Australia: An Inescapable Cultural Paradigm? Cross- and Transcultural Elements in Tim Winton's Fiction

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Abstract: The article considers Tim Winton's fiction in terms of its cross- and transcultural character. Despite the fact that local Australian settings permeate the writer's narratives, Winton creates an imaginary space that is both local and transnational in terms of its quality of the domestic culture, which Winton extends beyond its original field of practice. Winton achieves the transcultural quality of his fiction through transgressions and boundary breaking that are possible due to his frequent reworking of the traditional Australian themes and concepts of the unknown, supernatural, mystical, numinous and sacred, exploitation of leitmotifs of journey, transit and in-betweenness, use of cross-cultural symbols as well as various utopian and dystopian topoi such as Arcadia and Heimat.

Keywords: Tim Winton, local, global, universal themes, cross-cultural and transcultural symbols, motifs and topoi

In Tim Winton's works, Australia is always positioned in the foreground, that is, not just as a physical entity constituting the setting, but as an idea of what Australia is: an imagined space; a myth and conviction that the genuine Australia is rural, suburban and littoral. Winton's fictional world consists of spaces inhabited by archetypal characters traversing both geographical and imaginary locales, and comprises a number of themes and tropes such as *Arcadia, homo viator*, dream, death, continuity of material existence, metamorphosis, and resurrection. Winton's vivid descriptions adhere to white Australians' collective imagination which associates the country's most potent traditions and values with the outback. In addition, his exploitation of traditional literary themes and motives contributes to the consolidation of cultural stereotypes and promulgation of strictly limited ideas of the nation and national identity.

As a consequence, Winton's Australia does not seemingly depart from a stereotypical outback country. Due to his frequent repetitions of cultural patterns, Winton's oeuvre seems overwhelmingly Australian. However, the topoi Winton draws on constitute a starting point for presenting his own ideas of the country. His invocations to *common places* of the Australian culture align his works with colonial literature identifying Australianness with the continent's interior; however, his reworking of the traditional Australian themes opens his texts to the exploration of the intangible: the unknown, mystical, numinous and sacred notions of a transgressive quality. Thus, Winton's works might be characterised as both local and global, or transcultural, especially with respect to the scope of themes, concepts, symbols and tropes the author exploits.

On the one hand, Tim Winton's fiction is unquestionably Australian. Most of his works are set in the Australian environment and revolve around the themes of identity and history. With the three constant elements in his fiction – the land, identity and history – Winton provokes readers to rethink the relationship between the land and homeland, reconsider one's role as a

man/woman, a father/mother, a child/adolescent/adult, reflect on alienation and marginalisation, and on what it means to be white Australian, Aboriginal Australian, European, Asian, American or cosmopolitan. In addition, since Winton's narratives intertwine distant local histories, personal memories and present realities, the author tricks readers into nostalgic pondering on the history both collective and personal.

In her 2007 study *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity*, Catriona Elder explores the elements of Australian culture that contribute to the idea of what it means to be Australian. Among many Australian cultural practices, national myths, stories and narratives she analyses in her book, some are convergent with Tim Winton's idea of Australianness. The prominence of the land, Australia's colonial past, and celebration of the masculine character of the Australian culture (white, male and heterosexual) are elements that both Elder and Winton recognise as once essential to the construction of national identity.

On the other hand, however, Winton is able to go beyond the topos of Australia – the local and regional – into the global and universal. To this end, the author exploits border identities of his characters – the main agents of transculturation – who are usually found at existential crossroads and forced to face their sense of dislocation. Moreover, he takes advantage of the plot elements of transcultural literature such as leitmotifs of journey, in-betweenness or virtualization of the concept of home and homeland, and employs a set of themes, tropes and symbols of transgressive qualities and transcultural character. Consequently, despite various localities permeating his narratives, Winton's application of a specific set of topoi and symbols endow his prose with the features of the cross- and transcultural aesthetics: *cross-* since they are common to various cultures, and *trans-* as they go "across" and "beyond" a single culture to encompass, merge or converge elements of various cultures. In addition, Winton's preoccupation with global issues such as environmental protection adds an international and transcultural dimension to his oeuvre.

