

# Michael Wilding's Wild Bleak Bohemia

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## Abstract

This essay discusses the various aspects of Michael Wilding's work as an academic, creative writer, teacher, publisher and editor in terms of the ecological relationships he is able to maintain in these areas. Such relationships may be understood in terms of his attempts to develop co-operative relationships with others. The tone of the essay is as much informal as it is formal; spoken as it is written; personal as it is detached. The meaning of any communicative action is as much a matter of form as it is of content. In discussing his attraction to, and then turn away from, postmodernism, the argument is made that such a return to the ideas of realism seems a natural thing. But, as he is about to publish a documentary on the early literary scene in the Australian colonies as *Wild Bleak Bohemia*, the question is asked: have recent developments in the Australian literary scene created such another apparently bleak scene for the creative writer, academic, publisher and teacher? Wilding's experience may have much to teach those who seem perplexed by the current state of literary life, not only in Australia, but in their own environments.

**Keywords:** Michael Wilding, collaboration, Wild bleak Bohemia, ecology

In his 2013 book length study of Michael Wilding's fiction, the American academic Don Graham asks why Wilding's work hasn't been more recognized or considered in recent years. While Graham doesn't pretend to solve this mystery, he argues that Wilding's fiction is worthy of much more attention. Speaking personally, this state of affairs surprised me. I have lived outside Australia for the past twenty three years and so didn't notice this swing in literary tastes or spaces. My distance from the literary environment here blindsided me about this turn of events. Back in the late 1970s and through the 1980s when I studied with Wilding, he was clearly a central figure in the Australian literary landscape in many ways: as a proponent of "new writing", as an academic with several serious books, as a publisher who

along with Pat Woolley made available in Australia many seminal overseas writers in what was to become postmodernist fiction as well as other more counter-cultural books, and as an editor who had helped introduce Australian writers such as Peter Carey to an international audience and had edited a series for UQP on Australian and Pacific Writers, Wilding seemed to be a tyro in developing what I understood to be Australian literary spaces. What impressed me about him as a supervisor was his open-minded willingness to listen to my ideas, and even to my criticisms of his academic work in terms of specific errors of fact regarding William Morris's and Jack London's work as we talked for hours in his two story office on the top floor of this building or out on the roof in his private garden space. When he asked if I would correct any typos in the galley proof of his *Political Fictions*, I did so...somewhat heavy-handedly, but he wasn't defensive about my comments or "grammar corrections", some of which he accepted. I was nervous doing this, but it taught me a lot when later I started working with my own graduate students and tried to get them motivated to have a voice in what was being published in Thailand, China or Vietnam. Respecting students as equal partners in research and writing wasn't something that was taught in education text books. He even "tolerated" my arguments with him in public in the Feminist English Literature Teachers (FELT) discussion of George Meredith's *Beauchamp's Career* organised by Margaret Harris and Judy Barber. When I offered a concluding chapter to my M.A. thesis that suggested Marx's *Capital* could be read as a novel, he didn't reject it outright; instead, he said he didn't understand the Baudrillardian theory and argued with me about whether it was a coherent conclusion to my thesis, leaving it up to me to decide whether to include it. Years later, when reading Pira Sudham's *The Force of Karma*, I found this voice again in an episode where Prem, the autobiographical hero of Sudham's novels, is told by a tutor named Michael Wild (later to be turned into "Michael Wilding" in *Shadowed Country* in a rewriting of the episode) that he could say anything...*as long as he had a cogent or rational argument and facts to support that argument*. In a way, my own personal experience was being echoed or reinforced by this reading of a Thai novelist's work in another time and place. It was Pira Sudham who put me back in contact with Wilding by giving me his copy of Wilding's *Academia Nuts* in 2004 as well as Wilding's email address. I hadn't seen him since I had approached him to help me organize a series of literary readings at the Sandringham Hotel in 1988 when he had brought Vicki Viidikas, Robert Adamson and Stephen Oliver down to the pub which was then an alternative music venue.

