

Relationships to the Bush in Nan Chauncy's Early Novels for Children

SUSAN SHERIDAN AND EMMA MAGUIRE

Flinders University

The 1950s marked an unprecedented development in Australian children's literature, with the emergence of many new writers—mainly women, like Nan Chauncy, Joan Phipson, Patricia Wrightson, Eleanor Spence and Mavis Thorpe Clark, as well as Colin Thiele and Ivan Southall. Bush and rural settings were strong favourites in their novels, which often took the form of a generic mix of adventure story and the *bildungsroman* novel of individual development. The bush provided child characters with unique challenges, which would foster independence and strength of character. While some of these writers drew on the earlier pastoral tradition of the Billabong books,¹ others characterised human relationships to the land in terms of nature conservation. In the early novels of Chauncy and Wrightson, the children's relationship to the bush is one of attachment and respect for the environment and its plants and creatures. Indeed these novelists, in depicting human relationships to the land, employ something approaching the strong Indigenous sense of 'country': of belonging to, and responsibility for, a particular environment. Later, both Wrightson and Chauncy turned their attention to Aboriginal presence, and the meanings which Aboriginal culture—and the bloody history of colonial race relations—gives to the land.

In their earliest novels, what is strikingly original is the way both writers use bush settings to raise questions about conservation of the natural environment, questions which were about to become highly political. In Australia, the nature conservation movement had begun in the late nineteenth century, and resulted in the establishment of the first national parks. During the 1950s it involved campaigns in Tasmania against logging in National Parks, in Victoria to save forests and in NSW to pass Fauna Protection legislation. During the post-war years, however, the conservation movement expanded to take on issues of chemical pollution and nuclear testing, as Australia experienced a rapid expansion of industrialisation and new pressures to develop mining of all kinds, the flooding of rivers for energy production, and the use of pollutants in fertilisers, construction materials and so on. Public reaction to the larger and more intractable dangers caused by these changes was at first muted. Then Rachel Carson's book, *The Silent Spring*, appeared in 1962, warning against the long-term effects of pollution caused by fertilisers and pest control. It caused a sensation when it was published in the United States, and is widely regarded as the trigger in the West for rising anxiety and outspoken concern about the health of the environment.² During the 1960s the Australian Conservation Foundation was formed, while several major campaigns were fought—to save the reef and other areas in Queensland (this was Judith Wright's initiation into public campaigning), to conserve the Little Desert in Victoria, to stop sand mining on the NSW coast around Myall Lakes, to stop quarrying in the Colong Caves in the Blue Mountains, and to preserve Lake Pedder from the depredations of hydro-electric development (Hutton and Connors, 89–120).

Chauncy's and Wrightson's early novels anticipated this engagement with ecological issues that were rapidly becoming more visible and urgent. Their critiques of various abuses of national parks and environmental protections belong to an era less politicised than the 1960s, but were no less remarkable for that. In Wrightson's first book, *The Crooked Snake* (1955), a gang of children form a secret society to protect a local wildlife sanctuary from their rivals, a group of older boys who have access to guns and enjoy hunting. The gang members use a camera rather than a gun; they record local flora and fauna, and write a letter to the Minister for Conservation asking for the sanctuary to be put on the Forestry's map as a reserve, to make sure no-one can cut down trees or shoot animals on its ground. In their preferred method of research, and in their dealings with the bureaucracy, these children mark out a specifically modern, as well as Australian, mode of the Enid Blyton or Arthur Ransom adventure story in a natural setting.

