹⁶³ The more ecocentrally-focused notion of interspecies justice asks us to consider how human impacts are adversely affecting non-human species, which are ill-equipped to adapt to ecological change, as evidenced by the current phase of mass-species extinction.¹⁶⁴

This highlights just some of the issues that must be considered when approaching environmental peace from a global perspective. Any inquiry into peace cultivation methods cannot ignore issues of global justice – while it is important to establish peace cultivation methods that are of relevance in a local setting, not only is it unrealistic to expect that a nation can insulate itself from environmental impacts without considering the rest of our species, it is also impossible to make peace with the Earth without acknowledging the interconnectedness of all life and all peoples. It could also be argued that Western nations are particularly obliged to take action, as this is where ‘the bulk of the damage is being done to the global environment.’¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Almond, ‘Rights and Justice in the Environment Debate’, pp. 12-15.

¹⁶¹ Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace*, p. 164.

¹⁶² Zheng Baowei, 2015, ‘Thinking on Climate Justice Communication’, paper presented at ‘Environmental Humanities on the Ground: Materiality, Sustainability, and Applicability’ Conference, 6-8 November, Shanghai.

¹⁶³ Janna Thompson, 2010, ‘What is Intergenerational Justice?’, in *Future Justice*, Helen Sykes (ed.), Albert Park, pp. 5-20.

¹⁶⁴ Joy A. Palmer, 1995, ‘Just Ecological Principles?’, in *Just Environments*, Cooper and Palmer (eds), pp. 31-32; Andrew Johnson, 1995, ‘Barriers to Fair Treatment of Non-Human Life’, in *Just Environments*, Cooper and Palmer (eds), pp. 165-179.

¹⁶⁵ Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace*, p. 164.

Global Methods

As demonstrated in Chapter Six, despite the efforts of global summits and government policy, the most effective environmental peace cultivation occurs at the grassroots level – a grassroots approach can inherently address issues of justice by empowering local communities to act in their best interests, as discussed above. Many of the methods cultivated on the ground in the Rainbow Region, while suited to local conditions and evolved from a certain context, also have global application. As these methods are Western in context, it is not surprising that many of them are transferrable to other Western nations; however there is also strong evidence that such methods can be and *are* effective in non-Western nations as well.

As discussed, utilising the ecocentric wisdom of Indigenous peoples is a method of addressing environmental issues that is gaining popularity globally. It was recently announced that the Canadian government intends to award contracts to traditional communities to conduct research into local TEK for the purpose of informing climate change policy.¹⁶⁶ The TEK of the Scandinavian Sámi people has been recognised by the Norwegian government as an effective approach to resource management since the 1990s.¹⁶⁷ Not limited to Western nations, an edited volume compiled by Sarah Johnson brings together fifteen chapters that recognise the many benefits of TEK, looking at how traditional and local environmental knowledge has been successfully applied to an array of environmental issues such as biodiversity conservation and water management in countries including Russia, India, Mozambique, The Amazon, Iran, Madagascar, Botswana and Indonesia.¹⁶⁸

Just as alliances between traditional owners, environmentalists, farmers and other community members have resulted in a powerful movement in the Rainbow

¹⁶⁶ 'Canada seeks traditional aboriginal knowledge on climate change', *The Star*, 12 March 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/03/12/canada-seeks-traditional-aboriginal-knowledge-on-climate-change.html, accessed 16 March 2016.

¹⁶⁷ Einar Eythorsson, 1993, 'Sámi Fjord Fishermen and the State: Traditional Knowledge and Resource Management in Northern Norway', in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases*, Julian T. Inglis (ed.), Ottawa, pp. 69-86; Randi Nymo & Jan Åge, 2015, 'Challenges for Contemporary Sami Homeland Attachment, Identity and Well-Being', Australian Centre for Cultural Environmental Research Seminar, University of Wollongong, 23 September.

¹⁶⁸ Sarah Johnson (ed.), 2012, *Themes in Environmental History: Indigenous Knowledge*, Cambridge.

Region, there is hope that this is not only possible elsewhere, but is currently happening. Dorothy Kidd writes on the concept of 'extra-activism' (as opposed to extractivism), the movement to resist resource extraction:

there have been significant successes: the suspension of mining concessions in Mexico, Costa Rica, Chile, Peru, and Canada; the declaration by dozens of communities of mining-free territories; and moratoriums called by governments in Haiti, Quebec, Costa Rica, and El Salvador, among others. These local and national successes are facilitated by partnerships with international indigenous, environmental, and human rights organizations.¹⁶⁹

While these successes may not be based on blockade-style protest, which it must be acknowledged is not always a safe option in countries with repressive regimes and anti-protest laws, nonviolence has been successfully employed for environmental causes in a number of countries. The Chipko movement in India precedes Terania Creek as seemingly the first nonviolent defense of forests recorded.¹⁷⁰ In Indonesia, Mama Aleta Baun led a group of women in a one-year sit-in that eventually brought an end to mining in her region, leading to the closure of a number of mines.¹⁷¹ In Kenya, Wangari Maathai's nonviolent campaigning resulted in the conservation of parks, environmental education, food security, human rights and self-determination initiatives.¹⁷²

