

The Sound and Silence of Central Queensland: Listening to Alex Miller's Soundscapes in *Journey to the Stone Country* and *Landscape of Farewell*

JOSEPH CUMMINS

University of New South Wales

Australian novelist Alex Miller has written ten novels that interweave concerns with land, politics, art, old age, and memory. Listening to the sounds and silences that resound within Miller's landscapes opens up imaginative, post-colonial geographies, Australian spatialities that exceed the horizons of colonial vision. *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002) and *Landscape of Farewell* (2007), which in an interview on Radio National's *Book Show* Miller describes as being related like 'cousins', both present journeys into a web of interconnected central Queensland landscapes. A vital aspect of these landscapes is sound. The critical drive of this paper emerges out of the mutually informing encounter of Miller's use of sound, differently deployed in the two novels, with a critical listening practice that seeks to listen to how Miller's soundscapes construct the relations that resonate between his characters, and between the characters and the sonic landscape. Listening to the central relationships of the two novels, I argue that the unfolding of these relationships is within the resonance of the sounds and silences of Miller's landscapes. These characters are located in a sonic landscape that extends the dimensions of the visual landscape, instead existing, through sound and listening, in human/human and human/landscape relationships that exceed the spatiality and temporality that has traditionally, silently, produced the self/other structure of colonial mastery.

Taking its cue from the widespread critique of visualism carried out as part of postcolonial critique, this essay will filter through concepts of soundscape, sound, space, and subjectivity, aligning and harmonising them so as to open a resonant space in which the particular thematics that resound within the sounds and silences in Miller's two novels can be amplified and heard. A salient feature in Miller's novels is the relationality of his characters, and I argue that the complexity of thematic strata, issues of cultural difference, land rights, and historical trauma can be better understood through close attention to sound, a listening practice that reorients the landscapes of the novels. The use of a listening practice will account for one valuable and under-examined portion of Miller's engagement with Australian space. Positioned within the rich textuality and visual symbology of the two novels, sound and listening take up and extend the interrogation of Australian land politics also performed by the visual sense. In *Stone Country* and *Landscape of Farewell* Miller is deeply indebted to the traditions of representing Australian landscape, and at times he explores the visual symbolism of maps, photos and film. My analysis of the two novels focuses on sound and listening so as to consciously isolate the work of sound, to approach the specific openings and complications of space activated by sound, and to perform a 'close listening analysis' of two related novels that, in terms of character, theme, narrative and setting, resonate side by side. The listening methodology deployed in this essay continues the reconfiguration of space that has been one of the major imperatives of postcolonial theory. In focusing on the effect of sound within the specific central Queensland spaces of *Stone Country* and *Landscape of Farewell*, this essay will augment conceptions of the Australian landscape and

enable a new critical inflection to and reflection of contact and interaction between landscape, sound, and listening within the national imaginary.

An investigation into sound and listening is in part based upon the last four decades of critique of visual paradigms that is spread across a number of academic disciplines, include branches of Gender Studies, History, Geography, Cultural Studies, Art Theory, and Philosophy (Mulvey 1975, Foucault 1977, de Certeau 1984, Connor 1997, Smith 2001, Sterne 2003, White and White 2005, Damousi and Deacon 2007, Voegelin 2010, Toop 2010). Tracing the foundations of what he calls ‘ocularcentricism’, historian and philosopher Martin Jay argues: ‘Whether or not one gives greater weight to technical advances or social changes...the dawn of the modern era was accompanied by the rigorous privileging of vision’ (69). Sound phenomenologist Don Ihde offers a similar position: ‘Vision becomes the root metaphor for thought, the paradigm that dominates our understanding of thinking in a reduction to vision’ (8). Jay and Ihde both emphasize the centrality of vision to the development of post-Renaissance metaphysics. Slightly narrowing my critical lens, postcolonial historian David Arnold grounds the dominance of the visual within the workings of colonialism, arguing that ‘[t]he exercise of the gaze is the prelude to possession in more material and institutional forms...’ (29). Corinn Columpar pushes Arnold’s discussion into a colonial territory when she argues ‘the look associated with colonialism [...] systematically empowers white culture and reduces indigenous bodies to static icons of difference’ (38). Emerging from a number of key theorists, including feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey and the wide-ranging work of historian Michel Foucault, theories of the ‘gaze’ articulate the power of vision to order and control not only people but the environments or landscapes they inhabit.