After reestablishing contact with Wilding, he asked if I wanted to write a story for a forthcoming book *Best Stories under the Sun* that he was editing with David Myers. I had shown Wilding a novel I had written as an undergraduate earlier in my studies here which he had critiqued as erratic and liable to get me into trouble as it was clearly a roman a clef in parts. (It was also under the influence of Bukowski's stories and Wilding's own *Phallic Forest* stories). After I had finished my PhD, he had advised me to go into writing fiction and to avoid academic life. This was advice I followed until I moved to Thailand in 1992. After the book came out, I asked him to serve as a member of the editorial board on one of the journals I was developing. He readily agreed. In the interim, David Myers passed away and Wilding wrote an "in memoriam" of him for the first issue of the journal in 2007. Since then, he has been one of the few board members willing to be actively engaged in the journal's development.

What these perhaps ephemeral stories show is Wilding as an active participant in developing writers and avenues for creative work anywhere and at any time. He didn't have to do these things. Many others may have thought there were no kudos or academic credits to be gained from these efforts, or such tasks were beneath them. But, as before when he was supervising or examining my work as a student, there were no gulfs or social spaces that he found insurmountable; he seems to reach out to anyone who is involved in trying to get creative work published and to help them do it.

I tell these "stories-in-brief" to illustrate my own personal connections with the material of this paper and to demonstrate what I mean by an "insider" or *emic* approach to the study of literary spaces as *actually experienced spaces*. There is a sense of reality that we need to grasp when we study literature in the real world; not as a theoretical abstraction. This background knowledge is part of our schemata that we need to bring to the study of literary work; it helps to ground us and, hopefully, to make us better communicators in whatever literary spaces we inhabit at one time or another. This way, we can get "under the skin" of the texts we read and experience them as lived experiences. The stories we develop in our criticism and teaching based on our reading experience seem more truthful and sincere once we have gone through this experience. By grounding ourselves in the facts of these experiences, we connect with the communicative network felt by the artist and help to connect others (our readers and students) to that communicative network as important participants in it.

In preparing this paper, I was led back to Walter Benjamin's studies of Bertolt Brecht with which I introduced my M.A. thesis. Benjamin noticed a note Brecht had attached to a ceiling beam. It read "Truth is concrete". Benjamin's time spent discussing the state of literature with Brecht led him to absorb many of Brecht's ideas. In "The Author as Producer" he gives Brecht's view inside his own voice, as unacknowledged reported speech, as if they were both speaking when they say:

Now it is true that opinions matter greatly, but the best are of no use if they make nothing useful out of those who have them. The best political tendency is wrong if it does not demonstrate the attitude with which it is to be followed. And this attitude the writer can only demonstrate in his particular activity; that is, in writing. A political tendency is the necessary, never the sufficient condition of the organizing function of a work. This further requires a directing, instructing stance on the part of the writer. And today this is to be demanded more than ever before. *An author who teaches writers nothing, teaches no one.* What matters, therefore, is the exemplary character of production, which is able first to induce other producers to produce, and second to put an improved apparatus at their disposal. And this apparatus is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers — that is, readers or spectators into collaborators. (*Reflections*: 233. Emphasis in the original).

This perhaps lengthy quote or chunk from Benjamin's address is included here for several reasons. It is a technique Wilding himself uses throughout his critical writings in order to give the reader a representative sample of the text being interpreted so that his reader has enough information to judge the fairness of the critic's judgments or interpretations. Such a technique also allows the writer's voice its own space so that the critic's voice doesn't overbearingly drown it out. The passage is a factual thing. It is *evidence*. It also provides a lot of contextual information that the reader may use in evaluating the critic's work. A more thematic point to be made is that Benjamin's committed view of the role of the artist remains valid even now when discussing the political and social visions of Michael Wilding who, like Benjamin and Brecht, has tried to turn the means of (literary) production in the direction of empowering workers (and students can be workers) to produce their own work through a pedagogy of art. I hope that my own brief stories that began this paper have demonstrated concrete experiences of how Wilding has done such things in terms of developing small presses, distributing new writers' works, teaching and writing. The artist is a teacher who collaborates with other writers, students and teachers to develop new

approaches to art. Our function is, to invert Benjamin's italicized words, to learn from other writers; otherwise we learn nothing. And if we don't learn, then how can we teach?

