Review Essays

Recent Miles Franklin Awards: A Review

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Introduction

The history of the novel is arguably a European tradition, and it is the convention of that form which is contesting a place for itself in Australia. Australian writing reflects this struggle for an identity by writing from within and from outside of itself, from within a Western mindset, an Aboriginal mindset, an Eastern mindset[1], the mindset of migrants, women, men and expatriates. Australian novels explore a range of European and non-European human identities, and the setting of these pre-occupations is increasingly exterritorial. One emergent theme is that Australian identity is defining itself in this writing more by its relationship to the outside than its relationships to others in Australia.

This trend towards the global is helping Australian writers wrestle with the complexity of modern, multiple, trans-national, multi-layered identities. Such writing shows a strength and maturity which can point the way for leaders in Australia in fields other than the arts, where those qualities have not been as present. The images in the age of post-modern criticism may be confusing, but they are self-examining, enriching, transcending, they are forward looking, they have all the qualities of fine art and even of what used to be called literary merit.

Five writers taken from the Miles Franklin Awards (MFA) between 1995 and 2004 were selected and discussed. These books attempt diverse topics. Many of the novels are mostly set outside of Australia and carry the theme of what is here termed exterritorial transition.

As the historian Manning Clark so famously said in one of his Boyer lectures on ABC radio, one can learn about a country in many ways: by reading its history, looking at its paintings and art, listening to its music, looking into a lover's eyes, or by reading its literature.

The term 'literature' has become deeply contested, from those who would argue that a bus ticket has as much literary merit as Shakespeare, to those who say that literature to be literature must have certain distinctive criteria. For example, the Nobel Prize Committee that establishes the award for Literature consistently looks for writing which is culturally representative and which examines the human condition compassionately, illuminatingly, profoundly and with hope.

So how to begin to survey Australian writing, even across a narrow time spectrum such as that of nine years? Figures vary concerning the number of Australian writers who are published annually, but they certainly are numerous. Print-runs remain comparatively small, certainly by North American or European Standards. So how to determine what is Australian? Only that which was written in and published in Australia and deals with content that is set in Australia? Such was the narrow view at one time[2], but it had to give way, as it did in this period under review, a period of transition. So Australian writing can be Australian even if it is set outside of Australia, as much fine Australian writing is, even if it is written outside of Australia, and even if its storyline is non-

Australian. The only criteria for Australian literature to be Australian, is that the author should be able to demonstrate a deep knowledge of the Australian psyche, preferably by having lived in Australia and by having an Australian link in the book, best by characterization, an evocative geographic description of Australia's uniqueness, or better still, both.

Are prizes indicators of literary merit?

For reasons that are here disclosed, I have not chosen prize-winning writers for their privileged, elitist or possibly superior or distinguished value. Nor do I consider prizes as necessarily attesting to the merit over another, non prize-winning book. Nor do I consider a prize-winning book to have greater literary merit than a non-prize winning book, or a book from another genre. The postmodern notion of writing treats a text more loosely in the sense of desire (Roland Barthes) than in any hierarchical or class based arrangement of quality. It is suggested that the Miles Franklin Award (MFA) list of authors is simply representative of what a cross section of Australian readers finds worthy about Australian writing.

The MFA is the longest running (1957-2004) annual award of (currently around) AUD 30,000 bequeathed by the will of Australian novelist Miles Franklin for a published novel or play portraying Australian life in any of its phases. I have chosen to discuss books awarded this prize because they are representative indicators of Australian writing that are recognized through a process of selection that involves some public accountability by and to academics, publishers, librarians and readers. A minimum niveau of reader expectation should be satisfied by reading a MFA book. For me that has not always been possible, but that is said maybe more as an attestation to my limited ability to appreciate the breadth of writing that was awarded prizes. Or maybe other readers share some of my textual prejudices, for or against, as well.

I did not choose Miles Franklin writers because I consider them necessarily better than writers that have not been awarded the prize. Nor have I chosen the writers under discussion because of the monetary value of the prize or because of its calendar duration, but because of the award's overall ability to represent in terms of published numbers of copies, the extent to which they are studied in schools and universities, and finally, the category of writing they fall into. The writers discussed are not producers of coffee table books on gardening or cooking, nor do they easily fall into a genre such as romance, sci-fi or thriller. Instead, they all write about the Australian psyche, a psyche that at times is not necessarily terribly Australian, being human first, and, as will be shown, more often than not located exterritorially.