Focusing these discussions of the visual within an explicitly Australian perspective, Paul Genoni’s 2002 discussion of the ‘photographic eye’ in Australian fiction re-voices the claims of Arnold and Columpar. Genoni suggests that the ‘acquisitive gaze is revealed as a principle means by which space was brought within the realm of the discovered and mensuration and appropriation commenced’ (137). Genoni’s appraisal of photography and the power of vision within the colonial project lays its theoretical foundation with two pivotal critiques of Australian space and vision: Paul Carter’s *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987) and Simon Ryan’s *The Cartographic Eye* (1996). Carter and Ryan both chart the European confrontation with the Australian continent, paying close attention to the role of explorers, government officials, cartographers, surveyors and town planners in the production and circumscription of Australian colonial and postcolonial space. Paul Carter extended this investigation into a sonic territory closely bordering the present discussion with his examination the role of sound on the frontier between European and Indigenous in *The Sound In Between* (1996).

Moving beyond these examinations of the historical dominance of vision, sound historian and theorist Steven Connor focuses his critique of visualism on the pertinence of sound and listening to notions of both space and subjectivity in the broad epoch of modernism: ‘Visualism signifies distance, differentiation and domination; the control which modernity exercises over nature depends upon the experience of the world as separate from myself, and my self-definition in the act of the separation, which vision seems to promote’ (203-4). By engaging with the production of ‘distance’ and ‘differentiation’ through vision, Connor’s discussion of the development of technologies of sound and listening emphasizes the importance of sound to reconfigurations of

both spatiality and subjectivity.

Another aspect of the sonic construction of space is addressed by Don Ihde in *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (2007), where Ihde underscores the power of sound to amplify and uncover spatialities that may be invisible or hidden. In his detailed phenomenological study of sound, Ihde argues:

...it is with the hearing of interiors that the possibilities of listening begins to open the way to those aspects which lie at the horizons of all visualist thinking, because with the hearing of interiors the auditory capacity of making present the invisible begins to stand out dramatically. (70)

Ihde's investigation into sound and the auditory sense amplifies the way sound can enable the listener to delve into, behind, and beyond the visual surfaces of objects, transforming the spatial presence of objects and actions. This renovation of space is a vital aspect of the critique of visualism that sound and listening can perform.

Ihde and Connor's discussions of vision in relation to space and subjectivity go some way to articulating the two central concerns that underpin the listening work of this essay. First, I will explore space in terms of the sonic landscape, or soundscape, before moving into the implications of this sonic space for the subjectivity or character that is constructed through sound and listening. The study of the soundscape, or acoustic ecology, has its foundation in R. Murray Schafer's *The Tuning of the World (The Soundscape)* (1977). According to Schafer's contemporary, Barry Truax, in the *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (1978), the concept of soundscape denotes '[a]n environment of sound (sonic environment) with emphasis on the way it is perceived and understood by the individual, or by society. It thus depends on the relationship between the individual and any such environment' (126). Truax's conception of the space of the soundscape expands the parameters of the visually constructed landscape. Instead of the emphasis on visual distance and differentiation in the dichotomised 'experience of the world as separate from myself' that Connor described, the soundscape exists in the space of the relation between the sound environment and the individual.

Jean-Luc Nancy's theorisation of the space of this relation between the individual and the soundscape, what he calls the space of the 'referral', is an important conceptual tool within the close listening analysis that this essay will perform. In *Listening* (2002) Nancy begins to outline this space by initially making a distinction between hearing and listening. First, there is *hearing*, for example, hearing the many sounds which populate a landscape, like bird song, the human voices, or the sound of a car: Nancy says that *hearing* 'strains towards a present sense beyond sound' (6). When we are *listening*, to the same soundscape of sounds, 'it is from sound itself that sense is offered' (6). So while *hearing* is occupied with the analysis and abstract naming of sounds, *listening* to these sounds is not about analysis, but immediate experience and bodily relation. Within Nancy's theorisation, hearing and listening necessarily take place simultaneously, but the distinction encourages us to listen to the materiality of sound, and to think about how the 'sense' of sound has a certain way of structuring the relation between the self and the world. Nancy's listening/hearing theorisation also works to recast the temporal relationship between the individual and the environment: instead of the relation of distance, separation and

thus temporal dislocation that is produced by viewing a landscape, listening and hearing is immersive, simultaneous.

