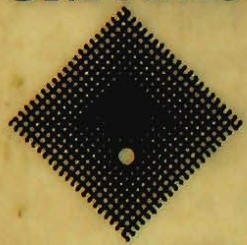


VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY



OF
TECHNOLOGY

McLAREN-BOXBI-DOC 33

THE FACULTY OF ARTS
VALEDICTORY LECTURE

for

PROFESSOR JOHN McLAREN

entitled...

'FEAR AND LOATHING IN THE
INDONESIA SEAS:

NOT
FOR
LOAN

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



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*The Challenge of Nationalism in
Australia and Southeast Asia.'*

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Dedication

This occasion is dedicated to **John David McLaren** BA Hons BEd PhD Melb MA Monash (1932-), who served Victoria University and its predecessor institution Footscray Institute of Technology with great distinction and foresight, from the time of his initial appointment, as the Head, Department of Humanities, in 1976, until his final retirement in 1997. Those 20 years were times of great change in Australian academic life, as well as in the humanities generally, and John McLaren played a central role in the debates and issues which characterised those two decades. He adapted and developed a broadly radical national nationalist view of Australian life and letters into a contemporary literary and social theory which lost little of its progressive character. McLaren provided a powerful critique of the CAE experiment with his book, *Equal but Cheaper: The Development of Australian Colleges of Advanced Education* (with E.R.Treyvaud, 1976). He contended that the teaching work of academics, whether in traditional universities or in the CAEs, could not be kept up to standard without a vigorous scholarly culture. McLaren wrote several books on the role of education in Australian society, including *Our Troubled Schools* (1968), *Libraries for the Public* (1969), and *A Dictionary of Australian Education* (Penguin, 1974). He also edited two volumes of social criticism, *Towards a New Australia* (1972) and *A Nation Apart* (1982). McLaren's published work in literary criticism is also extensive, with 5 major books and many scholarly articles. The first of these works was *Xavier Herbert's Capricornia and Poor Fellow My Country* (1986), followed by *Australian Literature: An Historical Introduction* (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1989). His cross-national study, *The New Pacific Literatures: Culture and Environment in the European Pacific* (Garland, New York and London, 1993) received generous international praise. In 1995 he published *Prophet from the Desert: Critical Essays on Patrick White*. McLaren's most recent work, entitled *Writing in Hope and Fear: Postwar Australian Literature as Politics, 1945-72* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), is a powerful evocation of the literary milieu in which he was raised and of which he formed a part.

McLaren's contribution to Australian literature was not merely bookish. He was a very active editor, revitalising the *Australian Book Review*, a monthly summary of Australian new books which had been discontinued. He was the editor of the second series of ABR, from 1978 to 1986. He was the Associate Editor of *Overland*, one of Australia's longest-running literary journals, from 1966 to 1993, and then was its Editor from 1993 to 1997. More significantly, perhaps, he saved *Overland* from the inertia which often overcomes an old literary journal, and successfully passed it on to a new generation of readers and critics. McLaren's teaching was first-rate, partly because of his long experience in high schools and the old Colleges. Working at Footscray, he responded to the challenge of 'multiculturalism' by introducing programs and subjects which enriched traditional Australian studies, first with the theoretical insights of the cultural studies group, and later with serious and sustained work in specific European and Asian cultural groups. As a teacher in the classroom, John McLaren was engaging, innovative and popular. He had the knack of bringing literature to life by the relatively old-fashioned method of first-class recitation. Since so many Footscray students were new to Shakespeare or other classics, this performance was riveting and original. He also adapted to new methods and technologies easily, introducing creative writing to the literary studies classes when that technique became popular in the 1980s, and the use of the Internet and e-mail in the 1990s.

