The 'Psychic Space' of Queensland in the Work of Janette Turner Hospital

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In January 1967 Janette Turner Hospital left Queensland for Boston. She was unpublished, 25 years of age, and very much the product of a loving but fundamentalist childhood that she understood as the 'source of all comfort and security, but also the source of all harm'. She has called America, India. Canada and France 'home' and has also frequently taught in other European countries. Although she has two adult children who have made their lives in the United States and Canada, her parents and three younger brothers remain in Brisbane, so she returns regularly to sustain family ties.

Today, as a novelist, short story writer, reviewer, critic and professional academic whose field of specialisation is medieval literature, her work is published in ten languages.2 The University of Queensland Press remains instrumental in publishing her books.3 Although Turner Hospital has become a member of an intellectual diaspora, although she has defined herself as 'nomadic and international' and 'dislocated', she nevertheless considers herself a 'roving patriate' rather than an expatriate Australian.4 More explicitly, she consistently calls Queensland her 'emotional home'.5

She has, in fact, described her body as 'thoroughly Queensland' because through it she experiences 'an exhilarating and pure sense of being home' that she attributes to the physicality of the place — to the 'light and the blueness of the sky'.6 Turner Hospital's writing about Queensland is invested with an emotional energy that is generated by an early 'sense of permanent exile' that encouraged her to write for 'other nomads'. She has also told interviewer Beryl Langer that she draws 'increasingly' on memories of childhood and of Queensland, describing this combination of time and place as enabling her to 'write out of psychic Queensland space'.8

This paper examines Turner Hospital's idea of psychic Queensland space as it emerges through her work. It argues that, as an educated, Western, upwardly mobile, voluntary exile, rather than a political refugee, the term 'exile' is too singular to encapsulate Turner Hospital's identity. Instead, the terms 'nomad' and 'exile' and

'diaspora' are instrumental in making her psychic space geographically specific — that is, a Queensland psychic space. Salman Rushdie has identified diasporic subjects as hybridic and has suggested that this loosening of the bond to a singular 'home' means that such subjects locate 'themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much in material things ... in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves'.9

Psychic Queensland space is not therefore simply about 'space' as the subtropical, tropical, desert or coastal landscapes of Queensland that Turner Hospital draws upon because they are lost and she yearns for them. Psychic Queensland space is also about putting childhood memories to work in the present to understand the discrepancy Rushdie has identified. For Turner Hospital, this packaging of the present is the source of art:

One becomes a writer in my case, out of the absolute necessity of mediating a conflictual environment to oneself, and in that sense the ... expatriate's malaise has traditionally produced something worthwhile in art.10

The 'conflictual environment' was a home consciously mediated by the Word of a Pentecostal fundamentalism that believed 'literally in the Second Coming'.11 This inevitably produced a visible difference that was targeted by the mainstream community. For an unimmunised child, primary school became a hostile environment. When her younger brother contracted diphtheria in the early 1950s and the family home was quarantined, the young Janette Turner was subjected to regular 'group bullying'.12 From Year 5 onwards, she felt 'marked as a leper'.13 Scapegoated as 'the contaminated Pentecostal child',14 she remembers spending 'nights and nights being so frightened about going to school in the morning that [she] would pray that [she'd] die'.15

Turner Hospital has described her childhood self as 'a clue-gatherer ... very conscious of the meanings of signs and the quite different meanings of them in ... disparate cultures'.16 She spent hours decoding the 'bewildering sign system' of difference that operated between the worlds of home and school.17 This was her experience of involuntary exile from what was then a very defined and homogeneous mainstream — an exile she later believed would have made her 'a permanent basket-case if things hadn't improved'.18 The geographical tension between Queensland and elsewhere in adulthood echoes these anxieties in Turner Hospital's childhood.