In his 2007 book *Australian Literature: Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism*, Graham Huggan notices that due to its engagement with postcolonial issues and matters, Australian literature has gained a transnational character:

> To see Australian literature in a postcolonial context is to recognize the dialectical interplay between one, frequently mythologized location (e.g. 'Australia') and another (e.g. 'Europe', 'Asia', 'America'). To put this another way: Australian literature has helped make Australia what it is by engaging with what others have made out of Australia. In this sense, the 'postcoloniality' of national literatures such as Australia's is always effectively transnational, either derived from an apprehension of internal fracture (e.g. via the figure of the culturally hyphenated migrant), or from a multiplied awareness of the nation's various engagements with other nations, and with the wider world. (viii)

In a similar vein, the editor of the 2010 book *Postcolonial Issues in Australian Literature*, Nathanael O'Reilly, observes that postcolonial reading strategies turn out to be fruitful in the analysis of Australian texts (2). More importantly, however, O'Reilly and Bill Ashcroft, one of the contributors to the book, recognise and emphasise the existence of various and numerous forms of postcolonialism. O'Reilly claims that "there are many kinds of postcolonialism, many types of postcolonial societies, and many ways for texts to be postcolonial" (6), while Ashcroft observes that, in general, "modernity, is culturally grounded and culturally transformed" and thus alternative modernities "appropriate and transform

global cultural forms to local needs, beliefs and conditions" (16). This is particularly useful for the analysis of Tim Winton's texts. His fiction is regarded as postcolonial because it addresses tensions between the centre and the margin, civilisation and primitivism, presents the world as fractured and gap-slashed, offers its characters the possibility to break and transgress boundaries, employs multiple narrative modes, different points-of-view, perspectives, and open endings. Nevertheless, for literary critics like Lekkie Hopkins and Hannah Shürholz, Winton's celebration of masculinity reinforces old patriarchal ideologies and gender stereotypes (Hopkins 49, Shürholz 60). In addition, in "The Challenge of the Novel: Australian Fiction since 1950" (2009), Susan Lever perceives Winton's practice of situating white Australians on an ancient and sacred continent as an attempt to seek "a pseudo-Indigenous relationship with the land" (514). As a result, in the wider context of a dispute over the author's engagement in neo-colonial practices, Lever's statement may suggest that Winton's appropriation of Aboriginal beliefs and traditions is in fact a continuation of colonial processes of marginalisation and dispossession.

Winton's novel *The Riders* (1994) illustrates how his fiction verges on the postcolonial and transcultural. For Shürholz, Winton portrays Jennifer as a threat to her family (73). Jennifer does not appear physically in the novel – she is depicted through other characters' reminiscences. Thus, she becomes a ghost-figure haunting and destroying her husband's life. In addition, Jennifer is represented as an undutiful wife and uncaring mother. Her rejection of marriage and motherhood grants her independence but at the same time renders her contemptible. Because Jennifer remains absent and hence can neither speak nor defend herself, for Shürholz, the book is an example of literature that silences and renders female figures powerless (74).

Due to the masculinisation of the narrative in the novel, subjective focalisation as well as marginalisation and misrepresentation of female characters, *The Riders* has been criticised for its patriarchal and colonial outlook. Nevertheless, the postcolonial character of the novel derives from a number of modernities Winton employs in this work. *The Riders* is engaged in the dialectical interplay between two mythologised locations, Australia and Europe, which, according to Gragham Huggan, situates Australian literature in a postcolonial context (viii). Fred Scully, the protagonist in the novel, is an Australian who travels across Europe to find his wife. Scully's nostalgic reminiscences of mythical Australia contrast sharply with sombre, stern and harsh European landscapes. In her book *Mind the Country* (2006), Salhia Ben-Messahel discerns European landscapes depicted in *The Riders* in terms of Greek mythology, Biblical symbolism and intertextual references (192-197).

