'Country', 'land', 'nation': Key Anglo English words for talking and thinking about people in places

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Abstract
The importance of the words 'country', 'land' and 'nation', and their derivatives, in Anglophone public and political discourses is obvious. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that without the support of words like these, discourses of nationalism, patriotism, immigration, international affairs, land rights, and post/anti-colonialism would be literally impossible.

   This is a corpus-assisted, lexical-semantic study of the English words 'country', 'land' and 'nation', using the NSM technique of paraphrase in terms of simple, cross-translatable words (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2014). It builds on Anna Wierzbicka's (1997) seminal study of "homeland" and related concepts in European languages, as well as more recent NSM works (e.g. Bromhead 2011, 2018; Levisen & Waters 2017) that have explored ways in which discursively powerful words encapsulate historically and culturally contingent assumptions about relationships between people and places. The primary focus is on conceptual analysis, lexical polysemy, phraseology and discursive formation in mainstream Anglo English, but the study also touches on one specifically Australian phenomenon, which is the use of 'country' in a distinctive sense which originated in Aboriginal English, e.g. in expressions like 'my grandfather's country' and 'looking after country'. This highlights how Anglo English words can be semantically "re-purposed" in postcolonial and anti-colonial discourses.

1. Orientation and methodology

The importance of the words *country*, *land* and *nation*, and their derivatives, in Anglophone public and political discourses is obvious. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that, without the support of words like these, discourses of nationalism, patriotism, immigration, international affairs, land rights, anti-colonialism and postcolonialism would be literally impossible. Dictionary definitions of *country*, *land*, and *nation* are circular and confusing, however, and so are technical explanations of the meanings in international relations, e.g. 'a country is a nation with its own government, occupying a particular territory'.

The present study is a lexical-semantic analysis of these three Anglo English key words using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach (Wierzbicka 1997; Peeters 2006; Goddard 2011, 2018; Goddard & Wierzbicka 2014; Levisen & Waters 2017; Ye 2017).[1] In this approach, word-meanings are described as mini-texts (semantic explications) constructed from a controlled defining language which is designed to be non-circular, non-Anglocentric, and as intuitively clear and accessible as possible. A semantic explication is intended to be a real paraphrase of what a word means to a speaker or to a hearer. The NSM method has particular value for postcolonial lexicography as a way to circumvent the "conceptual colonialism" that occurs when non-European words and concepts are described using a vocabulary which reflects the conceptual categories and ways of thinking of the colonisers (Levisen 2016, 2018). The NSM method can also be used to semantically deconstruct European words and concepts, as in the present study, and thus help to denaturalise them.

The NSM approach rests on a common ground of 65 ultimately simple meanings (semantic primes), which appear to be shared across all or most languages. They are listed in Appendix 1. Language-specific variant forms (allolexes) and portmanteau expressions are also allowed, e.g. English *else* for 'other', *often* for 'at many times'. If necessary, explications can also draw on other relatively simple words, providing that these can be explicated into semantic primes (Goddard 2016). Known in NSM parlance as semantic molecules, they are marked in explications by the notation [m]. In the present study, the most important molecules are: 'be born', 'be called', '(living) creatures', '(the) earth', 'ground', 'grow (in a place)', and 'we'. See Appendix 2 for explications of these items.

Needless to say, the language-neutral nature of the NSM metalanguage does not guarantee the accuracy of any particular explication. The primary criteria for a good explication of a given word are several-fold: (a) that the explication is phrased entirely in words and grammar of the NSM metalanguage; (b) that it is coherent, i.e. makes sense as a whole; (c) that it is compatible with the range of use of the word being explicated and with its relations with other words, entailments, frequent collocations, and so on, and (d) that it satisfies native speaker intuitions about interpretation in context. Although these criteria allow one to evaluate proposed analyses, there are no fixed discovery procedures that lead directly from usage data to an optimal analysis. Essentially the NSM analyst faces the same challenge as a lexicographer, i.e. formulating a paraphrase that matches the range of use of a word, but with the added constraint of doing so using a small controlled vocabulary of cross-translatable words. The present study is corpus-assisted, mainly using data from WordBanks Online, but it also draws freely on examples from other sources. I will often start off discussion of a word with a brief look at the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) entry about it, but this is purely for expository purposes.

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[1] The bibliography of NSM publications is extensive: dozens of books and hundreds of refereed journal articles and book chapters. For a searchable database of publications, see (nsm-approach.net). For a general introduction to the approach and supporting online resources, see the NSM Homepage (short URL: bit.ly/1XUoRRV).

For those unfamiliar with NSM explications, a few preparatory comments may be useful. Explications are much longer than dictionary definitions and the use of simple words can itself be disconcerting at first. Moreover, despite the simple phrasing of individual components, explications often display unexpected complexity when considered as a whole. A further complication is that each of the words in question (*country, land, nation*) is polysemous, i.e. has several, distinct but inter-related meanings, and each distinct meaning requires a separate explication; indeed, the necessity for a separate explication is the test for establishing polysemy in the first place, cf. Goddard (2000). In all, seven distinct explications are proposed in this study. Although supporting evidence for each explication must be partial for reasons of space, hopefully the analysis will be plausible overall, taken as a set of inter-related explications.

