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

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

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan or photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Siswas, Heather Taylor Johnson, Kerryn Tredrea and Cathoel Jorss for encouraging my return to writing after a long absence in the environment movement.

I thank my room-mates at the University of Adelaide, Rachael Mead, Emma McEwen, Dennis McIntosh, Catherine Arguile, Robert Horne, Bernadette Smith and Rebekah Clarkson for making it fun to go to work.

For his belief, encouragement and commitment to a rigorous process, I thank my supervisor Professor Brian Castro. I thank my co-supervisor Jill Jones for her insightful comments in the final stages of writing.

To the readers who responded enthusiastically when I needed a fresh perspective, John Flanagan Willanski, Sabina Flanagan, Rachael Mead, Heather Taylor Johnson, Rebekah Clarkson, Sonja Dechian, Anna Solding, Chris Flanagan, Julia Winefield, Diana Kirk, Alison Flanagan, Breony Carbines and the Rockhole Recovery Crew – it’s been lovely to share my stuff with you. Thanks so much for the helpful suggestions and tweaks. Thanks George Willanski for the formatting tutorial.

Thanks to the Adelaide writing community, and to all friends and family who have taken an interest in my work.

Thank you to Varuna, the Writers’ House for the Fellowship Retreat Residency that made the home straight a pampered gallop. Thanks also to Helen Barnes-Bulley and Varuna for the mentoring consultation and encouragement on a short story that got out of hand and became a novella.

My mother, Sabina Flanagan has always supported and encouraged my writing and has provided meticulous feedback on drafts of both stories and exegesis. Thank you, Ma.

For his faith in my writing, generosity as a reader and sustained interest in the development of my work and ideas, I thank my husband, John Flanagan Willanski. This thesis is the same age as our relationship!

Lastly, I thank my little in-utero daughter for keeping me company at the desk and everywhere else during the last six months before submission.

Cassie Flanagan Willanski, April 2012.