To establish contemporary Australian identity the chosen method here is to look at recent Australian literature, as the books themselves through the process of MFA selection manage to put their finger on the pulse of what in some way is quintessentially Australian. The Miles Franklin award is widely perceived to be a significant award for achievements in Australian literature, and it also is the oldest award for Australian writing. Despite the recent damage done to the award[3], Australian literature courses continue to take note of books given the award because they are an acknowledgement of an authoritative voice, author, publisher and effort. The books under discussion are a contribution to the examined life of people who have been touched by Australia, wherever they may have been at the time of writing or reading any of the works.

Such criteria suggest that the Nobel Prize for literature could have been taken as a better indicator. While I have also read many writers who have been awarded this prize, the purpose of this paper was less an international or transnational comparison than one confined by the geophysical boundaries of an Australian locus. That locality has a connection with Australia the

continent, sometimes choosing a setting that is within and sometimes a setting that is without Australia. Patrick White is Australia's only Nobel laureate in literature, and as no other laureates have chosen Australia or Australian-ness as a setting or characterization, a paper with such a focus cannot emerge. The tension between Australia and its relationship to the outside world was well taken up in many books by Patrick White, especially concerning Europe and the Middle East (*The Eye of the Storm, The Solid Mandala* to name but a few). Indeed, White, A.D. Hope and many others also have spoken of the barrenness within Australia in their time. I would like to think that writing aimed at the Australian psyche has grown and can hold a candle to such literature of other nations. Australian writing has passed Henry Lawson's colonial short stories, realistic as they then were, and has passed into a more complex analytical mode in this new century. The MFAs for 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2003 (See Table One) are deserving examples of this Australianness.

What the Nobel Prize and the Miles Franklin award have in common, is that both committees search for books and writing which illuminate, enlarge, explain, or examine the human condition.

There are other prizes for Australian writing, such as the Patrick White award (who used his 1973 Nobel prize to recognize writers who have been highly creative over a long period but have not received adequate recognition for their work. Since the inception of this award in 1974, only one of these writers (Thea Astley) has also been awarded the MFA.

The other significant national prize for Australian writing is *The Australian*/*Vogel* award for an unpublished manuscript, and has launched the careers of some of Australia's most successful writers, including Tim Winton, Kate Grenville, Gillian Mears, Brian Castro, Mandy Sayer, Fotini Epanomitis and Andrew McGahan.

Vogel-winning authors have gone on to win or be short listed for other major awards, such as the Miles Franklin Award, the Commonwealth Writers Prize and the Booker Prize. The award began its remarkable life in early 1980 when Niels Stevns, the owner of Vogel bread in Australia, approached the literary editor of *The Australian*, Peter Ward, about collaborating on a cultural prize.

Themes

Therefore mainly for keeping the selection manageable yet broadly representative the MFA was used. Australian writing in the period under discussion is still very much in search of itself. Australian writing since its earliest days of Marcus Clarke's *For The Term Of His Natural Life* (1870-1872), Henry Handel Richardson Trilogy of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* (1927) or the writings of Catherine Susannah Prichard and even later, with the writings of Patrick White has always struggled with setting and characterization, and the Australian-ness and non-Australian-ness of such work.

In developing an approach to this topic, it became furthermore important not to fall into a trap that many Australians in exile have fallen into, namely to sit in judgment over Australia from a distance, as someone who outgrew Australia, moved away from it only to vituperate it for its shortcomings from afar. Such an approach is not helpful, as it only serves to increase the divisions, and arguably ultimately serves to justify the person's departure more than accurately comment on Australia as it is now, not as it was before they left.

