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Griffiths, Michael R., "The correspondence of Bernard O'Dowd and Walt Whitman: Indigeneity and the cosmopolitics of settler literary nationalism" (2012). *Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts - Papers*. 1215.

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Abstract

In the last two years before his death, Walt Whitman corresponded regularly with an Australian poet named Bernard O'Dowd. While he would later reach great prominence O'Dowd was, at this time, an obscure antipodean nobody, a poetic dilettante whose voice was yet to emerge. On 15 March 1891, Whitman wrote to his admiring antipodean correspondent noting that "[t]houghtful folks here are paying much attention to you south there & Canada north" (Whitman, *Collected Writings* 5:176). Despite this gesture of transnational comparison between the two countries, Whitman makes no apparent connection between the indigenous peoples of either dominion, nor does he invoke the indigenous peoples of North America. This omission of indigenous Australians is a perplexing lacuna given his deep concern with Native Americans, for instance in the references to "Red Aborigines" in *Starting from Paumanok*, or to the "Squaw, wrapt in her yellow hemm' d cloth" passing among the multitudes of *Song of Myself*, or indeed to the "Austral Negro" highlighted in my epigraph (*Leaves* 30-1, 52). Whitman's association of Canada and Australia seems to be largely predicated on the connection of either to the United Kingdom. "The advice" of American writers on the two imperially governed nation states "is not to be in too g't a hurry to cut loose from G't Britain-but you both are the best judges and deciders of that" (Whitman, *Collected Writings* 5: 176). Despite this lacuna, there is a great deal to warrant the comparison between Whitman's attitude to the place of indigenous peoples in his vision of nation and a comparable articulation in O'Dowd's work. Each shares an insistence on nativist appropriations of indigeneity as the grounding of an embrace of difference that is nonetheless refused to the living indigenous subject.

Keywords

era2015

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Law

Publication Details

Griffiths, M. R. (2012). The correspondence of Bernard O'Dowd and Walt Whitman: Indigeneity and the cosmopolitics of settler literary nationalism. *Antipodes: a global journal of Australian/New Zealand literature*, 26 (2), 197-202.

The Correspondence of Bernard O' Dowd and Walt Whitman: Indigeneity and the Cosmopolitics of Settler Literary Nationalism

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You Austral Negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive lip/. . .
I do not say one word against you, away back there where
You stand,
(You will come forward in due time by my side.)
. . .
My spirit has passed in compassion and determination
around the whole earth

—Walt Whitman, *Salut Au Monde* (*Leaves* 182–3)

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH, WALT WHITMAN corresponded regularly with an Australian poet named Bernard O'Dowd. While he would later reach great prominence O'Dowd was, at this time, an obscure antipodean nobody, a poetic dilettante whose voice was yet to emerge. On 15 March 1891, Whitman wrote to his admiring antipodean correspondent noting that “[t]houghtful folks here are paying much attention to you south there & Canada north” (Whitman, *Collected Writings* 5:176). Despite this gesture of transnational comparison between the two countries, Whitman makes no apparent connection between the indigenous peoples of either dominion, nor does he invoke the indigenous peoples of North America. This omission of indigenous Australians is a perplexing lacuna given his deep concern with Native Americans, for instance in the references to “Red Aborigines” in *Starting from Paumanok*, or to the “Squaw, wrapt in her yellow hemm'd cloth” passing among the multitudes of *Song of Myself*, or indeed to the “Austral Negro” highlighted in my epigraph (*Leaves* 30–1, 52). Whitman's association of Canada and Australia seems to be largely predicated on the connection of either to the United Kingdom. “The advice” of American writers on the two imperially governed nation states “is not to be in too g't a hurry to cut loose from G't Britain—but you both are the best judges and deciders of that” (Whitman, *Collected Writings* 5:176). Despite this lacuna, there is a great deal to warrant the comparison between Whitman's attitude to the place of indigenous peoples in his vision of nation and a comparable articulation in O'Dowd's work. Each shares an insistence on nativist appropriations of indigeneity as the grounding of an embrace of difference that is nonetheless refused to the living indigenous subject.

