

## Chapter 5

### Out of Ireland: Ancestral Masculinity

While Keneally challenges and extends static concepts of nationalism in *The Great Shame* and *Bettany's Book*, Christopher Koch dislodges conventional notions of male gender identity in his double-novel, *Beware of the Past*. Together, the two novels *Highways to a War* and *Out of Ireland* form a single ancestral narrative, composed of a founder and an inheritor.<sup>1</sup> Ancestry is a nexus between past and present, and may enable the descendant to learn from the mistakes of history. Because Koch's two novels are so closely related according to character, they represent a type of ancestral identification, whereby descendants may use ancestry to inform their own lives. Although for the purposes of discussion this thesis deals with the novels separately, they are crucially linked by ancestry: 'Devereux may have escaped from Tasmania and from Time, but in an Athanasian way, he resides within his great-grandson'.<sup>2</sup>

While Koch, along with Keneally, is also concerned with nationalism, his main focus is the construction of gender identity. This provides a counterpoint to the reading of Keneally, but also identifies Koch's own unique use of ancestral narrative and his contribution to culture and society. This chapter is also designed to respond to the central criticism of Koch: that his work tends towards sexism and racism by reproducing the imperialist-masculine aspects of *Boys' Own*-type adventures. In fact, Koch is actually portraying dysfunctional characters and thereby illustrating a crisis of masculinity. A more appropriate critique might focus on how Koch fails to suggest any alternative to the dominant gender identity he challenges. Nonetheless, his gesture towards new conceptions of masculinity through ancestral narrative is notable.

Koch's ancestral narrative shares many similarities with Keneally's, but there are also major differences. In *The Great Shame* Keneally seeks to tell an untold ancestral narrative, that of the 'subaltern' Irish transportees. On the other hand, *Bettany's Book* tells the story of a life-changing discovery, or revelation, of

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Koch, *Highways to a War*, Milsons Point: Random House, 1995; Christopher Koch, *Out of Ireland*, Milsons Point: Random House, 1999. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the reading order of these novels.

<sup>2</sup> Noel Henrickson, 'On the Tides of History', *Quadrant*, April 2001, p. 56.

one ancestral narrative. Koch's fiction does neither of these things: what it does is explore the processes and outcomes of cultural and personal amnesia. Koch's focus is on absent ancestors and the destructive consequences of 'Hiding the Stain' or repressing the memory of convict ancestors. This is done initially through a focus on the silence of Kathleen with regard to the trauma she has experienced, and then broadens the focus to Tasmania and one specific aspect of Australian culture. Ultimately, Koch aims for reparation, showing a need to heal the wounds caused by wilfully forgetting one's ancestors.

The vehicle Koch uses to do this is the genre of adventure fiction. This inhabitation of adventure is by no means new; writers such as Conrad have often included a critical element in their adventures. Koch's earlier fiction also uses the conventions of adventure fiction to critique his characters' sense of male gender identity. For the main character Devereux, his time in the Antipodes is a type of adventure, where he is caught up in the cloak-and-dagger world of a colonial penal colony. However, Koch also undermines the adventure myth in important ways. Through Devereux's attraction to a pastoralist idyll and the shocking experience of real violence, Koch shatters the certainties of the adventure narrative and the simplified masculinity which often goes with it.

One of the clearest and most enduring symptoms of male gender identity is the way that male characters relate to women. Indeed, Koch's representation of women and how they are treated by his male characters has attracted significant criticism. What Koch actually does is demonstrate the negative, self-destructive attitude to women that many of his characters themselves possess, particularly through identifying a woman with a nation or a landscape. Devereux's English wife Katherine becomes less and less real as his exile proceeds, and he comes to see her betrayal of him as a betrayal of the homeland against a heroic rebel. Once in Australia his perception of Kathleen O'Rahilly is fiercely idealistic: he identifies her with Ireland and its peasant population, and his poetic vision constructs her in a type of *aisling*, which identifies Ireland as a woman. However, this type of idealisation is a deeply flawed project, and Koch goes on to demonstrate how self-destructive this is for Devereux himself. By undermining the traditional 'male gaze', Koch attempts to move towards a new way of relating to women, one which discards the idealised *aisling*. However, *Out of Ireland* only suggests such a project, gesturing towards the life of Langford in *Highways to a War*.

Male characters' attitudes to women thus reflect upon their own gender identity, and a common characterisation of Koch's men uses split-figures, or *doppelgängers*. These kinds of figures proliferate through Koch's novels, and it is worth looking at how he has used them previously before reflecting on their role in *Beware of the Past*. Ultimately, Robert Devereux is the quintessential split-figure: as a romantic nationalist, he is caught between the love of his homeland and its people and hatred for its oppressors. He is an archetypal artist-warrior: he loves the traditions and stories of Ireland and could be content as a farmer in a pastoralist idyll; however, he is full of anger for the injustices of colonialism and dreams of violent retribution against the British Empire. This foregrounds the issue of his gender identity, by evoking him within the archetype of a fully integrated, self-assured and confident adventurer-hero. 'This is the eternal dilemma of the romantic hero, the quester, but ... it is made almost unbearably poignant, because of Devereux's lucid intelligence and his cursed understanding of his own double nature and innate loneliness.'<sup>3</sup> In this way Koch challenges and undermines the assumptions of traditional masculinity, although this novel only manages to present this issue, rather than to move towards any kind of reparation or healing.

It is this move towards a new masculinity that the reader is led to expect in *Highways to a War*. Devereux abandons the Southern Hemisphere for the familiar social networks and the fame of the United States. He considers Australia an irredeemable colonial outpost, forever tainted with the convict stain. However, the conclusion of the novel suggests that hope does remain in Tasmania, and Devereux's inheritor, Michael Langford, is the one in which hope resides. In this way the reader moves to *Highways to a War* with a clear awareness of a problematic masculinity, and approaches the novel with a desire for reparation, reintegration, and the healing of historical wounds.

### **Absent Ancestors: 'The Stain' as a Wound**

The clearest connections between the work of Keneally and Koch are the representation of convict ancestry in Australia as a 'Stain', and a related concern with absent ancestors. There is a close similarity between the representation of

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<sup>3</sup> Sophie Masson, 'The Questing Spirit', *Quadrant*, January-February 2000, p. 116.

Sarah Bernard in *Bettany's Book* and that of Kathleen O'Rahilly: both characters have experienced deep trauma, and whether or not they actually remember their experiences, their silence indicates that they are unwilling or unable to express them. However, where Keneally seeks to fill the gaps and narrate the untold ancestral narrative, Koch leaves the ancestors as absent for the descendant, and thus is more concerned with exploring the effect of intergenerational amnesia. Here Koch is concerned with Tasmania's uniquely painful history as a penal settlement. Ultimately, Koch identifies the need to break the silence and uncover the 'Stain' in order to initiate a healing process. Of course, there is no need for the descendant to actually know the ancestor for a connection to be significant.

Keneally and Koch's portrayal of absent ancestors is evident in the silence of both Sarah Bernard and Kathleen O'Rahilly. After Sarah saves Bettany, he asks her about her past and expresses his eagerness to know her history. She is very hesitant to tell her story, and although she eventually does, her hesitation expresses the hidden shame of the convict and suggests its legacy beyond the current generation.

A similar focus on Kathleen's life narrative is evident in *Out of Ireland*. Like Bettany, Devereux is keen to hear the story of his convict love-to-be: ' – Stay a little, I said. I want to know you, Kathleen'.<sup>4</sup> Unlike Sarah, Kathleen readily tells her story to this famous nationalist: it is a typical story where her family was ruined in the Famine and she resorted to stealing to survive.<sup>5</sup> Koch might have withheld this narrative in the interests of underscoring the trauma and amnesia, but it serves to foreground the importance of validating and moving past experience by narrating it to another.

In this, Kathleen is just like Devereux himself, who recounts his highest hopes and deepest fears within his journal. During his nightmare experience on the convict hulks at Bermuda, he calls his journal a 'Candle in the dark', and asks himself why he writes at all, considering the danger. 'For the reason that my journal's thread is the thread on which my sanity hangs. It makes me believe that although so little happens to me, my life still has shape, like a free man's; that I still have a personal identity. If I'm not careful, I suspect, that identity may slip away.'<sup>6</sup> Devereux's very identity is fragile and contingent on his own life narrative. This is

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<sup>4</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 349.

<sup>5</sup> This is the type of story emphasised in Keneally's *The Great Shame*.

<sup>6</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 114.

similar to the role that ancestry plays in personal identity, and this is why Michael Langford lives his life without a true sense of who he is and his place in the world: for him, Devereux is an absent ancestor.

An absent father is highly significant in the life of the son, but in a negative way: the same goes for those ancestors who are denied by subsequent generations for reasons of moral delicacy.<sup>7</sup> Koch's fictional editor (and the narrator of *Highways to a War*), Raymond Barton, tells of the true Langford ancestry:

When Devereux fled the island for America, these things were left behind. He also left behind an infant son, Thomas – who was born out of wedlock, and who was reared as their own by the Langfords. The boy was named Thomas Langford, presumably to cloak his illegitimacy ...

Michael Langford and his brothers were ignorant of this history, and of the facts about their ancestry. Their father ... had read Robert Devereux's diaries, but made sure that his own sons did not, by keeping the journals locked in his storeroom. There they remained throughout his lifetime. The sons were thus unaware that they were descended from Devereux on the paternal side ...<sup>8</sup>

The 'paternal side' here is important, not only because it concerns the family surname.<sup>9</sup> Absent ancestors are like absent fathers, especially in this case because they both relate to the development of the self's gender identity. This is a particular problem for John, Devereux's grandson: 'John had to live with a double shame: his father had been not only a bastard, but the son of a transported felon'.<sup>10</sup> The dramatic language is appropriate, because John himself was a 'harsh and unforgiving man', which suggests the family troubles young Michael grew up with. The absent Devereux ancestry certainly did much more damage than if it had been excised earlier, but this must also be considered within the specific context of Tasmania.

In the context of the island's history Koch has a clear intention to overcome the trauma associated with the convict past. *The Great Shame* tells this history in order to validate it for the descendants of such transportees, the same way that

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Hulse notes that many of Koch's male characters lose their father-figures to war, temporarily at least. See Michael Hulse, 'Christopher Koch in Interview with Michael Hulse', *Quadrant*, June 1985, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>9</sup> One of the significant differences between Keneally and Koch is that Keneally avoids immemorial, patriarchal ancestry and often focuses on maternal links.

<sup>10</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. viii.

*Schindler's Ark* did for the Holocaust survivors. The Bettany sisters came to a more complete sense of themselves, their motivations, and their place in the world after discovering their hidden ancestral narrative. Koch also implies that there is a therapeutic need to tell the hidden ancestral narrative.

However, what is unique about Koch's approach is that he generally expresses this in a negative or abstract way. For instance, the diptych's title *Beware of the Past* uses James McAuley's poem 'Warning' to indicate the danger inherent in history. This relates to both the suppression of memory as well as its discovery. Furthermore, Barton's actual publication of the journal implies a need to tell the story; he had to wait for the Langford brothers to pass on out of a sense of delicacy, but it is simply assumed that the best thing to do is to publish the journal. On this level, Koch is engaging with a national process of revisionist historiography: just like Keneally, he is narrating the nation through a redefined idea of the past.

However, the more immediate and direct relevance of Koch's revelation of convict ancestry is on a personal level. The main reason Barton publishes the journal is not for the state or the nation, but because he was a close friend of Langford himself. It is to validate and explain Langford's life as told in *Highways to a War* that Barton reveals the ancestral narrative. As well as being a tribute to a friend who has died tragically, Barton's work as editor of the journals appears to carry a message to all people: that it is quite possible and necessary to develop and extend our sense of personal identity, and this can be assisted through ancestral narratives. Langford was unable to do so because of his family's ingrained habit of 'Hiding the Stain.' The specific aspect of identity which is relevant here is masculinity, or male gender identity.

In *Beware of the Past* Koch seeks to challenge and undermine traditional notions of masculinity in the same way that Keneally does with national identity in his more recent works. *Out of Ireland* represents the original moment of that gender identity: Devereux's life story serves as a negative example of masculinity, a gender identity gone wrong. It is not until *Highways to a War* that it is possible to gauge the consequences of this dysfunction, and to realise the extent to which Koch outlines new directions for masculinity.<sup>11</sup> The way he deals with this issue is by

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<sup>11</sup> For this reason, this chapter says little about ancestry as such: *Out of Ireland* is a foundational narrative which establishes the close connections which become more apparent in *Highways to a War*.

inhabiting the genre of adventure fiction, a narrative mode through which masculinity has traditionally been constructed. Furthermore, it is male attitudes to women, or the 'male gaze', which needs definite correction in modern times. Finally, Koch's deployment of the split-figure serves to diagnose serious problems in conventional male gender identity. In many ways *Out of Ireland* abandons hope, leaving the potential for healing and rehabilitation to the narrative of Langford's life in *Highways to a War*.

### **Adventure Narrative: Constructing Gender**

Koch uses adventure narrative as a vehicle for investigating masculinity and its potential defects, but it is just as clear that he is actually working against the grain of imperialist adventure fiction. *Out of Ireland* initially seems to be a standard adventure in the nineteenth-century tradition: Koch is adept at capturing the language and energy of adventure fiction from this period. However, on closer inspection there are several factors which undermine both traditional adventure and the conventional masculinity which goes with it. Devereux's love for Kathleen, his temptation to live in a pastoralist idyll, and his horrifying experience of actual violence add a new dimension to Koch's adventure and simultaneously act as a critique of conventional male gender identity. The outcome of this challenge remains to be seen in Michael Langford's life, where a crisis of masculinity is also articulated through adventure narrative.