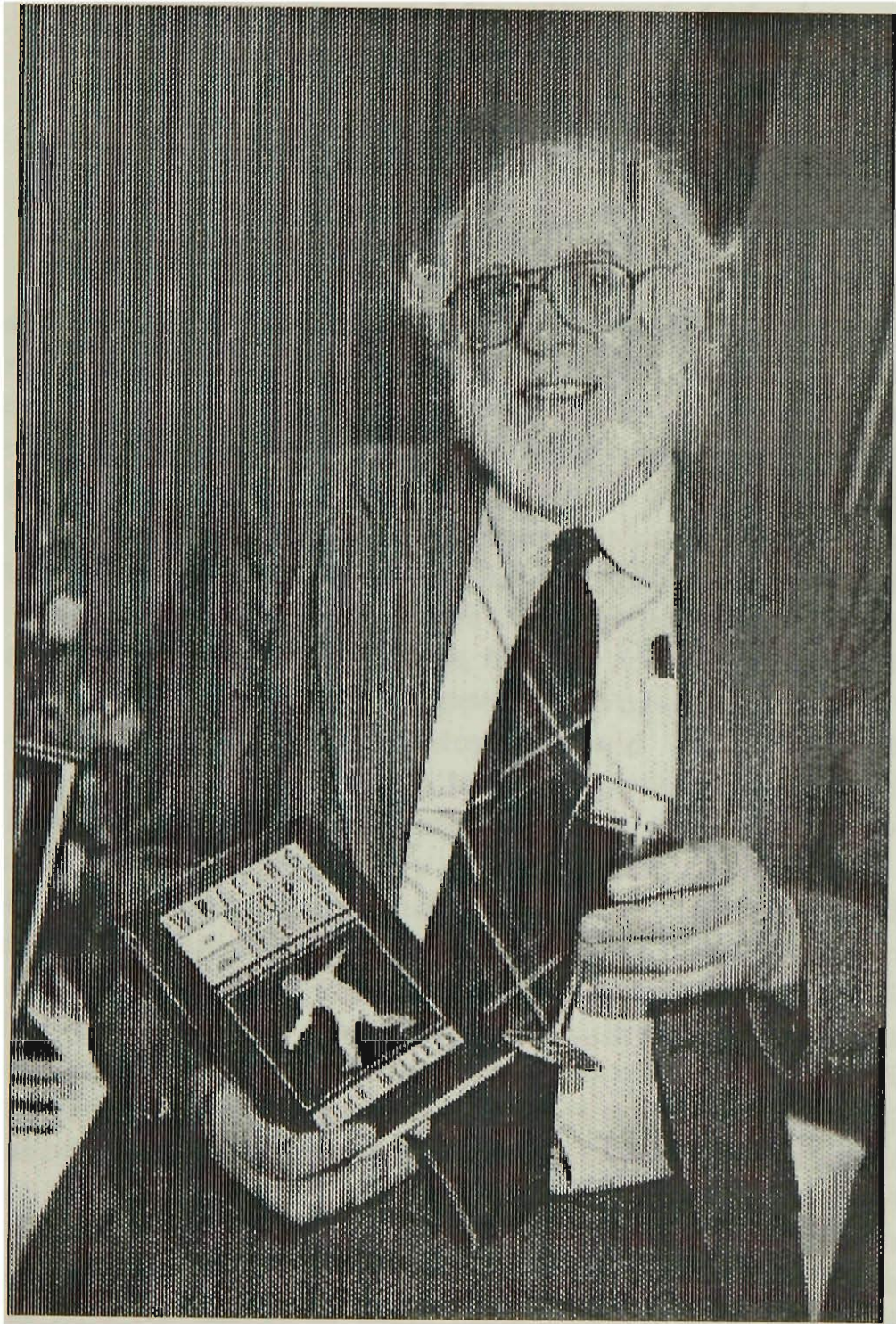
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McLaren, John, 1932-

The Faculty of Arts
valedictory lecture for
Professor John McLaren,



PROFESSOR JOHN McLAREN

‘FEAR AND LOATHING IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEAS:

The challenge of nationalism in Australia and Southeast Asia.’

John McLaren - Valedictory lecture, 1997

As I wrote the words for this lecture, and possibly now as I speak them, the smoke of forest fires is blanketing great parts of Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. These fires, scarcely reported in our press and even less internationally, have already been responsible for the crash of an airliner and the deaths of its passengers, and for uncounted cases of discomfort, illness and death among the citizens of the affected areas. They will also have added measurably to the atmospheric greenhouse effects that our present, and hopefully temporary, federal government prefers to ignore. They symbolize the twentieth century as aptly as the Holocaust, the atom bomb or the Berlin Wall. They are the direct product of the greed and corruption that characterize the new world order that has arisen from the shards of colonialism. The nation states that have arisen in this order either remain clients of imperial governments and transnational companies, or have descended into anarchy. In both cases, their ruling elites hold power by appealing to national traditions while serving personal ambitions. In Asia, the ideology devised to protect their power is misrepresented as traditional Asian values. In Australia, similar rapacity and disregard for the land and its people is cloaked in the rhetoric of a divisive and exclusive nationalism that uses an appeal to a falsified past as a means of generating fear in the present.

