

69. Stan Grant, in Philip McLean, 'Grant creates history and fights Jana: unknown moves into TV hot seat', *Sydney Telegraph* (29.12.91).
70. Sandra McLean, 'Stan had to sit on the story of his life', no bibliographical details (22.12.91), held at ABC clippings library, Gore Hill, Sydney.
71. Andrew McBride, 'Race no check to television career says Stan', *Courier* (Ballarat) (29.10.93), 14.
72. Liz Hickson, 'Heading for the Top: These Aussies have beaten all the odds ... without betraying their heritage', *New Idea* (2.4.94), p. 22.
73. Marcia Langton, *Well, I heard it on the radio*, p. 22.
74. Umberto Eco, 'Semiotics of Theatrical Performance', *The Drama Review*, 21( 1) (1977), p. 112.

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## BRETT WHITELEY: THE LAST AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC\*

Jon Stratton

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### Whiteley, art criticism and the new nationalism

From being celebrated as one of Australia's great artists, Brett Whiteley is increasingly being seen as a man blessed with great talent and ideas who squandered his gifts. The recent Retrospective of his work, which was meant to confirm his high status, is instead being reviewed as a revelation of his lack of artistic range, his self-obsession and flawed belief in his own greatness. For example, Joanna Mendelssohn in *The Australian* wrote that: 'If [the exhibition] had been slashed from 189 works to a manageable 50 it may have been possible to sustain the belief that Brett Whiteley was a major Australian artist, rather than a junkie constantly repeating his obsessions'.<sup>1</sup> She suggests that 'most of the exhibition is dross'. John McDonald, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, closes his lengthy review saying 'By the end of this show, we could be looking at a series of billboards advertising an irreverent Aussie satire on modern art. It is the record of a life spent, not "on the edge", as the artist imagined, but in a technicoloured cocoon of self-obsession'.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, perhaps the most positive review came from Giles Auty in *The Australian*. Auty is a recent import from Britain, a fine art critic who is a firm believer in the virtue and value of High Culture and the European canon of great artists. Ending his review with a discussion of Whiteley's

*Alan McKee lectures in Media Studies at Edith Cowan University. He is currently working on an Australian Research Council project with Professor John Hartley 'The Reporting and Reception of Aboriginal Issues in the Australian Media'.*

Lavender Bay paintings, from the mid-70s to the mid-80s, Auty argues that:

‘There is an elegant economy here that speaks of a very high talent, which had come belatedly to refinement. In a final analysis, Whiteley’s ambitions mocked mediocrity and caution. Possibly there is no more dangerous stance to take in a country such as this’.<sup>3</sup>

What Auty means by ‘a country such as this’ is left unclear but his review seeks to measure Whiteley in terms of the European tradition that Whiteley himself held in high regard and, echoing the aesthetic values of Romanticism, he writes of Whiteley’s ‘instinctive originality’. Auty suggests that the negative Australian criticism of Whiteley can be put down to the tall poppy syndrome.

Gradually, through the 1980s,<sup>4</sup> Whiteley’s reputation as a great artist became unsettled. What, for Auty, is Whiteley’s greatest achievement became for Australian critics evidence of the decline of Whiteley’s talent. In a review of Whiteley’s 1979 exhibition in Sydney Humphrey McQueen was ambivalent, describing the paintings and sculptures as ‘luscious ornaments’ and arguing that ‘The invitation to escape possessiveness [which is implicit in them] is put in objects whose very element is to excite a desire to own them’.<sup>4</sup> These paintings are from the period that Auty thinks of so highly. When, in 1991, Elwyn Lynn picked up on McQueen’s term ‘luscious ornaments’ as the title for his short appreciation of Whiteley in *The Independent Monthly*, his tone was much more defensive, praising him while recognising ‘the shaky state of Whiteley’s reputation’.<sup>5</sup> In a companion piece, Christopher Allen describes Whiteley’s work as ‘Kitsch Reborn’, a view echoed by McDonald in his review of the Retrospective who writes that, ‘Much of this work is unspeakable kitsch’.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, as Joanna Mendelsohn notes ‘One of the expressed aims of the Whiteley retrospective is to change public taste away from [the Lavender Bay] period towards [Whiteley’s] works of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s’.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, Whiteley’s earlier work is seen by some of his Australian critics as more aesthetically valuable than his later work. At the same time, Whiteley himself is so much bound up in Australian popular memory with the myth of ‘the ‘60s’ that valorising the work from this period is also problematic. While for some ‘the ‘60s’ is still positively valued as a time of great innovation, social and political change, sexual revolution and so on, in the economic rationalist and often conservatively moralist ‘90s it is also seen as a period of useless hedonistic excess, a period of sex and drugs and rock’n’roll which handed down little of worth to the next generation. On these grounds too, then, Whiteley, as an

Australian icon of ‘the ‘60s’ is now being criticised as being a self-obsessed junkie sensualist.

One thing is certain, over the course of his life’s work Whiteley’s political interests decreased and were overtaken, first, by his exploration of his own psyche and, later, by the attitude that resulted in the paintings described so tellingly as luscious ornaments and, far more negatively, as kitsch. Now, it would be easy to account for this trajectory as that of an artist coming to terms with himself – Whiteley’s Lavender Bay paintings and the later ones as signifying the peace he had found, his lack of a drive to express the discontent, pain and anguish which the critics value in the two large paintings which mark the political and personal phases of his development, *The American Dream* (1968–69) and *Alchemy* (1972–73). However, I want to make a quite different argument, and one which will also help us to understand why Auty out of almost all the critics in Australia is favourably disposed towards Whiteley.

Auty celebrates Whiteley’s Romanticism using the aesthetic terms of Romanticism. Whiteley’s critics tend to denigrate Whiteley’s work for the very Romanticism which Auty celebrates. Neither camp looks past Whiteley’s Romanticism and engages with his work’s relation to the Australian context in which he was painting. This is my purpose here. To this end, I want to examine how Whiteley’s Romanticism, which gave his work a critical edge in the first part of his life, was reconstituted in his later paintings so innocuously. However, this must be done through an examination of the radically changing Australian context in which Whiteley worked. As Whiteley disengaged his work from the issues central to the Australian experience so those issues were, themselves, being transformed. Whiteley, whose views and whose paintings had once been so radical, was left behind by a new generation of engaged critics and artists who saw his later work as simply lacking substance, his Romanticism as bankrupt.

I want to argue that Whiteley was a man of his times, and that those times were, in fact, Australia in the 1950s and early 1960s. Australia is no longer the place in which Whiteley’s sensibility was shaped. The youth culture myth of ‘the ‘60s’ hides the very profound and long-term changes that were taking place in Australia, changes that were leading to Aboriginal land rights – and the Hawke initiated reconciliation process – multiculturalism, and Australia’s ‘push into Asia’. Coupled with these was Australia’s new recognition of its place in the world, both literally and metaphorically. This entailed the steady disentanglement of Australia’s relationship with Britain, the slow distancing of Australia from United States foreign policy and the new perception that Australia is geographically, and should be politically and economically, and in complex ways culturally, a part of Asia.