Just as the previous two chapters' reading of Keneally worked from a basis in secondary literature on nationalism, this reading of Koch depends on an understanding of the role of adventure in the construction of male gender identity. As the next few paragraphs demonstrate, discussion on this topic has developed notably since the late 1980s, partly as a response to the success of feminist criticism in previous decades. However, this response has not been oppositional or antagonistic: rather, most theorists of masculinity have gleaned the insights of gender theory and applied them in new ways to men. This has served to explore male gender identity as a social and cultural construct which is given life through cultural products, such as adventure fiction. For Koch, this link between adventure and masculinity is central to his ancestral narrative and the potential for men to

change: he demonstrates how ‘individual acts of malignity have much to do with determining circumstance, or acts of bad faith committed in the name of an outdated set of ideals and stupid egotism.’<sup>12</sup>

One of the earlier attempts to analyse adventure fiction as a genre was Martin Green’s *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*.<sup>13</sup> This book explores the connection between adventure narrative and the development of the British Empire during the nineteenth century; it casts adventure as the ‘energising myth’ of the imperial project. It was the boys who read adventure stories in their youth who grew up to become colonial administrators and military men in the Empire; in this way, the dreams of adventure gave shape to the deeds of Empire. One of Green’s major aims here is to reveal the close connection between literature and cultural politics; this is a Saidian project, an example of colonial discourse analysis.<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey Richards understands the influence of adventure literature, especially for children, as much more malign; he sees popular fiction as ‘a form of social control, directing the popular will towards certain viewpoints and attributes’.<sup>15</sup> This, however, oversimplifies the role of literature in cultural life.

Green aims to take adventure fiction seriously, something which had not yet been done due to the dominance of the ‘domestic’ novel: ‘English literature had organised itself into a system, of which the central seriousness was hostile to the material of adventure and therewith of empire and frontier’.<sup>16</sup> Although this part of Green’s argument forms the basis for reading adventure as a distinctive and important genre, it forms only the most basic background to this reading of Koch. However, it must be noted that the ‘domestic’ novel also has close, hidden connections to the cultural politics of empire.<sup>17</sup>

What is much more germane to this discussion is Green’s keen awareness of the role of power in this literature/culture nexus, as well as more recent attempts to

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<sup>12</sup> Adrian Mitchell, ‘“Deep Ancestral Voices”’: Inner and Outer Narratives in Christopher J. Koch’s *Highways to a War*, *Australian Literary Studies*, Vol. 18, No.1, May 1997, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

<sup>14</sup> For an elaboration of Said’s approach, see Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Green, *Dreams*, p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> See Said’s reading of *Mansfield Park* in *Culture and Imperialism*. See Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1993.



reconfigure the power relationships which are often reproduced in adventure fiction. Speaking from the position of a white, Anglo-Saxon male, Green asks,

Can we renounce our nature as predators? ... the way to do it is to move into and through that nature, toward and beyond our imperialist fathers, understanding what they did and what they thought they were doing, their dreams of adventure and deeds of Empire.<sup>18</sup>

This self-consciousness of holding a position of power unjustly is also what pervades Koch's fiction. The evocation of 'imperialist fathers' is definitely worth noting; this origin is gendered in a concrete way.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, male identity is central to the cultural politics of adventure fiction: 'It was within the compulsions of these boys' own narratives that all the problematic elements of male identity could, momentarily, cohere'.<sup>20</sup> These fictions provide a partial answer to the question 'What kind of man am I?' Adventure fictions often focus on the development of masculinity in isolation; Joseph Bristow discusses how the public-school subgenre almost always casts only men (or boys) as main characters.<sup>21</sup> This 'passing the love of women' both assumes and implies the independence and freedom of men as they develop their gender identities at the frontiers of civilisation. This is, of course, a problematic notion, as this chapter argues later.

Some writers take the link much further: Richard Phillips is interested in the geography of adventure, and uses Frederic Jameson's idea of 'cognitive mapping' to explore the ways in which the exploration of new geographies can lead to the development of new identities. In this way, 'adventure stories actively construct rather than passively reproduce gender and imperialism'.<sup>22</sup> When the adventurer crosses the line into the unknown he (for most adventurers are male) is contributing to the mapping of new geographies and, potentially, the construction of new identities.

Within this process of cognitive mapping, a key factor in traditional masculinity and its potential for reconfiguration is the role of violence. 'It practically goes without saying that dominant, or hegemonic, masculinity is

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<sup>18</sup> Green, *Dreams*, p. xiii.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the invocation of 'imperialist fathers' is itself a claim to an ideological myth of origin: surely Green refers not to his literal father but to those who have gone before.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World*, London: HarperCollins, 1991, p. 226.

<sup>21</sup> Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p. 80.

endorsed by a longstanding genealogy of violence.’<sup>23</sup> This viewpoint closely identifies masculinity with military prowess, and helps to construct the standard ‘soldier hero’: ‘The naturalised equation of masculinity, military prowess and the nation is ... cemented’.<sup>24</sup> During the nineteenth century this will-to-violence was at odds with Britain’s cultural hegemony and the idealism of the imperial mission: violence ‘was an aesthetic of a new kind of militaristic masculinity, one hardly tempered by the cultural refinements of sweetness and light’.<sup>25</sup> This is precisely the contradiction which is resolved in the fictional lives of male adventurer-heroes, but it produces an inner conflict which is disastrous to real men. Notably, this dream of violence as a fulfilment of masculine identity is a problem which applies to not only imperialists, but nationalists as well. Koch emphasises this point: Devereux’s character is closely linked to the issue of male violence.

The spirit of renunciation or reparation is central to Green’s task. Towards the end of *Dreams of Adventure* Green explores the extent to which writers after 1918 sought to change literary formulations, since ‘The adventure of imperialism had lost intellectual and moral credibility’.<sup>26</sup> However, his general conclusion is that most writers failed to do so effectively; there was a persistence of form and resistance to the spirit of adventure which was difficult to overcome. He casts Lawrence as ‘a reincarnation of the WASP adventurer’,<sup>27</sup> and comments on the inherent difficulty of renegotiating power relations. Richards identifies a much more virulent strain of neo-conservative masculinity in the 1960s: an ‘alternative view of manliness, based on how much you drink and how tough you are. It is racist, sexist, chauvinist, thuggish and hedonistic’.<sup>28</sup> This is a revitalised imperialist patriarchy.

However, whilst acknowledging the resilience of the imperial dream and its articulation in adventure fiction, it is also crucial to ‘avoid the assumption that in the production of cultural identities popular fictions simply reproduce dominant ideologies’.<sup>29</sup> Just as national narratives can reconfigure ideas of the nation,

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Green, *Dreams*, p. 323.

<sup>27</sup> Green, *Dreams*, p. 327.

<sup>28</sup> Richards, *Imperialism*, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 10.

adventure narratives have the potential to help re-imagine masculine identity. Furthermore, it is not simply an oppositional stance which these new adventures can engender. Phillips argues that he is not discussing anti-adventures, because these narratives still use adventure in order to hold the reader's interest. They open a critical space which allows for an exploration of the post-war period of decolonisation.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, the potential for rearticulating masculine identity through adventure narrative has been more closely explored since Green first opened adventure to literary criticism. His subsequent work is concerned with the adaptation of adventure fiction in the post-1930 era.<sup>31</sup> 'Adventure can be detached from the sexist and imperialist imaginings with which it has so long been associated, and articulated instead to progressive principles which also enjoy popular resonance.'<sup>32</sup> While Koch cannot be considered as simply 'progressive', he himself has outlined his concern with at the very least highlighting Old-world patterns of thought: 'The books he [Langford] reads as a child all come from the British Empire period ... It's one of the reasons that he has a very unrealistic romanticism about serving your country, about the sort of relationships you'll have with women, all this sort of thing.'<sup>33</sup> These new types of adventure narrative do not simply articulate progressive principles; they represent a new type of cultural imagining.

Critical adventures are not just negative exercises in erasing established constructions of geography and identity. They use the geography of adventure stories as a point of departure to get somewhere new, to invent new stories and construct new geographies and identities, to write new literatures.<sup>34</sup>

Given this creative potential, the notion of 'new adventure' is more useful than 'anti' or 'critical' adventure, since these terms set opposition as a norm, and occlude the potential for reproduction of hegemonic gender identities.<sup>35</sup> In his fiction Koch does use adventure narrative as a type of departure-point.

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<sup>30</sup> Phillips, *Mapping*, p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Green, *The English Novel in the Twentieth Century (The Doom of Empire)*, London: Routledge, 1984.

<sup>32</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 290.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel, 'Interview', p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Phillips, *Mapping*, p. 160.

<sup>35</sup> The 'newness' of Koch's adventure fiction is clear in a simple comparison between Aubrey Hardwick and Mike Langford: Aubrey's 'relationship with the countries of South-East Asia is

Before delving into the new adventure in *Out of Ireland*, it is worth briefly considering some of Koch's earlier fiction in order to explore the adaptation of adventure he pursues. This is necessary to give a sense of how Koch has developed his approach to adventure over his writing career. What is clear is that his inhabitation of the adventure genre has developed hand-in-hand with his rearticulation of masculinity, so his challenge of old identities becomes most explicit in *Beware of the Past*.

Koch's first novel prefigures many of the dominant themes in his later works.<sup>36</sup> It tells the story of Francis Cullen, a young Tasmanian coming of age in Hobart and, later, Melbourne and Sydney. This *bildungsroman* narrative recurs through Koch's work, but this novel is particularly focused on Cullen's development into manhood. Early in the novel he forms a friendship with 'the Lads', and they decide to forgo the straight and narrow path of hard schoolwork to become 'bums'.<sup>37</sup> Cullen, in particular, is enamoured with the mainland: he dreams of going to Melbourne, to where he imagines the real world to be. 'He would break free from the hillbound circle of the island: now a mocking prison, its every corner and scene stabbing him with the joke.'<sup>38</sup> His eventual journey to the mainland is a rite of passage, and also an adventure: as he travels to a new place and crosses over the line of the familiar, he enters into adulthood.

What has made the shift finally possible is Cullen's rejection by his one-time girlfriend, Heather. Often it is in their relationships with women that men's gender identity is defined, and for Cullen this first romance is a cruel, crushing experience. Cullen is bullied by the alpha-male Donnie, and Heather joins in the joke.<sup>39</sup> His pain and humiliation serves to emphasise the damage to Francis's developing masculinity. When Heather casts him off, the last link to his home, and his boyhood, is severed, and he decides to follow his friends to Melbourne to pursue a life of excitement.

However, the dream of a new life crumbles as Cullen and his friends find it difficult to make a living. Moving to Sydney does not help, and the dream of

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manipulative and ambitiously self-gratifying while Langford's is selfless and passionate.' Noel Henrickson, 'Christopher Koch's Otherland', *Quadrant*, April 1997, p. 64.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher Koch, *The Boys In The Island*, UK: Hamish Hamilton, 1958.

<sup>37</sup> Koch, *Boys*, p. 43.

<sup>38</sup> Koch, *Boys*, p. 122.

<sup>39</sup> Koch, *Boys*, p. 114.

adventure and growing into manhood unproblematically is shattered when a close friend dies through an accident during horseplay.

Dead. Forever. That didn't happen to boys. His young, pallid, bony face with its pimples and freckles, its thin nose, his sandy crew-cut hair; all rotting forever in the ground. *That doesn't happen*, the boy protested.

But it had. Shane had refused to grow up. His destination had not been possible.<sup>40</sup>

The stark disillusionment with the dream of adventure on the Mainland is the main effect of the novel. Ultimately, through parties, gambling and drunkenness, the friendship turns to abuse and violence against a main female character: the macho drinking bouts have gone too far.<sup>41</sup> The novel concludes with a surreal car accident and Francis returning to Hobart to recover; the dream of adventure has shattered into nightmare. This novel not only undermines the myth of adventure, it connects it with a type of dysfunctional, self-destructive masculinity which clearly foreshadows Koch's later work.

A novel which inhabits the adventure genre much more self-consciously is *The Year of Living Dangerously*.<sup>42</sup> The setting in 1965 Jakarta is suitably foreign and historical to act as a backdrop for adventure. However, instead of featuring explorers, soldiers or sailors, it adapts the adventure genre by revolving around a group of Western journalists who are waiting for the eruption of the simmering conflict in Indonesia. This clearly prefigures the characters that form the cast of *Highways to a War*. Despite this alteration, the novel retains many features of conventional adventure and could be read simplistically as a standard adventure in the sexist-imperialist mold.

Into Jakarta comes Guy Hamilton, a British-Australian journalist on his first international post; this is also a rite-of-passage narrative. Hamilton is immediately challenged to a swimming race by Colonel Henderson, which illustrates the competitive drive these men share, but in a poignant way: 'Henderson reminded him of his dead father'.<sup>43</sup> So the men compete for the perfect scoop on breaking stories, and they are exposed to considerable risk, especially in the countryside

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<sup>40</sup> Koch, *Boys*, p. 175.

<sup>41</sup> Koch, *Boys*, p. 190.

<sup>42</sup> Christopher Koch, *The Year Of Living Dangerously*, Great Britain: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1978.

<sup>43</sup> Koch, *Year*, p. 49. Again the 'absent father' rears its head.

where Hamilton is nearly killed. Hamilton even finds himself in his own James Bond story, drugged and pressed for information by a KGB agent.<sup>44</sup> His relationship with Jill also takes on an aura of romantic adventure, which is considerably magnified in Peter Weir's film version of the novel.<sup>45</sup> All of these elements are clear markers of the novel's stature as an adventure narrative.

However, as in all of Koch's novels, the dream of adventure is undermined and, ultimately, shattered. The coup is enacted by the Left, and key generals of the Indonesian military are tortured and assassinated.<sup>46</sup> However, the most brutal and extended violence is in retribution for the failed coup: 'No clear tally will be kept, as the killing goes on ... In circles of lanterns in the paddy fields at night, the cane-knives will chop and chop at figures tied to trees; and trucks will carry loads of human heads'.<sup>47</sup> However, the key point is that this destructive violence shatters the myth of adventure for an important purpose: this very dream of adventure is implicitly tied to the colonial history of Java, and adventurers like Hamilton are deeply implicated in the whole process. At the end, Hamilton is given a home truth by his servant, Kumar: 'Of course, you are very concerned about the taking of life. To me there are worse things. Continuing misery is worse. The misuse of this country's wealth has caused misery of which you really know nothing. But you don't have to care. You can go to another country, and write other stories there'.<sup>48</sup> In this way Hamilton is directly implicated in the injustices of imperialism, and the shattering of adventure explicitly challenges his masculinity.