Trainer cites the global ecovillage movement as one of the key ways in which we can cultivate sustainable societies. He looks to Jarlanbah permaculture hamlet at Nimbin as an example of how ecovillages have 'now gone beyond theorising to actually developing the new ways.'¹⁷³ In 1998, there were over five hundred ecovillages in the

¹⁶⁹ Dorothy Kidd, 2016, 'Extra-Activism', *Peace Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ See Ramachandra Guha, 1990, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, Berkeley, pp. 152-184; Haripriya Rangan, 2000, *Of Myths and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History*, London.

¹⁷¹ Stephen J. Scanlan, 2016, 'Gender, development and the environment: female empowerment and the creation of sustainable societies', in *Development in Crisis: Threats to Human Well-being in the Global South and Global North*, Rae Lesser Blumberg & Samuel Cohn (eds), Oxford, p. 125.

¹⁷² Kerry Kennedy Cuomo, 1993, 'Keynote Address: Human Rights and the Environment: Common Ground', *Yale Journal of International Law*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 229-230; Ken Butigan, 2011, 'The Power of Wangari Maathai', *Waging Nonviolence*, September 29, <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/the-power-of-wangari-maathai/>, accessed 10 August 2014.

¹⁷³ Trainer, *Saving the Environment*, p. 54.

United States, and permaculture has been one of the most significant aspects of their widespread popularity.¹⁷⁴ Former Rainbow Region resident Johanna Garnett argues ‘since its inception in Australia in the 1970s, permaculture has been taken on around the world by those seeking to develop more caring and sustainable society-nature relationships.’¹⁷⁵ Garnett’s field study of a permaculture farm in Myanmar concludes that community-led responses are an extremely valuable way for ‘developing’ nations to reclaim food sovereignty and security, citing the fact that permaculture can happen at a grassroots level.¹⁷⁶ This demonstrates an example of global environmental peace cultivated from the soil itself.

As is the case in the Rainbow Region, the strongest and most promising examples of effective global environmental peace cultivation are happening within communities and on common ground. Holdgate argues that local care for the environment strengthens communities, which in turn strengthens the environment as discussed above. Holdgate’s research finds that this approach, known as Primary Environmental Care (PEC), has proven to be a great success in communities in the Niger and in Tanzania.¹⁷⁷ He argues that PEC is all about the ‘common objective’, and community control of environmental management has led to improved outcomes for ecosystem management.¹⁷⁸

Julia Marton-LeFèvre offers compelling evidence of how environmental cooperation and shared management can overcome strict border demarcation, helping to lessen the tension that exists in imagined boundaries by cultivating a shared sense of place and environmental responsibility. Known as ‘peace parks’, there are over 170 of these ‘transboundary protected areas’ which not only see the joint management of environmental reserves, but have also helped to re-establish peace after significant human conflict.¹⁷⁹ Bouding also discusses transboundary environmental peace, citing

¹⁷⁴ Trainer, *Saving the Environment*, p. 56.

¹⁷⁵ Johanna Garnett, 2015, ‘Saving the World with Organic Agriculture: Grassroots Permaculture Education in Myanmar (Burma)’, *Food Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 43.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 40-51.

¹⁷⁷ Holdgate, *From Care to Action*, pp. 230-233.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 230-233.

¹⁷⁹ Julia Marton-LeFèvre, 2007, ‘Foreword’, in *Peace Parks: Conservation and Conflict Resolution*, Saleem H. Ali (ed.), Cambridge, pp. xiii-xv.

the Earth Charter's reference to the 'ten thousand societies' that live on the borders of nations and draw on their 'many time-tested but unrecognized [sic] ways of settling disputes peacefully.' These communities have their own approach that is based in the local, evolved of a place, and enacted at the community level.¹⁸⁰ Reinforcing the possibility for environmental conflicts to unite community on common ground as demonstrated at Bentley, Maria Fariello Laux points to further successful examples in Cyprus, the Korean Peninsula, and Peru/Ecuador.¹⁸¹ Conca and Dabelko also argue that 'environmental peacemaking' is of benefit both to the natural environment and the peace of communities, citing examples of successful trans-border peace cultivation in the Baltic, South Asia, the Aral Sea basin, southern Africa, the Caspian Sea, and the U.S.-Mexico border.¹⁸² While these examples have a significant human dimension and are not as focused on cultivating human-nature interactions as others, they do demonstrate the ability of a community-based approach to successfully cultivate peace even in conflict-prone environments.