At the same time the attitudes of non-Aboriginal Australians towards Australia and its land have altered. Up to the 1970s Australian national identity was premised on its underlying Englishness. Migrants were expected to assimilate into a single dominant culture and the experience of that culture was that it had been uncertainly transported to this alien land. The changes I have been outlining have led to a transformation in Australian national identity and, as a consequence, non-Aboriginal Australians' relation to the land, to Australian nature. During the early 1970s the incoming Labor government encouraged what Gough Whitlam called the 'new nationalism' which:

'... related to a general pride in Australian achievement, particularly cultural achievement, and an increasing disquiet at the extent of foreign investment in Australia. From the mid-1960s, the founding of a Fellowship of First Fleeters, the expansion of the National Trust's role and the appearance of native shrubs in suburban gardens had all heralded a new confidence in being Australian'.<sup>8</sup>

Richard White goes on to point out that, in 1979, this new self-confidence was reflected in Australian History becoming an acceptable subject in the New South Wales Higher School Certificate.

In film, Graeme Turner dates a change in attitude to Australian national identity to around 1983 when, he argues, compared to the regressive nationalism of the first decade of the Australian film revival, 'something has happened to the way in which the nation is represented in our cinema, and this may be related to the fact that something has happened to the way arguments about the category of the nation are currently framed'.<sup>9</sup> Turner argues that recent Australian films – he identifies *The Heartbreak Kid*, *Death in Brunswick*, *The Big Steal*, and *Strictly Ballroom* – are much less self-consciously interested in Australian identity. He suggests that, 'What they offer their audiences is the opportunity of recognising, as Australian, representations of social experience which are defined by their hybridity'.<sup>10</sup> I would argue that, in this process, there has been an acceptance of a national identity which no longer has to be self-consciously defined off from English, or Anglo-Irish, culture but which views itself as a distinctive product of a complex history which includes people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The acceptance of this diversity and its hybrid consequences has been paralleled by an acceptance of the Australian land as a site of occupation in its own right rather than, as always was the case, being defined against a European 'original'. The beginnings of all these changes can be roughly dated to the early 1970s.

Whiteley returned to Sydney from New York, via Fiji, in 1969 having spent the best part of a very productive nine years out of Australia. Sandra

McGrath notes that by 1972 Whiteley was well-established in Lavender Bay. In the house:

People came and went, discussed politics, and the usual art world gossip. Mostly, conversation centred on politics. The Australian Labor Party was for the first time in decades about to win power, and the prospect of exciting and spreading reform was in the air'.<sup>11</sup>

It was at this time, as Australia was beginning to undergo the changes I have outlined, that Whiteley's work became more introspective and subsequently more kitsch – in Allen's terms, 'It is hopelessly superficial: Whiteley has a brilliant facility of line, but a rapid sketch exhausts what he has to say about the subject'.<sup>12</sup> Whiteley's inward turn happened at precisely the time that Whitlam's reformist Labor government, embodying the dreams of Australian 1960s radicals including Whiteley, gained power.<sup>13</sup>

'Politically, it seemed everything was beginning to turn in the direction Whiteley had hoped it might. Whiteley's passionate desire to see Australia as a part of Asia seemed to be coming true. With Labor in power, the political fuse that had burned so brightly in Whiteley died down'.<sup>14</sup>

With the fuse's dying down it seems that there was little left that Whiteley wanted to say. In the rest of this article I want to explore the reasons for this and discuss how Whiteley's refusal to confront the social, cultural and political changes in Australia made him an increasingly anachronistic figure.

Whiteley's political views anticipated some of the major transformations which I have been outlining. McGrath writes that:

'Whiteley saw Australia as a political infant smothered by motherly apron strings stretching across two oceans, two continents and hundreds of islands. For him these strings prevented the country from understanding, much less realising, its geopolitical or national potential. In his eyes, until Australia came to terms with Asia the country was doomed to an inane existence'.<sup>15</sup>

We must remember, from today's vantage point, how radical, how left-wing, such opinions were in the 1960s, and 1970s even. However, when the changes that Whiteley had been proselytising for started coming about they produced an Australia less and less understandable in terms of the values and outlook with which Whiteley saw the world. Not least among these was the absolutely central importance which Whiteley gave to the European High Cultural canon, especially van Gogh as well as Matisse and others, and the poets Baudelaire and Rimbaud. Today this could easily be claimed as a function of a less and less relevant cultural cringe.

By the 1980s the terrain of art and art criticism itself in Australia was altering, a gulf was opening up between younger artists and critics and the older tradition. The best example of this can be found in the establishment of *Art & Text* in 1981, a journal which summed up its intent like this:

'Essays by and about Australian and, sometimes, overseas artists, theoretical and cultural analyses, enquiries into the relationships between the several arts and an avoidance of extensive interviewing, reviewing and lavish illustrations all aim to establish *Art & Text* as a forum for critical and artistic re-examination and experimentation'.<sup>16</sup>

The Editorial had begun by criticising, 'The inconsistent ambitions and achievements of our critics and existing art magazines, the incomprehension of a large section of our art world to newer art and the tightening of opportunities for artists and writers [which] threatens the potential of art in the coming years'.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly given what I have been arguing, the first issue contained an article by Ian Burn re-evaluating art in the 1960s, 'focusing on the ideological character of the crisis in art which unfolded between roughly 1965–69 and its implications relevant to an account of the 'seventies''.<sup>18</sup> *Art & Text's* aim was to introduce theoretically grounded discussion of Australian art which was, itself, informed by recent theoretical work. In the event this meant primarily avant-garde work and some popular culture. In this context, Whiteley did not rate a mention. Indeed, from the site occupied by *Art & Text*, Whiteley was a part of the conservative tradition of fine art.

*Art & Text* was but one aspect of the changes in the Australian art scene in the 1980s. Aside from the establishment of a new avant-garde, there was the mainstreaming of Central and Western Desert Aboriginal art from Papunya and Yuendumu, and then the art from many of the other communities; the increasing acceptance of urban Aboriginal art; the greater formalising of Asia-Australia artistic relations with the ARX (Artists' Regional Exchange) series of exhibitions and the Queensland Art Gallery's Asia-Pacific Triennial; a new emphasis on regional developments in Australian art rather than a focus on Sydney and Melbourne as the key centres. This regionalising of Australian art was aided by the success of Perth's *Praxis-M* journal and Brisbane's *Eyeline*. Set in this context it is no wonder that Whiteley's later work, with its European High Cultural influences, lack of interest in the new reflexive theories of the avant-garde and lack of concern with the new Australian confidence in a distinctively Australian national identity, looks dated and that the Retrospective sought to place new emphasis on his earlier work.

*Art & Text* was the product of a particular historical conjuncture. On the

one hand, a recognition by avant-garde artists and critics in Australia of the increasing importance of post-structuralist theory as a way of thinking about artistic practice and the place of art in what was being increasingly described as postmodern society. On the other hand, the new nationalism in Australia was heavily promoted through the arts by way of funding decisions and this, in turn, led to a quite self-conscious 'Australian' accent – including an interrogation of what it meant to be Australian in the Australia of the 1980s – in Australian art and art criticism.<sup>19</sup> In these ways Australian art and criticism attempted to free itself of the hegemony of the European artistic tradition while, at times, catching itself up in the paradox of valorising European poststructuralist theory as an aspect of the project. Within this context, the conservative influence of a critic in Auty's position – as art critic for the major national newspaper, *The Australian* – is highly problematic. His emphasis on the European tradition as a touchstone for judging aesthetic worth and the lack of engagement in his criticism with social issues and with questions of Australian identity outside of its relation to Britain and Europe marks a nostalgic recuperation of pre-1970s Australian concerns that are out of step with the cultural challenges Australia faces in the 1990s. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in Auty's promotion of Whiteley's later work.