Indeed, all of the Western journalists have some moral culpability in the tragedy of Indonesia. Their own actions betray this: Curtis (echoing Conrad's Kurtz) scouts the cemetery looking for prostitutes, and Wally takes advantage of Javanese boys. Even Hamilton is not clear of blame: his role as a Western journalist is somewhat voyeuristic, as he seeks knowledge in order to create power for himself. Billy Kwan's file system is intended to appropriate the power of the *Wayang* puppet-master, the ultimate narrator. When Hamilton's arrogant naïveté leads him into a secure area, a Sergeant rifle-butts him in the face, and he is eventually forced to realise the role of imperialist adventurer that he has played: 'He was a watcher, a

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<sup>44</sup> Koch, *Year*, p. 208.

<sup>45</sup> *The Year Of Living Dangerously*. Dir. Peter Weir, Warner Brothers, 1983.

<sup>46</sup> Koch, *Year*, p. 270.

<sup>47</sup> Koch, *Year*, p. 293.

<sup>48</sup> Koch, *Year*, p. 288.

watcher merely: a Peeping Tom ... And Peeping Tom had lost an eye'. This injury serves to underscore the loss of Hamilton's imperialistic vision, and his eventual understanding of the world and his role in it.

Ultimately, *The Boys in the Island* and *The Year of Living Dangerously* each represent an important aspect of Koch's work. The former novel is partially concerned with adventure, but is highly focused on the development of masculinity in a coming-of-age narrative. The latter novel is less concerned with masculinity as such but very clearly undermines the myth of adventure. It is in *Out of Ireland* that these two concerns come together: Devereux finds himself in his own Antipodean adventure, and in doing so founds the masculine identity which Michael Langford is to inherit generations later.

*Out of Ireland* inhabits the genre of adventure fiction clearly and self-consciously, and it may at first be considered to do so unproblematically. In other words, some readers see little difference between Koch's adventure and the fiction of the nineteenth century, which was in some cases openly racist and sexist. For this reason it is worth initially looking at some elements of the novel which conform to the adventure formula. The opening incident of the novel is the transportation of Robert Devereux to Van Diemen's Land for treason against the British Crown. His fiancée Catherine believes that he 'will even half enjoy such an adventure'.<sup>49</sup> As Devereux moves across the line, over the equator and into the unknown Southern Hemisphere, Koch uses the adventure paradigm which Phillips describes as the 'cognitive mapping' which links new spaces to new identities.

Devereux enters into this process through a particularly tortuous route, a kind of trial by fire. This is made particularly cruel by Devereux's intense nationalistic fervour for Ireland and the love of his home county Clare, but also by a strange sense of freedom.

As I looked at her [the steamship], I found I had the fast-beating pulse one always has when setting out on a voyage, and a paradoxical illusion of freedom! Appalling though my situation was, there was also something tremendous in the prospect of being borne three thousand miles across the Atlantic, clad in my grey summer frock coat and old, dark-blue cap, with its glazed peak.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 172.

<sup>50</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 25.

Devereux is expressing precisely the exhilaration of setting out on an adventure. However, the boyish excitement does not last long when Devereux reaches the convict hulks at Bermuda: 'the night brought horrors ... sly filth and degradation.'<sup>51</sup> With obvious references to the Prometheus myth, Chapter Three is entitled 'Nail Him to the Rock', and Devereux witnesses the brutal, ritualised flogging of a convict: a stock motif in Australian convict fiction ever since Marcus Clarke. Immediately Devereux's 'Dream of Summer Islands' is shattered: 'the savagery of the British penal system had now been unmasked for me. This, I said, was what underlay everything: the scrupulous manners, the strict and conscientious order'.<sup>52</sup> At Bermuda Devereux's asthma worsens considerably; he gets no sleep for twelve nights, and decides to swallow his pride and ask to be taken to Van Diemen's Land, effectively submitting to his captors.<sup>53</sup> This serves to suggest the more complete undermining of Devereux's dream of adventure at the end of the novel.

When Devereux arrives in Hobart, the adventure narrative gains momentum. He feels he is in a place 'that was innocent of history; empty of memories; blank ... The town is a picture, and unreal: it induces unreal fears'.<sup>54</sup> When Devereux finds himself wandering late at night in this strange city, he unwittingly enters Black Lion Square, which is 'of Lilliputian size'.<sup>55</sup> It is a place unlike any Devereux has ever seen before: he sees the standard beggars, is shocked to be offered a child prostitute, witnesses two females bare-fisted fighting to a bloodthirsty crowd, has his watch picked from his pocket, and is nearly beaten up by a drunken soldier.<sup>56</sup> His first night in Hobart is an adventure itself, characterised by his own naïveté as well as the mystery and danger of the place.

The real boyish adventure begins when Devereux is reunited with his comrades, the other Young Ireland rebels who were also transported. With O'Neill in the Highlands, Devereux 'experienced an exhilaration in riding such as I'd never known before: we were riding as our ancestors must have ridden, across the grasslands of earliest history'.<sup>57</sup> This experience is certainly appropriate to an

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<sup>51</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>52</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>53</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 131.

<sup>54</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 213. This is precisely the kind of experience that Hamilton has on his first night in Jakarta.

<sup>55</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 230. This reference to *Gulliver's Travels* (an echo from *The Year of Living Dangerously*) is an additional reference to a classic adventure narrative.

<sup>56</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 231-5.

<sup>57</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 285.



adventure narrative, evoking as it does masculine forbears. When he reaches the wilderness with O'Neill, he offers a very telling comment on the landscape.

The Quoin puts me in mind of the fairy hills of Ireland. I remark on this to Thomas, and put the idea to him that Antipodean elementals, of which we can have no notion, may inhabit a place like this ... He's tempted to believe in fairies, as I am, and has always been fond of the youthful work I published on Celtic fairy tales and fairy lore.<sup>58</sup>

With this Koch is clearly marking his narrative as one which belongs in a long tradition of adventure: not only the imperialist adventure of the nineteenth century, but the ancient Irish adventures concerning travel to the Otherworld and contact with fairy beings.

Another aspect of the *Out of Ireland* adventure is one which Keneally also draws attention to: the epic battle between the colony's Governor, Denison, and the acting leader of Young Ireland, Martin Fitzgibbon.<sup>59</sup> Devereux and O'Neill discuss Fitzgibbon's situation gravely: they agree that although his conditions in a solitary cottage at Port Arthur are not bad by convict standards, they would soon kill an aristocrat like Fitzgibbon.<sup>60</sup> The situation is a delicate one; much like Devereux himself, Fitzgibbon refuses to submit to his captors and accept a ticket-of-leave, and Denison refuses to let him leave without a promise not to escape. O'Neill comments, 'Fitzgibbon's a gallant and noble man ... He's proved his bravery and his faithfulness to the cause as few others have. He's faced English bullets, which we've not done'.<sup>61</sup> Later Fitzgibbon recounts the horrible trial of his solitary confinement.<sup>62</sup> Just as Keneally portrays Smith O'Brien as a hero locked in a battle with the evil colonial despot Denison, Koch does with Fitzgibbon. This adds an extra dimension to the adventure of Young Ireland in Van Diemen's Land.

Within this context of an epic battle with colonial authorities, Devereux also finds himself in a world of colonial espionage. He wonders early on whether Howard's intentions are purely motivated by friendship, but later accuses him of spying. Koch's challenge to a simple adventure myth is evident when Howard says,

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<sup>58</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 283.

<sup>59</sup> It must be noted that the only character who has a close relation to a historical figure is Denison, although Fitzgibbon has some relationship to William Smith O'Brien.

<sup>60</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 278.

<sup>61</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 296.

<sup>62</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 433. The historical precedent for Fitzgibbon's incarceration can be found in William Smith O'Brien, *To Solitude Consigned: The Tasmanian Journal of William Smith O'Brien 1849-1853* (ed. Richard Davis), Darlinghurst, NSW: Crossing Press, 1995.

‘You ... are living in a child’s dream, Robert. Even your revolution is a dream, and will probably remain one’.<sup>63</sup> However, the intrigue reaches a high point with the informant Matthew Casey, the traitor to the cause. Devereux meets him on the street and accuses him of being a traitor all along: this confrontation stops just short of violence, but represents the climax of the espionage plot with Casey.<sup>64</sup> This cloak-and-dagger world is another element of adventure in this novel.

What really emphasises the adventure that these men share in the colony is the subversive meetings where they all leave their appointed district. A spirit of adventurous fun is definitely evident when they share a reunion lunch at Tunbridge. ‘We’re behaving like schoolboys ... We are highly delighted with our table on the bridge, and at the way that Sir William Denison and his minions are thus mocked’.<sup>65</sup> This delight is emphasised by the actual danger they are putting themselves in: they know that Denison is merely looking for an excuse to put them in chains. The boyish adventure is symbolised in the figures of the ‘Currency lads’ who ride through, ‘whooping and yelling like Red Indians’.<sup>66</sup> As the novel develops, Devereux’s Antipodean adventure manifests itself even more clearly.

Devereux becomes the archetypal adventurer hero when he decides to save and protect Kathleen. When he first meets her, his parting speech indicates the extent he will go to: ‘No, Kathleen, you shouldn’t ask my forgiveness. It’s I who should ask yours ... It’s you and yours that I’ve fought for, but I’ve not fought hard enough. I promise you, I’ll fight on – and so will all my comrades. I promise you that; and I bless you.’<sup>67</sup> When they next meet, Devereux hears her tragic story and promises her that she will never be sent back to the Female Factory again.<sup>68</sup> He ultimately does not trust Howard, and decides to found the farm with James Langford in order to deliver Kathleen ‘from Howard’s attentions, and bring her under my own protection’.<sup>69</sup> This desire to save and protect the damsel in distress is precisely what would be expected of a male adventurer hero.

Devereux soon makes a more daring and dangerous attempt to protect Kathleen. He and Langford hear that Kathleen has disappeared in Hobart, and they

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<sup>63</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 479.

<sup>64</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 616-8.

<sup>65</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 429-30.

<sup>66</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 439.

<sup>67</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 270.

<sup>68</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 352.

<sup>69</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 354.

leave to find her; Devereux insists that he joins in the rescue.<sup>70</sup> The situation becomes much more serious when it seems that she has been drugged and abducted by Daniel O'Donnell, who raped her earlier and caused her to be sent to the Factory, and who becomes Devereux's nemesis. 'All my thoughts were of Kathleen; I was now filled with deep anxiety for her'.<sup>71</sup> The two men travel into Wapping, Hobart's underworld, to find the abode of O'Donnell, a notoriously dangerous and violent man. 'We had penetrated Dis, where tears and empty laughter mingled: these were Albion's lost children. Criminals, perhaps, are all lost children.'<sup>72</sup> With the help of Langford's contacts they find O'Donnell's dwelling and discover Kathleen tied to a bed, still under the influence of opium. Notably, it is Devereux who carries her to safety, and the description of this is an idealised illustration of the bold adventurer hero rescuing the damsel from the den of the evil villain, and bringing her into the safety of civilisation.

My arm about her shoulders, I led Kathleen down the stairs of her prison. We moved along the street, past the pygmy grog shops and cottages of ill fame, her feet stumbling on the cobbles. After many wrong turnings, I brought her at last out of Wapping's mazes, emerging in front of the brightly-lit entrance of the Royal Victoria Theatre. Here was civilisation, of a sort: a little portico with a classical pediment and Tuscan columns; hoardings announcing the latest play from London; well-dressed ladies and gentlemen waiting about the doors to go in, laughing and talking as though no Citadel of Dis lay in the lanes behind.<sup>73</sup>

This rescue scene appears quite clichéd, but this classic adventure motif stands in stark contrast to the shattered adventure myth which Koch presents later.

The final adventure element worth discussing in the novel is Devereux's glittering escape from Van Diemen's Land. It is quite similar to the story of Mitchel's escape which Keneally narrates in *The Great Shame*: Keneally no doubt tells it because it makes for such an engaging narrative, a real ripping yarn. Devereux follows Paul Barry, who was able to save his honour by resigning his ticket-of-leave and announcing his intention to escape, although he did not get away without a few gunfights and a bullet wound.<sup>74</sup> Devereux assists Barry to escape by

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<sup>70</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 371.

<sup>71</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 375.

<sup>72</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 380.

<sup>73</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 385.

<sup>74</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 646-8.

boat, and there is an emphasis on the rough water and the dangerous conditions, not to mention the danger of encountering police.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, Barry escapes, and Devereux is determined to do the same with the help of 'Kentucky' Callaghan.

After his initial escape, Devereux tells of it from his hiding-place in his friend's bookshop; he carries few items (including a revolver), and has disguised himself as a Catholic priest. He tells of how he made the daring move of surrendering his parole in person, and asking to be arrested.<sup>76</sup> The authorities are slow to act, and Devereux gets away on horseback. The action is portrayed with an intensity which is entirely suitable to an adventure narrative:

We were mounted in seconds, and went at full gallop down the street: Callaghan in front, on his big grey horse, cape flying, whip rising and falling. The boys playing in the road laughed and pointed, as though we rode a race; some farm workers on the footpath did the same. It was all just a game to them – some sort of gentleman's prank, without any penalty: certainly not Port Arthur ... Dreamlike, receding, Mr Whitford's high old cries and the confused shouts of the constables sounded faintly in my ears. Callaghan looked back over his shoulder and waved me to go faster, and I urged Fleur on with the whip in a way I'd never done before, bent low over her neck, the wildness of flight and the prospect of freedom filling me with a shadowy elation.<sup>77</sup>

This action-packed escape could also sound clichéd, although like the rescue of Kathleen, the escape enters much more serious and unconventional territory later on. This suggests the transformation of adventure which the next section deals with. Once Devereux has escaped in this glorious, heroic manner, his actions after he leaves the store cannot be logically recounted in the journal he left in Tasmania. Koch uses the device of a letter to O'Neill to enable Devereux to explain his escape and express his feelings as he approaches his new home.