Turner Hospital does, however, find safe spaces for herself. Exploring the connection of landscapes to embodied writing, Bronwyn Davies has called such harbours 'unpeopled spaces'. 19 Turner Hospital has spoken to Davies of her first refuge:

I was told ... we don't understand what God's thinking. So I wasn't allowed to ask questions at home, and for quite other reasons at school the questions I would have asked would be deemed stupid or the class

would laugh at them. So my first experience of where I could think my own criminal and puzzling and unanswerable thoughts was a fusion of landscape and body and thought. I would climb and hide up our mango tree, you know, or I would go off alone to the beach or I would actually be in the surf ...20

This 'fusion of landscape body and thought' draws Rushdie's 'strange fusions' and 'unprecedented unions' to attention again, but it does so in a more active way. For Turner Hospital, this 'fusion' is not random or accidental. It is the result of seeking a space where she is free to create new answers. The narratives she produces from the age of nine onwards become the instruments of her identity shift from exile to nomad. Rosemary Betterton suggests:

The stories we tell ourselves about who we are — the half remembered events and places which shape our lives — are the foundations on which we build up a sense of self. Reworking what has already happened, we also give it current meaning, for history always represents the present as much as the past.21

The danger here, of course, is that the 'reworking' of the past can so distort the remembered landscapes that the 'current meaning' no longer maintains legitimacy or realism. 'Exile' becomes a term which gives romantic form to an undesired lack of 'fit' between self and place. Indeed, Selina Samuels has accused Turner Hospital of just such a tendency:

to romanticize a landscape that exists in her memory rather than in her present experiences and to write for a foreign market. She frequently characterizes Queensland as the exotic frontier of civilization, only superficially tamed ... designed to appeal to readers to whom Australia is ... recognizable only for boomerangs and *Crocodile Dundee.22*

This romanticising is one aspect of psychic Queensland space that deserves scrutiny. I demonstrate, however, that Turner Hospital's sense of exile is ambivalent; she *is* both nomad *and* exile. Just as the family is the 'source of all comfort and the source of all harm', exile evokes grief for what is left behind and desire for new possibilities, new futures.

The concept of 'exile' 'nomadism' and 'diaspora' are all relevant to analysing the representation of a rounded rather than reductive sense of Turner Hospital's construction and experience of psychic Queensland space. Although she uses the terms 'exile' and 'nomad' somewhat interchangeably, part of the following analysis rests upon recognising that, whilst some slippage is acceptable, the terms are in fact quite distinctive. Perhaps the slippage occurs because, as John Durham Peters suggests, 'current notions of exile, nomadism and diaspora are inescapably tied to the Hebrew Bible, ancient Greece [and] Christianity'.23 He differentiates them,

however, associating exile with a loss of home that tends towards nostalgia. A romanticising element rigidifies identity as the exile mourns what is unavailable. Thus Samuel's suspicions of Turner Hospital's romanticising tendency can be linked to her use of the term 'exile'.

Nomadism, however, challenges all this: it suggests that home is no longer connected to a singular landscape. Unlike exile, nomadism calls upon a certain poststructural fluidity in the subject, an ability to reconstruct 'home' in new lands. Diaspora, for Peters, may or may not have a set homeland. Diaspora tends towards the formation of an international community based on religious or intellectual principles. These are all aspects of the 'psychic Queensland space' that Turner Hospital draws upon in work that is, ultimately, that of the nomad and the exile who seeks new answers *by* writing from a psychic Queensland space characterised by the 'fusion of landscape and body and thought'.

Before bringing 'thought' into the equation, however, I want to examine the 'fusion' of body and landscape' — to return, really, to the idea of a body as 'thoroughly Queensland'. This is a tangible place to begin. Through looking first at the fusion of body and landscape, it will become possible to approach Peters' suggestion that nostalgia is a key component of exile alongside Samuel's notion of 'romanticising', a notion that potentially implicates Turner Hospital in a rather mercenary nostalgia that rigidifies identity to the point of excluding critical 'thought' or reflexivity.

