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PREFACE

The need to redefine Australia has been particularly urgent in the recent two decades when the image of this antipodean society as almost a model multicultural one, craving for freedom and tolerance, was demolished by growing intolerance and nationalisms. In today's world, torn by conflicts of interests, racial hatred and social divisions, the nineteenth-century concept of a nation and national ideology, which only apparently faded away in the era of the late twentieth-century globalisation, is now being given a new prominence not just by minor politicians who want to win the favour of their electorates (Pauline Hanson and others), but by surprisingly large sections of democratic, egalitarian societies as Australia and New Zealand undoubtedly are.

In the period of national self-definition, i.e. since the 1890s through the time of the Great War to the 1930s and 1940s, Australia produced a specific kind of national consciousness, being in part a response to English colonialism and cultural imperialism, but largely a form of self-produced enthusiasm for the unique native environment and the myths of (white) pioneers who in effect embodied masculine ideals of self-reliance, courage and persistence, which, in time, took the form of the renowned Australian mateship – an egalitarian bond between men based on classless point of view. As a nation of former convicts, migrants and refugees, Australia, since the times of abandonment of its 'white only' migrant policies of the 1960s, served for decades to follow as an example to the world of how to tackle migration problems in a peaceful and rational way, and how to build a democratic, egalitarian society. However, the 2005 Cronulla race riots and mob violence that followed was a rude awakening for most Australians. The riots, which stemmed from tensions between youths from Sydney's Lebanese, Muslim and local Australian population, proved that there exists an extreme form of Australian nationalism – 'Aussie Pride' – the ideology of which has been to fight the 'wogs,' the 'Lebs,' the 'Pakis'; that is, the non-white migrants.

The eleven articles collected in this issue represent, then, a wide spectrum of approaches to the notions of Australia's national identity, its literature art, culture, history and politics. They comprise an insightful, informative and original contribution to Australian studies and attempt to redefine the concepts of national and individual identities. Although the specific contributions approach the issues of historical heritage and contemporary perspectives on Australia differently, they

all complement each other in scrutinising a complex issue of a cultural slash in present-day Australian multicultural and multiethnic society. Among the problems that have been addressed in the volume are the concepts of nationhood, post-war trauma (the Great War), multicultural society and relations between Indigenous people and officials as well as representatives of the white community on the degree of integration of various ethnic groups. Moreover, the criticism of immigration policy reveals a rather disturbing and ugly face of a country which at first might appear as a semi-mythical multicultural paradise and land of plenty but, after a closer scrutiny and a more penetrating gaze at its colonial history, Australia, for instance, turns into a country with a troubled history of building, first, a white and, then, multicultural society. Furthermore, the threat to a more or less stable national identity posed by the ‘Other’/‘Alien’ or simply new immigrant communities and asylum seekers is discussed, which reveals the manner in which they have been (mis)treated and abused by officials. Apart from the difficult socio-political and historical issues, this collection of articles touches upon the Aboriginal art and culture, an interesting genre of bush ballad and traces and maps cultural, historical and literary landscape of the Antipodes. The volume also includes an analysis of the image of Poland in two “ash” poems by an eminent Australian poet, Andrew Taylor, which unavoidably extends its perspective beyond Oceania.

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