For Ben-Messahel, Scully acts like Odysseus when he sets out on a journey to reunite with his family (192). In Greece, Scully meets Arthur, an English expatriate, whom Ben-Messahel identifies as "the deposed king and antitheses to King Arthur" (193). Billy, Scully's daughter, is bitten by a monstrous dog, an epitome of Cerberus guarding the entrance of Hades, who chases them away from his territory. They flee to Rome, where buildings resemble the Tower of Babel. On their journey, Scully and Billy meet Irma, a German who, like a nymph, tries to seduce Scully, deprive him of his powers and dissuade him from searching for Jennifer (Ben-Messahel 194-5). Throughout the novel, Billy repeatedly compares Scully to Quasimodo, but it is not until they reach Paris and visit Notre Dame Cathedral that Scully actually becomes a corporeal personification of Victor Hugo's character. Scully's peculiar physical appearance coupled with his body fatigue prompted by the exasperating journey change him into the archetypal figure of Quasimodo. Finally, Scully and Billy reach Amsterdam, the city of sin, a

modern Biblical Gomorrah, the underworld, or as Scully puts it "the Auschwitz of the mind, the place you'd never dreamt of going, the hell they said wasn't real" (Winton *Riders* 340).

Mythologisation and demonization of European landscapes in *The Riders* challenge, subvert and reverse the past Western imperial tendency to locate Europe in the centre, and thus in the position of authority, and colonies on the margin. In the novel, Scully, the marginal Australian, is forced to confront his European cultural heritage. As a result of the encounter, Scully's identity as Australian is strengthened since he rejects taking the role of the inferior Other and turns down corrupt European inheritance. In this respect, *The Riders* can be categorised as postcolonial literature, and Winton's exploitation of global modernities renders it transcultural.

Transcultural influences of Winton's oeuvre are based on the author's frequent reworking of cross- and transcultural motifs, tropes and symbols. The motif of journey alone evokes an archetypal figure of *homo viator*, a traveller or pilgrim, transgressing an archetypal or mythical land to seek solace in family and home. Jerra Nilsam (a character appearing in *An Open Swimmer*, in short stories in the collection *Minimum of Two* and *Dirt Music*), Luther Fox (*Dirt Music*) and Fred Scully (*The Riders*) are nomadic figures crossing geographical spaces, erasing and transgressing boundaries to pursue happiness they experienced in the past and believe to regain in the future. Hence, their efforts are rooted in utopianism: to revive past happiness, fulfilment and a simple Arcadian life in harmony with nature, they mythologise the past hoping to experience an idea of home in a utopian sense, as *Heimat*, an idea which, as Bill Ashcroft describes, "has form rather than location, a promise rather than foundation [...] the home we have sensed but never experienced" ("Water" 17).

The motif of journey in *An Open Swimmer*, *Dirt Music* and *The Riders* is supplemented with universal, cross-cultural symbols. In *Dirt Music*, for example, Luther Fox is a recluse who cannot forget about his traumas. To come to terms with the loss of his family and experience metamorphosis, Lu travels to a remote and secluded part of Australia and explores the wilderness of small, isolated islands. On the ancestral and sacred land, Lu endures physical and psychological suffering that leads to the disintegration of his sorrowed soul. The comforting music that flows out of the ancient and numinous land contributes to Lu's healing, but it is not until he symbolically immerses in water that his rebirth is completed. In his article "Water" (2014), Bill Ashcroft notices that in Winton's fiction the symbol of water revolves around freedom, death and rebirth (41). Winton's protagonists are offered freedom since, as Ashcroft observes, water acts as a medium of change, transformation and metamorphosis, and as such it allows characters to "experience something of the holiness of the world" ("Water" 28). However, water may also be associated with timelessness as it fuses past with present and, like utopia, gives hope, inspires desire and anticipation and thus becomes a promise of *Heimat* ("Water" 20).

The land and water are topoi common in existential literature. The topos of the land as a medium guaranteeing the continuity of material existence is cross-cultural. Some cultures and religions assume that the land is crucial for reincarnation since nature embraces the human body, ingests and consumes it to give new life. Consequently, this continuous cycle of life, death and rebirth provides eternal being. Similarly, aquatic topoi – common to many archaic cultures and connected with primeval beliefs – are still found in various contemporary cultures and literatures. In general, water is believed to be a life-giving force; in religious rituals it has the power to wash off sins and purify souls, which in turn are the prerequisites

for rebirth and eternal life. In *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959), Mircea Eliade explains how the cycle of life and death is symbolised by water:

