

**THE FRAGMENTED SELF AND STRATEGIES OF  
SUBVERSIVE CONSTRUCTION: ANIA WALWICZ AND  
ROSA CAPPPIELLO**

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*ABSTRACT*

This article is an attempt to offer a critical vision of the work of Ania Walwicz and Rosa Cappiello within the context of non-Anglophone writing in Australia. Before entering upon a critical discussion of the works concerned, a brief historical introduction to Australian literature is necessary to show how preoccupations with national identity and exile have been central to its development and how these preoccupations also form a thematic core in all migrant writing. While the analysis of the works concentrates on both the feminist and migrant consciousness at work in the texts to reveal how they attempt to restructure existing monocultural constructs of national identity as diverse, plural and multiracial by subverting the patriarchal structures imposed upon them as women and migrants and how this in turn leads to the freeing of the repressed and silenced self, it also seeks to analyse the central or peripheral nature of such writing with regard to the canon.

On the seventeenth of September 1900 Australia announced its intention to become an independent nation in its own right, and on the first day of the new century, January the first 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia came into being. Thus legally, constitutionally and socially Australia was no longer a colony bound to Great Britain but a free standing nation with its own constitution. However, as with all post-colonial societies, the emotional and ideological break with Britain was a much longer process and one that had begun in the 1890s.

The idea that Australia developed as a colony in a clone-like copy of Britain is far from true. From the very early stages of colonisation, Australia began to develop its own personality, and social differences as distinct from those of the metropolis. Nevertheless, the pull of the metropolis for the new colony was inevitable, leading to

what A.A. Philips was to term the “Cultural Cringe”, that is the constant comparison of the local, in every terrain, with that of England in particular and Europe in general. Thus an artist or writer had “arrived” if his work was exhibited, published or critically well received in the “old country”. Furthermore, the early colonial writers had to contend with the problem of finding an aesthetic form of expression which would encompass the new and strange reality that Australia presented, a reality far more disconcerting and weird than that encountered in either Canada or America. The “transported” cannon and rhetoric would in no way translate the reality of the Australian experience and landscape and over generations writers had not only to adapt and remould the aesthetic and language to suit their reality, but also to come to terms with who they were and what it meant to be Australian.

By the 1890’s the drive towards the evaluation and construction of a national identity as distinct from the British was underway spearheaded by the *Bulletin* in literature and the Heidelberg school of painters in art. This nationalistic drive, which affected both the arts and thought at all levels, sought to exalt the local while also compounding the cosmopolitan heritage on which many of the writers and artists drew. Thus, for the first time, the profile of Australian writing and Australian national identity began to emerge. While the sense of exile and fragmentation of self which had informed the early texts still appeared, it was accompanied by an attempt to understand and to become emotionally involved with the continent itself. By the early twentieth century the voice of Australian writers had become distinctive, freed, in the main, from the pull of the metropolis, and criticism had become autonomous and self-evaluative.

The European history of Australia was founded on emigration from Britain and Ireland and thus, until the mid-fifties, the view that Australia had constructed of its national identity was that of a predominantly white and Anglo-Celtic society encrusted in Asia, politically and commercially bound to Europe and America. Since the fifties, however, the social fabric of Australia has undergone a dramatic change with mass emigration first from non-Anglophone European countries, and now in the last two decades from Asia. The awareness of its proximity to Asia, the weakening of trade links with Britain and the multiracial composition of its society has led Australia in recent years to reconsider the question of national identity and its traditional Anglophone-centric view of itself. Australian literature and criticism reflects this shift in the national perceptions of self and has been enabled to a large extent by the increasing corpus of writing by authors of non-anglophone origin, by first and second generation migrants. Migrant writing has offered the reading public at large new perspectives of what is accepted as Australian while redefining the concept of national identity from the viewpoint of “the other.”

