

Writing from the Periphery: the haunted landscapes of James McAuley

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In a comparative approach, this paper addresses the influence of important precursors on James McAuley's early poetry, its forms, themes and motifs, notably in the early work, what might be described as 'landscape' poems, and especially how translation functioned in his apprenticeship. The second part of the paper examines McAuley's successful return to the lyric landscape in the last decade of his life, and his apparent journey through a new phase of influences, dedications and appropriations. The term 'landscape' I do not use as a technical term, but rather as a word which best fits the poems I wish to describe which have, generally, a pictorial quality of images organised in a recognisable setting, a scene perhaps, often taken from nature and often adjacent to a more human-built environment, often featuring human figures or at least the gaze of a human onlooker, as well as that of the 'reader' onlooker.

While Chris Wallace-Crabbe and David Bradley have commented on McAuley's early landscape poems, including the concept of interior landscape, and there has been considerable comment on his later landscape poems influenced by Georg Trakl (notably by Gary Catalano, Carmel Gaffney, Peter Kirkpatrick, Igor Maver and Vivian Smith), this paper draws a link between the early and the later landscape poems. In addition, it further develops the recognition by Lyn McCredden and Noel Macainsh of the importance of translation in McAuley's work.

The Early Landscape Poems

Between 1936 and 1938, the young aspiring poet James McAuley, then writing under the initials 'JMc', wrote what has become one of his most anthologised poems, 'Envoi', a poem of four quatrains of alternating rhyme (*Collected Poems*, 6). The poem describes what might be regarded as a stereotypical Australian landscape, perhaps the speaker's home, containing 'blue-green gums' and 'brown sheep', a 'salty sunken desert' and an 'artesian heart' (*Collected Poems*, 6). It offers a modernist, somewhat surreal version of the usual archetype of a harsh and not particularly attractive landscape, the gums being in a 'remote disorder' and the sheep 'poking at his dreams along the hillsides' (6). The poem was one of McAuley's few contributions to the nationalist Jindyworobak School, which favoured imagery from arid inland Australia. It was first published in the *Jindyworobak Anthology of Australian Poetry* (1940).

What is interesting and revealing about this early poem is the gaze of the speaker, indicated in the first line: 'There the blue-green gums are a fringe of remote disorder...' and amplified in the third line: 'And there in the soil, in the season, in the shifting airs...' (6, my italics). It is as if the speaker is reporting, from far away, perhaps from a European country, in the manner of a travel guide or traveler recounting what is strange and exotic about a foreign country, one that is perhaps not even his own. Hence the detachment in the observation: 'The people are hard-eyed, kindly, with nothing inside them...' (6). It is a landscape from which the speaker seems to be estranged and which produces a kind of disorientation. For poet Judith Wright the lines evoked a

‘deep-seated sense of something wrong or out-of-place’ (208). In the language of post-colonial critics Gelder and Jacobs, the poem’s opening stanzas ‘turn what seems like ‘home’ into something else, something less familiar’ (xiv).

In contrast, the second set of quatrains brings about a shift in which the detached speaker reveals his involvement in and attachment to the landscape, despite its shortcomings: ‘And I am fitted to the land as the soul is to the body, / I know its contractions, waste and indolence...’ (6). He even manages a kind of reconciliation with the seemingly hostile and unyielding country and some reluctant if sagacious insight which is not only personal but shared: ‘Beauty is order and good chance in the artesian heart/ And does not wholly fail, though we impede....’ (6). Such a sense of order and chance is hard-won and conditional, extracted despite the negativity of ‘not wholly failing’ and other ‘impediments’ (6).

As commentators have already noted, the poem projects a voice of knowledge and experience, perhaps surprisingly for someone of McAuley’s tender years (Ashcroft, Devlin-Glass, McCredden, 181). However, the landscape, if not the experience of the poem, may be less invented than it might seem, and possibly was drawn from the time McAuley spent during 1938 in the dry sheep country of Bungendore near Canberra, tutoring children on a rural property . McAuley later commented that that landscape ‘was my first knowledge of the outback of any sort, of rural life, and it left a considerable print on me...’ (De Berg, 8). ‘Envoi’ can thus be understood partly as the mask of inexperience, fed by intuitions about what themes mattered to him then as the poet he was convinced he would become later.

