

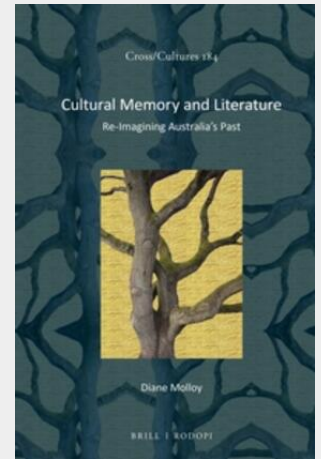
Molloy

## Cultural Memory and Literature

Re-Imagining Australia's Past

Cultural memory involves a community's shared memories, the selection of which is based on current political and social needs. A past that is significant to a national group is re-imagined by generating new meanings that replace earlier certainties and fixed symbols or myths. This creates literary syncretisms with moments of undecidability. The analysis in this book draws on Renate Lachmann's theory of intertextuality to show how novels that blur boundaries without standing in for history are prone to intervene in cultural memory. A brief overview of Aboriginal politics between the 1920s and the 1990s in relation to several novels provides historical and political background to the links between, and problems associated with, cultural memory, testimony, trauma, and Stolen Generations narratives, which are discussed in relation to Sally Morgan's *My Place* and Doris Pilkington's *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. There follows an analysis of novels that respond to the history of contact between Aboriginal and settler Australians, including Kate Grenville's historical novels *The Secret River*, *The Lieutenant*, and *Sarah Thornhill* as examples of a traditional approach. David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* charts how language and naming defined our early national narrative that excluded Aboriginal people. Intertextuality is explored via the relation between Thea Astley's *The Multiple Effects of Rainshadow*, Chloe Hooper's *The Tall Man*, and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Kim Scott's *Benang: from the heart* and *That Deadman Dance* and Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* reflect a number of Lachmann's concepts – syncretism, dialogism, polyphony, Menippean satire, and the carnivalesque. Suggested is a new way of reading novels that respond to Australia's violent past beyond trauma studies and postcolonial theory to re-imagine a different, syncretic past from multiple perspectives.

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