Nan Chauncy's first novel, *They Found a Cave* (1949), was a kind of prelude for this new style of adventure story: a family of English children are sent to stay during the war on a remote farm in Tasmania where they learn about Australian life—and especially about the bush, where the cave serves as a space of their own, separate from the grown-ups. Chauncy's third and fourth novels, *Tiger in the Bush* (1957) and *Devil's Hill* (1958) focus on a local family, the Lorennys, who live deep in the rainforest in south-western Tasmania. In *Tiger in the Bush*, the significant separation is not between the British motherland and Australian colony, but between the Lorennys and the 'Outside' (as they call it). Their property is so remote it is only accessible via 'the wire' – two lengths of wire stretched one above the other over a river valley. Badge, youngest of the three children, is the focus character. His older brother and sister have been sent 'outside' to school but are home for the holidays. Logging, mining and scientists' interest in the rare Tasmanian Tiger are topics of family discussion, and feed into the novel's plot. This plot hinges on Badge's relationship with two visiting scientists: they give him a camera in exchange for his help in locating the tiger, but he feels he has betrayed the creature, and tricks them into photographing the track of a wombat instead. In contrast to the modern children in Wrightson's *The Crooked Snake*, Badge, who has never been 'outside' and has never seen a camera before, thinks at first that it is a kind of weapon—but he quickly learns to use it for his own purposes, to protect the secret of the tiger. In *Devil's Hill*, the Lorennys family are host to their town-bred cousins, Sam and his two younger sisters, so in this novel the clash is between bush and city ways. This time the whole family goes trekking through the bush in search of a runaway cow, which they need to supply them with milk. The town cousins lose their arrogance and nervousness—transformations which are made possible through the models of the Lorennys parents: Dad with his bushman's know-how, and 'Liddle-Ma' with her bushwoman's strength and kindness. In this novel, then, children and adults inhabit the same enchanted bush space, and the emphasis is on what can be achieved there, rather than on threats from the Outside in the form of scientists and loggers.

In the 1980s the critic Brenda Niall characterised these and other children's novels as belonging to the genre of bush or pastoral idyll, which she saw as characteristic of the post-war period. They share 'a strong feeling for the natural world and an unequivocal rejection of urban Australia,' she wrote, and their success 'suggests that the celebration of rural life suited the mood of the period.' Of Chauncy's novels she wrote: 'If anything marks [them] as products of the 1950s it is their inward-looking, defensive quality: they build family fortresses against a dangerous world' (218). Around the same time Walter McVitty, looking at the early novels of

Phipson and Wrightson, was more attentive to their interest in conservation and ecology before such terms entered everyday use (101). He remarks on Phipson's 'profound conviction that "civilisation" (urban society) has lost touch with the living earth and only those who remain close to it and can respond to it can be said to be really living . . .' (40). McVitty draws attention to the way Wrightson's early work already has a sense of 'this old country' as an active force in the lives of both black and white Australians, one that would 'fashion its people, all of them, to its own shape in its own good time' (quoting from *The Rocks of Honey*, 106). Here we have two contrasting views of the significance of this focus on the bush in the post-war period—one, that it reflects Cold War social conservatism and rejection of post-war modernity; the other, that it signals a new ecological interest in the interdependence of all forms of life, ahead of its time.

Both interpretations apply to the Chauncy novels, which are our focus in the rest of this article: we want to place them in their historical context, and to register how they have been read before the recent emergence of ecocriticism. While their 'inward-looking, defensive quality' is undeniable, their concern with issues of conservation marks these novels as responsive to the contemporary political agenda in post-war Australia. By no means modern inheritors of the Billabong books, they do not 'celebrate' the kind of rural life represented by the fat wool cheques and bumper wheat crops of the 1950s—'pastoral in the farming sense', as Maurice Saxby puts it (108). If anything, they are pastorals in the classic sense of celebrating the bush as wilderness, an alternative to city life, where life is a matter of proud subsistence rather than using the land for grazing and cropping. We suggest that the culturally conservative implications of Chauncy's isolated farm family could be seen as a form of nostalgic resistance to post-war modernity—to its increasing exploitation of natural resources in the service of consumerism and its deployment of scientific knowledge to do so.

Her central characters display a suspicion of scientific or official knowledge of their bush environments: the Lorennys' practical knowledge, gained from years of hard-won survival in harsh bushland, is positioned in a binary relationship against outsider knowledge that is informed by the institutions of education and science. Local knowledge of the bush takes the form of 'bushcraft'—the skills and knowledge that enable survival in harsh and unpopulated country. This includes being able to identify animals and their habits in order to know which animals to hunt, which to learn from or observe, and which to avoid. It also includes knowledge of weather and the different effects of the seasons on the bush, as well as being able to identify edible plants or plants that might be used for medicinal purposes.