National identity is by no means a stable construct but fluctuates as the fabric of a given society changes. Typical of post-colonial societies is the reshuffling of national identity and the collective self as the emerging nation state redefines itself both from within and against the colonial legacy. In Australia by the fifties, as has been seen, this process was largely complete, but, at the close of the century, Australian society is now engaged in adapting itself to a multiracial social structure in which existing constructs of national identity and self-hood are being questioned. In a sense, it is fair to say that the emergence of this multiracial social patterning has led to the typical post-colonial conundrum of “Who are we and where do we belong?”

Migrant writing itself intrinsically poses this question, for central to the migrant experience of exile is the fragmentation of self and identity. The disorientated and

fragmented self is given expression, to some degree or other, in all migrant texts and is, in its essence, essentially post-modern. Hitherto accepted notions of self no longer hold as the centre of belonging disappears, while equally post-modern is the challenge issued to the approved construct of a linguistic and cultural homogeneous canon recognised as Australian literature. In this sense the migrant text acts as a post-modern deconstructor of canon, posing a new perspective of Australian literature as a multi-racial polyphonic palimpsest expressing multiple means of being and perceiving Australia and the Australian.

Much migrant writing, and in particular that of the first generation, tends to concern itself thematically with the question of exile, dispossession and repossession of identity and the exploration of what could be termed the schizophrenia of the migrant state. Uprooted, displaced, culturally and linguistically orphaned, the migrant finds himself hovering between two worlds: the old, which no longer offers a cultural or emotional north, and the new, which beckons enticingly, but which, more often than not, denies the migrant access beyond bare toleration. The migrant is thus doubly displaced; exiled from his country and cultural heritage on the one hand and, on the other, relegated to inhabit the fringes of the host society. Equally, the drive to assimilation on the part of both the host country and the migrant eager to be accepted and make his way, frequently brings about a denial or betrayal of the old, often resulting in a sense of guilt.

Migrant writing reflects both an individual and collective metamorphosis as the writer adopts the language of the host to express the individual response to the experience of fragmentation and dispossession and to articulate the search for a stable identity. This construction of identity can only be achieved through the balanced interaction of both cultures and languages and through resistance to the assimilative drive of the host community. For many, the construction of a stable identity will prove impossible, resulting in total alienation or in the occupancy of a cultural and emotional limbo. For others the social pressures towards homogenisation will result in assimilation rather than integration and the relinquishing of both cultural and linguistic inheritance. Many, however, will negotiate the transformation successfully, emerging with a sense of self which is both part of yet different to the Australian community at large.

Women migrants, however, are subjected not only to the same double displacement as their male counterparts being both culturally and emotionally uprooted aliens and marginalised as such, but are also suppressed by the patriarchal strategies of both their own and the host community. Thus, writers like Ania Walwicz or Rosa Cappiello will frequently negotiate their identity through the complex strategies of feminist ideology, thereby freeing themselves from the oppressive patriarchal order of society and the alienation that it imposes on both women and migrants. For these writers the migrant and the feminine consciousness are inseparable from each other, fusing in their struggle to dismantle the annihilating, assimilative nature of the patriarchal social order.

Ania Walwicz's first book, *Writing*, was published in 1982 and later reprinted in a joint edition with Philip Hammial's *Travel* in 1989.<sup>1</sup> This was followed by *Boat* in 1990, winner of the New Writing Prize in the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards<sup>2</sup> and then by *Red Roses* in 1992.<sup>3</sup> All three works are experimental both with regards to form and language, displaying a subtle and sophisticated range of textual strategies progressively developed throughout the three works which should, preferably, be read in conjunction with each other. In all three, Ania Walwicz exploits the possibilities of language to

explore the processess of thought, experience and emotion. The use of linguistic game playing, the deployment of surrealist associative logic typical of the oniric and the use of open textual strategies, all characteristic of postmodernist writing, are fundamental to Ania Walwicz's work, placing her clearly within a tradition which stems from Dada, Joyce, Stein and the "Écriture Féminine" of the French Feminists.