2. 'Country' in Standard Anglo English

The word *country* has several inter-related meanings. We exclude from consideration the meaning that occurs in the expression *in the country* (with near-synonym *countryside),* e.g. *live in the country, a day in the country*. This meaning stands in opposition to words like *town* and *city*. It appears in many compound expressions, e.g. *country road, country town, country house, country bumpkin, country school, country boy/girl*.

We will concentrate, in this section, on two meanings of *country* which are both related, roughly speaking, to *nation*. Later, in section 5, we will return to *country* to look at its specifically Australian English (and Aboriginal English) meanings.

2.1. country-1

Country-1 corresponds to the sense identified in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as A.1. "the land of a person's birth, citizenship, residence, etc.; one's homeland". The OED notes that this sense often appears with a possessive, e.g. *his country, their country*, but can also appear without any determiner, especially in expressions like *love of country, loyalty to country, for King and country*. In the WordBanks corpus, country-1 is most common in expressions with the determiners *this* and *the*, i.e., *(in) the country* and *(in) this country*. Some typical examples follow.

(1)   *There is no better opening batsman in the country than Atherton.*

(2)   *Eleven million people have mortgages in this country, that's one in three of the working population.*

(3)   *It's not an exaggeration to say that Trump has the most unhappy staff ever, with some feeling a higher duty to warn the public about what they see as a danger to the country.* (New York Review of Books, June 22 2017: 60)

The country-1 meaning is explicated in [A] below. Roughly speaking, one can say that it is an "inward-looking" meaning. Explanatory comments follow the explication.

[A]   *country-1*

a. a big place of one kind
    people can know what this place is called [m]

b. there are many places of many kinds in a place of this kind
    many people live in a place of this kind, many people are born [m] in a place of this kind

c. these people can think like this:
        "we [m] are people of one kind
         we [m] do many things not like people in many other places"

d. there are many places of this kind on earth [m]

The explication is in four sections. The components in section (a) say that a country-1 is 'a place of one kind' with a name of its own.[2] The first line of section (b) implies that a 'country-1' is extensive and varied. The wording 'there are many places of many kinds in a place of this kind' allows both for natural geographical features, such as mountains, rivers, forests, plains, etc., and for features created by people, such as villages, towns, fields, etc. The second line of section (b) states that a 'country-1' is populated ('many people live in a place of this kind'), and implies that it has "natives", i.e. 'many people are born [m] in a place of this kind' (cf. the etymology of *native*, from Lat *nat-* 'born').[3]

In section (c) these 'many people' are depicted as having, or rather, as potentially having, a certain "we-perspective", namely, they can potentially see themselves as 'people of one kind' and think: 'we do many things not like people in many other places'. The use of 'we' as a semantic molecule is a recent innovation in NSM theory (Goddard & Wierzbicka fc.). It cannot be discussed here but it should be said that 'we' is an important element in the semantics of many other collective concepts, e.g. 'family', 'team', aside from the place-based concepts analysed in this study. The components in section (c) imply a sense of common identity as "a people" ('we are people of one kind'), who see themselves as having various customs and practices unlike those of people in many other places.[4]

The final (d) component ('there are many places of this kind on earth [m]') gives a certain limited geographical perspective, but it falls short of the notion (implicit in the country-2 meaning, next section) that the earth is divided into mutually exclusive countries. It is possible to regard England, Scotland, and Wales, for example, as each being a country-1, even though they are all parts of the United Kingdom.

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[2] The reference to 'kind' is linked with the grammatical property of countability (cf. Goddard & Wierzbicka 2014: Ch 9), but we cannot pursue this matter here. Note the semantic molecule 'is called [m]' in line two. This is used in preference to 'name' because cross-linguistic research indicates that the former expression is more cross-translatable.

[3] This is not to say that this single component would be enough to explicate the word *native*s in full.

[4] Presumably the country-1 concept is closely related, semantically, to expressions such as: *countryman, foreigner, foreign country, treason,* and *traitor*.

2.2 country-2

Country-2 corresponds to the sense identified in the OED as A.5: "the territory of a nation; ...". This meaning reflects a global perspective, linked with the idea that the entire world can be divided into countries. The 'country-2' meaning is most at home in plural contexts, and, indeed, it is best explicated in the plural. This meaning is the closest to the International Relations understanding of *country*. As Clifford Geertz (2000: 231) once remarked, thinking of *country* in this sense, "*Country*, *nation*, *state*, *society* and *people* [are] the elementary building blocks of global world order".

Roughly speaking, one can say that country-2 reflects an external viewpoint. There is no "we-perspective" and even when used in the singular, it sees a 'country-2' as one among others. Presumably the country-2 concept took hold after World War I with the League of Nations, strengthening after World War II and the formation of the United Nations.

