

Ian McDonald
Mercy Ward

Mercy Ward is a moving picture of life and dying in a Georgetown hospital. The inescapable, mysterious, disturbing bond between life and death is a central reality of the collection.

The collection is also a microcosm of human life, in its variety of characters as well as inter-personal and social relationships. The ward offers a wide spectrum of the racial types that make up the Guyanese people: black African, Indian, Amerindian, Chinese and Portuguese. Whether they claim their personhood or are abject victims of circumstance, McDonald persuades us that all are persons, and all are worthy of attention.

In *Mercy Ward* the particulars of human character and behaviour are all the more heightened in the context of extreme circumstance. It is a drama of loneliness, fear, withdrawal into self, assertion of self, cantankerousness, quarrel, defiance, and compensatory, sometimes surprising, shows of care and affection, the dramatic interplay of strength and weakness of character. Ultimately though, in *Mercy Ward* it is the pain and grief of the doomed struggle against death that leave the deepest impression.

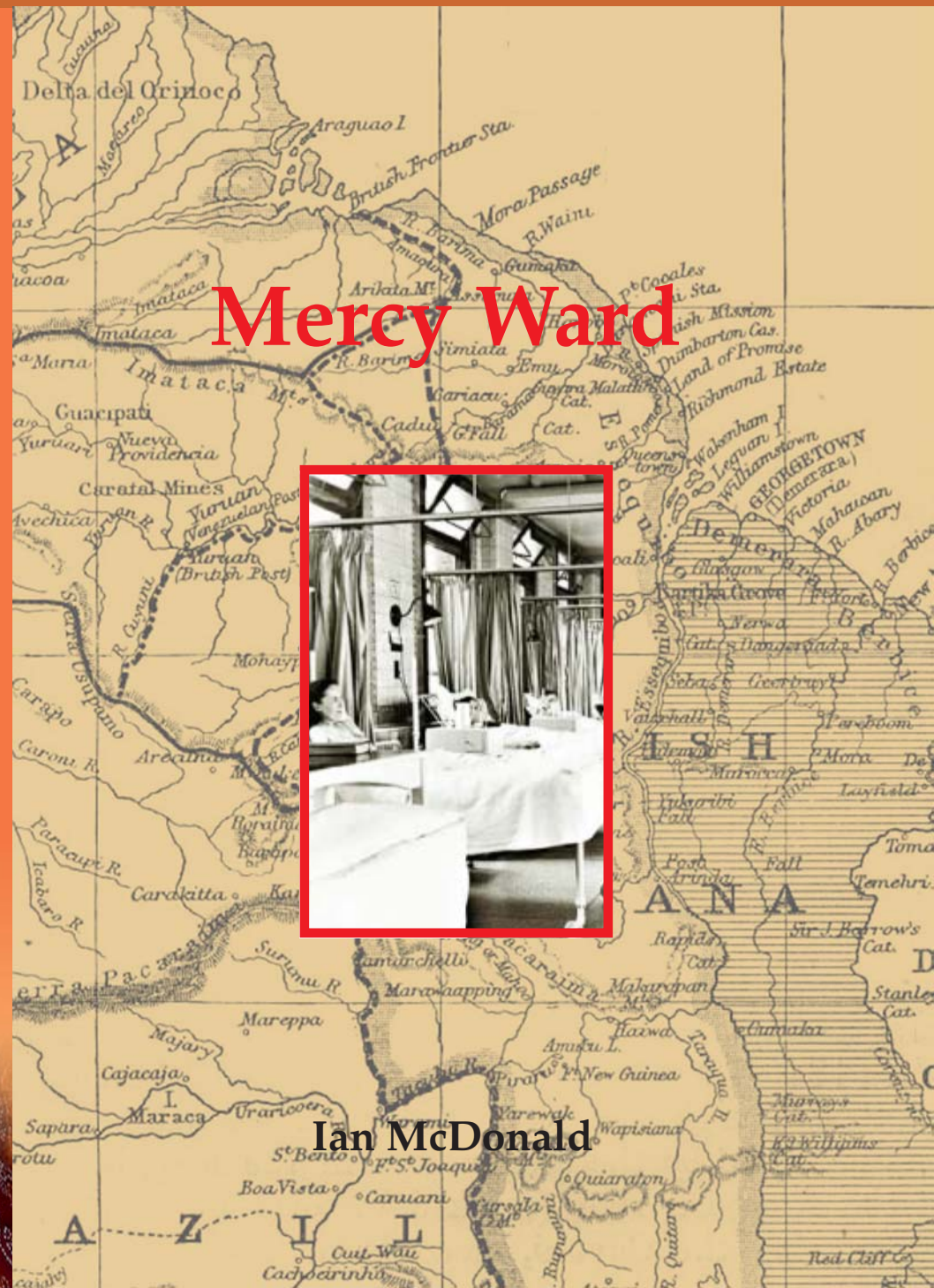
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