*Writing* is a collection of fifty-four apparently disconnected autobiographical prose clusters in which Walwicz not only narrates her own story, retrieving her earliest childhood memories of Poland, but also confronts and problematises her identity as a woman, migrant and writer. It is this confrontation with self and the ensuing search for a stable identity and individual voice which gives thematic unity and cohesion to the prose clusters. Thus, while the surface text is the narration of the autobiographical reality, the title, *Writing*, reveals the subtextual preoccupation with the struggle to construct an identity and enable a voice and language which will accommodate the new self. It is significant that it is towards the end of the collection in cluster forty-five, "Style", that the emergence of a unique stable self and voice is signalled:

(...) Words come to me and come out the end of my pen. I can make a dash and a dot. In a way no one else. Every person different. No two snowflakes. (...) That this is me here. I did that. That I. That this is really me here. That's the way I am." (p. 113)

In the final cluster, "New World", Walwicz confirms the new autonomy of self and voice expressed above declaring:

I'm newborn. I'm new. Brandnew. New. Me. I'm new. (...) I leave my hospital behind. I just get out of prison. (...) I give me birth. (p. 125)

Walwicz's articulation of self and identity turns her into a subversive linguistic and literary explorer. In writing herself into being through the narration of her story Walwicz uses language which resembles child-speak, the migrant's stumbling attempts at a foreign tongue, the syntactically chaotic and disrupted language of dream sequences and fast moving unpunctuated passages resembling stream of consciousness, thereby dismantling the boundaries of received notions of language as a seamless, stable and, above all, predictable structure. Re-coding language to articulate herself as different and self-aware, Walwicz carries out a frontal attack on the patriarchal social and linguistic systems that have forced her to remain speechless and invisible in all aspects of her multiple self: woman, migrant and writer.

Equally challenging is Walwicz's disruption of the expected voice and chronological sequence of the autobiographical narrative structure. Past, present and future infiltrate the narrative simultaneously, coexisting and overlapping, thus undermining the accepted logical temporal chronology, while the narrative voice becomes multiple and seemingly unreliable. The speaking "I/i" is both Ania Walwicz, woman, migrant and writer, but also a startlingly versatile role-player and ventriloquist, assuming and shedding identities in a literary-linguistic game of hide and seek. The authorial self thus becomes an androgynous, multiple mercurial self that escapes definition and which, characteristically, will not bow to the received notion of a single unified self. Walwicz is all of her persons and one at any given time:

I can play any role (p. 69), I'm John Dare. I'm a devil. I'm Evil Knievel that jumped over twenty buses. (...) I'm an electric girl (p 66)

This chaotic and at times seemingly incoherent language, together with multiple role-playing, uses the multivocality of literary language to articulate an identity which is constantly writing itself into existence in terms of difference by subverting the linguistic structures of the dominant discourse:

(...) i feel i'm getting somewhere i rip i rip i rip with all of me alltogether now in one move i tear through paper i rip i rip i rip i break through i come through i come clear(p. 117)

Walwicz's personal recoding of language assumes its artificial nature, effectively demonstrating the way in which language may be dismantled and reassembled to accommodate an individual linguistic space and experience.

The author's subversion, however, is not merely linguistic and literary. *Writing* is also about the dismantling of the strictures imposed on women in general, and on Walwicz in particular, by a patriarchal value and power system which have forced her to remain invisible, subservient, vulnerable and speechless "with a wad of cotton wool in my mouth." (p. 79)

The narrative of her childhood memories is presided over by a fragmented and insecure self hidden behind the mask of imposed social conformity: "(...) Girl 2 wore what anybody else. (...) Girl 2 that began as a mask grew on my face." (p. 99) As a result, the authentic self is suppressed and fades as "I go out of focus", fragmenting: "I get double", until finally: "She took me over." (p. 99) Childhood, conceptualised by Walwicz as "hospital" and "prison", signifying the annihilation of the true repressed self, is dominated by two typical archetypal figures in feminist discourse: the father who is butcher, knife-wielder, dentist and vet, and the mother who is authoritarian, distant and unloved by the child. By delving into the obscure areas of the subconscious, Walwicz sets out to free the repressed self in a patently clear reversal of the phallus complex, confronting and overturning her childhood experience as victim: "And I used to think. That I was born a gelding. And born a horse. And my father did it to me." (p. 79) No longer his victim, she emerges the free demonic female "(...) who put a knife in this man's gut." (p. 70) In a complete reversal of roles she becomes the wolf in her retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood." (p. 65) Now both huntress and temptress: "Want some sweeties mister? (...) I bought the wolf", she disguises herself to wield the knife against the stronghold of patriarchy: "I bought a hood for myself. Get me a hood. I bought a knife." (p. 65) Once the stronghold has been demolished, the doors of her childhood "prison" and "hospital" open, freeing her from silence and subordination: "They told me not to live," (p. 77) "I was becoming invisible," (p. 97) finally discovering that: "World's my oyster. I'm its pearl." (p. 66)