In an interview with Teresa Burns in *Journal of the Western Mystery Tradition* in 2013, Wilding explains his turn away from postmodernism towards a renovated realism in the following terms:

In *The Paraguayan Experiment* I made a dialectical reversal from the post-modernism of *The Short Story Embassy* and *Pacific Highway*. The political was uppermost in the Lane material and I returned to a determinedly realistic mode, though I retained the modernist device of collage to incorporate documentary material...I don't want at all to minimize the formal and aesthetic aspects of writing; but these emerge from an engagement with subject matter. I came out of post-modernism with a new interest in the story, in narrative, and with a renewed concern to engage with content, with the world around me, with the political. And this also changed my approach to literary criticism.

Here, there is a nexus between his academic and creative work that seem to exist in an ecological relationship whereby a change in one of his areas leads to changes in other areas. The turn back towards political realism comes out of the material he was studying and working on for his novel. He doesn't impose an alien pattern or form on it. What seems to lead him to move in a particular direction is his experience in life as a researcher and writer as he responds to others' requests; he was asked to write a libretto for an opera on William Lane and then developed an interest in Lane's writings and utopian experiments in transporting Australian workers to South America in the aftermath of the Shearers' Strike.

Wilding's turn towards realism and away from postmodernism raises the question of the respective spaces these two forms of writing hold in his overall work. He suggests that there is a dialectical relationship between them and that he has learned techniques from postmodernism he can usefully apply in his more recent studies and fictions. In his novel *Academia Nuts* (his critique of the academic critics) the two forms are juxtaposed pedagogically as he writes about the ways academic space has been morphing under the onslaught of utilitarian quality assurance drives amongst other things. By turning our backs on such onslaughts, we have been complicit in the apparent degradation of the university as a vital space in society and we

have become depoliticized to such a degree in our postmodern malaise that our academic space is collapsing or morphing into hyper-reality. Again, in his Burns interview, Wilding voices his later judgments on postmodernism when he explains his original attraction to it was to extend modernism:

This was a long time ago, before the more dubious implications of the late modernist or proto-post-modernist project had been thought through, before we had put our minds to the dehumanizing and de-politicizing, or at any rate de-radicalizing agenda.

Here, the use of the inclusive collective pronoun “we” hints at Wilding’s sense of or attraction to a community of writers or academics working together. While for some, this may lead off on a tangent to questions of “identity” in the abstract, a reader of Wilding’s fiction would hear a common chord in the ways he represents others around him in *The West Midland Underground* and particularly in *Pacific Highway* where the narrator’s interests are focused on the relationships of those in his group of friends as they resist the encroachments of a malevolent outside world shaded with politically reactionary intentions to harm their idyllic environment.

One consistent characteristic in Wilding’s writings has been the need to develop a sense of solidarity and community. This in part explains his interests in writing about political novelists and in his focus on particular writers in the Australian “canon” such as Furbey, Lawson, Lane, Clarke and Stead. Without taking this sense of a common space into account, his latest work, the forthcoming *Wild Bleak Bohemia* makes little sense. But once that work of 680 pages (by far his largest textual space in terms of words or printed pages) is seen in the context of wider themes in Wilding’s work in all its spaces, it makes sense, almost teleologically, as a coming together of many of the issues and concerns that bind Wilding’s work together as a cohesive whole: there is a narrative thread that winds throughout his work that isn’t broken in his turn away from postmodernism and that gives his work a sense of organic ecological integrity. By following the underground streams in Wilding’s work that lead to *Wild Bleak Bohemia*, a sense may be gained of how the writer configures his various literary spaces or lives into art, scholarship and criticism while regaining a sense of the paradisaical or at least utopian impulse in his work that may have been obscured in his earlier postmodern fiction’s version of such a paradise as a “disporting around in the sea of self-referentiality which was fun for a time but which you wouldn’t

want to spend your life in" (Burns interview). By going back to the nineteenth century, to the lives of those writers who laid the groundwork for Australian literature, he seems to be offering yet another new way of studying and writing about Australia and its literature as an alternative to the poststructuralist ways that he has turned away from. In developing this way, he has brought together his skills in research as well as his interest in detective or crime fiction to offer a documentary where the writer's voice is absent from the "big" narrative" except as the arranger of the materials that are allowed to speak for themselves, in their own voices.