Some examples here will be helpful in illustrating the point. Germaine Greer[4] graduated from Sydney University but has spent the bulk of her life in Europe, toggling between England and Italy among other places. Her contribution to feminism is a matter for the record, yet her infrequent returns to Australia, during which she chastises Australia without reservation, do little other than

increase distances of understanding and perception. Similarly Robert Hughes, art historian and author of a fine history of Australia[5], long-time resident in America, distinguishes himself by a false hubris, an arrogance born of the belief that by virtue of his achievements accrued outside of Australia, he can belittle Australia and people choosing to live in Australia. Such comments are indeed of little use when exploring how Australia's written-about identity was developed or is displayed.

Early themes in Australian literature include

- mateship and survival in colonial times which included an often anti-authoritarian streak as in the many narratives of Ned Kelly[6], convictism, free settlers, bushrangers and the like.
- the influence of the landscape, portrayed as both romantic (Banjo Patterson,) and realistic (Henry Lawson, Joan Lindsay *Picnic At Hanging Rock*, 1974)
- old country of emigration, forced or voluntary versus immigration to the new country, the tension between Indigenous Australian culture and European/Asian cultures
- the rural versus the urban, man versus nature, hardship and isolation versus civilization and neo-colonial existences

Exterritorial Images in Transition

By this term is meant that the Australian psyche as reflected in the books under discussion is defining itself in two significant ways. The first way is by the way any literature goes about such an examination, namely by an illumination of the human condition.

The exterritorial is the view that many of the writers have written about Australia from outside of Australia, that is, exterritorially. This need to have distance to see more clearly is an indicator that such writing is heavy, in need of oxygen or space in order to clarify focus. That is one meaning of the word as it is used here. This is a theme of perspective, of distance or proximity, of amplified lenses, changed lenses, different lenses, both rose colored and more critical, European, based on experiences gained outside or inside Australia, but in any case seen from a distance.

But there is another meaning to exterritorial. For example, much writing tries to place Australia and characters that have lived or passed through Australia into some relation with the rest of the world, its history, its other-than-Australian cultures. In this sense the Australian is defined from without, from its relationship to the other. It is proposed that this dimension has been more strongly present in the books under discussion than the inherently Australian self-examination in what are termed "domestic" novels in Table One.

So why exterritorial images in transition? Literature is never complete, never ended, as any book can only ever hope to provide a snapshot, a story at a particular time from whatever perspective. A certain elusiveness characterizes the discussed novels in that they do not ever absolutely fix an Australianness in a way that has arguably been managed by George Johnston in *My Brother Jack* (1964). The closest that might happen is by Peter Carey (2002) or Christopher Koch (1996).

So the preliminary conclusion is that the summary images given to the reader who reflects on what might hold the works of these authors together, is that the view from Australia outwards, and from outside, is more formative than the views from within. That is, the examined inner life is of course a theme in any good book. What is here explored is that the life examined from its relationship to others, especially outside of Australia, its exterritoriality, is more formative and transitory yet necessary in any book that merits placement on a Miles Franklin shortlist.

Table One: Miles Franklin Awards, 1995 – 2004, by Exterritoriality

MFA Year	Exterritorial Authors (Writing from without)	Domestic Authors (Writing from within)
2004	Shirley Hazzard (The Great Fire)	
2003		Alex Miller (Journey to the Stone Country)
2002		Peter Carey (History of the Kelly Gang)
2001	Frank Moorhouse (Dark Palace)	
2000		The Astley (Drylands), Kim Scott (Benang)
1999		Murray Bail (Eucalyptus)
1998	Peter Carey (Jack Maggs)	
1997		David Foster (The Glade Within the Grove)
1996	Christopher Koch (Highways to a War)	
1995	Helen Demidenko (The Hand that Signed the Paper)	

The Great Fire, Shirley Hazzard (2004)

Shirley Hazzard left Australia back in the 1950s, having been briefly at school in Woollahra, Sydney. She lived in all the countries she describes in her works, although she has spent most of her more recent life in New York.