Ania Walwicz's narration of her story, her return through memory to her childhood and her inquisition of the subconscious is fraught with the tensions of both the migrant experience and that of women as individuals submerged and repressed by the surrounding dominant group which alienates them. The fragmented self must therefore be reconstructed by means of subversion, by carving out a linguistic and psychological space as its own separate and clearly identifiable terrain, by challenging the socio-cultural and linguistic hegemony of the majority.

The same linguistic and literary strategies deployed in *Writing* reappear in both *Boat* and *Red Roses* and are used with the same subversive intention. *Boat*, to a large extent a reworking and extension of *Writing*, is again a collection of stunning prose clusters, though these are longer and more complex in the interweaving of Walwicz's personal history with intertextual references that draw on historical figures, the nursery rhyme and fairy tale, the bible and popular culture, among others. Equally, the language moves through an extraordinary range of registers from the biblical and literary to the vernacular, from broken English to the standard, to the hypnotic rhythm of invented language in "oolee" and "oolee 2": "ooleeooleeoolee oolee dee deedeedah doo oh deede mah oolee mah do dadeeda (...)" (p. 111)

Navigating the oniric, the world of the subconscious and the seas of memory, Walwicz uses the surrealist, disjointed and chaotic associative logic characteristic of the irrational as she sounds the deepest levels of emotion and experience. Reconstructing herself from the "(...) cut up woman from a Picasso painting" at whom "Everyone is laughing," (p. 100) she emerges triumphant: "i make me i wasn't anybody i make me i made me i sew me for years (...) i was so torn i repair me (...) i'm the best girl i'm better than what you see around," (p. 120) finding the voice and language that will express her into existence: "(...) words want me they want get in me i'm yours words fill me all up you are mine and mine can do anything i like with you." (p. 223)

*Writing* reveals a pattern of chromatic symbology that moves primarily around black/white, yellow/orange and red, a patterning which is intensified and extended in *Boats*. Ten sequential prose clusters, forming a narrative within the narrative, link a particular stage in the reconstruction of self to a specific colour symbol, ten in all, which will reoccur throughout the whole work signalling a similar situation and thereby forming an intricate pattern of colour coding. Thus the emergence of self from the abyss of fragmentation and silence moves from white: "(...) be quiet do as you're told" (p. 36) to gold, signifying a state of freedom, wholeness, and articulateness: "free to move around out of box free (...) even balance (...) clear head (...) am built (...) write me smooth in good (...) diary this writes me." (p. 53-54) The only clusters in the work to be numbered, one through to ten, each number corresponds to Walwicz's personal graphing of the construction of identity laid out in "Numbers," (p.53) the cluster immediately preceding the autonomous colour sequence: "0 is empty (...) 1 [white] is beginning i start (...) 10 [gold] is the best i can be i reach 10." (p. 33-34)<sup>4</sup> *Boat* contains, as seen, 100 prose clusters, 100 being a multiple of 10, the last significantly titled "Harbour" (p. 264) as Walwicz successfully completes the navigation of her subconscious. Thus the eleven prose clusters encapsulate the preoccupations, narrative and linguistic strategies employed in the whole, and are summarised in "Boat Show" placed immediately after the colour sequence. This narrative sequence within the narrative retells the main story, offering important keys to its interpretation, while providing a formal structural device which mirrors the multilayered and complex nature of self through which Walwicz must travel on her personal Odyssey to repossess the self and which will culminate in emotional and personal freedom: "(...) now i sail on sure speedy name gold boat arrow i'm the most there is i'm wonderful this is marvellous i'm commander of steady." (p. 59)

