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Sommario/riassunto

Beyond the obvious and enduring socio-economic ravages it unleashed on indigenous cultures, white settler colonization in Australasia also inflicted profound damage on the collective psyche of both of the communities that inhabited the contested space of the colonial world. The acute sense of alienation that colonization initially provoked in the colonized and colonizing populations of Australia and New Zealand has, recent studies indicate, developed into an endemic, existential pathology. Evidence of the psychological fallout from the trauma of geographical deracination, cultural disorientation and ontological destabilization can be found not only in the state of anomie and selfdestructive patterns of behaviour that now characterize the lives of indigenous Australian and Maori peoples, but also in the perpetually faltering identity-discourse and cultural rootlessness of the present descendants of the countries' Anglo-Celtic settlers. It is with the literary expression of this persistent condition of alienation that the essays gathered in the present volume are concerned. Covering a heterogeneous selection of contemporary Australasian literature, what these critical studies convincingly demonstrate is that, more than two hundred years after the process of colonisation was set in motion, the experience that Germaine Greer has dubbed 'the pain of unbelonging' continues unabated, constituting a dominant thematic concern in the writing produced today by Australian and New Zealand authors.