Typical phrasal examples include those in (4a) and (4b), while a couple of full sentence examples are given in (5) and (6). In the WordBanks corpus, 'country-2' occurs predominately in the plural and often in close proximity to a country name. Other words and expressions often associated with country-2 are: *enter the country, borders, passport, and visa.*

(4a)   *European countries, African countries, Islamic counties, poor countries, developed countries, ...*

(4b)   *every country ..., all countries ..., many/most countries, ...*

(5)   *Overall, we scored better than any EU country, bar Finland.*

(6)   *These recommendations can be followed both by individual countries and by multilateral agencies.*

Country-2 is explicated in [B] below. Explanatory comments follow the explication.

[B]   *countries-2*

a. many places of one kind
    people can know what these places are called [m]
    all these places are parts of the earth [m]
    people can know where on earth [m] these places are

b. people can think about the earth [m] like this:
        "all places on earth [m] where people can live are parts of one place of this kind"

c. people can think about a place of this kind like this:
        many many people live in this place
        in a place of this kind it is like this:
            people in this place cannot do some things, at the same time they can't not do some other things
        it can be like this because someone above other people in this place says so, it can be like this
            because some people above other people in this place say so

d. at the same time people can think about a place of this kind like this:
        "people in this place are people of one kind"

Section (a) of the explication starts with 'many places of one kind'. This implies that the singular is, in a sense, derived from the plural, roughly: 'one of many places of one

kind'. It continues with several "global perspective" components: 'all these places are parts of the earth [m]', along with the idea that 'people can know where on earth [m] these places are', suggesting the existence of maps and globes of the world. The component in (b) presents the assumption that the earth can be exhaustively divided into countries (at least, all places on earth where people can live, thus excluding the oceans and Antarctica), and that every habitable place belongs to 'one place of this kind'. [5] This implies that there can be no countries within countries. Hence, if Taiwan is part of China, it cannot be a country-2. Likewise, if England, Scotland and Wales are parts of the United Kingdom, they cannot be countries-2.

Section (c) envisages a large population ('many many people') and, significantly, that people in a country are subject to restrictions and obligations ('they cannot do some things, they can't not do some other things')[6], because someone (or: some people) 'above other people in this place' say so. This component is intended to the capture the idea of some form of overarching authority with a "law-like" character. Section (d) allows for the possibility of thinking about the inhabitants of a country-2 as 'people of one kind'.[7]

2.3. Extended uses of 'country'

The WordBanks corpus includes several extended uses of *country*. Examples like (7) can be roughly glossed as "people in the country" (presumably 'country-1'). Examples like (8) are superficially similar but semantically they are different in that they treat 'country' itself as an actor and are less open to the gloss "people in the country".

    (7)   *the country rejoiced…, the country watched in horror …, the country was in mourning*

    (8)   *the country had the chance to move forward …, the country celebrated its Bicentennial…*

I assume that uses like those illustrated above are licensed by some general principles of semantic extension which will not be discussed here. Instead, we turn to the English word *land*.

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[5] This component implies the existence of "geographical boundaries" without actually describing them as such. It is of course possible to explicate words like *borders*, and the like, using NSM; however, when I experimented with including such components, the level of detail required did not sit well in the explication.
[6] Though the expression 'can't not' sounds slightly unusual in English, it is fully grammatical and intelligible; often the combination 'can't not (do)' can be expressed more naturally in English as *have to* (or in German as *müssen*). In many other languages, 'can't not' is an ordinary everyday expression.
[7] Roberts (2017) proposes that 'country' is a semantic molecule inside country-based demonyms, i.e. terms for inhabitants of a place, such as *Japanese* and *Americans*. Note that component (d) creates a degree of overlap with a similar component in the explication of country-1 but there is still a significant difference, because in country-1, the corresponding component was presented as a potential way of thinking of the inhabitants themselves: 'these people can think like this: "we [m] are people of one kind'.

3. 'Land' in Standard Anglo English

The English word *land* is very polysemous, even more so than *country*. We will exclude from consideration the meaning *land* as opposed to *sea* (cf. *on land, dry land,* and the verb *to land*). Likewise, we will ignore the meanings found in expressions such as *arid land, fertile land,* and *farm land,* and in expressions such as *land for sale, a piece/plot of land.* These, it may be noted, are all non-count nouns. Finally, we will ignore the fixed phrase *the land*, found in "agricultural" expressions such as *living off the land* and *working the land.*[8]

In many languages, including Spanish, Polish, Ewe (Ghana), Farsi (Iran), and Pitjantjatjatjara/Yankunytjatjara (Australia), one or more senses of English *land* are expressed by the same word as 'ground'. Overlapping with this recurrent pattern of polysemy, the same word can often express the meaning 'the earth'.

3.1. land-1

Land-1 is an "old meaning" in English. Many uses have a Biblical resonance, which presumably goes back to the King James Bible, with its tremendous influence over the English language. The OED describes this sense of *land* as 2. "ground, soil, expanse of country." This definition is unsatisfactory in several respects, not least that the glosses offered ('ground, soil', on the one hand, and 'expanse of country', on the other) are too different from one another to plausibly represent a single meaning. Nevertheless, as noted above, formal overlaps between 'land', 'ground' and 'the earth' are common across languages, so it would seem highly likely that the concepts are intertwined in some way, perhaps differently in different languages.