The range of textual strategies employed in *Writing* and *Boat* are interestingly reworked in *Red Roses*, an exuberant freewheeling open text in which the prose cluster has been replaced by two hundred and fourteen pages of uninterrupted self-generating narrative. Thematic preoccupation with the mother, the central figure in the

work, leads Walwicz to explore all aspects of “mothering”; from the personal relationship with the mother, to the birthing of self and her own role as gestator of the text. *Red Roses* thus offers a self-reflexive disquisition on the processes of writing and the relationship between author, text and reader.

Walwicz is concerned with opening up a multiplicity of perspectives both for herself and her reader by means of “(...) making a collage montage a composite image a word texture text,” (p. 19) by spinning a web of intertextual relationships : “(...) these stories tell my stories i’m a reflector mirror a bouncer,” (p. 69) and by allowing words and images to evoke others in free association thereby enabling the text to generate itself. The author casts herself in the role of tantalising “fascinator”, web-maker and spider: “(...) i made a web a spinner i’m a spider,” (p. 67) winding and unwinding the threads that “attach” her to “(...) a room in my words,” (p. 66) while demanding that the reader should, in turn, “(...) read me slow” and “(...) unravel a ravel.” (p. 65)

Similarly, Walwicz acknowledges the strategy of literary game playing: “(...) writing is only a game” (p. 184) and the deliberate decoding of language: “(...) i am making a language a talk (...) i am in pink rooms making words” (p. 82) used to create a personal linguistic vehicle which will allow her to move beneath the surface reality and express the “other” self that inhabits the subconscious, thereby freeing it: “(...) I’m entering an entry to a deep place and a surface.” (p. 181) Thus, encompassed within this game playing is the notion that the very art of writing is, to a certain degree, cathartic, enabling the identification and repossession of the suppressed self:

“(...) the magician travels and travels and does tricks by writing it down this is the way of saving the catharsis in art but never completely and completely but just enough to save me then this makes me saying makes me different and different i have a real person then for writing this the writing of red roses. (p. 186)

Thus, as Walwicz “mothers” the text, it, in turn, “mothers” the true self by freeing it from invisibility and silence, expressing it into being.

Walwicz adopts the voice of the trickster, the magician, the unreliable narrator: “(...) i’m making it up or am i,” (p. 95) remoulding the traditional narrative form: “(...) that’s what a book’s supposed to be all about stories first of all” (p. 58), to create a multivoiced, multilayered text of innumerable stories within stories which defies the notion of closure: “(...) i wanted to make a definitive statements then the defining but there’s no such thing now” (p. 184). All stories are Walwicz’s story thus “(...) this story never ends,” (p. 85) but continuously invents itself by means of intertextuality and free association of word and image: “(...) everything refers a reference and suggests (...) everything remembers everything else a correspondence a speaking,” (p. 181) creating a richly textured discursive flux which, in its conscious subversion of the norm, reveals that other discourses, other forms and other different multiple identities can be released from the homogenising grip of the dominant culture as the journey towards the self is completed.

Rosa Capiello’s *Oh Lucky Country* is a seminal feminist text which centres on the plight of migrant women exploited by an intrinsically capitalist and philistine society and further repressed by their condition as women. Like Walwicz, Capiello articulates the feminine and migrant consciousness as inseparable, using as background her own experiences as an Italian migrant in Sydney.

