

Since the end of the British Empire, which had provided white Australians with points of view, attitudes and stereotypes of the world—including perceptions of their own role in it—, rediscovering an international identity has been an Australian quest. Many turned to European roots; others to the Aboriginal landscape; Blanche d’Alpuget and Christopher J. Koch are two who have ventured into Asia for the culturally and spiritually regenerative materials necessary to redefine Australia in the post-colonial world. They have taken Eastern concepts of ‘self’, and ‘soul’ and forged them with the Australian obsession of fear and desire of contact with the ‘other’ in a looking-glass of hybrid, Austral-Asian myth to reveal the true soul of Australian identity.

Along with a brief historical and literary background to the triangular relationship between white Australia, Asia, and the West, this study’s goal is to identify some of the Southeast Asian symbols, myths and literary structures which Koch and d’Alpuget integrate into the Western tradition. Central elements include: dichotomies as of personality, righteousness, and virtue; the ‘Otherworld’, where one may approach enlightenment, but at the risk of falling into self-delusion; archetypes of the Hindu divine feminine; Eastern roots of Koch’s themes of the ‘double man’; concepts of the forces of ‘light’ and ‘dark’; the semiotics of time and meaning; and the central Eastern metaphor of the mirror by which Australia creates interdependent images of itself and of Asia.

Intertextual relationships include: Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*; Orwell’s *1984*; Irving’s ‘Rip Van Winkle’; significant sacred works as *The Gospels*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*; the Javanese Shadow Theatre, the *Wayang Kulit*; and the Hindu hagiographic tradition.