It is noticeable that most examples of this meaning are in the singular. Commonly, *land* in this sense is accompanied by a modifier (often a prepositional phrase) which indicates some distinctive geographical or cultural feature: see examples in (9) and (10). Despite its slightly archaic feel, land-1 has a certain "emotional charge" which perhaps helps to account for its use in folk songs, as in (11), and political speeches.

(9a)   *the promised land*
(9b)   *the land of Canaan (the land of the Canaanites)*

(10a)   *a land flowing with milk and honey*
(10b)   *a land of sweeping plains, ...*
          (from Dorothea Mackeller's poem 'My Country' about Australia)
(10c)   *the Land of the Midnight Sun*
(10d)   *the land of the Bible, the land of Pagodas, ...*

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[8] For an interesting corpus-pragmatic study of the word *land* in a specific historical-discourse context, see Avila-Ledesma (2019).

(11)   *This land is your land, this land is my land*
         From California, to the New York Island
         From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters
         This land was made for you and me
         (famous American folk song 'Your land' by Woody Guthrie)

The explication in [C] for English land-1 is given in three sections. The first section has two notable components: 'it is one part of the earth [m]', which gives a "geographical" feel, and 'it is not like other parts of the earth [m]', which adds an element of distinctiveness. Section (b) says that a 'land-1' incorporates 'places of many kinds', suggesting landforms such as mountains, plains, rivers, coastlines, and such (cf. Bromhead 2018), and that it can sustain plants and animals of many kinds: 'things of many kinds grow [m] there, living creatures [m] of many kinds live there'. Impressionistically, this section suggests something like a panoramic overview, and a certain knowledge of and interest in the physical geography and the tapestry of life of the land in question.

In any case, the components in section (c) go on to say that this enables the place to sustain a substantial population ('because of this, many people can live in this place') and the final line adds that 'people can think about them like this: "these people are people of one kind". The wording suggests that such a possibility is open, not necessarily that such a construal is necessary, or even likely, in every case.

[C]   *land-1*

a. a big place (somewhere big)
    it is one part of the earth [m]
    it is not like other parts of the earth [m]

b. it is like this in this place:
        places of many kinds are parts of this place[9]
        things of many kinds grow [m] in the ground [m] there
        living creatures [m] of many kinds live there

c. because of this, many people can live in this place
    people can think about them like this: "these people are people of one kind"

The "geographical" flavour of the English word *land* is also evident in the existence of compound words such as *highland/s*, *lowland/s*, *tableland/s*, *woodland/s*, and *wetland/s*.[10] Many of these, it can be noted, can appear with a suffix *-s*, but such uses are

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[9] This phrasing is preferable to 'there are places of many kinds in this place', because the latter could be more easily understood as designating villages, towns, etc.

[10] The form *land* appears in the names for sub-national provinces, states and regions, not only in English but also in other Germanic languages with cognate forms. A couple of English examples are: Queensland (Australia); Newfoundland (Canada); Fiordland, Southland, Westland (New Zealand); England, Scotland (United Kingdom). It also is

not usually true plurals, in the sense of designating multiple instances of the same kind of place. Rather, the variant with *-s* is akin to a pluralia tantum *-s*, suggesting an internal multiplicity or diversity. The same observation can be made about the uses of the formally (but not semantically) plural form *lands*, in phrases like *(their/our) traditional lands* (see below). Space does not allow us to delve deeper at this point.

Needless to say, the word *land* plays a tremendous, perhaps preeminent, role in postcolonial and anticolonial discourses conducted in the English language: for example, in the struggle for *land rights*, in condemnations of the "dispossession" of indigenous people's *traditional land/s* (*ancestral land/s,* etc.). I will therefore spend a little time on this, though in truth the topic warrants a much deeper treatment. It seems to me that most uses of *land* in these contexts fall under the explication of land-1 given above, once we take into account an important additional detail, namely, the effect of "possessive" modification. After all, in discourses about land rights, dispossession, and disputed territories generally, people are not talking about land as such, but specifically about *someone's* land. Often there is an explicit modifier, either a possessive pronoun such as *our* or *their* (as in 12a), or the adjectival derivative of a proper noun designating a "people", as in (12b), or a word like *tribal*, *native* or *traditional*, as in (12c).The word *land* also occurs as a noun modifier in numerous fixed expressions, such as those (13), concerning ownership and use of "traditional land".

