

Overland

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KATHY HUNT

Precious Little



PRECIOUS LITTLE is a weekend weather girl and a keen amateur social anthropologist. After countless disappointing sexual encounters, some lasting up to 30 seconds, she decided to try and pin down, for posterity, some of the reasons for the major sexual stockades erected by men. Of the hundreds of men she approached only our Olympic coxless four declined to be interviewed. The following is an extract from her soon-to-be-published documentary, *Sex and Steak in Australian Pubs – Rare or Well Done?*

I decided to conduct my interviews in the subject's chosen hotel. The atmosphere was casual and the scent of cooking served as a potent olfactory trigger.

Richard, aged 45, a munitions expert, ordered the fisherman's basket. This rather upset me as it wasn't in the spirit of the working title. He said not to worry and, looking bleakly into his beer, began.

Richard's story

"My mother had a twisted sense of humour. She christened me Lucy you know. She never really told me I was a boy until one Christmas, when I turned eighteen, and she gave me a blue, non-stick frypan. I was actually born in June. She had a penchant for practical jokes – fake toast with real butter, real toast with fake butter; rubber fish fingers with genuine tartare sauce – and she hired a fake doctor to give us real tetanus shots. I was dreadfully insecure. The only things I could depend on were the real black jelly beans. And the fact that our real father was not Prince. Only once did my mother show the faintest interest in me. One Sunday in 1987 she looked up from her taxidermy and said, 'How's school going, love?' I was forty years old at the time."

At this point Richard was served a scotch fillet

steak. His look said it all.

The corrupt oral tradition of singles is becoming notorious. Mutual friends should discount all reports.

Libby, 29, teacher, salad

"I met Don at a conference. I could detect warm, Italian leather in the air, and there he was. We discovered lots of things in common – both our C.V.s weigh twelve and a half kilograms. And we hate the look of solid fuel heaters and Peter Reith. On our first dinner date I noticed that Don was having trouble making a commitment; he just could not decide between the pudding and the cheese and greens. I'm afraid I got a little tipsy and ragged him about it. I haven't seen him since."

Don, 30, teacher, vegetables

"A woman approached me at a recent conference and attempted to inhale my new leather jacket. Somehow we ended up going out to dinner where she ordered the wine and made me eat all my button squash. When I couldn't manage either pudding or a cheese platter she climbed on to the table and harangued all the diners about real men, Peter Reith and solid fuel heaters. After two waiters and a passing sniffer dog had wrestled her to the ground, I left. I hope I never see her again."

Communication between long term married couples may be based on false assumptions and even blocked by an ignorance of basic physiology.

Mary, 35, waitress, double scotch

"I read an article on orgasm at the doctor's. During lovemaking I asked my husband to

move the foreplay a little to the left. Within hours he had shifted to Adelaide."

Total lack of sympathy and understanding can lead to some bizarre behaviour.

Trevor, 56, semi-retired carpet layer, veal parmigiana

"I like to go down to the beach about midnight. The surf is loud, repetitive, insistent. Just like my wife, Marion. In a trance I sink to my knees and begin to form the perfect woman in the sand. Just like God. Her quartz eyes glitter in the moonlight. She smiles. Her legs are long. Her breasts are enormous. I build them up using shells for nipples and a bucket and a spade. Blood and surf are pounding in my ears. I throw myself into her silica embrace. Once a policeman caught me in the act. I told him I was looking for my watch. I don't think he believed me."

Conversely, loving wives are often hurt by a husband's preoccupation with the K-Mart catalogue.

Alan, 39, small businessman, avocado chicken

"I am the third speaker in our Apex debating team. Over the years we have raised thousands of dollars for wheelchairs. As I see it, it's our job as Apexians to serve as role models in these times of widespread gender confusion. To this end we like to go into girls' schools and debate important social topics such as 'Anal sex - what's in it for me?' and 'Without bondage will 1993 be just another year?' The youth of today is our hope for the future - especially the girls, some of whom, with luck and the right attitude, might just make it into the K-Mart underwear catalogue. While the Lions Club is busy showing Scandinavian exchange students around their hernias, we prefer to debate all winter, the girls' nipples stand out in the cold and we like to brag to the Rotarians afterwards. Take our last debate - 'Should Apexians conduct breast examinations?' We lost, sure, but it was three against six."

Society abounds with mixed messages. Some men find themselves in a dilemma.

Rohan, 47, country solicitor, sausages and bacon

"I respect women so much that I avoid them whenever possible, especially the feminists who want my sperm in a syringe. No doubt there are millions of people who enjoy effortlessly that horizontal form of stuttering known as sex, but give me a good Gregorian Chant any day. As a bachelor I am regarded widely, and wrongly, as quite a catch. Occasionally I am forced to attend that mutant social institution known as the cabaret. During the barndance (which I must endure for business reasons) I am pummelled



and groped by up to one hundred women whose genitals are separated from mine by only the flimsiest of cheap synthetic florals and the finest imported worsted my money can buy. The younger women reek of 'Lulu', a scent which makes my testicles ascend. When we waltz, the older women's bosoms heave like small oceans off the continental shelves of their industrial bras, and their hips have lives of their own. Many of these ladies remind me of my Aunt Valma who, as far as I know, is still featured in

the Guinness Book of Records under Miscellaneous Endeavours (Brick Carrying and Coal Shovelling)."

Conclusion

These Australian men have problems interacting personally and socially. Who or what is to blame? Genetics? Conditioning? Farex? Search me.

I have observed the powerful effect mothers have on their sons, the emotionally barren singles, the deep freeze of familiarity, the dangerously kind Apexian, the cautious and effete

country solicitor (what a bastard).

The selective sensitivity of men continues to fascinate. A friend told me how, when she offered a man her last condom, he accused her of being promiscuous. (Her son inflates them to support the nose cones of his model planes.)

Accordingly, I have decided to forsake social anthropology and return, full time, to the comforting predictability of the weather.

Precious Little,

New Year's Day, Phillip Island, 1993



Since its foundation, Overland has relied on the generosity of its subscribers to remain in existence. This year, the situation is more than usually dire, as the Literature Board has reduced our grant by an amount exactly equal to the amount raised through donations last year. Costs of course continue to rise. We have also lost the special grant for Overland Extra, but are seeking sponsorship for a special issue to be published in conjunction with the Next Wave Festival. Donations to Overland's publisher, the OL Society Ltd., are tax deductible.

Special thanks to our latest donors: \$100 R.C., J.J.; \$74 P.C.; \$60 J.McL., \$50 N.B., \$40 B.R.; \$24 D.G., M.M., J.McD., M.&S.P., B.G., L.F.; \$20 L.R., G.B.; \$15 S.T.; \$14 J.H., V.B., P.A., E.M., J.P.; \$10 D.M., F.L., B.J., B.N-S., D.R., P.H., M.McL.; \$8 R.M.; \$5 P.M., M.L., S.M.; \$4 R.B., T.S., E.W., M.T., M.R., H.S., E.C., J.F., R.B., C.C., L.C., J.B., V.P., B.G.; \$2 J.C. Total = \$844.

LIAM DAVISON

Landscape with Words – Writing about Landscape



IN SOME WAYS it feels odd to discuss writing about landscape when, for a long time, I've felt that landscape wasn't an appropriate subject for fiction at all. Even if, more often than not, that's where my fiction started – with a curious attraction to a particular place, a landscape with a strangely numinous quality that virtually demanded that it be written about – there was always the uneasy feeling that fiction should be about people and by focusing so closely on landscape I was somehow avoiding the issue or merely creating the backdrop against which the characters would act. The real stuff of fiction would come later. We are, after all, a narcissistic lot, caught up with our own lives. Fiction, I thought, should be a window to the soul or something like that and people – ourselves – its proper subject. There was something vaguely unsatisfactory about focusing so closely on the land rather than closely exploring humans.

I wasn't alone in thinking this. A critic, looking at my first collection of short stories, suggested that my fiction lost any excitement it might have had as soon as people swam into view. And later when *Soundings* was released, a very different critic identified my main character, Jack Cameron, a landscape photographer who has difficulty relating to people, as coming close to being the most boring protagonist ever to feature in a novel – which was a bit of a worry since, at the time, I thought there was quite a bit of myself in that character. I don't think that any more!

Still, my writing kept coming back to the landscape which informed it. While landscape didn't operate as a character itself, as I thought it might, it couldn't be separated from the characters who not only played out their lives

against it but found expression through it. And more often than not, it was landscape itself, with little or no reference to character, that carried the ideas I most wanted to work with through my fiction.

Of course, to be writing about landscape, especially in a post-colonial society like Australia, is to be writing about a whole range of other things as well – about perspective, cultural inheritance, ownership, appropriation, delusion, conflict, history. All valid ideas to be explored through fiction. And most importantly, once we learn how to read it, landscape is about people. It's a living record of past lives that has its own stories to tell. Even the term 'landscape' as opposed to 'land' implies an interrelationship with people – a way of seeing or shaping the land, a framing of it in some social or aesthetic context.

You may remember earlier this year there was a front-page story in *The Age* about a man with a bulldozer who'd consistently defied council regulations and was eventually jailed for re-shaping his own landscape. He'd moved thousands of tonnes of earth to build roads, bridges, lakes, rivers, to move hills – and all for no apparent reason other than that he wanted to do it. And, I guess, because he had the bulldozer. There was no economic advantage. Not a single extra sheep could be grazed on the land as a result of the changes he'd made. I'm not saying I admire this man, but I can understand the urge that drove him. It's not much different from the urge that drove the designers of French and Italian gardens to reshape land that was quite functional into something more pleasing to the eye – a way of exercising control.

And of course, once it's been re-shaped, it's

difficult to see how the land might have been anything other than how it appears now, or to see how others might see it differently. Landscaping is about imposing a way of seeing on to the land, a mind-set of ideas that are given expression through changing the relationships between things. And writing about landscape performs much the same function. It shapes and moulds the land; it presents it in a manner that both reflects and reinforces the values and aesthetic vision of the author. While the land might physically stay the same, the writing re-invents it to suit whatever fictional purpose it is needed to serve and, in doing so, shapes the way others will see it.

The setting of my recent novel *Soundings* is ostensibly Westernport, but it's my Westernport. Certainly it shares some features with the Westernport you would find if you drove down the South Gippsland Highway now and looked at it yourself, but it's not the same place. The West-



ernport of *Soundings* exists as much in my mind as it does in that geographical location to the south of Melbourne. I daresay also, that if you drove down there tomorrow to see it for yourself, you would see not only a different Westernport to the one I've written about, but a different one to the one the person sitting next to you would see. Despite our attempts to hold landscape in its place through writing, or maps, or paintings, it manages to slip into different perspectives depending on who is looking at it.

The novel started, as far as I can tell, with my

fascination with a lithographic print of Westernport produced by Louis de Sainson, the artist aboard Dumont d'Urville's 'l'Astrolabe' when it entered the bay in 1826 as part of a scientific expedition. The interesting thing about the print, apart from the fact that the point of land it illustrates no longer exists but is under water, is that the image of Westernport it presents bears no resemblance to the place I know from experience and no resemblance to colonial British artistic interpretations of the same period. It looks like a picture of France. This can, of course, be explained through the cognitive theory of perception – the idea that we can't see what we don't know. It's the same process that allowed d'Urville himself to liken the landscape behind the bay to the virgin forests of Brazil and Chile:

Here there are fine strands of trees easy to get through, there are vast grass-covered clearings, with well-defined paths and linked by other tracks so regular and well marked that it is hard to conceive how these things could have happened without the hand of man. This natural arrangement of the vegetation often impressed me in the virgin forests of Brazil, Chile and the islands of the South Seas ...¹

Even for the French, the idea that this might *not* have happened without the hand of man was beyond comprehension. They were as fully conditioned by the European concept of agriculture as were the British.

But these records, these creations of landscape taken out of the landscape itself, take on a reality of their own which for all intents and purposes (that is, in terms of knowledge and power) is just as valid as the land itself. The process is not much different when we consider the effect of fictional writing about landscape. It shapes as much as it reflects. It presents the subjective landscape of the imagination which is laid like one of those Reader's Digest transparencies over the land itself.

Much has been said about the obsession Australian writers have had with landscape and its debilitating effect on the development of a national literature, as if we should somehow have grown out of it by now. I don't think this obsession is peculiar to Australian writing or that it's something we should be striving to

shrug off like the remnants of adolescence. I see it rather as a necessary element of a colonial or post-colonial literature where the relationship with the land is, by definition, ambiguous; where the values and infrastructure imposed on it have not grown from an experience of the land itself but have in most cases grown from a quite different land. Our law, for example, with its emphasis on ownership, freehold title, inheritance, etc., is tied strongly to the British experience of the land and a social structure based on land ownership. Similarly, Western religious systems, in terms of both ritual and belief, are tied intrinsically to a notion of cultivation of the land which is very different to that which applied to this land; so different in fact that we were able to believe that this land was not cultivated before white settlement. That these discrepancies shouldn't be addressed by artists and writers now, while they are still being wrestled with through our political and legal systems seems odd to say the least.

The danger of course is in linking landscape with nationhood and reviving the unsatisfactory notion of it shaping a national identity – an idea which presupposes a common, shared experience of the land. This use of landscape as an easy symbol to create the myth of nationhood is, I think, limited and misguided. Even when writers and artists of an earlier period tried to shackle this idea to aboriginality in order to signal a break from the old world and old loyalties, there was the mistaken assumption that there was *one* aboriginal perception of the land, *one* culture rather than many different cultures and different perceptions.

What I'm most interested in when writing about landscape is its relationship with history and the past. Indeed *Soundings* can be read as a history of Australia since white settlement as reflected through changes in a specific landscape and, more importantly, through changing perspectives of it. It is, of course, a history of appropriation and deluded attempts to exercise control over a land that is not fully understood. So the colonial gaze is first given expression through the desire of the French scientists to classify, to order the new land, to take control of it through subjugating it to their own systems of knowledge. The period of exploration and settlement sees further attempts to control the land and shape it to fit a preconceived notion of what

it should be like. Maps and charts, as unreliable as they might be, operate as instruments of power. The period of development driven by an absolute belief in the idea of progress sees further attempts to 'improve' the land by altering it to serve European purposes. So the three parts of the book in some ways correspond with phases in our history, all characterised by our changing relationship with a land that has not yet been fully sounded.

But the relationship between landscape and the past goes much deeper than this. It's the idea of landscape as a historical record, as a sort of palimpsest of past lives that really interests me. I have to admit to a childhood fascination with rocks and stones, and particularly with fossils, which has stayed with me to this day. I lugged a great lump of rock home from France earlier this year in my hand luggage because of the fossils – those quintessential pieces of the past – embedded in it. I guess there's something of the collector's obsession here, the desire to classify and order, to use those beautiful words like 'Cambrian', 'Ordovician', 'Devonian', to take possession of things, but also there's the urge to own them. Not just look at and handle them but to *own* them, as if that's the only way we can know the land.

I'm interested in the remains of buildings too, old settlement sites, explorers' cairns, cuttings and excavations, middens, the outlines of old gardens, anything that remains as a record of how the land was used before. I remember my delight at coming across a book by Penelope Lively called *The Presence of the Past: An Introduction to Landscape History*, not only for what it had to say but for the realisation it gave me that such a discipline as landscape history existed – a fascinating blending of elements of archaeology, palaeontology, sociology, history, geography, architecture, horticulture – which in the end most closely approximated the experience of landscape I'd been struggling to find expression for through my fiction. Penelope Lively had this to say:

For landscape – as we see only too vividly from our vantage-point at the end of this most destructive of all centuries – is in a state of constant change. It is the job of the landscape historian to record and interpret these changes, and to try to recover from the visi-

ble – and the vanished – world of town, village, field and road, some aspects of our own past that may be most clearly revealed in this way. For the history of landscape is first and foremost about people. Each one of us moves about every day amid the silent record of who was here before us, fifty years ago, or a hundred or a thousand. But the record is not only silent but invisible – disguised as a meaningless view of fields and hedges, or stone and brick – until we learn to look at it. Landscape history is a particular kind of historical evidence, and has, it seems to me, a twofold value: it enables us to learn more about our past, and, over and above that, it gives an extra dimension to the world about us. We see it with imagination.²



So, standing on the shores of Westernport, it is possible to see, at the same time, the remains of a koori midden dating back thousands of years, the straight lines of the Koo-wee-rup drainage scheme channelling water into the bay and the newly completed dual carriageway of the South Gippsland Highway. And it is also possible to see the last remnants of the original swamp vegetation in the form of swamp paperbark, while in the distance there are the dark lines of pines revealing the early division of the land and acres of land ploughed and planted with potatoes or asparagus. And the interesting thing is that these things don't follow one

another in any chronological order but stand side by side. Different levels of time co-exist in the landscape just as archaeologists will find that rocks refuse to lay tidily in layers but will 'fold and pleat themselves' until they merge into each other. Apparently, if you leave a piece of land alone for long enough, its original vegetation will reassert itself, it will revert to 'original landscape' and you will see the past flowering out of the ground itself.

Lively refers to the "lost villages" of England, some two thousand of them lost as a consequence of the Enclosure Acts, and identifiable now only as a series of bumps and troughs in the ground which spring into relief in late afternoon light or through aerial photography so the astute observer can see the ghostly outlines of the past still lying just beneath the surface. Just as interesting is the denial of their existence by some historians, until quite recently when the evidence could not be denied.

History itself, like landscape, is changeable. We only see what our knowledge and preconceptions allow us to see. And of course we have our own lost villages or hidden histories here. There is ample evidence of cultivation and nurturing of the land before white settlement if only our eyes had allowed us to see it. At Lake Condah in western Victoria there are the remains of stone villages and an elaborate system of channels and fish-traps which still speak to us of a civilisation which our own limited perception denied. It's surprising how many koori midden sites correspond with what is now prime real estate.

Even the names we have given to places reflect a desire to impose a way of seeing onto the land rather than them being born out of the land itself. The names of places like Shipton and Shepton in the UK tell us that they were sheep towns in the past; Wheatley is a place where the soil was suited to wheat; Burnett where the forest was cleared through burning. Here, of course, many of those names that have grown from the land itself have been replaced with names that tell us nothing other than that it reminded some homesick settler of a place on the opposite side of the world. Still, they reflect a past in that they speak to us of a colonial history of displacement and delusion. If we carry our own landscapes with us, then the landscape also carries its own past and people with it. The

past is still present, and it is a past which speaks to us of people.

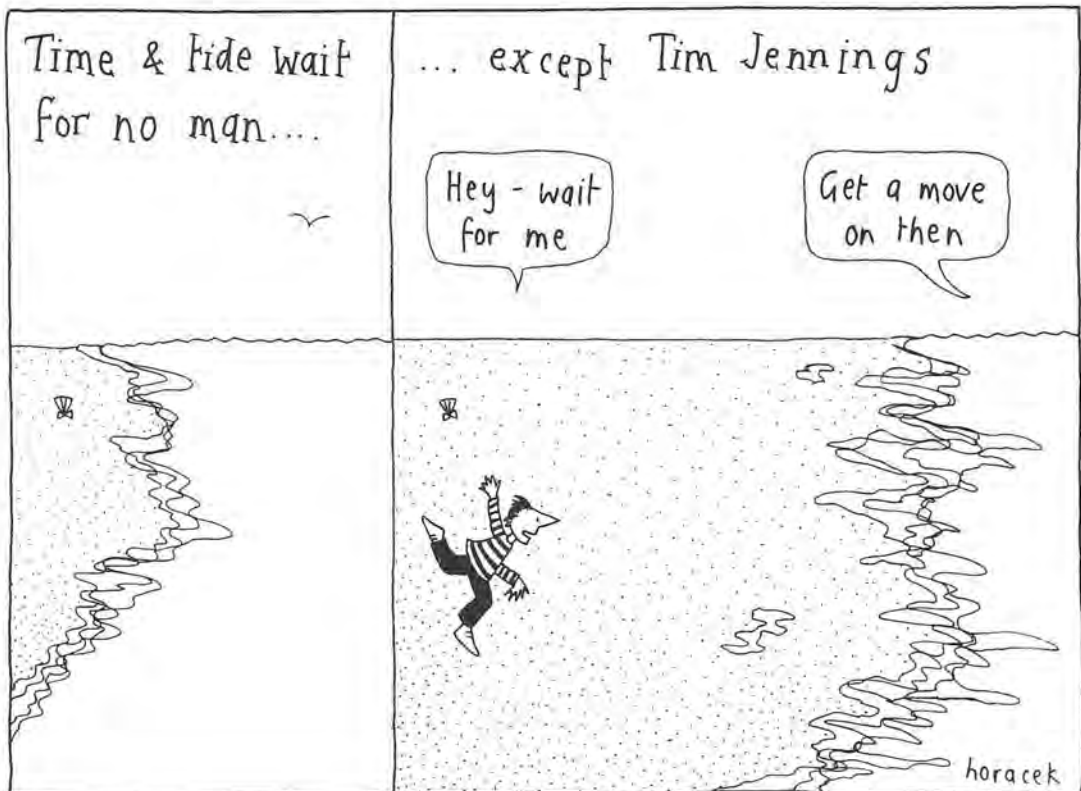
Finally, my interest in writing about landscape relates to the stories that are carried by landscape in a less tangible manner than those I've been speaking of. If we've left our mark on the landscape and shaped it to some extent, then it also leaves its mark on us. We've all felt that strangely numinous quality that certain places have because significant events have occurred there in the past. I'm not referring to ghosts and spooks but to a sort of communal remembering that invests a landscape with meaning. Western representations of landscape rely on visual, two dimensional forms – writing, maps, photographs, pictures that present physical landforms and how they operate in relation to each other. I'm interested in the idea that landscape might be presented in quite different ways – through

the recounting of stories of events that give meaning to place, the pictorial representation of these events rather than of the place itself, or the re-enactment of them through dance or music. Landscape not only provides us with a living record of the past but is given meaning through it and, in the end, is inseparable from it. This is my reason for writing about landscape.

Endnotes:

- 1 Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de l'Astrolabe, Vol.1 (1826-1827)*. Translated by Helen Rosenman.
- 2 Penelope Lively, *The Presence of the Past: An Introduction to Landscape History* (London: Collins, 1976), p. 9.

This article was presented as a paper during the Melbourne Writers' Festival last September. Liam Davison is a novelist and the author of Soundings (UQP).



DON WATSON

Ghosting Barry Hill



This article was originally presented as a speech during the launching of Barry Hill's long poem, Ghosting William Buckley (William Heinemann, rrp \$14.95) at the last Melbourne Writers' Festival. It appears here in a slightly edited form.

Buckley was the famous 'wild white man' who absconded with three others from a convict settlement at Sorrento in Victoria in 1803.

One escapee was later shot, and near starvation persuaded the other two to return into custody. Buckley was saved by Aborigines and lived with them for almost 32 years before being found by a party led by John Batman in 1835.

I WAS TRYING to think of contemporary equivalents to William Buckley.

It is as if a working class Sydney mick came among the Melbourne Middle Classes – at MLC or Scotch. Or a person of ordinary sensibility came upon a group of treasury officials on their home turf in Canberra.

But Aboriginal society is infinitely more interesting than that – the proper parallel is a Treasury official come among a band of people of common sensibility and average, decent education and aspiration, such as (I assume!) *Overland's* readers. Imagine this Treasury official in your society then, with nothing but the assumption of his superior intellect and training, his superior language and culture, and his grasp of the main game to protect him. What good would his blue pin-stripe suit be then? It would look absurd. We would probably poke him and leer. Sniff him for his duty-free French after shave. What good will his economics degree be when he confronts the strange milky blue eyes of Barry Hill. Or the robust yet poetic language of Barry's

tribe? Or Barry's knowledge of the local landscape, tribal lore and how to deal with drunks, upstarts and bores. All those things which one must know in this part of the world to survive. I mean cultural knowledge, received wisdom, ancestral memory – call it what you like. How to address your publisher. The way of men with women.

I mean, how would our Treasury official get on – decked out in his absurd pin-stripe suit with his first-class boarding pass poking out of his top pocket? His striped shirt, his floral tie with its windsor knot under his receding chin! Receding? The Treasury official as often as not has *no* chin. It's completely gone. Went in the '86 Budget – when, you may have forgotten, the public service chin allowance was cut in the interests of fiscal discipline.

No one ever remembers the good things governments do.

WHEN I WAS a boy we had a black man working for us. He lived in a tent down in the cypresses. The other side of the front paddock.

I say "black man" advisedly, because it was always said that he was not an Aboriginal, but what was called 'a white man gone black'. I remember as a boy telling our neighbour that he was a white man gone black and he said, "What did he do, fall in the campfire?"

He was part of the Drouin shanty town community from whence came Lionel Rose.

For what it is worth he was a marvellous worker – brilliant at cutting bracken and thistles, picking peas and killing snakes. He applied all those casual graces and skills most white Australians only see Aborigines display on the foot-

ball field to the necessary tasks of cow farming.

We used to take him down scones on a Sunday. His name was Marky and I can still see him as clear as day.

Our friend had two 'blacks' on his property – but one of them was a Polish refugee by the name of Phillip. These are small farms by the way – it's not the western district. But we forget how common it was to employ Aboriginals for not much more than their keep until very recently.

Now the obvious difference between Marky and Phillip, of course, was that they had crossed over *in extremis* – presumably being demoralised themselves, they had joined the camps of the demoralised.

But, reading Barry's book, made me think – if, in a small rural district, I knew two white men who had gone to live with these Aboriginal communities, couldn't it be that it is a very common experience? We know, for instance, Ernest Giles liked to occasionally turn up at balls in Perth with a bone horizontally through his septum.

And, thinking about these things, I remembered I was terrifically attracted to this bloke down in the tent in the cypresses. Primarily I think it was the smell of tobacco which attracted me. We were a non-smoking family. The smell of tobacco and alcohol are very attractive to a Presbyterian youth.

So out of all that – and given the extraordinary saga of 'the white woman of Gippsland' which I, along with several other people, have been chasing around for years, and the fact that these white women bobbed up on frontiers everywhere, and were not uncommonly an excuse for killing blacks, incidentally; and the surely not unconnected fact that the people who wrote these legends imagined Aboriginal society in details they were not capable of in any other expression of their thoughts or description of their lives – so out of all that, I wonder if it is absurd to say that over the last two hundred years, one way or another, white Australians have been crossing over to black Australia as often, perhaps more often, than black Australians have crossed over to the white.

And if that's the case – and there's other evidence for it, I think, in the national character, including the national sense of humour; and in the fact that so many Australians recoil violently at the idea that we have taken on any features

of Aboriginal culture, suggesting that it is what they fear most – that we've been making the cultural crossover ever since we got here, then that makes Barry Hill's book very difficult to marginalise. Even though it is a poem, and a long one at that.

