

Susan Ballyn, Doireann MacDermott, Kathleen Firth, editors, Australia's Changing Landscapes: Proceedings of the Second EASA Conference Sitges, Barcelona, October 1993. Barcelona: Departament de Filologia Anglesa i Alemanya, Universitat de Barcelona, Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, 1995. 239 pages, paperback.

This volume with 27 essays, the majority of which are by Australian contributors, is no credit to EASA. This is mainly due to the fact that the book cannot claim to be a masterpiece of editorial craftsmanship. Some papers seem to have gone into print totally unedited. The result is disastrous. Many essays are marred by printing errors, misspelled names, mutilated sentences, faulty quotations and inconsistent citation. Also, it is hard to discover a unifying perspective in the collection since 'landscape' has been taken to mean a variety of things. 'If there is any common denominator to be found in these papers', Doireann MacDermott writes in her introduction, 'then it is the constant preoccupation of a European people still uncertain in a land whose geographical position and physical features are so at odds with their cultural origins'.

This means that the inevitable 'landscape sine/cum identity' aspect dominates in fifteen contributions. Silvia Albe(r)tazzi (or Albertatzz) analyses Janette Turner Hospital's The Last Magician, showing that every literary landscape is idealized and thus a subjective view of reality. David Carment explores how in recent years very different ideas have emerged about the preservation and interpretation of historically significant elements of Darwin's European settlement. According to Laurie Clancy, the preoccupation with landscape and the associated notion of identity has reached near parodic forms and has been largely responsible for the creation and maintenance of a false consciousness of what it is to be Australian. Corroborating Clancy's point, Jeff Doyle and Deborah Jenkin illustrate that whereas Australians have always taken their self-image from some notion of the land, in the last decade the definitions of Australia and Australians through their spatial structures have been even more dominant than in the first 150 years of white settlement. David Coad discusses 'key aspects of the spatial dialectic' set up in Voss, i.e. the quest myth, the mystical meaning of the desert and the Neo-Platonic dynamic of the procession, conversion and

return. On the basis of A.J. Greimas' actantial model of narrative analysis Cynthia Vanden (or vanden) Driesen explores the mode of valorization of the indigene in White's novels. Maureen Lynch Percopo's reading of Robert Drewe's novels leads her to the conclusion that his fictional landscape has at its thematic center distinctly Australian concerns. Igor Maver sees Douglas Stewart's Voyager Poems as a means of creating national myths. Victor Oost's large-scale inquiry into adolescents' views of man and landscape in Australia ends with the not too surprising conclusion 'that perhaps the most distinctive feature of Australians is that they are a people in quest of an identity'. M.S. Suárez Lafuente discovers parallels between Cervantes' La Mancha and the Australian bush. Just as La Mancha is finally mapped, defined, named and made ready to enter into universal experience, the vast, unknown space was invented all over and named in order to be made recognizable for Europeanized consumption.

Some few contributors steer clear of the beaten track. Andrew Hassam's examination of 19th century British emigrants' diaries reveals that the often applied phrase 'the land of promise' is part of a vocabulary of transition, a perspective prior to arrival and a rhetoric that belonged to the voyage out rather than settlement. Building on Anne Janowitz's England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape (1990), Peter Read discusses attitudes of white Australians to particular, history-laden sites. Jennifer Strauss speaks of and for the tree in Australian poetry because she knows no other society which offers such evidence of a love-hate relationship with its indigenous forests and trees as that exhibited in Australian literature. Although marred by a number of printing errors, Wenche Ommundsen's paper is another highlight of the volume. Using Jean Baudrillard's essay on hyperreality "Simulacra and Simulations" as her point of departure, she illustrates that fictional landscapes, be they realistic, symbolic or postmodern, explicitly flout their basic unreality, i.e. their existence as pure simulacra. Andrew Taylor argues that Australian culture grew up between the devil of the arid interior of the continent and the deep blue sea which, in a not atypical shift of focus in the last twenty years, is no longer seen as cutting the land off from the rest of the world

but 'as an interior shoreline which is a site both of recreation and re-creation'.

Two writers set out to map the change of vision of the urban environment. Kate Darian-Smith describes the paradox that the Asia-Pacific war and the presence of the American forces turned Australian cities into exciting, cosmopolitan places, injected a new vitality into Australian urban life, and affected wartime constructs of femininity, the family, and national identity. James Walter contrasts cityscape and landscape and examines their significance for the artistic imagination, concluding that after the initial dominance of the bush and the interior the city now looms large in Australian imagination.

Another group of papers is specifically devoted to women. Taking the title story of Marjorie Barnard's The Persimmon Tree and Other Stories (1943) as their subject, Isabel Carrera (Suárez) and Aurora García (Fernández) analyze the motif of the window as part of that interior space which women have inhabited. Sharyn Pearce examines the new manifestation of the Woman's Page in Australian newspapers, taking Femail, the resurrected Woman's Page of the Brisbane Courier-Mail as her example. Hazel Rowley believes that just as Virginia Woolf sees the androgynous as an ideal, Christina Stead, in For Love Alone, seems to be proposing a creative merging of the sexes, a fusion of Australia, which represents eros without fulfilment and culture, and England, which stands for logos without physicality and eroticism. Graham Rochford Tucker describes the change brought about by the dynamic Charmian Clift in the sixties, in the way Australians looked at their lives, their culture and their landscape.

The remaining six papers can be said to form a group of their own. Their common concern may be seen in their emphasis on Australia's environmental, political, economic and cultural relation to the outside world. Crispin Conroy considers Australian domestic and international environmental initiatives. Xavier Pons is interested in the almost unprecedented changes in Australian economic policy and the broader implications they have on Australian attitudes and cultural life. Brian Hocking's focus is on the character of the post-Cold War international environment, its impingement on Australia, and the responses which

such changes appear to demand of Australian foreign policy. David Carter takes the claim that Australia has always/already been what European/American culture has only recently discovered as its own modernity as his target, warning against any attempt to treat Australian culture as a discrete organism, general condition or state of mind. Don Grant tries to answer the question, why Australians maintain and project an image of themselves which may not too closely resemble what they really are. Katica Ivanisevic compares the Migrant Experience section of the Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature with literary works of other emigrant communities in the world, stressing similarities and differences.

Summing up, it may be said that, where most of the 'literary' sections are concerned, the present collection recapitulates rather than supersedes much of what one has read elsewhere more than once. What Australian Studies needs desperately is an injection of new ideas.

Wuppertal/Germany

Horst Priessnitz