What the poem reveals is an ambivalence, a dividedness, if not a schizophrenia in the speaker’s attitude to the land which was supposed to be his home. In ‘Envoi’ the gaze of the authorial *persona* is that of a wandering stranger, observing a landscape with figures, from between this landscape and another world. For this reason his landscape has a strong element of otherness. Freud himself noted qualities of ambivalence inherent in the word ‘heimlich’ (‘homely’) (347). It shows a ‘paradoxical relation with the Centre’, which Hodge and Mishra have identified in their study of the post-colonial mind in Australia (196). Livio Dobrez, summarising friend and university colleague Donald Horne’s recollections about McAuley, writes of ‘. . . a young Romantic, a figure without a centre in a world without a centre . . .’ (274). In ‘Envoi’ McAuley may even prefigure a postcolonial ‘settler’ subjectivity and its sense of loss and unsettlement in apprehending and relating to the Australian landscape. Indeed, the poem evokes some of the meaning of the Freudian term ‘uncanny’ which theorists Gelder and Jacobs, and also Ravenscroft, explore in their studies of post-colonial apprehensions of the Australian landscape. It also anticipates the post-colonial writer described in the theoretical literature of the 1980s as one ‘whose gaze is turned in two directions’ (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 60).

As suggested above, the poem introduces themes that will be central to McAuley’s work for the next forty years, themes of alienation and homelessness, or what Ashcroft, Devlin-Glass and McCredden have described as the ‘haunted, homeless, displaced register of McAuley’s poetry’ (105). These themes initiate an ongoing dialectic between despair and acceptance. However there are various types of ‘haunting’ or ghostly presence at work in McAuley’s poetry that derive from presences or absences felt in the Australian landscape, but also from those in the literary and cultural traditions upon which he drew. For example, Harold Bloom’s Freudian inspired study on

poetic influence titled *The Anxiety of Influence* (1971) emphasises the following words by the mid-twentieth century French writer, André Malraux:

Every young man's heart is a graveyard on which are inscribed the names of a thousand dead artists but whose only actual denizens are a few almighty, often antagonistic ghosts.....the past is haunted by a voice with which words must be harmonized. (Bloom, 26)

Bloom's study offers fruitful perspectives for understanding the dynamic of McAuley's own poetic development in both his early and late pattern of 'apprenticeships', which will be explored further below.

European and Australian Influences

James McAuley is certainly an author of strong influences. As an Australian poet he belongs to what is considered the intellectual European tradition with his countrymen and forebears, the Germanic scholar-poet Christopher Brennan and Kenneth Slessor. In his essay, 'The Three McAuleys', Livio Dobrez describes the early McAuley as 'derivative, pretentious ... [if also] full of passion' (84). The early poetry shows strong traces of Blake, Yeats, Eliot, Auden, Rilke and Stefan George as well as McAuley's acknowledged Australian 'literary ancestor', the symbolist Christopher Brennan ('In Homage to Christopher Brennan', 135-142). McAuley was certainly conscious of his own European inheritance. In a mock review of one of his poems for fellow poet Dorothy Auchterlonie, he parodied his own work as '...a bad attack of Heine, which, although a variation of his usual Eliotism, does not suit him very well....' (52). McAuley's own poem 'Self Portrait, Newcastle, 1942' reflects also the particular importance of Rilke on his early work:

With friends he talks anarchism,
The philosophical kind,
But *Briefe an einen jungen*
Dichter speaks close to his mind. (*Collected Poems*, 204)

Rilke (1875–1926), the late Romantic, Decadent poet was an important precursor to the modernist movement. His vignettes of deserted streetscapes recall Baudelaire; his evocation of a homeland and an interest in the poetic quality of objects were more reflective of late German romanticism and early expressionism. McAuley, in letters during 1938 to Auchterlonie, then editing the Sydney University literary magazine *Hermes*, refers often to his reading of Rilke, both the poems and Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*. At that time McAuley was away from his usual urban environment and influences, living at a rural property in Bungendore tutoring children, and writing and reading voraciously. McAuley's state of mind in his own 'letters of a young poet' was attuned to Rilke's preoccupations, including his 'veneration for solitude as an intrinsic component of creativity' (Baldizis, 377). McAuley confided to Auchterlonie: '... Rilke allures me with the impression of an 'inwardness' I have not penetrated...' (27). He wrote: 'In

the last 10 days I have written 6 poems, translated 2 of Rilke's...' (34). One was the poem 'Herbsttag', 'Autumn Day', translated by McAuley as 'Autumn'. The first seven-line stanza faithfully reflects Rilke's pictorial, evocative concrete scene, with what are perhaps traditional images of a lush, full Autumn in a traditional rural village setting. The twist comes in the second five-line stanza where Rilke shatters this harmony, shifting to a dislocated city environment of deserted pavements, inhabited by the lonely dislocated, homeless addressee of the poem, one who like Rilke, and perhaps like McAuley, writes long letters home, and 'wander(s) restless, as the leaves are blown.'