One key aspect of the way the book is organized is Wilding's interest in the use of parallels that seems to be an organizing idea in much of his writing as a way of developing a communal sense of togetherness in whatever community he is involved with at the time; whether it is in his Wild and Woolley publisher's memoir, his campus fiction, his work in setting up the Writers' Centre with Irina Dunn, his editing of academic books, or his work with others as collaborators in various phases of his life. This technique of parallelism is not a new aspect of Wilding's art or thought; it can be observed in much of his literary criticism, thus suggesting the parallel relationship between the various spaces in his overall work. These parallels are not accidental or gratuitous; they are one of the key organizing structures in his work. This may be seen in his *Studies of Classic Australian Literature*, the title itself paralleling D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*.

In his study of Lawson, Wilding recognizes a number of parallels in Lawson's work that together form an argument that convinces the reader of the accuracy of Wilding's reading. The parallels may start with his epigraph from Edward Garnett where Garnett refers to himself as "the unsophisticated critic". In the context of theoretical sophistication which is the academic backdrop of Wilding's later academic work, such an identification asserts the writer's distance or difference to those who may be (mis)reading his criticism. Lawson, like Wilding, started writing in small presses (such as *The Republican* and *The Dawn*). In his essay, Wilding provides the *facts* about Lawson first, before discussing his stories as literature. He notes that William Morris published Lawson's "The Hymn of the Socialists" in *Commonweal*, Morris's own small alternative press, in 1889. He then rejects Manning Clark's criticism of a lack of a coherent ideology in Lawson by noting that "the lack of any coherent ideology was a strength". This gives Lawson's ballad published by Morris a sense of

“openness”. Then a link is seen between Lawson and Lane in Lawson’s connection to Lane’s small press (*Boomerang*) and the use of the term “workingman’s paradise”. Wilding also stresses parallels with future left wing figures such as Jack Lang who was Lawson’s brother-in-law.

Once these parallels have been made, Wilding observes Lawson’s own technique of parallels in the Jones’ Alley stories where Arvie Aspinall’s death is looked at in different ways in four of the stories in the collection. The implications of this “paralleling” are that it is left to the reader to recognize them as “the oblique, the understated”, as evidence for “a shared pattern of class exploitation”:

Nothing is spelt out – there is no generalizing, no theory, no moral-drawing. The bare facts, presented in parallel, reveal the socio-political truth.

Another parallel is the one Lawson sees between what happens on the land and in the city in “A Day on the Selection: A Sketch from Observation”. Wilding notes that life on the land and the “intellectual context” are paralleled and “both are sketched from Lawson’s lived experience”.

Yet another form of parallel is Wilding’s use of allusions. These are frequent in Wilding’s critical and creative work. He asks “When Adam delved and Eve span, who then was the gentleman?”- a reference to the Lollard John Ball, who was also a hero in William Morris’ political fiction *The Dream of John Ball*. Such unacknowledged verbal echoes form a scaffolding of other invisible voices that support the story or the point of view being expressed or built up. The old word “solidarity” that seems to have dropped out of fashion now comes to mind as the understated message of such a technique of collage or pastiche. This aspect of Wilding’s language remains throughout his work, though, perhaps his postmodern sojourn enabled him to play with these voices in ways that strengthened his own voice to the point that he didn’t need the support of explicit self-referentiality to continue them in his later work.

Another form of paralleling is only visible or audible in hindsight. It suggests that certain words or ideas remain in Wilding’s underground stream or catchment area of experiences to emerge later in another context or work. Such is the observation that “The Drover’s Wife” “is not a totally bleak vision”; there is the background idea of One Big Union which at the time of Lawson’s writing was being developed by Big Bill Haywood in America as the I.W.W. or the Wobblies. Wilding notes that Lawson in this story does what Lane does in *The Workingman’s Paradise*: critically examine Charles



Kingsley's view of socialism from an Australian context. Wilding notes that Lawson boarded with Lane's wife at the time and frequented McNamara's bookshop, "a library and centre for international radical journals and discussions". Here the parallel to Wilding's own continued interest in small presses is resounded through an even deeper allusion to his own writing and modes of production. These verbal echoes and reverberations give us insights into how the artist's mind works in a dialectical way with what he or she reads. We see things in what we read that are there; they are not paranoid projections induced by the use of drugs or forced on the material through an over-vigorous use of Theory.