The Great Fire is Shirley Hazzard's first novel in 23 years, as her earlier, equally transatlantically spanning novel, *The Transit of Venus*, was published in 1980. She has therefore spent, like many an Australian author, much of her life as an expatriate. *The Transit of Venus* tells the story of two orphan sisters, Caroline and Grace Bell, as they leave Australia to start a new life in post-war England. What happens to these young women--seduction and abandonment, marriage and widowhood, love and betrayal--becomes as moving and wonderful and yet as predestined as the transits of the planets themselves. Finely crafted and intricately constructed, Hazzard's novel is a story of place: Sydney, London, New York, Stockholm; of time: from the fifties to the eighties; and above all, of women and men in their passage through the displacements and absurdities of modern life.

The Great Fire was published in 2003, yet the setting in time of this work is earlier than that of *The Transit of Venus*. The former is a war memoir, while the latter is a post-war journey.

The Great Fire is set at the conclusion of the Second World War and follows two men's attempts to rebuild their lives. For Englishman Aldred Leith, it is through his documentation of disappearing Asian cultures and through the love of a young woman. Australian Peter Ecksley saw Europe, like many young Australians, as a chance to escape what Shirley Hazzard describes as 'the great Australian emptiness', a theme echoed by many writers including (to date) Australia's only Nobel prize winner in Literature, Patrick White.

Both novels draw on Hazzard's own life and experiences of the post-war, Cold war atmosphere, with the great fire, the catastrophes of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, being the basis for the title. This book won the Miles Franklin Prize for Australian Literature for 2004 and the American National Book Award. In accepting the US prize, Hazzard urged American writers to be aware of their responsibility not to degrade the language they had been given. It is indeed in the

power of some of her consummately written paragraphs that a reader can enjoy this writer at her best. Speaking critically, we are reading an elderly lady reminiscing on her life through a nostalgic reassessment of her past.

Shirley Hazzard was born in Sydney in 1931. She left Australia in 1947 and has lived in Hong Kong, New Zealand, Europe and the United States. She worked for the United Nations as a clerk between 1952 and 1962. She left in that year to become a full-time writer and has since become a passionate opponent of the UN. She now divides her time between New York and Capri. She won a National Book Critics Circle Award in 1980 for *The Transit of Venus* and delivered the ABC's Boyer lectures in 1984.

The Great Fire competed against some strong and prize winning other writers, such as Peter Carey and J.M.Coetzee, Booker and Nobel prize winners respectively. Also in the field was a very fine novel indeed, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, by Elliot Pearlman. It is the first time Shirley Hazzard has won the Miles Franklin Prize, while many other Australian writers have succeeded in doing so more than once. Some felt that the award was belatedly to recognize a writer who had been better known abroad than inside Australia.

In fact, the prize was awarded 44 times in its history from 1957 to 2004, only twice being awarded to two writers in one year. The coterie of prize winners is in fact a small one. Nine writers were awarded the prize twice, Peter Carey three times and Thea Astley, who died in August 2004, a record four times. So 12 writers managed to snatch the prize no less than 27 times out of the 44 awards. It is possible that the circle of authors deemed eligible was indeed small, or that there was an inner circle of Australian writers difficult for outsiders to penetrate.

Be that as it may, a survey of awardees does suggest three types of winners. Writers who are somewhat flash in the pan, whose early and promising work was not followed by other worthy books, secondly writers whose sustained contribution to Australian literature was recognized and finally writers whose stature was such that they also had earned critical recognition abroad, in the case of Peter Carey and Thomas Keneally by the Booker Prize, by the Nobel prize for literature in the case of Patrick White, and by American approbation in the case of Shirley Hazzard.

Pearlman's book is a significant achievement and was published as the only shortlisted title for 2004. It ranks alongside more recent literary achievements as Jonathan Franzon's *The Corrections* (2002) or Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* (1998). In terms of its psychological incisiveness, it ranks in my readings alongside Dostojevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. Certainly, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* is arguably the finest recent examination of society and relationships in Australia. It is directly contemporary and multilayered, sharing many different ways of looking at people. In contrast, *The Great Fire* is written from mainly one type of ambiguity, and one historically removed from the reader's here and now.

Which is not to say that one book is better than the other, just that the urgency to acknowledge the international reputation of Hazzard overrode the desire to recognize Pearlman as an Australian version of a Roth or Franzon. This is understandable, but only endorses the definition of exterritoriality offered above in that the MFA is seeking to identify prose that defines Australia to and within the world, rather than only to and within Australia.