As the bush is the key source of their knowledge, the Lorennys are indeed—in Wrightson's words—'fashioned' by the land 'to its own shape in its own good time.' They are mostly self-sufficient on their small scale farm, where their only contact with the 'outside' is through Uncle Link who delivers supplies in exchange for produce. Their day-to-day concerns are dictated by the practicalities of survival in remote bushland and all members of the family contribute to the ongoing work that must be done on the property. They are hard workers, they know and respect the natural environment, they are patient and never feel the need to rush anything but they are quick-thinking in an emergency. In key respects they exemplify the traditional values of the bushman—and the bushwoman—as celebrated in texts which came to be seen as nation-building, like the stories of Henry Lawson. The image of the bush as the place where settler national identity was forged was undergoing revival in the post-war years, with the appearance of revisionary accounts of Australian cultural history like Vance Palmer's *The Legend of the*

Nineties (1954), which examined that decade's attempts to 'transform the natural shapes around them by infusing them with myth' (52), and Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958), with its account of a national mystique built on the values of 'the nomad tribe' of bush men. Such a revival could also be seen as a form of resistance to the emergence of modern suburban Australia.

Chauncy's characters Dad and Liddle-Ma have no formal education; they have seen fit to send their two oldest children, Lance and Iggy, to boarding school in the city, but when scientifically minded Lance comes home for the holidays, tensions between official knowledge and bush knowledge become evident. In *Tiger in the Bush* (1957) Badge witnesses Lance and Dad engaged in a tense discussion about logging in Tasmania for the paper mills. Lance argues that the logging companies only take the big trees that they need, leaving the undergrowth and smaller foliage for the wildlife, thus keeping the bush intact. But Dad knows people who have seen the logging sites where the process of cutting down and hauling out the huge trees has decimated the other bush land in the area (32–33). Badge, who is highly attuned to the nuances of personal communication in people and animals, senses the personal nature of what is at stake in this argument. Lance, using an argument that draws on 'outsider' understandings of the family's home, challenges Dad's authority and ridicules his ignorance of the scientific 'truths' that apparently undermine Dad's arguments.

Lance's alignment with scientific discourses is depicted as a kind of betrayal both of the land in which he was raised, and also of his family who work to protect the bush and its secrets from outsiders. This dynamic is paralleled by Dad's disapproval of his brother who, long ago, went to America to seek wealth in mining, and remained there. Dad says, "That's not right nor fair, making a man change from the country what's edgercated him and given him a fair go" and maintains that he would never give up being an Australian in exchange for wealth: "no, not for twenty motorcars!" (26). In this parallel between Lance and his American uncle—a significant symbolic relationship, surely—notions of home and land are tied deeply to the natural environment of the Australian bush, which is represented as something to be preserved, an important part of what it means to be Australian. The conservation of 'untouched' bush land is linked here to the preservation of Australian national identity—there is, at this stage in Chauncy's writing, no mention of the custodial role of the original inhabitants of the land.

A further dimension of this anti-modern rejection of institutionalised knowledge in the Badge Lorennny books can be drawn out when we place them in the Romantic tradition where children and nature are symbolically associated. In this tradition of thought, as described by Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, both children and nature are constructed as spontaneous and pure forms, preceding and transcending the human, outside of language and culture (210). According to Rousseau, children should therefore learn only from experience of the natural world, not from 'civilisation.' 'Civilisation' works as a corrupting force both in nature (through the application of scientific knowledge and the processes of development that exploit the riches of nature) and in children (through the process of exposure to social rules and practices). In her short history of the relationship between ideological constructions of 'the child' and 'nature', Lesnik-Oberstein points to the paradox of 'children's literature' as 'the only books which were [considered] "safe" for the child: the only books which preserved and perpetuated the natural in the child, and the natural from which the child was to learn' (212). The Badge Lorennny books participate in this

Romantic construction of nature as the source of true knowledge and of childhood as a space of uncontaminated humanity. They also participate in the tradition of allocating to the child a key role in ecological awareness, which is so evident in contemporary children's books (Stephens, 40), though it was less common in the 1950s.

Related ideas about nature and knowledge can also be discerned in the child characters' relationships with native animals, and this is especially true of Badge. Badge is a quiet, reflective boy who is happiest out in the bush peacefully observing wild animals. He sits and watches them as hours slip by and he has gained a wealth of knowledge about the animals that live around his family's property. When Badge reluctantly attends school in the second book in the series *Devil's Hill* (1958) he contradicts the information about an echidna that his teacher reads out from a book. He is ridiculed by the class because they view him as ignorant and backward, and so ill-positioned to challenge the 'facts' that are written down in a school book. But Badge has spent his life observing these animals and he knows that he is right.