While environmental peace cultivation methods have evolved largely by practice in the Rainbow Region, there is a substantial amount of literature and theory to recognise and support the significance of such methods. Approaches in the Rainbow Region, while supported by bodies of theory, are unique in that they have been tried and tested 'on the ground' and have proven to be successful. The application of peace literature to the history of the region confirms one of the primary aims of this thesis – environmental peacebuilding literature does have relevance in the Rainbow Region, and can be used to better understand how we can cultivate environmental peace. Although cultivated *of a place* and strengthened by a local sense of place, there is also great potential for such methods to be adopted in other places as well.

¹⁸⁰ Boulding, 'Peace Culture', p. 449.

¹⁸¹ Maria Fariello Laux, 2002, 'The potential for environmental contributions to peace', in *Transboundary Environmental Negotiation: New Approaches to Global Cooperation*, Larry Susskind, William Moomaw & Kevin Gallagher (eds), San Francisco, pp. 414-428.

¹⁸² Ken Conca & Geoffrey Dabelko (eds), 2002, *Environmental Peacemaking*, Washington D.C.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

‘My hope for the future is that people will recognise the great values of community that have been grown here in this region, where people can enjoy their lives. Not with a shallow wealth, but with great deep wealth which is about having a comfortable place to be, enough food to keep you satisfied, warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and having a lot of fun with your neighbours and community. Because that’s what it’s really about, is this common thread that holds us all on this planet, is love.’

Paul Joseph, 2013.¹

The Rainbow Region of the modern era is renowned for its ecologically conscious communities, as well as its innovative and influential environmental action and activism. In order to understand how the Rainbow Region inspires such passionate responses as the late Paul Joseph’s above, this thesis has looked to the history of the region, and specifically to the changing relationship between people and place over time. What is revealed is that a desire to belong and to forge a sense of place crosses temporal and cultural boundaries, providing a powerful common ground upon which to map the evolving relationship between people and the natural environment. This thesis has also looked to this history to ask, as we propel ourselves into the Anthropocene with increasing rapidity, what lessons can we learn from these dynamic and innovative communities about cultivating a more environmentally peaceful future?

Interpreting the History

The term ‘land ethic’ has been used to describe the sets of values, assumptions and attitudes towards the natural environment that dictate how different cultural groups relate to the land and how they understand their place within (or outside of) it. The Bundjalung land ethic knows no distinction between people and place – inherent

¹ Paul Joseph, 2013, cited in Mike New, ‘My Journey into “An Aquarius Legacy”’, ABC Open, 25 May, <https://open.abc.net.au/explore/49014>, accessed 3 June 2013.

within Aboriginal culture are notions of interconnectedness, sustainability, care for the environment and a sense of belonging to the land itself. Belonging to the longest, oldest continuing culture on Earth, the Bundjalung people have attempted to adapt to the impacts of the imposition of a radically different land ethic and a widespread loss of ability to maintain their intrinsic connections to Country. Even through dispossession, the Bundjalung have earned a reputation as a people who have worked hard to maintain their connection to their land. Through their own efforts, and with the increasing realisation by Western societies of the environmental benefits of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, the land ethic of the Bundjalung people is a well-recognised element of the environmentalism of the region, particularly among alternative communities.

The colonial history of the relationship between people and the natural environment reveals some significant findings. The colonial land ethic, ingrained with nature/culture dualist thinking, was one that resulted in a devastating degree of ecological violence, the impacts of which Australia still suffers from today. However, despite the common argument that this was a result of a resource extraction mentality combined with a lack of emotional connection to the land, it appears to be more complex than that. There is strong evidence to suggest that many colonists did indeed feel a deep connection to land – the problem was that the land they were connected to was on the opposite side of the Earth. The rapid and widespread destruction of the Australian environment was not so much out of a contempt for a new and alien landscape as it was an attempt to transform it into a recognisable form, revealing a deep and powerful desire to create a familiar sense of place, and with it, a sense of belonging.

What is also revealed during this era is that the natural environment exerted a high degree of agency over the colonial settlers. While colonists attempted to transform the land, they were not always successful in their endeavours, and for many settlers it was only when they gained an understanding of the new environment that they could cultivate a living from it. Their value-laden, resource extraction mentality land ethic, forged in a different land, was perhaps unwittingly moulded by the unique

Australian landscape, as was their very identity. In general, the closer one lives to, in or *through* the natural environment, the greater the degree of Earth agency or influence is experienced. This history highlights the influence of Earth agency, the role that cultural values and understandings can have on the way one perceives their relationship with the Earth, and the importance of understanding one's local environment.

Mapping the evolving conservation movement as it occurred *of a place* allowed for an insightful exploration of what the developing movement looked like in a local context. Particularly interesting due to the outstanding conservation values of the Big Scrub and the influence the Scrub has had on shaping regional identity, the history reveals the gradual acquisition of place-based knowledge, shifts in values and a growing attachment to place. While evolving understandings are not linear and are complex due to differing land ethics, the history nevertheless clearly demonstrates a growing concern for the natural environment as people settle into place, and provides some understanding as to how the region was transformed from a place primarily considered a resource extraction zone to a landscape ripe for the countercultural influx. The key message from this history is that there are tangible links between place attachment and a desire to protect one's local natural environment.