In the short story 'Uncle Seaborn', the character Seaborn is working with gold ingots in a furnace at Mt Morgan, yet he is described in terms that merge him with his environment. His hair is:

soft as water, crinkly wavelets rippling back over sand), the colour of seaweed ... the filaments of his seaweed hair lift and sway against the moist aurora of the furnace. A gleaming creature, barebacked and slick with sweat, he reaches in with wood handled pincers, lifts, stacks the gold. Behind him ... the Great Dividing Range falls away to the coastal plain, and the wet tendrils of hair drip down ravines of muscle and bone, of eucalypt scrub, of Fitzroy River silt, making their way to the Pacific. It sucked at him endlessly, the ocean.24

His body is merged here not only with the sea and estuary, but also with a hinterland that is clearly named as a Queensland landscape that sculpts the body. It is on the whole, though, a description that maintains a distance between writer and subject. Its omniscience is that achieved by someone flying in a small plane across carefully observed terrain. He *is* the landscape seen through the high window of the authorial eye. Uncle Seaborn 's subjectivity is not open to us. The embodiment of the landscape is even external somehow to Uncle Seaborn, who. were he described to his face in such 'romantic' terms, would probably give the speaker a quizzical look before wiping the sweat from his brow and continuing with his task.

For other characters, however, the landscape is more internalised. Felicity in *Borderline* is connected to the landscape through her psyche:

Felicity woke sweating because of the dream.

She was trapped in a painting again. She fitted snugly inside her black outline but there were 144 square inches missing from the middle of her torso. Between her breasts and her pubic hair, the viewer could see straight through to the tropics: mango trees, coconut palms, white sand. A conch shell where her navel might have been. White wave crests frothing like crabs up the sand, a little breeze off the reef stirring her pubic hair ... According to the guidebook, someone said, the view could be South India or the Queensland coast of Australia. Felicity considered sticking small flags into the canvas to mark the sites of her hometowns. If you scratch the crotch and sniff, someone said, you can smell papaya.

No touching, please! called a guard.

There was a stain on the floor below the painting.25

This passage provides an internalised image of the tropics not simply because the image is located *inside* the torso of the character, but also because it is a dream that embodies itself by producing physical responses. It wells up from some deeper level and makes Felicity wake in a sweat; it produces in those who view it a carnal desire signified by both the promise of the sweet scent of papaya and the stain on the floor. That desire provokes the guard's prohibition on touching. The dream breaks to the surface and erupts into sensuality.

Felicity's tropics break into Turner Hospital's fiction repeatedly, and Turner Hospital has stated that for her, Green Island, off the Northern coast of Queensland, 'remains ... [an] image of Eden'.26 In *Charades*, when Kay finally manages to connect with Nicholas, for whom she has been yearning endlessly, he appears on her doorstep saying: 'I thought perhaps a trip to the Garden of Eden?' and she is whisked off to Green Island.27

There is often an innocent sensuality in Turner Hospital's Queensland landscapes. This is apparent in the short story 'The Last of the Hapsburgs'. where the ageing Miss Davenport stands on the beach near Port Douglas, hoists her skirts up to her thighs and, in her own vision of herself, is restored to youth. The surf 'rises from her ankles to her knees. *Sing me North Queensland*, it lisps with its slickering tongues'. Miss Davenport goes further than Seaborn, though: she realises that to do this, to 'sing North Queensland', she would 'need a different sort of alphabet, a chlorophyll one, a solar one. The place will not fit into words.'28 She begins, therefore, to dance, to bring the language of the body into play in a childlike physical dialogue with the landscape.