This essay examines the correspondence of Walt Whitman and Bernard O'Dowd in two senses. First, it refers to the literal correspondence, which O'Dowd initiated in March of 1890 and that continued till late 1891 before Whitman's death the

following March. Second, the paper will trace out the thematic correspondence between the work of the two poets, particularly with regard to a shared poetics of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. More particularly still, I will attempt to identify several correspondences between Whitman's and O'Dowd's attitudes toward the place of indigeneity in the nationalist poetic imaginary. This correspondence comports a reconsideration of O'Dowd's nationalism, his democratism, and his attitude toward the place of the indigenous Australian within either concrete vision. I draw Whitman into these assertions for several reasons. Firstly, the causal reason that Whitman may very well represent a great deal of the inspiration for the cosmopolitan dimension to O'Dowd's national poetics (as their literal correspondence shows). In this sense, where I indicate a correspondence between the two, my emphasis is ultimately on O'Dowd as an Australian poet influenced by, amidst else, Whitman's cosmopolitan nationalism. While, in ultimately focusing on O'Dowd, the present essay does not take up the task of elucidating Whitman's cosmopolitan nationalism, it reflects the widespread reach of Whitman's influence.

Further, in either Whitman's or O'Dowd's case, one finds, on the one hand, a correspondence between an all-encompassing cosmopolitical transcendence and, on the other, the attempt to foment a coherent vision of nation. For both poets, this cosmopolitanism is vested in a nativist appropriation of indigeneity, manifest as a spiritual effect. This transnational correspondence is significant since it reveals a certain cosmopolitics of appropriation that often accompanies the emergence of poetic nationalism in settler colonial spaces. In other words, the correspondence between Whitman and O'Dowd reveals not only the influencing and influenced predilections of an American poet and his antipodean pupil, but it also shows how the poetics of nativist nationalism operating in either settler colonial space related to alterity according to a parallel mode.

In either case, the vision of nativist poetics was frequently constructed around the appropriation of indigeneity, its spiritual preservation, and corporeal absenting.

As the work of Pheng Cheah, Jacques Derrida and others has shown, the place of spirit in the increasingly racialized, twentieth-century conception of nation is always at once fundamentally central and readily absented. For Cheah, at the inception of nationalism, “cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not quite distinct from each other because they originate from the same philosophemes of culture” (Cheah 117). In the settler colony, nativist appropriation is one such philosopheme. The narrative of the settler nation has been often open and accepting to the call to “democratize the world” even as the conditions of this democracy are consistently bound to race (O’Dowd, *Poems* 181–2). This phenomenon has been identified by Derrida as a central aporia that binds ideas and pretensions of cosmopolitanism to the nonetheless bounded nation. As Derrida puts it, one finds within the enlightenment form of this relation “the paradoxical but regular association of nationalism, with a cosmopolitanism, and with a humanism” (Derrida 162). This paradox comes about through a reading of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, for whom the proper makeup of the nation should be “all those who believe in spirituality and the freedom of spirit,” such that, Derrida notes, “if Fichte is nationalistic [. . .] he is so as a progressive, a republican, and a cosmopolitist” (162). Derrida, taking Fichte as a paradigm, shows how projects of nationalism often manifest a spiritual transcendence, just as this transcendent cosmopolitanism frequently retains the capacity to exclude. Cosmopolitanism, then, is not the antithesis of nationalism but is rather an immanent property nascent within it that functions both to open the nation spiritually to the world and immunize it against the excesses of cross-cultural transcendence. Between the ideal of cosmopolitanism and its constraint by (and within) nationalism, we find a cosmopolitics, which simultaneously exceeds and inhabits nationalism. The cosmopolitics of a national poetics, then, always involves drawing in the spirit of Other peoples even as it also frequently refuses their living presence. Further, that the spirit of, say, Aboriginality is a significant part of the cosmopolitics of nationalism does not necessarily permit living Aboriginal people a true place within the national future or, indeed, even the present.