Although it has much wider implications within the cosmos of his overall philosophical project, *sense*, the resonating materiality that one experiences in listening, is at the core of Nancy's idiosyncratic understanding of the structure of how a subjectivity is created through the back and forth movement of what he calls 'the referral'. The referral, what Ian James refers to as 'the passage of sense' (106), is the oscillating movement where sense touches the listener, and the listener is in turn open to sense, open to and in relation with the sonic world. This contact suggests that instead of a boundary between the self and the other, or the character and the landscape, the *sense* of sound produces both the character and its landscape, generating them together. Nancy says:

To sound is to vibrate in itself or by itself: it is not only, for the sonorous body, to emit a sound, but it is also to stretch out, to carry itself and be resolved into vibrations that both return it to itself and place it outside itself. [...] [M]eaning and sound share the space of a referral, in which at the same time they refer to each other, and that, in a very general way, this space can be defined as the space of a self, a subject. A self is nothing other than a form or function of a referral. (8)

Nancy's philosophical project in *Listening*, and his extensive work on subjectivity, community, religion, and art, is frequently devoted to the investigation of sense and how it constructs material *bodies*. What I will take from his complex theory is this movement of the referral, the idea that, through sound, to paraphrase Nancy, the self can both be returned to itself and placed outside itself. This referral breaks down the spatial and temporal boundaries that exist between the viewing, judging self, and the inert, othered, landscape. The movement of the referral demarcates a physical space that is filled with sound. Utilising Nancy's listening practice will allow me to amplify the relationship between characters and their sonic environment and thus move against the spatial and temporal distances and differences reified by the dominance of colonial paradigms favouring sight.

Much of Alex Miller's oeuvre (to date he has written eleven novels, winning the Miles Franklin Prize twice) is dedicated to the exploration of the self's relation to the cultural other. The specific way that Miller approaches this thematic is to write about situations in which his main protagonists embark on a journey where their own sense of authenticity and self is enabled through a figure of cultural difference, the vehicle of an 'other'. As Elizabeth McMahon has noted, in Miller's novels 'the wanderer is only truly located when they enter into the centre of another' (2). In *Stone Country* and *Landscape of Farewell* the figure of the wanderer is positioned in an explicitly postcolonial, post-Mabo landscape that emphasizes the political, historical and cultural differences between characters that engage with issues of inheritance and land ownership. In *Stone Country*, Annabelle Beck, an Anglo-Australian anthropology academic, makes the journey back to the country of her parents, and of her own childhood, with the help of Bo Rennie, an Aboriginal cultural adviser and former stockman. Sound plays a pivotal role in Annabelle's journey into the landscape of her childhood, where she encounters both the history of Aboriginal dispossession and murder, partly carried out by her own ancestors, and the present and future of rebuilding lives and relationships. In *Landscape of Farewell*, Max Otto, a German

History academic, faces the possible involvement of his father in World War Two war crimes, his own grief from the recent death of his wife, and the bitterness of moral failure in the aftermath of his academic career. After spending time with feisty Indigenous intellectual Vita, Max is persuaded to visit the similarly grieving Aboriginal advocate Dougald Gnapun, who lives in the same central Queensland setting as is depicted in *Stone Country*. The distinctive sounds and prominent silences of Dougald's landscape provoke Max to embark on an emotional and physical journey where he rediscovers his own self worth through writing, composing, and actually fictively becoming the ancestor of his friend Dougald.

In both of these novels, sound and listening are central to the movement beyond the blockages of cultural and historical difference that Annabelle and Max face in their journeys through their personal landscapes of memory and the central Queensland exterior. Miller's use of sound features in key scenes and places, such as the first meeting of Annabelle and Bo, the repeated references to silence as part of the description of the landscape during Max's first arrival at Dougald's house, or during the story relayed by Dougald to Max. Similar types of sounds are also present in several of Miller's other novels, although not to the same structural extent and symbolic effect as in *Stone Country* or *Landscape of Farewell*. Miller's first central Queensland novel, *Watching the Climbers on the Mountain* (1988), is like an introductory whisper to his later use of sound; the repeated 'silence'—in the landscape and between characters—reworking in similar symbolic and spatial registers to in the later two central Queensland novels. In *The Sitters* (1995), a particularly fugue-like soundscape interweaves birdsong with a meditation on the past, one part of a larger examination of visual representation and memory. Sound also makes a short but powerful appearance in the epoch-shifting 'discovery' of the bush and the Australian interior by the artist at the centre of Miller's 2011 novel *Autumn Laing*, the fictional account of the relationship between artist Sidney Nolan and art patron Sunday Reed.