White settlement in Australia has been characterized not so much by drama as by harshness and disappointment. When seen through the eyes of the settlers, it is also a tale of remarkable endurance and achievement, although these are shaded by the price paid. The settlement of the land has been accompanied by the degradation and destruction of the environment. The degree of tolerance and collective identity we have reached depends on an ironic secularism that when threatened can easily give way to prejudice and bitter racism. Generations of immigrants and visitors from Asia, beginning with the Chinese in the 1850s, have been victims of this intolerance, which has also extended to later waves of immigrants from Europe. The greatest victims have, however, been the Aborigines, whose treatment we are only now beginning to recognize. From their point of view, the history of white settlement has been one of dispossession, betrayal and brutality.

Allan Patience had discerned in Australia's history a "hard culture", characterized by masculinity and secularism, and a consequent brutality towards the land and to any people perceived as different. This culture, hostile to things of the mind and spirit, has made difficult the work of writers who have sought to take imaginative possession of the land through their words. Marcus Clarke portrayed the beginnings of a new society closed by the physical and mental barbarity of the convict system; Henry

Lawson and Barbara Baynton wrote of people driven into exile or madness by the harshness of the land; Henry Handel Richardson dissected the repressions of a society that, caught in a cycle of boom and bust produced by its own destructive energies, paid no heed to the gentler virtues of home and nurture. John Docker has described this view of Australian literary history as “the gloom thesis”, which may be related to what the present Prime Minister has called “black armband” history. Harry Heseltine more analytically suggests that the Australian writer has been trapped by “the tyranny of an uncertain self” that arises from the historical predicament of being “Thrust as it were into a cultural vacuum, without the support of a sanctioned tradition, [so that] his [or her] central task became one of authenticating his [or her] own uncertain self in an unfamiliar world.” Heseltine argues that recent Australian writers, particularly Patrick White, have been able to escape this tyranny and “make of the divided self the subject and support of a complex, sophisticated and penetrating art.”¹ However true this may be in relation to their art, it is my contention that the work of our writers continues to show a society divided from its own past and so incapable of relating either to its neighbours or to its own inner being. I would describe this not so much as a hard culture but as a “fearful culture”, frightened of itself and of others.

The novels of Henry Handel Richardson, Xavier Herbert and Brian Penton, in particular, portray a culture that, by denying the possibilities of gentleness and harmony, is perpetually exiled from its own land. More recent illustrations of this denial can be found in the work of such writers as Tim Winton, James McQueen and David Ireland - not to mention the current generation of grunge realists. In all of their writings, the masculine drive to dominate destroys the possibility of belonging, which requires the feminine capacity for making a home. McQueen, in *Hook's Mountain*, takes as his hero the outsider, the loner who eventually can defend the mountain he loves only by taking to the bush with the weapons of the people who would destroy it. Winton writes of heroes who eventually learn to surrender their violence to women, children or religion, represented frequently by the element of the ocean waters which dissolves their individuality. Ireland most memorably and unforgivingly describes the culture of brutality in *The Glass Canoe*, where life revolves around the Southern Cross, the pub that provides refuge for the urban tribes that live around it. In the chapter ‘My People’, the narrator draws an explicit parallel between these lives and the story of human kind:

First they were boys, primitive hunters of fruit and adventure . . .

Teenaged, they became apprenticed to learn the pastoral world of snorting, grunting, purring machines, . . . and grew among the flocks . . . of workers whose labour and lives were farmed by the powerful . . . The horizon had shrunk.

A few years more and a job displaced them, now part of the adults herd, to the refinement of the factory-city. . . amongst the unattainable riches of civilisation . . . The horizon was work, pub, races. (p. 11)

1 Allan Patience, ‘Australia’s Hard Culture’, *Australian Studies*, 1990 ; John Docker, *In a Critical Condition*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1984, pp. 110-40; John Howard, Menzies Lecture 1996, unpublished; Heseltine, *The Uncertain Self: essays in Australian literature and criticism*, OUP, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 1-21.