### Whiteley's romanticism

Whiteley was born in 1939. As he tells it, his chance discovery of a book on van Gogh while on a regular Sunday school outing to church was an epiphanic moment. He writes that:

'I had never believed that anything like that could exist. I almost felt that I had done it, or a part of me had. There was some connectiveness of soul. I understood it. It was right. Every decision in the painting was right. In sexual terms it was orgasmic, in spiritual terms ecstasy! Bathurst became Arles overnight'.<sup>20</sup>

This story plays a central part in Whiteley's biographical construction. Told in this way it provides an origin myth for some of the key figures in his work. First, his deep connection with the Impressionist movement. He painted portraits of van Gogh in 1968 and 1971, both called *Vincent*, the latter in a style that seems to combine van Gogh's own with that of Eduard Munch. Second, the equation of sexual and spiritual ecstasy and their combination with the experience of the creative process. Third, the reduction of Australia to Europe, of Bathurst to Arles. Here, the Mediterranean town becomes simultaneously 'home' and exotic; the place from which Whiteley can make sense of Australia. The fourth figure that is implicitly affirmed by Whiteley's narrative is the importance for him of representation over abstraction. Here, in fact, is the basis for Whiteley's

privileging of the European tradition over the American post-Second World War modernism of abstract expressionism. In addition, the identification with van Gogh's work acts as a metonym for Whiteley's Romanticism.

There are two ways of thinking about Romanticism. One is to understand it as a part of the modern European tradition, the other is to see it as an ideological reaction to capitalism. In this, latter, view Romanticism seeks to preserve the individual, and artistic creation, from the commodifying force of capitalism. It can also provide a springboard for social critique. From this perspective Romanticism may become an option anywhere where capitalism is the dominant mode of production – this, of course, includes its original elaboration in Europe. Whiteley's Romanticism can certainly be understood in this way. It was also very much founded in this European tradition. At the same time, Whiteley's Romanticism meshed with, and was heavily influenced by, the neo-Romanticism of the '60s counter-culture, a Romanticism which itself reworked many of the themes of the eighteenth and nineteenth century original. Where the first flowering of Romanticism appeared in the Europe in which the bourgeoisie were established as the holders of political power, and of the Industrial Revolution, the neo-Romanticism of the counter-culture was a reaction to the triumph of consumerism and the increasingly seamless commodification of everyday life.<sup>21</sup>

Whiteley's attitude towards imagination was influenced by that of the English Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who described the primary imagination as 'a representation in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM'<sup>22</sup> and the secondary imagination as that which 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealise and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead'.<sup>23</sup> Whiteley wrote that:

'Everything is in a state of flux, everything seems to be gyrating out from an invisible point of silence ... Painting is an elaborate game to show how close one can go to that silence. Fear is death's art. Painting objectifies the sensation of life: by a direct intuitive leap at the nervous system a finished picture should transmute the spectator into a rebirth, a chromatic renewal of original thrill ...'<sup>24</sup>

Coleridge's idea of the imagination centres it on the onto-rational, that which is beyond reason which, in modernity, became equated with the means-ends rationality which underlies the organisation of capitalism. Auschwitz and the atom bomb are now often taken as markers of the triumph of means-ends rationality and the corresponding loss of any moral position taken up from outside the pragmatic needs of the modern

capitalist state. This crucial shift in moral context, coupled with the post-Second World War spread of consumerism, led to a much more extreme and clearly delineated Romantic reaction by the counter-culture than that of the original. Rather than Coleridge, the members of the counter-culture favoured that starker and more mystical English radical William Blake and, in Theodore Roszak's summing-up, they created an alternative which wove together many sources, 'from depth psychiatry, from the mellowed remnants of left-wing ideology, from the oriental religions, from Romantic *Weltschmerz*, from anarchist social theory, from Dada and American Indian lore, and, I suppose, the perennial wisdom'.<sup>25</sup> Many of these themes became a part of Whiteley's own Romanticism.

Coleridge's idea of the imagination parallels the Romantic aesthetic valorisation of the sublime. Indeed, in Edmund Burke's foundational discussion of the sublime, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), fear – or what he calls terror – is central to our experience of the sublime. For Whiteley too, as the quotation above suggests, fear underlay great art. However, in common with the neo-Romantic counter-culture, Whiteley tended to privilege the ecstatic moment over the confrontation with the experience of terror. In Whiteley's work the finite mind's experience of the infinite I AM was to be found in sexual and religious ecstasy.

Whiteley's female nudes are always sexualised, objects for male/his desire that can lead to sexual ecstasy for him – or rarely, as in the now well-known painting of Janice Spencer masturbating, for the object of his desire. Commenting on Whiteley's nudes, Robert Gray writes:

'One needs to recognise what is happening in these: projected onto the female form is the feeling of a straining penis. The buttocks have become also testicles, the body is, at the same time, the soaring scrotum. This is particularly true of the sculpture, but is also the case with the best of his painted nudes'.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the most useful reading of this constant doubling of female nude and erect penis is a Freudian one.<sup>27</sup> The naked female body, with its – from a male point of view – lack of a penis produces not only desire but a certain terror, the terror of potential castration which, in Freud's understanding of psycho-sexual development, closes off the Oedipal stage for the boy. Fearing a castrating punishment from his father for desiring his mother he stops. In Whiteley's nudes the male viewer finds reassurance as the woman's penis is fetishistically returned, embodied in the woman herself. Here, then, we could argue that while the paintings do deal with terror they do so not, for example, to force the reader to confront the mortality of life which is present even in a moment of its

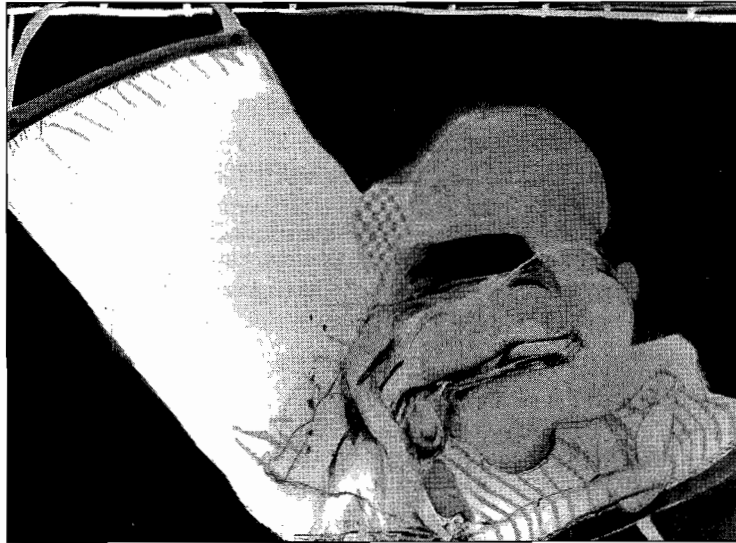


Fig. 1. Brett Whiteley: Christie and Kathleen Moloney 1964. Oil and collage on canvas 177.8 x 243.8 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Australia. Reproduced with permission of the Whiteley Estate.

ecstatic validation, but rather to reassure the viewer by fetishistically disavowing the male's terror of castration.