I was suffering from a sort of fever ... My body temperature rose and fell; my head was thick, and I was altogether wretchedly unwell. At one point I was subject to hallucinations; and these grotesqueries must be part of my account, since they were intertwined with what was real in a way that was deeply confusing.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 653.

<sup>76</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 663.

<sup>77</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 663-4.

<sup>78</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 685.

It is undoubtedly Koch as well as Devereux who has the penchant for this dreamlike kind of narrative; they both believe in fairies and ghosts. This is an important scene because it follows the gritty realism of the escape scene, and demonstrates a form of writing which is remarkably experimental for an author like Koch. As Devereux escapes a police search of Lenoir's shop, he walks into the cold Hobart night which makes his fever worse. He heads for the Rivulet, a 'common sewer: breeder of crime and cholera', with 'sewage, and a hundred other varieties of foulness'.<sup>79</sup> He bumps into a bloated, dead dog, and then has a frightening vision of Casey, a woman offering a dead child prostitute, and a monstrous Lucifer feeding on corpses.<sup>80</sup> Finally, Devereux's duality becomes manifest and he sees himself as if from outside, 'looking down on the soaked and desperate wretch who had once been Robert Devereux'.<sup>81</sup> This scene undermines the realism of adventure with visions, delusions and hallucinations: Devereux slowly loses his grip on reality while his psyche suffers one final fragmentation.

Ultimately, there are many elements of *Out of Ireland* which qualify it as an adventure narrative. The voyage into an unknown territory and future, the cloak-and-dagger world of a colonial outpost, the heroic rescue of a damsel in distress, and the glittering, daring escape from Devereux's prison set the novel firmly within the exotic territory of adventure. Furthermore, Devereux is cast as a classic adventurer hero, especially towards the end of the novel where the action increases pace and the climax approaches. However, it would be a mistake to cast the novel as a 'straight' adventure, because Koch undermines the dream in various crucial ways. Along with his reconfiguration of adventure, he also attempts to challenge the conventional forms of masculinity embodied in his adventurer-hero. However, Devereux experiences no significant character development in the novel, and the hope for a new masculinity is left to the Langford line.

The first aspect of Koch's new adventure revolves around the main male characters and how they relate to each other. Conventional adventure fiction portrays a group of men isolated from women, and away from familiar home territory. This portrayal presupposes a certain level of solidarity between these men: they work as a team to overcome adversity and thus symbolise the united purpose of

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<sup>79</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 688-9.

<sup>80</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 690.

<sup>81</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 691.

the imperial mission. Thus, the differences and conflicts between men in *Out of Ireland* serve to undermine one of the central motifs of adventure fiction.<sup>82</sup>

Although the Young Ireland rebels show a strong sense of camaraderie, there are also important conflicts and differences which undermine this solidarity. The two characters most outcast from the group are Martin Fitzgibbon and Liam Kinane.<sup>83</sup> The difference in opinion between Fitzgibbon and the other nationalists has its origin in Ireland during the agitation and failed uprising. For this failure Devereux blames Fitzgibbon, who ‘has always stood outside our circle and our lives’.<sup>84</sup> This is partly because of his origins; he is from a privileged and politically conservative family who supported O’Connell’s Repeal movement and worked for Irish independence through acting as a Member of Parliament. He reluctantly joined Young Ireland under the conviction that conciliation would never work, and he never supported violent rebellion or the taking of property to achieve the movement’s nationalist aims. For these reasons, he stands outside the circle of the other men and he becomes more and more isolated as the novel progresses.

When Young Ireland has its reunion lunch at Tunbridge and welcomes Fitzgibbon back from Port Arthur, the differences become more apparent. Devereux notes, ‘It’s this sort of self-important ponderousness that makes it so difficult to like the man; but I strive to maintain a mood of sympathy’.<sup>85</sup> Although the conflict regarding the uprising resurfaces, the men’s common experience of suffering unifies them to some degree. However, when the others discuss Fitzgibbon in his absence, their sense of resentment becomes clear. ‘ – Principles! Martin lives in a book. He thinks revolution can be made through gentle conversation and compromise. With the God-damned English!’<sup>86</sup> These minor conflicts break into serious ruptures later in the novel.

The other character who is excluded from Young Ireland is Liam Kinane, a Catholic from a working-class background. When Devereux is told that Kinane will meet him in Hobart, he comments, ‘ – Kinane is hardly a friend ... An acquaintance,

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<sup>82</sup> A fine example of this occurring in critical adventure is William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, London: Faber, 1965, the classic example of a *Boys’ Own* adventure gone wrong.

<sup>83</sup> Notably, Fitzgibbon and Kinane are based on two real Young Irelanders – Smith O’Brien and Patrick O’Donohoe – so these divisions have a historical basis.

<sup>84</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 299.

<sup>85</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 431.

<sup>86</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 442.

merely.’<sup>87</sup> However, when informed that Kinane has been transported for his part in the uprising, Devereux must admit some solidarity with him. Nonetheless, Kinane’s hero-worship of Devereux annoys him, and Devereux is particularly upset to hear that Kinane plans to run a paper in Hobart, arguing that their main aim should be to escape the colony in order to continue to work for Irish independence.<sup>88</sup> This newspaper project becomes a continual sore point between Kinane and the others, and when Devereux visits Kinane’s home in Hobart’s slum, he realises that Kinane is quickly succumbing to despair and alcoholism. Drunk and depressed, Kinane voices his resentment against the others:

– Unlike you fortunate gentlemen, I have no private means. I’m penniless, do you understand? Yes, you do: have I not borrowed money from Paul Barry? And I hated to do it. But I’m now earning a living from this newspaper, and am not ashamed of it. I’m able to send money home to my wife and children – who are living on the charity of relatives. I earn a living from doing what I believe in – do you know what that means to me? And the only help I have is from Matthew Casey, God bless him. From you I have only disapproval.<sup>89</sup>

Devereux is gripped by cold rage when Kinane accuses him of turning colonial landowner, and forsaking the cause. The division is accentuated by the role of Casey, who as an informer, promotes the conflict among the Young Irelanders.<sup>90</sup> During a dinner at the Lakes, the spirit of camaraderie among all members of Young Ireland appears to reign supreme: ‘Standing in a circle around the table, we raise our glasses and cheer him; then we toast our comradeship. In this brief, fond and foolish moment, we are one’.<sup>91</sup> The moment is foolish because it soon turns to a nightmare when, drunk, the men begin to discuss politics and philosophy. Kinane’s espousal of French Socialism inspires the others to warn against the dominance of an authoritarian state, and the tension increases when Kinane comments, ‘ – I have no time for Constant ... A defender of property-owners. An enthusiast for the English system. Piss on him!’<sup>92</sup> Surprisingly, Kinane receives support from Fitzgibbon, the most conservative of them all, but when Fitzgibbon denies that

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<sup>87</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 191.

<sup>88</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 203.

<sup>89</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 494.

<sup>90</sup> Casey is symbolic of all the informers throughout Irish history who have hampered rebellions and uprisings; this is further evidence that Koch’s new adventure reflects explicitly on historical processes.

<sup>91</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 515.

<sup>92</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 518.

‘property is theft’, Barry attacks him for his failure during the uprising, and the two almost come to a duel.<sup>93</sup> Eventually, Fitzgibbon gives voice to his despondence and fierce resentment: he blames Devereux and Barry for his situation.

– Because of Devereux – and you too, Barry – my life is ruined. I am torn from my family for another twelve years: and what have I become? A broken-down gentleman, in a colony of broken-down gentlemen and thieves! A nursery governor! And you? Colonial farmers – with convicts for your workers!<sup>94</sup>

Fitzgibbon leaves with the rift unhealed, but Kinane continues the argument, supporting both Fitzgibbon and Devereux at once. He then takes offence from Devereux’s comment about the people needing leadership. Kinane expresses his keen sense of exclusion; as a man of the people, he feels that the others are blatantly elitist and consider him a Paddy, an ape.<sup>95</sup> No doubt it is alcohol talking, but this scene completely undermines any sense of solidarity between these Irish nationalists. As such, the adventure narrative takes on a new aspect because the group of men experience serious conflict and dissension, rather than just marching on like a cricket team off to field.

What also shatters the myth of adventure is the depiction of realistic and brutal violence, and this relates even more closely to the construction of masculinity. An earlier section noted how ‘dominant, or hegemonic, masculinity is endorsed by a longstanding genealogy of violence,’ and this is particularly true of Devereux. As a militant nationalist based on the historical John Mitchel, he argues that independence is only possible through armed rebellion, and he thus endorses violence as a means to an end. In *Black Lion Square* Devereux’s first brush with violence does not directly involve him; although he raises his guard prepared for a fight, Langford deals with the drunken soldier and thus shields Devereux from physical conflict.<sup>96</sup> When he first saves Kathleen from O’Donnell, Devereux manages to avoid his nemesis and the violence that would certainly result. This is dangerous violence of a fun sort, the kind of near-miss which keeps the adventurer safe yet adds excitement to his exploits.

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<sup>93</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 522. The absurdity of dueling in the mid-nineteenth century emphasises the Old World attitudes of the characters.

<sup>94</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 526.

<sup>95</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 530.

<sup>96</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 235.



However, when O'Donnell abducts Kathleen once more, Devereux cannot avoid being involved in violent conflict which shatters his faith in the value of militancy. His purchase of a revolver forces him to consider himself more closely.

Ironically enough, although I'm described by the British as a terrorist and a man of violence, I do not like the idea of violence. Nor do I wish to turn to it unless it can be avoided. If my blood were up, and I faced an enemy who had to be dealt with, then I believe I would fight, and fight giving no quarter ... How brave a warrior I would have been [during the uprising], I cannot know; no man can know, until the time comes.<sup>97</sup>

Devereux strongly feels that he would use violence to defend himself or his ideals. He emphasises that 'no *man* can know', using the gendered noun and suggesting that this is a natural consideration for males. When James Langford begins training Devereux in the correct and effective use of firearms, he reproduces the code of tribal masculinity in the need to keep a cool head and to aim accurately to avoid death. However, because Langford is more experienced in this kind of thing, he is absolutely correct in his assessment of Devereux: 'If you'll pardon me saying so, Robert: this *revo-lushion* has been mostly in your head, it seems to me. Affairs of that kind are inclined to be different from what you think, when the guns are firing. Everything changes, when you start smelling gunpowder'.<sup>98</sup> Langford is correct: Devereux's advocacy of violence is pure idealism, and the brutal reality of actual violence affects him most profoundly. Langford himself expresses his masculinity very clearly when he declares his determination to fight to protect what is his: 'I ain't about to give it back'.<sup>99</sup> This profound ambivalence about violence and its relationship to masculinity undermines the glory of the traditional adventure narrative.

However, it is Devereux's own experience of violence which Koch uses to really challenge the traditional notion of what it is to be a man. This is evident even before Devereux narrates the tale: 'Waking today ... I find that everything has changed.'<sup>100</sup> With the benefit of hindsight he tells the story with an extra gravity, and the reader almost expects the calamity which is about to occur. When Bess comes to tell Devereux and her husband that O'Donnell and his men have arrived as

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<sup>97</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 542.

<sup>98</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 545.

<sup>99</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 546.

expected, James ‘actually smiled, as though savouring the prospect of some imminent enjoyment’.<sup>101</sup> Devereux is considerably more agitated, and panics when he realises that Kathleen has been left on her own. As the action begins, Koch adopts a dreamlike narrative which he has honed over his career. In addition, the whole scene becomes markedly gendered: both men load guns in preparation for pursuit, and even Bess ‘began to curse with a masculine luridness which startled me’.<sup>102</sup> However, this is partially interrupted but eventually reinforced when Langford winks, ‘cancelling his tone of aggression, and I felt a surge of love for him’.<sup>103</sup> The ‘love’ is actually the archetypal camaraderie – the atmosphere of manly adventure is perfectly established. Koch builds the pace and tension of the scene rapidly and evenly, just like a classic adventure: there is a sense of desperate urgency.

The narrative enters the clearly delineated realm of masculine adventure in which Langford, ‘with his martial and criminal abilities, was in undisputed command’.<sup>104</sup> As the bushrangers approach Devereux discovered ‘a moment of pause that resembled reverie. I would have liked to sleep, and drift away; and yet I was fully alert. I found that my hands were sweating, and they were like someone else’s hands’.<sup>105</sup> When they arrive and Devereux can see them, they look so rough that Devereux can hardly believe he is to kill these men. However, O’Hegarty goes into a kind of berserk rage: ‘He had apparently reverted to savagery, in the bush: a creature of the wilderness, driven by ungovernable wrath’.<sup>106</sup> In this moment Devereux faces his enemies and they act like a mirror, reflecting his own worst nature back at him. For when the firing starts, Devereux faces Lynch who has two empty barrels, and the detailed description of his deed is worth quoting at length for it shatters the adventure myth completely.

Now fury drove me. I raised myself, looking down the barrel of the shotgun; I got Lynch in my sights, conscious of the advantage that elevation gave me. His scream after I fired was appalling: an accusation I had not expected.

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<sup>100</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 552.

<sup>101</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 555.

<sup>102</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 556.

<sup>103</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 556.

<sup>104</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 558.

<sup>105</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 560.

<sup>106</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 563.

Breathing in the biting reek of gunpowder, crawling through the grass to get away from the new cloud of smoke that hung stationary in front of me, like a curtain drawn over my deed, I looked from behind another rock to see that the small man had fallen from his horse and was lying in the grass, his Scotch cap beside him. He was embracing himself, holding himself about the middle, and even from this distance, the blue shirt and the light Summer trousers could be seen to be saturated with blood: I had hit him in the abdomen, and the pellets had opened a wound the full width of his body. He did not cease to cry out, but continued at intervals, the falsetto sound both protesting and incredulous, like that of a child whose injury was beyond anything it had ever been led to expect.