As one sees in my epigraph, Whitman’s poetics is already a poetics of cosmopolitan, global, and transnational dimensions, even as it simultaneously remains a poetics of nation. The “Austral negro” is one amongst a plethora of others whose “spirit” will be central to the completion of the great poem of the singer’s nation—America, even as this figure extends well beyond its geographic bounds. For Whitman, the singing of the nation requires a poetics of a certain *spiritus mundi* in order, paradoxically, to define an ontology of the limits of its citizen selfhood. As certain recent theoretical interventions have shown, cosmopolitanism and nationalism are always connected by a thin and paradoxical thread.

Both Whitman and O’Dowd are simultaneously poets of nation and of the spiritual expansion of nations beyond the bounds of their citizenry. That is to say, each poet stands in

a tenuous relation between an attempt to sing the poetic vision of their respective nation—limited and defined—while opening this body politic onto a spiritual plane transcendent of its European inheritance, its fixed present and, often, the “races” and peoples that make it up. As Whitman famously put it in his 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*, “The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem.” “AMERICA,” he writes, “does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions” (Whitman, “Preface” 409). Further, spiritual homogeneity and the participation in an abstract and shared past with its “old religions” also couples with multiple national pasts and a transnational survey of potential subjects: “[t]he Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth, have probably the fullest poetical nature” (409). Where the nation is unified by certain such key signifiers as “the United States” and “America” in making this national body through the voice of the poet, many singings will be necessary, combining the “old religions” and origins in “all nations at any time upon the earth.” Further, whatever the extra-national reach of the poet, a certain celebration and chauvinism will consistently temper the cosmopolitics of nation with an exaltation of homogeneity. It is possible to read one correlate of these “old religions” as those of Native Americans, along with those European traditions no doubt simultaneously indexed by this phrase. Yet, we shall see, the mode of presence afforded indigenous custodians of the “old religions” is less corporeal and more particularly invested in the spiritual presence, which they will convey to a new republic. It is precisely in this emphasis on spiritual cosmopolitanism—at the expense of literal corporeal acceptance—that settler nationalisms retain a paradoxically racist nativism. In the terms of this cosmopolitics, nationalism has always retained a certain cosmopolitanism that nonetheless forecloses a truly universal spiritualism. By accepting the passing of Indigenous peoples as inevitable, the nativist poet arrogates the right to appropriate their vestige.

In *Starting From Paumanok*—whose title already draws from the Native American name for Long Island—it is the poet’s voice that is strengthened by the spirit of indigenous presence and not the survivance, in Gerald Vizenor’s sense, of Native Americans per se (Vizenor). “For the past,” Whitman writes,

I pronounce what the air holds of the red
aborigines.
The red aborigines,
Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls
as of birds and animals in the woods, syllabled to us
for names,
Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Mongahela, Sauk, Natchez,
Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-
Walla,
Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charg-
ing the water and the land with names. (*Leaves* 30–1)

This nation “AMERICA,” that does not “repel the past,” none-

theless has a relationship of sublation with the supposedly passed or past presences, which inhabit it. In this relation, the native is not wholly conserved, but this figure rather adapts its national futurity to memorialization in light of loss and “depart[ure], charg-/ing the water and the land with names” though not with their own lives. As Ed Folsom succinctly puts it: “The Indians, Whitman knew, had been abused and treated unjustly, but he also subscribed to the notion of progress and social evolution and believed that it was inevitable and ultimately valuable that America extend itself from sea to sea” (Folsom 57).

One finds in O’Dowd’s works a poetics that corresponds to this model of expansion, rendered as poetic nationalism, though not until well after his literal correspondence with the great American poet. Just as, in bringing about a new nativism and a new nation, Whitman will charge “the water and land” with these “names” of native spiritual mystique and significance, so O’Dowd in his *The Bush* would eventually assert that “Great Australia is not yet: She waits/[. . .] The passing of temporary States.” One can surmise a nascent vestige of these conceptual correspondences in his epistolary correspondence of 1890 and 1891. Though the question of indigeneity does not directly arise in the letters, the question of the past’s significance that will eventually code indigeneity’s fate does indeed emerge as a key issue.