Clearly one of the factors that influenced the panel of five judges, said Elizabeth Webby[7], was that Shirley Hazzard had an international reputation. In this way the Miles Franklin award is bridging local accolade with international recognition, a worthy endeavor, although the history of this award has not always done so, as will be shown when discussing Frank Moorhouse.

Dark Palace, Frank Moorhouse, 2001

This is the story of Edith Campbell Berry, a woman whose life is loosely based on a genuine Australian (from Melbourne), who believed she was transforming the world by her participation in the League of Nations. *Dark Palace* is actually the sequel to an earlier volume based on the life of Edith Campbell Berry five years earlier, when she first arrived in Geneva. That volume was called *Grand Days* (1993) and is a reference to the idealist beginnings of the League of Nations.

Moorhouse had lived in France and Switzerland to research the material for this book, and I believe he succeeded in several ways. His characterisation is sufficient to hold the reader's attention, his historical detail shows Australia's beginning worldliness, and the book amply illustrates this notion of exterritoriality. Edith, by living abroad, gradually finds herself. She might have found herself had she stayed in Australia, but as a young woman with a science degree, she felt hemmed in by Australia, and her discovery of herself is accompanied by the gradual realisation that the League was not going to work in the form that it was in.

At one point in the book she returns to Australia after 10 years in Geneva, and she finds herself strangely alienated from where she grew up. This experience emphasizes this notion of exterritoriality in that she is geographically lost, and her identity is somewhere, but not in any specific place, but more in the relation with places.

The point of Moorhouse's experience with the MFA is that his first volume was regarded as ineligible on the basis that it was not located in Australia. This in itself is an indication of the immaturity of the judging panel in being unable to arrive at an encompassing definition of what Australian literature might be. The fact that the second volume succeeded in being recognised shows that they were embarrassed by their earlier narrowness.

Jack Maggs, Peter Carey 1998

> It was a Saturday night when the man with the red waistcoat arrived in London. It was to be precise, six of the clock on Saturday the fifteenth of April in the year of 1837 that those hooded eyes looked out of the window of the Dover coach and beheld, in the bright aura of gas light, a golden bull and an overgrown mouth opening to devour him - the sign of his inn, The Golden Ox.

So arrives Jack Maggs, a figure larger than life and loosely based on a Charles Dickens novel, *Great Expectations*. This novel supports the notion of exterritoriality very well, as it moves from his conviction in England to Australia, and back to England to fight inner demons and phantoms. The book examines the perspectives of geography, culture, class, hope and aspirations, defeat and persistence, heroism and exhaustion, all in the same pages. Jack Maggs is a hero in himself (and antihero, depending on your values). In his struggle he manages to personify much of what so many people have experienced who have come to Australia, voluntarily or involuntarily.

Peter Carey's earlier MFA winner, *Oscar and Lucinda* (1989), equally achieves this fine balancing act between continents, people, cultures, religion and, not lastly, human feelings. Indeed, Carey manages to overcome distances in keeping the human at the centre, and is not unduly concerned by exterritorial matters, except that he has lived a large part of his life as a writer outside of Australia himself, as has David Malouf, Thomas Keneally and many others.

Highways to a War, Christopher Koch, 1996

This *Bildungsroman* is about a young Tasmanian (Mike Langford) who left Tasmania for

Cambodia to become a war photographer, until he disappears altogether. The book is a biographical assembly of the man's passion and of his self-realisation. In the respect that many Australians leave Australia to find themselves and be who they want to be, this book suggests that Australian identity is found offshore, by escaping the provincialism and narrowness that Christopher Koch describes as Tasmanian. Exterritoriality as a means of describing oneself.

One man's story? Yes and no. Of course it is possible to have successful careers in Australia. But it is culturally a relevant comment to make that many Australians see a trip to Asia or Europe as a rite of passage. Many New Zealanders still see England as their mother country and commute with fervor to that place, although in recent years they also choose to work in Australia, America and elsewhere. The difference is that Australians who go to Europe or Asia are often after a pub crawl from Athens to London, or a sexual awakening or a drug experience in Asia. In a sense, then, many Australians go abroad to lose their consciousness, or grow up as was the case with the protagonist in this novel.

