

INTRODUCTION

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Coolabah 1: This Foreign Country is the first edition of the online journal of the Australian Studies Centre of the Universitat de Barcelona (Spain). The previous printed journal, *Eucalypt*, had four volumes, respectively guest edited by Dr. Bill Phillips, Prof. John Barnes, Prof. Christopher Lee and Brian Beasley, and Dr. Elisa Morera de la Vall.

This edition was first conceived as the last printed edition, but a slight delay in the publication allowed us to have *This Foreign Country* as the first number of *Coolabah*. The name was chosen because it refers to a kind of eucalyptus (*Magnoliophyta, Genus: Eucalyptus Species: E. Coolabah*). It derives from the Indigenous Australian word "gulabaa" in Yuwaaliyaay language and it is included in the quasi national anthem "Waltzing Matilda". Therefore, the word "coolabah" included three very important aspects: first, it was related to the previous printed journal (*Eucalypt*); second, it acknowledged the traditional inhabitants of Australia; and, finally, it is known by all Australians.

In this edition, the use of the term "Indigenous peoples" instead of "Aboriginal" is defended. "Indigenous" is written with a capital "I" because it is a nationality and it is preferred to "Aboriginal" or "Aborigine" when the noun designates the name of mainland Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Furthermore, "peoples" is written in plural because, before the colonization of Australia, there were many clans with more than 600 different language groups and each clan spoke about four or five different languages or dialects. Therefore, the heterogeneity of the traditional inhabitants of Australia cannot be forgotten in their naming.

The title of this issue, *This Foreign Country*, makes reference to a thought all collaborators to it shared at some point during their time in Australia. As none of us was born Down Under we perceived it as a “Foreign Country” and our experiences there influenced us deeply.

All the writers share the treat of having been exchange students between the Universitat de Barcelona and La Trobe University (Melbourne) and/or Southern Cross University (Lismore) between the years 2000 and 2006. Australia has provided us with a huge baggage of feelings, emotions, experiences and memories we will never forget and for some of us Australia became a turning point in our lives, personally or academically speaking.

This edition was born as a tribute to our experiences, as a moment to reflect and remember how we once perceived Australia as a foreign country. At some point before, during or after our exchanges, we all thought Australia was such a foreign country: because of the different season-month calendar, the trading hours or the custom of walking barefoot at home and sometimes even on the street, to give a few examples. Contributors were asked to write a text where this foreignness was dealt with, in any style and format. The outcome is the mix of creative, academic and personal writings that follow.

The reader of this journal will encounter a “dance” among the topics of the writers, as each paper, story and poem is completed by the following one: from one view of a topic to another aspect of the same topic, which, at the same time, suggests or deals with other aspects further developed in the following contributions. This is the reason why the arrangement of the table of contents is not alphabetical, but thematic.

The reader will find theoretical articles, creative pieces of writing and personal papers dealing with different aspects of the “foreign country” that Australia was for all contributors. Each one of us had the freedom to choose the style and the minimum length of the contribution but the topics chosen can be described by four main keywords: city, nature, identity and migration.

The first contribution is Ruth Sancho's poem "Melbourne in Winter", a wonderful piece which makes the reader feel as if they were walking through Melbourne.

In "What can We do about It?", Elena Xampany makes us think and reflect about the importance of nature and global warming.

Mila Martínez's "A View on the Dialectic Between the Individual and the Environment" discusses the relationship humans have with cities and nature.

Carles Serra's "Reflections on Phenomenology and the Poetry of Kevin Hart. Foreignness and Strangeness at the Heart of Australian Identity" takes the reader through a poetic journey in order to understand the relation between individuals and nature.

A second poem written by Ruth Sancho takes us through a literary, sensual and mythological journey in her "Gulliver Surfs into Alice's Virgin Bay", where the loss of innocence and the end of Dreaming are dealt with.

Issues of identity and place are explored in David Calderón's "Expatriates: Who are They?", where he approaches this subject from a sociological point of view.

Victòria Gras "Mama 'poma', dad 'apple': Raising a Child with Catalan in Australia" explains her personal experience of migrating to Australia and deciding to raise her daughter in Catalan and English. Therefore, here we find the opposite point of view: that of an immigrant to Australia, not of an expatriate from Australia.

In Anna Zamora's "Destination: Down Under" the issue of identity is the main topic in a fictional account of the experiences an exchange student from Barcelona in Australia.

Lena Lund's personal experiences in Australia, especially her relationship to cities, villages and nature and meeting her husband there, are the topic of her paper "Australia: The Land that Changed My Life".

To finish with the personal accounts, in my paper “This Foreign Country Fascinates Me”, I write about my relation to Australia and about the many experiences I had there.

Finally, Ruth Sancho’s third poem “Why do You have to Own Everything Nice?” is the perfect closing text as it deals with city, nature and a farewell.

As the reader can see, the structure of this journal is circular and the reader can appreciate the theoretical articles, personal experiences or creative pieces of writing. I am sure all texts will make the reader reflect on the issues raised by the authors and will agree that they all have in common a view of Australia as “this foreign country”. Enjoy the reading!

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