

Here Where We Live: The Evolution of Contemporary White Australian
Writers' Responses to White Settler Status.

Cassie Flanagan Willanski

Discipline of English and Creative Writing, University of Adelaide

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Abstract

The Exegesis: The Evolution of Contemporary White Australian Writers' Responses to White Settler Status.

It is proposed that Australians of white settler heritage writing on the subject of Indigenous Australians in the period from the early 20th Century to the present day take a combination of three common approaches. The “haunted”, “contemporary representations” and “stepping back” approaches represent an evolving attitude in contemporary white Australian writing on Indigenous themes. This evolution occurs in a rough chronological order, however within this chronology the writing may exhibit a fluidity, moving back and forth between the three approaches. Texts by Patrick White and Judith Wright are used as primary examples of the three approaches, with secondary examples given from a range of contemporary white Australian writers.

The evolution of Indigenous Australian writing is discussed within the “stepping back” approach. Parallels are drawn between the evolution of white and Indigenous Australian writing on Indigenous themes, with the argument that Indigenous writing displays both the “haunted” and “contemporary representations” approaches. The final approach for Indigenous Australian writers, however, is the “stepping forward” approach. The poetry of Kath Walker/Oodgeroo Noonuccal is the principal example given to illustrate this section, with additional commentary on a range of contemporary Indigenous Australian writing.

Examples of the three approaches' influence on the creative component of this thesis are discussed throughout the exegesis.

The Creative Component: *Here Where We Live*.

The creative component of the thesis, *Here Where We Live*, is a collection of short stories that examines contemporary white Australians' sense of place within the South Australian landscape. Awareness of environment and attitudes

towards Indigenous people are constant, but not always dominant themes. The three approaches discussed in the exegesis are represented within the different stories. As each of these approaches involves the concept of Indigenous invisibility, Indigenous people and issues are sometimes represented as being on the periphery of the white characters' awareness.

The short story collection is divided into three parts, each of which corresponds to one of the three approaches in the exegesis. Part One, "Ghosts", corresponds to the "haunted" approach, Part Two, "Ways We Learn Things" corresponds to the "contemporary representations" approach, and Part Three, "Country", to the "stepping back"/"stepping forward" approaches.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide.

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