> The waters symbolize the universal sum of virtualities; they are *fons et origo*, 'spring and origin,' the reservoir of all the possibilities of existence [...] *E*mersion repeats the cosmogenic act of formal manifestation; *im*mersion is equivalent of a dissolution of forms. This is why the symbolism of the waters implies both death and rebirth. Contact with water always brings a regeneration – on the one hand because dissolution is followed by a new birth, on the other because immersion fertilizes and multiplies the potential life. (130)

In *Cloudstreet*, as Ben-Messahel observes, water gains biblical importance (177). The epigraph to the novel taken from a chant by a Baptist pastor sets the tone for the story and delineates the symbolic role of water and the river. The Swan River remains central for the narrative and protagonists since it is an invigorating force that stimulates social life. In geographical terms, it is a hub of the fictional universe which attracts and gathers the entire community. From the banks of the river one can see "yachts moored in flocks over on the Mosman shore and the great, long scar of the sandspit" (*Cloudstreet* 112), "lights out on the river and fires on the beach" (113), "the boozing parties of prawners with their whingeing kids and boiling drums of water" (113), and listen to "the sound of mullet jumping and prawns scattering" (115). As such, the river constitutes the centre of a vibrant Arcadian town, where a seemingly utopian community celebrates life in harmony with nature. Moreover, the river and water emanate animating energy and life-giving power. For Fish, a boy who seems to suffer from a brain injury after a near-drowning incident, the river is a powerful force that offers him a promise of recovery and metamorphosis, and for his brother, Quick, it is the source of energy and motivation:

> the river was a broad, muttering, living thing always suggesting things that kept his mind busy. Every important thing that happened to him, it seemed, had to do with a river. It was insistent, quietly forceful like the force of his own blood. Sometimes he thought of it as the land's blood: it roiled with life and living. (*Cloudstreet* 304)

A cross-cultural aquatic topos that resembles Winton's symbolic treatment of water assumes that life is a process of drifting towards the ocean which, like the land, absorbs, consumes and connects everybody and everything. This coincides with Winton's treatment of the ocean as a repository of ancient knowledge and home for enigmatic creatures, fish and whales – the only living beings that, as Winton's narrative suggests, have gained access and insight into the greatest mysteries of the world.

In *An Open Swimmer* (1982), Jerra Nilsam invests a lot of time and effort to catch a mysterious fish with a pearl in its head that epitomizes ancient knowledge and mysteries since it is "'made out of the part of the brain.' The aggregated life, the distilled knowledge of lifetimes, of ancestors, of travel, of instinct, of things unseen and unknown" (114). In a similar vein, Abel, the protagonist in *Blueback* (1997), thinks that the eponymous fish possesses knowledge about the past and his father's tragic death. In *Shallows* (1984), Queenie Cookson is engaged in the protection of whales she associates with the divine. As a young girl, Queenie heard humpback whales' songs, which she believed were "the voice of God calling from down in the bay" (3). For Queenie, whales are God's messengers (15), and for

George Fleurier, a French environmental protester, they are magic creatures that have seen "the civilizations coming and going. They are observers, perhaps even recorders" (141).

In his works, Winton frequently makes use of the universal character of transcultural tropes. In addition, the writer fuses cross-cultural symbols, both religious and non-religious, to exploit metaphysical dimension of the human existence. The symbols of the fish and water, in particular, regularly recur in Winton's prose each time the author's spiritual vision of the world is presented. Consequently, most of Winton's main characters lead a littoral life and are ceaselessly dragged to water or the ocean: "Funny, isn't it, [...] how we always walk to water" (Winton, *Scission* 62), the statement articulated by a nameless female character in the short story "Wilderness" (in *Scission*) could be a watchword for the strong bounds that exist between Winton's protagonists and water. In *Shallows*, Daniel Coupar describes his granddaughter, Queenie Cookson, as "an amphibian-child, skinny, shiny-skinned, shimming through bodies of water and vegetation" (67), and in her grandmother's dreams Queenie appears as "a little girl swimming like a fish only there's no water and she's wriggling about in a patch of red dirt – and her ribs are all showing, she's got no clothes on [...] she moves her mouth, it's all swollen and dry and the teeth are black" (Winton, *Shallows* 73).