Thus, the history takes a different turn from 1970 onwards. The relationship between people and natural environment is at the heart of this history as many new settlers deliberately sought out a closer connection with the Earth and a simpler way of living. From the 1970s onwards, while there is noticeable conflict arising from competing notions of belonging, there is also an increasing coalescence of land ethics and a growing respect for different ways of seeing the land and one's relationship with it. Intentional communities, environmental activism, bush regeneration, the use of the arts, experiments in sustainable living and spiritual understandings of the Earth all emerge as innovative responses to the desire to cultivate a closer connection to the natural environment. The history shows a remarkable cyclical process – new settlers are influenced by global attitudes, and they deliberately cultivate environmentally

peaceful lifestyles that are inspired by the local place, which in turn are of global influence and significance.

Looking to the history of the region allows for a deeper understanding of the Rainbow Region of the modern day. While it is also important to understand the region within the context of political and demographic change, much of the environmental action and activism today is cultivated from the common ground that arises from a shared sense of place. Community collaboration draws on different empirical knowledge sets, informed *of a place*, and allows for the voicing of diverse understandings of the relationship between people and natural environment as well as varied expressions of belonging. The region today demonstrates just how empowered communities cultivated on common ground can be.

Looking at the history as a whole, it is largely a history of the developing understandings of human-nature interactions, and of white Australians coming to understand the natural environment, its limits, and its beauty. It is a somewhat cyclical history – after thousands of years of peaceable and symbiotic human-nature interactions, the dominant land ethic was cleaved in half by the nature/culture divide as well as the influence of structurally violent colonial capitalism. The rapid and widespread ecological violence that followed speaks volumes of the importance of having a connection to place - how we relate to the Earth is absolutely key to how we treat or mistreat it. Since the divide, humans have faced a gradual process of coming to terms with place, re-forging connections to the natural environment and finding a sense of belonging within it. While white Australians may never fully understand or even approach the relationship between Bundjalung people and their Country, a deep sense of place and belonging is central to humans inhabiting the Earth in environmentally responsible ways, and must be at the heart of building cultures of environmental peace.

While the Rainbow Region is well-known for its post-1970s environmentalism, this thesis has also revealed that innovative approaches to environmental issues in the region actually pre-date this pivotal era, providing further evidence that the region has been at the very centre of innovation in approaches to environmental issues. The

community-led effort to regenerate the Big Scrub at Lumley Park, Alstonville, is considered to be the first instance of citizen-initiated rainforest regeneration in Australia. Likewise, the Border Ranges campaign, initiated by a forest worker in the 1940s and further advanced by farmers as well as other local citizens in the 1960s, is highly significant. Not only does the latter represent one of the earliest campaigns to conserve rainforest, it also gives great weight to the theory that a desire to protect the natural environment forged through a deep connection to place can transcend seemingly opposing land ethics. The remarkable confluence today of traditionally opposing views, as demonstrated at Bentley as well as in the nation-wide protests against the ecologically violent coal and gas industries, offers great hope. Such a confluence allows once-deeply ingrained political and social divisions to be overcome for a common cause, in the process breaking down the potential for conflict and cultivating peaceful relationships both between people and with the Earth.

The region is a place of environmental firsts, and the list is overwhelming. In addition to the Lumley Park and Border Ranges campaigns, the Aquarius Festival is considered to be the first major expression of the Australian counterculture movement. It is said to be the site of the first Welcome to Country, the first place where Buddhism was taught outside an Australian city and the site of the first successful direct action blockade in defense of a forest, which itself included a number of innovative firsts, such as the production of a television commercial to promote an environmental cause, as well as the pioneering of globally-used protest techniques such as blockading and tree sits. Tuntabul Community set a precedent as the first legal land-sharing cooperative, paving the way for the establishment of the region as a hub for successful ICs and MOs. Terania Creek was the site of the launch of the first commercial internet in Australia, of great benefit to the promotion of environmental issues and awareness, particularly through the Rainforest Information Centre, one of the first activist organisations to use the internet to disseminate information globally. Local environmentalist Ian Cohen was the first Greens parliamentary member in NSW, and Tamara Smith is the first lower house Greens MP to be elected outside a major city anywhere in Australia. The Bundjalung were the first Aboriginal people in NSW to negotiate a land grant, and the region is home to the first Indigenous Land Use

Agreements in Australia. Lismore City Council is the first in Australia to organically certify its compost. The region has produced the first school program in the country to focus on bush food and medicinal plants, the first Australian organic market to sell certified organic produce, and the first community-owned renewable energy retailer.

There can be no doubt as to the region's green credentials, and this impressive list alone provides overwhelming justification as to why we should seek to learn from their lead. While the region has already contributed a great deal to environmental knowledge, approaches to issues and activist tactics, the place has yet more to offer. In this era of extremely challenging environmental issues, the Rainbow Region provides hope that grassroots environmentalism can achieve a great deal.