This is not a frequent event in Turner Hospital's work, but it is recurring. In *Charades*. Kay climbs Tibrogargan, one of the Glass House Mountains in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. She:

flings her arms up to the sky in an intense spasm of pleasure. If she were to take a dance step into space, she believes the air would support her ... she can feel the mountain breathing like a heart against her spine ... [she] turns her face, eyes closed, to the sun. There will never be words for this, she thinks. It will never need words.29

In both these episodes, time disappears, the boundaries between landscape and body melt as a moment of divine connection recalls the innocence of Eden before the Fall. In its pristine relation to the landscape, the body is infinite, consciousness is expanded and individuality is a part of something much larger than what is defined and contained inside the skin. These are experiences of *jouissance* that precede mediation — that are pure, spiritual and deeply restorative. There is no question of belonging in the moment or the place that constitutes the experience. The divine is, like Eden itself, beyond time and space. All longing is gone; only being remains and home is this extraordinarily infinite space without boundaries. The characters are simultaneously corporeal and spiritual.

Although these experiences will never need words, or are beyond words, they clearly come to readers through narrative. In fact, Turner Hospital is drawing precisely on that combination of childhood memories and Queensland landscapes, that psychic Queensland space, to draw a past into the present through the signifying process. The same space can be seen shaping the creative process when she speaks about the writing of Charade's homecoming. She explains that the Queensland sections of that novel, and the homecoming scene in particular, were:

written when it was minus 20 or worse outside, while looking out onto the frozen Saint Lawrence and Lake Ontario. I just felt mentally that I reconstructed the rainforest around me — it was really quite wonderful. I really didn't want to come back out of it at all. you know I just felt I went right back in time — it was a terrific feeling ... when I was writing the bit about Charade's phone call home to Bea and she says, 'I'm homesick Mum, I'm coming home' — I'm sobbing away at the word processor — and that was when I realised that I would, I am coming back. I mean it suddenly hit me.30

Writing functions as a conduit through which Turner Hospital reconnects to past landscapes through the body. Charade's return is symbolic not simply for Charade but for Turner Hospital as the physical process of writing becomes instrumental to her psychic *reconstitution* of her Queensland identity.

There is clearly some truth, therefore, to Samuels' 'accusation' of romanticising, not only in the small 'r' nostalgic sense relevant to exile, but also in the big 'R' literary sense of the Romantics, through an affinity for landscape, the psychic and the sublime. Turner Hospital also draws heavily on a fusion of body and landscape in articles and non-fictional narratives for audiences that *are* a non-Queensland or 'foreign market'.

In the Destinations section of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* she has an article called 'The Brisbane Effect'. Here she tours the landscapes of her youth. She tells of her return to 'the place that now and forever sends its mad green passion-fruit vines and jasmine runners and mangoes rampaging into dreams and into every corner of my imagination: the city of Brisbane, my hometown'.31 The editorial byline capitalises on this excess, declaring that: 'An Aussie returns home, where the subtropics impose their own organic idea of things.'

Similarly, a piece in the *New York Times* Travel section declares a child of the rain forest returns to that fragile world' and is accompanied by photographs of the marsupial tiger cat, Boyd's rainforest dragon and curtains of strangler-fig vines. Yet correspondence indicates that this article was researched and factual rather than personal.³² Unlike the Destinations piece, it totally ignores the fact that Turner Hospital grew up in suburban Wilston and rode the trams into the Valley more often than she reached the fringes of the rainforests at Mount Glorious, Samford or Tamborine Mountain.

Uncle Seaborn's physique, the euphoria of Miss Davenport and Kay, Charade's return, as well as the tropical flavour of these non-fictional pieces, are symbolic for the characters and for Turner Hospital. The process of writing (re)establishes the psychic connection to 'home' she felt when her body was up the mango tree or in the surf. It is romanticised because she is *not* returning simply to Wilston, to the family home or to fundamentalism. These things represent a world she found impossible to inhabit for any length of time: the church made her 'asthmatic' and she 'walked on eggshells' trying not to hurt the family by holding different views.33 She returns instead to a constructed and naturalised space. This is a space she associates with both home and freedom, where she is close to family and fundamentalism but not bound by them.