In *Tiger in the Bush* the child's duty to conserve the natural habitat is the point of Badge's decision not to help his American cousin Russ who, with his scientist partner, is looking for proof of the existence of the Tasmanian tiger. He knows that if Russ takes proof of the tiger back to America, the bush that is their home will be flooded by 'outsiders' clamouring to find and capture the rare animal. The bush is positioned as a delicate site that city-dwellers lack the understanding to enter without wreaking destruction. Although the scientists do not intend to harm the bush or its inhabitants, their ignorance of the subtleties of life in the bush prevents them from co-existing in it along with the animals and plants—as Badge and his family do. Here, it is the scientists who rely on Badge for their education, and in this way Chauncy gives a voice to the local inhabitants of these remote areas who were wary of development and destruction of the land that was their home.

Chauncy draws on the relationship that had long been cultivated between the bush environment and the identity of settler Australia, depicting the bush as a site which fosters in the Lorennys family those characteristics of self reliance, mutual support and practical wisdom that were believed to contribute to a uniquely Australian character. In *Devil's Hill* Badge Lorennys is depicted struggling with anxieties around growing up and separating from his parents in order to go to school. He is reluctant to leave his life of survival in harsh, isolated bush land where life goes by at a slower pace, in order to travel to the school where the knowledge he has learned from bush survival is not valued and he is viewed as 'backward.' At this time of crucial anxiety about joining mainstream culture, a return to the bush is what is needed for Badge to fully mature—isolation is perceived as desirable, even necessary, for maturity. This mirrors anxieties about Australia as a maturing country that was breaking away from its 'parent' country England and now dealing with the powerful influence of its new protector, the United States (White 161–62).

It is not only modernity and scientific knowledge that cause anxiety in these novels, but the intrusion of 'outsiders.' Just as the Lorennys' property is cut off from the 'outside' by a dangerous expanse of water, so Australia's borders, 'girt by sea,' have been imagined as creating a separation from centres of civilisation in Asia, Europe and the Americas. Australia's cultural history is plagued by deep anxieties about outsiders, those strange and fearsome Others whose

difference threatens the Australian ‘way of life,’ and the 1950s was a period when that insularity was notably threatened, both by the ‘invasion’ of post-war immigrants and by Cold War fears about the advance of Communism.

While it does constitute a ‘fortress against a dangerous world’ (Niall), the Lorennys’ relationship to the country that they care for has a positive as well as a defensive aspect. The family achieves the recently formulated aim of living ‘lightly’ on the land, making a minimal impact on the wilderness. Theirs is not so much a struggle for survival, or to tame the land, as depicted in most stereotypes of the building of national character, but a triumph of self-sufficiency, reminiscent of a much earlier novel for children, *The Swiss Family Robinson* (Johann Wyss, 1812–13). In emphasising the value of the bush environment for the formation of character, Chauncy poses a reason for Australians to preserve the bush rather than destroy it by ‘development’ in exchange for consumer benefits.

Chauncy’s novels celebrate the landscape as an awe-inspiring presence that evokes a strong emotional attachment, in the Romantic tradition of presenting the bush as Edenic. In his discussion of attitudes to the bush in Australian writing for children, Ern Finnis places the work of Chauncy, Wrightson and Hesba Brinsmead in this Romantic tradition, in contrast to stories of survival by Phipson, Clark, Southall and Thiele, which depict the bush landscape as an antagonist. He traces their ambivalent response to landscape back to Henry Lawson’s ‘bush realism,’ suggesting that it is out of sympathy with current espousals of ‘oneness with the environment’ (Foster, Finnis and Nimon, 59, 83). But however much the Badge Lorennys books celebrate the bush as a beloved and familiar landscape, they are not entirely Romantic in Finnis’s sense: the bush can threaten to dissolve into an unknown and inhospitable wilderness, as it does when Badge foolishly loses his horse in the bush and injures himself trying to catch it, in *Tiger in the Bush*.