– *Hah*, he said. *Hah. Hah. Hah.*

The sound was hateful, and monstrously comic, and I wanted it to stop; but it would not stop. No doubt his liver and intestines were riddled with my pellets, and his pain must have been appalling.<sup>107</sup>

This description is remarkable both for its vivid, graphic detail and for the human pathos with which it is conveyed. Devereux writes as a deeply compassionate man who is horrified at what he has done. As the showdown with O'Donnell begins, Lynch's dying gasps form a morbid refrain; he calls on Jesus and Mary which underscores his Irishness.<sup>108</sup> Glancing at Lynch, Devereux feels instant remorse: 'Why did I feel guilty? I felt guilty. His face was white as plaster, and his dark eyes met mine without accusation: he seemed instead to be concentrating on some terrible, unresolved problem'.<sup>109</sup>

This leads to the moment of clarity where Devereux faces his Other in Daniel O'Donnell. The two men are fighting for Kathleen (who stands for Ireland) and notably O'Donnell uses ancestry as a claim to authentic Irishness:

Well, I say you've never been Irish. Do you hear? Not you nor your ancestors, whom I piss on ... I spit on you and yours, who were nothing but English robbers. And I bow to no man. I am a Ribbonman, and a descendant of kings. I am Daniel O'Donnell from Donegal, and a descendant of Red Hugh O'Donnell ... Kathleen is not for you: she's too good for you. An O'Rahilly – of the same blood as the great bard! She has better blood than you, Devereux.<sup>110</sup>

In this crucial scene, all the aspects of the text with which this thesis is concerned cohere. There is a clear reference to ancestry, specifically as a means to

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<sup>107</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 565.

<sup>108</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 566

<sup>109</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 567.

<sup>110</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 568-569.

authenticating a particular cultural identity. Furthermore, this ancestry is closely related to masculinity as these two men compete for Kathleen, and there is a sense of doubling. Finally, this is a classic adventure scene but of a new kind: the violence has clear consequences, especially for a compassionate man like Devereux.

Lynch set up a new outcry: a sudden wailing of extraordinary loudness, made unnerving by the fact that it now resembled that of a deranged and tormented woman. He screamed: and the screaming had a gurgling in it, no doubt because my pellets had penetrated his lungs, as well as his stomach. He must have been in great agony, and it was all I could do to refrain from looking across to where he lay.<sup>111</sup>

At this the tension increases to its climax: Devereux gets a clear shot at O'Donnell who falls to the ground with an embodied thump. Langford is overjoyed: 'I knew you wasn't white-livered, he said. I knew it, Robert. What a shot! You and me – we're real partners now, eh? No, by God – we're brothers – ain't we?' While this is the ultimate claim to tribal masculinity, Devereux can hardly respond: he is in a daze, muttering, '– I have killed a man ... and he was one of my own.'<sup>112</sup> He cannot share Langford's rapture: he is deeply disillusioned, having been forced to confront the worst part of his own nature.

There can be no doubt that this episode seeks to recast the role of violence in adventure fiction, and that it challenges the assumption that masculinity is somehow defined by being able to commit violent acts. It completely reverses the triumphalism of the earlier rescue of Kathleen, and asks, 'If being a man is being prepared to commit to action, what does this entail?' Moreover, this scene relates the issue of violence so closely to male gender identity that it cannot help but to act as a moment of origin for Michael Langford: this is a part of his ancestral narrative he would have learnt the most from. He would do well to know of Lenoir's advice to Devereux:

– There is one thing that troubles me: circumstances have now made you willing to kill. Do not grow too willing. Many idealists like yourself begin by recommending killing on paper, for the sake of noble ends: then they begin to commit such acts themselves, and the ends are no longer noble. Forgive me, but I must say this to you, before we part

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<sup>111</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 570-1.

<sup>112</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 572.

for ever: be careful that you do not kill to revenge yourself on life, and on what life has done to you.<sup>113</sup>

While the presence of action and violence is a dominant part of the challenge to traditional masculinity, Devereux is also lured by the temptations of the domestic realm. His romantic sensibility is not just nationalistic; part of him longs for peace and security. Howard plants a seed with his assessment of the pleasures and benefits of colonial life.

– Civilisation? It's become a good deal too fast for me, in the last few years. I think it has somethin' to do with the comin' of the railways – and so many other God-damned machines. Everyone's in a constant hurry now, at home: everythin's at high pressure, like these bloody steam boilers. Everythin's about speed. I don't like speed. Have you noticed something about Van Diemen's Land, Devereux? No steam trains – and no damned rush. It's the world as it was thirty years ago – even older. Slow, sleepy wagons in the lanes; slow, friendly pedlars comin' to your door. Even spinnin' wheels, still. And I'm almost self-sufficient. This little estate of mine grows most of what we eat: our hens give us eggs, our cows give us milk, and Mrs Bates bakes our bread. It's the world of Virgil's *Georgics*, Devereux – and there are worse worlds to live in, wouldn't you say? I feel at times I'm almost livin' in the Golden Age.<sup>114</sup>

This premodern, self-sufficient idyll certainly appeals to Devereux, who is immediately taken with the beauty of the landscape. In the highlands with O'Neill, he claims, '*The Lakes!* Like my friends, I believe I'll grow addicted to them; their virginal enchantment is already working on me'.<sup>115</sup> When Langford proposes they open a farm together, Devereux is sorely tempted to cast away his life in the Northern Hemisphere, to sacrifice his nationalistic principles and ideals in order to pursue life in a pastoralist idyll. This challenges Devereux's identity and self-perception in several ways, not the least of which is his gender identity.

Boeotia! It lay somewhere in the country's heartland, the country of the *Works and Days*. Boeotia! Ancient, rural world where tyranny and power-seeking were unknown; where the nobles and the kings of Metropolis had yet to make their entrances, to hold good men to ransom. It lay waiting to be found: here, after thousands of years; alive once more in these virgin hills and forests, under these strange constellations ... This, indeed ... was the world that old Hesiod knew,

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<sup>113</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 679.

<sup>114</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 264.

<sup>115</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 323.

where monotony and toil did not mean unhappiness, but contentment, where cities and kings and leaders and struggles for earthly power were all far away; where the bond between man and man is not based on blood or station, but on their common tie with the soil, and their common effort. This was how it was between myself and Langford.<sup>116</sup>

Certainly, this idyllic portrayal is disrupted by later events and Devereux does return to the hemisphere of his home, but he is sorely tempted to eat of the lotus and stay as a colonial landowner. Devereux's dreams, desires and motivations are fractured along a crucial fault line, the line between a life of adventure as an exiled nationalist and the settled life of a farmer and family man. This at once undermines the adventure narrative and casts into relief the issue of gender identity – he cannot decide what kind of man he wants to be.

Devereux is so completely attracted to a life as a colonial landowner, not just because of the beautiful landscape which reminds him of Ireland, nor the economic opportunities offered by cheap land and cheaper convict labour, but because he has found what he considers to be the love of his life. Ultimately, the one thing which most fundamentally challenges Devereux's role as a traditional male adventurer is his deep and abiding love for the central female character of the novel, Kathleen. If much adventure fiction is about 'passing the love of women' and forging identities in an unknown place surrounded only by other men in an almost homosocial environment, the presence and role of women could pose a serious challenge to conventional masculinity. This is a deeply complex issue, because relating to women could just as easily reinforce stereotypes and traditional power structures, as it has in much nineteenth-century adventure fiction. However, because the representation of women is closely tied to the construction of masculinity, it is worth looking closely at how this operates in a novel like *Out of Ireland*.

## Relating to Women

Milady's Winter Line: the Slim Silhouette, a card read; and they were gazing at beautiful female dummies with long eyelashes and vivid lipstick who walked a window-dresser's dream street: a violet boulevard empty of life, temperate, sterile and perfect, its silver trees and buildings utterly remote from the pavements of the real street outside; a zone where these women of dream were safe from the raw south wind that searched out the warehouse and boarding house, and

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<sup>116</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 270-400.

where they looked at no such shabby young men as Francis and Shane.<sup>117</sup>

Koch's recasting of male gender identity through adventure fiction is clearly demonstrated in the narrative portrayal of female characters, and particularly the perceptions and attitudes of male characters. The earlier section on *The Year of Living Dangerously* mentioned how many of the male adventurers who comprised the team of Western journalists in Indonesia were exploitative to the point of brutality. This is a fine example of how Koch uses his novels to portray the darker sides of not only human nature, but certain types of men.

The power-ridden and hierarchical penal world of Van Diemen's Land is the setting Koch uses to depict inherent inequity, especially between the sexes. This is a brutal world where women are traded as commodities, exploited and displayed in ways that would never be acceptable in London. The child prostitute in Black Lion Square is a fine example. Koch draws attention to these power structures in relation to Devereux and Howard, and especially their trading of Kathleen. Koch emphasises the power / knowledge relationship evident in artistic representations when Devereux leafs through some of Howard's portraits of women.

But as I went on, I came across pictures of a different kind. Masterly in their execution, they were disturbing in their content, and resembled no other pictures I'd seen. They seemed to me like medical drawings, rather than works of art – since only a medical purpose seemed to justify the way in which these bodies had been depicted. Here were convict women of all sizes and ages, from starved-looking girlhood to gross middle age – all of them naked, and drawn with remorseless exactness.<sup>118</sup>

Other pictures depict mythological, idealised images of women. The most disturbing one, entitled 'Andromeda', depicts a woman in chains, subservient. Devereux is disturbed: 'although the painting was allegorical in its intent, and the chains were no doubt a fiction, there was nevertheless something cruel about this fiction, since fetters could hardly be new to the woman who was Howard's model'.<sup>119</sup> What Devereux is dimly aware of is the cruelty of the power behind representation, but he is unable to fully comprehend how this impinges on his own sense of gender identity. After all, he later goes on to compete with Howard for the

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<sup>117</sup> Koch, *Boys*, pp. 171-2.

<sup>118</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 338.

'possession' of Kathleen. Nonetheless, issues of gender identity and power relations between the sexes are something that Koch's fiction is keenly interested in.

This is the chapter section which most clearly responds to widespread, potent criticisms against Koch's work, which range from the persuasive to the prejudiced.<sup>120</sup> An example of the latter is McKernan's unsubtly-titled 'C.J. Koch's Two-Faced Vision'.<sup>121</sup> This article claims that Koch 'distorts his pictures of Indonesians' and 'is not interested in ordinary Indonesian life', nor in 'ordinary women' but only the 'tawdry and morally vacant', that he is obsessed with 'the grotesque, the stunted, and the exotic' to the extent of setting himself up for 'charges of racism, sexism and general inhumanity'. Such assertions are based upon the most simplistic reading of the novels, and Koch is clearly justified in defying the Inquisition in his article 'The New Heresy Hunters'.<sup>122</sup> Clearly McKernan has mistaken the author for his characters and seen the views presented in his novels as those of Koch himself. This fallacy is defused by Henrickson, who sees that 'Koch's characters reflect quasi-Platonic ideas, or live parallel mythic lives. The reader sees this most readily in the novel's women. In them are revealed aspects of Otherland, spiritual truths.'<sup>123</sup> This portrayal of dangerous illusion is one of Koch's most enduring themes.

Other readings seek to understand Koch on his own terms by appreciating his literary analysis of culture and identity. These arguments tend to see Koch's work as an exploration of particular modes of thought, rather than a reproduction or endorsement of these attitudes. 'Koch's ... novels all explore the peculiar tensions of the post colonial personality through Australian protagonists who are all questers doomed not to find the fulfilment, excitement, or promise their sensibilities lead them to seek.'<sup>124</sup> One writer argues that the novels actually help to remap the

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<sup>119</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 339.

<sup>120</sup> This section will aim for brevity, since this thesis seeks to use Koch to forward a particular argument about ancestry and gender rather than to defend, apologise for, attack or balance other viewpoints.

<sup>121</sup> Susan McKernan, 'C.J. Koch's Two-Faced Vision', *Meanjin*, XLIV, No. 4, 1985, pp. 432-9.

<sup>122</sup> C.J. Koch, 'The New Heresy Hunters', *Overland*, No. 102, 1986, pp. 43-6. For more background on the controversy surrounding McKernan's article see Judith Brett's letter in *Overland* 103, 1986, p. 20.

<sup>123</sup> Henrickson, 'Tides of History', p. 57.

<sup>124</sup> Helen Tiffin, 'Asia, Europe and Australian Identity: The Novels of Christopher Koch', *Australian Literary Studies*, X, 1982, pp. 326-35.



Australian psyche in a kind of ‘cartographical relocation’.<sup>125</sup> This reading echoes the notion of ‘mapping identities’ encountered earlier. This is a kind of ‘living dangerously’ which delves into the deepest cultural inheritances in Australia, involving ‘the redefinition in terms of a recognisably local and colonial consciousness of the universal Wordsworthian dream of some lost glory’.<sup>126</sup> What really demolishes McKernan’s argument is the acknowledgement ‘there is a vital difference between character and author’.<sup>127</sup> In fact, Koch self-consciously exposes, explores, and criticises the very processes of representation which McKernan outlines. It is not as if he is passively or ignorantly endorsing the racism or sexism which is part of Western imperialism. D.M. Roskies sees different aspects of Koch’s work as ‘rendering the expressive and representational function of the work problematical, by encouraging an inquisitiveness about the material nature of the means of representation’.<sup>128</sup> McKernan is correct in noting the outdated attitudes in the novels but is far too eager to point the bone at the author.

An adequate reading of Koch’s fiction must take account of his attempts to expose, challenge and undermine specific formations of identity. However, such a reading must also be careful not to overestimate the success of this project, or to underestimate the inherent dangers. There is always the possibility of slipping back into old habits of mind; changing tradition slowly requires constant vigilance, and there is a danger reproducing the type of adventure fiction where ‘“Asia” becomes the site of a Western and specifically first-world touristic nostalgia for the lost moment of hegemonic power in European history’.<sup>129</sup> In terms of gender identity, Koch’s fiction should avoid succumbing to the seductions of traditional adventure, the comfortable security of patriarchal power structures. It is progression beyond the old ways of thought that Koch’s work should logically move towards, and in men’s relations to women the need for this process is clearly evident.

When Devereux is first transported from Ireland he is completely sundered from Catherine Edgeworth, his fiancée. Like Robert, Catherine comes from an

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<sup>125</sup> John Thieme, ‘Re-mapping the Australian Psyche: The Asian novels of C.J. Koch’, *Southerly*, XLVII, No. 4, 1987, 456-61.