Yes, Queensland is Eden. Yes, it is romanticised and, generically at times, Romantic. Yes, it no doubt appeals to non-Queenslanders as 'exotic'. But Turner Hospital's fusion of body and landscape is not all that creates Queensland psychic space. Psychic space is also about bridging a mind/body split to bring 'thought' into the equation. Turner Hospital retreated to the surf or the mango tree, or writing about memories of the surf and other childhood landscapes in order to think. Before Rushdie even captured and popularised the experience of diasporic subjects locating themselves in 'ideas rather than places', Turner Hospital was living it. She was 'reworking what [had] already happened' (Betterton) into narratives that sought to understand, critique and communicate the impact of difference.

Her writing, therefore, is never purely Edenic. Eden remains as it is theologically, very prone to carnality and to being destabilised by a woman who continues to ask (and find answers) for her own 'criminal and puzzling' thoughts. This constant, restless searching forces an exile, the loss of 'Eden' as a sheltered home in the presence of God. For Turner Hospital, the exile was self-imposed rather than divine retribution but it meant severing herself from the certainties of the fundamentalist family and church. Rejection of their beliefs despite their ongoing love, meant that, in their eyes, she 'was consigning her soul to eternal damnation'.34 It is little wonder that 'thought', critical thought, is a partner in the creation of her psychic Queensland space.

Turner Hospital's capacity for romanticising, and then engaging a critical consciousness, is made clear in the appropriately named short story, 'Litany for the Homeland'. Told by a mature narrator who takes readers back to her Queensland childhood, it is a complex and potent brew of ideas. It begins with the narrator under 'the frangipani tree at the age of seven, lost, homesick for Melbourne which

had been so recently mislaid'.35 Throughout the piece, the nostalgia of the exile produces a sentimental attachment to Queensland:

Here where I write, where a brilliant cobalt scar of river has just slashed the white surface of March, where the St Lawrence is still mostly skating rink but part flow, I have smelled and touched Queensland. I have woken, disoriented, to see orchids in snowdrifts. Along the bare knotted trunks of maples and hickory trees, epiphytes and creepers have run rampant. I have smelled rainforest.

Homeland is where the senses steer by instinct when the reins are let go. It is always accessible in that small space between sleeping and waking ...

Wherever I am, I live in Queensland. I know to what brown country and to what wet rainforests my homing thoughts will fly in the moment between living and dying, when *desire shall fail*, *for man goeth to his long home*, and woman too ...36 (italics in original)

This passage is useful, however, not only because it captures an intense nostalgia, but also because it reminds us that Turner Hospital is writing from elsewhere, that she *is* writing, she is selecting from and (re)constructing memories. Psychic space is also represented in this extract as a liminal terrain, a threshold space. It is where the *'senses* steer by instinct' in that space between sleeping and waking. It is also, however, where her 'homing *thoughts* will fly' as the soul hovers at another threshold between living and dying.

For Turner Hospital, psychic Queensland space is therefore physical, intellectual and spiritual. The story is structured *as* a litany. The prose of 'Litany to the Homeland' has recurring 'amens', cadences and rhythms that make it a prayer. Religious texts and concepts are woven into childhood memories, conversations about homelands and the narrator's speculations. It is an earnest supplication that seeks a response from the audience. That entreaty is a plea for understanding about the complexities of 'home'. It is made by a narrator who is not simply in exile awaiting the moment that physical desire fails and the soul returns to the 'long home' or a narrator who uncritically accepts that *'here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come'.37*

Instead, this restless nomad critically recognises the contingency and marginality of any 'home'. The Medieval *Book of Hours* is used to demonstrate dislocation, the way 'people step out of gold leaf miniatures and into the margins and sometimes right off the page'.38 The narrator identifies the people *and* the words that occupy such spaces as her 'kin'.