The novel was first published in Italian in 1981, winning the Premio Calabria,<sup>5</sup> then translated into English by Gaetano Rando and published in Australia four years later.<sup>6</sup>

The Italian edition provoked heated debate when it reached Australia for reasons pointed out by Gaetano Rando:

(...) it was greeted with cries of horror and vilification by some of the more affluent sections of Sydney's Italian community, a reaction to certain disconcerting elements presented in the novel. These included the language (sometimes crude in the extreme), the exploitation of migrant women workers in the ethnic-run Sydney factories, the description of the abject living conditions of these low-income earners, and the explicit presentation of both heterosexual and homosexual activities. (p. vi)

Rosa Cappiello hails from Naples and racy though the language is in the English edition, one can readily imagine that in the Italian original the textual strategies deployed by Cappiello must have afforded an even richer linguistic transgression. In his introduction Rando comments at length on the linguistic and literary tradition on which Cappiello draws:

(...) there is explicit reference to the elemental activities of people expressed without euphemisms, a crudity of language due in part to Neopolitan popular tradition but also based on the current speech habits of the younger, post-1968, Italian generation. It also reflects the style of contemporary Italian writers such as Pier Paolo Passolini (...) Alberto Moravia (...) and Paolo Quintana (...) (p. vii)

Rando goes on to underline the subversive nature of Cappiello's use of language in the Italian original, which is powerfully pervasive in the English text, as a means of subverting the norm, as a weapon of social denunciation:

The type of Italian used in the novel contains a considerable amount of material drawn from slang and vulgar speech. This linguistic marginality in terms of perceived norms of literary expression may be interpreted as the "official" Italian culture which has rejected the migrant by instigating his/her migration. Disintegration of language may be equated to disintegration of the migrant's cultural base, stifled by the host society. Rejected by the old country but not accepted by the new, the migrant-protagonist author uses language as an instrument of denunciation. (p. xi)

The similarity with strategies employed by Walwicz is evident, though the level and method of the transgression differs.

The story of urban migrant life is narrated by Rosa, a composite autobiographical and fictional voice, while Cappiello transgresses form by using a plotless structure resembling a cubist-like superimposition of disjointed, grotesque characters and events. This structure aids Cappiello's view of migrant existence as self-destructive, leading to fragmentation, a dualistic vision of the world, the degradation of the individual and finally to self-enclosure and silence:



I wish the earth would swallow me up. To dig a deep hole with just the force of my foot and bury myself in it. They have gagged me. I have lost myself. I don't even know who I am, the she-devil, the adventuress, the borrower of others' mannerisms, is drifting, shattered into a thousand pieces, every piece pregnant with things unsaid. (p. 171)

The overcrowded and squalid living conditions in the migrant ghetto in Sydney are used by Cappiello to foreground the crude reality confronting migrant women who become the easy victims of their own material aspirations and that of their peer group, and of male sexist ideology, finding themselves trapped on the bottom rung of the social ladder. The "Lucky Country" thus becomes a nightmarish, grotesque social jungle in which identity and individualism are lost in the struggle to survive:

(...) with the act of migration we had ordered ourselves a fine funeral for our identities, to be reincarnated in sewers, as factory workers, in machinery, in knots, as tender morsels for despotic men (p. 5)

While Cappiello thus demolishes the myth of Australia as the "Lucky Country", she embarks upon a direct attack on the phallo-centric citadel of male sexist ideology. Male characters are grotesque emasculated caricatures:

The male - we gradually got to know him prick in hand. He belongs to all races, bearer of diverse customs and cultures, speaks the international idiom of fucking but not fluent English. (p. 9)

The migrant male's Australian counterpart fares no better:

Jokes there were aplenty about the Australian variety: spineless, drunkard, not much interested in females. Faced with choosing between a glass of beer or a woman, he opts for the beer. From what we've heard he derives the same sexual enjoyment from it. (pp. 9-10)

Women, "Their intellect still in an embryonic state," (p. 19) become sexual objects or remain blindly and hopelessly trapped in the gender based roles dictated by the patriarchy:

The lucky bride, as well as being strong, a good worker, an impeccable house-keeper, an angel and other bullshit is also envisaged as a bearer of pay-packets as well as the odd child, but first she must provide documentary evidence that her sex has been sealed from birth (p. 12)

Ultimately, what migration and Australia offers these women is the "poverty of spirit spawned by an empty existence, the aimless struggle in a country which often offers only suicide or madness" (p. 114) for "This country will never be home." (p. 120)

For Cappiello, like Walwicz, writing constitutes a process of self-definition and transformation. The fictional figure, Rosa, remains trapped and silenced for although "(...) the plot of the book I'd like to write, if I knew how to write, begins

gradually to take on an indistinct shape” (p. 89), the work is never completed. Not so for Rosa Capiello. *Oh Lucky Country* enables its author to redefine herself through the process of writing as neither Australian nor Italian, but Rosa Capiello: an individual tied neither to ideology nor ethnic community; a woman in her own unique right.