But the mateship of the bar uneasily contains the violence suppressed by the exigencies of work. The schooner of beer, the 'glass canoe' of the title, does not take its passengers away from the frustrations of their lives. Pub disputes are customarily settled by fists, boots or weapons, the chronicler of pub life is disposed of in a barrel, and the pub itself is eventually destroyed in a fight with the tribe from a neighbouring pub. As an image of Australia, the illusory freedom of the pub proves to be a prison that suppresses the instincts it promises to nurture. Its confines breed distrust of outsiders and of any insiders perceived as different. As an image of modernism, the novel shows the tribes still dispossessed of their lands by the forces that promised liberation.

Australian writing does however have gentler images of settlement and its promises fulfilled. Alan Marshall's autobiography, *I Can Jump Puddles*, stands as a celebration not only of a boy's triumph over polio but as a realization of the companionate possibilities of a country town. In the later stories, collected in *Hammers over the Anvil*, Marshall returns to the time and place of his youth to reveal the underside of rural life, the violence and bigotry that ruptures the dream of harmony. Yet he still shows these elements of life through the eyes of the childhood narrator and his friend, who bring to the events an understanding and tolerance that is shown by few of the adults. This childhood perspective - so different from the egotistic anarchy of Norman Lindsay's juveniles - suggests that the boys, not the adults, hold a truth about Australian society that cannot be suppressed by the shortcomings of individuals. Yet, unwittingly, this also suggests that Australian culture remains in a state of immaturity, rejecting evil as something external and individual, able to contaminate others but not ourselves. This applies also to the work of Marshall's friend and contemporary, John Morrison, whose stories of work on the waterfront and in the suburbs show evil in the form of both class and family oppression, and portray the terror as well as the comfort of solidarity. Morrison finds strength in compassion, whether for a child, a fellow worker or a domestic partner. Lack of compassion distorts the personality, driving the individual, male or female, outside the bounds of society. Yet although Morrison shows how these distortions reflect and produce a society divided by class and domestic power, he does not portray the inwardly divided individual. Evil remains external, a product of an oppressive system and malignant individuals, not a collective responsibility, at once collective and individual.

Although Australian poets have similarly tempered the story of a harsh country with visions of harmony and fulfilment, David Campbell's poetry embodies the relaxed sprawl of a man completely at home in the countryside. Judith Wright achieves a deeply spiritual relationship to land and nature. Les Murray finds in the bush a quality that heals the divisions of settlement and the alienation of the cities. Yet these visions are, in each case, shadowed by irresolution, by a failure at the heart of the intimacy. Campbell tends to dissolve suffering, by both blacks and whites, in a cycle of love and death that stretches back to classical mythology. Murray, despite his celebration of a bond with the land that is shared by both settlers and blacks, linked by what he calls "the human-hair thread", betrays in his most ambitious work an uneasiness about the strength of this bond. His verse-novel, 'The Boys Who Stole the Funeral', starts in the relaxed style of folk lore, but finishes with the white boys having to undergo weird blood-rites at the hands of a gothic Aboriginal spirit before they can claim their share in the land. But it is above all Wright who, from her early 'Bora Ring', has been aware of the Aboriginal absence from the white story.

This recognition deepens in Wright's later work to the realization that the absence is not only from the landscape, but from the settlers themselves. Like Campbell, Wright is descended from the pioneering generations whose lives had provided the source for Franklin's and Penton's fiction. The change in her understanding is dramatized in the distinction between the two prose works that deal with these forebears. The first, *Generatlons of Men*, is an affectionate story of their coming to this land, and of the struggle, it took, particularly by the women, to make it their own. The second, published 22 years later, puts the Aborigines in the story, so changing it from an heroic epic of endurance to a tragic tale of dispossession, brutality and bloodshed. The land hunger of the new settlers led them, with a few notable exceptions, to exclude Aborigines from their newly seized runs. Driven by fear, they forced the government to recruit a force of Native Police, who in turn joined with the squatters in both retaliatory and pre-emptive killings of the Aborigines. The Aborigines, forbidden to gather for ceremonial or social purposes, excluded from their lands and often deprived of the weapons they needed to hunt for game in the scrubs that remained to them, fought back, adding to the squatters' fears. The story is both common and sadly familiar, but Wright identifies its central element as the refusal of the whites to recognize the Aborigines as humans who would respond in the same way as any others to being deprived of all they had known and cherished. As one of the persecutors, the Crown Commissioner William Wiseman, wrote, "not even the savage of Australia was 'so utterly devoid of courage and pride as to yield without a struggle that country ... on which he is used to obtain his food, and to which he is undoubtedly attached.'" (p. 85) These words were not, however, intended to arouse compassion, but as a warning to settlers who did not accept that to treat the Aborigines with kindness was to be the first to suffer from pillage.