<sup>126</sup> Paul Sharrad, ‘Living Dangerously: Christopher Koch and Cultural Tradition’, *Quadrant*, XXIV, No. 9, 1985, pp. 64-8.

<sup>127</sup> Kirpal Singh, cited in Koch, ‘Heresy Hunters’, p. 45.

<sup>128</sup> D. M. Roskies, ‘A View of Asia from Down Under: The Politics of Re-presentation in *The Year of Living Dangerously*’, *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1989), pp. 35-50.

<sup>129</sup> Amanda Nettelbeck, ‘Expanding Boundaries: Changing Perceptions of “Asia” in Two Australian Novels’, *Kunapipi*, 16.2, 1994, pp. 13-23.

aristocratic background and so their marriage is rather an expected thing: this is a traditional relationship where the man exercises control by fitting the woman within an idealised image of femininity. This is emphasised when Devereux describes the picture of Catherine he holds dear at the beginning of his exile.

Catherine! She has now become a mere, exquisite profile, in the coloured Gluckmann daguerreotype sitting on top of the book-shelves. A shaft of white-hot sun, coming through the barred porthole, catches and illuminates her. But this remorseless sun doesn't make her portrait glow, as the gentle beams of Ireland would do: instead, it seems to be fading the picture as I watch; to be bleaching it to a white shadow; to be consuming it altogether. An illusion; but I have just got up and moved it into the shade.<sup>130</sup>

This is the novel's first evidence of Devereux's fiercely Romantic temperament: he puts too much faith in illusions and idealises Catherine. The processes of representation and perception inherent in Devereux's viewing of the picture is strongly emphasised. Catherine's absence is keenly felt; when Devereux receives no letter from her he attempts to restrain his bitter disappointment and not blame her too much.<sup>131</sup> When he does receive a letter from her, it accentuates the absence: 'Dear God, what a heartless and immense distance separates us! A few days' delay, a missed ship, and silence descends for weeks!'<sup>132</sup> The urgency of this lament emphasises that Devereux has a certain associative image of Catherine in his head: she represents home, the familiar life of order and civility, and his plans for the future. He has an enormous emotional investment in his idea of her, and the reader begins to sense that he is setting himself up for a fall, like so many of Koch's protagonists.

When Devereux receives her next letter, he is worried by its questions and gentle reproaches, and begins to doubt the constancy of their relationship. Catherine is particularly disapproving of the extremity of his nationalist activities. 'I begin to fear that she no longer understands what I am, or that I can do no other than what I do. I even fear that she never did understand – or didn't wish to.'<sup>133</sup> The faint premonition he experiences here turns out to be accurate; his suspicions are aroused when a letter from Casey suggests that Terence Butler, a mutual friend, may be

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<sup>130</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 4.

<sup>131</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 28.

<sup>132</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 46.

<sup>133</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 76.

acting a little overzealously in his support of Catherine's distress.<sup>134</sup> Devereux is shocked when Catherine breaks off their engagement, stating her intention to marry Butler.<sup>135</sup> He is mortified, and his response is worth considering in some depth.

He has given himself twelve whole days to consider her response, and he believes he is able to view the matter somewhat dispassionately: 'Anger will be my destroyer, and to hate them both is base.'<sup>136</sup> In one way he appears to consider her actions to be justified, but he is also hurt and resentful, so he does not think as generously as he might.

More was being asked of this respectable young woman than I had any right to do; more was being asked than she had the character to give ... Was it reasonable to ask this gently-reared, refined and intelligent girl to come on my account to the most dreaded of all penal colonies, at the final, savage end of the world? ... was she to share with me – perhaps for many years – what she and her family see as my disgrace? No; clearly no: not this young lady.<sup>137</sup>

Several things are evident in this passage: Devereux is clearly resentful, although he tries not to channel that resentment towards Catherine. The terms he uses to describe her are notably patronising: 'respectable young woman', 'girl', 'young lady.' Although he admits that anger is not appropriate in the situation, Devereux does project a large amount of the responsibility onto her, citing her lack of character. He is completely ignorant as to how his own illusions of Catherine have led him to expect an unrealistic loyalty. Devereux saw Catherine as the faithful, good-natured wife who would stand by her man in Van Diemen's Land for fourteen years if need be. Through framing Devereux's response in this way Koch is clearly highlighting his narrator's own preconceptions and illusions, and the way they have led him to a painful resolution.

It is these kinds of perceptions and idealisations of women that Koch highlights in his portrayal of men. This is implicitly linked to Devereux's own sense of gender identity. Although he feels betrayed by the woman who represents home, security, faith, and the future, Koch is suggesting that Devereux's own sense of himself is merely reflected by his image of womanhood. This is the process of constructing masculinity which Koch outlines in all his novels, and the reader can

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<sup>134</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 133.

<sup>135</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 172-3.

<sup>136</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 171.

only wonder whether Michael Langford will inherit the same patterns of thought. However, within *Out of Ireland* there is another significant female character who serves as a reflection of Devereux's own gender identity in a more complete way.

Devereux has one overriding perception of a major female character, and this one is much more effective at underlining issues of gender identity and power relations between the sexes. Devereux falls in love with Kathleen, who for him embodies Ireland – in this way nation and gender become closely intertwined. This discourse of gendered landscape or nation responds to a pervasive tradition within colonialist adventure literature, where the foreign land is feminised and seen as 'Other' to the hero, who needs to protect and occupy the place. This is a foundational colonialist trope, strongly evident in novels such as *King Solomon's Mines* and *Robinson Crusoe*.<sup>138</sup>

However, the *aisling* itself also has deep traditions within nationalist thought, especially in Ireland, where the nationalist hero defends the nation from the cruelty and oppression of the foreign invader, cast as a competing suitor. The *aisling* is an ancient form of poetry with modern political overtones. Koch uses it both explicitly and implicitly to explore men's illusions of women, and how they are essentially self-destructive for the male gender identity. This is one of the mistakes the reader comes to hope Langford will not repeat.

Such an association between femininity and nature (or national territory) is pervasive in Orientalist and colonialist writings, and has been the subject of much attention by feminist and post-colonial theorists. 'In the modern formulation ... the female body is fully aligned to nature and both are opened to an uncompromising and penetrating gaze as the passive property of men.'<sup>139</sup> Such representations can be closely identified with imperialism and patriarchy because they implicitly construct power relations between men and women, and between the coloniser and the colonised. 'So long as men are symbolically identified with culture, which attempts to control and transcend nature, then women, because of their close associations

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<sup>137</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp 171-2.

<sup>138</sup> H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (ed. Dennis Butts), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989 [1886]; Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (ed. Angus Ross), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985 [1719].

<sup>139</sup> Denis Cosgrove, 'Landscape and the European sense of sight – Eyeing nature' in Kay Anderson et al., *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd, 2003, p. 261.

with nature, must also be controlled and contained.’<sup>140</sup> However, such representations should be considered in the context of a reading practice.

One classic adventure narrative, *King Solomon’s Mines*, feminises the landscape in the most unsubtle ways possible, mapping Africa as a female body open to occupation by the group of male adventurers seeking buried treasure. Such associations also move across cultural borders: ‘In the myths of the Hopi Indians, for example, the Earth is regarded as female, to be treasured and protected from rape, just as in English pastoral poetry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the countryside is beautifully female’.<sup>141</sup> This is precisely the kind of tradition Koch is self-consciously responding to, as Devereux romanticises the landscape of Van Diemen’s Land in precisely this way. However, while the pervasiveness of this association must be recognised, so should the potential for reworking or reshaping such representations. ‘Feminist critics and artists have sought to rework modernist associations between landscape, the body and femininity, emphasising the body as a social construction and its creative potential, and pointing out the possibilities of revisioning nature in terms of male bodies and alternative masculinities.’<sup>142</sup> It is this type of transformation which Koch opens space for, although he does so using a creative rather than theoretical approach.

What complicates Koch’s task is that it is not a simply reproduction of colonialist forms of representation that he is enacting. Most obviously in its title, *Out of Ireland* responds to Irish nationalist thought of the nineteenth century. The novel’s title quotes one of Yeats’s most strongly nationalistic poems, ‘Remorse for Intemperate Speech’, although like Koch’s novel Yeats’s poem is not straightforwardly nationalist: it questions the ‘fanatic heart’ and its motivations even while evoking them. One specific form of poetry, the *aisling*, is what Koch is working with: here the nationalist poet sings of a feminised Ireland whom he wants to protect from the unwanted advances of England. Koch self-consciously inhabits this tradition with a critical purpose. Kathleen ‘was truly a daughter of the soil of Erin: an O’Rahilly who may well ... be an actual blood relation of that wonderful Egan O’Rahilly who lamented the death of the Gaelic order, and who created the inspired form of *aisling* in which Ireland herself is the woman of the poet’s

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<sup>140</sup> Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 46.

<sup>141</sup> McDowell, *Gender*, p. 45.

vision'.<sup>143</sup> Koch is certainly not an advocate or apologist for such identifications of landscape with femininity; he shows how they are, in fact, among the most dangerous of illusions.

The narrative is told entirely by Devereux, who depicts the first appearance of the to-be-beloved character with an aura of significance, a halo. By doing so Koch emphasises that Devereux sees only an image of Kathleen, a representation. Devereux is immediately taken with her appearance as she exclaims aloud in Irish.

But we were able to see her face, reflected in the mirror above the sideboard as the flames of the candles were, which danced about her image like fireflies; and this white, counterfeit visage in the looking-glass, its lips parted in panic, its pale eyes flaring, looking back at Howard and at me (or rather, looking back at our reflections), had a briefly uncanny appearance: we seemed for these moments to be presented with a face which was no convict housemaid's at all, but that of some water-sprite from legend, staring from the depths of a pool.<sup>144</sup>

Koch has already established that Devereux is fascinated with Irish folklore and is inclined to believe in fairies and ghosts. He sees Kathleen as an ethereal character: this is certainly an idealisation, and he is obviously not appreciating her own individuality at all.<sup>145</sup> She is significant to him because she reflects a part of himself back at him: his passionate nationalism. Robert confuses these two emotions in all sorts of ways: later reflecting on his meeting with Kathleen, he muses, '*A peasant from Limerick ... A felon; her virtue lost. But was she not also stricken Ireland – a woman of the fairy hosts? Was she not the woman in the *aisling* song?*'<sup>146</sup> On their next meeting Devereux cannot restrain his impulse to act on his passions; after hearing her story and seeing her weep, he thinks, '*You are Ireland ... But I didn't say it aloud, I said: – Ah, my dear, I'm so sorry. If I can ever make the English pay for all that's been done to you, I will. But these fine words sounded empty; and it was then that I made a decision.*'<sup>147</sup> At this point Devereux decides to buy the farm with Langford in order to have Kathleen on his territory. Deprived of action in Europe and with his nationalistic aspirations crushed, he takes the opportunity to

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<sup>142</sup> Cosgrove, 'Landscape', p. 262.

<sup>143</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 582.

<sup>144</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 259-60.

<sup>145</sup> Notably, Kathleen has similarities with Koch's own ancestor whom he acknowledged as early as 1989. See Baker, *Yacker 3*, p. 194.

<sup>146</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 271.

<sup>147</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 352.

live out his dreams in another way. His identification of Kathleen with Ireland becomes stronger and stronger, despite warnings of its danger.

It is Kathleen herself who shows Devereux that nationalism can be a myth, a dream, an illusion. When she expresses her happiness and contentment on the farm, Devereux says:

But Ireland is still our home; the place whose hills and streams nurtured our spirits from childhood. Our motherland.

– All that is poetry, she said. But poetry is for the quality, like yourself – and a cruel mother Ireland was to me. I'm thinking sometimes that I may find more kindness here, in this wild place, where we are told that humble folk may begin again.<sup>148</sup>

This is a clear warning to Devereux that his love for nation – and its connection to his love for Kathleen – could be dangerous. But his raging masculinity has built up a momentum that cannot be restrained: when they are soon caught in a storm together, Devereux immediately acts to protect Kathleen, and their relationship is finally consummated.<sup>149</sup> From here Devereux enters an illusion which will eventually break his spirit.

Koch also portrays the love for nation which is shared amongst men, and cements their identity. One chapter is entitled 'Dark Rosaleen', the title of a nationalist song in the *aisling* tradition by Clarence Mangan. In a spirit of comradeship Devereux seeks out Kinane to warn him about Casey, and in so doing visits a pub which he would usually never go near. At this point the nationalist atmosphere reaches a high pitch, as Kinane sings the song itself.

– Now we shall sing the loveliest of songs about Ireland ... Ireland, our mother and our queen! Stripped naked by her enemies; left without husband or son; the homes of her people wasted! ...

Then he began to sing 'Dark Rosaleen.' ...

Poor, eccentric Mangan! This was the loveliest thing he ever wrote, and will surely never die. And the passionate, yearning tenderness, the naked yet delicate intensity of Liam's rendering of the words, is not to be described; all of his love of country and all his bitter grief at the loss of her was in it ...

If Ireland was a woman, then Liam Kinane was truly in love with her, I thought; and now I regretted every scornful opinion I'd ever held about him.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 418.

<sup>149</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 420-1.

<sup>150</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 487-8.

Noble ideals aside, this love does not mean self-fulfilment for Kinane: he dies consumed by alcoholic grief and self-pity. Nor does Devereux find his love of Ireland as a woman a satisfying or fulfilling experience in the long term. His disillusion is foreshadowed when Barry speaks metaphorically of the pain of exile, where Ireland is represented both as a lost love and a grand old house. 'In the dream, I long for her as I used to do. Sometimes, I actually see her, at the end of a corridor. But then she goes through a door and is gone, lost – and the knowledge goes through me like a sword. I wake, and I long to go in search of her.'<sup>151</sup> Later, Devereux is warned once again: on a Sunday walk, he leaves Kathleen far behind without considering that it is her asthma which is holding her back: 'I was pierced by guilt; and as well, by an irrational fear'.<sup>152</sup> Devereux is deeply afraid of leaving her behind, and particularly of losing her the way he lost his other beloved, Ireland. During the birth of their son he expresses how much she means to him: 'The notion of losing Kathleen made me wild with terror: I was trembling and sweating, scarcely knowing what I did or said'.<sup>153</sup> He is not consciously aware of living within the illusion that he possesses Kathleen.

