



THE MIND'S OWN PLACE

by Ian Reid

Some topics to consider while reading *The Mind's Own Place*:

- Place and migration
- Cultural and individual identity
- Ideas of upheaval and displacement
- Mixed motivations
- Concealed wounds and thwarted dreams

Two women and three men, displaced in different ways by the rapid transformation of Victorian England, travel separately to a small settlement on Australia's western rim. With them they carry social ambitions and psychological wounds. As their lives intersect in the Swan River Colony, what they encounter is not quite what they expect. Who will struggle, who will thrive, and how will each react when secrets emerge?

Based on real historical figures, *The Mind's Own Place* explores the intricate relationship between the shaping of character and the pressure of adversity.

About Ian Reid



Ian Reid is the author of a dozen books - fiction, non-fiction and poetry - whose work has been widely anthologised, awarded prizes, and translated into several languages. His previous historical novels are *The End of Longing* and *That Untravelled World*, both published by UWA Publishing. He lives in Perth, where he is an adjunct professor at the University of Western Australia and an emeritus professor at Curtin University.

Discussion questions

- 1 The back cover quotes from a review of a previous novel by this author: “Wherever his characters go, Ian Reid places us vividly there.” Is this true of the various locations in *The Mind’s Own Place*?
- 2 How significant is the title in guiding a reader’s interpretation of what happens?
- 3 The cover reproduces a painting. Another image, a photograph, faces the beginning of the text. Sources and dates of those two pictures are shown on the imprint page. What relevance do they have to the story?
- 4 The action is sometimes discontinuous, moving between different characters, settings and periods. What aspects of the narrative hold it all together as a whole?
- 5 The Afterword explains that, although most of *The Mind’s Own Place* is freely invented, parts of it correspond to real people and events. How is your response to the novel affected by knowing that it combines creative fiction with a framework of historical fact?
- 6 The two main female characters, Polly and Amelia, often feel that they face very limited choices. Are these limitations imposed on them entirely by social circumstances and gender roles or by their own attitudes as well? Is it different for Thomas, Alfred and Runty?
- 7 Asked about things that inspired *The Mind’s Own Place*, the author has mentioned how the “turbulent effects” of the Industrial Revolution dislocated the lives of many people who “consequently found their way to the western shore of Australia, flotsam and jetsam of that upheaval on the other side of the world.” Do the ups and downs of the main characters in the Swan River Colony result from the big changes they experienced in England (railways, textile mills, potteries etc.)