In June of 1890, O’Dowd wrote his “dear Master,” with much despondence about his efforts toward either Australian nationalism or poetic achievement (O’Dowd to Whitman). “I give you a few threads of a failure,” he wrote, referring to his rhetorical skill and his thwarted ambitions to spread the word of Australian nationalism, and, indeed, the poetic importance of his master. “I believe,” O’Dowd wrote, “fame once intended to give birth to a child. Some accident happened and I was the abortion. Dear Walt I love you with all my heart and all my mind and must unburden myself a little.” Although O’Dowd’s early efforts at republicanism had come to naught, Whitman’s verse was a comfort and an inspiration to his spiritual aspiration that could be connected to this nationalist political goal. “I was,” the letter earlier states, “foolish enough to start a movement for the separation of Australia from England. We held two meetings and I am not altogether sorry now—that very few heard of it.” Yet nonetheless, Whitman’s verse rejuvenates the connected spiritual impulse in its interweaving of past mythos and present subjective and nationalist pretense: “I look over the past and see a desert with a soul wandering aimlessly. I fear I have lost the soul for ever. Your words at times make me pulseresponsive but I know it is the human ‘I’ and not the fitful aerial marsh-fire-like ‘I’ of the past. I am optimistic now, before was the reverse.” Not only does this last statement recall the relation between Whitman’s assertion of “poetical nature” in America or the “past” it does not repel, it also anticipates the attitude toward poetic nationalism one finds in the O’Dowd who would come to literary fame in the next century. For this O’Dowd, the present self of the nationalist poet requires the ephemeral trace of the indigene, even as this transitory inheritance functions like the “fitful aerial marsh-fire-like ‘I’ of the past”: a necessary but insufficient portion of the “pulserespon-

sive” “human ‘I’” of the present. The present “I” needs the past “I” of tragedy, loss, and tribulation, but this sense of loss and passing is insufficient to a physically adept poetic physicality—the “pulseresponsive.”

By 1941, this pessimism had long been cast aside by O’Dowd. Now the Melbourne *Herald* was content to declare O’Dowd “our national poet” (Front Matter of O’Dowd, *Poems*). But when still not yet the “national poet,” O’Dowd, in one of his last letters to Whitman, seemed already optimistic about the connection between democracy and nation in Australia, even if he was too humble or too unaware yet to connect this assertion with his own poetic ego, his own “I.” “We want a Walt Whitman here,” he wrote in August of 1891. O’Dowd perhaps had in mind the modernity of the democratic self, with its physiologically fit “modern man” that opens the first pages of *Leaves of Grass* (Whitman, *Leaves* 1); whether or not he saw himself as this future Australian Whitman is unclear. “Ours is a democracy too,” O’Dowd continued, “with even more hopeful prospects than yours but with great dangers ahead (especially social)” (O’Dowd to Whitman [1891]). Even as the national poet reaches transnationally, he does so in a cosmopolitical mode: to the exultation of the present prospects of his nation’s own body politic. In 1910, O’Dowd would give poetic form to this assertion of Australia’s potential democratic greatness in his *Democratize the World*—again, perhaps continuing the Whitmanesque cosmopolitics of democratic aspiration and modernity. There he argued in poetic form that racial difference was incompatible with spiritual transcendence as the horizon for an imagination of an ideal egalitarian nation:

The race that claims within its bound
Divine equality
And treads another on the ground,
Is building on a lie. (O’Dowd, *Poems* 181).

In a following stanza, he broaches a notable topic for my current comparison—the relationship between indigenous peoples and the Nation—a key theme for Whitman, as I have observed. What is crucial here is the tone of the attitude to indigenous doom or survival as it bears upon the meaning of the present “I” of the national poet. “If,” O’Dowd wrote

[. . .] the tale we daily hear
Too glibly from each tongue,
Of races doomed to disappear,
Of tribes whose song is sung

Is based on cosmic law of Good,
You too our sad ones must
Renounce the Hope of Brotherhood
And be to serfdom thrust.

(O’Dowd, *Poems* 181–2).