Buckley, I mean to say, is not so much a rarity existing in the category of 'strange but true', but an exemplar of a complex and pervasive *reality*. And it's that which makes him a truly mythical individual.

Buckley comes from the frontier where imagination and reality meet – and of course that's what Barry Hill has mined. I don't think we've mined the frontier enough in Australia: it's always dangerous, which is why it was quickly sanitised and has remained so ever since.

The white women came in with their calico after the white men had done their work and the blacks were dead or diseased or demoralised. They made curtains and drew them across the past. That was when the seed of the first lie and the first Treasury official was sown.

“ ... so many Australians recoil violently at the idea that we have taken on any features of Aboriginal culture ... ”

Australians still think they can live down the realities of massacres, men and boys in chains, sexual abuse. And, as Melbourne was founded by a man who hunted Aborigines for bounty, I supposed it is true they can.

The standard response these days is to call recognition of reality 'guilt'. It's funny how many of the people who use this device to delegitimise the cause of Aboriginal Australia would be the first to savage the Japanese for not recognising what happened in prison camps. They will say the Japanese are re-writing or selectively writing history.

No one says we should forget the massacre of Sandakan, or on the Somme – but the massacre at Warrigal Creek or half a dozen other places in Gippsland is part of the 'guilt industry'.

But if you begin to think of this encounter

between black and white Australia as something other than an exercise in guilt, you begin to see its vast potential for strengthening the culture.

It is a more significant encounter than the first AIF's with the people of Cairo, and it might help explain why their rampages were so frightful that they are still remembered there.

It might help explain the Australian population's ambivalent reaction to the arrival of US servicemen during World War II, including black servicemen.

The more we understand the frontier, the more we understand our essential nature and this country's essential nature.

Which is why it might be true that men like Buckley are necessary. If they didn't exist we

would invent them – as repository for all our ignorance and desire. And guilt.

But there's a lot more to be said about Barry Hill's book than this. In addition to its philosophical purpose, it is all brilliantly evocative – only someone who knows the landscape like a tribesperson could conjure it up so vividly. And it's also very droll and seductive and sexy. The frontier is a sexual experience.

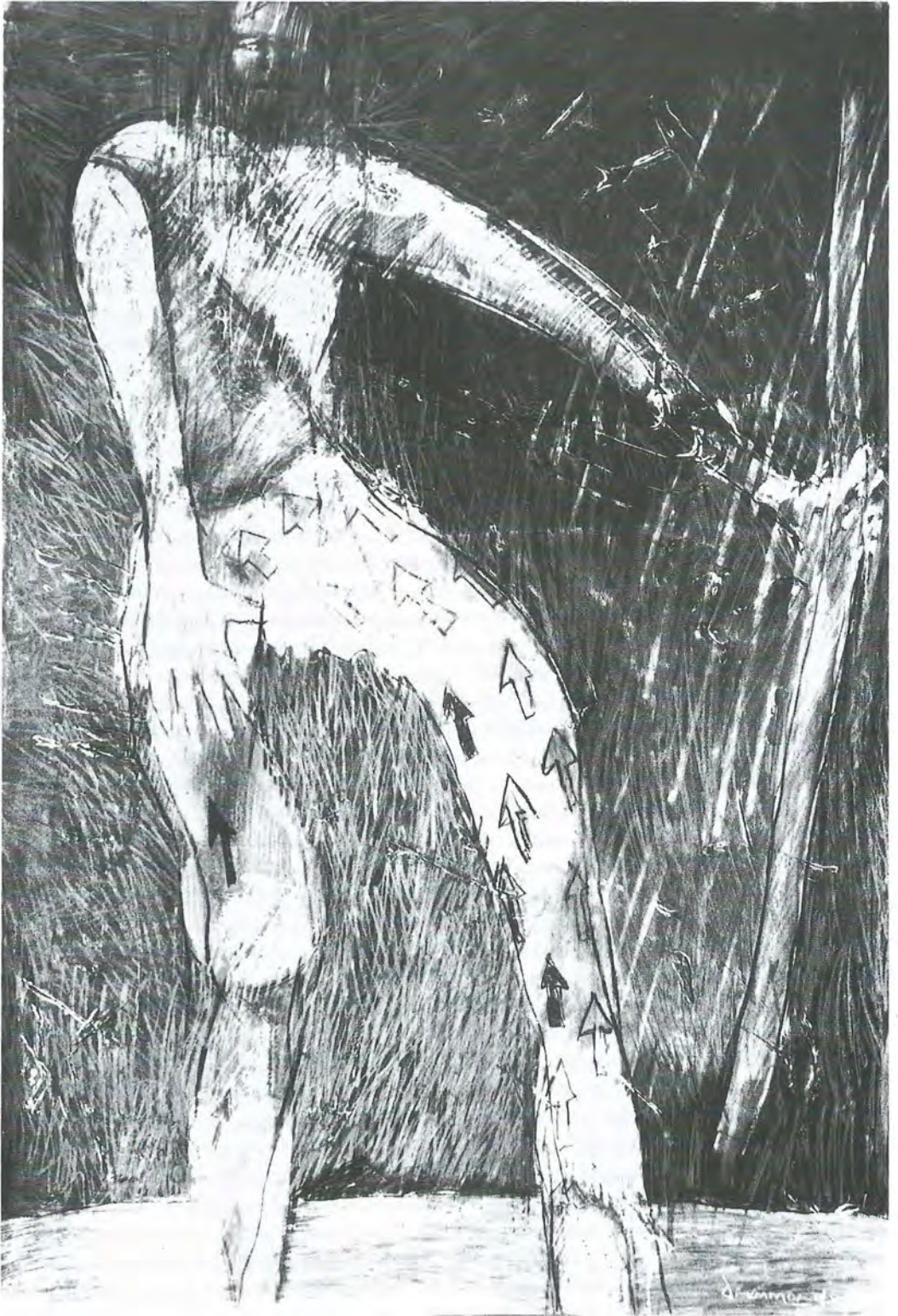
I think it is a wonderful book. And the best thing is, being a myth, Buckley can spawn many others.

Don Watson, man of many parts, is the author of Caledonia Australis, a history of settlement and Aboriginal extermination in Gippsland.



Athol believed he was Bach...but Estelle would have none of it.

Leigh Hobbs



LIAM DAVISON

William Buckley: A Man of Words



Barry Hill: *Ghosting William Buckley* (William Heinemann, \$14.95).

HEAR THE NAME William Buckley and you immediately think (especially if you are from Victoria) of the wild white man, the man who lived for thirty-two years with the aborigines after being accepted as a spirit, a ghost returned from the dead. You think of Buckley's Cave, Buckley's Falls, Buckley's Chance. You think of a Crusoe figure or a Caliban, a giant of a man who has forgotten his own tongue, and you find that the man is inseparable from the idea of the man, and that the idea of the man has become so much a part of the landscape he inhabited as to be inseparable from it. You find that his name has entered our lexicon not only as the particular name of a particular man but as the embodiment of all those ideas associated with him. He has, if you like, entered the realm of myth. William Buckley is, himself, an idea.

It is the idea of Buckley that Hill is ghosting here, following closely on his intangible heels as he journeys through the landscape he will become a part of and imaginatively entering his consciousness to write what is (and must be) so much more than the story of Buckley's life. This sustained, book-length poem, the latest expression of Hill's ongoing fascination with Buckley, operates as much as an exploration of self – the ways of knowing and defining oneself through language, perception and the positioning of oneself in a personal landscape – as it does as a narrative account of a great journey by an heroic figure. It is a poem of dislocation, discovery and loss, a musical celebration of the human spirit, a work of history and a remarkably complex yet moving elegy. It is a work of great scope and achievement.

Hill employs a range of voices to explore the

idea that Buckley has become. Many are attributed to Buckley himself – his own imagined voice or the voices of memory and experience that sound constantly inside his head. There is the aware, self-conscious voice, alert to his own predicament and the mythic role he has chosen to play:

With each step we make
 history on unthinking feet
 through mind scrub
we progress, crossing as best we can,
 projections of streams
 and full rivers of morning:
From that Antipodean depression
 at Sullivan's Bay, a riderless saddle
 of dune, dead water in casks,
mosquitoes breeding without memories
 all blooded one way or
 another – under leaden skies
on Christmas Day we raised a small hatch
 and lurched out ...

There is the quaintly formal voice attributed to Buckley by his original ghost, John Morgan (who wrote of his life and adventures while Buckley was still alive), and used by Hill to provide much of the narrative drive of the poem:

The reader, in these colonies, will be aware that what I had witnessed was nothing more than a great Corroboree, or rejoicing, at my having come to life again, as they supposed. After eating some roots I lay down by the side of my new friends, and although so recently highly excited, yet I enjoyed a sleep undisturbed by dreams, either of the past, the present, or the future.

There is Buckley's lost voice filled with snippets of memory of a soldiering past and a childhood spent in Cheshire, and there is his newfound voice shaped by his experience of the land and the language it feeds to him:

*This is Karaaf Creek near Keingang.
I am Armadeat from the dead.
Bornea, Bornea swim near hear,
their rivet eyes and reminders.
Waakee, Waakee, the uncatchables call
before flying to Yallock, the Yawangs, Jerringot*

There are the voices of others remembered by Buckley – the rhythmic chant of the women who found his body:

*On the day of the first hot wind we found him
On the day of the pale sky, we found him*

*The sky pale like an egg, we found him
We found him flattened by the wind*

*Kunnawarra grazes on the lake her head down
Kunnawarra grazes, her feathers flattened by the
wind*

*Kunnawarra dips her neck in the water
On the day of the first hot wind we picked him up*

or the self-important accusations of Authority on his return to civilisation:

You failed
to instruct them in Knowledge
of the Supreme Being. You insufficiently
prayed for your salvation,
and theirs. You did not light
fires religiously, or scour horizons
in quest of redemption.

For much of the work, the voice alternates between that of an omniscient, third-person observer, rich with descriptive detail of both Buckley and the translucent colours of the world he moves through, and a knowledgeable, second-person confidante who addresses Buckley, often in a soothing, consolatory tone, and defines his experience in terms of classical or literary allusion.

Rejoin the nursery rhyme of yourself
where each branch speaks

and even dunes have a story to tell.
Wander along the eely banks
singing *Kunnawarra, Kunnawarra*
then leave her name be again.
Shout at the pathos of ice
freezing lakes with nostalgia.
You are here not there.

How far out do you want to go?
How many grubs will you take in flight?
Dead men's eyes are in the mind.
The mariner here is you,
and the wedding guest too.

The effect is to elevate Buckley to heroic status and to heighten the tension between the old and new references by which he is able to define himself. It also operates to broaden the parameters of the work itself, though there is always the danger of it being so overburdened with literary allusion – Coleridge, Shakespeare, Defoe, Bunyan, Orpheus, Narcissus – as to sink beneath its own weight. Even Ern Malley gets a mention in a remarkably game reference to the black swans of trespass.

Hill also employs visual images (mostly reproductions of photographs from the LaTrobe collection) and a prosaic commentary that adorns the later sections of the work to both guide the reader through the difficult bits and replicate the literary conventions of Buckley's time. While these work to provide a fashionable multiplicity of contexts for Hill's vision of Buckley, to my mind they operate more as decorative or illustrative devices than as integral parts of the text.

It is the fugal interplay between the voices that provides the real strength of this work. It creates the sense of Buckley's movement through and experience of the new land and (since Hill recognises that language is the medium through which we bring ourselves into being) of his reinvention of himself. Hill is concerned with the struggle between Buckley's acceptance of his new condition and the tatters of his earlier self. New experience is filtered through the known:

He routes inland, trying
to put on the country
a domestic compass,
make it his own:
plain, treeline and sky

a cloud and a familiar
face in the cloud
unmistaken by seaspray,
like ... Cheshire!

until a new tradition, a new pattern, is formed with Buckley the giant, moving *tribally forward*, as part of it. Hill is concerned with the construction of person and place and the slow process of them becoming one:

and later that night he shakes awake
stumbles into fog to urinate,
the tide out, the sand steaming
like a porous and thoughtless cranium
of a giant beneath him.
He thinks, 'I am not beached,
my feet are here on this crown.
In the morning the giant will wake, and kick.'

Emptied, niggly, Buckley tucks himself into the
big ear.

This process of becoming, whereby the familiarity of the past recedes and is replaced by something altogether new, is intrinsically tied to language. Buckley's new perception, as he is placed in the landscape as *Barroworn* or magpie, is given its totemic expression through language. Language is inseparable from the experience that spawns it:

*Barroworn, Barroworn, they drop the name
Barroworn, Barroworn, they drop the name
into your mouth. The fire crackles as they sing.
You suck on the word's flesh, munch the soft
bones of the warrior bird's carolling.*

Buckley swallows his own tongue to accommodate the new and finds:

his speech was
worn down
surfaces flaked off
minerals panned for
veins of sound.

He finds that the names he uses when hunting boomerang against him, forcing him to take stock and reassess what he has lost as well as what he has become. Language is both friend and enemy. It provides comfort and solace in enabling him to re-define himself as part of the new land, and it betrays him when, returning to civilisation, deaf to his mother tongue, the word *Bread* causes memory to stir *like a whale offshore* and bring back to him the sentence that banished him in the first place – Transportation Across the Seas. It is language, sentences or the lack of them, by which he is judged:

'He is a lump
Of clay. His
forehead is
Hottentot. His
brow a sheep's.
He's but a brute
who can name.
His tongue is criminal.'

And it is ultimately language by which this work is judged – the marvellous diversity of it, the way it turns back on itself and echoes through the poem, the power of it to transport us and to transform our perception of Buckley's landscape. Hill's language brings the ghost of Buckley powerfully back to life.

Liam Davison is a novelist and the author of Soundings UQP, 1993.

THE KNIFE OF BEAUTY

(monologue)

1.

I can't tell if this is a time of hatred
or is it just the change of seasons
when I hear the field turtledoves?
If it is spring, I shall become uglier
in the draughty mirror of my barren years,
my love will gallop away
among a mob of black horses past the gates
where the high snow still covers
everything.

My ugliness is a thief in all the rooms
of my very own house.
The Master is outside on a sign hunt
he searches for new seed and new blood.
She, though, is in her bridal chamber
spinning and dozing over her prettiness
but my shadow will cover her quick enough.
O, Master too far off, you do not see
how absorbed she is, combing her hair at the
mirror.

With my yellow thumb I open the window
will the gypsies never come
they trade in poisonous combs and ugly mirrors
will the weddings never come with their own
fresh weapons.
Time hands me only the wind's knife.
It is incisive as love or hatred.

2.

My thoughts thaw. Outside
the young black earth is sprinkled
with cocks' blood. Still
the Master, that man of the sacred forests
has not come. The knife given to me by time
is something I cannot hide – not from the white
dawns
nor from the gypsies who peek through the
window
clutching poisonous gifts
nor from the armed weddings
waving their dirks.
She is there in her chamber
entangled by sleep and her prettiness.
My shadow at the door haunts her.
My hatred-knife has grown enormous

her white door cannot hide it.
It will come through the utterly dark night
forests
to slice through her cord of sleep,
this beautiful knife of my Master
who hunts in vain for his seed and blood.

The night is enormous with green forests.

Tonight

even her door will be eaten away by dreams
and my hard shadow will force its entry.
I can feel her lingeringly under the silk
of her bridal gown. She is beautiful. Her body is
warmed
by the icon lamp, her sleep is not yet
unravelling.
My knife, though, is even more beautiful. My
knife of white dawns.

I severed her head. What is it but a skein
of undisposed dreams? Then even the knife
began to sing
its quiet song at her throat, blending into the
dawns,
cutting the greening forests of the night.
My shadow was enough to tear down her
chambers.

It is done. So, come now Master. You must
love your own blood
which could not safeguard your manliness in
the hunt.

3.

Her St. George's Day head blossomed in
daylight
incandescent as a torch of uncreated dreams.
It lit up the rooms and they shook. The house
is now a shambles
and gypsies and weddings have trodden all
over it in the spring campaign.
And she is even more beautiful, more beautiful
than death.
I am besotted by her. Her red hair is fine spun
as the Orient where blood
etches for the male seed some intricate hunting
scene.
Her beauty at last killed time
and choked up the sand clocks in the steppes
where excited men wander the forests.
My shadow is ugly. It has vanished.

There was a child crying in her room.
I sheared the sound with my knife, made sharp
by all the dawns.

That second night I sacrificed my milk
even though it might nourish every tribe.
Every night and every morning I step up to the
roof

but I will not give birth to love. The old seed
from the past year

is something I buried under the doorstep. I
remember doing that

as I remember waiting for news from the
Master

who demanded all of this in my thoughts.

4.

I am hungry for you Master at this full moon.
Wormwood has grown on the doorstep, snakes
hatch there

therefore neither gypsies nor armed weddings
might pass this way again.

The locusts and the plagues of summer have
come

to rampage with diseases last year's seeds.
Her pretty head has been putrified by noons
that melted into hot evenings. Alone in all the
house

beauty found itself free to mate with the worms.

I have been reduced to the one who at night
wanders in the field

leaving behind the sanctified home
and the hard bread covered in dust. The dog
of the distances is howling. I am alone
in this perpetual struggle with beauty
waiting for you. My strong body

will not be impregnated by the wind nor by a
thousand barren years
unless you bring your new seed from this
year's hunt.

Return quickly, my Master, I am starved for
you!

The turtledoves are dust. Summer has brought
death

the wind fences the house in its chains
and my ugly shadow is lost in the cloisters of
monasteries.

5.

The worst has happened! His hunt was futile.
He came that very morning I entertained the
knife

with my own beauty. On a dead horse with a
dead falcon

he came ashen and white from thoughts of the
futile hunt.

He said: all is as it was, and asked for the
bride.

I pointed to my knife. Slowly it began to sing.

Licking me with his whip he sought out the
peasants.

The worst has happened and even worse will
follow. The hunt was futile
and the new seed hadn't been brought. I waited
for the peasants

but was already singing the old refrain of
beauty. My knife listened.

Not since the last hunt has he been my Master
therefore he was eaten up by dry thoughts of
the new seed.

Only this: he was the better singer. He brought
the peasants with torches

and he repeated: All will be as before. Then he
crushed the wormwood

and put the old stone up on the doorstep. The
juice of the wormwood began to sing
the peasants pulled out their knives and sang
as if tormented

by the futile hunt. The worst has happened and
even worse will follow for the new seed has
not been brought

I threw down the knife and demanded four
horses.

They brought four horses. I tied them to my
body

and I sang to all four sides of the world to tear
apart my body

my beautiful body to all four sides of the world.

The horses pulled, and then died. They, too,
then began to sing.

BOGOMIL GUZEL

Translated by Ilija Casule and Thomas Shapcott

REI ZUNDE

Circus



LOOK, NO PHOTOGRAPHS. O.K.? You want to look at something? Check this out."

It was hard to miss, but I moved closer. A scar running from his knee to the ankle. Where his calf should have been.

"Er, how did that happen, Kev?"

"Fuckin' tiger, mate. Had a swipe at me. Should've paid attention. Like a bloody knife ... filleted me leg ... spent seven months in hospi-

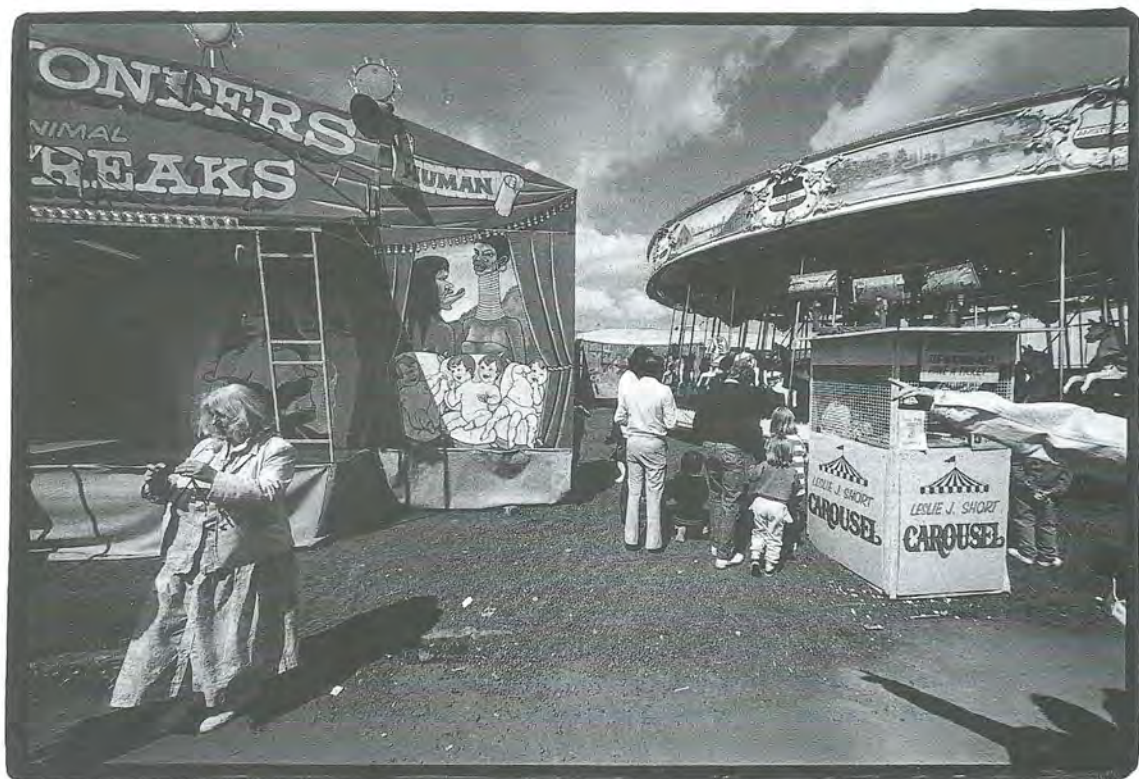
tal. Didn't enjoy that."

I looked down the line of the scar. Kev was wearing thongs which were encrusted with elephant shit. My gaze slipped past him into the gloomy interior of his tiny caravan. The same stuff carpeted the floor. A homely touch.

"Like looking after elephants, Kev?"

"Yeah ... beautiful animals. Shit a lot though."

I looked around. Apart from the keeper, the circus was empty of people. This was everyone's





afternoon off. They had gone into the city to catch a new movie. For entertainment at home, they liked to watch videos.

AS A CHILD I remember the peculiar excitement of first seeing, from a distance, the oblique red and white stripes of a circus tent rising above the familiar grey paling fences and jaded weatherboards of our suburb. Then, suburbs were like country towns, isolated and reliant on exotic experiences from the outside. The circus appeared from a landscape of the imagination. Its reputation added to the allure of an uncertain promise beyond the sunlit canvas folds into the darkness.

Crunching on red cordial ice-blocks in square wafer cups, I would be drawn to the animals, their spaces defined by trucks and ropes and chains. It was the first time I actually saw them, felt their volume and texture and gesture. There, a camel with hair the texture and colour of a careworn teddy bear. Absurd eyelashes that





gave him a theatrical air. A Rhesus monkey, the type they used for medical experiments. All electric movement. Enclosed in what looked like a steel milk crate. Surrounded by food detritus. Once, a black panther with eyes that looked as though they were illuminated from the inside. A head of aggressive harmony. Soft paws on a stained steel floor. With eyes that ignored mine.

IT'S A HOT DAY. The attendant beckons me through the entrance. Past the vendors offering metallic-hued balloons, neon fairy floss and saffron-coloured nachos. There is a perceptible drop in temperature, but a hot light burns through the canvas, red, yellow, white, glowing over the upper and lower reaches. A soft cathedral. In my childhood, it was occupied by angels and grotesqueries. The complex smell of circus life lingers and mingles with the expectation of the matinee about to begin. In the performers' assembly area, the owner, Stephen, greets me with the face and demeanour of an accountant. He doesn't introduce me to the others, protocol will be observed if I stay out of the way. They turn out to be polite, diffident and professional. I try to grasp the choreography of their preparations. They begin in their caravans, arrive a few minutes before their performance, conduct some perfunctory exercises and slip through the folds of the curtain. After a while they return the same way, breathless and flushed. A pause, and they return to their homes. They seem like ordinary people. I look around at the props and clothes left on racks, lots of spangles. But not glamorous. During interval, I ask Stephen about his circus. He began as a farmer and decided to fulfil a childhood ambition. Now he has two circuses out of about fifteen touring Australia. He describes it as a business first, and a lifestyle second. Schedules have to be established at least a year or two in advance, council permits negotiated, acts booked, animals' supplies ensured. Stephen seems constantly preoccupied. This hired tent has to be returned but the new tent on order is nowhere near ready. The tapes in the music machine have to be rearranged. Last week an officer of the local council insisted that the huge garbage bins be placed outside the reserve, another official arrived to demand that they be placed inside. Yesterday the police had rung. Animal Liberationists intended to stage a protest. The circus people reacted to the news with

defensiveness and stoicism. Like news of heavy rain. Stephen is cynical. Today is their last show and he cannot see the media value of a demonstration at the end of the run. The demonstration does not eventuate. This morning the RSPCA investigated a complaint that a male baboon had a red bottom.

Robika the trapeze artist shows me the calluses on his hands. He is worried. They have split open and the pain affects his timing. He is philosophical so we begin a conversation about photography. He has to go but he doesn't bother with a warmup. He tells me he never does. All goes well until the triple somersault. Sometimes he deliberately misses to increase the tension but this time he fails twice more. As his face turns away, it reveals the loss of pride. Only for a moment. He turns to wave goodbye to me with a jaunty smile and a shrug.