Rarely in his post-1969 work did Whiteley combine ecstasy with a confrontation with terror, rather ecstasy was, for him, a way of keeping death's terror at bay. This is one place where, on Romanticism's own terms, Whiteley's art failed. Here, aside from any questions about lack of political or social engagement, it is the lack of a concern with terror which marks the Lavender Bay paintings as 'luscious ornaments'. That he does not acknowledge this calls Auty's own critical practice into question. The paintings in which Whiteley most successfully introduced terror to sexual ecstasy are the pre-1969 Christie series painted while he was in London. Here, Whiteley's paintings were inspired by the murders of John Reginald Christie who, in Ladbrook Grove, London, near where Whiteley subsequently came to live, enticed prostitutes to his house where he subsequently killed and sexually isolated them.<sup>28</sup>

### Whiteley's landscapes

Aside from Whiteley's female nudes themselves, the other genre which he infused with male sexual desire for the female body was his landscapes. Landscape painting has been of central importance in the Australian fine art tradition. As Graeme Turner has noted:

'The growth to maturity of Australian artists is ... customarily seen in terms of the painters' coming to grips with the physical representation of the land in the first instance – the Heidelberg School – and discovering its abstract, metaphysical or mythic properties in the second instance – Sydney Nolan'.<sup>29</sup>

Anne-Marie Willis provides a context for this idea, suggesting that, 'Whether we are talking about coffee-table art books, films, literature or informed scholarship, landscape is the most pervasive theme in Australian high culture'.<sup>30</sup> She argues that a preoccupation with the colonists' relationship to the land is typical of settler colonies and that national identity is sought in the dynamic of this relation.

It was with the Heidelberg School, around the late-nineteenth century, that the Australian landscape was domesticated and integrated into a vision of Australian national identity based on a valorisation of the bush myth. For all the claims made about their realism, the paintings of Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin and Charles Condon present a romanticised and, as Willis argues, a Europeanised view of the Australian land. As she goes on to write: 'A search for identity located in an assumed essence of place was to drive later generations of artists further inland to the desert regions of central Australia'.<sup>31</sup> Here what they found was the older image of Australia as a harsh and unforgiving land where the colonisers were forced to struggle to survive.

Pervading this experience of the land has been the trope of the land as a woman. Throughout the European colonial tradition, the land colonised has been viewed as female to be taken in hand by the male colonisers. The negative Australian perception of the land has produced a dominant 'construction of the bush as cruel mother'<sup>32</sup> in Kay Schaffer's words.

While this has been the dominant view through colonial Australia's history, Gary Catalano has suggested that, since the Second World War a change has been taking place. As he puts it: 'Not too long ago many Australians were content to believe that their country was harsh, alien and forbidding in its physical aspects; ... this harsh image has now given way to one almost the exact opposite in its connotations'.<sup>33</sup> Catalano contends that two social movements have effected this change, a revaluation by colonial Australians of Aboriginal life and culture and a new respect for the environment. Now, while Catalano is certainly overstating the case that the older view of the Australian land has been overturned, he is right that a change in attitude has been taking place, one that, linked with the other changes I outlined at the beginning, has been gaining pace since the early 1970s.

Whiteley's landscape painting intersects with this change. Referring to Russell Drysdale's landscape paintings of the 1940s, which Catalano



takes to epitomise the older tradition, McGrath writes of Whiteley that: 'To Whiteley, Drysdale was from his childhood days 'Dry-'s-dale' – a name, an image, a sound that conjured up the Australian heat, a heat that was like hell or death, where the earth was parched, the people skinny, the air dry and the mood pessimistic'.<sup>34</sup> McGrath suggests, following Whiteley himself, that it was his discovery of the Italian early Renaissance painter Duccio that showed Whiteley, in his words:

'... that heat could be a renewal, that it didn't have to be an unknown or an ending. It didn't have to be hell, or the end of a bushfire. There was an optimism that was not present in Drysdale's outback colours'.<sup>35</sup>

However, if we compare Whiteley's painting of *Sofala*, done in 1958 before he went to Italy, with Drysdale's *Sofala* (1947) we find that already Whiteley was using blocks of bright colour which express an exuberant acceptance of the bush town quite lacking in Drysdale's flattened image of it as dusty, dry and seemingly abandoned.

What is important to my argument here are Whiteley's landscapes from the mid-1960s onwards. In many of these Whiteley makes the connection between the female nude and the Australian land. These female nudes retain their phallic connotations. When transposed to the Australian land, Whiteley's desire for, and Freudian terror of, the female body produces

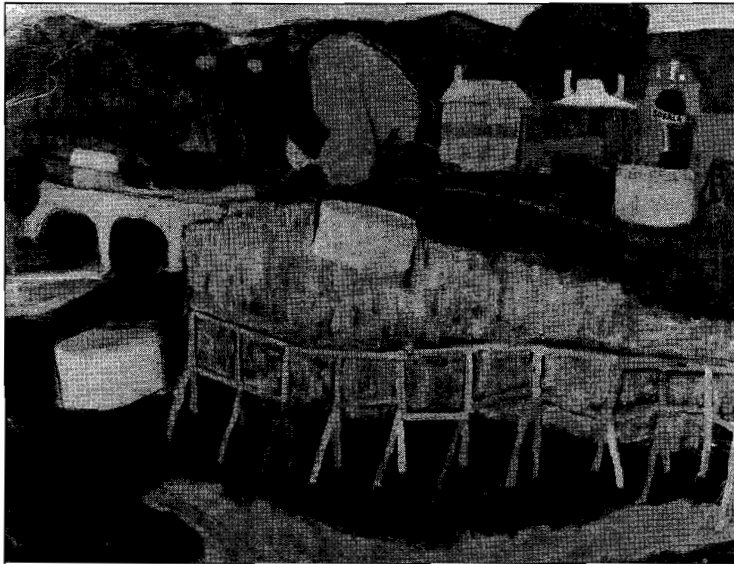


Fig. 2. Brett Whiteley: *Sofala* 1958. Oil on canvas on board 65.8 x 85.4 cm. Collection of the NSW Government. Reproduced with permission of the Whiteley Estate.