This essay seeks to highlight the use of sound in the pivotal nodes of *Stone Country* and *Landscape of Farewell*, confirming the complexity of these spaces, the vital role of sound in their representation, and the way that sound can enable the movement beyond the confines of the self in a postcolonial context. For Annabelle in *Stone Country*, listening to the sounds of the landscape enables her to grapple with the difficulties of her own cultural inheritance and to feel the historical resonances she shares with Bo. In *Landscape of Farewell* Max becomes involved in a different kind of sonic relation with Dougald, one that is based on silence, but which nevertheless leads to the two men forming a close and healing friendship. Central to the formation of Annabelle and Max's relationships is the space of the sonorous landscape, a space that is constructed by sound and opened up, both by the characters and the reader, through listening. Miller's listening protagonists, Annabelle and Max, are able to exist in the landscape in a different way; instead of inhabiting a relation of self/other, they, to use Nancy's idiom, 'stretch out' and are touched by the sonic landscape. For Miller's characters the experience of listening to the sounds that animate the soundscapes of these novels is both the experience of a complex interpersonal connection, and the fundamental need to recover, uncover and reclaim lost or dispossessed home spaces.

Stone Country is both a journey of return and a reclamation of authenticity. The following soundscape is from early in the novel, when Annabelle makes her initial trip into the central Queensland bush and re-engages with Bo for the first time since her childhood:

Bo turned by the open door of the truck. From the sandalwood ridge behind him a friarbird repeated its ardent cry again and again, warning off the intruders, Ar-coo! Ar-coo! Ar-coo!

Bo turned and walked down the hill towards the Pajero. The volume of the music increased, the voice of 2PAC pursuing him along the slope, *I shall not fear no man but God, though I walk through the valley of death...* The girl's laughter, rich, youthful, sensuous. A liberation in some deep amusement. The dry groundcover crackling beneath Bo's boots, releasing the musty odours of dead time. (55)

Within the context of the novel this soundscape reveals a significant amount of information about each of the characters and the path of the narrative. If one were to *hear* the sounds one would conclude that Annabelle, the hearing perspective through which we hear the soundscape, is an outsider who at this stage of the narrative has little connection with the landscape or the other characters. Listening closer to these sounds reveals that this is not the case; in the terms of Nancy's theorisation of *listening*, Annabelle is actually inhabiting the sonorous space of the referral.

There are four sound elements in this soundscape: 1. The sound of the friarbirds' song, 'its ardent cry again and again, warning off the intruders, Ar-coo! Ar-coo! Ar-coo!'; 2. The sound of 'the voice of 2PAC', with lyrical content that is notably included and emphasised by its italicisation; 3. The sound of the 'girl's laughter, rich, youthful, sensuous'; and 4. The sound of the 'dry groundcover crackling under Bo's boots, releasing the musty odours of dead time.' The friarbird's song is, in its enthusiastic repetition, a warning or alarm that, through its resonance both within the space both of landscape and in the ears of Annabelle, creates a sonic space. The sense of its cry 'Ar-coo', emanating from the natural part of the soundscape, touches on and amplifies Annabelle's feeling that she is an outsider. With the sound of the voice of 2PAC we have an element that would seem, in comparison with the friarbird, to be out of place. While Nancy's theorisation of listening is more interested in listening to the material sense of the sounds, rather than hearing the lyrics, it is impossible not to take them into account: it is hard not to think that when 2PAC sings about the *valley of death* he is expressing Arner's negative state of mind. Through this sonic medium Arner projects his own silence and inaction into the landscape. The music gives his attitude an aggressive sonic character; the form that this takes is characteristically 'the steady beat of the bass' which is combined with the 'fierce' tone of 2PAC's voice that is elsewhere described as 'crying forth his bitter desire for revenge' (123).