IN JUNE 1993, in Rethel, France, an escaped circus elephant grabbed an 89-year-old man in its trunk and trampled him to death. In Melbourne, I stand at the edge of the elephant's area and contemplate the attraction and apprehension that they evoke. I trust in four formidable





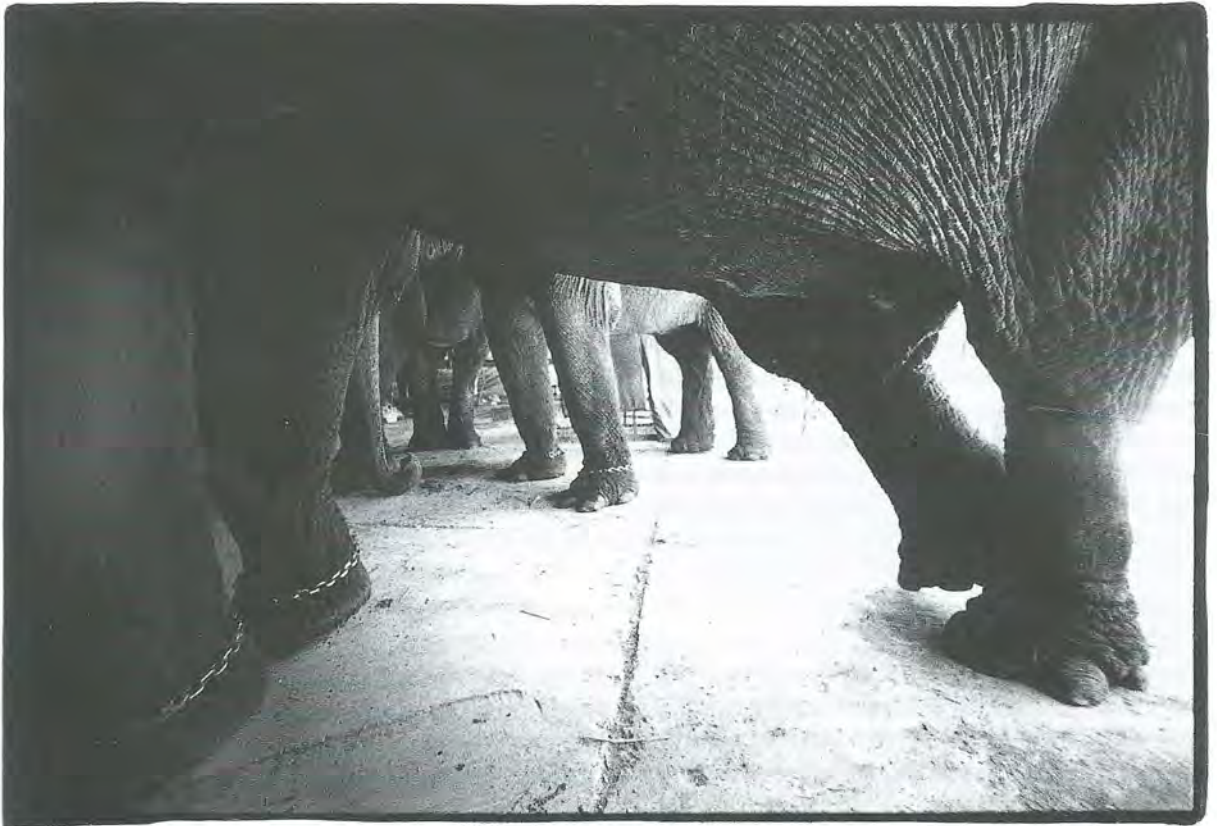
chains and my human inclination to project anthropomorphic qualities onto secondary beings. Thus the elephant's ruminative and dignified air, its easy, ambling, swaying gait invokes a gentle response. Only its sheer bulk is intimidatory. Is it true they weep when distressed?

Stafford owns the four elephants hired out to Stephen for a season. They are female and the last of their kind. The only male elephants in Australia belong to zoos. Circuses are forbidden to import endangered species. If you could find a seller, an elephant's market value would be between \$20,000 and \$50,000. Stafford allows me to venture closer. I reach out and stroke Peggy's hide. She is 51 years old but her skin is surprisingly soft. Close, she seems as ancient and permanent as earth with unfathomable eyes which

I cannot help but interpret as wise. Once, trumpeting with glee, she escaped into a sugar cane field. All efforts to recapture her failed until the next day, and succeeded only then because she had gorged herself to a standstill, her body rumbling with the purring of contentment.

As I leave it has become night. In my car, I look to the left. By the light of a powerful floodlamp, the four elephants are feeding. Amongst the oak trees their forms are silhouetted. Against the blue night sky the greens and yellows of foliage are fluorescent. In that moment there is no sound and I could be anywhere. Time seems to pause. Magic.

Next morning, the circus is gone. It is cool. Only the elephants are there. They've been booked to attend the opening of a car wash.



JEFF KLOOGER

Interpretations, or the New Orthodoxy



Ken Ruthven: *Nuclear Criticism* (Melbourne University Press, \$19.95).

Wenche Ommundsen: *Metafictions?* (Melbourne University Press, \$19.95).

Andrew Milner: *Cultural Materialism* (Melbourne University Press, \$19.95).

IN THE PREFACE TO her book, *Metafictions?*, Wenche Ommundsen describes how her enjoyment of metafiction is connected with her initial encounter with French structuralism and "the shock which, as we perceived it, shook the very foundations of the venerable *Ancienne Académie* and reinvented literature right in front of our – oh, so naïve – eyes." I suspect that the excitement post-structuralism arouses in many students – and their teachers – is of a similarly iconoclastic nature. This observation is not meant as a criticism – I am all for breaking a few idols. At its best, philosophising with the hammer can be intellectually re-invigorating as well as exciting; it all depends on what happens *after* the false gods have been reduced to rubble. Unfortunately, it is possible to become so addicted to the thrill that one does little more than break the same idols over and over again, until eventually you find yourself in a landscape consisting entirely of debris. Judging from the media release announcing its launch, the new 'Interpretations' series from Melbourne University Press is intended to dispel fears that the humanities and social sciences after the posts (post-structuralism, deconstruction, post-modernism, etc.) might answer to such a description. In particular, the series aims to defuse the attacks of "non-specialists" whose "resentment" at feeling excluded from areas of research which

operate with "sophisticated theories and specialised terminologies" leads them to criticise such research for its jargon, accusing it of using an unnecessary and pretentious obscurantism to mask a lack of substance. By providing clearly written introductions to recent theories and critical practices, these books will allow such critics to appreciate for themselves the value of these new developments. Having read the first three books in the series, I can report that they are, for the most part, lucid and readable. The authors have clearly gone to some pains to make themselves understood by a wider audience than their peers. Notwithstanding this, I am not con-

"Their aim was practical and frankly political, to contribute to the public debate over nuclear policy in support of the anti-nuclear case."

vinced that any of these books will oblige critics of post-structuralism to seriously reappraise their position. In fact – somewhat unexpectedly given the tenor of the publicity material – one of the authors actually engages in some quite unambiguous condemnation of his own.

One of the first things I learned from reading Ken Ruthven's book, *Nuclear Criticism*, is that 'Nuclear Criticism' is not just a more pretentious and proprietorial way of writing 'nuclear criticism'. It may be that, of course; but it is also the specific title adopted by those critical theorists who, in response to the increased belligerence of the superpowers during the Reagan era, set out to apply their methods of textual analysis to the

discourse of nuclearism. Their aim was practical and frankly political, to contribute to the public debate over nuclear policy in support of the anti-nuclear case. In this they distinguished themselves from those schools of deconstructive and post-structuralist thought in which reality is barred from discussion except as a textual effect. Their willingness to engage with ethical issues was also a welcome departure from the usual post-structuralist suspicion of such matters, tainted as they are by their association with humanism.

Unfortunately, since the 1984 Cornell colloquium at which the project was launched, Nuclear Criticism has all but disappeared, leaving little behind save the conference papers themselves – and even these have been largely ignored. Ruthven wishes to rectify this, to breathe new life into the project of Nuclear Criticism, and to ask why it was that an enterprise begun with such energy and apparent good intentions should have come to so little. In the end, he attributes most of the blame for this to the inaccessible nature of the writing, and many of the Cornell papers he discusses do seem unnecessarily ethereal in their presentation. Another possible explanation canvassed by Ruthven is that Jacques Derrida may have managed to sink the project in its infancy. It would not have been the first time Derrida had been a party pooper.

As Ruthven notes, at a 1966 conference at Johns Hopkins University devised to celebrate the burgeoning of structuralism, Derrida delivered a paper which soon came to be recognised as structuralism's death certificate. Derrida's Cornell paper, entitled 'Not Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)' (a bravura performance in itself), was a deconstruction not of the rhetoric of nuclearism but of the very concept of Nuclear Criticism, which, apparently, left many of those associated with the fledgling project contemplating their own aporias. What I find surprising is that anyone should have been troubled by what Derrida had to say. His primary target is the idea that Nuclear Critics could be any more competent than others in distinguishing between nuclear realities and nuclearist fictions. They are, he suggests, in the same position as everyone else, and have no right to claim a special authority for their brand of nuclear criticism.

Given that deconstruction is, as Ruthven explains, "a means of questioning the legitimacy of an authority that claims to be grounded in the determinate meaning of an unequivocal text", (and this, incidentally, may be all that deconstruction *is* good for) I cannot see why aspiring Nuclear Critics should have been surprised or disturbed by Derrida's revelations unless they really were aiming to do something which, according to their own understanding of things, is impossible. Surely they did not expect to be able to produce texts that were any more authoritative than those they were deconstructing! All texts are deconstructable – that is the point, isn't it? So what? The demonstration of this is only damaging if one does not already recognise the fact, or if one refuses to acknowledge it. In any case, to seek to enter into a political discourse with the intention of raising it above the level of mere opinion is to miss the point, for opinion and the examination and interplay of equally ungroundable values and beliefs is what politics is about, or what it must be about if it is not to be merely a form of technocracy.

If, despite its shortcomings and lack of success up to now, Ruthven finally opts for Nuclear Criticism as the future of nuclear criticism this is for the rather obscure reason that "untheorised practices – however well intentioned – have had their day." This may be so; though, to tell the truth, I am not entirely sure I know which specific accusations and assumptions lie behind the enigmatic phrase "untheorised practices", still less whether they are justified. In any case, I cannot see how one gets from the need for theorised practices to the necessity for Nuclear Criticism. Apart from an unreasonably stubborn defence of Nuclear Criticism and a tendency to use a caricatured humanism as a punching bag whenever he wants to assert the theoretical superiority of his own position (a common post-structuralist tactic), Ruthven's book is interesting and well written. His discussion of the history of attempts to represent the nuclear and to analyse such representations – nuclear criticism rather than Nuclear Criticism – is fascinating.

METAFICTION HAS BEEN described as self-indulgent, masturbatory and apolitical. It has been accused of abdicating fiction's responsibility to explore implacable realities beyond the narrow realm of literature. If such com-

plaints are reminiscent of those directed at post-structuralist theorising this is no mere coincidence. As Ommundsen tells us, metafiction exists "at the intersection between theory and fiction". Influenced by those recent theories of language and literature which reject the naive understanding of representation as 'mimesis', a

"Metafiction has been described as self-indulgent, masturbatory and apolitical."

simple re-presentation of the truth of an independently existing reality, metafiction flaunts their own 'fictionality', examines the nature of their own activity and playfully subverts the conventions of a realism which they regard as politically dubious and/or aesthetically untenable.

A self-confessed fan of metafiction, Ommundsen sets out to defend it against its detractors. In the process, she provides a comprehensive account of the critical debates surrounding metafiction, discusses all the issues which have been raised in relation to this type of writing, and outlines the theories which have influenced both the writing itself and the debates. Despite this thoroughness, I found the book confusing and frustrating. Although Ommundsen vigorously disputes some of the more extravagant post-structuralist claims about language and literature, labelling as absurd assertions that literature can only ever be about itself or that the mimetic function of language is non-existent rather than simply more complex than naively realist theories would have us believe, many of her comments elsewhere seem to contradict such views. This could be seen as even-handedness, but I think it is probably more like fence-sitting, and, as such, symptomatic of Ommundsen's basic approach.

Having decided that what she is interested in is continuity rather than novelty, she seeks to question the idea that any *absolute* distinction can be drawn between contemporary and past fiction. Rather than defending metafiction as a genre, she questions its very existence, defending instead the more general phenomenon of lit-

erary "reflexivity". Ommundsen argues that reflexivity exists as a dimension of the literature of all eras, that it is, as much as anything else, the result of a particular strategy of reading, and that it does not preclude an involvement with reality. Reflexive fictions address reality by examining how this reality is constructed culturally and in the stories through which individuals make themselves and others. All this is well and good; but what about metafiction? At one point Ommundsen suggests that "The 'danger' associated with the view that all fiction is reflexive is only there if reflexivity itself is taken in the narrow sense to mean nothing but literary introspection." But what of those fictions in which reflexivity *is* reduced to narrow literary introspection, in which the world *is* conflated with the purely literary text? Isn't this what critics of metafiction are complaining about when they use this term? Whether such writing does or does not comprise a genre would seem to be a rather technical consideration, and, ultimately, beside the point.

The strange thing is that Ommundsen cannot get beyond the category of metafiction, even though she questions its validity. She recognises this, admitting that she seems to want to deconstruct her metafiction and have it, too. In this she believes she has discovered a paradox as fundamental as that of the Cretan liar. Having caught the deconstructive bug, she is not satisfied with pointing out that metafiction might be only part of the broader category of reflexive fiction. (It is a similar unwillingness to make subtle distinctions which leads many writers of metafiction and the theorists who inspire them to subsume all narratives under the heading of 'fiction', from whence it is but a small step to confusing books with reality.) Instead, she insists on being suspicious of all categories, all classifications, for all are equally methods of "containment". Perhaps so, but not even Ommundsen would suggest that we can do without them altogether. While we acknowledge the provisional and imperfect nature of all our categories, perhaps we should also try to replace bad categories and concepts with better ones. Of course, this would mean going a step beyond putting terms "under erasure", or appending question marks to them, or leaving spaces for readers to fill in on the pretext that no "critical consensus" has yet been achieved.

MILNER'S BOOK, *Cultural Materialism*, is, in contrast, admirably clear about its aims and straightforward in its pursuit of them. Unlike the other two, it is not about a particular application of post-structuralism, or a related cultural phenomenon, but a parallel approach to the study of culture which incorporates the most valuable insights of post-structuralism while managing to retain a commitment to radical political values and goals. It was the Welsh cultural theorist, Raymond Williams, who coined the term "cultural materialism". Milner, after a perfunctory comment on the invidiousness of comparisons, describes Williams as "by far the most intellectually and politically significant figure to write about literature and culture in the English language during the twentieth century." In *Cultural Materialism* Milner analyses Williams' principal ideas, traces their development and places this development in its historical, political and intellectual context. In the process he gives us a wide-ranging account of the evolution of post-war British thought on literature and culture. He covers the conflict between Leavisism and communist Marxism, the birth and development of the British New Left, the late importation into Britain of continental theory – the various schools of Western Marxism, including, significantly, Althusserian structuralist Marxism – and the sometimes vindictive and petty intellectual battles which ensued, and the development of cultural studies as an academic discipline in Britain and Australia.

Williams' cultural materialism was the continually evolving result of his efforts to overcome the deficiencies of both Leavisite literary humanism and orthodox Marxism while preserving what was of value in each. Leavisism was elitist and idealist in its approach to the question of cultural value, but it did credit culture, in the twin senses of a common way of life and artistic works and practices, with an inherent significance not reducible to the economic. Orthodox Marxism regarded culture as a mere effect of a determining material – i.e., economic – reality, but it did recognise the importance of class inequalities and was committed to their eradication. What Williams arrived at was a conception of culture as thoroughly material, consisting of "many and variable productive practices with specific conditions and intentions." Against the crude determinism of the Marxist base/super-

structure model, which he argued suffered from a deficit rather than a surplus of materialism, Williams insisted on the recognition of multiple determination, an understanding of culture as "a whole way of life . . . both thoroughly material and thoroughly marked by the impress of power and domination, in all its particular aspects"; but also the site of real and potentially effective contestations of this power.

Milner compares cultural materialism with structuralism as two attempts to escape the theoretical deadlock between idealist humanism and determinist Marxism. Where structuralism saw structure as "all-determining, agency as an illusion and subjectivity the ideological effect of structure", cultural materialism understands structure as a set of limits and pressures within which agents operate and subjectivity, "though socially produced and shared", as real and active. Milner also remarks on the similarities between Williams' approach and that of post-structuralist theorists such as Foucault who also reject structuralism's absolute determinism and

"... post-structuralism continues to suffer from a determined anti-humanism inherited from structuralism ..."

insist on the need to examine particular practices and their relationship to power. He argues, however, that post-structuralism continues to suffer from a determined anti-humanism inherited from structuralism, a legacy which "leads to a systematic derogation of the possibilities for progressive social change, collective action and individual politico-ethical commitment."

By contrast, Williams' "entire intellectual effort was organised around a continuing political project, that of a radically democratic, popular socialism, in which the idea of a common culture, truly made in common, might finally be realised." According to Milner, Williams' example shows how some form of humanism – not liberal or idealist, but materialist – is essential if we are interested in a radical and progressive politics. In something of a heresy against the current intellectual *zeitgeist*, Milner goes so far as to argue "that there is, in fact, a human

nature, and that this nature is best grasped by Marx's understanding of the human 'species being' as constituted by our capacity for conscious, collective and creative production''.

Although it seems anachronistic, it is fitting that Milner's book should have been among the first in the series. It offers some valuable historical insights into how the humanities and social-sciences have come to be what they are today, and, via the example of Williams, suggests how they might progress beyond this. Central to any such progress must be the adoption of the basic

attitude to theory which Williams exemplified throughout his intellectual career, an attitude which, following an observation by Milner, can be distilled into something like a creed: no apostasy, no orthodoxy, not so much a doctrine as a research project.

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Jiri Tibor

ANDREW MILNER

Commodity Fetishism



Edward W. Said: *Culture and Imperialism* (Chatto and Windus, London, 1993, \$39.95).

Aijaz Ahmad: *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (Verso, London, 1992, \$55.00).

EDWARD SAID – whose planned visit to Australia in February 1994 has sadly been postponed for reasons of ill-health – has been one of the key protagonists in the debates over what is often termed ‘postcolonial theory’. Indeed, those debates were effectively inaugurated by the publication in 1978 of Said’s *Orientalism*. Said, Professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York, is almost the very model of the western elite academic. Except, of course, that he is a Palestinian, a member of the Palestinian National Council and a supporter of Yasser Arafat’s PLO. Born in Jerusalem in 1935, Said comes from a well-heeled, middle class Christian family, who fled to Egypt during 1947–8. In the United States, he is probably best known for his role in the media as perhaps the one important local representative of the Palestinian cause. A regular target for Zionist hostility, he has been labelled and libelled as ‘the professor of terror’. The last time he was invited to Australia, quite predictably, he was refused entry.

Orientalism was both deeply scholarly and passionately engaged, its central concern not so much ‘the Orient’ itself as the ways in which British and French (and in a small way American) scholarship had come to construct the Orient as ‘Other’. For Said, Orientalism was a ‘discourse’ in the Foucauldian sense of the term: “an enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient ... during the post-

Enlightenment period”.¹ This was never for Said simply a matter of academic ideas reflecting other ‘political’ interests. Quite the contrary: “Orientalism”, he insisted, “is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture”.² *Culture and Imperialism* is at once an elaboration upon and a further development of many of the themes originally advanced in *Orientalism*. Where the earlier work focused exclusively on the Middle East, Said now expands his interest in the “general relationship between culture and empire” (p. xi) to include analyses of a very wide range of European writing on Latin America, Africa, India, the Far East and the Caribbean. Indeed, his concerns extend even to Australia: the book’s opening literary example is that of the representation of Australia in Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (pp. xv–xvii). Where the earlier work focused almost exclusively on the discourse of the colonisers, Said now also explores the narratives of anti-colonial resistance from George Antonius and C. L. R. James to Ranjit Guha and S. H. Alatas. Where *Orientalism* had remained preoccupied with the zenith of European imperial power, Said here traces the culture of imperialism back to its earliest moments in the British conquest of Ireland and forward to a much expanded treatment of contemporary American power.

There is much that is extraordinarily *right* about the book. Said’s readings of *Mansfield Park*, for example, or of *Aida*, are close to criticism at its very best: they irreparably transform one’s understandings of these particular texts in ways which seem simultaneously both absolutely unexpected and yet absolutely faithful to their textuality and to their contextuality. The

accounts of Ireland as a first instance of the European imperial pattern, and of Yeats as a poet "of the colonial world ruled by European imperialism during a climactic insurrectionary stage" (p. 266), are immensely persuasive. The wealth of scholarly detail brought to bear on the intertwined cultures of both colonisers and colonised is deeply impressive. And it is difficult to dissent from Said's conclusion that: "there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on ... separation and distinctive-

"There seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on ... separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about."

ness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about the connections between things ... It is more rewarding – and more difficult – to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about 'us'. But this also means not trying to rule over others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how 'our' culture or country is number one (or *not* number one, for that matter)" (p. 408). Said's vision of the point and purpose of Comparative Literature has a much more properly contemporary resonance than anything in Auerbach.

And yet, certain doubts persist. Said often writes as if traditional notions of literary-critical value and of canonicity are still somehow unproblematically available to the postcolonial critic. But if European literary culture has been as complicit with imperialism as he believes, then it is difficult to see why he should persist in these kinds of value judgement which arise precisely from that very particular culture. As Raymond Williams – a writer whom Said very much admires – once insisted, such criticism "actively prevents that understanding of response which does not assume the habit (or right or duty) of judgement".³ These very different, essentially sociological, understandings of aesthetic response, which clearly distinguish contemporary cultural studies from earlier

notions of 'Literature', would almost certainly prove much more compatible with Said's political interests than are his own residual attachments to canonicity. It is one thing to insist on Kipling's significance as a writer for and within and about imperialism; and that is what Said wishes to say. It is quite another, and quite inappropriate surely, to try to pass Kipling off as a putative member of the high western canon. To describe *Kim* as the work of "a great artist ... blinded by his own insights" (p. 196) seems not only close to risible, but also quite simply unnecessary.

More serious doubts arise, perhaps predictably for an (Anglo-)Australian writer, over Said's treatment, not of India or of Egypt, but of the 'white' settler colonies. If Said is absolutely right to analyse British representations of Ireland as dramatically prefiguring the subsequent history of the imperial adventure, he may nonetheless be mistaken in his view of Australia as a 'white' colony akin to Ireland (p. xvi), and of white Australians as "an inferior race well into the twentieth century" (p. 127). Here Said echoes the kind of argument advanced in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back*⁴ – a book he cites with approval (p. 260) – to the effect that such settler societies as Australia can meaningfully be assimilated to the formerly colonised societies of Africa and Asia as in some sense analogously 'postcolonial'. Post-structuralist though their theoretical sources often are, the paradoxical effect of such arguments often

"Post-structuralist though their theoretical sources often are, the paradoxical effect of such arguments often seems to obliterate rather than celebrate difference, both the difference between pre-independence and post-independence periods and that between the colonisers and the colonised."

seems to obliterate rather than celebrate difference, both the difference between pre-independence and post-independence periods and that between the colonisers and the colonised.

For, of course, the colonies of white settlement are not postcolonial in any sense other than that

posited by a strict periodisation between pre-independence and post-independence. In every other respect they are instances of a continuing colonisation, where the descendants of the original colonists remain dominant over the colonised indigenous peoples. Whatever the merits of the kinds of analysis pioneered by Said, accounts of how European colonial discourse constructed the non-European as 'Other' appear implausible when applied to societies like Australia. The colonies of European settlement were typically imagined as overseas extensions of Europe itself, as 'Self' rather than 'Other', as "New Britannias", in the words of W. C. Wentworth's 1823 sonnet, rather than new Irelands. Said's treatment here (of what is admittedly only an incidental in his general argument) seems oddly insensitive to the fate of the Koori peoples, victims of a settler state which clearly bears more than a passing resemblance to Israel.

The obverse of Said's generosity towards the Australian settlers is an entirely understandable lack thereof to their North American counterparts. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin were driven by the logic of their own deeply unhelpful argument to include even the United States itself in the category postcolonial. Said, an American as well as a Palestinian, makes no such mistake: the United States, he warns, is "repeating what France and Britain, Spain and Portugal, Holland and Germany, did before us" (p. 65). And yet this too seems to me mistaken. When Said observes that the "world has changed since Conrad and Dickens in ways that have surprised, and often alarmed, metropolitan Europeans and Americans, who now ... face an impressive roster of newly empowered voices asking for their narratives to be heard" (p. xxii), one is struck by the simple fact that Conrad and Dickens were indeed Europeans and *not* actually Americans at all. There are today few more deeply unfashionable thinkers than Lenin. But it still seems to me one of the great strengths of *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* that it so clearly distinguished the specific forms of late nineteenth and early twentieth century European imperialism from the colonial policies of earlier periods in the histories both of capitalism and of pre-capitalist societies such as ancient Rome.⁵ So too should we distinguish between the globalising dynamics of post-war 'postmodern' late capitalism and the essentially 'national'

character of high European imperialism.

There can be no doubting either the enormity or the sheer excess of American military power. But American militarism increasingly functions not so much to establish a specifically American colonial empire as to sustain the conditions of possibility for an increasingly transnational world economic system. Where the older British and French colonial interests were secured (and importantly secured against each other) precisely by the brute fact of colonial possession, the

"... American militarism increasingly functions not so much to establish a specifically American colonial empire as to sustain the conditions of possibility for an increasingly transnational world economic system."

global interests of these new once-American (or once-Japanese or even occasionally once-Australian) but now transnational corporations, and the global reach of this new once-American but now transnational popular culture, are each sustained as much by the 'free' flow of the markets as by direct politico-judicial coercion. In Lenin's sense of the term, postmodern late capitalism is not so much imperialist as 'post-imperialist'. And by the same token, it is also quite significantly 'post-European', as European intellectuals from Umberto Eco to Jean Baudrillard and Ferenc Fehér have been quick to recognise. Recall, for example, Eco's appalled fascination at how American popular culture 'travesties' European high culture. The contrast for Eco runs not between the colonial and the post-colonial, but between the culture of "Cultivated Europeans and Europeanized Americans" on the one hand, and the hyper-reality of "the average American imagination and taste", on the other.⁶ Unconsciously echoing Harold Macmillan, Eco describes the ideology of the Getty Museum in Malibu as one of "preservation, in the New World, of the treasures that the folly and negligence of the Old World are causing to disappear into the void ... Just like the crocodile tears of the Roman patrician who reproduced the grandeurs of the very Greece that his country had humiliated and reduced to a colony."⁷ Judged in

these terms, Australians surely know where they stand: *civis Romanus sum*.

The colonies of European settlement in the Americas and in Australasia are neither former colonial powers nor are they in any meaningful sense postcolonial. They are entirely *sui generis*, 'post-imperial' remnants of the old empires, successful heirs to a New World, not of post-colonial revolution, but of colonisation at its most prodigiously genocidal extreme. And like it or not, this is what 'we' are: as Phillip Adams observed only partly in jest in *The Australian* only a few months ago, we are merely Californians on the wrong side of the Pacific. This, I suspect, is the real postmodern future, a com-

"... we are merely Californians on the wrong side of the Pacific."

modity culture freed from the encumbrances of the European tradition and "a purer stage of capitalism than any of the moments that preceded it", as that other professor of Comparative Literature, Fredric Jameson, so succinctly puts it.⁸ And it might just be that Section 4 of Chapter I of the first Volume of Marx's *Capital*, on commodity fetishism, is now more than ever the best possible starting point for an analysis of contemporary culture.