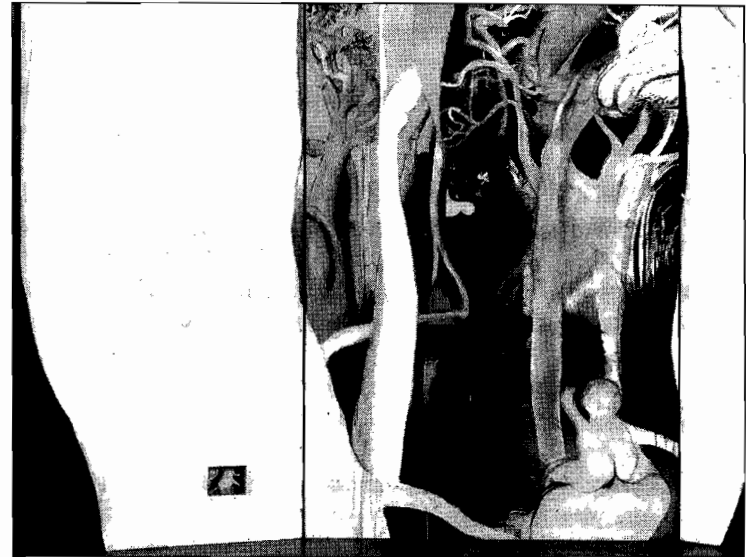


Fig. 3. Brett Whiteley: *The Bush* 1970. Brush and ink on rice paper 92 x 61 cm. Private collection, Sydney. Reproduced with permission of the Whiteley Estate.

a quite different experience of the land to the older view of it as a harsh and forbidding cruel mother. Whiteley infuses the land with a positivity and makes it the object of a male desire quite alien to earlier Australian landscape painting. In Whiteley's beach paintings, from *The Beach* (1966) to the *Bondi Beach* (1983) triptych, semi-naked youthful female bodies seem to emerge from and merge back into the sand of the beach. In *The Beach II* (1966) the painting is centred on the lower half of a naked female sun-bather, her vagina remaining a mystery just out of sight while, in what appears to be a large shadow thrown on the sand, breasts have been drawn, seemingly on the sand itself.

*The Bush* (1966) takes the female sexual identification of the land inland. The title can be read as a pun on the bush as a term for the Australian countryside and as a slang term for a woman's pubic hair. The painting, another triptych, contains a number of phallic gum trees which break into tangled masses of branches which may be read as pubic hair. Behind them is the lush, seemingly tropical, greenery, a quite common metaphor in the west for the vagina. In the front of the painting a baby is sitting gazing through the pubic forest into the vagina and holding out a hand towards it. If this bush doubles as a mother then it is certainly not a cruel one, not one that is felt to reject its human children. Schaffer notes that 'if the land is loathed and feared, as it is in [Henry] Lawson's stories, then it offers no prize. Men retreat into mateship'.<sup>36</sup> In *The Bush*, the land is inviting,

simultaneously the place from which the child has come and where it wants to go. Where previously the apparent alienness of the land, something associated with non-Aboriginal Australians' sense of displacement, produced a fear quite dissociated from desire, Whiteley's landscapes trade on a new sense of the land as being desired, as the home to the new national Australian identity. Now the terror is experienced as an aspect of (male) desire rather than as something inherent in the land itself. In the inscription on the third panel of the triptych we get the additional sense of the male – or, at the very least, Whiteley's – ambivalence over the vagina, a place sexually desired but also feared, as we have already noted Freud claiming, because of its reminder for men of the possibility of castration. The inscription reads:

'... what perfumes, what evils, be below all this green/singing ringing lazy: unpredictable unshaved shrapnel seen;/but go well beneath – beyond any death adder's scheme/ – There! Stillness? Seething complete/divided and kindled on uranium heat, that can't ask reason gently to kiss flesh to cheat'.<sup>37</sup>

The suggestion is that this vaginal bush is to be both desired and feared. This interpretation of the bush also constructs it, in the Romantic terms I have already discussed, as sublime.

Whiteley's assimilation of the female nude into the Australian land is most completed in *The Olgas ... Soon* (1970) and *Fragment off Olga or Jah! How Black Can You Get* (1974–75). In these paintings the Olgas take on the appearance of huge, motherly breasts, in *The Olgas ... Soon* even having a cloud and cockatoo nipples! In this painting the natural breasts overwhelm the tiny man-made (sic) phallic rockets. In *Fragment Off Olga* the two breasts are separated by a phallic rock from which clouds appear to be ejaculating which further enables the rock breasts to be reread as testicles. In most of Whiteley's landscapes the traditional western trope of woman as being more natural than man is invoked to help naturalise the Australian landscape, not as the cruel mother of old but now as the youthful desirable woman. Whiteley's landscape painting operates within one of the major shifts in the experience Australian national identity – the acceptance of the land by the colonisers – but it does so within what are now pre-feminist understandings of the naturalness of the female body.

### Whiteley as commentator

There is another aspect of Whiteley's work that derives centrally from the European – indeed English – Romantic tradition. This is the importance of critical commentary in his work, especially up to 1970. Here the reference point is another poet, Shelley. In *A Defence of Poetry* (1840),

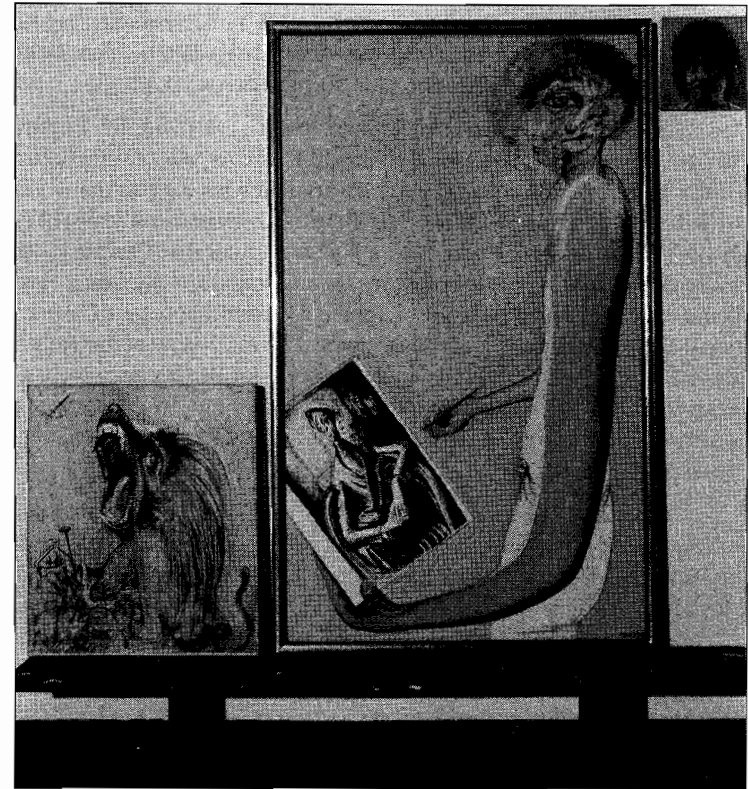


Fig. 4. Brett Whiteley: *Art, Life and The Other Thing* 1978. Triptych of oil and mixed media on board, 90.4 x 77.2 cm, 230 x 122 cm, 31.1 x 31.1 cm. Collection of the NSW Government. Reproduced with permission of the Whiteley Estate.

Shelley wrote that 'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world'.<sup>38</sup> Now, what Shelley meant by this was that poets had a sensitivity which gave them an insight into the way things ought to be. Echoing Coleridge, Shelley called poets 'the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration'. This grandiose claim suggests that poets have access to transcendental Truth. However, it does enable us to understand how commentary that is critical of the status quo was legitimated as part of the Romantic tradition.

Political commentary, in the broadest sense of the term, is best evidenced in Whiteley's paintings in the Christie series and *The American Dream*, also painted before his return to Australia in 1969. In his later work, where Whiteley was more preoccupied with his own psyche, the commentary has become personal, appearing in the form of the many self-portraits he



painted and drew. Commentary here means Whiteley commenting on himself and, sometimes, as in the triptych *Art, Life and the Other Thing* (1978), on his heroin addiction.