In direct opposition to Arner's sonic presence is the laughter of his sister Trace, described as being 'rich, youthful, [and] sensuous.' From a compositional point of view, it is as if Miller is filling out a two-part human counterpoint in this soundscape: Arner is the bass and Trace is the soprano. While the first two sounds, the friarbird and 2PAC, make Annabelle feel unwelcome and out of place, the sound of Trace's laughter identifies her as someone who is open to Annabelle for friendship and connection. The final sound element, the crackling of the groundcover under Bo's boots, is a double-sense combination in that its sonic presence calls forth an imagined olfactory sensation, 'the musty odours of dead time.' This sound is both a human and non-human presence, and so binds the two together as integral to the soundscape. Even though Annabelle has only just met Bo, his movement through the landscape creates a sonic presence that gives her an indication,

through the imagined smell of time, both of his knowledge of the land and his connection to its past. As the narrative progresses Bo, the most sonically present character to the landscape, becomes intimately connected to Annabelle, both in terms of their romantic relationship and the slightly utopian ending of the novel on Verbeena Station. It is no surprise that sound and listening are instrumental to the conclusion of the novel:

When she woke beside him later, the bush beyond their camp was still and silent. She lay awake listening. She realised she could not hear the thump of Arner's music. Bo stirred beside her. 'Arner's not playing his music,' she said. They lay in the dark, listening.

'That boy's gotta sleep sometime,' he said.

'It's a sign to you.'

He was silent a moment, then, 'I guess you're right.' (364)

The four sounds in the soundscape develop and link the detail of both the characters and the landscape, and the different types of sound create layers of space that exist simultaneously. The 'sense' of Arner's music is a particularly arresting presence in this soundscape, demarcating a territory that is built by the combination of the regular drum/bass pulsations that characteristic hip-hop music, and the 'fierce' tone of 2PAC's voice. Miller's inclusion of Arner's music throughout the novel highlights the complexity of the spaces he is depicting. Arner is an Indigenous Australian, learning about his culture and country from his uncle Bo, and the presence of his music, with its strong iteration of African-American ghetto life and gang masculinity, endows Miller's central Queensland landscape with a spatially distant element. Although this sound element is more global than local in comparison to the birdsong or the crackling of groundcover, it powerfully connects the disparate space that spans the US and Australia, resonating with the historical and emotional character of this shared landscape. While Arner's music may be his attempt to erect a sonic barrier between himself and the world, by hearing the lyrics and listening to the aggressive attitude of the music, it becomes clear that 2PAC's music amplifies the presence of Aboriginal colonial histories of dispossession within this landscape. Given the importance of music to Arner, his decision to stop listening to it at the end of the novel is material evidence that he is beginning to reconcile his differences with Annabelle and Bo.

While Annabelle may feel that she is an outsider, the Nancian 'sense of sound' positions her as part of the back-and-forth referral motion of the sounds that populate this soundscape. In one sense she may be a newcomer and an outside 'observer', but the sonic form of the soundscape will not let her distance herself. Instead Annabelle has a presence within the soundscape; the sounds resonate around and within her, creating her as subject in a relation of being-with the landscape. Sound places her as both returned to herself and outside herself, breaking down the division between self and other.

In comparison to Miller's use of a complex harmony of sounds in *Stone Country*, *Landscape of Farewell* is a novel of distant rumbling, but more predominantly, of silence. The assumed position of *Landscape of Farwell* as following *Stone Country* is based on a number of reasons, the most important being the development of the mining theme first encountered with the surveying of lands in *Stone Country*. Miller's meditation on old age in *Landscape of Farwell* compared to the beginning of a relationship at the centre of *Stone Country* is also a clear gesture

towards this alignment. Even more apposite to this essay is the transformation of sound between the two novels. Where the mining issue is explored but not directly articulated in the start of *Stone Country*, the mine is sonically manifest in *Landscape of Farewell* as an ever-present rumbling: Max repeatedly mentions how ‘the air trembled with the distant thunder of the mine’ (121). This menacing machine ambience is distinctively minimal, unlike the intricate soundscapes featured in *Stone Country*, but it nevertheless ties the landscape to wider issues like environmentalism and the economic development emerging from the contestation of land rights that form the historical and cultural background to Miller’s central Queensland novels.