They are always beckoning me to the mysterious space behind the word, between the pages, beyond the pale and the fence palings and the text and the sanctioned structures. Their eyes glitter. Listen, they murmur seductively: rules are for transgressing, borders for crossing.39

This describes yet another 'mysterious' threshold space, an unsanctioned psychic domain that is populated by characters who reinforce the significance of the triumvirate of body, landscape and thoughts that are fused in Turner Hospital's childhood memories of Queensland. A renegade Catholic boy with 'glittering eyes' entices the narrator from the garden, through the paling fence into the sensualised openness of paddock and creek. He is 'half-wild' and lives in a boat that is moored in various places in Breakfast Creek. Discovering this, the narrator suddenly 'looks down a mirrored corridor of *why nots?* Infinitely multiplying themselves and leading to who knew what possibilities?'40

This marks a shift from the nostalgia and mourning of exile to the possibilities that being nomadic offers those who leave Eden. A Cree Indian becomes a reminder that the narrator is not alone in her connection to a landscape that is only partially available to her. He takes her to his 'home': an ice flow that, like her Queensland, is a landscape that is only available for a part of each year before it disappears. 'Litany for a Homeland' lists various incarnations of home, making the whole idea contingent and unstable. The narrator observes that 'we shift from place to place, we build homes, we construct a homeland, we deconstruct it, we make and unmake, we wander from past to future'.41

More than this, however, 'Litany' stresses again the importance of words that have been marginalised by mainstream texts. A black marine trying to come to terms with a civilian identity befriends the adult narrator when she is teaching a writing class. His stories are too profoundly disturbing to assess. Memories haunt him:

But what do you do with all the stuff in *here?* he demanded, knocking on his forehead. 'You need a garbage truck to cart it away. If I could write stories and send them to you ...' he said. He held his head in his hands as though the clamour inside was deafening. 'If I could let it *out*', he said. 'If I could send you letters.'42

Like Turner Hospital, the marine writes 'out of the absolute necessity of mediating a conflictual environment to oneself', to externalise what is internal, to recreate a relationship to the past that will support the present. None of this is sentimental. It is stark and blunt. It sits alongside the nostalgic and contextualises it, partly illuminating the plea for understanding and recognition that shines through a 'litany' whose theological roots are partially responsible for the mark of difference that rests on the narrator.

Whilst Eden exists as a pure Queensland space, it simultaneously exists in constant tension with its own unreality. The intemalisation of the tropics in *Borderline* demonstrates how Paradise seems to bring with it an undertow, a pull towards embodiment as forbidden carnal desire. The tropics are not simply a lush Eden of sunlit beaches and green islands; rainforests are not simply the home of people like Bea, a fertile and compassionate earth-mother figure; Brisbane is not simply a city whose relaxed pace creates the 'languid feeling of life underwater'.43 In *The Last Magician*, Sydney's dark underworld has found its way to Queensland.

Gabriel has 'traced tunnels all the way to Brisbane. "They come out in Brunswick Street," he says.' This urban corruption is connected to the Queensland police force as Gabriel goes missing after getting the help of 'an old Brisbane cop' who should not be trusted.44

Corruption taints paradise, emerging as an erotic undercurrent in the rainforest rock pool at Cedar Grove, Samford where the protagonists all played as children. Charlie dives into the pool into a 'strange and thrilling world':

The inside of the rainforest hummed in his ears and ... [h]e was so surprised by the sense of weightlessness and euphoria that he opened his eyes and the water was crystal clear. He saw each dimple in the great basalt slabs and he saw moss waving like flags, and he saw the pale ghostly legs of Cat and Catherine, twin mermaids, trailing above him. When he popped above the surface like a cork from a bottle, he was spluttering but laughing too. He thought his laughter might take him up above the water, the boulders, past the laddered fig, past the canopy itself. He was flying.45