It is commonplace now to connect the Christie series with the English painter, Francis Bacon's tortured paintings. However, they are also a part of the genre of English social commentary that goes back to the works of William Hogarth (1697–1764) and Thomas Rowlandson (1757–1827). Whiteley was fascinated with the way the prostitutes that Christie killed could disappear without anybody noticing or worrying. As he wrote 'How could society produce such an environment, in which a score of women could disappear unnoticed and unaccounted for?'<sup>39</sup> We must remember, here, that if the Christie murders were a shock for Britain, they were an even bigger shock for the colonial boy going 'home' to the source of Australian culture in the early 1960s. Humphrey McQueen has commented that:

'The Christie series also continued the reaction that colonials often had once they discovered that the centre of its empire was the true heart of darkness. A feature of the Christie images is how much scribbling they contain, as if Whiteley was trying to black out the awfulness he had depicted'.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, in 1960, when Whiteley left Australia to go to Italy and then London, eight-year-old Graeme Thorne was kidnapped from a Bondi street corner and held for ransom after his parents had won first prize in a Sydney Opera House lottery. Nearly six weeks later his decaying body was discovered near French's Forest. As Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett put it in their book on Australia in the 1960s, with Thorne's death 'a slice of mythically innocent, "nice", "old" Australia died with him'.<sup>41</sup> Australia was already changing from the comfortable post-war world in which Whiteley had grown up.

Whiteley was typical of his generation in going to London. In fact, this was the last generation to make such a trip to the colonial motherland before the new nationalism and multiculturalism made it all but irrelevant. Among other famous names, and without mentioning the thousands of not-famous ones, who made the trip we could include Richard Neville, Germaine Greer, Robert Hughes, Clive James and Barry Humphries. For Whiteley this visit to Italy, England and France was an intellectual pilgrimage to the cultural sources of his art. From London Whiteley went on to the new site of popular cultural power – and Australia's new military protector – the United States where, in New York, he painted out his disgust with the most powerful country in the world, its consumerism and its war in Vietnam in a painting the title of which echoes Norman Mailer's title for a collection of his essays, *An American Dream* (1965).<sup>42</sup>

Whiteley's move to Fiji and then back to Australia began his turning away from social criticism and towards personal interrogation. At this point his work ceased to comment on social issues. It is important to recognise, again, that the work of Whiteley championed by the conservative critics such as Auty is this, later, work.

### Whiteley's orientalism

There is one more aspect of Whiteley's Romanticism which needs to be discussed – his orientalism. In this, too, he follows closely in the steps of the Romantics – though here the French tradition rather than the English – as well as expressing at a general level orientalist understanding that pervaded western, including Australian attitudes. *The American Dream* is framed on either side by tropical imagery meant to suggest peace, tranquillity, indeed paradise, McGrath describes them as 'archetypal images of Eden'.<sup>43</sup> After finishing the painting Whiteley could stand New York no longer and, in his words:

'... jumped on an aeroplane for Fiji. I had painted something of Fiji in *The American Dream* – a scene of boats and water and tranquillity – that became my dream'.<sup>44</sup>

Fiji had been governed by the British who had brought in indentured Indian labour to work the cane fields. However, in the British – and Australian – imagination this colonial and economic history was repressed. Instead, Fiji became the British version of a tropical island paradise, where the French had Tahiti and the Americans gained Hawaii. This exotic fantasising, which is these days commodified and remobilised to attract tourists to international tourist destinations, often in the same tropical islands, is made up of a composite of images opposed to the daily life of temperate western industrial capitalism. It involves sunshine and a sultry, inviting heat, as opposed to grey skies and cold, no need to work, no need for time-keeping, a friendly, easy-going and communal life-style as opposed to the competitive individualism of western capitalism, and the sexual desirability and availability of the 'native' girls. We should note here that this is a predominantly male fantasy. This is what Whiteley bought into.<sup>45</sup>

Whiteley's image of Pacific tropical paradise is one specific inflection of a much more general orientalism. In 1967 he and Wendy visited Tangiers. In his notebooks he attacked Moroccan society, including the veiling of the Muslim women. At the same time his eroticisation of the exotic, orientalist woman is remarkably similar to Gustave Flaubert's. Here, from 1853, is Flaubert's description of his first encounter with the Egyptian courtesan Kuchuk-Hânem:

'On the staircase, facing us, with the deep blue of the sky illuminating

her, stood a woman in pink trousers, with nothing around her torso but dark violet gauze.

She had just come out of the bath, her firm bosom smelled fresh, something like the odor of sugared turpentine ...

Ruchiouk-Hânem is a tall, splendid creature, whiter than an Arab, as she is from Damas; her skin, especially on her body, is a bit coffee-coloured. When she sits nearby, she has small bronze bulges on her flanks. Her eyes are black and inordinately large, her eyebrows black, flared nostrils, large solid shoulders, abundant breasts, like apples'.<sup>46</sup>

Whiteley writes:

'There sometimes I see one (woman) oozing mystery with such effortless dignity, like some night goddess still with the vapour of midnight for eyes, sitting motionless in the midday sun, a powder white haze swirling from her ... erotic and hot and not making a single sound except in the electronic stinging of those eyes'.<sup>47</sup>

Here Europe's – and Whiteley's – 'mysterious East' is embodied in a veiled woman who is at once hidden and desirable.

In 1973 the Whiteleys left Australia again for a lengthy overseas trip which took them, among other places, to Harar in Ethiopia where Rimbaud had lived on leaving France. From this trip there is an ink and collage picture entitled *Time Image of Ethiopia*. In it, an Ethiopian woman is portrayed with one breast exposed placing it within the genre of postcards discussed by Malek Alloula in *The Colonial Harem* in which, in his example, Algerian women are revealed unveiled and very often bare-breasted to the colonial gaze. In Whiteley's drawing the mysterious, female East, – here in the guise of a north African woman – is revealed in the desire of the colonial male gaze.

From Australia's geographical situation it is 'Asia' – Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and, of course, Japan and China – which has been the most important part of the orientalist construction. It is in relation to Asia that the complexity, and the datedness, of Whiteley's attitude is most apparent. From around the time of *The American Dream*, Whiteley had started including 'Asian' symbols in his work. *The American Dream* had a yin-yang mandala in it, a Buddha and a version of a Chinese or Japanese ideogram. Previously Whiteley's interest in the exotic had taken a European inspiration and, as we have seen, his paradise lay in the South Pacific. Now, back in Australia, as McGrath puts it: 'Whiteley, still squirming under the slings and arrows of the American experience, felt Australia was drifting into a similar state, an abyss that would be ruinous if the nation continued to turn its back on Asia'.<sup>48</sup> He wrote his name in Chinese characters on the doors of his studio<sup>49</sup> and dedicated his second