For Wright, the refusal to acknowledge the humanity of the Aborigines is at one with the settlers' ignorance of the land they exploited. Both have led to destruction, and consequently to an alienation of the settlers from the land, an inability to put down roots. Yet in her later poetry she has found a way forward based on an acceptance of the past and a yielding to the landscape, rather than on an attempt to impose our desires on either. In her 1985 sequence, 'For a Pastoral Family', she sees both the persistence and the failure of her family's endeavours. It is written in love, as she writes of

Blue early mist in the valley. Apricots
bowing the orchard-trees, flushed red with summer,
loading bronze-plaquet branches;
our teeth in those sweet buttock-curves ...
...
it was well, being young and simple,
letting the horses canter home together.

This affection is complicated by her awareness of the ironies of a history that builds contentment on violence and then dispossesses the dispossessors. The opening to this sequence compounds the pleasures of the present with the blindness to the circumstances of their foundation and the bewilderment of the successors of the pioneers to their own dispossession:

Well, there are luxuries still,
including pastoral silence, miles of slope and hill,

the cautious politeness of bankers. These are owed
to the forerunners, men and women
who took over as by right a century and a half
in an ancient difficult bush. And after all,
the previous owners put up little fight,
did not believe in ownership, and so were scarcely human.

(*Selected Poems*, p. 226.)

The century and a half of occupation would be little enough against the timeless stretch of the "ancient" bush, were it not for that further adjective, "difficult". Something, the poem suggests, is due to those who endured such difficulty to make the land serve their purpose. Yet the final lines of the stanza, written at the same period that the author was chronicling the terrible record of the resistance and dispossession of the Aborigines, serve also as a judgement on a nation that, by refusing to acknowledge the cost of its achievements, fails to recognize the humanity of those on whose blood these achievements were built. Instead of legitimate possession of the land, we are left with a polite avoidance of the truth of both history and human nature.

As Wright comments on her family at prayer,

That God approved was obvious,
Most of our ventures were prosperous.

As for *Dies Irae*

we would deal with that when we came to it.

(p. 228)

A complacent decency blinds us to both the inner and the external forces of destruction. Wright herself finds comfort in the oppositions of a landscape that heals and language that connects.

This place's quality is not its former nature
but a struggle to heal itself after many wounds.

...

In a burned out summer, I try to see without words
as they do. But I live through a web of language.

('The Shadow of Fire', p. 236.)

Through language, which for Wright includes science and history as well as poetry, we can comprehend the truth and mystery of the world we inhabit, and so become fully human. A trust in language can lead us to the realization expressed in the closing line of this sequence, that "We are all of us born of fire, possessed by darkness." As a corollary, a failure to trust language, the attempt to avoid the discomfiting facts of our lives, can only lead to the kind of nightmare apparition we find in Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', where the figure of Life-in-Death comes to possess the mariner's soul.

Although Bernard Smith has shown us how Coleridge's poem was derived in part from accounts of Cook's voyages to the Pacific, there is no reason to believe that

this image has any direct factual counterpart. It is however significant that it arises in the course of Coleridge's imaginative reconstruction of an incursion by Europeans into a world entirely new to them. The core of the poem is the slaying of the albatross, and the guilt, punishment and expiation of the killer. In its aspect as an episode in the imperial exploitation of new worlds, this can be taken as a metaphor for the process of white settlement in Australia. Judith Wright performs for us the role of the mariner, keeping us from celebrations by reminding us of a guilt in which she acknowledges her own complicity. Until we do likewise, we remain enmired in our guilty past.