Which takes us to what is perhaps the heart of Edward Said's own darkness. From *Orientalism* on, Said's intellectual vision has been underwritten by an enduring political commitment both to the Palestinian revolution in particular and to the 'Third World' colonial revolution in general. Much more so than in the earlier work, however, *Culture and Imperialism* remains haunted by the grotesquerie of much actually existing postcolonial independence: "nationalism was often led by lawyers, doctors, and writers who were partly formed and to some degree produced by the colonial power. The national bourgeoisies and their specialised élites ... in effect tended to replace the colonial force with a new class-based and ultimately exploitative one, which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms. There are states all across the formerly colonized world that have bred patholo-

gies of power" (p. 269). Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* develops an argument against postcolonialist theory on the grounds that it has tended, by turn, to substitute nation for class and textualism for activism (pp. 92-93). Said himself provides Ahmad's book with one of its main targets. Like Said, Ahmad is a professional academic, and like Said he comes from a part of the former British Empire: he is Professorial Fellow in the Centre for Contemporary Studies at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi. Unlike Said, Ahmad is also a Marxist, in a country where Marxism continues to enjoy a greater intellectual appeal than in either the United States or Australia. In Ahmad's view, much of the intellectual legitimacy attaching to postcolonialism derives from its fundamental complicity with the structures of social privilege enjoyed by both First and Third World intellectuals and by Third World ruling classes. "The East", he wryly observes in allusion to Said's own earlier account of orientalism, "seems to have become, yet again, a *career* - even for the 'Oriental' this time, and within the Occident too" (p. 94).

For Said's role as a Palestinian activist, Ahmad has nothing but admiration. His reading of Said's academic work, most especially of *Orientalism*, remains much more sceptical. Ahmad explains the book's undoubted appeal for Third World intellectual immigrants into the West in the most caustic of terms: "Among critiques that needed to be jettisoned ... were the Marxist ones, because Marxists had this habit of speak-

"What the upwardly mobile professionals in this new immigration needed were narratives of oppression that would get them preferential treatment, reserved jobs, higher salaries in the social position they already occupied: namely, as middle-class professionals ..."

ing about classes, even in Asia and Africa. What the upwardly mobile professionals in this new immigration needed were narratives of oppression that would get them preferential treatment, reserved jobs, higher salaries in the social position they already occupied: namely, as middle-

class professionals ... For such purposes *Orientalism* was the perfect narrative" (p. 196). *Culture and Imperialism* shows Said himself increasingly aware of those class divides within Asia and Africa, and by implication of the limitations of much of his own earlier Third Worldism. In its place, however, we find an increasing reliance on what Said himself – the author of *Orientalism*, no less – improbably describes as "the Utopian space ... provided by the university" (p. xxix).

Neither Third Worldist nor socialist in any sense that might speak to the languages of class (as Williams's work most certainly did), where then does Said's erudition lead him? Reflecting on earlier versions of some of the essays eventually incorporated into *Culture and Imperialism*, Ahmad points to the very peculiar way in which Said's reworkings of Auerbach have acquired a poignant contemporary relevance: "All that seems to have changed ... is that ... the white world ... has become an object among other objects of consumption, quite on a par with India. This is the imperial geography not of the colonial period but of late capitalism: commodity acquires universality, and a universal market arises across national frontiers and local customs, while white trade rejoins black trade.

When cultural criticism reaches this point of convergence with the universal market ... it becomes indistinguishable from commodity fetishism" (p. 217). If this is not yet quite true of Said, then neither is it yet quite true of Australian 'postcolonial' criticism. But we have already seen the future and it works, God help us.

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Endnotes

1. E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978, p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
3. R. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Fontana, Glasgow, 1976, p. 76.
4. B. Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Routledge, London, 1989.
5. V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, International Publishers, New York, 1969, pp. 81-2.
6. U. Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, tr. W. Weaver, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, 1986, pp. 4, 6.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.
8. F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, London, 1991, p. 3.



1993

We are not A-MUSED

Bev Aisbett

FUGUE

With my house crowded with ghosts
And the stars like a forsaken elixir
About me, I, too, could wait for
The angels to heed me, saying
'The earth, what did you make of it?
The bovine days, catacombs of nights?'

They will not come. They will not ask.

Difficult to find other mythologies in
A suburban backyard, the wind
Trailing leaves and creepers across
My path. My momentum is lost.
The granary of my mind seems
Casually ransacked . . .

They will not come. They will not ask.

I could almost envy those in prayer,
Their purpose in that splintered pain
Before them. The trappings of their quest
So obvious in their gaze. If repentance,
After all, were quite so easy. I could
Nestle comfortably in such harness, but

They will not come. They will not ask.

The fruit of all longing must perish
Or be eaten, the tabula rasa
That records all incompleteness and
All hope be read and inflicted.
Even emptiness must have its shape.
A dwelling made of night and rain.

They will not come. They will not ask.

The place of the skull, then. Golgotha.
Meaning only in sacrifice, in realising
We were already something of a failure.
Futility rests like a sheet on a hot night,
Cloaking the sound of guns, sound of choirs.
My menace is alive and simply within me.

They will not come. They will not ask.

The streams grow abundant, I clamour
For mountains. The ocean smells of
Oysters and I zig-zag in to bathe.
My house grows quiet as the ghosts
Lie down to rest. Like some undetermined
Wine I mellow in my husk.

They will not come. They will not ask.

SHANE McCAULEY

INTRODUCED BY KEVIN D. MURRAY

Madonna



An 'Exclusive Interview'

IT'S RARE FOR a magazine to receive an anonymous contribution – rarer still to publish one. In this case, the anonymity is not due to a lack of courage by the writer, rather it seems that the absence of author is necessary to establish the kind of inquiry which it sets up. This inquiry questions the divide between star and audience as it nestles inside the opposition between centre and periphery. At least it seems to.

The contribution claims to be the transcript of an interview with Madonna in Melbourne. The unlikelihood of such an occurrence is confirmed by her record company, Warner, and her touring agency, Frontier, who both deny that such an interview could have taken place. While in Australia, Madonna refused to do any press: minor duties were left up to her brother, Christopher Ciccone, while shopping excursions were conducted by a same-sized double.

This interview appears, almost certainly, to emerge from the imagination of her audience. It should sit beside the recent publication of dreams by American women about Madonna (Kay Turner, *I Dream of Madonna*, Thames & Hudson, \$19.95). This genre of phantom visitation narratives is testimony to Madonna's capacity as a star to move between the stage and the stalls. Her more devoted followers find themselves in the position of Pygmalion, advised by the star goddess how to fashion their own, private replica of her beauty.

The Melbourne Madonna speaks particularly for life in a small nation like Australia. We might wonder at the need to turn to an American star for this. Certainly there are many local figures gifted with Madonna's tricky egocentricity: Edna Everage, Gwen Harwood and Tracey

Moffat all provide for their audience a spectacle of fame. In addition, Anne Marsh's recent publication (*Body and Self*, Oxford University Press, \$40.00) notes the emergence of local talents such as Linda Spool and Barbara Campbell who taunt their audience with sexual allusions. However, the interview goes some way to addressing the issue of why Madonna cannot be the girl next door.

At the beginning, Madonna appears to use the interview much like a graffiti 'tagger' might deface an esteemed monument: to leave her mark in public. Her remarks about the Olympics have a definite undertone of sarcasm. This sarcasm may extend to her confession that New Yorkers talk about Melbourne with the same awe that Melburnians talk about New York. But there may also be a more profound layer of meaning underneath this. Madonna's spatial logic evokes the parable of the doorkeeper in Kafka's *The Trial*. The man from the country waits decades at the door to the Palace of the Law until his hope expires, at which point he is told that the door was meant only for him. Accordingly, one might see the experience of inessentiality, identified in a city like Melbourne, as the *cause* of New York's power, rather than its *effect*. Like the Marx brother who would not belong to a club that would have himself for a member, it is a trick of provincial logic to ascribe value to that which renders itself invisible.

From outside the Palace, such a view offers a grim picture of self-alienation. On the other side, however, a far more positive understanding emerges. As Madonna's Melbourne unfolds, it is New York which becomes the city of dreams, gazing upon this remote place as a retreat into reality. This Melbourne is a pastoral sanctuary,

like the New Jersey of Richard Ford's *The Sports-writer* – "on the lee-side of the action", but not trying to get somewhere else.

Melbourne's Madonna appears 'happy with things as they are'. This attitude contrasts itself with a patriarchal psychology which seeks a hidden depth of meaning. Madonna offers the colloquial American understanding of 'dream' as a freedom of expression. In popular culture, this theory of dreams is often portrayed as the classic blonde reaction against male seriousness (recall Lorelei, in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, who confounds Dr Froyd [*sic*] by claiming to be too busy using her brains during the day to dream at night). When questioned about the status of dreams as reality, Madonna responds "You should know". Alert readers might note a clue here to the fictionality of the interview.

Perhaps emboldened by this, the interviewer begins from this point to take a more aggressive attitude. Though Madonna eludes allegations of imperialism by turning it into a drag show, she is less successful when dealing with her lack of vulnerability. Madonna's inability to win a major film role depicting a 'weak' character has now become part of her public story. But is this so irregular? It's not unusual for a star to confess to a weakness by which the audience might define its strength. Even Jacques Derrida admits to a lifetime failure to write a truly 'naive' work of philosophy. This interview may be the only way the star in control can admit this flaw others ascribe to her. Once this is out, though, a very particular kind of power relationship emerges between the Melbourne Madonna and her audience.

An interview with Madonna for *Overland*,
conducted after her last Melbourne concert,
29 November 1993.

I: Why did you agree to an interview with *Overland*?

M: You're so straight and, what's the name of that month, oh yeah, August. A literary journal, eh? I expect you're always talking a lot about dead people, right? I know I don't fit that category quite yet, but I want to be treated just as seriously as someone who's dead, you know what I mean? That's my answer, but what about you?

I: Well, I just thought there were a lot of questions you never get asked which our readers would like to hear about.

M: Yeah, like what?

I: Do you have any regrets about the level of success you've achieved?

M: [Fake yawn] Wake me up when you've got something more interesting.

I: What does it mean to you that the media is so hostile?

M: I think this interview was a big mistake. Sorry, I got to go.

I: Wait. What do you think of Melbourne?

M: At last. I've been waiting so long for that question.

I: Really? So what do you think?

M: Nothing.

I: Nothing?

M: Sorry, it's a wonderful place, and it's a real pity you didn't get the Olympics. You deserve it.

I: Did you expect anything of Melbourne?

M: Yeah, lots.

I: Like what?

M: Well, everyone I know back home talks about Melbourne. In fact, there's barely a party I go to without someone bringing Melbourne up in conversation.

I: What do they say?

M: You can guess.

I: No, I just can't imagine.

M: Slow! Well, we talk about the new restaurants and galleries, whether the success of *Phantom* can be repeated with *Scrooge*, how many W Class trams are left running, that sort of stuff.

- I: Well, you'd never know.
- M: Christ, you know all those things already. You'd be disappointed if you knew these cool international stars just thought about Melbourne all the time. We're ashamed of it, slightly.
- I: But, surely, compared to a city like New York, say, Melbourne doesn't have as many places to go out at night and nothing really happens on the street like New York?



- M: But New York's fantasy, and I guess my whole career has been based on fantasy. In a city like Melbourne, on the other hand, there's a real reality. There are things in Melbourne that you just can't experience anywhere else.
- I: Like what?
- M: Like what? Well, you know, I don't want to sound rude – much – but boredom seems a big thing here. A special kind of boredom, not just that empty, nothing to do feeling. More a kind of wanting something exciting to happen, something really wonderful, but a fear that it might actually happen.
- I: Can you give me an example?

- M: No, not really.
- I: Perhaps you mean a disaster, like a war or an earthquake?
- M: Maybe. But Sydney gets it first, like it's got the aboriginal dance company and the gay mardi gras.
- I: And the Olympics – Sydney 2000.
- M: But Melbourne's 3000 isn't it – that's something to hope for at least. Now, the children are getting restless, I must go.
- I: So where are you going out tonight? The Hellfire Club?
- M: Perhaps I do have time for some more questions.
- I: Well, speaking of the Hellfire Club, the *Sex* book you put out last year ...
- M: Oh, I forgot about that.
- I: What do you think people get out of it. How liberating can a book like that be when it's so focused on just you?
- M: Have you read Martha Graham's autobiography?
- I: The dancer? You trained with her didn't you?
- M: A real inspiration. Well, she says I just put into action what most women hide away in their own dreams.
- I: But from Kay Turner's new book of dreams you get the impression that most of their dreams are now about you anyway.
- M: So now I give people something to dream about.
- I: Would you like that, for the world to be a dream about Madonna?
- M: Sounds kind of weird – yes, of course I would, it's my destiny.
- I: But according to Freud, dreams are an expression of the unconscious and you can't control what happens down there.
- M: That's crap. Dreams aren't like any mysterious message.
- I: What are they then?
- M: You want the Madonna theory of dreams?
- I: Sure.

- M: Pay attention and stop fiddling with that tape recorder, unless you've got a thing for them, that is – I go for cameras myself. Where was I? Yes, dreams are a place of freedom, where you can go anywhere in the world and meet anyone you want. Exactly like Disneyland, except it's free and it's private.
- I: Except your Disneyland is anything but private.
- M: Sure. I have a dream ...
- I: And it's true.
- M: You should know.
- I: What's your next move?
- M: Well, I'm kind of getting a bit weary of performing, musically at least. The world's saturated with enough music, specially my kind of music. We need space for something different.
- I: Like what?
- M: Well, more along the Vogue line, you know. Taking the posture. Making the gesture. It's a way of appealing to a much wider audience.
- I: Isn't your audience wide enough at the moment? Straights, gays, lesbians, men, girls, blacks, hispanics – who haven't you covered?
- M: Well, the deaf for one. When you think about it, the deaf are a whole class of people who've been left in the margins and had to discover their own language.
- I: Do you have a particular affinity with the deaf?
- M: It's not like blacks. I used to *feel* black. I never *felt* deaf. It's more like I just get excited thinking of that deaf energy.
- I: That seems to be what contemporary culture is all about – letting everyone be different.
- M: What's wrong with that then?
- I: I suppose it becomes predictable and dangerous, like in Bosnia.
- M: But, god, it's better than everyone being the same, you remember the line, *despite your sex, despite your religion, despite your race, you're just the same as us.*
- I: But we are just the same to you. In the 'Girlie Show', you included a version of 'Holiday' where you played the role of a general in the American armed forces. You even got the audience to chant "Yes Sir" at your whim.
- M: And there was that huge stars and stripes as a backdrop.
- I: Indeed, do you see yourself as a leader of the American empire, colonising local cultures with the same kind of authority as the military displayed, say, in the Gulf War?
- M: I've never killed anyone.
- I: I take your point, but how can you expect a second-order nation like Australia to enjoy being lorded over in such a chauvinist display?
- M: You tell me – I still haven't worked it out.
- I: Well, maybe that you did it in drag made it safe.
- M: Yeah, maybe.
- I: So what can you offer the audience apart from someone to look up to?
- M: My vulnerability.
- I: But you don't have any vulnerability. You're the one in control, the successful business woman who makes all the deals.
- M: So you don't think I can be vulnerable too?
- I: Well, the only thing that could make you vulnerable is your lack of vulnerability, but then you wouldn't have the lack to make you vulnerable.
- M: I could be vulnerable if you just let me get away with it.
- I: Sorry, that's our domain. We're the ones who get to feel neglected, overlooked, cheated. You stick with the success, pleasure and power number, OK?
- M: Hey, who's the boss around here?
- I: You are, and don't forget it.
- M: Yes, sir.

The books mentioned in this interview are Kay Turner: I Dream of Madonna (Thames & Hudson, \$19.95), and Anne Marsh: Body and Self (Oxford University Press, \$40.00).

KRISTIN OTTO

Peene Mouth



ONE OF HIS HAIRS caught between her teeth. She opened her eyes and read *GOTT MIT UNS* on his unfastened belt-buckle. God is with us. Yes. His rifle was arm's length away.

She was not particularly attractive – was smart and slightly fat with coppery hair and bland skin – not tanned, blonde and svelte like a lot of the other girls. She had learnt to keep her mouth shut, with words at least.

At first, the feel of his hair and skin reminded her of shucking sweet corn, the silky strands underneath the husk, sweeping them under her fingers, the hard pearlescent kernels, the sweetness, milkiness. Good enough to eat. Even the unravelling wrapping of a sheath.

(What would it be like not to think about food?)

"*Ach, Du*" he called her softly. "You" in a round voice with love – she can tell – in the middle. Heinrich never called her by name.

Trude wanted to fill herself up, every way she could; to the back of her very throat where the words, screams and laughter sprang from. Someone else's bone-like flesh, a hard thin wetness, a viscous squelchy wetness, clean saltiness. She gasped, but gasping, though romantic, can sometimes lead to choking on that thick explosive taste.

The images of the angel pictures in her room were held firmly in her head. Her Aunt Hildegard had cut them out of old art magazines at home in Hamburg. Angels hold, and carry aloft. Gravity is lost and safety gained with them. This messing around with the body – one wants for an angel and receives opposites: weight, pressure, friction. To lose one's self, time and space.

Trude imagined Heinrich as an angel.

Two of the most wonderful things about fucking, she thought, were losing the sense of pain and the power of speech. Only trouble was, prior conditions required energy, a full belly perhaps, and desire. But then oh, tiny wounds felt to magically heal, not only the dull almost numbness that showed masking of pain, but pain itself seemed to disappear. Likewise speech. Someone could be engaged in the highest intellectual conversation, or relating the depths of emotion, or pedestrian mundane, when these mere utterances would drown in the wash of sensation over the brain. Invented the formula for transforming fermented potatoes into liquid oxygen? Describing a complicated recipe for *Baumkuchen*? Telling the story of your life? All superfluous, just another scattered pearl-string dropped in the ocean of words.

Heinrich was a great swimmer. There were tan lines on some of the men when they swam, but not him, he was pink all over. Like her he did not brown. She burnt. No, Heinrich did neither, but simply glowed. He had a strong muscular body, slightly squat with wide thigh and calf muscles, broad shoulders and a deep chest. She guessed he lifted weights or boxed or some such thing. His red-blonde wavy hair was almost ginger, greying at the temples, with a deeper ginger and grey on his chest and below his belly. Concentrating strictly on the centre of his broad face with its cupid lips and small tilt-tipped nose could almost lead her to believe he was an angel. Except for the bright blue eyes rolled up under his blonde lashes and eyebrows, and the moans.

She wondered whether he had children somewhere.

Heinrich sank flat on his back, arms open

wide, chin jutting up; scratchy field grey pulled up around his shoulders, spread pooled around his hips; his torso bare to the groin. She looked down at his head thrown back, eyes half closed, body motionless. Is that what he's going to look like when it happens? she wondered, that instant the instance of death.

Sometimes words won't go, sometimes words are little deaths, all losses of one sort or another. There would be a time when the words finally stopped.

He loves me, she thought. He just hasn't said it yet.

TRUDE KNEW if she told the family back in Hamburg what was going on here no one would believe her, no one.

IT HAD ALUMINIUM SKIN and four fins. They all did, some painted with blue and white patterns, some bright yellow and red, all as tall as eight men. Tiny balls of cloud or vapour would drift, then big clouds – L(iquid)OX(ygen) – escaping. All a rocket needed was something that would burn smooth, releasing the greatest amount of heat per weight. Oh yes, yes. The principle the same, and that of the gun. Thrust drove the V2 up faster than gravity pulled weight down. The countdown began,

“10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, ...” Just like in the Fritz Lang movie. That's where they'd gotten the idea from. One of the men had told Trude that on the nose cone was painted a girl sitting on a crescent moon. Yes, just like the old *UFA* “Girl in the Moon” movie. Unheard of, unimaginable, amazing!

With a flash visible for kilometres, the clear orange tail-column of fire as long and solid as the rocket itself appeared above the tree-tops. Rolling thunder rumbles crossed the sea with deafening roars. It spun. It staggered. The countdown over the PA gave the number of seconds in flight, then “sonic velocity” was announced. A spin, a stagger in the heart – so fast and no longer in sight! The electric tone over the PA was tuned to the rocket's speed. Not seen but heard. Boom the barrier of sound, touching the stratosphere over the Baltic Sea. Everyone would look up to see nothing but summer sky and the frozen lightning of air-shifted condensation trails. Only a pause, minutes before splash-

down. But, everyone said, a Peenemunde minute lasted an eternity. How to control oneself?

All this every couple of weeks or months, for almost the past year now; explosions, burnouts, failures as well. Patterned bodies revolved instead of readied. Speeding then crashing – smoke, flames, fragments of sheet metal, branches, sand whirled in the air. That strong sweet smell of alcohol and everything wrecked covered in frost. Feet frozen to the ground. Always beforehand: noise, steam and smoke.

Von Braun said, if he lived to be seventy he would be the first man to stand on the moon. Herr Professor Sturmbannführer von Braun in his uniform:

“Ah,” all the girls said, “now there is a man.”

Werner von Braun talked and talked. He had three secretaries in continuous shifts.

IN PEENEMUNDE were shining, big skies (bigger than Berlin). Hundreds of kilometres of German coastline surrounded dunes, beaches, marshland, oaks, pines, forests, smooth water, reeds, ducks, white swans, deer, pheasants, rabbits, leather, bilberries (so good for the eyesight) and that flat broad water, sluggish River Peene to the sea. In old English *Peene* was the sharp or thin end of the hammer opposite the face. Skies that big were necessary for the other end of a hammerhead, at its *munde*/mouth/*monde*.

Yes, in Peenemunde were paved streets, an *S-Bahn*, brick and concrete buildings, wooden buildings, an airstrip, rocket launch pads, lawns, flowerbeds and a continual perfect blackout at night. There were thousands of people of both sexes and all ages. They wore *Luftwaffe* uniforms, *Wehrmacht* uniforms, *SS* uniforms, smart business suits, sensible dresses, baggy slacks, protective coats, ragged trousers, worn jackets and striped *KZ* ‘pyjamas’. They spoke different languages and had different security passes.

The brick and concrete buildings, and model town plans had been designed by Albert Speer when he was merely the Leader's architect, not yet *Herr Reichsminister* for all war industry. The *Flak* lights around Peenemunde were the same ones he had used to build a Cathedral of Light for the huge Party rally in Nürnberg nearly ten years earlier. One hundred and thirty searchlights, their straight columns going kilometres up into the night sky.

Of all Speer's works and plans Trude had seen as a young architect, this was the most lovely. The base of a heavenly wall, a higher invisible wall of unearthly, unimaginable strength and effect. Secrets above-earthly – like Peenemunde. She had heard of the reason behind the *Lichtdomm's* design, to hide the beer paunches of the old Party faithful marchers who were so aesthetically displeasing. Speer would have them march in the dark, and he did.

Trude imagined von Braun and Speer as angels.

IT HAD BEEN A BEAUTIFUL summer's day and sunset. An unusually strong breeze blew onshore. Trude lived in the single girls' quarters between the old Strength Through Joy holiday camp and the beach. It was very comfortable – light views, handsome furniture, flowers, rugs, print curtains, and the angel pictures. Yesterday's V2 launch had been postponed, so she had not had much work to do. She turned the light off and opened the window. Strong light from the full moon poured in, with the scent of pine resin from the nearby trees.

Alarm sirens woke her. She dressed in the dark. An hour later some planes could be heard droning closer, apart from that – silence: the usual run to Berlin, no doubt. There was no *Flak*, no fighting. But the few planes increased not just in proximity. Many, many, vibrating, throbbing, growling; fit to fill heaven and earth.

THE MACHINES had been talking. Across the flat land and water, Turing had been talking, stuttering and listening. Herr von Braun talked. Speer talked.

In Cambridge, the Englishman, the other "Turing" had long hair, rumpled and dirty clothes, strangely coloured and cut shirts, a shoestring tie, and absent-mindedness.

He tried to decipher the Enigma. "Is the m-m-machine talking? Is the machine t-t-talking German? I can tell I c-c-c-can tell another machine can tell." He said he knew genuine German; how many how often various letters and diphthongs. There had been an *Entscheidungsproblem* (decision problem) and now there would be a Turing machine. What was human compatible was machine compatible: human intelligence/machine intelligence. If a problem could not be solved by a Turing machine then it

could not be solved by any machine, nor by a human being. A problem defined, unique answer proven to exist, and yet the answer never to be known?

The Turing machine computed: read, encoded, decoded symbols. He named his machines universal because their program could be anything. Like the brain, another well-known Turing machine. Computers.

Turing needed to fill himself up, every way he could, with someone's bone-like flesh, viscous wetness, clean saltiness and that thick explosive taste. Yes, yes. To the back of his throat. Madness.

The English broke the code and, later, him too. Peene Mouth.

One and a quarter million photographs had seen and been seen.

A SUDDEN BRIGHT YELLOW light cancelled out the moon, the blackout. Falling from the clear sky under parachute, red lights cascaded like Lametta on Christmas trees to burn furiously on the ground. Bombs fell scattered. Trude wanted Heinrich. She ran to shelter in a cellar. The surrounding earth trembled.

Wave after wave of heavy planes and bombs came with continual crashing explosions. A man in the cellar told her to keep her mouth open so that the force of the blasts would not affect her so much. Pressure and dryness. Darkness. Throats coated with the dust and smoke coming in under the cellar door. Girls screamed and cried. Maybe it was her, she wondered. The steady drone of hundreds of planes, no fighters, hardly any *Flak* still. What was Heinrich doing, where was he, why hadn't he come to save her? The blackness in the cellar thickened and began to choke her. She retched.

The steel door became rimmed with incandescent light, the gap widening with each explosive wave. Outside was the hissing of phosphorous and incendiary bombs, sparks and flames. Inside was even thicker, hotter. Trude could almost remember a prayer she had learnt fifteen years earlier. Every word under her breath, her gasps; every breath. A bomb fell very close, the crack of horror blew the door wide open on its hinges. Waves of heat, pressure on every millimetre of her skin. The blast pushed her back. She gasped hot, dry air. It hurt, it would make her sick, could she choke on her own flesh?

Peenemunde minutes.