The greater personal charge associated with the solitary figure in stanza two is strongly reminiscent of McAuley's first literary ancestor, Brennan, who can be placed earlier in this late romantic tradition, and who was known for his series of poems 'The Wanderer' (1901-02). McAuley's translation might be seen as the tribute of the young apprentice, Bloom's 'ephebe' (Bloom, 54) or latecomer, to his two masters, one European and one turned to Europe, who pioneered the modernist depiction of images of loss, alienation and melancholy.

McAuley's early poem, 'German Chorale', published in H.M. Green's 1946 anthology *Modern Australian Poetry* (1946), goes so far as to incorporate 'Autumn' in its entirety as its concluding two stanzas (slight changes indicated in bold):

... **Heart, it is time.** The fruitful summer yields;
The shadows fall across the figured dial,
The winds are loosed upon the harvest fields.
See that these last fruits swell upon the vine;
Grant them as yet a southern day or two
Then press them to fulfilment, and pursue
The last of sweetness in the heavy wine.

You shall be homeless shall not build this year.
You shall be solitary and long alone;
Shall wake, and read, and write long letters home,
And on deserted pavements here and there
Shall wander restless, as the leaves are blown.

Bloom describes such a strong influence as a 'profound act of reading that is a kind of falling in love with a literary work (xxii). 'German Chorale' reflects the ultimate dedication to the master in the form of an unashamed 'swallowing'—McAuley had chosen to 'swallow' the *persona* of the homeless wanderer haunted by the memory of an Autumnal rural scene, probably his original home.

Another early example of the influence on McAuley's writing of Rilke, George and the symbolists can be seen in the unpublished poem, 'At Balmain' (letters to Auchterlonie, 6) which was to be the epilogue for McAuley's first collection. McAuley noted how he had used George's distinctive broken punctuation:

Thin strip of moon · Discoloured sky
Like rust · the houses humped and dark
Along the waterfront · No sign
Of earth-and sea-breath, foam-and-dust
Visits disconsolate lovers in the park.

And I in youth · who seek an art
Like twilight inward and resigned ·
Now for an instant free, apart ·
Give forth instead of love and ruth
The wordless inner moving of the mind.

As critic and poet Chris Wallace-Crabbe has noted of the companion poem ‘At Bungendore’, this short lyric shows how ‘the careful observation of a landscape prepares the way for a statement of personal emotion’ (326). The lingering focus on the ‘houses humped and dark’ under a thin moon assists in evoking the inwardness ‘like twilight’ to which the young poet aspires, and also: ‘...The wordless inner moving of the mind’. This recalls McAuley’s observation in his MA thesis on symbolism, written two years later in 1940 (‘Symbolism: An Essay in Poetics’, II, 16), about how the ‘psyche gazes upon external images as symbols for our own conflicts’ and of how such a technique underlay Baudelaire’s construction of a ‘...*paysage d’un âme...*’, ‘...the landscape of the soul...’ (II,16). The young poet was seeking, through this landscape, artistic devices for exploring uncanny presences or imaginings, ‘like twilight inward and resigned’.

McAuley drew Auchterlonie’s attention to ‘the pictorial imagery in the first stanza of his early poem ‘At Bungendore’, the landscape of his temporary rural home:

Now the white-buskined lamb
Deserts his ewe and bawls;
The rain spills from the dam;
A far-of bird cry falls... (*Collected Poems*, 5)

He wrote that he cherished the belief that it was ‘very atmospheric’. He rebutted any possible counter-argument that the lyric was ‘not my *voie* [way]’, explaining: ‘...the impulse to write this sort of lyric visits me every now and then and I don’t feel as sure as I did that I can’t do good work in this field...’ (letter to Auchterlonie, 21). Writing twenty years later, Wallace-Crabbe would unknowingly concur with McAuley’s assessment, regretting that ‘the enforced clarity of his [later] more public muse’ had triumphed over the early ‘lyric impulse to inner exploration’ (324).