Wright closes *The Cry for the Dead* with an elegy to the people her family displaced, and above whose descendants, still subject to punitive white laws, "the cliffs and ravines of Expedition Ranges perhaps still shelter, in caves and overhangs, the crumbling bones of those who were pursued there more than a century ago, and a few fading and eroding scratches and stains of old stencilled hands and figures may remain as the last memorials of the Wadja and their northern neighbours." (p. 280) This image of ancient signs now deprived of the watchers that gave them meaning also haunts fiction of settlement by Randolph Stow and David Malouf.

In *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, the boy, Rob, grows up in a quiet country surrounded by war. The signs of this violence that threatens his family security are, in the present of the novel, the Japanese and, from the past, the reminders of the convict labourers who built the house and the Aborigines who were displaced to allow its building. In Malouf's *Harland's Half Acre*, the children play around a place made haunted by their father's stories, a platform of rock where Aboriginal carvings lie "stranded by time and sun in spare outline". There,

Stepping back into the lives of those first creators, they would crawl about, retracing the lines with a forefinger, clearing out leaf-grist, pollen, fragments of bark, the husks of dead insects; or would themselves take a knife and scrape, so that figures only vaguely discernible would . . . climb back to the surface and surprise them (p. 23)

But between their play and the past they retrace lies the violent breach that had marked their family's irruption, like that of the Wrights, into this new land. "First, the overland trek from somewhere beyond Tamworth into an unsettled area that was immediately, to the three brothers, so much like home". And, as Malouf comments, "so much like a place they had never laid eyes on but whose lakes and greenness were original in their minds." Then, "Possession was easy. One bloody brief encounter made official with white man's law." (p. 30) The settlers can see only an imagined homeland, in which the Aborigines have no place. The culture derived from Europe can see natives only as noble savages or decadent remnants, who in neither case can play a part in history. Their destruction is therefore as acceptable and lawful as it is inevitable. They must be removed to allow the grand narrative of social progress and individual fulfilment to continue.

But, as Malouf shows, physical occupation of the land does not of itself convey either permanency or imaginative possession. In seven lines of his narrative, and one generation of their history, the Harlands lose their property and are reduced to day-labourers. The remainder of the narrative tells of how Frank Harland travels through time and space until he is able to paint the canvasses that make a tiny part of the land truly his own. To

possess this land he has also, however, to understand the world from which the Europeans came, but from which their descendants have cut themselves off in a denial that parallels their denial of their violence towards the Aborigines. Europe is symbolized in the figure of Knack, the dealer whose music, in which Harland recognizes "something compelling . . . which led to strength and sunlight," also brings the violence of war and suicide. Centrally, however, the repressed violence is symbolized by the dark space beneath the Queensland house,

where under-the-house was another and always present dimension, a layer of air between lighted rooms and the damp earth: a place of early fears, secrets, childhood experiments, whispers, . . . It was darkness domesticated, a part of local reality, the downside of things. . . that underworld was full of threats. (p. 145)

It is in this place of fear that Harland's nephew Gerald hangs himself, so destroying the possibility that there will be any heir to the family's dreams, but at the same time freeing Harland for his final burst of creativity. To accommodate this urge he has to leave the house, living almost without shelter near the ocean, allowing no barriers to come between him and his painting of the land and his people. He has taken into himself history and place, the knowledge of others in himself, and is able finally to face the truth without despair.

Although this representative family of Australian writing provides evidence of our hard culture, it does not suggest that this is a satisfactory way to characterize the whole of our culture. Nor is the so-called "gloom thesis" sufficient. There are too many contradictions. Despite the harshness, cheerfulness keeps breaking through. Yet I think it is fair to say that it is a culture of avoidance, a culture that is reluctant to acknowledge evil while still affirming the positive values of human existence. The writers I have discussed, like all artists, face these truths, but their works are peopled with characters who are unable to do so. Like the narrator's Aunt Roo, in *Harland's Half Acre*, they don't want to know what is wrong, let alone do anything about changing it. "I've told you years ago, pet, those people are no good . . . concerned with nothing but pulling the world down, they're never satisfied. And in a country like this, where we have everything!" (p. 193) In some ways, this is the precise attitude of Judith Wright's relatives, who insist that the "really deplorable deeds / had happened out of our sight, allowing us innocence." (p.226) But, as Jessica Anderson has pointed out, innocence is itself dangerous, destroying what it cannot understand. In a society characterized by the contradictions of "its rawness and weak gentility, its innocence and deep deceptions.," the domestic tyrants, heirs of a hard culture of dominance, are excused, while their victims are condemned for the crime of being different." (*Tirra Litra by the River*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1978, p. 83.) This condemnation, while exalting the kind of family values espoused by John Howard, leads to the assumption that anything important happens elsewhere, and thus perpetuates the notion of Australia as a second-class, derivative society, incapable of managing its own destiny. This leads to the cultural cringe that makes us seek powerful foreign sponsors while refusing to take a stand against our neighbours on any basic human values. Rather than recognizing difference within a common set of values, we follow an imperialist tradition in assigning them to a category of difference that is not subject to the values we wish to see applied to