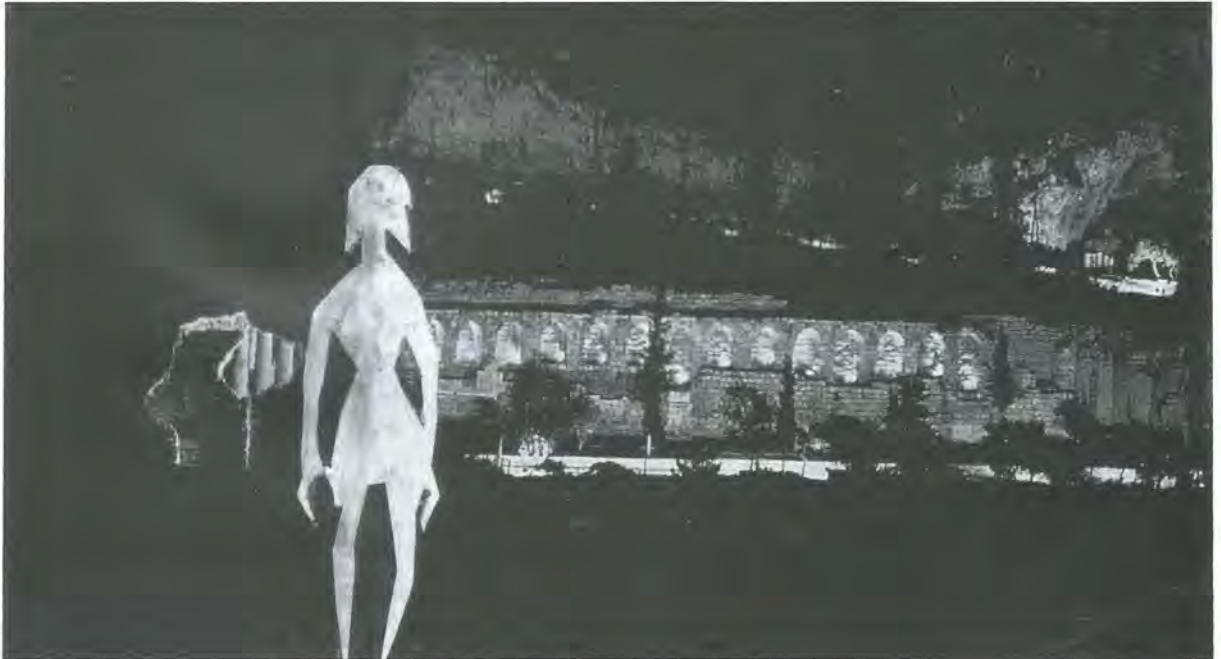
"Heinrich!" someone shrieked. Perhaps it was her.

She was wet with sweat and urine, blasted dry. It was almost worse being able now to see the ghastly light half-illuminating faces. Clouds of smoke drifted past the open doorway. The crackle of flames continued, and concussive explosions came more randomly, lessening the steady all-encompassing pounding where she felt every element in the world being blasted and ripped apart. The drone of the four-engined bomber formations lessened and receded. A fine, light powder covered every surface, slightly gritty in places. So, even sand could be destroyed. Trude stumbled to the doorway. The shelter was crumbling. Outside the bricks were on fire, covered in phosphorous.

It wasn't the explosion itself she heard. The earth simply lifted under her feet, her ears registered only a loud ringing noise, and the whole of her head felt to crack. When total blackness receded, came brown. Trude dazedly opened her eyes. She was swimming in dirt. Not like swimming with Heinrich at all. She spat out a mouthful of sandy earth. With one roar her hearing returned. Heinrich?

Beyond the circular edge of the small bomb crater she was sprawled in could be seen burning buildings, pine trees flaming like torches. The planes were back in their hundreds, more waves. She pushed herself up and slipped sideways. Screaming people and whistling bombs. She made to run towards the beach (maybe Heinrich was stationed there) but fell into the next crater. Explosions quadrupled explosions, and the hundred *Flak* back. Still brighter than daylight, burning yellow in long tendrils fell from the sky, phosphorous white fizzing. The earth erupted all around her as bombs hit. Another one far too close and soft, heavy dirt covered her. Metal flew through the air. Her earthy blanket pinned her, ears blasted feeling pressure not hearing, eyes alternately screwed tight or flown open. She saw the moving beams of Speer's old searchlights through the drifting clouds of real fire and artificial screen smoke. The crunch of firing and explosions didn't sound in her deafened eardrums anymore but resonated through her body, chest cavity, solar plexus. Different guns different felt noises hundreds around Peenemunde.

Heinrich? She talked with her mind to the blackness. "Want it to stop!"



Trude opened her eyes. Tracer bullets made beautiful patterns in the dark sky: straight lines, slight arcs, crossing and recrossing, interweaving on a starry backdrop. The rolling ground cover clouds went from rosy to dark red, making her weep with their acid fumes. Everything seemed on fire, just the colours of the flames and sparks whirling upward would sometimes change from orange and red to green or blue, and still the white and yellow. Darkness in the shadows, and parts of the after-midnight sky.

This bomb Trude heard, all the others whistling this one this one: she tried to run in the dirt to protect herself but could hardly move, she blubbered she whimpered she screamed her mouth bowels and bladder opened. It hit, not her. Screams came. The ground shifted once again. With dirty sand in her gullet, she turned one leg, then the other. Pushing through the remaining sand she rolled on her belly in to the next crater. For some moments all that fell from the sky was vivid green and red marker light, and strips of metallic paper. Trude felt her limbs, hands, fingers, feet, the back of her head, her neck: there. Now run.

She pushed herself upward, heart hammering, and ran in a half crouch towards the beach. Other people ran too, disappearing. One man was on his knees. She couldn't see whether he was slumped without legs to use or whether he really was praying. Wreckage, fire, craters. Again more bombers in their sky matrix. Trude stumbled, Trude fell, into the water, and screamed. Salt and cold on burnt flesh.

The taste. She gagged. There were other girls from the quarters crouching, standing, crying in the water. Further on-shore were *Flak*, bombs causing so many explosions that the sea bounced back against its own motion. Underneath the rhythm was ceaseless. Great fountains were created by bombs landing in the water. One girl began babbling and shrieking, "Have you seen the beautiful fountains? Oh, better than Versailles."

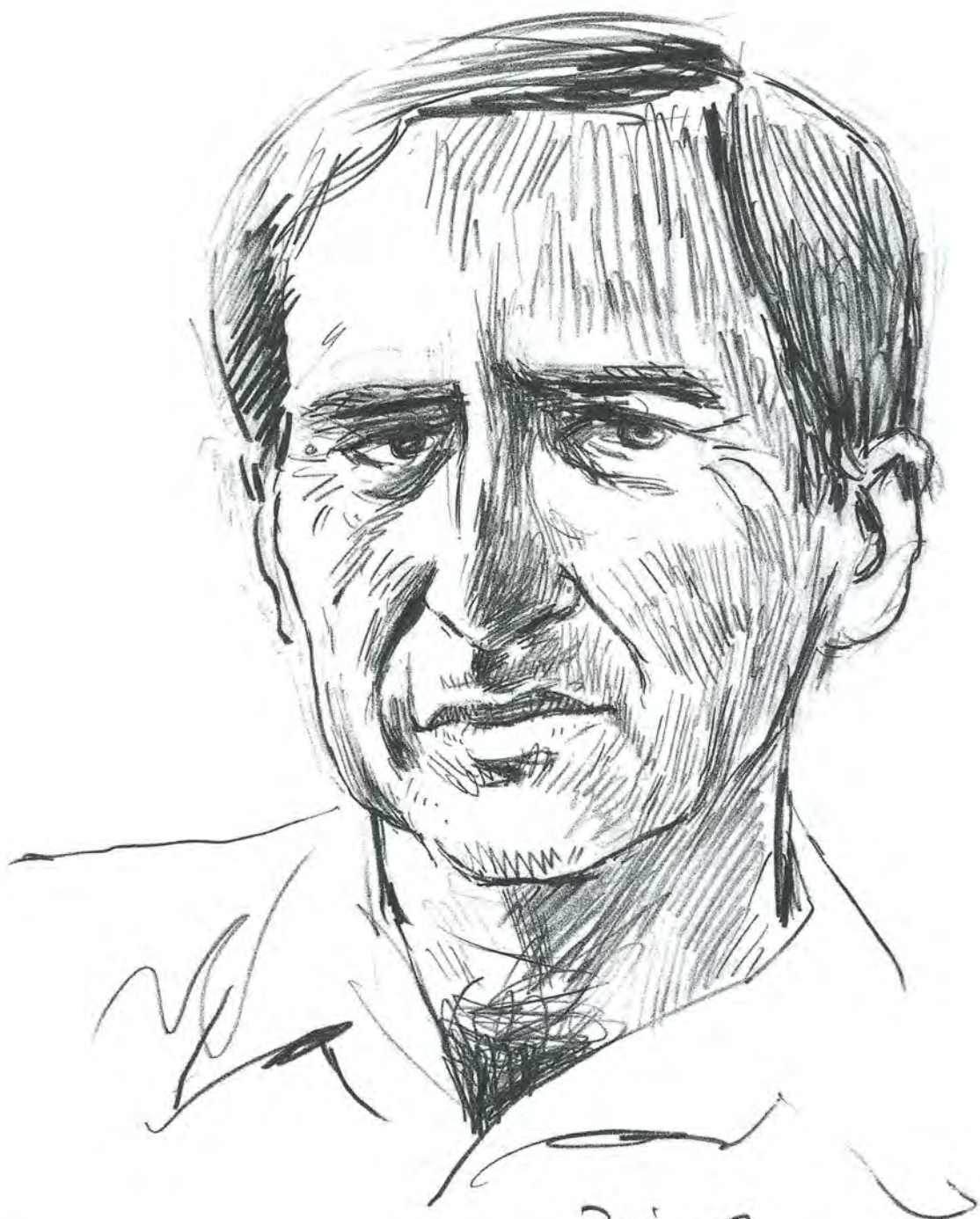
Trude crouched in the rocking black water. Water broke over her head at times. Night fighter planes arrived and began to play their *Schrage Musik*. "Slanting", "off-beat", "jazz", this method of attack, seen from the ground like silhouettes of two lovers: one larger, one above, one with more power, one with the death of the other in sight. By the light of exploding bomber petrol, metal and ammunition, the fighter slid out from underneath.

The sky was mesmerising: saturated colour in translucent strings shot across and upward, spirals, incendiaries, bursting shells. Due to distance, some of the explosions Trude could see before identifying the delayed sound. Her head hurt. The bombers straggled, with aerial, mechanical fights whirling and chopping through and around them.

A plane came in very low along the beach, out of the darkest part of the sky. Five lines of spritzer machine-gun fire hit the black water and the girls. One who had stood being held up momentarily by the bullets pumping in. Where were the angels? Trude knew the colour of blood: intense, jewel-like, perfect complementary to that blue of the heavens, deep space. She sagged under the water, under the sound. A bullet pierced her shoulder.

AFTER THE RAID was sudden eerie silence, murmur of surf on sand, sea of fire. After the rain things kept exploding, time bombs, huge shock waves. The grass on the dunes was in flame. Full daylight came late, smoke shut out the sun. The air was full of stink and dust. Phosphorous floated in the sea. The large forest was charred remnants, wooden buildings also, but chimneys remained with charcoal cartoons of people who had hidden trapped there. Everywhere bomb craters, and people lost their way because they couldn't recognise place. Ruins and human meat. Cries for help in many languages. Burials began.

Trude felt it was easier to vomit than to eat.



R. J. Arma 94

LES HARROP
A Head-Jog



Alex Skovron: *Sleeve Notes* (Hale & Iremonger in association with Golvan Arts, December 1992, \$12.95 paperback).

CONTRARY TO WHAT my good friend Kevin Hart says in the *Melbourne Age*, apparently on the authority of Derrida, a poem is not a hedgehog.

You might claim figurative life for poetry, but as to the nature of that life, there's no obvious agreement. A poem by Emily Dickinson buzzes like a trapped fly; a Lawrence poem flexes like a snake; there's a well-known one by Donne as wittily agile as a flea; and Peter Steele recently fathered a languid cat-poem.

If you were determined to assimilate Alex Skovron's new volume to the animal kingdom you would be better not to follow the abstruser musings of French philosophers, but search instead for some fabulous and musical creature such as the one conjured up by Yeats:

... such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
of hammered gold and gold enamelling
... set upon a golden bough to sing
to lords and ladies of Byzantium ...
 'Sailing to Byzantium'

These poems are interested in music; and they are themselves works of musical artifice, preoccupied with form in its various senses – as structure, as shapely utterance, as interaction among social individuals. They are more than a little taken up with such fugitive and subtle feelings as animals, even hedgehogs, seem not to be deeply involved with.

Their love of ordering is to be seen on every page. In 'The Precisian Looks Back', Skovron (a book editor of long standing) examines his own zeal for correctness, and in doing so he goes beyond self-parody, and past mere orderliness.

In the poem's best lines the perfection of expression itself becomes moving:

My job is to re-put things;
I fix things thoughtlessly put down.
 (Little things that count.)

My concern's correctness
where galores of wrongnesses abound.
 Some would call me pedantic ...

And for any reader who does suspect that this is idle pedantry – a love of littleness for no good reason – the poem carries this rebuttal:

... Hasn't history convinced us?
It's the little things that count
 which counted.

Some of the little things, which are simultaneously the biggest, are catalogued in a piece called 'What Matters':

The old roof creaking in the rain
A moth fussing about under the light
A mug of gold steam on a windy night
The impermanence of tunnels, a line of type
And the face inspecting itself
Like a stranger ...

There is nothing new in the procedure, nor in the manner, nor in the view of life which the poem implies. A preponderance of modern verse – all verse perhaps – is devoted to celebrating detail. (Hardy, in a famous and what may now seem sentimental lyric – which to my mind is not the equal of the one quoted above

– professed to hope he'd be remembered as a person sensitive to minutiae:

... nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
when the hedgehog travels furtively over the
lawn . . .

'Afterwards'

Most contemporary poets may be assumed to have a similar ambition, though their ways of giving utterance to it will vary. It is unsurprising, though still worthy of remark, that *Sleeve Notes* is patient with detail.

The book's title, if I'm not straining at it, includes a modest pun. Pre-modern waiters and eccentrics at large used their starched cuffs as notebooks. It's not too fanciful perhaps to see their *ad hoc* jottings as a living notation on whatever's happening – the life score, you might say. The sleeve, too, is that part of our clothing on which the heart is occasionally worn.

But if *Sleeve Notes* enjoys its jottings, it is not immune to larger gestures. We hear of "an opera star whose mediocrity is staggering"; of Mahler, who "wanted to swallow the whole world / in his symphonies". The lush passages in Skovron's writing remind us how much he is at home amid the colour and bang of Bruckner, Mahler, Richard Strauss. Like Mahler, Skovron is a Jew who is more than a little taken with the rich stuffs of the European past, and with their moral and cultural survivals.

Littleness and largeness – the two are pointedly combined in a piece called 'On the Theology of Ants' (which needs to be seen whole): it is a formally conclusive poem about the incapacity of human understanding. It operates partly through panning back from its immediate subject, a favorite technique which joins comprehensiveness to the pleasures of detail. We meet the same instinctive panning in another piece, set in Venice, where the huge and intricate machinery of time is shown working its will throughout the sleeping town:

the night-owl would continue
nocturnally to perch among his books
while the corners, crannies, all
those dead alleys & nooks
of a swaggering city would imperceptibly
lurch into another century . . .

It may or may not be part of the reviewer's task to try and estimate the attitudes – social, political – that he imagines he sees moving at the back of such verse. So far as one can surmise, Skovron is humane, attentive, preoccupied with the decency of the civilised individual. He seems comfortable with the belief that general civilisation grows out of personal decency.

These of course are old assumptions – the fancies of the *haute bourgeoisie*, of nineteenth-century European democracy. Many would say – either out of informed conviction, or out of the pressing need to seem up with the game – that such assumptions have been shown to be limited and dangerous.

We all know how readily discussion on the rightness or wrongness of political belief is reduced to mere assertion. Since Skovron is not overtly political, either in his writing or as a person, it may be that he has preferred not to think through the difficult links between Mozart's Salzburg, *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, Weimar, modern German history (which once again promises to become the history of us all). It may be. Skovron was nine when he arrived in Australia. He and his wife are both Polish Jewish emigrants; both lost family members murdered in the last German catastrophe. As an undergraduate and graduate student, Skovron made politics his chief study. Some may see it as strange that in his circumstances he should revert to a sympathetic interest in the continent that has served his family so ill.

BUT PART OF ERASING the nightmare passage of the 1930s and 1940s is evidently to recall the more distant and (for some at least) better integrated European past. Skovron takes the best of what his parents left behind, and transplants it and nurtures it in the more genuinely benign soil of Australia. Had he been writing much in the narrowly nationalistic seventies, his Eurocentrism might have prevented his winning a hearing. But we are free for the time being of the ocker narrowness of that generation, free enough indeed to see that Skovron's Australianness is very strong. In his own person he is phlegmatic, tolerant, attentive. It comes as no surprise that he loves cricket, supports union membership, writes on Elgar. He is a Jewish Anglo-Australian – a type not unknown in this city of assimilationists.

Those who hold the familiar view that the very civility of German Jews brought on the Nazi persecution may not be happy at the thought of the cultural reintegration which is implied here. Isn't there the possibility of a new descent into complacency? of the century's repulsive history repeating itself in the antipodes? The short answer is "No". Journalism and film-making to one side, the risk of a racist cataclysm in this state and on this continent seems very remote. (I make no reference here to the cataclysm that has befallen the Aboriginal people.) If Skovron's poetry is lacking in radical rant, it is largely because the writer is so well grounded in fact. It is partly also because he knows too well (and this is a more painful point) what explicit divisions can lead to.

I don't mean to suggest that he avoids any necessary subject. In 'German China' he describes with some force how:

That international combustion engine known
As history stalls, restarts with a kick
As the tanks trundle . . .

Because he is alive to the dangers of combustion, he has preferred not to risk them. Up-to-the-minute theorists approaching these poems from their range of fixed viewpoints, may be disappointed at the lack of radical solutions on offer. They must learn to live with their disappointment, if only because there is no agreement as to which is more 'radical': psychosocial tinkering (which involves extensive literary tinkering), or a quiet and critical tolerance in the face of what actually exists. No one doubts that such

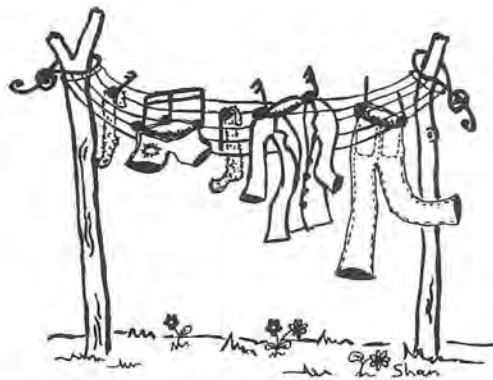
tolerance shades readily into complacency, and has been exposed in the recent past. (It is a happy fact that the political choices one makes, whether deliberately or by habit, are not inevitably replicated throughout the polity. In Australia at least, we can be grateful for our pluralism. A writer with a healthy scepticism about her own godlike judgements, will be delighted to see that others are reluctant to share her views.)

Skovron may be vulnerable to attack from those hard-faced ideologies which presently and always dominate circles that are in the know, but no poet is less likely to be flustered by his outsider status. No writer is less susceptible to jargoning, to the passing fad.

All the poems in this, his second collection, are testament to Skovron's mental steadiness (his dullness even) in keeping to the twin tasks of mastering versification, and trying to make some personal sense of life.

It is four years since his first book. While he's been learning his craft many other poetic reputations have flared briefly and died. There is something a little stupefying about Skovron's application. His whole history – as encyclopaedist and editor, as householder and family man – has been a patient, deliberate preparation for the task of making verse. His pains are easy to deride, but their fruits have now become evident.

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Shan Shnookal

FIONA MCGREGOR

Move



1

JOEL DIED AT 3 A.M.
It's Rebecca who rings me, saying Joel had wanted to die for a while but didn't know how. Yes. We've all been waiting for what seems like a long time.

Hail attacks the window. Tree tops jerk against grey. The paint will never dry in this weather. I see the tricycle whose rusty locomotion wakes me every morning. The little girl from flat two pedals it around and around the Hills hoist beneath my window. It's jammed against the laundry door, nose first, back wheels quivering in the wind.

Oh God Christine, I feel so bad, I hadn't seen him for ages, I feel awful.

Come on Rebecca, don't take that on.

I pick up my cigarettes. Adrift in paint fumes, gas from the leaking heater and my sister's grief, I unravel the extension cord. I retreat into my bedroom with the telephone.

I felt funny about seeing him in that state, in nappies.

I'm sending you a hug Beckie, down the wire.

I sit on the edge of my futon. My legs outstretched reach the bookcase. Next to it is the computer, then the three large boxes. If I shift down the bed I can still reach everything with my toes.

Oh Christine, I feel awful.

I don't have to say much. We're twins. I'm just there. On the other end of the phone.

I hide in my room. I live alone. A blanket covers the window. This small room, low-ceilinged, lends itself to hours curled up on the futon. In here, day is the same as night. Nothing is above waist height; the wardrobe is built-in. There seems no point in unpacking my stuff. Let

it unpack itself. A clean shirt and clean underwear will be dug out each day, until I do my first load of washing in Melbourne water.

I've been moving too often, for too long, to feel easy about unpacking. I need to be ready for the next move – you never know when it could occur.

I keep the phone by my bed, I keep trying her number. Beth still doesn't know mine. It's got 2323 at the end of it. This combination of numbers makes me think of falling onto the back leg, taking a step forward, falling back, stepping forward.

Joel and I came down to Melbourne last year to visit Rebecca before she went back to Sydney. She lived on the tenth floor of a tower on The Esplanade, and this was where I got the picture I kept of Melbourne. The sun setting over Port Phillip Bay, palm trees swishing below in the park as night descended. The city lights emerged – a rim over flat land. It soothed my chaotic Sydney eyes, this orange line kinked by the Westgate Bridge, and I knew that I would come to live here.

Rebecca put on that Grace Jones song, 'Strange, I've seen that face before', and Joel opened a bottle of Veuve Cliquot, timing it so the cork popped in the verse containing his name. *Dans sa chambre; Joel et sa valise*. We were celebrating Joel's acquisition of DDI. He opened the box that was almost as big as a briefcase and swept his hand over its contents. Goody! he grinned at us, Drugs!

When I visited Joel six months later, he was in a wheelchair. He was going blind. He urged me to have a swig of morphine. Ooh Christine,

have you been naughty again? Tell me!

My wild nights didn't shine so bright in the retelling. Maybe Joel's excitement was just courtesy. But Joel was one of the rudest boys in the business. Well, he was probably feverish by then.

Joel was much more Rebecca's friend. They went through Law School together.

I am in a peaceful city now. Good job, no distractions, nothing stronger than tea in the cupboard. The steady tram pace: you go slower but you reach your destination. This fumey St Kilda flat is only temporary. I'll move as soon as I find somewhere better.

But I can't get on to Beth. Perhaps I should consider this a good sign. Beth's out and about. At night. Good!

Please Beth, pick up the phone.

2

THE SKREEK OF THE TRICYCLE beneath my window. A tram ride in the drizzle along St Kilda road. Over the Yarra and up to Russell street.

I am at work on time. My dreams were drafts of the bereavement letter to Joel's father; the sentences trail into this day like tattered streamers after Mardi Gras. What will become of this man who is as Orthodox as the day he set out across Czechoslovakia fleeing the Nazis, whose only other child along with her two children was shot by her husband three years ago, before he put the gun to his own head. I have seen that grave at Rookwood cemetery, vast, monumental, and Joel is the next in line. I cannot stand with Joel's father, who didn't know his son would never marry, let alone not survive him. My grieving's been done already, and Rebecca will cry for me at the funeral.

At last, somebody puts a stop to the ringing.

Rebecca? I've been trying you for ages! D'you know where Beth is?

Rebecca says she's in hospital. PCP again.

An icicle depends from the cold season of my insides.

Then, a flame of anger. Rebecca should have told me about Beth last night. How can she expect me to understand if I'm a thousand kilometres away?

Rebecca begins to shout.

When's she gonna get her own physician? Why didn't she go on to AZT? I'm sick of all this ... Chinese herbalist trippy shit!

I'd like to remind Rebecca that she wasn't satisfied with Joel's methods either. But I'm beginning to think the less said, the better. There are no reliable facts here, and everything else seems melodramatic.

I scrawl the hospital number on a piece of office stationery.

Beth didn't know Joel although me and Rebecca tried to introduce them for over a year. Somehow, Beth made excuses each time we arranged a meeting. She's only just joined Positive Women. She wants to give her money to the Animal Liberationists. Rebecca and I roll our eyes.

Give it to Positive Women! Bobby Goldsmith! Fight Beth, fight!

And Beth getting sick just now makes us suspect there is something deliberate in this. We resent the illness Beth has become, that has never become her, Beth with her fresh face and soft, red hair, her lithe twenty-three year old legs. Beth gets all sensitive when she finds dead spiders in the laundry. Years before infection she would cover her eyes and whimper *Tell me when it's over* when blood was spilled on screen.

Who is going to hold Rebecca's hand? I can't: I'm in Melbourne.

Why's it all happening at once? I say.

Oh, Beth will be all right, Rebecca snaps.

Somebody comes into the office behind me. I'm still new here; I shouldn't be having conversations like this at work. STD and all. After a while I say, Do you want me to come up?

Do what you want, says Rebecca, and hangs up.

I stare at my computer. I don't understand the program they use here. I bluffed my way into this job and I'm terrified they'll discover I'm a fraud. The person leaves the office; I haven't turned around, I don't know who it is.

I ring the hospital. Room 232, please.

Just a minute. Musak.

The sun is suddenly shining and the day no longer seems real.

I look back at my computer. The screen saver's come on. It's Flying Toasters. I watch for a while,

trying to decipher the pattern. Two toasters fly from the top right-hand corner to the bottom left, another three follow them, and then two more, and so on. There are pieces of toast flying everywhere. I know that in the Control Panel you can choose the number of toasters and toast you want to fly. But this isn't my computer.

The nurse's voice again. She can't talk right now, she's under an oxygen mask.

I need a cigarette. The coffee's gone cold. My grip tightens on the cup, I think of cans collapsing in fists. I have to stop myself from throwing the cup through the window. I want the sound of breaking glass, I want the lunch time movement on Russell Street to cease.

God, I say to the empty room, This is *ridiculous!*

The toasters repeat their diagonal journey. They make a shucking sound, and I recall Joel at the Bayswater Brasserie, kicking up a fuss because his oysters weren't shucked at the table. Rebecca laughed, but I cowered with embarrassment when the waiter came. Later I told Joel to *get shucked*. In all seriousness. We had a fight. I said I was sick of seeing obituary posters with no female names on them. Joel said I was being too unrealistic. Rebecca said I was being too righteous.

Flying fucken toasters. How ridiculous. What's the point?

The girl from the club is at my place around midnight. I lift back my doona. She's got the best legs I've ever seen. I'd watched them on the dance floor, then moved to an appropriate table. Just arrived in Melbourne and I'm in a club, getting picked up by the girl with the great legs. A week later she's telling me I need somebody to love me. I tell her what's been happening these last two days. The dry facts. Listen to my monotone. She says they say these things happen in threes. What the hell is that supposed to mean?