The strong early influence of Rilke, George and the symbolists suggests, in Bloomean terms, the young writer wanting to become or to appropriate them. However, six years later, the poet was already starting to distance himself from such influences, rejecting from his first collection *Under Aldebaran* (1946) a poem titled 'Jesus' which he considered 'too Rilkean'. In a much later essay McAuley put a clear distance between himself and Rilke's 'intense subjectivism' ('Journey into Egypt', 181). However the 'apprenticeship' phase represented an important period of technical development and of self-definition within the Australian literary environment, including both the national and local flavour of the Jindyworobaks but also the considerable mainstream and predominantly European literary models such as those taken up in Sydney University's literary journal *Hermes*.

Even when McAuley's lyric landscapes drew on recognisable Australian motifs (for example the lambs of 'At Bungendore' and the Sydney foreshore of 'At Balmain'), these ethereal landscapes may have seemed less identifiably Australian because of their diffuse symbolist form. During the 1980s, out of prevailing concern about Australian cultural identity, McAuley's early European orientation and apparent 'intellectualism' was subject to criticism from commentators such as Docker (77-81). Despina Baldizis wrote of his poetry's later 'retreat to a precious isolation' and 'refined arrogance', linking this with the poet's reflections upon '...a certain thinness of the environment [in Australia]' (378).

The significance of translation

By connecting McAuley with the European 'other', translation remained an important exercise in his ongoing pursuit of self-differentiation. Growing from his scholarship at Sydney University in Latin, English and philosophy and from his reading in French and German poetry, it led to his exploration of important recent European poetic movements. Friend and fellow student Joan Fraser, who later published as Amy Witting, wrote of her collaboration with McAuley in translating French and German poets, mainly for his MA thesis on symbolist poetics but also as a reflection of their mutual passion, particularly for German late romantic poets (37). McAuley's translation work did not end with the 1930s but continued through the 1950s, with German poets Hölderlin, Hofmannsthal, Haushofer (who was important politically because of his resistance to the Third Reich) and with Austrian expressionist poet Georg Trakl who would become as important in the 1970s as Rilke had been in the late 1930s. Many of the poets McAuley admired—Dryden, Hölderlin, Rilke and George—were accomplished poet-translators.

McAuley lacked the cultural advantage of contemporary Australian expatriate writers Martin Boyd and Patrick White who drew into their artistic dialectics their geographic straddling of two worlds. Rather, for McAuley translation might have been seen as an opportunity for travel, and for enlargement into a world, a realm of experience, culture and tradition. This was otherwise inaccessible in the 1940s and 1950s to all but the most privileged in an Australia that was much less internationalised in terms of travel and access to non-Anglophone texts. It is linked with what Venuti has written about translation in the Romantic period, in which the translator 'loses his national self through a strong identification with a cultural other' (Venuti, 20). Translation may also be viewed as another process likely to lead to displacement, alienation or, more creatively, for the appropriation of nostalgic masks, the detached description of landscapes not one's own but perhaps coveted. As Nietzsche wrote: 'Should we not make new for ourselves

what is old and find ourselves in it?’ (in Venuti, 67). This partly explains the pastiche of ghostly literary presences sprinkled across his work. Significantly, by the mid-1960s James McAuley too had come to be haunted by his own past, in a series of important poems returning through memory to his youth and early adulthood, notably in ‘Father, Mother, Son’, ‘Because’ and ‘Tabletalk’ (*Collected Poems*, 181, 200, 202).

This is not to say that McAuley was not experimenting with more identifiably Australian landscape motifs in his early poems, which also became an increasingly important strand in his lyric landscape genre. ‘Terra Australis’ (c. 1938-40), for example, seems to take as its avowed prime purpose the celebration of a more stereotypical Australian landscape. Adopting the persona of the explorer, a variation on the wanderer, it evokes the discovery of the true Australian homeland with a satisfying concreteness in which:

...the wattle
scatters its pollen on the doubting heart;
The flowers are wide-awake; the air gives ease
There you come home; ... (*Collected Poems*, 16)