Learning from the Rainbow Region

In addition to producing an environmental history of the Rainbow Region, this thesis has sought to learn from the lessons provided by the dynamic region. Common streams were identified, and peace literature as well as other relevant theory was applied so as to best understand how we can cultivate environmentally peaceful futures. Placing the theory within the context of that which has been practiced in the region demonstrates that such peace cultivation methods do indeed work on the ground, often at the grassroots level, empowering individuals and communities to respond to environmental issues.

Key findings included the significance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and the inherently peaceful land ethic it can provide; the importance of both values and environmental education on shaping one's impression of and relationship with the natural environment; an understanding of the interconnected nature of all life on Earth; the significance of place attachment as a motivator for environmental action and activism; the benefit of considering environmental peace cultivation methods within existing frameworks such as Infrastructures for Peace (I4P); and the innate capacity for collaborative, community-based responses to bring people together for a common cause to overcome environmental challenges. Lastly, it must be noted that love – of people, other species, the Earth, and life itself (known as biophilia) – as one of

the most powerful of human emotions, provides an extremely strong common ground upon which to relate to one another and to the natural environment, and has done so throughout the history of both the region specifically as well as that of wider Australia.

This thesis does not claim to address all of the issues of the Anthropocene or purport to have the solutions to the serious environmental challenges before us. It does hope to contribute to discussions as to how we can move into the future, based on methods and approaches that actually work. From the Bundjalung land ethic, through to white Australia's growing attachment to place and their response to the destruction of places grown dear to them, and to the desire to forge ecologically sensitive ways of living, the communities of the Rainbow Region have largely unintentionally cultivated and refined organic environmental peacebuilding processes. As a result we have at our disposal a set of demonstrated techniques and tactics, forged on the ground, that have grown organically and over time in response to a desire to look after the *place*. While grown of a place, however, these techniques also have global application, and critically, have been demonstrated to be effective in other Western as well as non-Western nations.

One of the most important findings to arise from this thesis is the importance of community. This was not initially a major area of focus, and its recurrence is highly significant. As noted in the Discussion (Chapter Seven), interview respondents consistently expressed a sense of belonging that was both of a place, and of the community. It was perhaps naïve to start this thesis on the theme of common ground without considering that communities provide the setting for people to come together and *cultivate* common ground, while at the same time, a strong sense of community is a product of common values and goals, demonstrating a two-way process. This significant theme is interwoven throughout the history and it has become apparent that community is central to environmental peace cultivation processes. It is highly unlikely, for example, that the Bentley victory would have occurred without community support, while at the same time the community spirit that has grown from Bentley has led to the further cultivation of common ground and the strengthening of the community's resolve to unite in the face of environmental challenges. The growing

evidence that communities actually come together in times of crisis if they share a common threat provides tremendous hope, as this kind of grassroots response will be critical as the inevitable Anthropocene weighs down upon us. Community is where people choose to either come together on common ground, or not to – the cultivation of environmentally peaceful communities therefore is an absolutely essential factor as to whether or not we survive the challenges ahead of us.

New Perspectives

This thesis has aimed to make a number of original contributions to existing scholarship. As identified in Chapter One, the significance of the history of the region is disproportionate to the amount of academic attention it has received. This thesis has added to the growing historical literature, contributing a unique perspective. Looking at the history through both an environmental history and an environmental humanities lens has allowed for an investigation of the changing and evolving relationship between people and place, as well as an interrogation of the nature/culture divide. While there are a number of Aboriginal and colonial histories of the region, these have not focused specifically on human-nature relations.

There exists no history of the development of the conservation movement in the Rainbow Region despite the significance of the environment movement in the region. This thesis has also filled a gap between the colonial history and the countercultural history, providing some understanding as to how the region was transformed from a resource extraction zone to a place ripe for countercultural influx. An exploration of the evolving conservation movement, local in setting but placed within national and global context, allows for an exploration of what the conservation movement looked like on the ground and offers something new to scholarship. It has also contributed to the gradually expanding field of literature that looks at the counterculture, the Aquarius Festival and the region's environmental activism.

This thesis has also contributed to the growing concept of environmental peace, and has hopefully added both an understanding of its importance as well as some substance to its definition, goals and approaches. Environmental peace should

be actively aligned with the environmental humanities, as this thesis demonstrates the great potential that can come from such a union. It is hoped that these two fields can continue to grow together and share understandings. In outlining the issues that lie at the heart of the aims of the environmental humanities, namely engagement with the Anthropocene, the nature/culture divide and the need to re-think our selves back into the interconnected whole Earth, and addressing them from an environmental peace perspective, the interconnections between the two become evident. Working from a peace cultivation perspective also offers the humanities a grounded, practical base from which to initiate positive change.