Such a testing of Badge is part of the process of his growing up, a process which is strongly gendered. A key theme here is the way in which bush life produces a particular kind of heroic Australian masculinity, a concept not new to literature about Australia. Kay Schaffer points to the role of the bush in developing ideas of Australian national identity: ‘The bush and the battlefield, as opposed to the trivial and fragmenting life of the city, become the testing ground for Australian manhood’ (30). This plays out in the tension between Badge and his cousin Sam in *Devil’s Hill*, who are both tested when the Lorennys family heads off into the wild bush in search of the runaway cow. Through spending time in the bush with the Lorennys, Sam stops complaining, and stops talking about the sophistications of the city, as he learns to appreciate the real wonders of the bush, and of a life motivated by necessity rather than novelty. ‘It is not just Badge’s influence or physical demands that help transform Sam. It is his immersion in the landscape that brings healing’ (Saxby, 110). John Stephens, in considering the settler narrative that underpins the story, points out that Sam’s transformation makes visible the binary of city and country set up by Chauncy where ‘the city represents not a gaining of sophistication but a loss of knowledge’ (58). This knowledge is tied implicitly to an Australian masculinity that is embedded in the harsh landscape of rural Australia.

The manhood towards which Badge and Sam are travelling is exemplified by Dad, who is resourceful, strong, capable and independent, and has extensive knowledge of the bush from his

days as a prospector. Sam's whining, bad-tempered, lazy and selfish character traits are linked to femininity by Dad and Liddle-Ma, who consider that Sam has been fussed over by his mother, and has spent too much time with only girls and women for company. The kind of masculinity valued in the Badge Lorennny books is not exclusively attached to male bodies, however. Liddle-Ma, isolated in the bush for decades, has not been shaped by the 'civilised' femininity of town life. Rather, her defining feature is her strength, both physical and also emotional and mental. She is bigger than her husband (hence her ironic nickname) and just as strong: 'Liddle-Ma extended a free hand, huge and capable, one that could do a woman's work and a man's, too' (6). But if Liddle-Ma and Dad seem to be cut from the same cloth, it is Dad's history as a forger of his own destiny that marks his difference from his wife: the narrative details how Dave Lorennny claimed his piece of land 'by right of pioneering conquest and hard work' (2-3), whereas Liddle-Ma is given no history at all.

Nevertheless, she embodies the kind of character that the bush environment is held to foster: she is sensible, practical, gentle, fair, strong, hard-working, and perceptive when it comes to people and relationships. She is the means through which the (masculine) qualities of ideal Australian character are transmitted to Badge and his cousins. The fearful, timid Bron reaps the most benefit from Liddle-Ma as a role model. Bron looks up to the older woman who is sure of herself and extremely capable. Through Liddle-Ma's gentle nurturing of Bron in the bush environment, the young girl loses her undesirable girlish traits of anxiety, fearfulness and timidity. While the traits of independence, strength, practical abilities and stoicism are presented as the ideal for all Australians, not only men and boys, the division of labour in the Badge Lorennny books lies along familiar gendered lines: Liddle-Ma and Bron take on the domestic duties of cooking, homemaking (readying the campsites) and childcare (of the toddler Sheppie) so that Dad, Badge and Sam can do the 'real' work of tracking the brindle cow through the bush.

As Kay Schaffer points out, the 'bush Mum' of Australian literature possesses the qualities needed for leadership of the family in rural settings. Able to preserve civilisation in the wilderness if the male leader of the household is absent, the position of the bush Mum seems like a position of power for women. Yet it relies on the same discourses within patriarchy that oppress women and undermine the value of femininity by defining it in opposition to masculinity as a lack: when the woman is most valued, 'the status she acquires is a masculine status' (71). Yet it can hardly be argued that the Badge Lorennny novels participate in that mythology of the bush which Schaffer has defined as the predominant mindset of white male settlers, of fear and antagonism towards the bush, and by implication the whole natural environment. Land was seen as virgin soil to be raped and tamed, and put to productive use, and the bush appeared as a source of threat, a symbol of the unknown (60-62). On the contrary, these novels manifest a strong commitment to understanding and conserving the natural environment and fostering a sense of wonder and an imaginative engagement with the land.