Going, going, gone.

Going, gone, gone.

She strokes me, she soothes me. I disappear inside the velvet of my sensitive menstrual orgasms. I don't know her. I don't want to know her.

3

I AM ABLE to do this. Woken by the tricycle, on the tram – *ding-ding!* – in the office by nine. It

is the third day and I am still in Melbourne.

As I said to Rebecca on the phone, I've said goodbye to Joel. It's a relief – the tension's snapped.

I rang him when I was living with Beth a few months ago. Did he want a visitor? Was there anything he needed? *No darling, I'm too sick.* Joel's wheezes were barely audible above the Westerly coming down the long garden – a woeful respiration in last night's bottles stacked outside the back door.

But the effort if I asked him to repeat himself. I put the phone down and went out to cry under the lemon tree. This wind will send the pollution out to sea; tomorrow Sydney will be a tourist brochure. Muted, released, muted, released, the sound of trucks changing gears up on Parramatta road.

Beth came out of the house and held my hand. It's all right, Christine.

I squeezed hers back. God Beth, I don't know how you do it.

Beth reached up into the branches. She picked one lemon, then another, then another.

I don't either, she shrugged, We just have to.

La porte est claquée. Joel est barré.

I watched Beth walk back into the house. The seat of her pants wobbled its emptiness, her warmth lingered in my palm. I wondered if her clothes would fit her again. Probably not. She had been claimed.

Always in a hurry, maybe I said goodbye too soon.

After this bout of PCP, Beth had stayed at her mother's place in Mosman to be pampered for a while. Her mother told me gossip had started, she sounded upset. I wondered if mine were one of those Mosman mums in their pastel cashmere, standing outside Country Road, browsing through Mosmania. *Homosexual* this, and *drugs* that, and *Isn't it dreadful? Poor thing!*

The girl from the club rings me. I'm lugubrious. I say things aren't what I thought they would be. That view of Port Phillip Bay from Rebecca's flat is about as relevant as an old postcard. It is clear to me that it was my mistake and my mistake alone to suppose it's a normal thing in Melbourne to have a view.

The eternal revolution of the Hills hoist, the tricycle's morning journey engraved beneath. Small white rooms, fume-filled; put a blanket on

the window. The thought of that flat I'm in makes me feel ashamed.

It's not permanent, she says. Give it time.

Time, I say. Bad timing's what it is.

Between my thighs blooms a memory of her fist inside me, ungloved. Foolish hypocrite, maybe that's what I am, knowing none of us is really safe. Yet I will ask for it again. From anyone.

She offers to cook me dinner. I feel a sudden pressure, as though I have to cram for an exam. How can I put down roots here? How can I learn the new when what I thought I knew too well is slipping through my fingers, unlearned, unknown.

Can't you just go up for a few days? she says. I'll pay.

She's so nice. But it's not the money. Money is easy. Money doesn't matter. Rushing back up so soon after arriving? How can I help anyway? It would detract from the seriousness of my move to Melbourne. I am an expert mover, and if I move, I move, that's it, I stay put.

The mere thought of going to Sydney makes me feel panicky and loose, as though I've run half the marathon. I'm exhausted but the other half still looms.

Hard yellow sunlight on car bonnets, the fug of exhaust, screaming traffic. It takes twenty minutes to get from Parramatta road to Broadway. A sense of that luminous space behind the CBD; patches of blue; the sweep of ocean. A swim after work and then out to dinner and then somewhere else. Oh, it's tempting, I'm tempted.

All day his face haunts me. It is there through the window when I look up from my screen,

hovering above Russell street. Emaciated, dark with lesions and chemicals. Angry eyes, laughing mouth. Joel's got another New Zealand joke.

Joel's face inhabits a night forest, as seen from a moving car. Somebody is driving and I am the passenger, searching for Joel through the trees. I know Beth is in there somewhere, and when we turn the corner the headlights will go on her.

I walk down St Kilda Road, hoping for an affirmation of this vision. But there is only the War Memorial and then the hospital, and lawns artificially lit, and I am walking.

I must take control of my life, every second is important, I must seize it and use it well. I'm too impatient to wait for a tram so I keep walking, I start to run. I feel like I've been running all my life.

The tram comes, several pass me by when I am in between stops. His face flicking through the trees. The soundtrack in my head is that Grace Jones' song, but the tempo is wrong. Too slow, too calm. Angry with impatience I race across the road, daring the yellow headlights. *Taxi!*

Home.

My room dark as midnight. Between the pillows the warm, rough scent of cotton from the futon. I roll onto my back. Face to the ceiling, the fumes begin to invade me. Like a cistern, I am filling. Tears trickle down into my ears.

The tricycle squawks past. That's a morning sound, a time-to-go sound.

I'm not the one who's dying. I'm not dead.

I've got three hundred dollars in the bank. I'm getting a cab to the airport.

MOMENT

I'm still in the dark & somewhat doubtful
about the little silver bird sitting in its nest
upon a golden watch; sky
blue eggs do drop
& make ticking noises in the wind.
The leafless trees grow feathers.

Around a noble rise in the land / the
empty beds are on the move.

ROBERT DRUMMOND

THE CULL

Don't they know it's going on already?
Where do they live? Where do their kids live?
Saō Paolo, Flinders Street Station, Dagenham:
you don't need to stay at school to learn that
kind
of geography. Same planet, same street.
My koori mate Shane's got a brother in
Robinvale.
You don't know what happens there? Get real!

Cops and Wormald guards are just the tip,
methodical, uniformed, doing their job.
The real bulk's deeper, where the ice-white
shirts
of management trainees are medalled
only with pen clips over the heart
from nine to five, but after dark . . .

How much shit does it take to fill
a four-wheel drive? How much
self-righteousness need squeeze into one
trigger finger? Do they think
beef-faced Old Grammarians can play
football forever, not want new sport?

The light at the end of the tunnel
is mounted on roo bars and it burns
like a tyre necklace or a church barbecue.

"It couldn't happen here" say the newspapers
inside my shirt and pants against the wind
round the back of the Frosto plant.

A Landcruiser's headlights switch the mesh
fence on.

TIM THORNE

AT THE BEGINNING of this century, few people on the left would have expected that at its end nationalism and religion would remain, with greed and the ambition to power, the strongest motivating forces in world politics. Perhaps the first world war should have disillusioned them, but the Russian revolution seemed to offer a new hope for international socialism. Even now, some leftist sects continue to believe that its time is about to come. Yet the most significant and tragic events today are the civil and religious wars being fought in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Georgia, Sudan, Palestine and elsewhere. The spectre of these events is no doubt behind the fears of people like Geoffrey Blainey and Bruce Ruxton that multiculturalism and the recognition of native land titles threaten to destroy Australia's national unity, leaving us exposed to foreign aggression and domestic strife. Yet the alternative lesson we can draw from world events is that in this country we have the opportunity of acknowledging the evils of our past so that we can build on its strengths a true secular commonwealth built on the recognition of difference rather than the imposition of uniformity.

BROWSING THROUGH a recent Daedalus catalogue from the United States, I came across a paragraph advertising Carmel Bird's collection of Australian short stories. It started, "I keep finding that a surprising percentage of the new fiction we admire is from Australia." Then, after listing the writers who are included in the collection, the writer explains the non-appearance of others of her favourites – Tim Winton, Georgia Savage and Rodney Hall – by commenting that "There is clearly an

overabundance of riches." Yet, of the writers listed, only two – Patrick White and Christina Stead – would have found publication without the assistance of the Literature Board or its predecessor and the nurture of dedicated local publishers like Laurie Muller and Ian Templeman. Even Patrick White would have been unlikely to find a publisher, now that the accountants have taken over and turned publishing into a segment of the multinational information industry. Philanthropists like Ben Huesch – White's editor and publisher at Viking – no longer have a place in the business. So much for those who think that the promotion of our writers is merely catering to personal self-indulgence or provincial vanity. Incidentally, the Daedalus catalogue is an ideal source of cheap North American books. It comes free from Daedalus Books, PO Box 9132, Hyattsville, MD20781-0932. And US mail ensures that postage and handling costs are a reasonable \$10 per order.

SINCE THE LAST ISSUE, we have received sad news of the sudden death of one of our Board members, D. R. Burns, known generally as Bob. Bob was a distinguished essayist, novelist and teacher who had only recently joined the Board, but had already contributed to our work through discussion and recommendation, as well as through his own writing. His first novel, *Mr Brain Knows Best* (1959), is a vigorous satire on the pretensions and deceptions of Melbourne's postwar business, political and intellectual life. Burns subsequently became well-known for his regular book reviews and essays in the *Sydney Nation*. Later, he became an academic, first at Melbourne's Secondary Teach-

ers College and then at the University of New South Wales. His book, *The Directions of Australian Fiction 1920-1974* is a pioneering work that retains its freshness and acuteness of judgement today. We look forward to reading the two new novels that were at the time of his death with his publisher. Meanwhile, *Overland* readers will shortly be able to read his trenchant essay on Peter Carey's *Illywhacker*, which he sent to us at the end of last year.

John McLaren

Sean McMullen writes to correct errors that crept into the report of the interview on science fiction in our last issue. *Eidolon* magazine does pay for fiction; Norman Lindsay illustrated Earl Cox's short story 'The Social Code' (*Lone Hand*, January 1909), not his novel, *Out of the Silence*; A. Bertram Chandler's first stories were sold to the American magazine *Astounding*, not to *Man*; the boom in the publication of Australian science fiction in the 60s took place in America rather than in Britain; the editor of *New Worlds* was Carnell, not Parnell.

J McL

A JOB FOR JOSEPH

He talks like a creek over broken rocks burling.
We need to listen too hard –
our ears after we dip them to him
burn with tortoiseshell light.

Only a little 'hearing impaired',
only a little 'slow',
Joseph's done his regulation years at school
and now he wants a job.

"You and a thousand more" ...
Five seconds washed by Joseph's voice
turns the counter clerk at the CES
to petrified wood.

'Higher Education', the Government preaches –
but that, Joseph suspects, is only
for still ponds, minds happy to be muddied
with physics and literature.

He can't think well enough to be sure
how much more than him
they understand,
so he thinks about it anyway.

"Joseph did some roofing in work experience",
his mother says "and he did *that well!*"
"Put a bit of metal in his hands
and he just *shines* ..."

Loud enough for even Joseph to be drowned,
down her waterfall hurtles.
An Affirmative Action file lobs him a job –
Joseph floats from her in silence.

In the used car yard, under a tumult of torn
plastic
hissing white noise in the wind,
dubious promises hum.
Joseph – a dedicated worker,

devoted to details the still ponds
would not deign to reflect on –
squirts rainbows over rust
and waxes chassis awake.

He speaks with his hands,
pausing them sometimes like stilled wings
before grasshoppers
crackled to corpses in radiator grilles.

Almost within reach of that cradle of metal
he can rest and shine in
Joseph dips himself down
to broken light mending.

Hears only
how his hands
over these hubcaps'
huge coins zing.

JEAN KENT

ROSS FITZGERALD
Political Correctness: Good Intention, Disastrous Consequences

FEW PEOPLE ACTUALLY BELIEVE in freedom of speech. They believe in freedom of speech for themselves, but they tend not to believe in freedom of speech that contravenes their own deeply held beliefs, be they religious, political, sexual, or whatever.

Praise of free speech by others is often insincere. As soon as people start saying what they really think about controversial topics, others will say, "Free speech by all means, but not *that* free. You want *licence*, not liberty". Licence here translates as what that person disapproves of – what he or she believes ought *not* be said or advocated.

Few supporters of 'free speech' mean what they say. 'Free speech' is rather like 'Habeas Corpus', as soon as it looks like being useful, say in wartime, there are moves to have it suspended or curtailed. It requires considerable courage to defend the rights of individuals and groups to make utterances and to promulgate ideas no matter how unpopular they are or how hurtful of other people's feelings. But if we are committed to critical inquiry it is crucial to protect the speech of those whose ideas and opinions we, or others, regard as vicious, hurtful, cruel, misguided

or just plain wrong. This is because the consequences of suppression of such utterances are far worse than the 'hurt' they may inflict.

Freedom of speech and free thought are currently under attack by a new wave of suppression, including what one may loosely call the political correctness movement. This is taking hold in a number of our government departments, statutory authorities, and particularly in our tertiary institutions via, for example, the introduction of speech or language codes to enforce politically correct expression and utterance. There is a corresponding tendency to restrict from critical discussion and open debate certain 'sensitive' issues, relating especially to matters of sex, religious beliefs, race and gender.

When I was a child living in the gruelling, if not ghoulishly petit-bourgeois Melbourne suburb of East Brighton, along with most of my confreres I learnt to parrot "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me".

I first heard this and a similar adage "If you can't say nothing nice, don't say nothing at all", unconsciously mispronounced by a viciously incompetent and functionally illiterate teacher who I shall call Mrs Bull, at Gardenvale primary school. Mrs Bull's total contribution to our class's knowl-

edge explosion was the oft-repeated injunction "Put your 'ands on your 'eads and be 'elpful".

While sticks and stones can certainly break bones, words *can* sometimes hurt us. I remember running home from school in tears after being called 'Dumbo the Ele-

"I remember running home from school in tears after being called 'Dumbo the Elephant' ..."

phant' – this (to me at least) hurtful taunt applying not so much to my bulk or apparent stupidity but to the hugeness of my ears. Many a night young Ross spent sleeping fitfully with each ear pinned together with a clothes-peg in the forlorn hope that such a remedy would reduce, if not my ears' size then at least their angle and thus their prominence. This, as with many folk-remedies, was to absolutely no avail.

Being a relatively secure, Aussie-Rules supporting, white Anglo-Celtic male child in a suburb which boasted modest homes but had absolutely no flats let alone any Aboriginal inhabitants, I wasn't all that hurt by terms of abuse. This, of course, didn't, and does not, apply to

many others. Epithets, especially of racial, sexual, or religious abuse, can indeed emotionally hurt or wound those at whom they are directed.

But while this must be accepted, it is important to understand the implications of what is a relatively new phenomenon – and that is a gathering tendency to blur the distinction between words and physical violence, and instead to argue that hurtful words and ideas are actually a form of violence. Thus ‘offensive’ words are categorised as an assault – as in the phrase ‘verbal harassment’ or more tellingly ‘assaultive speech’.

An integrally connecting notion, which is also rapidly gaining prominence, is that the utterance of such words and ideas should be proscribed, the (potential) utterers *banned*, and the perpetrators of such hurtful or offensive speech punished.

While the commandment “Thou shalt not hurt another individual or group with words” may on the face of it sound admirable, in fact it is extremely threatening to critical inquiry, which is a lynch-pin of the liberal-democratic system. As Jonathan Rauch argues, in

“The injunction not to inflict harm by words is deeply antagonistic to free speech, free thought and critical inquiry.”

Kindly Inquisitors: The New Attacks on Free Thought (University of Chicago Press, 1993), “This moral principle is deadly – inherently deadly, not incidentally so – to intellectual freedom and to the productive and peaceful pursuit of knowledge”. The injunction not to inflict harm by words is deeply antagonistic to free speech, free thought and critical inquiry. What

Rauch calls “the new sensitivity”, which would regulate criticism and utterance on the grounds of preventing hurt or offence is, he argues, the old Inquisitorial authoritarianism in disguise. It is just as noxious, if not more so, being cloaked in the guise of compassion. Almost always, its advocates do not think through its dreadful consequences.

“It is crucial to maintain the distinction between words and weapons.”

It is important to insist that talk of words as weapons must be seen to be a metaphor. It is crucial to maintain the distinction between words and weapons. You do not have to be Immanuel Kant, as Rauch explains, “to see what comes after ‘offensive words are bullets’: if you hurt me with words, I reply with bullets, and the exchange is even ... If you are inclined to equate verbal offence with physical violence think again about the logic of your position. If hurtful opinions are violence, then painful criticism is violence ... What do you do about violence? You establish policing authorities – public or private – to stop it and to punish the perpetrators. You set up authorities empowered to weed out hurtful ideas and speech”. Or in the case of Salman Rushdie you sentence him, and the translators of *The Satanic Verses*, to death.

The Ayatollah Khomeini, who placed the *fatwa* on Rushdie for writing “in obscene and blasphemous opposition to Islam, the prophet and the Koran”, once said in an interview (1979) “I do know that, during my long lifetime, I have always been right about what I said”. Although I would not wish to push any personal resemblances, in this breath-

takingly fundamentalist certainty the Ayatollah isn’t all that far removed, in principle, from modern westerners, however well-meaning, who wish to stop others causing pain and hurt and offence with their evil words and ideas. One of the many problems with this position is that ‘evil’ is often in the ear and eye of the hearer/beholder.

Once you suppress one form of offensive utterance the way is open to suppress another. As Saul Bellow put it fictively, “Everyone knows there is no fineness of accuracy of suppression. If you hold one thing down you hold down the adjoining”.

LET US NOT BEAT ABOUT THE bush. Salman Rushdie’s satire

“The Ayatollah Khomeini ... once said ... ‘I do know that, during my long lifetime I have always been right about what I said.’”

was deeply insulting and offensive to a great many Muslims. To them it *did* undoubtedly cause emotional hurt and suffering. As liberal-democrats we need to admit that truth and yet argue that this is the price we must pay for freedom of expression; that people do *not* have a right not to be offended, that they do *not* have a right to seek punishing vengeance for the hurt and anger and pain caused by another’s words.

But Rushdie’s *fatwa*, with very few exceptions, produced no such honest response. Hence there was no clear and principled defence of Rushdie’s freedom of expression which must include the freedom to offend.

Without the freedom to offend, freedom of expression ceases to

exist. Currently in Australia satire, with its multi-faceted potentialities for enlightenment, advance and offence is under threat by well-meaning legislation, including anti-racial vilification, anti-sexist and anti-ageist legislation. Yet, if it is any good, satire must and should offend. As Mort

"Without the freedom to offend, freedom of expression ceases to exist."

Sahl taught me, the true satirist should have a go at everyone – especially oneself. No group or individual should be barred. But try telling that to the thought-police.

There is a concerted move to blackball the discussion of certain ideas and issues by saying, as Dr Hewson recently said of Tim Fischer, that such discussion is 'not helpful', or is 'inappropriate' or 'divisive', or else by labelling the speaker 'racist' or 'fascist' or 'reactionary' or by suggesting that 'one shouldn't be discussing this', which is all very different from arguing whether or not the propositions put forward are or are not true.

There is also a concerted move to outlaw the use of certain *words* which are held to be offensive. When I was a child, my mother and my auntie, both called Edna, enjoined me "Don't use language". A similar injunction is beginning to apply to certain terms of alleged abuse. One of the difficulties with such regulation is that such words or terms of derision (black, queer, etc.) are often turned upside down by minority groups to become words of pride and political mobilisation, such as the use of 'Queer Nation' or 'Black is Beautiful'. Here in Australia, with the rise of the Melanesian

self-determination movement, do not be surprised if in ten years' time the current obscene term 'Kanakanaka' is adopted by the Melanesians themselves.

In the 1950s and 1960s political correctness was fundamentally of the right. Now much of the impetus comes from what should be our most progressive forces. Thus, many of our tertiary institutions, which should be in the forefront of promoting freedom of expression and critical inquiry, are instead in the forefront of establishing bureaucratic codes of regulation and inculcating conformity.

In some of our universities, which ought to have an intellectual obligation to cultivate rather than curtail criticism, increasingly students and staff are afraid to say anything about controversial topics lest they be misconstrued.

Rather than regulating, obstructing or banning from speech those individuals who promulgate unpopular ideas, what we should be doing is encouraging widespread discussion, examination and debate so that those ideas can be criticised and if necessary repudiated. We ought adopt the position attributed to Voltaire, that seasoned opponent of humbug, puritanism

"Any attempt to exercise political control over knowledge and the expression of belief is reprehensible ..."

and other attacks on free thinking, "I disapprove of what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it".

Any attempt to exercise political control over knowledge and the expression of belief is reprehensible, as is any suppression of speech and criticism no matter how ill-informed those ideas may

be. That is why it is crucial that creationists and revisionist German historians and white supremacists also be granted their entitlement to *speak*, as long as they do not commit or cause actual physical violence.

While one American university (Connecticut) has already adopted rules punishing students for the use of "derogatory names, inappropriately directed laughter, inconsiderate jokes and conspicuous exclusion of certain students from conversation", as *The Australian* reported last year, Adelaide University is seriously considering an anti-racial policy that will scrutinise curricula for "cultural insensitivities that are the result of historically Eurocentric views". Good intention no doubt, but disastrous in its consequences.

There are indeed many forces, apart from outright censorship, acting to restrict public debate in the west, including Australia. That is why a few months ago a group of us including the libertarian-lesbian Margaret Bateman, ex AAP-Reuters journalist Lorann Downer, journalist Phil Dickie now with the Queensland Criminal Justice Commission, columnist and broadcaster Phillip Adams, Professor Paul Wilson and myself formed the Voltaire Institute.

Believing in the crucial importance to a liberal-democracy of free speech and freedom of inquiry, one of the aims of the Voltaire Institute is to staunchly defend the rights of individuals and groups, in this country and overseas, to promulgate ideas no matter how unpopular.

Things change. Once it was politically correct to believe in witches, now it is politically correct *not* to believe in witches. Even in our own lifetime we have seen a number of scientific and intellectual orthodoxies come and go.

I am passionate about many things – about the destructive effect of alcoholism and other forms of drug addiction, about the

curse of large-scale structural unemployment, about flogging off our pristine wilderness areas overseas. But of all things I am passionate about the free flow of ideas and doing what I can to ensure that research, criticism,

inquiry and utterance on any topic, however controversial, using speech-forms no matter how unpopular, should not be impeded.

From this perspective aborting ideas is a much worse crime than

aborting foetuses.

Ross Fitzgerald

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FRANK CAIN

The Making Of a Cold War Victim

THE COLLAPSE OF THE COLD WAR will provide new and interesting avenues for historical reinterpretation as the archives of both western and eastern governments disgorge their contents. One major question to be answered will be when did the west know that the Soviet empire was little more than a paper tiger. In Australia, numerous minor questions will be settled such as the details of the ASIO operation conducted from 1951 to 1954 to have Vladimir Petrov defect. Much yet remains to be told of that affair. The release of archival holdings will displace that account currently available from the dribble of papers thus far handed out by ASIO. Another question closely intertwined with the Petrov affair, the accusation that Ian Milner was a Soviet spy, will also be settled when these additional records become available and the procedure by which he became falsely implicated will be revealed. This article traces the events in the process that led to Ian Milner being framed as a spy and thereby becoming one of Australia's early Cold War victims. This affair seemed to be marked by a determination by the Australian right to uncover a Soviet spy at any cost to the individual concerned and this sorry tale shows that if Ian Milner had not existed he would have to have been invented.

Unfortunately for Milner, he became identified in intelligence

circles early in his career as a *rara avis*, a rare bird. This was a term reserved for intelligent, middle-class, well-educated, left-wing objects of intelligence surveillance. Intelligence agents were fascinated by such people because they offered a rare and sharp contrast to the trade union activists or Communist Party members who made up the bulk of people kept under political surveillance in Australia. Intelligence agents also considered themselves a cut above the proletarian activists they watched and viewed with a type of reserved jealousy the insights that watching international scholars gave them.

Ian Milner became a focus of their attention from the time he graduated from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand in 1934. His father, Frank, had been Rector of the Waitaki Boys' School at Oamarau (a government boarding school) and a man of conservative values. But Ian developed radical ideas of the world. These were reinforced by his travels associated with his studies at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. On the way to Britain he visited Leningrad and Germany. In September 1934 he found himself in a Nazi rally near Hanover and witnessed the wildly cheering response to Hitler's address to a mainly farming-class audience with all the paraphernalia of brown shirts, SS troopers, Horst Wessellied and loudspeakers.¹ The rally made a deep impression on him. It convinced him that these people, who could orchestrate such a successful response from

simple farming people, would become a force to be reckoned with. Ian continued on his way to Oxford, crossing from Flushing in the Netherlands to Harwich in October 1934. His radicalisation continued in Oxford where he joined the University's Labour Club and marched alongside unemployed miners in Tony-pandy in their huge demonstrations in Wales against their long-term unemployment. The Spanish Civil War also had a considerable impact on him. He helped the Labour Club raise money to send medical supplies and arms to the government forces. He was ashamed of the British government's policy of non-intervention, but was cheered by the actions of his New Zealand government's representative in the League of Nations, who voted with the Soviet representative in favour of collective measures against the aggression of the fascist powers in their attacks on the Spanish people. He was deeply moved by the Cambridge poet and communist student leader, John Cornford, when he came to Oxford to address the students on the War. He had fought in Spain and his later death in battle on his return there deeply moved Ian as being a demonstration of self-sacrifice to stop the fascist juggernaut.²

He became Commonwealth Fund Fellow for 1938-39, initially at the University of Columbia in New York but later at the University of California at Berkeley. He returned to New Zealand after this where he was appointed to

the New Zealand public service. In 1940 the Institute of Pacific Relations published his book *New Zealand's Interest and Policies in the Far East*. He was appointed in 1940 as a lecturer in the Department of Politics in the University of Melbourne by W. Macmahon Ball. He wrote that this appointment almost certainly saved him from prosecution, and perhaps jail, for being secretary of the Peace and Anti-conscription Council that was established by Christians, lefties, communists and pacifists to oppose the war when it was in that phoney stage where the Poles and Czechs were being left to their fate. By this time Milner would have had dossiers opened on him by the NZ police who conducted intelligence surveillance in those years, possibly by MI5 and Scotland Yard's Special Branch in Britain and the Investigation Branch of the Attorney General's Department in Australia, which was the precursor of ASIO in civilian intelligence matters.

On 12 September 1940 Ian married Margot Leigh Trafford at the Marriage Registrar's Office in Adelaide.³ Margot was born in Auckland, New Zealand, and graduated from the Auckland University College where she majored in French, English and History and took a Diploma in music in 1934. In 1937 she obtained the post of Senior French Mistress at a private school for girls in Adelaide, South Australia, Woodlands Church of England Grammar School. Margot's great interest in life, however, was the piano. She studied with Brewster Jones of the Adelaide Conservatorium. Piano playing and music remained the principal interest in her life.

Margot was more a joiner than Ian and driven by her concern over the growth of Japanese fascism and its invasion of China she joined with activists in Adelaide in raising funds for Chinese bombing

victims and in boycotting Japanese goods. She joined the Communist Party at this time and simultaneously joined the ambulance corps and trained as an ambulance driver.