However the poem lacks the focus and the still presence of his earlier landscape poems such as ‘Envoi’. Rather it ranges across a wide geographic sweep to include iconic Australian emblems in varying landscapes, such as the magpie, the emu, the cockatoo, the angophora and the northern inland desert valleys (probably the Tropic of Capricorn as suggested by the motif of the goat). In this McAuley appears to be taking up the distinctive arid inland motifs of the Jindyworobaks who favoured emblems of a continent untrodden by people except for the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia. As in ‘Envoi’, the gaze is still that of the outsider, thinking of but not yet at home, speaking from afar, even if to fellow countrymen, guiding them on their own voyage of self-discovery: ‘Voyage within you on that fabled ocean/And you will find that Southern Continent...’. ‘Terra Australis’ represents McAuley’s first, almost allegorical, encounter with the exotic tropes of the Indigenous world, albeit with the European gaze of the explorer, a precursor of the post-colonial ‘settler’ figure. At times its exotic emblems—the wattle, the air, the magpie—seem homely: ‘There you come home’. However unlike the reconciliation seen in ‘Envoi’, the mood shifts so that the concluding stanzas reverberates as strange and disorienting:

There too the angophora preaches on the hillsides
With the gestures of Moses; and the white cockatoo,
Perched on his limbs, screams with demoniac pain;

While not discursive, there is a strong intellectual engagement with the physical emblems of the poem. It is still the land of ideas—the ‘mythical’ rather than the actual Australia—where the land and its icons reflect an idea of an antipodes imagined by the Portuguese navigator Quirós as a

land 'where reside/all things in their imagined counterpart'. McAuley would return to this persona in the late 1950s in his long narrative poem *Captain Quiros*.

Various critics (including Kirkpatrick, Macainsh, Maver, Smith) have commented on how Rilke, George and Trakl enabled McAuley to mediate into his own poetic practice the essence of modernism, 'whatever he prosaically expressed about the end of modernity' (Kramer, xxvii). He confided to Auchterlonie in 1938: 'except for the 17th century give me the moderns any day for my money' (19). Eliot was another precursor who helped mediate McAuley's adaptation of modernism, though McAuley rejected the scepticism and sterility he found in Eliot's work. The discursiveness which enters his poetics from the end of the 1940s reflects his own growing debate and preoccupations with modernity, both in aesthetics and ideology.

A new direction

By the early 1950s McAuley was positioning himself to reject the whole modern and romantic tradition, in the pattern Bloom described as 'poets wrestling with their ghostly fathers' (88). This had been precipitated by his critique of the surrealist manifestation of modernism in the 1944 Ern Malley collaborative hoax poems, and the subsequent, rushed anti-surrealist manifesto of the explanatory Statement written with co-author, Harold Stewart. In a recent study, *Networked Language*, Philip Mead (182) draws attention to Shakespeare's 'ghostly presence' in the Malley poems.

By 1952 McAuley had converted to Catholicism and was also working on a set of essays he would publish in 1959 as *The End of Modernity*. The essays reflect his argument that the 'modern world of industrial progress was a world of disinherited beings cut off from the deepest sources of satisfaction, restless and jangled, driven by unstilled cravings, through a course of life without meaning or direction' (24). McAuley wrote of the modern world as 'the age of anxiety', perhaps echoing Auden's long poem of that title in 1948. He wrote of the dilemma of poets writing in such an alienated world and spoke wistfully, if not hopefully, of the order possible in a 'metaphysically-oriented society' ('The Grinning Mirror', 69). Might he have been thinking of the central European villages of which Rilke had written in 'Herbsttag'? Or 'the old social order' he might find later in Trakl's turn of the century Salzburg ('The Poetry of Georg Trakl', 209)? At the time McAuley seemed to be less nostalgic for place than for time and culture, a kind of pre-lapsarian anguish which he had encountered in Brennan. However, such sentiment encompassed many postmodern and postcolonial subtexts, including themes of alienation, of homelessness and of belatedness, expressed throughout his work in an uneasy shifting between acceptance and despair.