In memory, this is a place of innocence and connection to the sublime reminiscent of Miss Davenport's dancing in the surf. There is an innocent awakening of Charlie's sensuality. There is also, however, an erotic charge between Cat and Robbie that is a precursor to future violence. When Robbie is swimming, Cat joins him 'sliding on her belly on the boulder like a lizard', entering the pool 'like a water snake' before 'wreathing in a slow coil around Robbie and then yanking him down. There was a spluttering thrashing game, and laughter, and they could see Robbie kissing Cat and Cat kissing back.'46

There is no laughter in the next 'game', however, when Robbie holds Cat on the railway tracks near Wilston station as those he wants to impress hold down her simpleton brother a few metres away:

It was the boys on the corner who held Willy down, and Robbie who held down Cat. They used long forked sticks, no not sticks, small branches of stringybark trees.

Cat struggled and screamed. 'I' ll kill you. Robbie,' she yelled.

The wave of pleasure Robbie felt was so intense, he thought he might choke on it. He felt drunk. He forgot he was afraid of the rails. He threw himself down on to of Cat and kissed her full on the mouth. She bit him. He was in a frenzy of excitement, struggling on top of her, kissing, being bitten and biting her back. Her wrists were manacled with his hands but she fought against them and reached up and yanked his hair. He gave a yelp and laughed in triumph but vaulted back and held her down with the branch.47

Willy dies because he is simple and even when the boys release him he stays on the tracks. The scene in the rainforest pool is a softer, more innocent and yet sensualised rehearsal of a moment when lust and power gain the upper hand. Willy's death is one of two for which there is a body, rather than an absence. The other is a woman's skeleton found wedged between two boulders in the rainforest pool where the children all swam. It had been so savagely knifed that the bones were nicked and chipped, the stab wounds estimated at 36 and the murderer profiled as someone intimately connected to the victim.48 The pool becomes a place of innocence and corruption as what is probably Cat's body rots away. Representing freedom and entrapment, it can be read as signifier of both Paradise and Purgatory.

In *Oyster*, of course, where Turner Hospital actually confronts fundamentalism directly. Queensland is even further removed from Paradise. The setting is the desert, and it is a desert that is a far cry from its potential as a place of spiritual retreat or enlightenment, or the frontier of self-discovery and adventure as it traditionally is in Australian literature. The opal-bearing land beyond Quilpie is a cloistered, stinking hell-hole. Beneath the ground, in the tunnels of the opal mines, a cult leader wrapped 'in a scarlet robe' and ensconced on a 'throne of scarlet cushions' ritualistically rapes and abuses the bodies and souls of those innocents he has seduced into following him. The young protagonist tells him defiantly that the way he quotes the Bible makes her feel sick. Religious images are collapsed on to carnal desire as Oyster's 'sex stands up like a pulpit' and he refers to it as the 'sceptre of power'. Forcing himself into Mercy's mouth, he begins to rant and rave about her eating of the 'fruit of the Tree of Knowledge' in order 'to know all things'.49

In closing, then, it is possible to see that, for Turner Hospital, words may have replaced the Word, but the constitutive nature of language is retained and strengthened by its embodiment through a psychic space that is driven by memories that are highly specific to Queensland. Turner Hospital writes out of a 'psychic Queensland space', drawing on memories of childhood and Queensland to produce texts where there is a 'fusion of landscape and body and thought'. She has represented the nostalgia of the exile and simultaneously used the energy that loss creates to examine and portray the contingency of home. In the process, she became a member of a diasporic intellectual community that is neither contained and defined by some nostalgic dream of return to a homeland, nor wildly celebrating its freedom from the constraints of a singular home.

In this space of retreat *and* connection. Turner Hospital is creating and recreating identities, reading them and rewriting them in order to give the past, as Betterton puts it. 'current meaning'. The 'fusions' are 'unprecedented' because they are new. They are also familiar because they are tangible enough, embodied enough, to be traced in her writing. The texts are romanticised insofar as they appear as exotic to those who live beyond Queensland. At the same time, however, they take readers well beyond any stereotypical representation of Queensland as a naturalised tropical paradise.