Limitations

As noted above, the realisation of the significance of community to the concept of environmental peace only became evident as a result of research conducted. As such, interviewees were not asked any questions about community, their connection to it or the importance of it. Doing so may have generated different results and could have led to deeper understandings. This work may also have been limited by the fact the author is not a 'local.' Most of the literature on the region has come from within, and a great deal of it offers insightful reflections. As an 'outsider', it is possible that a different perspective has been achieved, but at the same time, understandings may perhaps be limited.

Another limitation is that this thesis can only offer a necessarily narrow history, given both the temporal and geographical scope of the work. It has focused on the most significant dominant cultural groups, selected because of the influence of their expressions of belonging upon the land. As such, other groups have not been represented. Migrants, for example, particularly from non-English speaking backgrounds, likely have a very different experience of the region, as may the many retirees that are attracted to the region. Byron Bay has also been necessarily excluded, and this may be an issue for some locals who would argue that it is undeniably a part of the region. The choice to exclude it was based both on the need to limit the scope of the work as well as the significantly different history of the place, but a similar history

that explores the changing human-nature interactions in Byron Bay would complement this thesis well. Furthermore, there are many more environmental campaigns, protests, organisations and initiatives that have come out of the region, and it would be impossible to detail every one. There is still a great deal more that could be said about the environmentalist spirit of the place.

Further Research

While this thesis has aimed to contribute to the history of the Rainbow Region, the place still deserves and requires much more historical inquiry. Comprehensive histories of the Aquarius Festival, the region's successful Intentional Communities and Multiple Occupancies, and their contribution to society, are yet to be written. The North East Forest Alliance also deserves more academic attention, as does the Terania Creek blockade, and undoubtedly, histories of Bentley will emerge in time. There are also more specific topics that have emerged from the thesis that could be further researched, including the Vietnam War moratoriums as a significant catalyst for environmental activism, the role of women and gender inequalities within the environment movement, and a deeper exploration of how 'locals' responded to the countercultural influx.

Further development of the concept of environmental peace and stronger links with the wider field of peace studies are also required. Doing so can make valuable and critically important contributions to the way in which peace is understood and may offer further suggestions as to how humanity can confront the Anthropocene. Such research offers the possibility of raising awareness of issues such as food, water and resource 'security', and framing it in less anthropocentric ways may convey the critically important understanding that what we do to the Earth, we do to ourselves, fellow species and future generations. While this thesis has linked practice with theory to demonstrate how we might develop environmental peace cultivation methods and approaches, practical methods, programs and tools to enable peace cultivation could also be further explored.

Final Words

The way that we relate to the natural environment is absolutely key to the way that we treat it, use it or abuse it. A strong sense of place, based on an understanding and respect for the natural environment, is a solid foundation upon which to cultivate common ground, and the communities that arise from this process will be well-equipped to confront environmental challenges together. The history of Rainbow Region demonstrates that we all write our different expressions of belonging upon the land, but when the natural environment is understood and respected, our imprint is not so heavy. Furthermore, when our sense of place is built on collaboration, it also builds respect, both across cultural boundaries, and respect for the Earth, as new knowledge opens up the possibility of a new way of seeing, understanding, and cultivating environmental peace.