The Milners lived in North Melbourne and became involved in community affairs such as pressing to have the local slum houses provided with basic necessities. Margot became Secretary of the Civilian Air Raid Defence Committee to speed up the digging of trenches and providing the necessities required in the event of an attack. Both Margot and Ian were now more supportive of Britain's position in its dedicated opposition to the fascists and they became totally immersed in their contributions to the war effort. Margot at this time dropped her connections with the CPA while remaining good friends with her associates who remained members. Margot recalls that Ian was never a member of the CPA. They both joined the local branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and were surprised at lack of leadership and the dedication to beer swilling that seemed to dominate meetings.

Ian was active in other areas of Melbourne politics such as the Council of Civil Liberties and the Australian-Soviet Friendship League, formerly Friends of the Soviet Union (FOSU). Ian Milner spoke at various public meetings of the Friendship League in Melbourne and Tasmania. After the Japanese began attacking Australia, he supported the proposal for training people in guerrilla warfare—a proposal which alarmed both officialdom and the army, but which had a very practical application at that time. Ian had attempted to join the army, but he was refused because of poor eyesight. Through his university work he became involved in army education work and Margot joined Eddie Foxcroft of the Economics Department of the

University of Melbourne in the War Organisation of Industry as well as giving lectures in music and English literature in army education courses.

Ian looked to expand his skills in international affairs and took up a position in the External Affairs Department in November 1944 to gain greater experience of administration in that field. Both Milners enjoyed their stay in Canberra, especially after they exchanged their room in the Kingston Hotel to live in Paul Hasluck's house while he served overseas. Hasluck was responsible for having Ian appointed to External Affairs to work in the Post-Hostilities Planning Division of the department and Ian was soon promoted after Hasluck left for San Francisco with Dr Evatt. In this new position he was the External Affairs Department representative on the Post-Hostilities Planning Committee conducted by the Department of Defence. On 6 November 1945, as a routine part of his work, he asked the Department of Defence to send copies of a British discussion

"These events ultimately led to Ian being improperly labelled as a Soviet spy."

paper relating to security in the Western Mediterranean, Eastern Atlantic, Security of India and Security of the British Empire to his division. Such documents were required, he wrote, in order that the division of the Department of External Affairs could discuss the matters raised and prepare a departmental position paper for presentation to the planning committee. This was done, Milner travelled to Melbourne to present

the department's paper and that was the end of this particular project. Events continued to unfold thereafter in relation to the papers which were used in this meeting. These events ultimately led to Ian being improperly labelled as a Soviet spy.

Milner was a temporary employee in the department – he was on leave from the University of Melbourne – and he became interested in a position with the United Nations in New York after one of its recruiting officers visited Canberra. By November 1946 he had been appointed to a position in the Department of Security Council Affairs of the UN. He resigned from the University and the Department of External Affairs and he and Margot left to establish their new home on Long Island. Margot's mother soon after joined them from New Zealand. Ian worked with the Greek Boundary Commission and in 1947 he worked with the UN Palestine Committee under Ralph Bunche following the assassination of Count Bernadotte. By September 1947 he was secretary to a nine-member international committee appointed by the General Assembly of the United Nations (the Soviet Union having walked out) with the UN Temporary Commission on Korea based in Seoul. They prepared a report on the intractable division between North and South Korea but it had little effect on diverting the civil war that was to erupt between the divided regions of the unhappy country. Meanwhile, Margot and her mother sailed to Auckland but her mother died on the voyage and her body was cremated at Honolulu. Ian flew from Switzerland, where he had been attending the Lausanne conference on Palestine, to meet Margot in Fiji and then flew to Auckland to make the funeral arrangements before her ship arrived. They subsequently travelled to Australia together for a brief holiday and to visit friends.

The Milners' arrival in Australia in the spring of 1949 triggered a large scale intelligence surveillance operation by the newly established and greatly under-employed ASIO. Their every movement was watched and recorded as they visited their friends in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. ASIO's focus on the Milners had two origins, both of which were reasons for ASIO being established early in 1949. The first resulted from the US placing an embargo on the transfer to Australia of all classified information. This ban came at a crucial time because Australia was in the process of establishing the Joint Project by which British-made guided missiles were to be tested and further developed at the Woomera rocket range and at the Salisbury laboratories near Adelaide. It was hoped that the US might provide important technical information. Both British and Australian authorities asked why the ban had been imposed. Sir Frederick Shedden, the Secretary of the Defence Department, went to Washington to ask the Truman administration for the reasons and to persuade them to lift the ban following the establishment of ASIO. He was refused on both counts.⁴ The ban was imposed in May 1948 after the newly founded CIA warned the US Defense Department that a leak had occurred in Australia of secrets to the Soviet Union. No further information was provided.

This spying revelation seems to be linked to another incident concerning the decoding of Soviet diplomatic traffic, including transmissions from the Soviet embassy in Canberra. This joint US-UK operation has been identified under the code name *Bride* or *Venona*. Little is known of this affair other than what has been published in the book, *The FBI-KGB War* by Robert J. Lamphere and Tom Schachtman. Information seemed to have been revealed

by MI5 to the Australian Prime Minister that the Soviet Union knew of the discussions about the British input to the Australian Post-Hostilities Planning Committee of 1945 as discussed above. The Department of External Affairs and the Defence Department conducted internal inquiries, but other than the Defence Department mentioning that Ian Milner handled the document on behalf of External Affairs, nothing came of the inquiries. The information from the British was judged to be too vague and the Australian officials concluded that the Soviet Union may have obtained its information direct from British sources. And there the matter ended in April 1948.⁵

Writers on the topic, such as Michael Thwaites, Robert Manne, Harvey Barnett and Richard Hall, who subscribe to the theory of Ian Milner being the spy, argue from the *FBI-KGB War* and the Defence Department's mention of his name that Ian Milner was the spy.⁶ They ignore the fact that, according to this book, the decoding operation continued up until May 1945 when the Soviet changed its

“ ... the unfortunate Milner was to be implicated in another alleged spying episode – the Petrov affair.”

coding procedures. Milner did not handle the material until November 1945. He could not have been responsible for any leak of that information. But the right in Australia were not to give up and the name of the unfortunate Milner was to be implicated in another alleged spying episode – the Petrov affair.

BUT WHERE THERE IS SMOKE there is fire. Could Milner have

handed copies of the British documents, innocuous as they were, to Communist Party officials who handed them to Soviet intelligence agents in Canberra? Anything is possible; but was it likely? Spying operations are not casual affairs – their mechanism has to be established and the processes tested and monitored. Assuming Milner was a CPA member, which Margot says he was not, his sense of responsibility and gravitas would not have led him to entrust his career to a clandestine operation of which he knew nothing. If a spy-line did operate which involved Milner then a series of documents would have flown through it, not the single one that pundits have the unfortunate Milner dropping into it on a very casual basis. The Milner allegation turns on the extremely scanty information MI5 gave to the Australian government and on which it never elaborated. It is likely that it never will.

By 1950 Margot had expanded her skills in piano playing through studying in New York and was to travel to Switzerland to a summer school at Tremozzo (on Lake Como) conducted by Artur Schnabel and his son, Karl-Ulrich. Ian went with her for a holiday, but the osteo-arthritis in Margot's fingers intensified – due, she thinks, to the stress induced by the prospect of the master classes – and Ian suggested that she fly to Prague for treatment by Professor Lench, a renowned expert in arthritis at the Albertov Institute. He recommended special mud treatment at the Czechoslovakian spa town of Piestany. Being a UN officer, Ian had no problem remaining in Prague and he established connections with the Prague UN office and one of its officers, Jarmila Fruhafova, whom he had known in the New York office. It was she who had actually recommended Professor Lench to Ian for Margot's treatment. The treatment succeeded

and Ian was given leave from the UN to remain in Prague while it continued. He took up teaching English at Charles University at the invitation of Professor Vancura, head of the English Department. Margot obtained work as an English translator and wrote material for inclusion on gramophone record covers. Ian became more immersed in writing, research, teaching and translating at the university and resigned from the UN to remain permanently in Prague. Margot gravitated to the music society in Prague and with the Czech language she had learned while recovering her health was able to assist musicians with English interpretation and translation work. In 1957 she accompanied the Smetana Quartet on its tour of Australia and New Zealand to help them meet her musical friends in these countries.

The Petrov affair started in February 1951 when Vladimir Petrov arrived in Australia with his wife to work in the Soviet embassy as a coding clerk. ASIO began watching him and a part-time ASIO agent, Dr Bialoguski, made contact and continually entertained Petrov in the bars and brothels of King's Cross on his frequent visits to Sydney to escort Soviet diplomatic messengers back and forth between Canberra and Sydney. What information was thus obtained from Petrov in these early years is not known at this stage, but on 27 May 1952 the new Minister for External Affairs, Richard Casey, informed the Australian Parliament that a "nest of traitors" had been identified in the public service and he mentioned the name of Dr Burton, a former secretary of the Department of External Affairs. Almost two years later, after long negotiations between ASIO and Petrov, he defected in April 1954. The nest was now to be exposed.

Petrov claimed to be a KGB agent and to have been conducting a spy ring out of the embassy

via senior Communist Party officials. He produced papers, that he said were stored in his KGB safe, containing the names of politicians, public servants, including External Affairs officers, and commercial men trading with the USSR. Robert Menzies, the Prime Minister, ordered the holding of a Royal Commission to which all those people were to be summoned to explain why their names appeared in Petrov's documents. Ian Milner's name did not appear in the papers. This presented little problem for ASIO. Petrov was reported by ASIO to have said in the ASIO safe house that he had a "vague memory" that he had received a cable some years previously (he could not, of course, produce the copy) asking whether Milner could return to New Zealand and what his standing was with the External Affairs Department. Milner's name was again in the intelligence frame.

The Royal Commission took on the aspect of an inquiry into the alleged leak in 1948 and it again turned over the events of the Department of External Affairs in those years. All these External Affairs officers were able to defend themselves and no element of the spying allegation could be attached to them. However, Ian Milner's name was bandied about and the implication that he was the spy went uncontested because he was not represented before the Commission. ASIO, naturally, was not about to produce information clearing Milner of any allegation, indeed its officers helped to put Milner more firmly in the frame as being a spy.

Dr Greg Pemberton has closely studied this issue and he has found that Colonel Spry, Director-General of ASIO, asked Sir Frederick Shedden to have Frederick Chilton who had investigated the leak in February 1948 on behalf of the Defence Department to appear before the Royal Commission and implicate Milner in the leak. Shed-

den, to give him due credit, refused, saying that there was no evidence against Milner. "Spry then assured him that they just needed Chilton to 'associate' Milner with the document MI5 claimed had been leaked." Chilton did give evidence, but only to inform the Royal Commission of the "inconclusive result of his investigation in February 1948".⁷ Chilton had no inside knowledge about the leak, the Venona decrypts or the nature of information held by MI5 – if indeed it held any information of substance on the topic.

"The Royal Commission exposed no spies, recommended no prosecutions and was judged to be a damp squib."

The Royal Commission exposed no spies, recommended no prosecutions and was judged to be a damp squib. Milner, on the other hand, was 'tried' and 'found guilty' in his absence. The Commissioners stated that Milner's handling of the UK documents "gave rise to grave suspicions as to the use he made of them". They added the ominous phrase "that he did so is supported by other material which we have seen". No one knows to this day what this "other material" refers to. Some writers have speculated that it was the Venona decrypts that the justices saw, but could not identify it in order to preserve the secrecy of the decrypt operation. Dr Pemberton shows that the Commissioners were not shown any decrypts. He argues that there may have been a Venona operation which produced documents exposing spies elsewhere in the west, but such documents would have been of no use for evidence in this case.⁸

Milner could only watch from afar events involving his name. He could have been invited to give evidence or, at least, been interviewed by ASIO officers in Prague. Two of them travelled to Glasgow to interview another witness, Bruce Yuill. Milner submitted an eleven page statement to the Prime Minister early in 1956 denying the allegation of spying and asking that it be incorporated into the official record of the Royal Commission. It was decided that it was too late to do this. Colonel Spry maintained his attack on Milner by dismissing his statement with the phrase that "it does not accord with the situation as I understand it".⁹

Engaged in his new career in Prague, Ian seemed to be unaware of the damage that ASIO's case had done to his reputation. In the debate which followed the release of the Royal Commission's report and in the books written about it, Milner has been portrayed as "the spy who jumped over the wall" to escape retribution for leaking documents to his Soviet KGB handler. The latest version of these events has the unfortunate Ian cast as the "Rhodes Scholar Spy" in opposition to the Cambridge moles.¹⁰

Ian re-established his relationship with Jarmila Fruhafova in Prague. Margot believes their attachment may have begun in New York and while Margot tried to hold the marriage together for the following few years, she settled for a divorce in 1958. While deciding whether to remain in Prague or return to New Zealand or live in Britain she flew to New Zealand via Sydney in 1954 at the time when the Petrovs were making their revelations about Ian Milner and others. Margot was met by John Minter, formerly chargé d'affaires at the US embassy but then working as a UN official in Sydney. He asked her to meet ASIO officials after they had approached him, and he accompanied her to the King's

Cross hotel where the interview took place. The ASIO agents showed her photographs, which she did not recognise, and asked her about whom she and Ian had met in Canberra. She mentioned the names of diplomatic and university people with whom they mixed and then explained that her illness had been the reason for them going to Prague and remaining there for some time after. ASIO passed some of this information to its New Zealand counterpart and Margot went through a similar interrogation when she arrived there. None of this explanation from Margot, about the reasons they went to Prague in 1950 and remained there, was presented to the Royal Commission as evidence. We will have to await the release of further RCE files from ASIO to establish whether ASIO gave this information to the Commissioners in private and they decided to suppress it or whether ASIO withheld it from the RCE because its objective of framing Milner would thereby be prejudiced.

On her return to Prague, Margot attempted to persuade Ian to travel to Australia to ensure that his explanation of events would be put to the RCE. He rejected this suggestion, saying that he did not wish to travel without Jarmila and that he would first make a statement to the Prime Minister through the British embassy in Prague and then give a personal interview if requested.¹¹ He did send a statement to Dr Evatt, but nothing came of it, nor anything of the statement he sent to the Prime Minister in 1956. Had Ian accepted Margot's advice the large Milner spy-industry would never have emerged. In 1960 Margot finally left Prague for London where by 1962 she took a secretarial post with the BBC. She still lives in Highgate, London, maintaining her long-held interest in early music, literature and travelling to Prague to maintain her friend-

ships there.

Ian was welcomed in the English Department at Charles University because native English speaking scholars were scarce and he had a good reputation as a scholar which was confirmed later by his researches and publications in English literature. Ian did not join the Czechoslovakian Communist Party but, along with his

“Had Ian accepted Margot’s advice the large Milner spy-industry would never have emerged.”

university colleagues, he did protest at the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. One of them, Zdenek Stribrny, was moved sideways to the Computer Studies Department but Milner was left in his position because he was not then a senior figure either in the department or the university. He was always regarded as a good scholar and firm friend by his departmental colleagues and his contribution to the knowledge of English was greatly appreciated. He carried a heavy load in English language and conversation until British Council language teachers and US Fulbright professors began to arrive in Prague to take up that work.¹²

Ian’s detractors in Australia, who have accepted uncritically the allegation expressed by the three commissioners sitting on the Royal Commission into Espionage, and left unchallenged by ASIO, that it was Ian who leaked material to the Soviet embassy and then “escaped over the wall” into Czechoslovakia to escape retribution, have always ended their story at this point. Richard Hall did take one small step further to argue that Milner could not have obtained a lecturing position at Charles University unless the

Czech Communist Party had approved, thereby confirming the suspicion of the spying allegation. The contributions Ian made to the study of English literature in Czechoslovakia over the forty years he remained with Charles University give lie to any suggestion that he was provided with a safe haven for services rendered to Moscow. He was an active scholar there, making contributions to the international study of two writers in particular, George Eliot and Charles Dickens. He was definitely not the superannuated spy of Hall’s construct. His monograph, *The Structure of Values in George Eliot* (Charles University, 1968, pp. x + 144), has been admired for “its mastery of English and American critical approaches, enriched with the main tenets of the Prague School of Linguistic and Literary Theory”. His other studies of Eliot have appeared in journals published in Cambridge, Cairo and London. His work on Dickens has appeared in international publications on Victorian studies, one edited by Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius and the other by Colin Gibson.¹³ Immediately before his death in June 1991 he completed a lengthy and what was regarded as a pioneering essay on “Dickens in Czechoslovakia, 1842-1976” written in conjunction with Jaroslav Hornát.

Another significant part of Ian’s literary life was his translation of Czech poetry, amounting to ten books and contributions to four anthologies. In collaboration with his second wife, Jarmila, he has made what have been regarded as fine, fresh and competent English versions of the works of many of Czechoslovakia’s poets. Before his death he and Jarmila were completing a representative selection of Czech poets, published at home or in exile or in underground papers, from the writers of the 1920s until 1990, to be published in Britain.

This work confirms that Ian was a significant scholar. His career in the early post-war years points to his having been what was very unusual for those years – an international public servant. To then have become highly literate in a foreign language, to the extent of being able to translate its leading poets into English, points to a person of unusual talent and capacities. The ‘Ian Milner-as-spy’ industry should now be seen for what it was – a very un-Australian attempt to justify the political witch-hunts that marked much of the Menzies years.

- 1 Most of the personal details of Ian’s life were provided by Margot Milner during interviews at her London home on Sunday 3 May and Thursday 7 May, 1992 and in subsequent correspondence with her.
- 2 These details are taken from a draft of Ian Milner’s memoirs held in the Turnbull Library in Wellington, edited with an introduction by Professor Vincent O’Sullivan and intended for publication by the Victoria University Press, Wellington, New Zealand in 1993.
- 3 The more public details of Ian’s life are contained in the two ASIO files ‘Ian Frank George Milner’ CRS A 6119/ZRI, Items 17 and 18, Australian Archives, Canberra, hereafter AA.
- 4 Frank Cain, ‘An Aspect of Post-War Australian Relations with the United Kingdom and the United States: Missiles, Spies and Disharmony’, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 92, April 1989, pp. 186-202.
- 5 See the External Affairs Department file, A669/1, A33/1, AA.
- 6 Michael Thwaites, *Truth Will Out, ASIO and the Petrovs*, Collins, Sydney, 1980, p. 125 suggests that Milner’s involvement is proved by the Commissioners’ vague remarks about the “other material which we have seen”; Robert Manne, *The Petrov Affair, Politics and Espionage*, Pergamon, Sydney, 1987, p. 20 bases his Milner accusation on the alleged decryptations described in Lamphere and Schachtman and Chapman Pincher, *Their Trade in*

Treachery; Harvey Barnett, *Tale of the Scorpion*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, alludes to a combined US-British operation but does not mention any decryption process. Milner is regarded as a guilty party because he "voluntarily decamped to Czechoslovakia to spend the rest of his days", p. 43; Richard Hall, *The Rhodes Scholar Spy*, Random House, Sydney, 1991 discusses Milner on the basis of the account by Peter Wright in his *Spy Catcher* about Venona, but he adds to it the unproven story of the Harbin intercepts and enlarges it with his own account that anti-left

figures were watching Milner and his friends in the Department of External Affairs and helped "expose" him.

7 Greg Pemberton, 'Spy Mystery That Will Not Die' in *Canberra Times*, 19 June 1991, p. 21.

8 *ibid.*

9 'Personal Statement' by Ian Milner and Spry's response of 18 May 1956 in CRS M4505, Item box 65, Milner I. F. G., AA.

10 Richard Hall, *The Rhodes Scholar Spy*.

11 Correspondence with Margot Milner, 5 October 1992.

12 This information about Ian's university career from an interview with his colleague, Professor Zdenek Stribrny, in Prague on 22 May 1992.

13 For an account of Ian's work see *Philologica Pragensia* (Prague) 29.2, pp. 92-93, 1986 and 19.3, pp. 142-148, 1976. For an assessment of Ian's work I am indebted to a short biography published before his death by Zdenek Stribrny in *Litvra-ria Pragensia* 1992.

Frank Cain is a historian, and the author of *Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia* (1983).

GRAHAM DUNKLEY
The GATTing of Wisdom

LIfe AS WE HAVE hitherto known it may be about to change beyond recognition. The agent of the apocalypse is not the United Nations, the Catholic Church or the US-sponsored New World Order, but that body with the uninspired acronym of GATT. The so-called Uruguay Round proposals of GATT represent an unprecedented move towards global free trade. The proposals, due to be finalised in December 1993, present serious threats to the environment, national autonomy and cultural independence, yet they have been subject to virtually no public debate in Australia.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is a world trade agreement first signed in 1948 and now covering one hundred and nine nations. In general GATT has had considerable successes in reducing formal tariff protection and promoting international trade, but less luck with its other main objects of bringing 'transparency' to protective forms and ensuring non-discrimination between trading partners. During the 1970s and 1980s most tariff-reducing countries, even the most GATT-fearing of them, re-introduced protection through the back door of 'non-tariff barriers' (NTBs)

such as export subsidies, voluntary export restraints and a myriad of restrictive regulations, many of them discriminatory between trading partners.

Over time two major sectors, agriculture and textiles, have been excluded from GATT at the behest of its main founder, the USA, while under GATT's dispute system villains have simply ignored inquiry panel decisions.

To rectify such indignities GATT began, in 1986 at Punta del Este, Uruguay, a new round of trade talks aimed at creating a more systematic world trading order. After interminable politicking and many false finishes the final Uruguay Round draft offers the following seven proposals:

1. The re-inclusion of agriculture and textiles into GATT, with textile quotas to be phased out over a decade and agricultural protection to be cut by a third over six years.
2. Improved 'transparency' for residual protection by converting all NTBs into tariffs (so-called 'tariffication').
3. Increased 'market access' for all goods through tariff reductions (to minimal levels by the end of the century), rationalised regulatory measures, global 'harmonisation' of product standards and

better codification of anti-dumping measures.

4. New international rules to protect intellectual property.
5. Minimisation of restrictions on foreign investment which adversely affect trade.
6. The inclusion of all internationally traded services under the GATT umbrella via a new 'general agreement on trade in services' (GATS).
7. The conversion of GATT itself into a global trade watchdog with teeth.

GATT lovers believe that these proposals will bring more systematic trading rules, fairer trading processes, better trade opportunities for poorer countries, greater global mobility for productive resources, less government meddling with trade, increased trade volumes and a more closely integrated global economy. Thereafter, services, goods and people will be able to drift whimsically forth across the planet, moving freely over dissolving national boundaries in search of prosperity.

The Confederacy of Sceptics

THE ONLY CLOUDS on this glorious horizon, apparently, are the array of vested interests and other protectionist forces which cower in the corners of all coun-

tries, emerging periodically only to sap the free trade dream. According to the 'public choice' school of New Right thought such interests can be very motivated and effective because they have much to gain relative to the majority of the population, amongst whom the greater social good is spread thinly. Thus, aware rulers must ensure that such interests do not prevail.

A distinction must however be made between narrow self-interests (which are not always unjustified) and the confederacy of sceptics who, on principle, doubt the alleged virtues of this emerging 'borderless world'. Sceptics worry about matters such as equity, the social costs of structural adjustment, environmental and cultural impacts.

The Rich Get Richer

GATT supporters claim that inclusion of textiles and agriculture will greatly benefit the Third World, boost sales in both sectors and help the food and fibre exports of countries like Australia. However, the main immediate beneficiaries of textile liberalisation are likely to be the richer Third World nations, while some of the poorer ones may actually be worse off due to the abolition of current concessional access to the European and North American markets. And there will, of course, be swings and roundabouts. Australia will gain wool outlets but lose textile jobs to imports. Europe, North America and Japan will be flat out redeploying farmers and textile workers, at considerable social cost. Champions of free trade suggest that we are moving into a dynamic world of perpetual structural change but none has attempted to estimate the likely social and human costs of this.

The idea of 'tariffication', the converting of all NTBs to tariff-equivalents, is integral to the

global 'level playing field' and sounds rational. However, many Third World countries have relied heavily on NTBs, particularly domestic industry subsidies, for development, while some such measures have been crucial to industry policy in Japan and Europe. Economic rationalist free-traders deny the value of these measures for industry development, but there is substantial evidence for their effectiveness, if sensibly employed. This proposal would probably greatly restrict, if not eliminate, the possibility of systematic industry policy in future, and the right of countries to use such instruments for development has not been considered by GATT.

The 'market access' provisions of the Uruguay Round propose across-the-board tariff cuts of 33 per cent plus rationalised standards and anti-dumping measures designed to greatly reduce all countries' trade barriers. Certainly anti-dumping rules have been abused and need reforming. The proposal for uniform global product standards, particularly for food exports, sounds good in theory but comes with warning bells. The proposal was brought into GATT negotiations by a USA peeved at European rejection of its hormone-treated beef exports.

The Uruguay Round draft seeks to avoid "unnecessarily high" safety standards and proposes that all testing, labelling and standard-setting be based on "currently accepted" scientific evidence. GATT standards are to be set by a hitherto obscure Rome-based UN body, the Codex Alimentarius, whose current standards are middle-of-the-road relative to the various national standards. Enforcement of the Codex will improve some low standard products, but may reduce other standards. Australia, for instance, has recently reduced some seventy-five previously high standards to lower Codex levels.

Further, the enshrining of concepts such as an "accepted scientific norm" and "unnecessarily safe standards" threatens to both discriminate against risk-averse nations and bestow upon the world scientific establishment an infallibility which is neither healthy nor warranted.

Trips and Trims

THE PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE new 'trade-related intellectual property rights' (TRIPs) is directed at protecting First World products (music, books, watches, handbags, etc.) against Third World copying and piracy. As such it constitutes higher, not lower, protection. One can understand the concern of companies from rich countries, but the issue is the old one of monopoly incentives versus public interest, writ globally.

Many Third World countries claim their policies of minimal patenting for trans-national companies have enabled them to start legitimate industries and provide low cost pharmaceuticals to their people. They fear that TRIPs will damage their technological development, advantage the trans-nationals and enable their germplasm to be exploited by biotechnology companies. Already the US has used bilateral gunboat diplomacy (threats of retaliatory tariffs) to bully several Third World countries into adopting suitable intellectual property regimes.

Proposals to restrict 'trade-related investment measures' (TRIMs) could hit Third World countries even harder than TRIPs. At the request of the USA and other rich, capital-investing countries, this provision is aimed at practices such as requiring foreign investors to use some local inputs, do some research locally, retain a set portion of value added in the host country, allow a quota of local equity, export a set quota of

output and so forth.

Such measures are commonly used in the Third World to promote development and retain a degree of local autonomy, but they are seen by transnational companies as restrictive, discriminatory impediments to trade and investment. Sceptics believe that the abolition of TRIMs would increase investment flows to poorer countries, but at the price of greatly reduced autonomy.