ourselves. Thus the standards we applied to the Aborigines in order to seize their lands become a means both of separating us from our neighbourhood and of excluding anyone within our own community who dares to be different.

This dual separation and exclusion will be overcome by recognizing the causes. By repressing our own past, both the history of settlement and the history of the countries from which the settlers came, and replacing it with stories of triumphal nationalism, we repress our own human potential. Gillian Bouras, in her accounts of her reverse migration, her courageous but doomed struggle to become a part of the peasant culture of her husband's Peloponesian village, shows the gap that we can never cross to a past that was lost when we became literate. But her books also succeed in acknowledging that past that we share even if we can no longer live it. She may never have been able to gain acceptance from her mother-in-law, or even to gain respect for her attempts to understand and enter into the village life, but she did succeed in translating that oral tradition into words on the page, so that it can become a part of our lives as we can never become a part of it. Fotini Epanomitis brings the same culture alive from the inside, returning imaginatively to the myths and legendary history of her ancestral Greek village and so making it a part of our world. Beth Yahp does the same for the Malaysian Chinese, bringing their uprooted traditions into direct conflict with the urbanising and modernising present. These writers, by taking us into specific European and Asian cultures, enlarge the meaning of our own culture, both strengthening our understanding of its sources and undermining its imposed unity. As we discover these mythological elements in our own community, these traces of different pasts that continue living in the present, we enhance our capacity to recognize the cultural understandings that underpin the distinctive Aboriginal relationship to the land that we occupy. But if we are to understand ourselves and our place in this land we need also to learn from the efforts of our neighbours to construct nations within the boundaries that they, like us, have inherited from the regimes of imperialism. F. Sionil José's novels, which place the Philippines at the centre of world history as its people struggle to build a nation, encompass the victims of modernism, the dispossessed who fill the slums of Manila and constitute a global diaspora of labour, as well as the peasants who continue to produce the wealth that sustains the globe-trotting elite. K.S. Maniam shows the deracination and exclusion of the members of the Indian community which was originally brought to Malaya to work the plantations, and Catherine Suchen Lim and Shirley Geok-lin Lim explore the parallel circumstances of the Malaysian Chinese, both at home and abroad. Gopal Baratham shows the dark underside of cruelty and persecution that underpins the antiseptic commercialism of Singapore. All these writers are engaged in questioning their national ideologies, of revealing the human costs of modernization and globalization, and of making room within their nations for those who are excluded by the sometimes genteel, often barbaric practices of government and industry.

These are the people being choked by the smoke of burning forests, and condemned to further years of poverty by the collapse of speculation on stocks and land. Theirs is the world we share, and their search for freedom, for a place where they can be at home with themselves, is one that can teach us much about our own struggle to find security in a threatening world. We have at least as much to learn from the writings of these countries as we do from the metropolitan writers of Europe or the United States. Along with the writers from our own country, they can help us to come to terms with our colonial past, to make ourselves at home in our land and its present,

we have a particular responsibility for this country. It happens also that we live at a time when this responsibility is particularly urgent. An honest and unsentimental appraisal of our cultural traditions and the cultures of our neighbours can give us the understanding and courage we need meet this responsibility.

Genuine reconciliation with the aboriginal people, whose important writing lies outside the scope of this talk, is a necessary step towards this end. The adoption of a Republican Commonwealth deriving its sovereignty from the people and embodying the values of secularism, egalitarianism and diversity is, of course, vital.

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