Frank Bongiorno comments that these lines “could even sustain a skepticism about the popular ‘doomed race theory’” (Bongiorno 56). Yet Bongiorno also comments (and I think accurately) that O’Dowd’s overwhelming attitude to the place of indigeneity in the Australian nation and its poetic imaginary is

to see “the Aborigines enter historical consciousness only when appropriated and integrated with the culture of the colonizer. Far from being part of the national culture in their own right, they are a mystical stone-age leftover, or ‘living fossils’” (45). This assertion gels with O’Dowd’s own avowed attitude, in his essay on *Poetry Militant*, that it is Walter Baldwin Spencer—author (with Frank Gillen) of the classic *Native Tribes of Central Australia*—who represents the poet of Australia and not the Arrernte, whose myths and ceremonies are described in that text (O’Dowd, *Poems* 13; Spencer and Gillen). For O’Dowd: “we have already a great poet in Australasia, but like the divine ancestors of Professor Spencer’s aboriginal Centralian tribes, he is split into fragments” (O’Dowd, *Poems* 14). These fragments are the various poets he describes in the essay, from Lawson to Patterson and less well-remembered Australian scribes. It might be more in line with this avowed poetic attitude to read the criticism of *Democratize the World* as being leveled not against the belief in the notion that Aboriginal people are one of the “races doomed to disappear” but rather at a “too glibly” enunciated attitude that this disappearance is a result of the “cosmic good.” For O’Dowd, the disappearance of Aborigines is apparently inevitable; what matters to his poetic project is how well their fragmentary vestiges will be reintegrated into a future Australian poetic nationalism.

After listing the many fragmentary figures of this potential poetics, O’Dowd insists that his “meagerly outlined list will indicate [. . .] that there is at least prime poetic material in Australia now, capable of responding, with judicious mingling of powers, to any call a nascent nation would make on it” (*Poems* 14). The nation, for O’Dowd, is to be the product of a syncretic production through understanding the corpus of its white settler writers together. However, this assemblage is thoroughly analogous to the process by which Spencer must have—the poet imagines—brought together the fragmentary nature of *alcheringa* (the Arrernte word for dreaming, or dreamtime) in his rendering of the myths and practices of the Central Australian tribes. Just as the ethnographer makes sense of a coherent Aboriginal tradition from fragmentary accounts of dreamtime ancestors, so the poet must draw together all the elements of the settler nation’s mythic past—including its Indigenous inheritance.

For O’Dowd, making sense of Australian poetry from the fragmentary corpus of themes produced by its fine writers is a process comparable to making *alcheringa* into a single comprehensible whole, equally relevant to the nation to come. Yet, as Whitman wrote of the “melt[ing]” and “depart[ing]” of the “Red Aborigines,” for O’Dowd, living Aboriginal people have no relationship to the national form in the future to come of Australian democracy, despite the fact that their “fragmentary” names, traditions, and customs may well bear such a relation. Aboriginal legends were to be one spiritual fragment among the many inheritances that the poet must synthesize. This process was to resemble that of the Spencerian ethnographer, an agglomeration of fragments. Yet, while O’Dowd’s notion of tradition and individual talent as it bears upon the national poet was drawn from an analogy with the relationship the Arrernte and their ethnographer had with the “divine ancestors,”

O’Dowd’s comparison certainly suffers from a lack of understanding of Aboriginal religion. This is so since for the Aboriginal religious conception of dreaming, the dreamtime “past” is both past and present—a golden age of heroes who nonetheless still frame the religious life of living people. If O’Dowd’s poetics in *Our Land* closes by reaching back to “the dramas of a Golden Age,” this “golden age” can be read as referring to both Australia’s Indigenous past and its European inheritance (O’Dowd, *Poems* 259). Anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner would later highlight this common Australian mistake of equating “the dreaming” with a fixed Golden Age in the past. For Stanner, explicitly, the European notion of a pastoral “golden age” should not be thought as equivalent to the temporally complex notion of a past in the present that characterizes the dreaming. Nonetheless, such an equivalence certainly had entered the settler imaginary as early as in O’Dowd’s work.