(12a)   *they lost their land(s); they have stolen our lands and everything on them*
(12b)   *Aboriginal land, Palestinian land, Indian land, ...*
(12c)   *We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders.*
       (Australian PM's Paul Keating's Redfern Speech 1988)

(13)   *land rights, land claim, Land Council; Maori Land Court*

The semantic texts below attempt to spell out the meaning of "possessive" modification in such contexts. Essentially, they convey the idea that there are people who regard themselves as "belonging" to the land, in the sense that they can think 'we are like a part of this place, other people are not like this', and feel something (by implication, something special) because of it.

a. our land ==>
    we can think about this land like this:
        "we [m] are like part of this place, other people are not like this"
    when we think like this, we feel something because of it

b. Aboriginal land ==>
    these people (Aboriginal people) can think about this land like this:
        "we [m] are like part of this place, other people are not like this"
    when they think like this, they feel something because of it

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found, but less commonly, in names for countries, e.g. English *Ireland, Switzerland, Thailand*.

Of course, indigenous people are not the only ones who speak in such terms or express such sentiments. The phrase *our land* features prominently in the national anthems of Australia, Canada and Finland, for example.

3.2. land-2

As noted in the previous section, land-1 is not a fully countable noun, despite the existence of its variant form *lands*. The meaning I will designate land-2, on the other hand, is fully countable: the plural form *lands* designates a plurality of individual lands, as in example (14). As evident from this example (and the collocation with *on earth*), the meaning is close to that of *country*, though *land* has a slightly archaic and poetic ring to it.

> (14)   *We are one but we are many, and from all the lands on earth we come …*
>   (opening chorus lines of the Seeker's song "Australia", regarded by some as Australia's folk national anthem)

> (15)   *(folk tales, myths, stories, etc.) from many lands.*

> (16)   *… to bring peace to this unhappy land …*

In English, land-2 in its literal sense can be regarded as holding secondary importance (compared with country-1, country-2 and land-1) and for reasons of space, it will not be explicated here.

As a parting comment, note that the expression *the land of …* is frequent in rhetorical and imaginative contexts, such as the examples in (17) and (18) below. In the WordBanks corpus, uses like these actually outnumber the "literal" (country-like) meaning.

> (17a)   *the land of the free, the land of opportunity* (often in reference to America)
> (17b)   *the land of the fair go* (in reference to Australia)
> (17c)   *the land of the falafel* (a gibe referring to Sydney's western suburbs)

> (18)   *The Land of Stories. The Land of Nod. The Land of Decoration, The Land of Sometimes, The Land of the Moon, In the Land of Women, In the Land of Men, The Land of Yes and the Land of No.* (book and film titles, etc.)

4. Two meanings of 'nation' in Standard Anglo English

The word *nation*, and related words such as *national*, *nationalist*, *nationalism*, not to mention *international*, are without doubt key words of contemporary politics and public life (Bennett, Grossberg, & Morris 2005). Unlike as with *country* and *land*, there is an extensive literature, impossible to review here, examining aspects of what one may broadly term the concept of 'nation' or 'nation-state' from various points of view—historical, sociohistorical, political, etc. These studies are mostly from outside linguistics and are predominantly concerned with "nationalism", rather than with the lexical semantics of any individual word, such as English *nation*.[11]

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[11] As shown in Wierzbicka (1997), "nationalist" movements and sentiments are often mobilized around more historically and culturally specific terms, e.g. "homeland/motherland" words, such as Polish *ojczyzna* or Russian *rodina*. The country

The OED overviews the meaning of English *nation* as: "a people or group of peoples; a political state." The two parts of this overview are so different as to indicate the existence of separate meanings, and indeed, the Dictionary goes on to distinguish a number of different senses. The main one, for our purposes, is discussed below.

4.1. nation-1

The OED definition for sense I.1.a is: "a large aggregate of communities and individuals united by factors such as common descent, language, culture, history or occupation of the same territory, so as to form a distinct people." Note that *nation*, in this sense, is said to be an "aggregate of communities and individuals" (i.e., it consists of people, rather than being a place) and that there is an emphasis on them being "unified".

Some typical phrases and contexts are given below. Note that, like country-1, nation-1 typically occurs in the singular, often as *the nation* or *the nation's*. The expressions *our nation* and *our nation's* are also common. Some examples follow.

(19a)   *(the Prime Minister/President) addressed the nation ...*

(19b)   *the crime (day, etc.) shocked the nation, the story (news, etc.) gripped the nation*

(19c)   *the nation's health, the health of the nation's children, threats to the nation's cybersecurity.*

(20a)   *a nation in mourning (crisis, turmoil, pain, debt, etc.), ... a nation at war, a nation divided*

(20b)   *a grateful nation ...* (an American patriotic cliché)

(20c)   *a nation of (shopkeepers, immigrants, animal lovers, slobs, ...)*

(21)   *Billionaire Elon Musk has unveiled a scheme to build a giant battery to solve the nation's energy crisis.*

(22)   *Our findings indicate that while legalisation would increase marijuana use, it would not turn the country into a nation of potheads.*

My analysis is given in explication [D] below. Needless to say, the explication represents an "imagined community" (Anderson [1983] 1991), rather than any objective reality. Notice that the explication incorporates 'country' (presumably 'country-1') as a semantic molecule; cf. Goddard (2016) on chains of semantic dependency.