In 1961 McAuley moved to the island state of Tasmania where, perhaps in response to the stronger presence of landscape in a society where the rural is never far away, some of the concreteness and contemplative stillness of his early lyrics began to return to his work. This is not to imply that he was not inspired by nature in Sydney or in his visits to New Guinea, as shown in poems of this period such as 'To a Bird of Paradise' (c. 1952), 'Palm' (c.1953) and 'Nativity' (c.1955) (*Collected Poems*, 67, 71 and 69). However from 1961 the presence of nature or perhaps also the poet's turn to nature becomes increasingly evident. These later poems, particularly those from 1970 onward, have been considered McAuley's finest achievement. One

might argue that the more temperate ‘European’ climate of Tasmania in some way matched the images of his early translations. For example, ‘Autumn Ode’ (c 1965) perhaps answers to his early Rilkean translation ‘Autumn’, however, the Autumn images are particularly Tasmanian, reflecting McAuley’s growing insistence on observation informing his art. He also draws upon the vernacular of a simpler, more direct and accurate language style: ‘...Poems that are lucid and mysterious, gracefully simple but full of secrets...’ (*A Map of Australian Verse*, 204):

We have this last of Autumn: apples ripening
In air sweetened like wine;
In the hopfields, golden walls
Of poplar: things we once took for a sign. (*Collected Poems*, 188)

This might be seen as the writer establishing a link between self and place. McAuley also wrote of a sense of ‘homecoming’ in terms of genre, in returning to the short lyric which Wallace-Crabbe had praised in his early work: ‘...It seems I have come back full circle to the kind of poem I began with but with a greater depth of experience...’ (204). McAuley’s nostalgia for ‘tradition’, perhaps associated with his adopted Catholic religious observance, and his nostalgia for a European cultural presence more generally, never completely disappears from his work, being transferred to the European-style architecture of older settlements in Tasmania, such as the old church clock-tower in ‘St Johns Park, Newtown’ (c 1963). In the next breath, however, the poet distances himself, professing not to care:

Tradition is held there,
Such as a land can own
That hasn’t much of one.
I care—but do I care? (*Collected Poems*, 180)

There is in the above words a residual ambivalence—between caring and not caring, but about what? The apparent desire for ‘tradition’ is not adequately met in the old colonial church. In this figuring of loss and absence McAuley may foreshadow the interest in Indigenous tradition that increasingly would inspire Australian writers during the last quarter of the twentieth century. As in other poems of the period there appears to be a weaning away from the past and from other geographies, resulting in a stoic if uncertain adaptation to the here and now of Australia in the 1960s:

The past is not my law:
Queer, comical or stern,
Our privilege is now.

The later poems

In the last decade of his life, McAuley's lyric landscapes became increasingly defined by their particularity in celebrating and naming the seasonally accurate images of his new home in Tasmania. This is the case, for example, of the short lyric landscape poem, 'In the Huon Valley' (c.1966):

Propped boughs are heavy with apples,
Springtime quite forgotten.
Pears ripen yellow. The wasp
Knows where windfalls lie rotten (*Collected Poems*, 208)

This particular poem seems to enact the Adamic naming of place, the new, but not naïve, vision of which Walcott has written in 'The Muse of History' (329-332).

McAuley's new poetics aspire to a simplicity of approach and reverence in attitude, a celebration which was not always easily achieved. This he recognised in a series of poems dedicated to what might seem to be, in the late 1960s, his new, Australian-born master, the untutored Australian lyric poet and balladist John Shaw Neilson. McAuley admired Neilson's work for its intuited symbolism, acute observation of nature, human compassion and metrical felicity ('The Poetry of John Shaw Neilson', 1-17). It represented for him '...the plainchant we have lost...' ('Keep the Season', c1970, *Collected Poems*, 213). The poem 'The Hazard and the Gift' (c.1970) which McAuley dedicated to Neilson, perhaps acknowledging his own limitations of apprehension and art, wistfully describes the rarity of Neilson's innate poetic gift:

It isn't ever found, it's only given;
But given only if we try to find;
And even then it's very rarely given. (*Collected Poems*, 219)

McAuley's subsequent re-encounter with the Austrian expressionist poet Georg Trakl (1887-1914) in a series of translations and dedications from 1970 to 1973 might be seen as a recurrence of his preoccupation with Trakl's central European contemporary, Rainer Maria Rilke, some 32 years earlier. McAuley felt particularly drawn to this second European precursor, to his strongly imagistic land and townscapes, also recognising from his own experience Trakl's search for redemption and his struggle between transcendence and despair. McAuley considered it '...perhaps the finest poetry written in our century' ('The Poetry of Georg Trakl', 202 – 223). He noted '...the beautifully shaped lyrics that mingle sound and colour...set in a recognizable place [that] construct a recognizable situation...' (163). Finally he concludes, in words that hark back to his own description of Baudelaire's lyrics: '...It is a landscape of the soul...' (163). Interestingly, such descriptions could easily be made about McAuley's own lyrics of the time, evident in the simpler imagistic style which had already emerged by the late 1960s, just before he started on his new exercise in translation between 1970 and 1973, and before his pilgrimage visit to Salzburg in mid-1973.