In his Lawson essay, Wilding then registers the switch made by Lawson from impressionism to realism after 1902 with the perceived collapse of socialist hopes. Instead of having to write very short pieces to fit the *Bulletin* format, Lawson could experiment with the more discursive modes of British magazine realism that he found when he went to England and wrote "The Letters of Jack Cornstalk". Lawson's attack on the spaces of St Paul's which were meant to be "suggestive of wide open spaces" (Lawson labels such a view a "useless lie of civilization") is linked by Wilding to D.H. Lawrence's attack on the idea of the university in *The Rainbow*. In both writers, there is a parallel absence of politics "displaced into nationalism" as a result of what Wilding understands as Lawson's (and Lawrence's) crisis in art because "his political commitment became increasingly inexpressible" in the mainstream commercial press. This crisis led to Lawson's new mode of "realism with his socialist commitment". The meaning of Wilding's own realist approach to literary studies is clear in his denunciation of abstract or overtly theory-driven criticism:

To read Lawson's stories out of context, to exclude this [radical socialist] milieu in which he lived, wrote, published and took his pleasure, is to give a deprived and inadequate and ultimately absurd account of his art....When, however, we restore the historical context of Lawson's work, when we resituate it in its once contemporary context of ideas, a much fuller reading emerges.

These observations of Australian literature made by Wilding are not new to his approach. Adumbrations of his approach to writing about the lives of Marcuse Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall in *Wild Bleak Bohemia* can be traced back in an underground stream to an essay he published on Clarke in 1974 (in *The Australian Experience*: 19-37) when he was first playing with postmodernist fiction. In response to the suggestion by

G.A. Wilkes, the founding professor of Australian Literature here, that Clarke's presentation of convict conditions "verges on the sensational" and "the aggregation [of brutalities] produces a melodramatic effect" with its monotonous brutality, Wilding retorts:

Again the restraint, the detached manner of narration, makes the horror more telling. Clarke uses a similar detachment of manner in his scrupulousness about the precise months and years, and about geographical accuracy. This both emphasizes the documentary aspect of the book, and underlies the horror. [The suppression of human aspects by historical objectivity] are drawn attention to all the more forcefully by that very suppression. For the contents of these chapters are facts that cannot be divorced from any humane or emotional response.

Wilding's reading of what he sees as Clarke's "unemotional dispassionate factual objectivity" could be carried forward to his own approach in *Wild Bleak Bohemia*. The apparent coincidences in the story of Clarke's novel do more than tidy up the novel by creating resolutions or transitional links between its parts: they stress the relationships and familial connections in the "paralleling" (to use Wilding's term) of lives. In place of Wilkes' reading of the novel as being melodramatic, Wilding offers a view of it as "a novel of the most powerful, most hopeless despair".

The segue from Wilding circa 1974 to Wilding 2014 is not a long leap; it has been prepared for in his own critical writings, work in small presses and publishing and in his own art in which a sense of the real has always been present, even in his postmodern fictions. The research and editing techniques used in *Wild Bleak Bohemia* are organically developed throughout Wilding's writings in various literary spaces. These consistencies give his work a sense of ecological vitality that in part is sustained by his abiding interest in observing parallels in whatever material he is working in. When we recall his description of his turn away from postmodernism as a "dialectical reversal" in his Teresa Burns interview from 2013, we hear yet another, leftist, echo in his strategies that link him to the work of Brecht more than has been currently recognized. His word for this dialectic has been "parallelism" and it emphasises the contrasts and contradictions in the literature he reads, teaches and criticizes as well as in the literature he writes and publishes. But it also registers continuities. In *The West Midland Underground* (1975) a book of short stories that often parallel each other, Wilding has said things that seem to adumbrate his later realism: the narrator of one of his stories

records that his story is “the flexing exercises of my writing, though in this case not my fiction, and my impulse is not the autonomy of creation, but the obsessive accuracy of recollection” (156). In the same book of stories another of his narrators observes that all writers now (in what was later to be labeled as the postmodern era) have a realist novel secretly buried in their desk draw. These secret novels seem a version of what D.H. Lawrence labeled as the ‘dirty little secret’ of sex that was suppressed in English fiction when he was writing. Given Wilding’s affinities with Lawrence’s work and the allusions to it in his writing as well as his essay on Lawrence’s Australian novel *Kangaroo* (published in *Political Fictions*), the parallels between realism and sexuality in Wilding’s work need to be further studied. Both writers can be seen as outsiders observing Australian conditions as English writers and seeing things that those inside maybe don’t see as they are immersed too much in the climate of their age.

