

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

Submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Research, 4th May 2012.

Creative Work: *Here Where We Live.*

A note on the relationship of the short story collection to the exegesis.

The stories in my collection contain aspects of the three different approaches discussed within the exegesis. Discussion of the stories' relationship to the three approaches is included at the end of each chapter. Often a single story will be mentioned as reflecting more than one approach, as in the case of "Night Blindness" (66), which contains elements of all three of the approaches, and "Stuff White People Like" (86), which has elements of both the "contemporary representations" and the "stepping back/stepping forward" approaches.

Despite this overlap, each story can be said to be dominated by a single approach. Therefore the collection is divided into three parts that correspond to the three chapters of the exegesis. The first part, "Ghosts", contains two stories that reference Chapter One's "haunted" approach, with characters in the stories "Drought Core" (55) and "Night Blindness" (66) concerned with metaphysical manifestations of Indigenous people and the Australian landscape, as well as the need to come to terms with the past.

The second part, "Ways We Learn Things" reflects the "contemporary representations" approach, with its emphasis on attempted engagement with Indigenous people and the Australian landscape, accompanied by awkwardness, mistakes and the wish to belong without guilt. These stories all feature a character called Oliver Bentley. The first story, "Stuff White People Like" (86) details Oliver's attempts to come to terms with his white privilege after attending a reconciliation ceremony. "Karko" is about Oliver's discovery of the concept of appropriation as a child on a school field trip. "Free With the Animals" (111) is the story of Oliver's wife Clay's relationship to the Australian desert and its role in her healing from a traumatic past.

The third division of the short story collection, "Country", is a reference to the "stepping back"/"stepping forward" approaches of Chapter Three. Stories "Oak Trees in the Desert" (116) and "Her Thoughts Heading North" (138) feature white and Indigenous characters who are working together towards a common

goal (in this case protecting the landscape from the nuclear industry). The short opening piece “My Good Thing” (150) also belongs to the “stepping back”/“stepping forward” approach. Again it tells of a place where the borders of Indigenous and white experience overlap, in the story of a white woman, an Indigenous man and their child.

It may be noted that some of the stories do not have a blatantly “Indigenous” central theme. The concept of Indigenous invisibility and its relevance to my short story collection has been discussed earlier in the introduction. Other themes present within the collection, such as families, the environment, teaching and relationships occur without reference to the “Indigenous” theme of the exegesis. This is because as a creative work the short story collection contains several themes that were not dictated consciously in their writing. The attitude of white characters towards Indigenous people is just one of these themes, but was the one I found most interesting and hence decided to explore within the exegesis.