

# *HOMELANDS*

*A creative thesis incorporating a book manuscript and exegesis  
submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communications,  
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**Part 1: *The Exegesis***

**Part II: *The Creative Work***

*by*

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*I think that I am here, on this earth  
To present a report on it, but to whom I don't know.  
As if I were sent so that whatever takes place  
Has meaning because it changes into memory*  
Czeslaw Milosz, The Unattainable Earth

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## ABSTRACT

*Homelands* is a creative post-disciplinary response to the 2001 “Tampa Crisis”, to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to rural “white” Australians’ reactions to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers since the late 1990s. The project draws on my sojourns in refugee communities in Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia, and Australia, and on my own lived experience in inland rural New South Wales. I explore the reasons people are fleeing Afghanistan and Pakistan, the impacts of their migration on Australian politics, especially in rural electorates such as my own, and the stories “white” rural Australians believe about “boat people” and others who are phenotypically and culturally different from them. I also interrogate the role writers, such as myself, have in influencing progressive social change and promoting more morally enlightened “border protection” policies.

I argue that extreme nationalist beliefs are driving both the conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan from which refugees and asylum seekers are now fleeing *and* Australia’s current punitive treatment of “boat people”. In both cases these beliefs are most strongly manifested by the groups social analysts call “the left behinds”, who live in relatively ethnically homogenous and culturally impoverished rural and regional electorates. The strong support Pauline Hanson received in such constituencies in Australia in the 1990s forced mainstream political parties to appropriate many of her One Nation Party policies, as demonstrated by the Howard government in the 2001 “Tampa” election campaign. Since then, opportunistic politicians and others have amplified community anxieties about “boat people”, and successive governments have extended the Howard era “Pacific Solution” policies in even more punitive ways to maintain electoral support.

I draw on recent research in multiple disciplinary fields to understand the psycho-social dimensions of these ethno- and religious nationalist attitudes. I examine a range of theories about identity formation and nationalism, and the processes of attitudinal change. I find that such change can only be precipitated by introducing new stories into communities’ repertoires and by re-emplotting familiar stories from different perspectives in ways which inspire strong emotional responses. I conclude that writers can have a fundamental role in this process. The complexity and multidimensional

messiness of the “real world” cannot be adequately represented by traditional linear modes of storytelling, however. By using more literary genres writers can narrate events from multiple perspectives and in diverse voices to more accurately represent some of these complexities, and to develop believable “characters” who can inspire empathy and compassion in ways that can promote attitudinal change.

This project offers both new stories and familiar ones told in unfamiliar ways to challenge the Us/Them binaries which are the hallmark of the exclusionary identity stories now driving Australia’s “border protection” policies. Despite the government’s boasts that it has “stopped the boats” people are continuing to flee conflict, persecution and famine in their homelands, including Afghanistan, in record numbers. As the impacts of Anthropogenic Climate Disruption take effect, these numbers are likely to increase even further, and at least some future climate refugees will almost certainly try to reach Australia by boat. The Australian government is unlikely to change its current “border protection” policies, however, until rural voters’ fears and anxieties about cultural difference are addressed, and they accept new more inclusive identity stories to replace the Us/Them binaries of “white” settler nationalism. Until this happens, Australia’s moral integrity and its reputation as a good global citizen will continue to be compromised, and refugees and asylum seekers now being held in off-shore detention centres, warehoused in Indonesia, or surviving on short-term bridging visas, will continue to be mistreated and prevented from contributing productively to Australia’s future.

## Table of Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation (formally Commission)
ACD	Anthropogenic Climate Disruption
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANU	Australian National University
ANZUS	Australia - New Zealand - United States Security Treaty
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCE	Before the Common Era
BIDA	Batam Island Development Authority
BME	Beginnings, Middles and [happy] Endings
CE	Common Era
ENSO	El Niño Southern Oscillation
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
FARC	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i> , Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
IIAS	International Institute for Asian Studies
INA	Indian National Army
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISAF	International Security Assistance Forces
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
IVC	Indus Valley Civilisation
KNIL	Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger
LeJ	<i>Lashkar-e Jhangvi</i> , Pakistani Islamist terrorist organisation
MEAA	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
MiG	Russian Aircraft Corporation which, in the post-Soviet era, was changed to Mikoyan-
MRCA	Most Recent Common Ancestor
MV	Motor Vessel
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NTT	Nusa Tenggara Timur, an Indonesian province, which translates as Eastern Southeastern islands
NWFP	North West Frontier Province, Pakistan, now known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

ONP	One Nation Party
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PoR	Proof Of Registration
POW	Prisoners Of War
PPP	Pakistan Peoples Party
RSL	Returned Servicemen's League
SAS	Special Air Service
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i> , Nazi era paramilitary unit
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
STO	Storytelling Organisation Theory
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States (of America)
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USS	United States Ship
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOC	<i>Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie</i> , Dutch East Indies Company

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