Throughout his fiction, Wilding and his narrators observe people from the outside; the psychologies of those around them are not contemplated in some Jamesian way. Instead, the readers have to do that work themselves – if they so wish. Characters speak for themselves and show us how they think in their own words; meanings are not imposed on their words, as their language is far too complex for such readings to be realistically done. When a narrator tries to engage with another’s language, the result is a complicated failure or breakdown in communication. Better to leave such impositions alone or run the risk of getting lost in one’s own hyper-real nightmarish world of theory-building where no facts are offered to corroborate a reading of others’ minds. What characters actually say are the only real facts we have; we have to look to their actual words as documentary evidence, as ethnomethodologists who try to understand emicly how the people in what Del Hymes calls a “communicative event” interpret each other, from inside the social situation or historical context. Even in his “new writing” period in the 1970s, Wilding has remained grounded in the actual words spoken by his characters in the various forms of dialogical communication they try to have with each other. These are yet another form of the “facts” and they give a documentary feel to all his fictions that relate his creative and academic languages in a diglossic form: not of a High and Low variety of a language, but of a creative and an academic one...though, perhaps nowadays the complicated hyper-real language all too often found in academic discourse may have assumed a “higher” or more prestigious position than the languages actually used by creative writers in the real world.

Over the 680 pages of his latest work *Wild Bleak Bohemia*, the parallel stories of Marcus Clarke, Henry Kendall and Adam Lindsay Gordon as they struggle in an Australian version of Balzac's *Lost Illusions*, or in a parallel story or contemporary companion account of the social and personal conditions surrounding Clarke's writing of *His Natural Life*, Wilding has created a dialectical antithesis or opposite to what he wrote as a creative writer and critic before: a documentary where the authorial voice of Wilding is suppressed, much as Wilding notes Clarke suppresses comment in *His Natural Life*.

To rebuild realism as a new form, Wilding only inserts his own words to introduce documentary source material; as grammatical glue or cement that supplies the cohesion needed as one document segues into another document so that the voices recorded by the participants in the series of communicative events that comprise the narrative can speak for themselves in a form of liberation linguistics, in their own words. They tell their own and each others' stories and interpret each others' communications. The documentarian's "voice" is silently there in the paralinguistic or body language of the text that forms a seamless whole without any chapter divisions; instead, pilcrows are used to mark shifts in focus as the three main lives are put into parallel relations in the "editing" process to create a sense of the relentless forces that tear the creative writers apart and bring them together in colonial Australia. On the rare occasions when Wilding's own voice can be seen and heard in the text, it is only as a darkness visible to highlight connections to other writers in other times and spaces, such as when he notes of Clarke towards the end of the document: "He had opened up the territory that Henry Lawson was to develop" (312 in the typescript version of the text). To have done more would have harmed the ecology of the text by imposing breaks that were not there in the historical experience: chapter headings, a table of contents or an index would have ruined the renovated realism of the text and turned it too heavy-handedly in the direction of academic work. Instead, the text remains finely balanced between creative and critical writing.

This may be a new form of criticism, a specifically Australian one rooted in the historical evidence that Wilding has painstakingly rescued from materials in libraries that now seem to be torn to pieces in this age of economic rationalization. Access to such documents may well prove to be harder in future for writers (both academic and creative) who wish to research their historical materials and provide empirical evidence in support of their views.

But the effort to do such work is needed. Wilding's achievement is to bring the reader of the documents into the production of the text by turning the means of production in the direction of a renovated radical approach to Australian writing. To parallel Brecht's/Benjamin's words recorded earlier in this paper:

What matters, therefore, is the exemplary character of production...to put an improved apparatus at their [the readers, students and critics] disposal. And this apparatus is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers – that is, readers or spectators into collaborators.

Wilding has been reaching out for such collaborators throughout his writings as a way of building a community of creative scholars who are committed to realizing the social visions that Wilding sees as shaping his world, his spaces. Insofar as he succeeds in this project, his writings achieve an ecological strength, a connectivity that may open new vistas in Australian literature and criticism. But the question of whether his work will be recognized as a major contribution to Australian literature in the current literary climate may remain an open or problematical one unless and until others respond to his efforts to build collaborative bridges within Australian literature and between that literature and the international context.

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