Badge, in these two novels, does not seek to tame the bush and reap its riches for himself, but to evade the rules and workings of a dominant society which he does not understand or relate to. Life on the land is necessarily anti-materialistic, where the goal is to live in harmony with the bush as part of its ecosystem, and respect for that ecosystem is the core requirement for admission to its fold. Badge feels that the land is watching him, and as he worries about his agreement to lead the Americans to the Tasmanian tiger, he is suddenly granted 'illumination. He

knew exactly what to do' (112): it is as if the bush has suggested a solution to his problem. At the end of the novel, after the Americans have departed (with nothing but the plaster cast of a wombat track to reward their efforts), the boy looks up:

An old wedgetail hung suspended over the valley. He was their special eagle known by the gap in his pinions, caused—so Dad said—because some idiot Outside took a pot at him, although he was a protected bird. . . . The old warrior made three great effortless arcs and zoomed away until he was as small as a crow . . . (153)

Watching this, Badge feels some regret that 'everything was just as it had been before Russ came—still and quiet, with nothing ever happening.' But that is as it should be: 'the valley went back serenely to its peace' (154). These novels depict a special relationship in which self-knowledge is intimately tied to love and knowledge of the environment—and the capacity to learn from it.

Chauncy's representation of the bush as a source of knowledge and awe as well as an object of love takes on new significance when viewed from the perspective of contemporary eco-criticism. The critique of modernity implied by the novels' rejection of formal knowledge as well as the exploitation of natural resources need not be seen only in the light of Cold War isolationism, as Niall did. Rather, it can be regarded as part and parcel of an ecological critique of the modern mode of exploiting the natural world, which 'empties human life of the significance it had derived from living in and with nature and alienates individuals and communities from their rootedness in place' (Heise 507). But, again from the perspective of contemporary eco-criticism, to the extent that Chauncy presents the bush as a wilderness, her writing 'conceals the fact that the apparently transhistorical ideal of *wilderness* only acquired connotations of the sublime and sacred in the nineteenth century and that the cultural valuation of pristine and uninhabited areas led to the displacement of native inhabitants' (Heise 507)—or in this case, followed on from their violent dispossession. Chauncy was to begin to remedy this cultural forgetting in her next novels, *Tangara* (1960) and *Mathinna's People* (1967) both of which are concerned with the indigenous people of her chosen country, and their suffering at the hands of white colonists.

Another aspect of Chauncy's ecological perspective which should be mentioned here is her creation of a particular landscape with its own flora and fauna, specific to the Tasmanian rainforest. This regional specificity was new to Australian writing for children in the post-war years, when it was also being pioneered by Colin Thiele's stories of growing up in the Barossa Valley and by Patricia Wrightson, with her 'keen eye for what identifies a particular place (Bangalow palms and bush-turkey mounds)' (Halliday). Indeed, literary attention to biodiversity was relatively new to Australian literature in general. It could fairly be attributed to the Jindyworobak poets like Rex Ingamells, who advocated shedding European models in favour of settler Australians learning to 'express themselves in relation to their environment,' to 'the indestructible spirit of place.'³ Crucially, this involved an idea of the land as an active force in human as well as animal and plant life.

This was the context of ideas about the natural environment which children's writers like Chauncy shared with Australian poets in the post-war period. Judith Wright, to name the most eminent of the poets, was convinced that post-war civilisation could only be redeemed by

creating a right relation with the natural world, this conviction is dramatised by her powerful evocation of a particular landscape, like the ‘bony slopes wincing under the winter’ in ‘South of My Days.’ Just as Wright made the New England high country a living presence in her poetry, so Nan Chauncy gave the Tasmanian forests a literary presence. She had migrated to Tasmania with her family as a girl of twelve and returned to live for much of her adult life at the site of her childhood home, an orchard outside the town of Bagdad, some thirty kilometres north of Hobart. After her marriage, Nan and her husband lived there in a small cottage, ‘Day Dawn’, built by her father and brother, where she wrote by the light of a hurricane lamp. Chauncy Vale was gazetted as a wildlife sanctuary in 1946 and was bequeathed by her husband Antony to the local council in 1988 (Eastman). Like Wright’s, Nan Chauncy’s writing is infused with a passion for the landscape where she lived and had her being, a passion which would later transmute into a passion to understand the history of that place as a site of dispossession of the Indigenous inhabitants by settler Australians. Both these white Australian women writers effected a transition in their writing from the love of a particular ‘landscape’ to a regard for ‘country’, in something approaching the Indigenous Australian sense of custodianship.