Ultimately, Devereux loses Kathleen to an asthma attack when he is away helping Barry to escape. Her death cripples him, both emotionally and spiritually, and he is consumed and tight-lipped with grief when he first discovers it. 'I was not here. I was not here. I can write no more.'<sup>154</sup> Like the Victorian gentleman he is, Devereux cannot bring himself to express fully his grief, even within his journal. He does, however, discard the image of macho adventurer when James first gives him the bad news: 'Then I began to weep, and he reached out and took my hand, gripping it hard. I tried to stop, embarrassed by the sounds I was making. But I could not; and the more I wept, the harder his calloused hand gripped mine'.<sup>155</sup> He does admit that he is wracked by dreams, excruciating memories and a crippling guilt that he was not present to help. In his letter to O'Neill, he writes, 'Ever since my loss, it's as though my mind and spirit have closed up'.<sup>156</sup> This is no ordinary grief; Devereux has truly suffered a monumental loss, which is caused by his

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<sup>151</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 444.

<sup>152</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 452.

<sup>153</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 642.

<sup>154</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 656.

<sup>155</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 657.

<sup>156</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 684.



overinvestment in his relationship with Kathleen, as well as his image of her as Ireland. However, he is not self-perceptive enough to realise that he has set himself up for a fall; it takes Lenoir's advice for the reader to clearly understand this.

– Ah yes, Ireland. Of course. Always Ireland. Nationalism ...  
– But is nationalism what you really worship, Devereux? You, and all the other young men in Europe who have made their countries into deities? I think they are female deities, you direct such passion towards them. And each of these deities is supposed to be more beautiful and perfect and virtuous than the others! How is one to choose among these ladies, if one is put in the position of Paris? ... What will they do, all these nation states of yours – each one of them convinced that it's more favoured by destiny than the others? Prussia! Italy! Hungary! Will they not fight each other? I think I see blood in the future ...<sup>157</sup>

In this dark prophecy of the First World War, Lenoir warns Devereux against the dangers of nationalism, specifically the kind of nationalism which casts nations as females needing to be protected or liberated. However, he soon connects this directly with Devereux himself, and his sense of himself as a man. His warning that the illusion which brings together woman and nation is inherently dangerous would be useful for Michael Langford in the next century.

I admire your collection of Irish fairy tales. I find them very beautiful – and beautifully written. It's your best self who wrote those, Devereux. And I must ask you: in your inmost mind, is the country you call Erin not the half-world of Faery? Is it not *there* that you wish to live? ...  
– You are actually more Celtic than one realises, at first. You long for the world of shadows; of invisible spirits. I know how much you loved her, my dear. But you can't follow; you can't go where she is. You must learn to turn away, and climb back towards the world. The more that you long for the dead, the more your live spirit will wither. Isn't that the wisdom to be found in the legends you so admire? ... Go, catch your ship, sail out of the Underworld, and live!<sup>158</sup>

This resounding warning serves not only to warn Devereux of the dangers of his own self-identity, it allows Lenoir to unburden himself and enables the reader to appreciate the novel's deepest concerns. This is as blunt as Koch can be: on the simplest level, he is making it obvious that Devereux's masculinity is misguided and deluded, that he has invested far too much emotional and spiritual energy into his image of Kathleen as Ireland. This serves to challenge Devereux's self-assured

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<sup>157</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 680-1.

gender identity by emphasising the processes of projection and idealisation of the Other in which he participates. This is the kind of gender identity the reader hopes Langford will avoid in *Highways to a War*; however, it is also worthwhile assessing the extent to which Koch proposes any potential for change within *Out of Ireland* itself.

Devereux's attitude to Catherine Edgeworth epitomises the worst aspects of the male gaze: she is literally just an image to him when he goes out to sea. He expects that she will wait for her hero patiently and faithfully, although her letters make it clear that she lays the responsibility for his position squarely at his feet. It is the destructive, illusory nature of the male gaze which Koch is keen to distance himself from.<sup>159</sup>

Ultimately, Devereux does not substantially alter his attitude to women through his relationship with Kathleen. He is still inclined to idealise his beloved, except this time he does it in terms of a particularly nationalistic kind of love. However, Koch does attempt to undermine the complete idealisation of the female through representing Kathleen as grounded, on her own terms. She is not prepared to blindly follow Devereux on his escape to America, and she expresses her wish to sink roots in Van Diemen's Land.<sup>160</sup> Again, Devereux's assumptions are shown for what they are and the individual, human qualities of Kathleen shine through his simplified image of her.

However, it is in the actual representations of Kathleen, particularly during intimate scenes, that Koch suggests the potential for a new male gaze. With Kathleen, Devereux comes to appreciate a different kind of beauty: a carnal, embodied beauty.

And now the lingering reek of the hop-plants, whose resins induce sleep and intoxication, was joined in the dimness by the odours of bodily passion: indelicate, pungent and innocent as the odours of the vegetable world. When I recall our frenzy, I recall the mingling of those essences, vegetable and human: distillations I might once have

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<sup>158</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 681.

<sup>159</sup> While Devereux's faults seem obvious in this reading, at least one commentator has accused Koch of valorising his characters: 'he wants his aristocratic Irish heroes to be better men than they were.' See Pybus, 'Failure of Imagination', p. 289. On the other hand, some readers see Devereux as a complex figure: 'He is not always an admirable or even likeable character; sometimes he can be a prig, an eternal adolescent, a naïve fool with an annoying sense of *noblesse oblige*. We are infuriated, too, by his obtuseness...' See Masson, 'Questing Spirit', p. 116.

<sup>160</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 550.

called gross, but which now I see are nothing of the kind, any more than Kathleen herself is gross. Or if she is, I am in love with her very grossness, which is the grossness of life.

I have ventured into life's heartland, where the sacred groves lie – and where I never dared venture before. The Eleusinian mysteries and the ecstasies of Demeter have been closed to me until now – or rather, I've closed myself against them. This is because I've thought of beauty as something which must always be refined. I have failed to understand that those who seek Demeter, and the ancient, secret mysteries of the Harvest, must accept carnality as beauty's other face. Then they will delight not only in flower-scents, but in the odours of bodily toil, and the female serum of love.<sup>161</sup>

As well as speaking right against the grain of Victorian 'delicacy', this crucial passage indicates that Devereux is partially aware of his assumptions and idealisations about women: 'I've thought of beauty as something which must always be refined'. Furthermore, Devereux senses a distinct change in his own perceptions; Kathleen embodies a new idea of beauty, and he sees her as he has never seen a woman before. 'This is the woman I've sought all my life, and false fastidiousness is banished. I am changed, greatly changed. I'm possessed by this woman of the people, by this daughter of the soil of Limerick, whose neck and limbs are as delicate as a child's, yet whose body is touched by coarseness: by maturity come too soon ... Coarseness and beauty are one.'<sup>162</sup> Devereux loudly proclaims that he has changed, and it is particularly his idea of women that he has felt to have changed. He is no longer in love with Catherine, a two-dimensional image which merely gratifies his own sense of self. He feels that he loves Kathleen for who she is, for her embodied beauty and her groundedness.

It thus seems that Koch is undermining traditional attitudes to women and particularly challenging the traditional male gaze. There is an attempt to move Devereux beyond his traditional masculinist way of seeing women, to change his character in order to redefine and rework his own sense of gender identity. However, such change is difficult, and Devereux is not actually as successful as he thinks; he still idealises Kathleen. After proclaiming that 'coarseness and beauty are one', he goes on to tell her once again, '*You are Ireland*'.<sup>163</sup> Ultimately, Devereux lapses back into the familiar male gaze by idealising Kathleen's very coarseness, and particularly by seeing her as a personification of Ireland. This leads him to the

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<sup>161</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 425.

<sup>162</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 450.

abject despair and grief he feels at losing her. This challenge to masculinity and an attempt to move beyond it is emblematic of the whole novel: when Devereux abandons his son in Van Diemen's Land, he is also abandoning any hope for reconstructing himself as a new type of man. He leaves this difficult task to his unborn descendant, Michael Langford.

## Split Figures and Dysfunctional Masculinity

One of the most recurrent motifs in Koch's work is that of the split-figure, the doubleman or *doppelgänger*. The use of this figure serves to question male gender identity, undermining the myth of the adventurer as a coherent, integrated, stable personality. An early interview with Koch drew out his belief that 'character is something that's not always complete'.<sup>164</sup> A brief survey of Koch's earlier fiction illustrates how closely the split-figure is linked to issues of male gender identity. It is then possible to see how pervasively Devereux's dual nature challenges the standard image of the male adventurer hero: as a romantic nationalist and poet-warrior he is inherently divided in crucial situations. This problematic masculinity is the main inheritance he leaves for Michael Langford.

Koch's portrayal of split figures is strongly evident in all his novels. However, as they progress they deploy the 'doubleman' in more sophisticated and complex ways, emphasising connections to adventure fiction as well as a critique of masculinity. Thus, *Highways to a War* and *Out of Ireland* together represent the epitome of Koch's craft so far, and the most extended exploration of the split-figure and its relationship to male gender identity. Koch's earlier *doppelgängers* foreshadow the two in *Beware of the Past*.

Koch's first novel evokes the split-figure in subtle ways. The narrator recounts how his friend, Lewie Mathews, 'seemed to carry with him a secret life: elusive; hinted at in his face'.<sup>165</sup> As with Michael Langford, this secret life is a clear symptom of duality. Francis Cullen also has dreams and hears voices; he sees Melbourne as a kind of Otherworld, a place of excitement and adventure. As this chapter has already discussed, this novel is largely about the shattering of childlike

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<sup>163</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 450.

<sup>164</sup> John Thieme, 'Christopher J. Koch: Interview', *Kunapipi*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1986, p. 20.

<sup>165</sup> Koch, *Boys*, p. 41. This secret life foreshadows that of Michael Langford.

illusions. Towards the end of the novel Cullen is given a clear diagnosis of his condition: 'You don't belong anywhere, do you know that?'<sup>166</sup> The reason is that Cullen, like all of Koch's protagonists, is a man of dual nature; he is torn by conflicting desires and cannot forge ahead on the path of life. For this reason he never truly feels at home anywhere.

Koch's second novel also evokes the split-figure, although the idea is barely formed. The main character dreams of a Master whose voice rings in his ears. 'The echo of the Master's voice stays, and there is a malice in its undertone, as though it has tried to show me something, warn me ... all I know is that the boys and men were double.'<sup>167</sup> This is a vague warning which suggests an all-pervasive doubleness, linking this duality with masculinity in a way which becomes much clearer in subsequent novels. Later, this novel also evokes a connected idea: that of the Unseen, a kind of Otherworld which is always around the corner, just behind the veil of present reality. It is the world of illusion, and Koch connects this to the main character's illusions about a woman in particular.<sup>168</sup> It is between these two worlds that doubles split, come together, and conflict: the Celtic flavour of this idea is much more strongly present in *Out of Ireland*.

It is in *The Doubleman* that the split figure really emerges. As its title suggests, the entire novel is an exploration of the influence of the Unseen world and how male characters are often split into conflicting opposites. Set during the iconoclastic 1960s, the novel portrays the destruction of old certainties, especially through the acknowledgement of spirits and an unseen world.<sup>169</sup> In a narrative which strongly echoes *The Boys in the Island*, the protagonist and his friend experience a rite of passage through a type of adventure as they explore alternative philosophies. In the pattern of Koch's fiction, this novel ends with the destruction of illusion. The novel's most significant figure, however, is Clive Broderick, who guides the young men into an understanding of the unseen world. Richard experiences a slight shock when Broderick suggests a novel idea to him: 'Haven't you ever suspected that the universe is double?'<sup>170</sup> This is only a slight hint at the importance of the split-figure in this novel, but it pervades the entire narrative.

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<sup>166</sup> Koch, *Boys*, p. 171.

<sup>167</sup> Christopher Koch, *Across the Sea Wall*, London: Heinemann, 1965, p. 89.

<sup>168</sup> Koch, *Sea Wall*, pp. 219-20.

<sup>169</sup> Christopher Koch, *The Doubleman*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1985, p. 102.

<sup>170</sup> Koch, *Doubleman*, p. 110.

Duality is used as a structural principle here, and it serves to undermine the certainties and illusions under which the characters live.

The last major use of the split figure before *Highways to a War* is in *The Year of Living Dangerously*. Almost all this novel's characters are split or have doubles, but here the doubling results from hybrid social, cultural and biological origins. The Chinese-Australian Billy Kwan feels inherently split: 'It's rather a bore to be *half* something, you see, old man. There's no great problem belonging to any *one* race – but a man needs to be able to choose.'<sup>171</sup> Hamilton can certainly empathise – as an Australian with British-colonial origins, he too is caught between conflicting identities. These men have difficulty reconciling the conflicting aspects of their masculinity. Furthermore, in his files Kwan emphasises the duality of Sukarno's personality: '*he has twin personalities, hard as steel, or poetic and sentimental ... Thus he unites in himself the two great religions of Java. A double man, a man of dualities!*'<sup>172</sup> Just as in *The Doubleman*, duality is used a structural principle for the whole novel, although here it is also linked to the political situation in Indonesia, the conflict between the Left and the Right. This novel also closes with the familiar pattern: the collapsing of dualities, the shattering of illusions, a tragic death, and little progression beyond that. However, its use of the split-figure is notably more sophisticated, exemplifying as it does Koch's central concerns.

Koch's earlier fiction clearly establishes the significance of duality and its relationship to male gender identity. Koch repeatedly casts his protagonists as men who are split-figures, unable to reconcile their inner conflicts, and who are addicted to a world of illusion or idealised perceptions. This is essentially a negative task, where the main aim is to undermine the old illusions and certainties, to challenge male gender identity. Within the narrative there is little reconciliation, reparation or healing, and there is the sense of the reader being taught a lesson. This is precisely the pattern that *Out of Ireland* follows.