As has been seen, Ania Walwicz’s and Rosa Capiello’s writing, while transgressive in form and language, picks up many of the preoccupations characteristic of much migrant writing; exile and alienation, marginalisation and the fragmentation of self. Equally it moves beyond these concerns to deal with the repression and silencing of the feminine self, thus combining both the migrant and feminine consciousness as inseparable in the struggle to subvert the patriarchal social order.

Migrant writing, both the more traditional and the experimental, opens the debate as to where it is to be placed with regard to the canon of Australian literature traditionally written by Anglophone writers. There are those like Con Castan who would argue for its centrality within the canon because the migrant text shares so many of the thematic characteristics of the mainstream.<sup>7</sup> Others, like Sneja Gunew, would argue that to accept Castan’s view is, ultimately, to place the migrant text within the assimilative grasp of the mainstream, thereby dismantling its power both to disrupt patriarchal homogenising strategies and to express into existence distinct perceptions and notions of being Australian.<sup>8</sup> It is possible, perhaps, to argue that the two viewpoints are not necessarily totally, mutually exclusive. Walwicz’s and Capiello’s work follows Castan’s premise of being central to the canon in so far as it explores the experience of exile, the disjointed, fragmented self and the coming to terms with an alien environment, all thematic markers, as has been seen, in the history of Australian literature. Equally their transgressions of the linguistic and literary norm, their drive against the traditional Anglocentric conception of Australian identity and their feminist concerns locate them on the periphery as radical writers working against the mainstream.

Ultimately, what their work does is to offer other ways of seeing and being an Australian by restructuring existing monocultural constructs of national identity as diverse, plural and multiracial, but Australian nevertheless. As is the case with many migrant writers, their attempt to answer that post-colonial multiracial conundrum “Who are we and where do we belong?” leads to the repossession of a unique articulate self, affording the reader the opportunity to reassess both his personal ideological and cultural assumptions and the profound socio-cultural changes taking place as Australia negotiates its identity as a multi-racial community in Asia. If the term multiracial or multicultural is to have any relevance at all then, finally, there can be no centre or periphery, no single core of literary canon and no sexist hegemony. Utopian this may be, probably impossible to achieve, but, in the meantime, migrant writing in general and voices like that of Walwicz and Capiello in particular, must continue to exert pressure on existing monolithic socio-cultural structures and perceptions to enable the creation of a new social landscape and identity which will allow for non-exclusive multiple ways of perceiving and being an Australian.

## Notes

1. Walwicz, Ania *Writing*, published together with Hammial, Philip, (1989) *Travel*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson. All further references are to this edition.
2. Walwicz, Ania (1990) *Boat*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson. All further references are to this edition
3. Walwicz, Ania (1992) *Red Roses*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press. All further references are to this editon.
4. Bracketed colours are my addition.
5. Cappiello, Rosa (1981) *Paese fortunato*. Milano: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore. Note “fortunato” appears uncapitalised in the Italian original.
6. Cappiello, Rosa (1985) *Oh Lucky Country*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press. All further references are to this edition.
7. See Castan, Con “Greek Australian Literature” in T. Spilias and S. Messinis (eds.) (1988) *Reflections: Selected Works from Greek Australian Literature*. Box Hill: Elikia Books. Translated by John Vasilakakos and Mary Mylonas, pp. 3-28.
8. See Gunew, Sneja “Migrant Women Writers: Who’s on Whose Margins,” in Ferrie, Carole (ed.) (1985) *Gender, Politics and Fiction*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.