This begs the question as to why it is necessary for many people to leave Australia in order to gain such experiences. What prevents them from maturing on their home soil? One answer is to say that not only Australians travel to learn, it is a humanly common pursuit. Another answer, pertinent to Australia, is that the country lacks something that is provided outside of itself. Maybe it is the challenge, an opportunity to step outside a constricting society, a society that is reluctant to applaud personal achievement outside the realm of sport, a society that is reluctant to look at itself in the same way that other societies notably manage to do, such as Europe or Asia. Australia avoids looking at itself, thus coercing an exterritorial perception of character and persona.

In a very large sense, the literature of Australia is peopled by writers who give voice to this theme, the pull of the outside, of Europe. Henry Handel Richardson in her life and trilogy[8], and Patrick White by his own example and many of his books[9] illustrate the tension of not quite being at home in either place, not in Europe, not in Australia, not Asia, thus subject to a pendulum action, a back and forth, looking for the advantages of the old and the new country.

The Hand That Signed The Paper, Helen Demidenko/Darville, 1995

"*The Hand that Signed the Paper* tells the story of Vitaly, a Ukranian peasant, who endures the destruction of his village and family by Stalin's communists. He welcomes the Nazi invasion in 1941 and willingly enlists in the SS Death Squads to take a horrifying revenge against those he perceives to be his persecutors.

"This remarkable novel, a shocking story of the hatred that gives evil life, is also an eloquent plea for peace and justice." (Dust Jacket quotation)

To say that this novel caused something of an uproar would be to utter an understatement in Australian literary history. It basically split the Australian literary scene down the middle - on the one hand it was defended from the point of view of freedom to write whatever one wants; and on the other it was accused of being anti-semitic, racist and downright fascist.

At the time of its publication, it attracted reviews such as these:

> -astonishingly talented...with the true novelist's gift of entering into the imagination of those she is writing about. - David Marr
>
> A searingly truthful account of terrible wartime deeds that is also an imaginative work of extraordinary redemptive power. - Jill Kitson

One can speculate on the reasons why this book was a MFA Winner, based on the opinions above and the kind of prose below.

> As I drive down the Pacific Highway, the French are busy dropping bombs into the waters in which my nieces swim, the Americans and Iraqis are engaged in a bizarre competition to see who can destroy the world many times over most, and my uncle will soon be on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity. I wonder casually, as I turn off the main road to fill up with petrol, if Eichmann had a daughter and is she felt the same way as I do now. It is an idle question, but I toy with it as the light and darkness at sunset plays over the glittering Ampol sign. This is one petrol station where they still serve you while you sit in your car. A pimply boy walks towards me across the asphalt and asks 'how much?' and I say 'twenty dollars'. I sit in the cockpit of my car, and look at my watch. The boy takes my keys. The key ring has a cheap plastic figurine of 'Expo Oz' attached. I've had it for four years, and Expo Oz's platypus bill has very little paint left on it. (First Paragraph)

In August 1995 it emerged, as a result of some simple investigative journalism first by the Brisbane Courier Mail, then picked up as a newsworthy literati bun-fight reminiscent of the Ern Malley Affair[10] by most newspapers in Australia including *The Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, that the author was not who she said she was. She claimed to have an Ukrainian father and she claimed her surname to be Demidenko. In fact, the name with which she studied at the University of Queensland was Darville. Her father in fact was a migrant to Australia from England.

Some of the contestation around this book concerned the content of the book, some the author's identity, and some the association between the two. In the event, Darville's book found a publisher, and more than 25,000 readers, including myself. There are many books written every year in Australia, and some find publishers while others don't, some have small print runs and some have re-runs.

The fact that Helen Darville misrepresented herself and her background in order to market her fiction more successfully should, in theory at least, not affect the consideration of the book's literary merit. After all, the prevailing postmodern notion is that 'the author is dead' (Roland Barthes), that any work should be able to stand on its own merit, independent of its creator.