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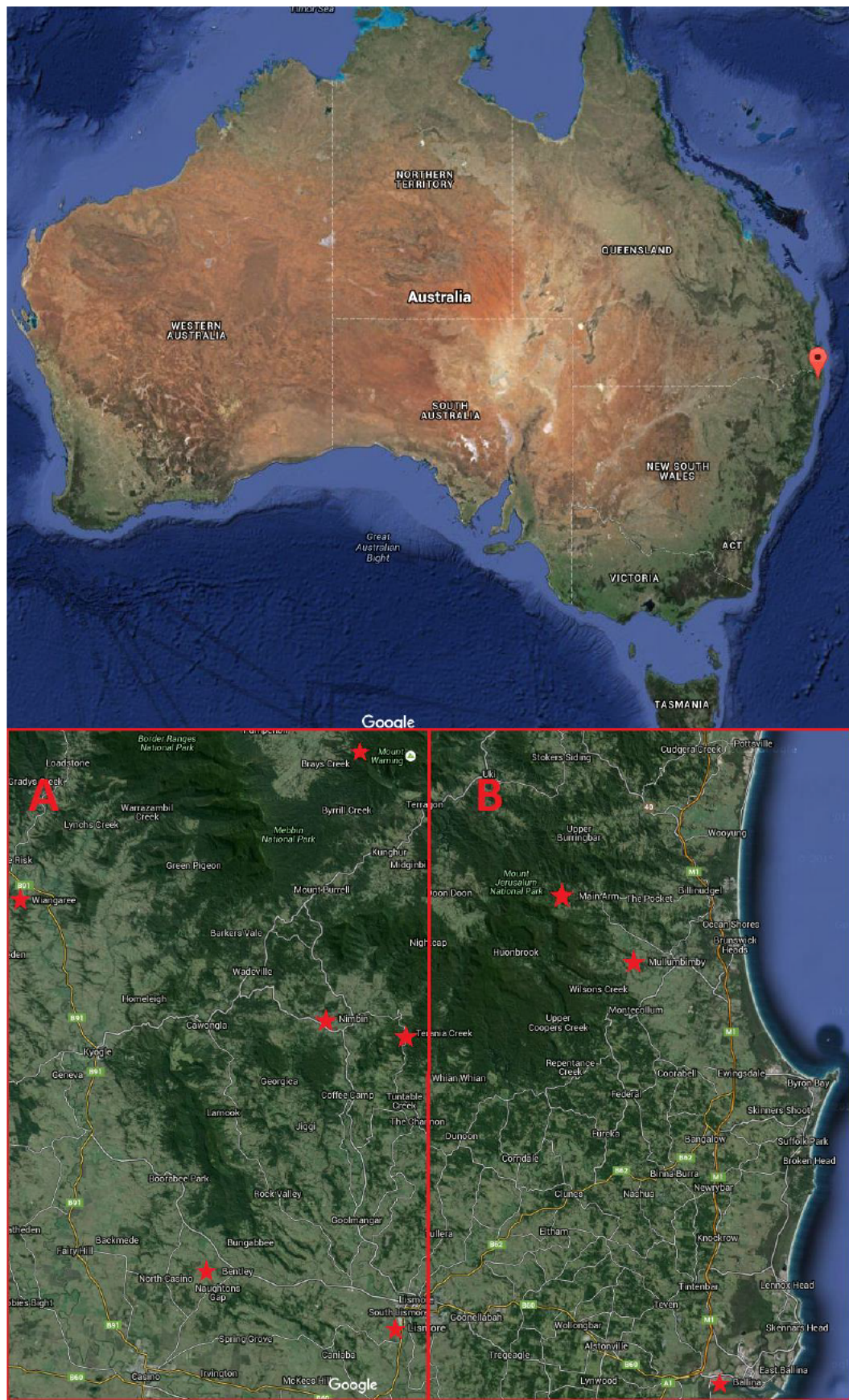
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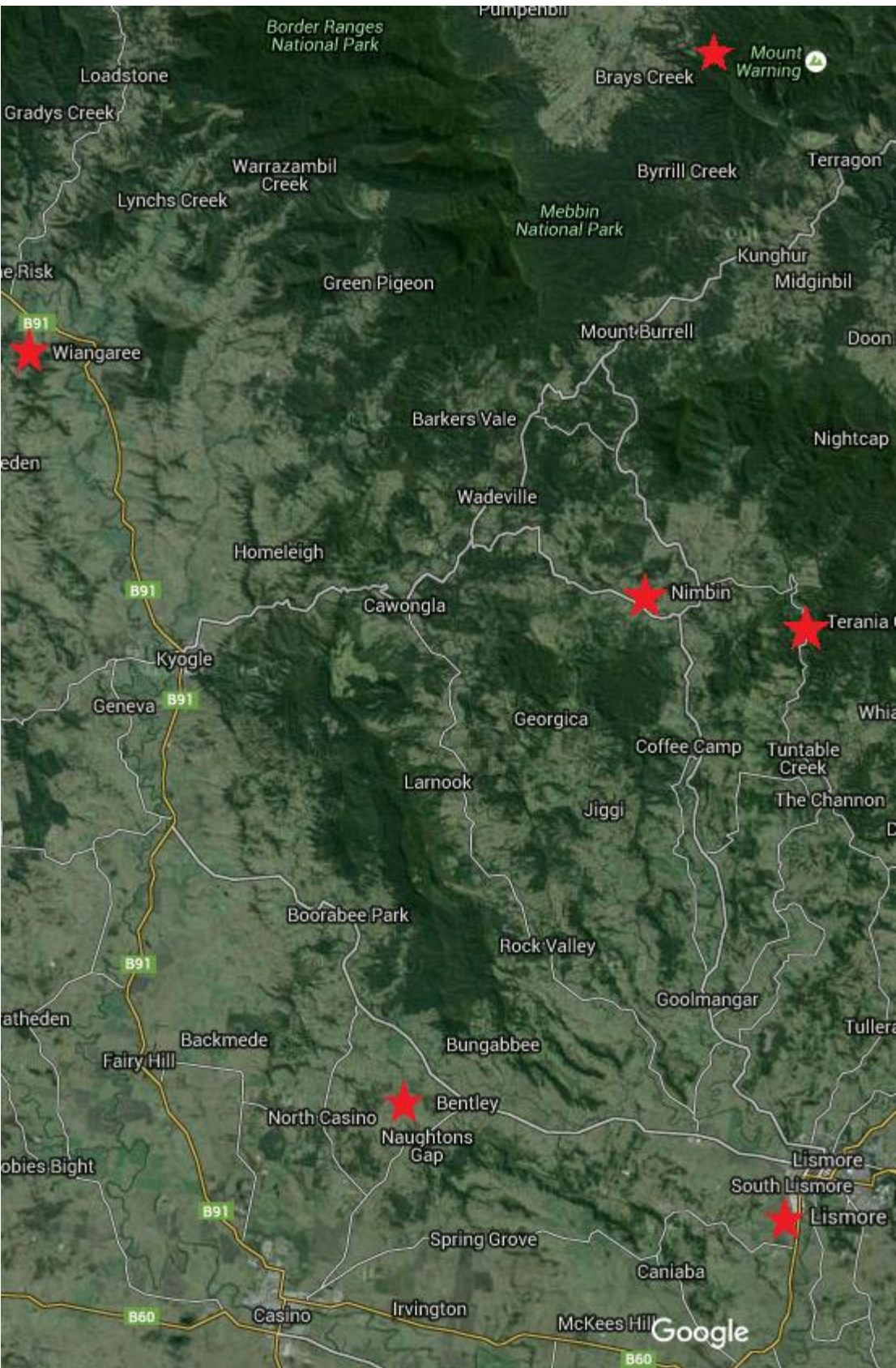
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Appendix A Maps of the Rainbow Region