*Out of Ireland* is the most thorough depiction of a male adventurer as a split figure that Koch has yet produced. This is no doubt because the historical model for Devereux, John Mitchel, saw himself as a man of dual nature, and often expressed this sense of split identity in his *Jail Journal*. Koch reproduces this duality in Devereux, and allows it to percolate through his entire personality at all stages of

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<sup>171</sup> Koch, *Year*, p. 84.

<sup>172</sup> Koch, *Year*, p. 130; italics in original.

the book. Even though Devereux, like Mitchel, is consciously aware of this splitting, he seems oblivious to its consequences for his character and life as a whole. In other words, Devereux continues to develop his double nature without any noticeable shift towards a more coherent, integrated gender identity.

When Devereux is about to leave on his journey of adventure, he feels a paradoxical illusion of freedom, and comments, ‘So contradictory is the human heart! In particular a heart such as mine, since I am a man of double nature.’<sup>173</sup> Devereux proclaims the fact like he is proud of it: he is not a simple, one-sided man. He even toys with the idea: after a fine meal with his comrades, he looks up at the wild stars and engages his *doppelgänger* in a post-colonial philosophical dialogue, considering whether the Southern Hemisphere can contain the same universal truths which Europeans discover in their own hemisphere.<sup>174</sup> This playful attitude pits the *Self* against its *doppelgänger* in a relatively safe environment, and Devereux is able to play with his duality without too much concern.

However, his awareness of his duality and its seriousness develops throughout the novel, and the battle with the bushrangers serves to emphasise this aspect of his character as he begins to understand himself more completely.

Am I a man of violence? Certainly I’m not the same man, since I shot O’Donnell and Lynch. Or rather, another man has been discovered inside me ...

I go double; I go double.

One of my two selves, I discover, is distressed by the fact that I have taken life. He accepts the fact that I’m not actually guilty, since the killing was done in self-defence – and yet he still feels like a murderer ... My first self is horrified, and wishes to pick up the bushranger’s fallen spectacles, and to explain to him why his death is necessary. But my second self feels differently. Fury drove him, and will no doubt drive him again. He not only wished to kill O’Donnell: he exulted in it. This was the truth; but I told it to no-one.

This second self alarms me, and makes me understand that I can never be quite the same man that I have been: a man who was always passed as gentle, except in his ideas. But have I ever been that man? My second self has been waiting to emerge, it seems.<sup>175</sup>

This is a momentous realisation for Devereux; previously he has played with the idea of having a *doppelgänger*, but when he realises that his second self may be a

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<sup>173</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 25.

<sup>174</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 321.

<sup>175</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 580-1.

violent man, the security of his gender identity is thrown into doubt. He is like Dr Jekyll, who knows that the much-famed potion only extracted a personality that was already latent within his character. This realisation produces serious confusion and self-doubt; Devereux is unable to even make a decision and strike out on a path. When considering escape, Barry and Callaghan are clearly prepared for violence, adventure, gunfights, and possibly death: 'There was something weirdly casual about it, and I wondered if I would be as sanguine as Barry when my own turn for escape came. I found my thoughts turning to the quiet green rows of the hop glades, to the murmuring peace of the valley, and to Kathleen, swollen with our child, lying in bed waiting for me'.<sup>176</sup> Devereux is deeply torn between the possibility of escape and a Boeotian life of quiet farming. He is not the cold-hearted adventurer happy to leave the woman behind to continue his daring exploits: he lacks the certainties of his comrades.

Throughout the novel other characters point out Devereux's dual nature, which complements his own self-awareness nicely. However, he again ignores all the warnings. When Howard pushes him on the fact of his ancestry, Devereux admits:

– It is true that we are descended from that monstrous Earl of Essex who carried out such slaughter in Ulster for Queen Elizabeth. I take no satisfaction in my descent from bloody Walter Devereux, I assure you – nor do I admire the second earl, my namesake, whom Elizabeth beheaded. I'm a good deal more proud of those ancestors of mine who truly became Irish, and who went down at the Boyne against your armies, fighting beside the Gaelic gentry. We were good Norman Catholics then, although it's true we're Protestant now. And we Old English are no longer yours, you know.<sup>177</sup>

Along with his historical knowledge, Devereux indicates that his inherent duality is partly to do with his biological and cultural inheritance, and so the role of ancestry is central here. So the duality which Devereux passes on to Langford has origins which stretch back further than the nineteenth century. The painting which Raymond Barton discovers in the Langford storeroom was painted by Howard, who has a remarkable gift for character judgment in portraiture, and he sees and paints the two men in Devereux.

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<sup>176</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 638.

<sup>177</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 105.



– But the second self isn't so strikin'ly apparent in most faces as it is in yours, Devereux. The two faces constantly shift and merge into each other, like water. This is what I've tried to capture – and I think I may have done so. One of them's the face of the political rebel, and has anger to be found in it. That's the face of the man who wrote that rather terrifyin' and notorious piece callin' for insurrection in the Irish countryside, and for the tearin' up of railway lines ...

– But then I see the other face. The face of a dreamer: of a man capable of compassion. This is the face of the Robert Devereux who wrote those pieces on the Famine, which are filled with such pity – and who published that little book on Irish myth, re-telling the stories in a way that was pure poetry ...

– The question is, he said, which of the two faces predominates? And how can a man in whom I see such gentleness advocate bloody insurrection?<sup>178</sup>

This is the core of the problem: Devereux is a romantic nationalist, an artist-warrior. On the one hand he loves the Irish people above all else; he is a key figure in the cultural revival, and his compassionate, human side is shocked by the death and abject suffering of the Famine. However, his fierce nationalistic beliefs inspire powerful hatred for the nation's enemies; he is prepared to fight and kill to protect that which he loves. Lenoir is perceptive and wise regarding Devereux's character, and his voice has strong overtones of Koch's in it. 'You are not a politician; not even a political agent, in your heart. You are an artist-warrior. A very dangerous type: one who will take up the gun with joy, once he is convinced he is justified. And the men who follow and succeed you will be just as dangerous'.<sup>179</sup> This indicates that Devereux's duality will be inherited by men after him: Lenoir foreshadows later Irish militant nationalists such as the Irish Republican Army and also gestures towards the life of Michael Langford. This leaves the question of whether Langford will discover and overcome his dual nature.

Devereux's duality, his status as a split-figure, is responsible for significant grief and confusion during his time in Van Diemen's Land. He is forced to face his violent nature, which drives furiously towards killing others. This is difficult to reconcile with his intense love of Ireland and its people, and his desire for a life of peace and quiet. This inner conflict manifests itself in his indecision regarding whether or not to escape; he is torn between living as a farmer with Kathleen and pursuing the struggle for Irish independence in America. This is an inherently self-

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<sup>178</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, pp. 329-30.

destructive form of gender identity, and it is the final aspect of Devereux's silent inheritance for Michael Langford in the twentieth century.

*Out of Ireland* seriously challenges male gender identity, as the very idea of masculinity is fractured along crucial fault lines. Devereux begins with an existing dual identity, but this duality becomes magnified under the pressure of the shattered adventure myth, seeing his identity in the mirror-image of the Other, and the despair and trauma of his whole adventure in the Antipodes. By the end of the novel the reader can see that little character development has actually occurred; surely, Devereux has been warned countless times and his experiences should help him to alter his idea of his own manhood, but there is little evidence to suggest any substantial change after his escape to America. This is partly because the narrative itself does not leave Van Diemen's Land; the journal stays in the Langford house to be discovered generations later. However, the lack of character development in Devereux is also due to the fact that Koch is predominantly concerned with exploring and portraying the actual fragmentation of identity, rather than outlining any new identities.

This portrayal of a protagonist as a split figure is present in many types of romantic prose, from adventure to gothic. In the case of Koch, it is closely related to an illustration of a type of maleness which is incomplete, and lacks the integrity and coherence of a functional identity. This splitting is very similar to Dawson's use of Kleinian psychoanalysis, which claims that gender identity is constructed through a process of psychic splitting, integration, and composure.<sup>180</sup> He points out that a type of manic splitting can result in forms of revelation about self-identity and can involve self-blame, guilt and a lack of social integration. These are precisely the symptoms Devereux exhibits at the end of the *Out of Ireland*: his whole sense of himself is fundamentally shaken. However, Dawson also emphasises that it is necessary for the damaged imagos to heal itself through recuperation and reintegration with an understanding of the role of the real Other, although this healing is always partial. What is notable about *Out of Ireland* is that Devereux does not recover from his split identity; his problems follow him back into the Northern Hemisphere.

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<sup>179</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 680.

<sup>180</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, pp. 27-52.

The notion of split identity and its relation to the colonial situation was explored early by Franz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks* examined closely the psychological aspects of the colonised, and discovered an inherent duality at work. 'The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man ... That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question.'<sup>181</sup> This is implicitly connected to gender in important ways, since Fanon goes on to discuss how inter-racial sex can be an expression of power relations. The main difference between Fanon and the approach of Koch is that Fanon is concerned with the colonised rather than the coloniser.<sup>182</sup> However, looking at the other side of the power relation exposes the fact that many of the same processes are at work. While the black man may strive to be white yet yearn for his own culture, the white man is caught between the benevolent rhetoric of the colonising mission and its sometimes brutal and violent realities. Along with Dawson, what Fanon also emphasises is the negativity and self-destructiveness of dual identity, and the need for reparation and reintegration.

However, no such healing process occurs in *Out of Ireland*. The novel ends with Devereux's gender identity in ruins; he is unable to reconcile the two aspects of his nature, and his inner conflict has torn him apart. This maimed and confused masculinity is the inheritance that is left for Langford, and it is a kind of festering wound which persists, untouched, over the generations.

### **The Devereux-Langford Child: Hope for a New Generation**

Despite its length, the narrative of *Out of Ireland* feels cut short before its time; there is a sense of more stories to come, both the story of Devereux in America as well as the story of his son who is left in Van Diemen's Land. Devereux escapes his confinement and runs to the Northern Hemisphere, his home: 'We were truly back in the northern hemisphere ... The Antipodes were finally left behind. Soon I would be back in my native zone: an exile no more'.<sup>183</sup> He feels enlivened and experiences new hope when he discovers that he is free.

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<sup>181</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968, p. 17.

<sup>182</sup> The coloniser/colonised binary actually collapses with ambivalent figures like Devereux.

<sup>183</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 684.

However, as he escapes the island, Devereux is also abandoning hope in all sorts of ways. His hatred of what he sees as only a prison is passionate: ‘Ah Christ, I said, am I never to be free? ... my body yearned to be there: in my lost, native zone of the North ... I was filled with pure hatred for this island, and for the whole of the accursed Antipodes’.<sup>184</sup> This unforgiving malice towards the place is strongly reminiscent of John Mitchel, and also of the dominant attitude of the time. Devereux’s acute feeling of exile from his beloved homeland will not allow him to feel any attachment to the place of his incarceration. However, by escaping he also abandons hope of ever returning to Ireland itself: O’Neill says, ‘you will still be in exile ... and will not be able to return to Ireland’.<sup>185</sup> While Devereux completely abandons the hope of return by escaping Van Diemen’s Land, there is also a sense in which he leaves hope behind in the island.

Indeed, hope remains in the place itself. Barry and Devereux are disconcerted to find that O’Neill has no intention of joining in their escape, and not just because of the risk, nor the prospect of never returning to Ireland. It is because he is actually beginning to make a home in the island: ‘But what has “the right side of the world” given us? The endless bitter feuds of the great, and the oppression of the small: the old, repeated tragedies of Europe. I am tired of all that. I want to experience the world unsullied ... This landscape is still waiting for something. It will have its poets, some day.’<sup>186</sup> O’Neill expresses hope for the future of the island: he is coming to know the landscape and be part of it, and this is an expression of hope which Devereux never achieves.

Another element of hope which Devereux leaves behind is the memory of Kathleen, which stays with the place. Clearly he hopes to forget her; the pain of losing her is too intense to remember her properly. However, her rootedness in a new soil is an expression of hope for the future of the island itself: she picks the wildflowers, learns their names and begins to love the place.<sup>187</sup> She would clearly be happy to stay in Van Diemen’s Land; for Devereux, this promotes his inner conflict, and fuels his resentment of the place. However, it is Kathleen’s conception of a child which most attaches her to the land, and symbolises her healing and hope for the future.

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<sup>184</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 640.

<sup>185</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 537.

<sup>186</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 538.

Kathleen had prayed for this baby, I felt sure. Nothing else could finally have healed that sorrow in her heart and in her womb left there by the loss of her first child. And to ask her to leave here now seemed almost perverse: a folly. She had put down roots, in this alien soil – she who had known little else but misery and starvation on her own – and now, in this Spring of the Antipodes, when our hop-bines were climbing again, she was pregnant, and the gladness of the season was her gladness.<sup>188</sup>

Just as children represent hope for the future nation in Keneally's work, Devereux and Kathleen's child represents the embodiment of their relationship and hope for a future generation. Although the birth is tense and fraught with danger, the baby Thomas is Kathleen's last mark left on the world and Devereux's last mark on the island. When Devereux leaves him for America he is abandoning hope for the future as well as the healing made possible by the unconditional love of parenthood.

Gingerly, I took the tiny creature in my hands, holding him like a parcel; as I did so, he began feebly to cry, his minute fists clenched, his face even redder. And an entirely unexpected emotion swept through me: a wave of yearning love for him. Suddenly I understood that I had a son in my hands, for whom I would have to care.<sup>189</sup>

Devereux abandons hope along with his son when he escapes Van Diemen's Land for the hemisphere of his home. However, Thomas lives and is taken into the care of the Langfords, adopting their name. Devereux's legacy is one of broken dreams and illusions, the myth of adventure gone wrong, a patriarchal and self-destructive attitude towards women, and an irredeemably split gender identity. The only hope at the end of the novel is for the Langford line, and the reader is led to hope that *Highways to a War* will show how to heal the wounds of the past and repair fractured identities. This remains to be seen in Michael Langford's inheritance.

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<sup>187</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 418.

<sup>188</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 550.

<sup>189</sup> Koch, *Ireland*, p. 644.