The fact that her marketing strategy obviously influenced members of the Miles Franklin Prize Committee to make the award in 1995 therefore is an issue. Several commentators (Richard Glover, Greg Roberts) have suggested that the reasons the prize givers gave showed – once again – that Australia's Cultural Cringe[11] persists and pervades Australia to such an extent that exterritorial images hold a greater appeal than does domestically-inspired and -located narrative.

A further criticism of this book's award is the observation that the judges were gullible to a perceived fashionable political correctness prevailing in Australia at that time. A correctness that in some quarters still today says that a woman with a non-English speaking background (often referred to in the reviews as 'ethnic', i.e. Non-Anglo-Saxon centric), a woman whose family has moreover been dislocated by geography, war and history should hold greater public interest and reader appeal than a narrative which by its domestic setting might contain fewer sensational and outrageous disadvantages. Thus, in post-modern language, there was a privileging of the author's gender and ethnicity above the actual book's merit.

The eagerness with which the judges praised this book made them overlook the author's obvious personal and ideological confusion (some commentators even inferred anti-Semitism as well as a flirtation with extreme right wing conservatism). The latter references hark back to a similar literary episode in early 20th century Australia, when documented nascent nationalistic sources were used for DH Lawrence's *Kangaroo* (1927). Their decision to award the prize highlights (apart from a less than careful reading[12]) not only a cultural sense of inferiority, but a

desire to value Australian writing that defines itself with history outside of Australia, as if by virtue of that association the identity of Australian writing could be asserted and strengthened from within.

This book defines my use of the term exterritoriality in three senses:

- A persisting attempt by an Australian-born writer to link Australian identity to a larger, externally located identity. Thus exterritoriality as a theme says that there is an imbalance between prose that deals within Australia and prose that explores memory, links, and connections that lie outside Australia. This is an imbalance of value, of identity, of integrity of identity that succumbs to external rather than internal definitions of themselves.
- This exterritoriality can be partially explained by the fact that, in comparative terms, less has happened historically in Australia than outside of it, and in fairness to Australia (indigenous Australian history included) Australia is a creation of people most of whose personal histories do indeed come from outside of it.
- But exterritoriality here also is used to illustrate the persistence of the cultural cringe complex in Australia, first coined in 1950, now continuing past the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and the Celebration in 2001 of the centenary of Australian Federation, into a new millennium. In the contemporary setting, this cringe mentality is hiding behind political correctness, which is a form of intellectual cowardice. The form of this suggests that a woman's experience is better than a man's, because women have been discriminated against more than men. That an ethnic woman's story is more serving because it emanates from a less privileged group than a mainstream majority. That writing which is wholly located within Australia is less deserving than writing that engages with borderless ideologies, as if the two were mutually exclusive [13].

Why is it that Australian literature that is awarded prizes cannot have an authenticity, a location, a set of described experiences that are profoundly linked to the land which it is meant to represent? The answer is that Australia is in transition from exterritorial images of itself towards a more self-assured, self-asserting, inner way of writing. Why such a desperate thirst for exterritorial origins, settings, histories, pre-occupations? Is the colonized novelty of Australia overshadowed by the colonizer's historical consciousness, or does Australia itself provide a barren-ness (A.D. Hope), a lack of Lawrentian fecundity for the purposes of literary inspiration?

Bibliography

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Interview with Shirley Hazzard at http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2004/s1134760.html