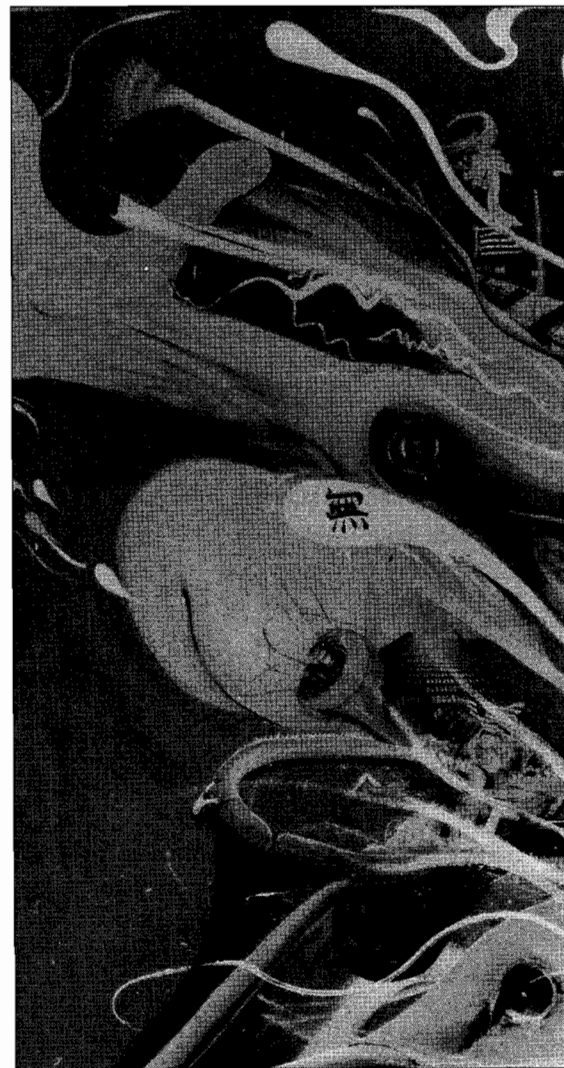


Fig. 5. Brett Whiteley: *The American Dream* 1968–69 (detail of panel 6). Oil and mixed media on 18 wood panels 244 x 2196 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Reproduced with permission of the Whiteley Estate.

exhibition after his return, called 'Portraits and Other Emergencies', to the People's Republic of China.

What was this 'Asia' to which he wanted Australia to turn, and why did he want Australia to turn to it? In the first instance this is the exotic Asia of spiritual mystery, the place of Buddhism, Taoism the *I Ching*, and Zen. In this Whiteley was, once again, following the late '60s reworking of the earlier Romantics' fascination with Japan and China. McGrath quotes Whiteley discussing himself as a painter: 'To be perpetually shifting and

not holdable, to be mercurial and Zen'.<sup>50</sup> Roszak provides a history of the importance of Zen to the counter-culture, tracing it back through Alan Ginsberg's poetry to Jack Kerouac and the beats.<sup>51</sup> Whiteley's understanding of 'Asia' was, heavily influenced by the American Hippie view of it as the mystic East. Whiteley saw himself as on a Zen journey of self-discovery. As Alison Broinowski has pointed out, 'Whiteley produced self-portraits whose antecedents were Buddha, van Gogh and a fourteenth-century Japanese monk',<sup>52</sup> noting also that, 'Zen, for him, was no less than a theory of painting, and in the 1970s shortcuts to satori were produced by drugs'.<sup>53</sup> Broinowski also points out that in his fascination with Japan Whiteley was following a well-trodden late-nineteenth century European artistic path that included van Gogh.

In Whiteley's view Asian mysticism can be a source of spiritual renewal for a capitalist, consumer-dominated Australia. With this perception it is no wonder that he should also follow the Hippie lead and valorise Mao Ze Dong's brand of communism. In 'Portraits and Other Emergencies' we find Whiteley politicising religious ecstasy. He does this through a particular orientalist view of 'Asia'. McGrath writes, 'The exhibition aimed, [Whiteley] said, to shift Australians into an Asian awareness'<sup>54</sup> but we should not mistake this for the kind of shift that preoccupied the Labor government through the 1980s and early 1990s. Their concern was to reposition Australia politically and economically, to tie Australia into the region and to persuade regional leaders to take Australia seriously as an Asian power with a western heritage. Whiteley's concern was far different. He saw Asia as the source of spiritual and political renewal for a country becoming increasingly Americanised and soulless.

In his 'Statement concerning the work', about *The American Dream* and written shortly after his return to Australia, Whiteley writes that, 'As the work began I still considered myself an outsider, a foreigner, a white Asian staying in America for a short time, capable of being able to objectify the separation I felt from needing to behave as most Americans did'.<sup>55</sup> Here Whiteley identifies himself geographically, and perhaps spiritually, as Asian at a time when the United States, and indeed Australia, was involved in the Vietnam war. This is, in fact, a tactical political statement and as such presages the political statement about Asian mysticism that came to be important in his work. In this it needs to be distinguished from the more pragmatic economic concerns about Australia as a part of Asia that were central to the Labor government's initiatives in the 1980s.

### Conclusion

Whiteley was a man of an Australia that is not ours. His valorisation of

the European high cultural tradition, his attitude towards the female body and his conventional orientalism all make this clear. However, in the context of his time, many of his ideas had a radical edge to them: his celebration of the Australian land, his acceptance and pleasure in a sensuality denied by post-Second World War puritan Australia, his recognition of the importance that Australia look to its Asian north. As Australia changed, though, Whiteley did not. Moreover, the critical terms used to evaluate Australian art changed. On the one hand there was the *Art & Text* emphasis on postmodern theory and on art that was reflexive, pastiche and collage based. On the other hand, there was a new preoccupation with art which attempted to be recognisably 'Australian', that rejected the European tradition – or ignored it – and tried to express an Australian sense of place and identity. What Auty likes about Whiteley's work, its Europeaness, is exactly one of the things most other critics dislike. Historically and biographically the Lavender Bay pictures mark the moment when Whiteley lost touch with Australia. In doing so his work became, in Philip Adams' words, that of 'an up-market Ken Done'.<sup>56</sup> It is in these paintings also that Whiteley left off confronting the terror which, as we have seen, is fundamental in the Romantic experience of the sublime. Aesthetically speaking it is the lack of that terror which leaves Romantic art open to the accusation of being merely kitsch. Culturally speaking, the movement away from the confrontation with the terror that is a part of modern and postmodern everyday life signals, in Whiteley's work, his removal from direct engagement with social issues and, by implication, his failure to deal with the enormous changes that Australia has been undergoing since his return in 1969.

The negative evaluations of the Retrospective tell us more about how much Australia has changed since the 1960s than they do about Whiteley's paintings; though the paintings themselves do tell us how little he had changed in spite of his odyssey of introspection. In European Romantic thought the figure of the reclusive seer who, through personal suffering, has gained great insight into how the world is and how it should be is of central importance. It is here that Wordsworth's hermit, and maybe even Coleridge's ancient mariner, connect with Shelley's idea of the poet as an unacknowledged legislator. Whiteley put in the suffering but he never seems to have confronted the demons and terror, instead filtering his suffering through the '60s neo-Romantic emphasis on the pleasures of hedonism. And he never seems to have used any insight that he felt he had gained to confront and comment on the changes taking place in Australia. This is the context in which we must understand the conservative critical valorisation of Whiteley's later work. The pity, so far as Whiteley's corpus is concerned, is that the engagement of Whiteley's earlier work with the issues of pre-1970s Australia, and his struggle to

find an artistic means of expressing this engagement, remain so little acknowledged. It appears that at the time of his death, Whiteley was working on another massive painting called *Australia*. Would this have summed up Whiteley's past, or might it have been his struggle to come to terms with Australia's present? The more general question to be answered so far as Australian art criticism is concerned, made more urgent by the election of a Coalition government, is whether the conservative tradition being championed by the likes of Auty signifies a renaissance of traditional aesthetic values alongside traditional, that is pre 1970s, social and cultural views, or whether the new, and sometimes mutually incompatible, directions pursued by Labor government policies and the 1980s Australian artistic and critical avant-garde will be pursued.