In *Australia*, O’Dowd’s most famous poem of nation, the “Delos of a coming sun God’s race” is not vested in Aboriginal people but in a future Australian race built from cosmopolitan fragments; these might include Aboriginality as well as the many and multiple fragments of Australia’s European past. Bongiorno has connected this sense to O’Dowd’s indulgence in theosophical mysticism, with its notion that “the ancient Australian continent could ‘produce no new forms, unless helped by new and fresh races, and artificial cultivation and breeding’” (Bongiorno 47). Yet, while O’Dowd and Whitman’s correspondence makes no reference to the “Aboriginals” of either Australia or America, the discussion either man indulged in of the relationship between the “past” and the new nation would seem to be an influence on the former’s view of an Australian nation of the future. Here, “Great Australia is not yet,” but will be eventually—building on its multiple pasts. In *Our Land*, O’Dowd combined primitivist racist characterizations of “[s]omnolent Asia,” and “Africa, fey with witcheries,” with a declaration of his embrace of immigration in the making of the new Australian race. However, writing in the journal *Theosophy in Australia* in 1912, O’Dowd argued for “universal brotherhood, irrespective of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour” (Bongiorno 56). Opposed to the white Australia policy, O’Dowd believed instead that “Australia and her herald gods” should “invite/A chosen race”: “She calls the fit of all the world to share” (O’Dowd, *Poems* 257). O’Dowd’s poetics of national citizenship, then, invites all in spirit and in theory, even as it lays in place the caveat of “fit(ness)”—a physicalized nationalism spectrally haunted by cosmopolitical selection. As *The Bush* puts it, Australia is steeped with a certain absence awaiting a moment when the physical body of the coming Australian people is to be charged with the absent native spirit: “[t]ill we become ourselves distinct, Australian/(Your native lightning charging blood and nerve)” (*Poems* 196). That Australians themselves remain in a state of tense “becom[ing]” seems to be the source of some anxiety for O’Dowd. This transient state precipitates the cosmopolitan invitation that is nonetheless foreclosed by the question of race: “Australia” does not “invite” all but rather “a chosen race.”

While O’Dowd’s attitude to this new race was influenced by the teachings of theosophy, it also corresponds a great deal with

that of his poetic “master” Whitman, particularly as regards the attitude to the making of what the former called poetry militant, defined as when the “real poet” becomes “an Answerer, as Whitman calls him, of the real questions of his age” (*Poems* 4). This questioning of the temporal and historical conditions, these transcendental humanist questions seemingly most proper to cosmopolitan political form are also concretely constructed as questions of nation and race. For O’Dowd, Australia must draw from its past but ultimately be “the land of perfect men and women perfectly mated”—a gesture he compares to that of “the courage of poets like Walt Whitman [. . .] for their noble pioneering work in the great America” (*Poems* 23). Poetry is to be a work of pioneering and expansion, of breeding, eugenics, and spiritual agglomeration; the vigor of the native, it seems, is a spirit to be appropriated but not a body that will survive. Similarly, the “fit of all the world” does not include the pejoratively classified “Africa” and “somnolent Asia.” For O’Dowd, this “courage[ous]” vision is precisely Whitmanesque. Aboriginality enters this nexus for both Whitman and O’Dowd primarily as specters of influence on the emerging hybrid National race. The temporality of aboriginal incorporation is belated in advance; as Whitman noted, parenthetically, the “Austral negro [. . .] will come forward in due time by my side.” This sense of a belated indigeneity passes between the two poets.

As Bongiorno notes, O’Dowd can be read as viewing the future race taking on the reincarnated spirits of Aboriginal *Churingas*, in poems like “Land of the ‘Terrible Rite,’” which he drew from Spencer and Gillen’s observation of such initiation practices as subincision (Bongiorno 51–2). That the *Churinga* had been read by the ethnographic duo as a sign of spiritual incarnation in the face of biological nescience further compounds the trope as one of spiritual inheritance bereft of physical survivance (Wolfe). The future of Australia and the spirit of the Bush are to come not from Aboriginal survivance but from the rebirth in a Celtic fairyland of an ideal hybrid people who will be brought together from so many “fragments of the past”:

And Spencer sails from Alcheringa bringing
Intaglios, totems and Books of the Dead.
(O’Dowd, *Poems* 189).