Depicting Queenie as an amphibious or a half-aquatic figure emphasises intolerable austerity and barrenness of the country and sharpens the contrast between the invigorating and mysterious ocean and the dry, infertile land. It is, however, the figure of Fish Lamb that most intensively combines religious symbolism with the numinous and spiritual dimension of Winton's novel *Cloudstreet*. After the accident, part of Fish transcends the physical reality of the world and the other part remains trapped in the bodily, material existence. From the moment of near-drowning, as Michael McGirr notes, there are two Fish Lambs, the one who escapes and merges with water and the river, and the one who gets imprisoned in the central room of the house at Cloud Street No 1 (61). Fish is stuck on the verge of the real and spiritual realms and the only way for Fish to regain oneness is to drown again. Therefore, he feels an irresistible need to immerse and re-enter the river in order to reunite with his other half.

For Winton's exploration of the mysteries of human nature and exploitation of cross-cultural symbolism, his oeuvre achieves transcultural character. In *Cloudstreet*, for example, there are two universal, cross-cultural tropes connected with the figure of Fish: the aquatic topos of life as a process of drifting and the imagery based on the duality of human nature (human being as an amalgamation of body and soul) and the dual self. The former is illustrated with Winton's symbolic treatment of water and a scene in which an unidentified narrator, probably the part of Fish that transcended material existence, tells the other part about the Swan river:

> The river. Remember, wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be many fish, for this water goes there, that the waters of the sea will become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. (*Cloudstreet* 179)

In the novel, the latter – the dualistic imagery – is inextricably connected with the figure of Fish, his disintegration into material and spiritual parts. Interestingly, however, Winton uses the symbols of both fish and bird to refer to the human soul in his reworking of the dualist imagery of human existence. In *Cloudstreet*, the symbolism is stated directly through the boy's name "Fish" and his desire to immerse into and reunite through water. Nonetheless, it is also suggested that Fish may have the features of both an amphibian and a bird. In one of

his dreams, Quick, Fish's brother, sees Fish standing in the middle of the boat with his arms out as if he was "a bird sitting in an updraught" (114). A moment later, Quick observes how the sky and the river merge: "Quick [...] sees the river is full of sky [...] There's stars and swirl and space down there and it's not water anymore" (114). When he wakes up, he asks

> Are we in the sky, Fish?
> Yes. it's the water.
> What dyou mean?
> The water. The water. I fly. (*Cloudstreet* 114)

The apparent merger of the two realms, the sky and water, expresses Fish's urge to overcome the state of in-betweenness he is trapped in. However, at the same time, the scene foretells Fish's metamorphosis yet to come. This is achieved at the end of the novel with Fish's death, his return to water and fullness of his being. Through water, the medium of timelessness, Fish's soul regains oneness ("I'm a man for that long, I feel my manhood, I recognize myself whole and human" (*Cloudstreet* 430)), and like a bird raises up to a vantage point outside time, to "the broad vaults and spaces" (*Cloudstreet* 2) from where "you can see it all again because it never ceases to be" (2). The final scene of the book is directly linked with the prologue, which casts a wide perspective on the Lambs and Pickles picnicking by the river at the time of Fish's death. The time sequence of the novel turns a full circle and the point at which *Cloudstreet* starts and ends is also a point at which action is looped. Once again, Winton invests water with the quality of a symbol and medium of reincarnation sustaining the never-ending cycle of life and death.