Silence is the resonating heartbeat that animates the friendship of Max Otto and Dougald Gnapun in *Landscape of Farewell*. Annabelle is struck by Dougald’s characteristic silence when she meets him briefly in *Stone Country*, listening to ‘[t]he enormous weight of his silence in its presence, indeed the gravitas of his silence’ (94). Similarly, Max notes how Dougald ‘inhabited a deep and very private silence of his own- as some poet has expressed it, *listening to his own depth*’ (*Landscape of Farewell* 67). Instead of being simply a lack of sound, silence is a powerful and resonant sense, a materiality whose presence binds the immediate situations of the characters with a larger historical context that addresses two geographically separate historical events. The landscape in which Miller sets Max and Dougald’s friendship is one that jointly resonates for both the men. Max listens: ‘The enormous silence of the landscape was suddenly close and oppressive, the unrelieved solitude of the forlorn township in the ocean of scrub, the abandoned machines rusting into the ground...’ (117). The ‘enormous silence of the landscape’ resonates, for Max, with the isolation and dysfunction associated with old age. But at the same time this silence of the central Queensland landscape resonates with the silence that exists at the core of his relationship with his father, a German World War Two veteran.

Dougald’s silence touches upon the broader Australian Aboriginal experience of colonisation, what Jane Belfrage, in her discussion of Australian acoustic space, calls the ‘Great Australian Silence’ (1). Belfrage, developing a phrase first coined by anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner in his Boyer lectures *After the Dreaming* (1968), takes up the same ideas about visualism that were voiced by Jay and Ihde in my introduction, refocusing them onto Australian Aboriginal colonial history:

Foreign, ‘deaf’, visually-oriented knowledge practices of hand-written and printed texts usurped sovereignty in the knowledge soundscapes of the land. As White Men mapped, renamed and stole the territories, they inscribed themselves and their knowledge systems upon the land and into text. The cultural subjectivity of the White Man was inscribed into the very forms of the landscapes as they were altered and renamed. (2)

Dougald’s silence emerges from this same colonial history of oppression. Max and Dougald share a number of similar life experiences that have distinctly silent sonic elements. While Max’s relationship with his father is overshadowed by the human degradations surrounding World War Two, Dougald explains to Max how his relationship with his father is overshadowed by the silence and shame of domestic violence: ‘[h]e beat me in silence’ (159).

The connection between Dougald and Max's silence, and the mutual resonance that emerges between the two silences surrounding the different histories of massacre, exemplifies Miller's subtle use of sound. Miller deftly sets up a dual-axis situation in which the silence of the landscape resounds both between the two elderly men in their emotional and physical present, and between Max and Dougald's geographically distant individual pasts. For Max, 'the wanderer', the silence of Dougald's landscape reharmonises the discordant silence that existed in his and his father's past. Reflecting on his childhood wartime experiences, Max remembers how '[a] capacity for deep silence was revealed within each of us, like a cavern we had not known existed before' (227). To complete his sonic resolution of the past, Max writes a fictional history of the massacre story of Dougald's ancestor Gnapun, a creative task that simultaneously addresses the silences in Dougald's history. In this way silence and listening collapse the spatial boundaries of nation and the temporal boundaries of history. The sense of sound touches Max when Dougald tells him the story of his ancestor Gnapun: 'As I lay there in my bed in the silence after he had gone, listening to the moaning of the wind in the scrubs and the creaking of the embers of my fire, his voice was still sounding in my ears' (165-6). Listening to the soundscape of his small room, Max is aware of how the sound of Dougald's voice resonates within him, touching and inspiring him to compose the story. For Bill Ashcroft, Max Otto's writing of Gnapun's story is '...the ultimate agency of utopian reconciliation...' (16).

'Massacre' is the story that Max writes after hearing Dougald's oral history of the Aboriginal massacre of European settlers. In this story Max comes to hear and listen to the resonance of the bush through the 'ears of another', Gnapun. The sonic world of this history, in contrast to the present time of the novel, is filled with much more dramatic sound, including the 'shrieking silence of the cicada chorus' and 'the listening scrub' (180-86). The most striking example of Max's sonic embodiment of Gnapun occurs when he writes '...I shall give the cry of the Wylah, the funeral black cockatoo, for you all know that his is the bird of my spirit and you will recognize my command in its cry above the clamour of these people' (194). The sacred sound of the totemic bird is a call to arms that, while only existing in the past tense of the story, breaks the silence of Max and Dougald's present. The massacre story opens up a powerful sonic resonance between Max and Dougald that empowers Max, through his imagining of Gnapun, to come to terms with his own experience of massacre. Once again, this realization is rendered by Miller through sound: '...it rang like a bell in my head: *So you have identified yourself at last with the perpetrator of a massacre*' (215). Max realises that, 'with his gift of the story of his great-grandfather, Dougald had unknowingly instructed me in my own way forward' (227).