### Notes

1. Joanna Mendelssohn, 'Obsession Overrides Talent', *The Australian*, September, 1995.
2. John McDonald, 'The Mirror Crack'd', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 September 1995; *Spectrum*, p. 14a.
3. Giles Auty, 'Child of His Times' *The Weekend Australian*, September 23-24, 1995; *The Weekend Review*, p. 12.
4. Humphrey McQueen, 'Brett Whiteley', *Art and Australia*, 17 (1979), p. 51.
5. Elwynn Lynn, 'Luscious Ornaments' *The Independent Monthly*, September, 1991, p. 34.
6. McDonald, 'The Mirror Crack'd', p. 14A.
7. Joanna Mendelssohn, 'Buying a Piece of Brett', *The Weekend Australian* September 16-17, 1995; *The Weekend Review*, p. 10.
8. Richard White, *Inventing Australia* (North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 169.
9. Graeme Turner, 'Whatever Happened to National Identity? Film and the Nation in the 1990s', *Metro Magazine*, no 100 (1995), p. 33.
10. Turner, 'Whatever Happened to National Identity?', p. 34.
11. Sandra McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, revised ed. (Pymble, N.S.W.: Angus and Robertson, 1992), p. 106.
12. Christopher Allen, 'Kitsch Reborn' *The Independent Monthly*, September, 1991, p. 35.
13. See Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties in Australia* (South Yarra, Vic.: Hyland House, 1991), pp. 167-177 for a discussion of this connection.
14. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 117.
15. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 55.
16. 'Editorial: on Criticism', *Art & Text*, 1, no 1 (1981), p. 11.
17. 'Editorial: On Criticism', p. 5.
18. Ian Burn, 'The 'Sixties: Crisis and Aftermath: (Or the Memoirs of an Ex-Conceptual Artist)', *Art & Text*, 1, no 1 (1981), pp. 49.
19. *Art & Text* has always been partly funded by a grant from the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council. The Australia Council and the Australian Film Corporation were both set up in 1975 as a major revamp of Commonwealth funding for the arts by the Whitlam Labor government. Tim Rowse discusses funding for the arts in the early 1980s in *Arguing the Arts: The Funding of the Arts in Australia* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1985). Labor's perception of the arts as integral to the production of Australian national identity and as an important aspect of the national economy peaked with the release of *Creative Nation* in October, 1995. A useful discussion of *Creative Nation* in these terms is Denis Cryle's 'Redefining Australia': Cultural Policy and the *Creative Nation* Statement', *Southern Review*, 28 (1995), 283-288. The importance of the agenda-setting in the arts funding interventions by the Whitlam and the Hawke/Keating Labor governments must be acknowledged in any discussion of the rise of cultural policy in Australian cultural studies through the 1980s and early 1990s.
20. Quoted in McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 12.
21. A reading of Theodore Roszak's contemporaneous, and retrospectively remarkably insightful, account of the American version of the counter-culture, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, first published in 1968, makes this clear. Roszak filters his account through his own recognition of the counter-culture's connections with Romanticism.
22. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London: J.M. Dent, 1975), p. 167.
23. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p. 167.
24. Quoted from Whiteley's notebook in McGrath *Brett Whiteley*, p. 167.
25. Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture* (London: Faber, 1970), p. XIII.
26. Robert Gray, 'A few takes on Brett Whiteley', *Art and Australia*, 24, no 2 (1986) p. 223.
27. The reading of Freud I am utilising here is not Freud's own universalist one, rather it is a reading which thinks of Freud's work as making sense of individual psychosexual development in the modern west; in other words a culturally-based not a psychobiologically-based reading.
28. Among the most powerful of these paintings are *Kathleen Maloney Taking Gas* (1964-65) depicting the naked young woman inhaling the gas that would kill her, *Christie and Hectorina McLennon* (1964) and *Christie and Kathleen Maloney* (1964-65) in which Christie is shown ravishing the dead woman's body.
29. Graeme Turner, *National Fictions* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 26.

30. Anne-Marie Willis, *Illusions of Identity: the Art of Nation* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1993), p. 61.
31. Willis, *Illusions of Identity*, p. 88.
32. Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
33. Gary Catalano, *An Intimate Australia: the Landscape and Recent Australian Art* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Hale and Iremonger, 1985), p. 9.
34. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 26.
35. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 26.
36. Schaffer, *Women and the Bush*, p. 101.
37. Quoted here from Barry Pearce, *Brett Whiteley: Art and Life* (London: Thames and Hudson in association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1995), p. 230.
38. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*.
39. Quoted in McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 58.
40. Humphrey McQueen, 'Pretty Toys for the Bourgeoisie', *24 Hours*, December, 1995, p. 60.
41. Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, p. 26.
42. In fact, Whiteley did a poster for Mailer's New York mayorial campaign. While I have no room to consider it here, it is worth asking the extent to which Whiteley was influenced by Mailer's analysis of the United States's malaise. Certainly there is some overlap in Whiteley's emphasis on male desire and male power. In the painting these are linked to nuclear explosion, women's bodies, consumerism and, by implication, the war in Vietnam. *The American Dream* was completed in 1969 but the Marlborough-Gerson Gallery in New York, which had shown other paintings of Whiteley's refused to show it. The painting does what American abstract expressionism could not do, comment directly and critically on American society.
43. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 90.
44. Quoted in McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 91.
45. Throughout Whiteley's work the 'tropical island' fantasy is an important signifier of paradise. In *Gauguin* (1968) Gaugin stares meditatively out of a photograph at a naked Tahitian girl while on the left hand side an outlined bust of another girl holds up a sign which reads 'Pleasure', facing some mountains, palm-trees and sea. In *Portrait of Baudelaire* (1970), Baudelaire's Creole mistress, Jeanne Duval, appears above his head as his inspiration. The fantasy is also to be found in *Green Mountain (Fiji)* (1969) which uses the metaphor of the land as a desirable woman.
46. Quoted in Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 85. The whole of Lowe's chapter 5, 'Orient as Woman, Orientalism as Sentimentalism: Flaubert' is relevant here.

47. Quoted in McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 81.
48. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 91.
49. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 90.
50. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 91.
51. Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* Chap IV, 'Journey to the East ... And Points Beyond: Allen Ginsberg and Alan Watts'.
52. Alison Broinowski, *The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 150-151.
53. Broinowski, *The Yellow Lady*, p. 151.
54. McGrath, *Brett Whiteley*, p. 94.
55. Quoted here from Barry Pearce (ed), *Brett Whiteley: Art and Life*, p. 231.
56. Philip Adams, 'Fame was the Spur' *The Weekend Australian* Sept 30-Oct 1, 1995.

This is a revised version of a public lecture given at the Art Gallery of Western Australia in March, 1996 to accompany the showing of the Brett Whiteley Retrospective. I should like to thank Wendy Dunclas, Education Officer at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, for inviting me to speak, and for her help in the gathering of materials for both the lecture and the article.

Jon Stratton is Associate Professor in Cultural Studies at Curtin University of Technology. He has published widely in the area of Cultural Studies. His most recent book is *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).