Notes

- Janette Turner Hospital. 'Janette Turner Hospital' interview by Ron Store, Brisbane, 5 October 1988. LINO 17(1) (1990): 28.
- 2 Diana Thorp. 'Cult Fiction: Waco Goes Bush in Queensland', The Australian. 10 October 1996: 5.
- 3 However. Janette Turner Hospital's most recent novel. *Due Preparations for the Plague* (2003). was published by Norton/HarperCollins.
- Janette Turner Hospital, 'Novelist as Urgent Quester', interview by Christine Hamelin (n.p., n.d.). Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada 9 (1993): 106; Janette Turner Hospital. 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Writer', interview by David Hay (n.p., n.d.). The Bulletin. 25 July 1989: 132; Janette Turner Hospital. 'Janette Turner Hospital', interview by Candida Baker. Sydney, August 1985, in Yacker 2. ed. Candida Baker (Sydney: Pan. 1987): 258, 273.
- 5 Peter Charlton, 'Out to Lunch: JTH', *The Courier-Mai!* (Brisbane), 8 August 1990: 31; Jane Sullivan, 'Have Grab-Bag, Will Travel', *The Age* (Melbourne), 1 September 1990: 10.
- 6 Janette Turner Hospital. 'I feel in transit. I don't quite belong anywhere', interview by unknown author. *The Australian Author*, 17(3) (September 1985): 4.
- 7 Turner Hospital, 'I feel in transit'.
- 8 Beryl Langer. 'Interview with Janette Turner Hospital', Australian-Canadian Studies: A Journal for the Humanities and the Social Sciences. 9(1&2), (1991): 143.
- 9 Salman Rushdie quoted in *Emigre Feminisms: Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Alena Heitlinger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1999): 6-7.
- 10 Langer, 'Interview with Janette Turner Hospital': 146.
- Janette Turner Hospital, 'Margins Within Margins', interview by Francine Ringold (St Louis. September 1992). Nimrod: International Journal of Prose and Poetry 36(2) (Spring/Summer 1993): 32.
- 12 Store, 'Janette Turner Hospital': 19.
- 13 Baker, 'Janette Turner Hospital': 261.
- 14 Janette Turner Hospital, 'Janette Turner Hospital: Dislocations, Borderline, Charade', in Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings, ed. Gerry Turcotte (Sydney: Currency Press, 1990):
- 15 Store. 'Janette Turner Hospital': 19.
- 16 Ringold, 'Margins Within Margins': 32.
- 17 Janette Turner Hospital, 'Why I Write', Kunapipi 16(1) (1994): 128.
- 18 Store. 'Janette Turner Hospital': 19.
- 19 Bronwyn Davies, '(Be)longing in the Writing of Janette Turner Hospital: Eclipsing the Constitutive Force of Discourse,' in (In)scribing Body/Landscape Relations (Oxford/Walnut Creek. CA: Rowman and Littlefield/AltaMira Press. 2000): 235.
- 20 Davies. '(Be)longing in the Writing of Janette Turner Hospital': 236.
- 21 Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body* (London and New York: Routledge. 1996): 173.
- 22 Selina Samuels. 'Dislocation and Memory in the Short Stories of Janette Turner Hospital', Journal of Modern Literature 20(1). Summer 1996: 92.
- 23 Peters. John Durham, 'Exile. Nomadism and Diaspora: The Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon', in *Home. Exile. Homeland: Film. Media, and the Politics of Place,* ed. Hamid Naficy (New York and London: Routledge, 1999): 17.
- 24 Janette Turner Hospital, Collected Stories (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press. 1995): 203.
- Janette Turner Hospital, *Borderline* (Melbourne: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985: reprinted St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1987): 19.

- 26 Store, 'Janette Turner Hospital': 273.
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- 31 Janette Turner Hospital, 'The Brisbane Effect', *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Destinations section. 12 November 1988: 44-51.
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