In *Dirt Music*, Bird is the name of Lu Fox's six-year-old niece, who died in a car accident together with her parents and sibling. For Lu Fox, Bird was a celestial creature, the only one in the family who could communicate with God: "if anyone saw God it would likely be her. Bird's the nearest thing to an angelic being" (*Dirt Music* 110). Thus Bird is a figure that combines earthy material existence with a divine, holy spirit. However, in his latest novel *Eyrie* (2013), Winton departs from associating the symbol of the bird with the image of a winged angelic figure. Tom Keely, the protagonist in the novel, is an antithesis of the mythical Phoenix. The eponymous nest is Keely's apartment located on the top floor of the Mirador, the highest building in Fremantle. Keely is a divorcee, a former environmental activist and bird watcher who has discredited himself and his organization. Professional life problems coupled with his unsuccessful marriage and complex relationship with his father are responsible for Keely's depression. Unemployed, divorced and broken, Keely has withdrawn from social life and closed in the walls of his obscure apartment – his eyrie. Overwhelmed with the burden of the past, he lives in a state of limbo. Keely has submerged himself completely in traumatic memories and let the past consume his present. Like an eagle grabbing its prey, Keely metaphorically digs his claws in and holds on to his tragic past. Unfortunately, Keely's memories are far from being nostalgic; rather they are a burden dragging him down. In this respect, Keely is like a raptor bird that gets hold of prey that is too heavy to lift – a simile explicitly established in the following scene:

> I saw that once, on a documentary, a film on TV. This great big bird underwater, trying to drag itself up with a huge fish way too big to carry. It couldn't heave itself out of the water, couldn't even get to the surface, but couldn't let go. It was locked on. Fighting up through the water with its wings. Like something you've never seen in your life. This great white bird hauling itself up, trying to fly against the ocean. (*Eyrie* 140-1)

Keely has a soul of a bird that desires to free itself by flying out from the balcony of his apartment. However, Keely's convalescence is hindered by the complex relationship with his father and his symbolic distancing from water. Keely's father, Nev, was a physically strong and morally pure local hero who protected the weak and helped people in need. After Nev's death, Keely felt obliged to continue his father's mission and decided to become an environmentalist protecting local wildlife against the destructive force of global development. Unfortunately, he failed. Convinced of his inferiority, Keely made himself believe he had disappointed his father. This paralyses and deprives him of power. However, Keely takes his last chance to prove he can bear the heritage his father left him, and attempts to help his old acquaintance, Gemma, and her grandson, Kai. It is because Keely believes he has nothing to lose that he risks his life to help them. This, as his mother explains, runs counter to what Nev would have expected from his son. Keely, however, ignores his mother's warnings and heads towards his self-destruction.

In addition, Keely's withdrawal from water contributes to his fall and hampers his healing. Unlike Winton's other characters experiencing rebirth or metamorphosis, Keely abandons a littoral life for a city one. As a consequence, he deprives himself of the possibility of revival. Keely's soul of a bird desires to break free from the burden of the past and craves for freedom, but it remains caged in his ailing body. The separation of the two is possible only through death. However, when in the last scene of the novel Keely approaches a body of a man lying on a pavement at the foot of the Mirador and discovers it is his own, it becomes obvious that he is not going to experience spiritual rebirth. Unlike Fish in *Cloudstreet*, Keely's soul does not undergo metamorphosis and is not liberated; rather Keely remains an antithesis of the Phoenix, the mythical bird endowed with the power to regenerate and obtain a new life from the ashes of its predecessors.

Winton's exploitation of motifs and symbols common to various literatures invests his fiction with a cross- and transcultural character. In her article "Transcultural Winton: Mnemonic Landscapes of Australia" (2014), Sissy Helff argues that Winton's writing can be regarded as transcultural for the author's exploration of mnemonic landscapes that connect communities in Australia and beyond as well as his generation of memories that work on both local and global levels, and thus are of transnational and transcultural quality (222). Helff rightly assumes that transculturalism of Winton's works lies in his production of memories common to members of different cultures, especially in the context of Australia's colonial past, which is strongly articulated in Winton's novel *Shallows*, where the writer emphasises that disgraceful colonial practices may be traumatic to both Aboriginal people and white Australians.

Nevertheless, the transcultural quality of Winton's works also derives from his ability to draw from different cultural traditions. For Mikhail Epstein, the author of "Transculture: A Broad Way between Globalism and Multiculturalism" (2009), "we acquire transculture […] at the crossroads with other cultures through the risky experience of our own cultural wanderings and transgressions" (330). Winton's cultural transgressions become evident in his idea of the sacred and his attitude to land. The author's sacred derives from a number of sources: the Bible, Christian and Protestant traditions, and Aboriginal beliefs. His works are both filled with fragments from the Bible and religious symbols, and inhabited by a plethora of ghosts and spiritual creatures. Although religious elements are present in his fiction, his texts are neither dogmatic nor evangelical (Miels 29), mostly because Winton prefers spirituality

understood as the amalgamation of the supernatural with the mystical to a restricted sense of spirituality imposed by conventional, religious beliefs and formal, institutional religion.