It is “[a]mong the poet’s duties” to visit “the Wells of rejuvenescence, for he is a citizen of the Land of the Ever Young (Fairyland, some call it!) and to maintain his citizenship must drink of its springs.” While the essay on *Poetry Militant* does not mention Aborigines in regard to fairyland and these springs of youthful poetic citizenship, *The Bush* situates Aboriginal lore as a key spiritual center within this space where, equally, Celtic “elves deploy in kern and gallowglass.” Here Spencer is marked a poet guarantor of the place of “Alcheringa [. . .]/Intaglios, totems and Books of the Dead” in this wellspring of poetic citizenship—like the Bush itself—which will retain the spiritual echoes of past influence for the poets’ construction of a new nation. Once again, Aboriginal people are absent from this narrative except insofar as they charge the poet with a capacity to make nation out of the “Past”—drawing it together with the many influences that will make the “Great Australia” that is yet to come.

Just as O’Dowd’s “Wells of rejuvenescence” provides an ideal community for the poet nation-builder, youth was equally a question for that most exemplary cosmopolitan nationalist Fichte. As Derrida has noted, for Fichte, “[t]he children must reconstitute the past development of the national language” (Derrida 164). Political communities, of which the nation-state has been the most dominant under modernity, continually rely on positing a cosmopolitical inclusiveness that their project necessitates *de jure*, but refuses to permit *de facto*. One can see clear commonalities between, on the one hand, Fichte’s spiritual cosmopolitics undergirded by notions of race and nation and, on the other, the sense in *Our Land* that while a certain spiritual openness to “invite all the fit” will open to Europe, Asia and Africa, it will do so only on its own selective terms. As I earlier remarked, *Our Land* closes with the declaration that

On this vast and unpolluted stage
Behold the New Jerusalem descend
And build the dramas of a Golden Age.
(O’Dowd, *Poems* 259).

If this is to be a stage on which all are invited, the reference to its “unpolluted” nature also implies the policing of race. Interestingly, what follows are spiritual metaphors blending Western and Aboriginal references. If the “Golden Age” is often code for the Alcheringa—a notion that W. E. H. Stanner would later try and demystify—then the image of the place of indigeneity in O’Dowd’s vision of the coming nation is a cosmopolitics of spirits rearticulated for the national consciousness (Stanner). This cosmopolitanism sees Aboriginal spirit as a mediated presence, necessary for the rejuvenation of poetic, youthful inspiration, and not as a living presence.

One finds in O’Dowd, then, a Whitmanesque cosmopolitanism bereft of a true place for indigenous people in its national vision. Similarly, the spirit of the past and of the non-citizen is potentially welcome in the nation, provided it pass the test of “fit(ness).” If Australia is to be a spiritualized cosmopolitical space of democratic openness, it is also to share in Whitman’s crypto-race-thinking of “athletic democracy” (*Leaves* 3). For O’Dowd, the “fragments” of the indigene are properly a part of the nation’s past and not necessarily of the “unpolluted stage” of its present. Settler colonial cosmopolitanism, then, is continuous with nativist appropriation and not a separable process. The fit races may in time enter the cosmopolitan nation space—a notion that resists whiteness as normative. However, what remains in O’Dowd’s poetics of hybridity is the notion that the hybrid race of the nation select the fit appropriate to its futurity. The distinction between O’Dowd’s cosmopolitan nativism and his nationalist attitudes to immigration is a distinction of temporality. Where nativism properly archives the spirits of the past who are viewed as doomed to disappearance, the immigrant populace is to be decided based on its potential contribution to the hybrid nationalism of the future. While it has not been my aim to provide an exhaustive history of such nativism, O’Dowd’s use of Aboriginal motifs—read as a poetics of appropriation—can be seen to anticipate a number of settler literary projects, including that of P. R. Stephenson, Rex

Ingamells, Ian Mudie, Xavier Herbert, and later, Les Murray. We have seen how O'Dowd's cosmopolitan nativism, with its appropriation of indigenous motifs, corresponds to Whitman's earlier project. This settler colonial poetics anticipates one of the trajectories that may be seen to recur through twentieth century Australian literature. □

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