[D]   *nation-1*

a. many many people

b. all these people can think about one country [m] like this:
      "people born [m] in this country [m] are people of one kind
      we [m] are all people of this kind
      we [m] all feel something good towards this country [m]"

c. when these people think this, sometimes they want to think like this at the same time:
      "we [m] are one, this is good"

name itself is also usually an emotional lightning rod. As well, in many languages the counterpart of the word *nation* lacks the positive, emotional "punch" of the English word; cf. section 6.

The first line of explication [D], i.e. section (a), constitutes 'nation-1' first and foremost in terms of people, rather than in terms of place: 'many many people'. This is the most striking difference between the *nation* concept and the concepts of *country* and *land*, which are construed first and foremost in terms of place. The components in (b) develop a theme of "one-ness", starting from the (imagined) point of the view of the people concerned. They can think about one country: 'people born in this country are people of one kind, we are all people of this kind'. This wording leaves room for immigrants to be considered part of a nation-1, while still framing the imagined 'people of one kind' in terms of a prototype of being born in the country (cf. etymological link with Latin *nat-* 'born', mentioned earlier).

There is no requirement for members of a *nation* to be living in a given country, hence allowing for exile, diaspora, etc. The final component adds (presumed) shared good feelings towards the country in question. Section (c) is intended to capture an ideal of "national unity". Notice that it is introduced in terms of how people 'sometimes want to think', rather as a descriptive statement of how people actually think.

There is abundant collocational and phraseological evidence to support the posited link between *nation* and "one-ness" (unity). These include high frequency collocations with the words *divide(d), unite(d), whole* and *entire*.

4.2. nation-2

The word *nation* of course has a second sense, which is close to the International Relations notion of a "nation state". This will not be explicated here, but I will make a few observations. Nation-2 very frequently occurs in the plural, often in association with the word *world* or with a word designating a continent or region. Nation-2 implies an independent government. In the singular, the word has positive connotations, even an idealist ring, contrasting notably with *state* in this respect. Very likely, the explication of nation-2 includes 'country-2' as a semantic molecule; cf. example (27) below.

(23)   *the United Nations, the nations of/around the world, ...*

(24)   *African/Asian/Western/Muslim nations; the nations of Central America, the nations of Europe, ...*

(25)   *Kurdistan—a nation in waiting, a nation in the making ...*

(26)   *Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.*
          (Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, 1863)

(27)   *South Sudan has become the world's newest nation, its neighbour to the north being the first to officially recognise the new country.*

Finally, some comment is needed about uses such as *the Kurdish nation, the Cherokee nation*, *Zulu nation*, etc. In my view, these uses represent an extended meaning analogous to the nation-1 meaning, but with something like land-1 in place of country-1. The same extended meaning is found in the expression *First Nations*, which originated in Canada but is now being used in other countries, including Australia.

This concludes the main part of the present study, which has focussed on meanings of *country*, *land* and *nation* in contemporary mainstream Anglo English. Some final discussion points and reflections will be given in section 6. Before that, however, I would like to spend some time examining a special use of the word *country* in Australian English, a use which has its origins in Aboriginal English and thus has a special interest for postcolonial linguistics.

5. 'Country' in its special Australian English and Aboriginal English sense(s)

As mentioned, the most important "place-related" word in postcolonial and anticolonial discourses conducted in English is, no doubt, *land*—and the Australian context is no exception in this regard. But along with the lexicon of *land rights*, *land claims*, *Aboriginal land*, and so on, in Australia there is also a distinctive use of the word *country*, to refer, roughly speaking, to an area of traditional Aboriginal land as understood by Aboriginal people themselves. I will designate this meaning 'country-3'.

The Macquarie Dictionary (which is based exclusively on usage within Australia) recognizes a specific sense which it identifies as belonging to Aboriginal English: "traditional land with its embedded cultural values relating to the Dreamtime: *the importance of country"*. The dictionary exemplifies with two fixed expressions: **live on/off country** *Aboriginal English* 'to live on/away from one's traditional land'. But though it clearly has its origins in Aboriginal English, I agree with Bruce Moore, director of Australian National Dictionary Centre and editor of *The Australian National Dictionary* (Moore 2016), who says: "the specific Aboriginal use of *country* is a very old sense, but … in the last 50 years, or 40 years, that sense has become much more widely known … and has therefore become part of Australian English, and not just Aboriginal English" (ABC Radio, Awaye, 21 January 2017).

To reinforce this point, it can be noted that the 'country-3' sense is widely heard in the names for two familiar institutions of public life in Australia, the 'Welcome to country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country'. Wikipedia describes the Welcome as a ceremony whereby "a traditional Aboriginal elder or custodian welcomes people to their land", noting that "since 2008, every new session of Federal Parliament opens with a Welcome to Country". The Acknowledgement is a short 'protocol' to be included in the opening of official events. It is mandatory for many institutions, including universities. Every sitting day of Federal Parliament begins with both the Lord's Prayer and Acknowledgement of Country (cf. Merlan 2014).