During an interview, Winton admitted that he could not commit himself to any formal religious affiliation because he is "a non-conformist by nature" and his "affiliation is to the Creator, not to any institution" (qtd. in Miels 31). On another occasion, Winton said, "I'm a Protestant with Catholic heroes: Merton, Dorothy Day, St Francis. I guess I inhabit the chunk of space where the Mennonites and Catholics meet" (qtd. in Rossiter 3). This indicates that he draws his inspiration from various sources and different traditions. For the mixture of Christianity, in particular Protestantism, and Aboriginal mythology, Winton's fictitious world resembles the Gnostic pleroma, "the abode of God and of the totality of the Divine powers and emanations" (Miels 34). As an amalgamation of different religious traditions, Winton's idea of the sacred has a transcultural quality.

In his oeuvre, the land itself becomes an epitome of sacredness, and as such it requires protection. Therefore, as a writer and ecologist, Winton calls for more preoccupation with environmental issues. He addresses his concern about the environment is his works where he recognizes human's destructive influence on nature and wildlife, and dangers posed by excessive industrialisation and development. In his short story "Aquifer", published in his collection *The Turning* (2004), Winton emphasises the problem of environmental exploitation and humans' inability to strike a balance between social development and environmental sustainability. In *Blueback*, Dora and Able Jackson try to protect their local marine life. In *Shallows*, Winton describes the environmentalists' struggle against whalers in Angelus. Finally, Winton himself has become a conservationist fighting for the protection of Western Australia's local marine environment. In 2012, for example, Winton visited parliament house in Canberra to lobby politicians to create a chain of national marine parks in Australia.

For their postcolonial character, cross-cultural symbolism and global issues exploited, especially environmental protection, Winton's works have attracted considerable interest among academics and found a broad international group of readers. According to data provided by the National Gallery of Australia, by 2002, Winton's books had been translated into twelve languages ("Tim Winton: Book Reading", on-line). Until 2016, however, as Penguin Random House quotes on its website, the number of languages the writer's works were translated to rose to twenty-eight ("Tim Winton", on-line). These numbers reflect Winton's growing popularity worldwide. However, Winton's success would not be possible if it were not for his ability to set his stories in rural and suburban Australia, draw from Australian literary traditions, rework Australian myths and intertwine these elements with transcultural, universal literary motifs and symbols. Consequently, despite its transcultural character, his fiction remains deeply rooted in the local. Thus, Winton's oeuvre represents Henri Lefebvre's idea of fusion wherein the local and the global are inextricably connected and inseparable.

In *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre argues that "the *worldwide does not abolish the local*" (86, emphasis in the original) and claims that space is composed of many, unlimited or uncountable number of spaces, and that none of these spaces disappears in the course of growth and development (86). He also notices that spaces:

> may be intercalated, combined, superimposed – they may even sometimes collide. Consequently, the local (or 'punctual', in the sense of 'determined be a particular 'point') does not disappear, for it is never absorbed by the regional,

> national or even worldwide level. The national and regional levels take in innumerable 'places;' national space embraces the regions; and world space does not merely subsume national spaces, but even (for the time being at least) precipitates the formation of new national spaces through a remarkable process of fission. (Lefebvre 88)

As a result, globalisation does not destroy local diversity. Contrarily, the global assimilates the local and triggers interest in the regional. Consequently, Graham Huggan classifies Winton among the writers whose prose combines the local dimensions of Australian literature with "the *global* outreach of the various modernities within which it [postcolonial model] freely circulates, and to which both its writers and its readers are inextricably bound" (ix). In this way, Huggan emphasises that although Winton's writing is strongly centred on Western Australia, its geography, locales and communities, it revolves around the issues of national and global importance such as environmental protection, identity, history and future. Moreover, with the modernities he employs in his writing, Winton neatly transfers the problems of Western Australia's local communities onto the national level, and promotes the localities nationwide and worldwide thanks to numerous overseas publications.

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