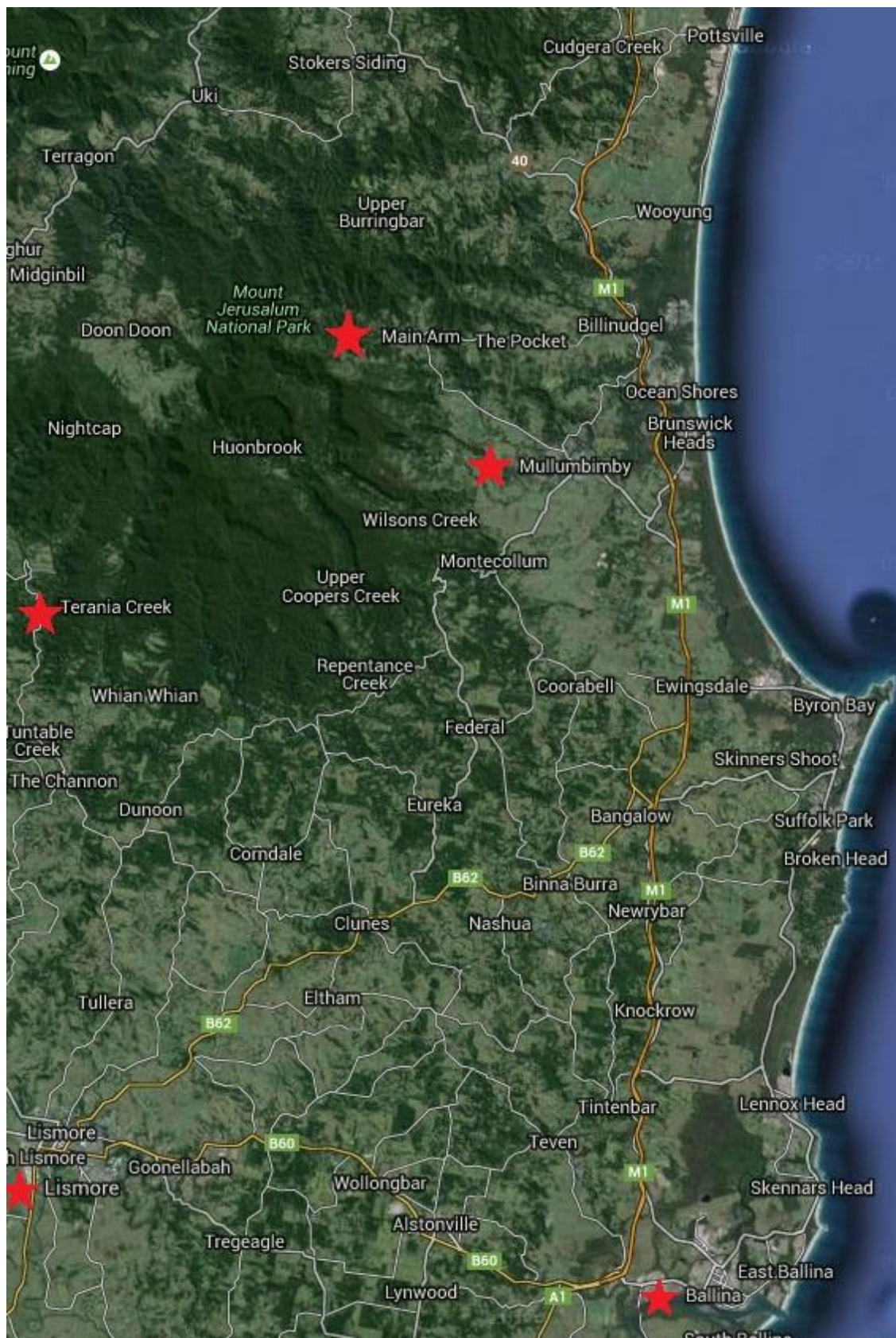


See over page for map close-ups.

Map A



Map B



Key places starred. Maps adapted from Google Maps™ by author.