

University of Wollongong - Research Online

Thesis Collection

Title: The grotesque poetics of Rodney Hall's dream trilogies

Author: Greg Ratcliffe

Year: 2000

Repository DOI:

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Research Online is the open access repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

2000

The grotesque poetics of Rodney Hall's dream trilogies

Greg Ratcliffe
University of Wollongong

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

University of Wollongong

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Recommended Citation

Ratcliffe, Greg, The grotesque poetics of Rodney Hall's dream trilogies, PhD thesis, Department of English, University of Wollongong, 2000. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/845>

University of Wollongong Thesis Collections

University of Wollongong Thesis Collection

University of Wollongong

Year 2000

The grotesque poetics of Rodney Hall's
dream trilogies

Greg Ratcliffe
University of Wollongong

Ratcliffe, Greg, The grotesque poetics of Rodney Hall's dream trilogies, PhD thesis, Department of English, University of Wollongong, 2000. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/845>

This paper is posted at Research Online.
<http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/845>

NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

The Grotesque Poetics of Rodney Hall's Dream Trilogies

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Greg Ratcliffe BA (Hons I)

**English Studies Program
March 2000**

Certification

I certify that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted to any other university or institution for a degree. The work contained in this thesis is my own work except where otherwise indicated.

Gregory James Ratcliffe BA (Hons I)

March 2000

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the following people for their various contributions and assistance while writing this thesis:

Dr Gerry Turcotte, my supervisor and mentor, without whom this project would not have been completed. Gerry has provided me with unstinting support, encouragement and inspiration during my candidature — as well as a bottle of *Rabelais* wine.

Catriona McGurk, the University of Wollongong's Arts Faculty Librarian, for teaching me internet search skills before the student body had general access to the internet, and for generally helping with my research enquiries.

Professor James Wieland for reading the final draft of this thesis prior to its submission.

The staff of the English Studies Program who attended the postgraduate seminars and offered constructive advice and criticism.

The English Studies Program for employing me as a lecturer to sustain my own grotesque body during the writing of this thesis.

My friends and colleagues, Dr Lori Lebow, Dr Karen Brooks, Richard Lever, and Saeed Urrehman, for encouragement and stimulating discussions.

Professor Kateryna Clarke for making available her unpublished 1988 interview with Rodney Hall.

Rodney Hall for providing me with an uncorrected typescript of his forthcoming book, *The Day We Had Hitler Home*, and for granting me an interview at the University of Wollongong, August 1999.

And most of all, my partner Nada for her constant support and caring.

The illustration of "Chang the Chinese Giant" has been published with permission of La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

The illustration of "taken by surprise" has been published with permission of the National Library of Australia.

The following illustrations have been scanned from various sources, and their captions are as they appear in their respective publications:

The illustrations for figures 1 and 2 have been taken from Geoffrey Harpham's *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982.

The illustration for figure 3 has been taken from Willard Farnham's *The Shakespearean Grotesque: Its Genesis and Transformations*, London: Oxford UP, 1971.

The illustrations for figures 4 and 5 have been taken from William Eisler's *The Furthest Shore: Images of Terra Australis from the Middle Ages to Captain Cook*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.

The illustration for figure 6 has been taken from Helen Wallis' "Java la Grande: The Enigma of the Dieppe Maps", published in Glyndwr Williams and Alan Frost, *Terra Australis to Australia*, Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1988.

An earlier version of chapter three, entitled "Terror Australis: Rodney Hall's *The Second Bridegroom*" has been published in *Seriously Weird: Papers on the Grotesque*. Ed. Alice Mills, New York: Peter Lang, 1999. 13–33.

Sections of chapters three, four, and five appear in a more general paper dealing with the three novels of *A Dream More Luminous Than Love* which has been published by the Association for the Study of Australian Literature in *Current Tensions: Proceedings of the 18th Annual Conference, 6–11 July, 1996*. QUT. 164–71.

List of Illustrations

- Figure 1. Nicolas Ponce, engraving from Domus Aurea designs, in *Descriptions des bains du Titus*, 1768. *foll. page 11*
- Figure 2. Nicolas Ponce, engraving from Domus Aurea designs, in *Descriptions des bains du Titus*, 1768, detail. *foll. page 11*
- Figure 3. An initial 'V' for the Book of Job in a Vulgate Bible, MS. Auct. E. inf. I, fol. 304r; English, late twelfth century. *foll. page 78*
- Figure 4. *Mappa mundi (World Map)*, 11th century, MS., *Osma Beatus*, Cathedral, Burgo de Osma. *foll. page 78*
- Figure 5. Pierre Desceliers, *Java la Grande*, 1550 MS., from his *World Chart*. *foll. page 80*
- Figure 6. Guillaume le Testu: *Java la Grande*, 1556. *foll. page 80*
- Figure 7. Chang the Chinese Giant. *foll. page 216*
La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.
- Figure 8. Roy Millar, Aboriginal attack "taken by surprise" *foll. page 219*
Kalgoorlie, W.A. Photograph in: Album 283
National Library of Australia.

Abstract

The grotesque is a constantly changing mode of representation that depends on the artist's particular socio-historic context for its form. In *A Dream More Luminous Than Love* and *The Island in the Mind*, Rodney Hall develops a poetics of the grotesque which is applicable to his interrogation of Australia's representation in the "official" archive. From the time that the classical writers began to hypothesise the existence of a continent in the southern hemisphere Terra Incognita was portrayed as a grotesque space inhabited with monstrous beings. This image was compounded in the late eighteenth century when the British discovered the east coast of Australia and colonised it with their own abject body, the convicts and lower classes.

In *A Dream More Luminous Than Love* and *The Island in the Mind*, Hall interrogates the discursive construction of the self and Other, and argues that the discrepancies between the image and the object reveal the ideological investments of (neo-) classicism, primitivism and capitalism in the pre-colonial and colonial representations of Australia. The "primitive" is repressed, not eliminated, in the clean and proper body, and Hall disturbs the binary structure of self/Other, civilised/primitive, West/East centre/margin by using the devices of inversion and reversal to locate traits of the grotesque body in the depurated subject. Paradoxically, the proper body is a figure of lack, for which the grotesque Other is the supplement.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

List of Illustrations

Introduction: “Australia Wasn’t Invented by the English”	1
1 Past and Present: The Grotesque Body in Theory and Culture	10
2 The Unsayable Terra Incognita: The Invention, Discovery and Colonisation of the Grotesque Outland	62
3 Terror Australis: The Wild Man within <i>The Second Bridegroom</i>	109
4 “The House of the Dead is the Place of Birth”: <i>The Grisly Wife</i>	154
5 “A Despairing Admission that the Flesh is Doomed”: <i>Captivity Captive</i>	193
6 Doubling Back in the Web of Becoming: <i>The Island in the Mind</i>	247
Conclusion: “The Seeds of Monstrosity Are in Us All”	333
Bibliography	337