The sonic landscape of *Landscape of Farewell* is one dominated by silence, but this silence has just as much powerful resonant materiality and sense as the soundscape in *Stone Country*. The mutually resonating silence at the core of Max and Dougald's friendship, a silence that resounds both in the exterior environment and internal emotional landscape, brings into alignment both men's hidden histories of massacre. Similarly, sound and listening enable Annabelle and Bo's to reconcile their interconnected histories and move forward together. Alex Miller's two novels both resonate with sounds and silences that create landscapes where manifold spatialities and temporalities are uncovered, coexist, and connect. Taking up the multiple strands of visualist critique and sound theory, this essay has 'listened' to the sounds and silences in pivotal scenes of *Stone Country* and *Landscape of Farewell* so as to enable another way of encountering the central Queensland spaces depicted in Miller's two novels. The relation of 'being-with' opened by Jean-

Luc Nancy's theorisation of listening and sound reverberates within the complex relations between 'self' and 'other', between Indigenous and settler, that is staged in Miller's two novels. In this essay I have focused on sound as a conceptual and sensual presence within the larger critique of land politics performed by *Stone Country* and *Landscape of Farewell*. This methodological contact with the novels generates and enables a valuable critical perspective on postcolonial spatial analysis, an approach that may prove useful in other sound and space sensitive encounters with Australian and other postcolonial literature.

Works Cited

Alex Miller's *Landscape of Farewell*. *The Book Show*. Radio National. Broadcast 19th November, 2007.

Arnold, David. *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science, 1800-1856*. Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2006.

Ashcroft, Bill. 'Australian Transnation' *Southerly* 71.1 (2011): 18-51.

Belfrage, Jane. 'The Great Australian Silence: Inside Acoustic Space.' *The Australian Sound Design Project*. Essay, 28 June, 2001. 28 April, 2011.
<http://www.sounddesign.unimelb.edu.au/site/papers/AusSilence.html>

Carter, Paul. *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*. London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987.

---. *The Sound In Between: Voice, Space, Performance*. Kensington: University of New South Wales Press, 1992.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Columpar, Corinn. 'The Gaze as Theoretical Touchstone.' *Women's Studies Review*. 30 (2002): 25-44.

Connor, Steven. 'The Modern Auditory I' in Roy Porter, ed. *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 203-223.

Damousi, Joy and Desley Deacon. *Talking and Listening: The Age of Modernity*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2007.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. Sheridan. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.

Genoni, Paul. 'The Photographic Eye: the camera in recent Australian fiction'. *Antipodes* 16.2 (2002): 137-42.

Ihde, Don. *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

James, Ian. *The Fragmentary Demand: An introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in 20thC French thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

McMahon, Elizabeth. 'Continental Heartlands and Alex Miller's Geospatial Imaginary' in Robert Dixon, ed. *The Novels of Alex Miller: An Introduction*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2012. 125-138.

Mulvey, Laura. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' *Screen*. 16.3 (1999): 44-53.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*. Trans. Charlotte Mendel. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.

Miller, Alex. *Autumn Laing*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2011.

---. *Journey to the Stone Country*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2002.

---. *Landscape of Farewell*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2007.

---. *The Sitters*. Ringwood: Viking, 1995.

---. *Watching the Climbers on the Mountain*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 1988.

Ryan, Simon. *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*. Cambridge; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Smith, Mark. M. *Listening to Nineteenth Century America*. London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Stanner, W. E. H. *After the Dreaming*. Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Toop, David. *Sinister Resonance: the Mediumship of the Listener*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

Truax, Barry. D, ed. *Handbook For Acoustic Ecology*. Vancouver: A.R.C, 1978.

Voegelin, Salome. *Listening to noise and silence: towards a philosophy of sound art*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

White, Shane and Graham White. *The Sounds of Slavery*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005.