There are also echoes of Trakl's poem 'Music in the Mirabell Garden', as translated by McAuley (*Music in the Mirabell Gardens*, 1982), in his own poem 'In the Gardens', which was written following a visit to the Botanic Gardens at the Sydney Domain around the same time he was completing the translation (between 1970 and 1973):

. . .Ancestral marble has gone grey.
A birdflight wavers into space.
A faun looks with dead eyes after
Shadows that glide into the dark. (*Music in the Mirabell Garden*, 28)

Trakl's short quatrains, his motifs of corroded stone and the 'pallid stranger' entering the gardens all come to life again in McAuley's 'In the Gardens':

Poor summer with corroded face
And sightless eyes looks down the path,

. . .The stragglers leave. The iron gates close. (*Time Given: Music Late at Night*, 16)

McAuley's late lyrics tend to share motifs from what he described as the 'earlier half of [Trakl's] brief period of mature composition' (207): church bells, wine, music, the moon, Autumn, the vignettes from a village society, as well as a deep and persistent Christian outlook, specifically a concern with redemption and the fall. Above all, the solitary figure present in and apprehending the landscape seems to pervade Trakl's and McAuley's late landscapes. For McAuley, reading Trakl may have been, to recall Bloom, like looking into a mirror at his 'gnostic double' (145) or, in Freudian terms, an 'encounter with one's own alterity' (Ravenscroft, 82-83). However, that crisply imaged and musical lyric voice, that recognisable sense of place and situation McAuley so much admired in Trakl had already largely been constructed in his own poetics, celebrating the seemingly European Tasmanian environment which was now his new home, albeit one pervaded by a grim colonial past.

The anxiety about national identity that had preoccupied many Australian writers since the 1940s was not to be found at the core of McAuley's work. He was never one to argue for a 'single cultural heritage' (Huggan, xiii). As early as 1937, when he was editor of *Hermes*, McAuley had lashed out at '...literary nationalism, the theory that the artist should sit and write on his dunghill...' (37). In 1955 he wrote of the importance of universal themes, and in terms of identity advocated not the provincialism of self-conscious nationalism in literature but rather 'an embrace of regionalism' ('The Grinning Mirror', 67). McAuley would probably have agreed with the more recent postcolonial dialogue in which David Malouf has reminded contemporary Australians of the importance of regional landscape, and of the acceptance of a diverse identity: 'it is our complex fate to be children of two worlds' rather than 'an orphan in the Pacific' (79). Malouf has advocated to the Australian listener and writer an acceptance of our 'being in the

world' (101), as an alternative to anxiety about our place in the world. McAuley reaches this kind of sensory unity much more frequently, especially in his later poems, where he was conscious of his already shortened lease on life because of an incurable cancer. Such brief interludes of acceptance and ease in McAuley's work are, however, made all the more poignant by the underlying presence of a stoic despair. A shadowy late romantic melancholy haunts his apprehension of his new Tasmanian home.

Insect and bird are owners,
But nothing here is mine,
At most a moment's leasehold,
To cherish and resign. ('Fingal Valley', *Time Given*, 39)

This stanza of McAuley's late poem dating from 1974 again raises the Freudian sense of the 'unheimlich' or uncanny that persists throughout McAuley's work in his apprehension of felt absences, perhaps even the belatedness of his own incipient if repressed romanticism (Kane, 152). Ravenscroft has described what Freud identified as the uncertainty about home and homelessness, belonging and non-belonging as a 'rich example' for the postcolonial nation (81). McAuley appears to hover on the threshold of such an understanding. However, the source of his anxiety in the second half of twentieth-century Australia, perhaps like that of Trakl at the century's turn in Austria, was less geographic than metaphysical, that of the particular but universal wanderer, the prodigal, who feared or perhaps knew, that his Eden, his father's house in the twentieth-century world, was always and only at best a transitory thing. Notwithstanding his strong and conservative engagement in national political issues, McAuley was a cosmopolitan, driven by a geographic perspective and the concerns of an emerging postcolonial Australia, drawing upon the experiences, techniques and languages of both the centre and his homeland, and wrestling with or absorbing those late romantic and modernist influences to build his own differentiated poetic world, weaving strands of the universal with the authentically local.

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