The phrases given in (28) below are commonly heard in Australia, in relation to Aboriginal people and their relationship to particular areas of traditional land

(28a)   *caring for country, looking after country*

(28b)   *living on country, being on country*

(28c)   *knowledge of country, respect for country*

(28d)   *this is my grandmother's (grandfather's) country.*

There is hardly space here to trace the trajectory of this usage from Aboriginal English to contemporary general Australian English, but a few key points are as follows. First, the usage originated quite early after European occupation of Australia (Arthur 1996: 115; Pleshet 2018). Early attestations include those in (29).

(29a)   *All black-fellow gone! All this, my country*
         (1845, Maroot, from Botany Bay area)

(29b)   *This is not his country, what he do here?* (1884)

(29c)   *All this, blackfella country.*

(29d)   *Where your country?*

As Arthur (1996: 115) put it, in a seminal study of Aboriginal English: "*country* [is] used all over Aboriginal Australia to name the place where a person or group belongs. The use of the word 'country' for this 'belonging place' reflects the cultural structure of Aboriginal Australia."

Jumping into the 20th century, the Aboriginal English usage was popularized in general Australian English by the title of Xavier Herbert's (1975) novel *Poor Fellow, My Country,* by the role of anthropologists (especially Stanner 1969, 2003) as public intellectuals, and then during the land rights and Native Title decades: the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s; cf. Toyne and Vachon's (1984) popular book *Growing Up The Country.* In the 1990s, the expression *caring for country* entered the public policy lexicon in connection with Aboriginal people's traditional and ongoing role in "land management", cf. Young, Ross, and Kesteven (1991); Altman and Kerins (2012); Pleshet (2018); see Weir, Stacey, and Youngetob (2011) for an extensive bibliography.

In my opinion, the book *Nourishing Terrains* (Rose 1996), a study for the Australian Heritage Commission, was likely to have been particularly influential, partly because of its use of song-poems and quoted words of Aboriginal people (given in English, often in translation) and partly on account of its poetic, even rhapsodic, prose. The following quotation comes from Chapter 1, titled 'Country'. It is helpful to give a sense of how the traditional Aboriginal concept was being interpreted into the mainstream.

"People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country ….
is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease." (Rose 1996: 7)

Coming into the 21st century, the word *country* was used extensively in the popular movement for Aboriginal Reconciliation. "Cultural tourism" has also been a powerful

conduit for injecting country-3 into mainstream Australian English, especially via interpretive materials and the tourist experience at the Uluru and Kakadu National Parks, visited by millions every year.

Explication [E] is an attempt to explicate the country-3 meaning in general Australian English (not in Aboriginal English). It is based largely on my intuitions as a native speaker, having regard to the phraseology reported above. As one might expect, the explication includes several novel components. Note the use of 'Aboriginal [m] people' as a key expression in sections (d) and (e). (The same molecule will be needed for other Australian English words which are understood to designate "Aboriginal" concepts or viewpoints, e.g. *Dreamtime, corroboree, whitefella*, and *sorry business.*)

[E]   *country-3* (e.g. *living on country*, *my grandmother's country*, *looking after country*)

a. one big place
    there are many places in this place

b. things of many kinds grow [m] in these places
    living creatures [m] of many kinds live in these places

c. people can live in this place because of this

d. Aboriginal [m] people think about this place like this:
       "a long long time ago many things happened in this place, things like this can't happen now
         some people can know much about this, some people can't know much about it"

e. some Aboriginal [m] people can think about this place like this:
       "I am like part of this place, this place is like part of me"

The components in section (a) present country-3 as holistic and extensive ('one big place'), but at the same time as containing 'many places'. Sections (b) and (c) present a view of 'country-3' in terms of diverse plants and animals, familiar from previous explications. These qualities of *country* (plants, animals) mean that 'people can live in this place because of this'. The components in section (d) allude to Aboriginal people's consciousness of Dreamtime events having happened in their country, and to the idea that knowledge of such events can be restricted to certain people. Needless to say, this is not a full depiction of the concept of 'Dreamtime' in Australian English, let alone the much deeper and more elaborate Aboriginal understanding of "Dreamtime" concepts in traditional cultures (cf. Stanner 1969; Green 2012; Goddard & Wierzbicka 2015). Section (e) includes components about Aboriginal people's strong "identification" with their country. They can think not only 'I am like part of this place' (i.e. I "belong" here, so to speak), but also 'this place is like part of me'.

As already stated, explication [E] is proposed as a model of the meaning country-3 in general Australian English. At the risk of complicating the narrative, I would like to mention a couple of further components that may belong to the Aboriginal English concept and that may also form part of some non-Aboriginal people's broader understanding of the country-3 concept, if they have more knowledge and personal contact with Aboriginal people.

There may be an additional component in section (b): 'in some of these places, there is much water [m]'. This would reflect the importance of "water sources" for life in arid Australia and their salience in Aboriginal thinking. There may be additional components, as below, in section (e). These components stop short of saying that Aboriginal people believe the place to be literally "a living entity" but are strong enough to explain many characteristic Aboriginal ways of speaking about 'country'.