List of Miles Franklin Awards

2004 “The Great Fire”, Shirley Hazzard, London, Virago,
2003 “Journey to The Stone Country”, Alex Miller
2002 “True History of the Kelly Gang” Peter Carey
2001 "Dark Palace", Frank Moorhouse
2000 "Drylands", Thea Astley and "Benang", Kim Scott
1999 "Eucalyptus", Murray Bail
1998 "Jack Maggs", Peter Carey
1997 "The Glade within the Grove", David Foster
1996 "Highways to a War", Christopher Koch
1995 "The Hand That Signed the Paper", Helen Demidenko
1994 "The Grisly Wife", Rodney Hall
1993 "The Ancestor Game", Alex Miller
1992 "Cloudstreet", Tim Winton
1991 "The Great World", David Malouf
1990 "Oceana Fine", Tom Flood
1989 "Oscar and Lucinda", Peter Carey
Date changed from year of publication to year of announcement.
1987 "Dancing on Coral", Glenda Adams
1986 "The Well", Elizabeth Jolley
1985 "The Doubleman", Christopher Koch
1984 "Shallows", Tim Winton
1983 No award.
1982 "Just Relations", Rodney Hall
1981 "Bliss", Peter Carey
1980 "The Impersonators", Jessica Anderson
1979 "A Woman of the Future", David Ireland
1978 "Tirra Lirra by the River", Jessica Anderson
1977 "Swords and Crowns and Rings", Ruth Park
1976 "The Glass Canoe", David Ireland
1975 "Poor Fellow My Country", Xavier Herbert
1974 "The Mango Tree", Ronald McKie
1973 No award.
1972 "The Acolyte", Thea Astley
1971 "The Unknown Industrial Prisoner", David Ireland
1970 "A Horse of Air", Dal Stivens
1969 "Clean Straw for Nothing", George Johnston
1968"Three Cheers for the Paraclete", Thomas Keneally
1967 "Bring Larks and Heroes", Thomas Keneally
1966 "Trap", Peter Mathers
1965 "The Slow Natives", Thea Astley
1964 "My Brother Jack", George Johnston
1963 "Careful He Might Hear You", Sumner Locke Elliott
1962 "The Well Dressed Explorer", Thea Astley
"The Cupboard Under the Stairs," George Turner
1961 "Riders in the Chariot", Patrick White
1960 "The Irishman", Elizabeth O'Connor
1959 "The Big Fellow", Vance Palmer
1958 "To the Islands", Randolph Stow
1957 "Voss", Patrick White

1. Alex Miller, *The Ancestor Game*, MFA 1993
2. This was the view of why The MFA was not given to Frank Moorhouse for Volume One of his League of Nations novels in 1995, *Grand Days*. It was argued that although the main character was Australian, the novel was set in Geneva, Switzerland, and thus could not possibly be Australian.
3. Dame Leonie Kramer, Australia's first professor of Australian literature and until 2001 Chancellor of Sydney University, must count among her less successful achievements the awarding of the prize to the young woman who wrote *The Hand that Signed the Paper* (1995).
4. Author of *The Female Eunuch, Menopause*, and other titles.
5. *The Fatal Shore*, 1989, *Nothing if not Critical*, 1993,
6. The most recent version of which is by Peter Carey, *The True History of the Kelly Gang*, 2001
7. Professor of Australian Literature, Sydney University, in the ABC report on the Internet (cited). "In the judges' report we refer to it as a novel which shows in the digital age why the novel still matters, and I think we were exactly thinking about the particular pleasures that you get from wonderful literary fiction which you don't get from any other media, and that is, the way in which she's able to create scenes and characters in just really minimal words, and the fact that she doesn't really tell you... she leaves a lot of it up to your own imagination to fill in the gaps."
8. Henry Handel Richardosn, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney*, 1916
9. Patrick White, *The Eye of the Storm*, 1979
10. In 1944 Max Harris, the editor of *Angry Penguins*, published poems by one Ern Malley. The real authors of these poems were James McAuley and Harold Stewart. The literary hoax tested the biographical accuracy of the author, the authenticity of the poetry and the relationship between the two.
11. AA Phillips, 1950, a feeling that Australia's culture is inferior to that of other countries.
12. Dame Leonie Kramer, a Miles Franklin Judge for *The Hand That Signed The Paper*, in 1992 famously claimed, with not the slightest misgiving, that she had not read one of the texts she prescribed for the Higher School Certificate Examination of the New South Wales Board of Studies. The text in question was *Top Girls*, by Caryl Churchill, and was seen by some parents as feminist and using expletive language.
13. A good example of Australian Writing which is wonderful for its universal, borderless material is David Malouf, *Conversations at Curlow Creek*, (1996), or *Remembering Babylon*, (1994). Yet these books were never selected, it is contested here, precisely because of their Australian consciousness. Instead, once again, the theme of exterritoriality is found in Malouf's *The Great World*, 1991, which was given the MFA undoubtedly for that novel's memory of Australian military engagement and experiences during the Second World War.