

Recent Australian memoirs: claiming 'home', reclaiming 'country'

Dr Lynda Gilfillan

**Monday 6 November
18.00–19.00**

LT3 Kramer Building,
Middle Campus, UCT

R100 (full fee); R50(staff)* R30(students)

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In this lecture on two recent Australian memoirs – Tim Winton's *Island Home* and Stan Grant's *Talking to My Country* – Dr Lynda Gilfillan explores the terms 'home' and 'country' in the context of contemporary Australia. As a West Australian, Winton occupies a littoral space, at the land's edge. It shapes his identity on a continent that, he says, 'is too big and rich and complex to be truly understood'. Especially so, given its 65 000-year-old Aboriginal culture. Grant

is a son of this ancient culture, and yet, like Winton, he is also the descendant of Irish convicts. Each author, in his own way, is the heir of exile. And now, generations later, Winton's 'home' is the very place which Grant reclaims on behalf of forebears who were not only dispossessed, but massacred.

In their memoirs, these authors confront what Edward Said has described as the 'rift forced between a human being and a native place,

between the self and its true home'. For Said, this rift is 'unhealable'. But is this the conclusion reached by the two Australians? Or do their writings reach out in hope?

Dr Lynda Gilfillan lectured in English at the University of Pretoria before becoming one of South Africa's most sought-after book editors. She now lives in Australia.

* As a partially self-funding entity, we are obliged to charge a small fee for extension lectures. These are fixed at Summer School rates.



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