> these people (i.e. certain Aboriginal people) can think about this place like they can think about someone
> they can feel something good towards this place like they can feel something good towards someone

Finally, in some people's understanding of the country-3 concept, there may be an additional section alluding to some kind of mystical or spiritual sense of connection:

> when these people (i.e. certain Aboriginal people) are in this place, sometimes they can think like this:
> "there is something here not like in other places, people cannot see it, it is like something living"

Clearly, many questions and issues remain, such as: What is the relation between the meaning country-3 in general Australian English and its meaning (or meanings) in Aboriginal English(es)? How might these meanings be changing in new discourses about Aboriginality, reconciliation, sustainable land management, etc.? To what extent are such meanings even stable, and to what extent are they variable across different speakers and sectors of the speech community?

My main purpose in this section has been to open up these questions for discussion, and to underline the point that words of English origin are not necessarily always and irrevocably "Anglo" in their meanings. They can be adopted by indigenous peoples themselves and thereby become infused with indigenous meanings and understandings.

6. Concluding remarks: Cross-linguistic and historical differences

The present study has been sketchy and incomplete in many respects. To produce full "lexicographic portraits" of each of the target words (*country, land, nation*), exploring their complete range of polysemic senses, their collocational and phraseological profiles, their derivatives and semantic networks, would be a very substantial undertaking, even within a single language such as English. There is also a brace of other inter-related "people-in-places" terms, such as *state*, *landscape*, and *territory*, not to mention *home*, *homeland*, and the like (Wierzbicka 1997).

To complicate the picture further, it is clear that the nearest corresponding words in other languages, even cognate words in other European languages, may differ significantly in their semantics. In some European languages, a single word, e.g. German *Land* (pl. *Länder)*, covers most uses of both English *country* and *land*, presumably with extensive polysemy. Conversely, other languages may have specialized and/or different terms in the same domain. For example, among the Polish set *kraj* 'country', *ziemia* 'land', *państwo* 'state' (cf. *pan* 'mister/sir'), and *naród* 'nation', it is possible that none exactly matches its English dictionary translation (Wierzbicka pc). It seems especially

clear that words approximating English *nation/s* vary quite markedly across languages, even in languages that possess an apparent near-equivalent. To illustrate, one Russian near-equivalent to *nations* would be *narody*. The Soviet Union used to call itself a "country of a hundred *narody*". On the other hand, what is called in Russian the "Organization of United Nations" does not use *narody*, but *nacij* (a loan from English): *Organizacia Soedinennyx Nacij*. Notably, Russian *nacija* (sg) lacks the positive, rallying character of the English 'nation'. Cf. also Stecconi (2010) on differences between English *nation* and Italian *nazione*.

Such differences multiply once languages and cultures from other parts of the world are brought into the picture, which of course is essential for the project of postcolonial linguistics. Despite the selective nature of the present study, I hope that it can help open the way for such studies by demonstrating a methodology for describing and discussing meanings, which is productive and precise and at the same time minimizes the danger of relying on Anglo/Eurocentric metalanguage.

Appendix 1: Table of semantic primes (English exponents)

I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY	substantives
KINDS, PARTS~HAVE PARTS	relational substantives
THIS, THE SAME, OTHER~ELSE	determiners
ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MUCH~MANY, LITTLE~FEW	quantifiers
GOOD, BAD	evaluators
BIG, SMALL	descriptors
KNOW, THINK, WANT, DON'T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR	mental predicates
SAY, WORDS, TRUE	speech
DO, HAPPEN, MOVE	actions, events, movement
BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING)	location, existence, specification
(IS) MINE	possession
LIVE~LIVING, DIE	life and death
TIME~WHEN, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT	time
PLACE~WHERE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE, TOUCH	place
NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF	logical concepts
VERY, MORE	intensifier, augmentor
LIKE~AS~WAY	similarity

Notes: • Exponents of primes can be polysemous, i.e., they can have other, additional meanings. • Exponents of primes may be words, bound morphemes, or phrasemes. • They can be formally complex. • They can have combinatorial variants or 'allolexes' (indicated with ~). • Each prime has well-specified syntactic (combinatorial) properties.

Appendix 2: Explications for the main semantic molecules used in this study

This place IS CALLED Bendigo
people can think about this place like this:
    "when I want other people to know that I am thinking about this place, not another place,
        I can say the word Bendigo"

CREATURE
something living
something like this can feel something
something like this can move

THE EARTH
a very big place
it is below the sky [m]
all places where people live are parts of this place

GROUND
something
it (= this something) is in all places where people can live
it is below people's bodies
in many places at many times parts of people's bodies are touching this something

Something is GROWING in this place
there is something of one kind in this place
parts of this something are inside the ground [m] in this place
things of this kind are like this:
    at some time they are very small
    some time after this, they are not very small anymore
because it is like this, people can think about something of this kind like this:
    "it is like something living"

'WE'
all these [someones], I am one of them
when I say this, I'm thinking about them all in the same way

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