Chauncy’s early novels were recognised at the time as bringing new and valuable qualities to Australian writing for children: *Tiger in the Bush* and *Devil’s Hill*, and also *Tangara* all won the Book Council’s annual award. Her contemporary, Patricia Wrightson, described her innovative focus on the ‘secret ground of emotion’ and its ‘extension into the Australian environment’ as an ‘earthquake’ in the field of writing (1970, 30). In retrospect it is possible to discern links between that evocation of the bush as a formative influence and traditional settler Australian constructions of gender. Yet Chauncy’s treatment of the theme of entering into masculinity in the Badge Lorennny novels is subtly altered by her emphasis on learning from the bush through an attitude of attentive love. In retrospect it is also possible to discern in her work the effects of an emerging, ecologically sensitive way of seeing human relationships to the environment.

NOTES

¹ The Billabong books were a series of 15 novels for children published between 1910 and 1942 by Mary Grant Bruce. They were set on a prosperous cattle station and featured Norah, her brother Jim and his friends.

² See Eliza Griswold, ‘The Wild Life Of Silent Spring’, *New York Times: The Sunday Magazine*. 21 September 2012. MM36.

³ Ingamells, *Conditional Culture* (1938) quoted by Gary Clark in Birns and McNeer, pp. 429–30.

WORKS CITED

- Bradford, Clare. *Writing the Australian Child: Texts and Contexts in Fiction for Children*. Nedlands, Perth: U of WA P, 1996.
- Chauncy, Nan. *Devil’s Hill*. (1958) London: Oxford UP, 1971.
- Chauncy, Nan. *They Found a Cave*. (1949) London: Oxford UP, 1963. Repr. with introduction by John Marsden, Text Classics, 2013.
- Chauncy, Nan. *Tiger in the Bush*. (1957) London: Oxford UP, 1971.

- Clark, Gary. 'Environmental Themes in Australian Literature'. *A Companion to Australian Literature Since 1900*. Eds. Nicholas Birns and Rebecca McNeer. Rochester NY: Camden House, 2007. 429–43.
- Davison, Graeme. 'Sydney and the Bush: An Urban Context for the Australian Legend'. In *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity*. Ed. John Carroll. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1982. 109–30.
- Eastman, Berenice. 'Chauncy, Nancen Beryl (Nan) (1900–1970)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. 21 July 2013 <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chauncy-nancen-beryl-nan-9735/text17193>.
- Foster, John, Ern Finnis and Maureen Nimon. *Australian Children's Literature: An Exploration of Genre and Theme*. Wagga Wagga NSW: Centre for Information Studies, 1995.
- Halliday, Alison. 'Patricia Wrightson'. *Australian Writers, 1950–1975*. Ed. Selina Samuels. Detroit: Gale, 2004. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* Vol. 289.
- Heise, Ursula K. 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism'. *PMLA* 121.2 (2006): 503–16.
- Hutton, Drew and Libby Connors. *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*. Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Lesnik-Oberstein, Karin. 'Children's Literature and the Environment'. *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*. Eds. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells. London: Zed Books, 1998. 208–17.
- McVitty, Walter. *Innocence and Experience: Essays on Contemporary Australian Children's Writers*. Melbourne: Nelson, 1981.
- Niall, Brenda. *Australia through the Looking-Glass: Children's Fiction 1830–1980*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1984.
- Palmer, Vance. *The Legend of the Nineties*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1954.
- Saxby, Maurice. *Images of Australia: A History of Australian Children's Literature*. Sydney: Scholastic P, 2002.
- Schaffer, Kay. *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*. Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1988.
- Stephens, John. 'Continuity, Fissure, or Dysfunction? From Settler Society to Multicultural Society in Australian Fiction'. *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*. Ed. Roderick McGillis. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000. 55–70.
- Stephens, John. 'From Eden to Suburbia: Perspectives on the Natural World in Children's Literature'. *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature* 16.2 (2006): 40–45.
- Ward, Russel. *The Australian Legend*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1958.
- White, Richard. *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980*. Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981.
- Wrightson, Patricia. 'Nan Chauncy: An Appreciation'. *Reading Time* (July 1970): 30–31.
- . *The Crooked Snake*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955.
- . *The Rocks of Honey*. (1960) Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1972.