Economic Policemen

THE INCLUSION of services into GATT is the great revolution of the Uruguay Round. Service trade is restricted, not by tariffs and so forth, but by domestic regulations which deliberately or inadvertently prevent potential overseas competitors from entering the market. Free trade in services will require all GATT members to minimise such regulations and remove these discriminatory practices. Thereafter, companies offering services in areas such as telecommunications, banking, insurance, shipping, professional services, law, tourism, consultancy and 'culture industries', will be able to move into any country at will. Free traders would see the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) as the greatest breakthrough in history and Australia, like most rich countries, thinks it will do well out of the deal. Third World countries, mostly being major importers of services, are more sceptical. The main Third World service 'export', tourism, is now known to have a range of adverse environmental, social and cultural impacts. More fundamentally, however, many sceptics query why service providers should be able to enter countries willy-nilly, and they are concerned about the cultural implications of this.

Costs, Benefits and Hidden Agendas

JOURNALISTS AND PRAGMATISTS of the short term perspective are hailing a Uruguay Round conclusion as the way out of recession, anticipating a US\$200 billion boost to the world economy and A\$2.5 billion for Australia over the next few years. Without wanting to spoil the party, I should point out that these figures represent a minuscule 0.05 per cent of the annual gross world product (excluding the ex-Soviet bloc) and 0.65 per cent of Australia's annual GDP, or even less if these benefits are spread over many years, as they are likely to be.

More iconoclastic free traders are convinced that such benefits are 'non-trivial' and would be multiplied over time by 'dynamic gains' such as new technologies and innovation. They believe that a globally integrated, free trading economy for all goods and services would bring unprecedented allocative efficiency, encourage the best of transnational corporation entrepreneurship, minimise bumbling bureaucracy and eliminate the productivity-destroying effects of vested interests.

The confederacy of sceptics, by contrast, believes that the price of these minimal economic gains will be a wide range of non-economic costs, along with a number of hidden agendas. In particular they worry about the commercialisation of all activities, the 'marketisation' of the world, the handing over of economic affairs to large transnational corporations, the rule of technology and efficiency, and the neglect of social, cultural and ecological values in pursuit of global growth. In particular sceptics are concerned about the implications of the Uruguay Round for the environment, national autonomy and cultural integrity.

Environmental Destruction

ENVIRONMENTALISTS HAVE BEEN vocal opponents of the proposed new GATT system, fearing

that it will dilute environmental standards, encourage destructive, resource-intensive trade and make it difficult to enforce environmental treaties through trade sanctions or 'green tariffs'. Green groups have claimed, for instance, that Codex standards would allow up to fifty times more DDT in fruits than current US standards. They point to various GATT, EC and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) cases in which high standards have been reduced to the common denominator, recycling incentives over-ruled, and so forth. Of special concern has been GATT's rejection of US measures which restrict the importation of Mexican tuna caught by methods which, incidentally, kill dolphins.

For its part GATT also claims to be green, and points out that Article XX allows a few exceptions to free trade for conservation and health reasons. However, GATT leaders worry incessantly that crude protectionist interests are lurking inside the green Trojan horse, and they will not accept measures which imply discriminatory unilateral standards, such as the US tuna restrictions. Thus, GATT has recently rejected an Indonesian move to limit timber exports in order to reduce rain-forest logging, the grounds being that the regulations did not apply equally to Indonesian exporters of timber products. EC appellants claimed that this constituted an unfair subsidy to local 'value added' industries and a misuse of environmental regulations.

GATT has admitted that some re-location of industries to 'pollution havens' has occurred, but claims that by-and-large trade will be good for the environment so long as all countries ensure that environmental values are reflected in trading prices. However, the trouble with this argument is that trading prices do not currently reflect environmental values, let alone cultural values, and may not

do so for a long time to come. At present a single processed board adds more to the gross domestic product than a whole forest and few countries are moving to change this accounting system. Yet even with thorough ecological and resource accounting, it is not clear that markets will ever adequately reflect such costs, especially when trading prices today often do not reflect the 'pass through' of exchange rate changes and other cost fluctuations.

The GATT view of 'sustainable development' reflects conventional economic rationalist theory that growth will be green so long as markets can 'internalise externalities' and elicit environmental research. But this ignores the fact that Western technologies are a major cause of environmental problems and voracious Western demand is the main cause of resource depletion. To the extent that trade enhances growth, this will be exacerbated.

Cultural Disintegration

IF GATT TAKES an ultra-conventional view of the environment it virtually ignores the issues of national sovereignty and cultural integrity. The theory of comparative advantage, upon which the doctrine of free trade is based, assumes that there are human and natural resource differences between countries, and GATT magnanimously concedes that nations are not clones of each other. But GATT seems quite oblivious to the potential of the Uruguay provisions to reduce national sovereignty.

Deregulation of international capital markets during the 1980s largely eliminated the capacity of national governments to control short-term (mostly speculative) capital flows. The Uruguay proposals would severely limit the ability of governments to use protection, develop an industry policy, regulate services or place

conditions on foreign investment.

The notion of cultural integrity scarcely features in the GATT. In the Uruguay Round draft the notion does not rate a mention. Many countries, including Australia, have urged that audio-visual services be exempted from proposed GATS free trade provisions on the grounds of 'cultural protection'. Only the USA and Japan, both major exporters of audio-visual material, were pushing for total de-regulation. The USA, which arguably dominates the globe culturally, has been storming the world trying to bulldoze other nations into dropping measures such as TV local content requirements. A number, including New Zealand, have dutifully complied, while Australia remains 'on notice' for its pathetically minimal four per cent local drama requirement.

The Uruguay Round proposals and the integrated global economy they herald would be a disaster for cultural independence, particularly in the case of free trade in services. Services are things people do for each other in a cultural context and willy-nilly trade will bring an inexorable homogenisation - witness the 'MacDonaldisation' of Australia (and the planet), the new toy war in which Coles Myer has been 'forced' to copy US consumerist retailing methods, or the mass importation of children's baseball-style clothing. Under the new-GATT it is unlikely that national governments could do anything to control such trends or create local counter-cultures for fear of trade discrimination claims.

The US is most audacious in its hypocrisy, demanding access to other countries' markets while simultaneously proposing to exclude from GATS many services such as shipping, aviation and banking at the behest of competition-shy local industries. Australia is one of twenty countries which have 'bound' themselves to a sub-

stantial degree of trade-inducing deregulation in many services (except audio-visuals), urging others to do likewise. Already US law firms, work rehabilitation companies and the like are entering Australia, and only time will tell what cultural impact this will have. If GATS becomes a reality no segment of any society will be allowed to remain isolated from the global market-place or protect its sub-cultural traditions. We should look much more closely at the implications of this.

The Road From Punta del Este

IF ALL SEVEN URUGUAY ROUND proposals are adopted by GATT members there doubtless will be some (small) short-term economic benefits and probably a curtailment of the present disruptive trade politicking and US economic gunboat diplomacy. This will be to the good. But there may ultimately be horrendous costs in terms of the environment, which could be damaged, the cultural independence of societies, which could be seriously compromised, and the policy-making autonomy of nations, which could be cut to shreds. The proposed multilateral trading office with legal powers and trade sanction weapons would be the closest thing to a world government the Earth has ever had and it will bear no resemblance to a democracy.

Graham Dunkley

Graham Dunkley lectures in Economics at the Victoria University of Technology.

Since this article was written, the GATT agreement has been signed, but decisions on cultural traffic are still to be finalised.



CAPSULE listings are free, and should be sent to *Overland* at least eight weeks prior to publication. (*Overland* is a quarterly, and appears in early December, March, June and September.) Copy sent to Capsule may be edited, and not all items are used.

THE Third Annual Women Playwrights' Conference will be held in Adelaide, from July 1 to 10. Addressing the conference will be Dorothy Hewett, Oriel Gray, Mona Brand, Alma de Groen and Hannie Rayson. Robyn Archer will present new music theatre. There will be traditional performances by SA Aboriginal women, a season of women's plays staged by Meryl Tankard's Australian Dance Theatre, Red Shed, Doppio Teatro and other companies, as well as workshops, playreadings, film screenings and exhibitions. For further details, registration brochure and accommodation and travel information, write to: TAWPC, B Mail, Flinders University, GPO Box 2100 Adelaide 5001.

THE 6th International Feminist Book Fair, to be held at the Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne from July 27 to 31, is subtitled *Indigenous, Asian and Pacific Writing*. It is expected to attract about 250 publishers, with 200 international and Australian writers taking part. Overall attendance is expected to be around 20,000,

including 3000 international visitors. The first two days are trade only, and the subsequent three days are open to the public—when thousands of books will be on display for interested browsers. Details: GPO Box 2681X, Melbourne 3000.

YOU can write to The Performance Space, PO Box 419 Strawberry Hills 2012 (or phone 698 7235) for a bi-monthly listing of events which are held regularly at 199 Cleveland St, Redfern. TPS remains one of Australia's liveliest and best places to see new music/dance/performance.

ROS Bandt's new CD on Move Records, *Improvisations in Acoustic Chambers*, will be released in 1994/95. For a full listing of CDs from this company, which has vigorously supported Australian composers and musicians for the past 25 years, write to 10 Glen Drive, Eaglemont 3084. And phone (03) 497 3105 for details of special releases and/or events organised by Move.

THE innovative Astra Chamber Music Society presents concerts throughout the year, including first performances of new works by Australian composers, as well as a wide-ranging repertoire of early music and 20th century composition. Imaginative presentation of pieces in interesting venues is a

hallmark of Astra concerts. An exciting line-up of guest musicians, performers and ensembles will be taking part in 1994. To be included on Astra's mailing list, or for further details, phone 326 5424.

THE Second Composing Women's Festival will be held in Melbourne from June 3 to 29. Contact Dr Therese Radic, C/- Contemporary Music Events Company, 3rd Floor, 31 Victoria Street, Fitzroy 3065, or phone (03) 509 4068.

ARTEFACTS, of 117 Sturt Street, South Melbourne, organises professional workshops, which are conducted by seasoned actors, directors and educators. For further information, write to the above address, or phone (03) 699 5154.

THE 33rd Australian Science Fiction Convention will be held in Melbourne from April 1 to 4. Write to PO Box 212, World Trade Centre 3005.

A COMPREHENSIVE roundup of Victorian and South Australian multicultural arts events is presented in *Synapse*, the free monthly tabloid newspaper, which is available from The Multicultural Arts Trust of SA (144 King William Street, Adelaide 5000, phone [08] 212 1258); and from Multicultural Arts Victoria (The Broom Fac-

tory, 144 George Street, Fitzroy 3065, phone [03] 417 6777).

WORK from eleven immigrant artists who arrived in Australia in the past four years will be exhibited in *The Thousand-Handed Hydra: Artists From Four Continents*, at the National Gallery of Victoria, from April 29 to May 15. Phone (03) 685 0382/256 for details.

GUTS: Global Urban Tribal Streetwear, is another exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, on display from May 20 to July 3. It shows "the cutting edge of new generation fashion" from around the world.

ALSO in Melbourne, from May 16 to 24, is the annual Next Wave Festival, which showcases the work of young people working in the arts. The Festival includes a comprehensive Writers' program. For further information, write to Zane Throw, 31 Victoria Street, Fitzroy 3065. Phone (03) 417 7544.

A NEW publisher of poetry booklets, Metro Press, has recently released four titles: *Inside The Moontree*, by Eluned Lloyd, *Mission Brown Chihuahua* by Anna Cameron, *Night Breathing* by Gary Maller, and *Mix Don't Blend* by Maria Fresta. Metro would especially like to publish "previously

uncollected Queensland poets". Write to Metro Arts Centre, 109 Edward Street, Brisbane 4000.

THE Queensland Poets Association holds regular readings, including open readings, at Brisbane's Metro Arts Centre. It also organises workshops and seminars, and publishes *The Guide, a National Newsletter for Australian Poets*. Membership of the Association costs \$10. For further information, write to GPO Box 24, Brisbane 4001, or phone (07) 221 4977.

The Guide, a National Newsletter for Australian Poets contains useful information for poets: a listing of poetry events held throughout Australia, a checklist of regular poetry venues in each State, articles about the language, culture and practice of poetry, and news of poetry competitions, publishing opportunities, writers' groups, and much more. Annual subscription (for six issues) is \$21. Write to GPO Box 24, Brisbane 4001, or phone (07) 221 4977.

THE revised, updated and enlarged *Handbook for Victorian Writers* (\$10 members, \$15 non-members, inc. \$3 postage and handling) is now available from The Victorian Writers' centre, 156 George Street, Fitzroy. Phone (03) 415 1077.

FOR information about the 1994 Tamworth Writers' festival, to be held in June, write to Lynden Treneman at 34 Rawson Ave, Tamworth 2340. Note that writers are still being recruited for the 1995 and 1996 Festivals.

ASAL '94, the annual Association for the Study of Australian Literature conference, will be held at University College, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, from July 3 to 8. Phone Susan Lever on (06) 268 8907 for details.

HOBO, a new poetry magazine published by Black Lightning Press, is edited by Dane Thwaites and Judith Beveridge. Contributions are invited from poets, and subscriptions are \$18 for four issues. Write to PO Box 166, Hazelbrook, 2779.

THE Australia Council, at 181 Lawson Street, Redfern, 2016, houses an Information Centre containing a large range of books on cultural policy and practice, some of which are available for loan. The Centre is open from 10am to 5pm. Phone (02) 950 9183.

SPINDRIFT is a new magazine for previously unpublished writers, which invites contributions of short prose (to 1200 words) and poetry. Write to Bill Collis, PO Box 575 Marrickville 2204, or phone (02) 560 0198.

HOBO

Poetry-only magazine. "Excellent, no frills" - Don Anderson, SMH. Editors: Dane Thwaites & Judith Beveridge. \$5.50 per copy. Subs \$18 for 4. #1 & #2 published; copies of both available. Poetry & poetry reviews/articles sought. Payment: 1 free copy of magazine. Compensation for no cash payment: the company of the extremely good. PO Box 166, Hazelbrook NSW 2779.

Rush Hour of the Spirit

BILLY MARSHALL-STONEKING

Christobel Mattingley (ed.): *Survival in Our Own Land* (Hodder & Stoughton, \$49.95).

Mudrooroo: *The Kwinkin* (Angus & Robertson, \$14.95).

Gerhard Fisher (ed.): *The Mudrooroo/Muller Project* (NSW University Press, \$24.95).

Keith Vincent Smith: *King Bungaree* (Kangaroo Press, \$39.95).

JOURNEYING SOUTH one afternoon from Yuntjunya toward the remote Aboriginal settlement which the whites had re-named Docker River, my travelling companions – two old men from the Pintupi tribe – took it upon themselves to educate me into the country through which we were passing.

To the uninitiated eyes of a whitefella, there wasn't much to look at, but as the Land Cruiser barrelled forward, Nosepeg and Tutama's rolling commentary continued. With fingers pointed or lips puckered toward a clump of boulders or a distant sand dune, the men indicated, or rather presented, the evidence for the various intrigues and adventures of their ancestral spirits.

"That tree, over there, that's a digging stick. And this creekbed here, this is where the Dingo-Man dragged Marlu, the Kangaroo, back to his cave. That dry lake, proper dangerous one. Warlawarlara, the crazy giant men who eat people, live inside, underneath."

Every place, every feature, every aspect had a story. Nothing existed simply by virtue of geology or erosion or any other whitefella myth

whose purpose is all-too-often materialistic at the expense of what can't be counted or controlled. To the Pintupi and their fellow tribespeople, at least, this was not the inhospitable and desolate landscape that countless white explorers had depicted in their diaries and memoirs, but a country with all the variety and activity of Swanston Street during some legendary rush hour of the spirit.

Survival in Our Own Land also takes the reader on a journey. This time into the complex and often tragic history of the Aboriginal people of South Australia. What makes the book unforgettable is its humanness. There is nothing that one could call 'academic' in this volume. Nothing that is kept at arm's length. Instead, one is continually confronted and challenged by memories, ideas and longings, which come from the people themselves – Aboriginal people – who tell their own stories from the inside out.

"A story of injustice and treachery, of strength and hope, and the courage to say no."

The composite story that emerges is both personal and political; individual, and yet representative. A story of injustice and treachery, of strength and hope, and the courage to say no. History touched by strength and eloquence. Close to the ear, the voices of mothers, battlers, artists and songmen, teachers, hunters, elders and activists come off the page without the usual mediation of a white narrator.

And then there are the letters and newspaper reports; the government documents and white-fella statements as to codes of behaviour and other rules and regulations that were felt to have an edifying influence on 'the natives'. The absurdity and inhumanity of intolerance is underscored by these documents, and by many of the photographs and illustrations that accompany the text, one of the more remarkable collections of images ever assembled.

But this is much more than a resumé of misery, a recounting of outrages. Behind it all is the spirit of a proud and resilient people – Australia's greatest, untapped human resource. "It doesn't matter how many qualifications we have in the white man's world", an Aboriginal mother says. "It's still important to have pride in remembering that we are Ngarinyeri. I'm passing it on to my daughter. I teach her, my mother teaches her. I would like her to grow up in the same way as I grew up, knowing that she is Ngarinyeri."

STYLISTICALLY, *The Kwinkin* is an interesting departure from Mudrooroo's earlier books, *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* and *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the End of the World*. The self-absorbed protagonist is a small-time Queensland politician who, because the universe is cruel and has a perverted sense of humor, ends up as a colonial administrator on an island in the middle of the South Pacific. His unusual story, however, is told in "a series of tape recorded transcripts", which lends a conversational quality to the prose. The result is a satire not only on the mentality of the European world-view and its rampant imperialism, but on the language of the invader/oppressor as well.

"The so-called beauties of nature passed me by", the narrator tells us. "I considered such things as aspects of real estate which might go to inflate the prices of hillside properties."

The book is brimful of irony and politically astute observation. The backside of power; the shabby cowardice that masquerades as authority; and the uncriticised arrogance and desire of one group of people to dominate another are all scathingly satirised.

Mudrooroo's language – which he has created, it would seem, almost mediumistically out of the persona of the narrator – has all the confessional fervor about it that one would

expect from a man whose power resides in a policy statement. "Perhaps", the narrator tells us, "... we are of the elect... descended... from He who was responsible for bringing them the Gift of Light. Ah, sir, such a noble gift, a rare gift, you can't buy that at Harrods, not even in those days."

The Mudrooroo/Muller Project is an entirely different sort of book, being the record of a collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists.

Sub-titled "A theatrical casebook", the volume is a collection of those sources, ideas, techniques, poems, interviews and political philosophy that went into the creation of Mudrooroo's play, *The Aboriginal Demonstrators Confront the Declaration of the Australian Republic on 26th January, 2001* and the German playwright, Heiner Muller's *Der Auftrag (The Commission)*. The texts of both plays are included in the book, as well as several photographs documenting the workshops.

Collaborations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists have, over the years, produced many significant contributions to Australian culture. The influence of the Warumpi Band, with its mix of rock and tribal language, is a case in point; as is the collaboration between the painters Turkey Tolson and Tim Johnson, and between the writers Ruby Langford and Susan Hampton. This book is the record of a mutual exploration. Its value to theatre workers, especially those involved in cross-cultural projects, is unquestionable. If nothing else, it underscores the importance of artistic co-operation unfettered by distrust, racism and competition.

NOSEPEG TJUPURRULA was one of Central Australia's most celebrated raconteurs. During an audience with Elizabeth the Second in the early fifties he introduced himself as "the King of the Pintupi". Bungaree, an Aboriginal man who lived in Australia in the late eighteenth century, also described himself as a king – "the king of Broken Bay".

Keith Vincent Smith, in his book, *King Bungaree*, gives a loving and well-researched portrait of a man who acted as an important intermediary between his own people and the people who had come to his country on "monster birds". It chronicles in graphic terms the life of a man

caught at the fulcrum of two conflicting world views. But it is also a testament to courage and strength in the face of impossible odds.

An early-day Gandhi, Bungaree is described by the Russian explorer, Bellingshausen, as

“... a loving and well-researched portrait of a man who acted as an important intermediary between his own people and the people who had come to his country on ‘monster birds’.”

being gentle and kind of heart. “He has often endangered his life”, the explorer writes, “in his efforts to keep the peace within his tribe.”

Profusely illustrated with maps, sketches and reproductions of early lithographs, the book is more than a lively biography. It also presents a vivid account of the life and times of the emerging colony – the explorers, convicts and settlers, many of whom Bungaree had dealings with of one sort or another.

King Bungaree is a valuable contribution to our understanding of Aboriginal struggle, and how one man, through humour, intelligence and foresight, maintained his integrity.

Billy Marshall-Stoneking is a poet, playwright and filmmaker. His most recent book, Taking America Out of the Boy, was published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1993. His play about Ezra Pound, Sixteen Words for Water, will be presented by the Melbourne Theatre Company in 1994.

In Perpetua, Sweet Modernism and the Ganges

ADRIAN MARSHALL

Christopher Cyrill, *The Ganges and its Tributaries* (McPhee Gribble, \$14.95).

THIS BOOK, *The Ganges and its Tributaries* is not a great novel, and in no way is it trying to be. But it is an impressive novel of remembrance: of a young man conceived in

Calcutta, born in Melbourne, living suburban life in St Kilda, Dandenong and Oakleigh. The day he and his family move house becomes the occasion for those remembrances.

It is a short book and easy to read, a book full of dreams and wonderment, of secret recipes for garam masala, of strange mixes of Hinduism and Catholicism and young, would-be love. It is about many things: a boy finding his way between two cultures, cricket, an extended family forever arriving straight from India, and Joseph – the narrator’s – vivid imagination:

“I imagined the couples remembering their dead grandparents when they saw my fingerprints on the window, remembering an aunt or uncle because of the tread of my footprints on the grass, or remembering a miscarried child when they saw the mud surrounding their garden taps.”

The novel follows the constantly diverging courses of Joseph’s real and imaginary lives, just as – in the model of India his father sets adrift on a pond in their back yard – the Ganges and its tributaries flow into the imaginary oceans of the world:

“He let the model drift in the water without securing it. It looked as if India had pulled itself away from Asia, ripping the Himalayas with it, and was powering itself through the Indian Ocean in whatever direction it chose. The Ganges would no longer flow into the Bay of Bengal but into all the oceans of the world.”

This is a simple book and offers no profound philosophy, no heady abstractions, but rather presents the reader with a sense of small truths being found in the way things are. It is a novel of a life observed without nostalgia or sentimentality, but with a reflective and insightful quality that allows the reader to imagine the story-teller trying to capture the peculiar qualities that make the otherwise ordinary moments in each of our lives stand out in our memories. And it ‘feels’ honest, which is perhaps its most persuasive quality.

What makes this book particularly distinctive, is that it portrays the experiences of first-gener-

ation Indian immigrants in Australia with a sure lightness of touch. Cyrill writes with a fancy and playfulness that is most evident in the way he shifts easily from scene to scene, and in the book's overall rambling, without-beginning-or-end structure. Here we find not the "literary arsonist" the cover blurb would have us believe Cyrill to be, but rather, perhaps, a sweet modernist. For all its rambling, though, *The Ganges and its Tributaries* is a tidy novel – neatly intermixing, sometimes blurring, the present and the past, and signposting all its digressions – and the impression of tidiness is heightened by an evenness of tone and pace that is relentless. A sex scene, a third of the way through the book, is almost the only time the pace varies. In its evenness of tone, and in some of the sentences, you can almost trace Gerald Murnane's influence. There is also a confident exactness about the descriptions that, though rich in carefully picked detail, are open enough to let the reader use his or her imagination as much as the young Joseph uses his.

Christopher Cyrill is a graduate of the writing course at what was Toorak College, now part of Deakin University and this impressive debut is his first novel. If he is representative of the talented young writers emerging from the new writing schools, then there is a big shift already happening – the emergence of exciting new voices, of a new generation.

Adrian Marshall is a graduate of the RMIT writing course. His novel, Typetrax (Modern Writing, 1993) won The Instant Book Award for 1993.

Landscape, Language and Life Forms

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

John Kinsella: *Full Fathom Five* (Freemantle Arts Centre Press, \$16.95).

Diane Fahey: *Mayflies in Amber* (Angus and Robertson, \$14.95).

THE TITLE POEM OF John Kinsella's third collection, *Full Fathom Five*, is a curious choice. Unfortunately, it highlights the poet's least explored and least successful area of poetic development – common human emotions in common human relationships. Without

'Full Fathom Five' (propped up by Joyce, Shakespeare and Jackson Pollock) it would have been easier to concentrate on Kinsella's successes.

The first two-thirds of this book plays with ideas in language and language in ideas. Although the last third concerns particular paintings, the poems are clearer and well-made. Ironically, it's here that Kinsella feels free to make statements about people, and history. While he doesn't always succeed in the two areas of his work, both the language play and his interpretations of art works are enjoyable and challenging.

Would the poet's playful poems be so effective without his vivid Western Australian landscape and seascape imagery? A moot point, but probably not. The relativity, the quantum physics, the human-made as nature and nature as the human-made, the potentially illusory nature of art and thought, the bizarre metaphors and anti-metaphors, the allusions and anti-allusions all interest the reader because of the vivid visual imagery.

By contrast, metaphorical high jinks that aren't located in landscape and seascape tend to have less impact, as in the poem 'Of'. The following lines from 'The Mark Of The Beast' are typical of Kinsella's many teasing but effective poems:

The mark of the beast is a cairn of granite,
 or the rain-riven walls of a dam
 shining in the late afternoon like a vast lump
 of crumpled velvet and polished bone.
 The mark of the beast is an old foundry
 surrounded
 by rubble and lime pits, the navigation
 marker
 that lures or deters to save, the glint of distant
 sunglasses.

Kinsella includes interpretations of various works by photographers and artists such as Max Dupain, Arthur Boyd, Morris Graves, Helen Frankenthaler, Kenneth Noland, Susan Rothenberg, Paul Klee and Andy Warhol. His range of interpretations includes considerations of the art, the artist and the artist's subject matter. Instead of *embodying* a sort of language-based sense of relativity, as he had done previously, he now *tells* the reader about interpreting Boyd.

The process is 'seasonal'. Kinsella might write a different poem in winter.

Warhol's Marilyn Monroe is both biography and history:

from the earthly DiMaggio, loaded
and ready to leap from the black bunker,
to your heavenly lips, icons worshipped
by every team, loved even in defeat.
And the celebrity pitching the first
ball of the season calls the atmosphere
sweet. The President licks your golden feet.

The ending of 'Lavender Mist' (after Pollock) is like nothing in his earlier work:

you watch it swallow
the wharves, the first waves of the cold war.

The poet who'd delighted in playful ambiguity becomes the poet who can politicise *mist*. Bravo!

DIANE FAHEY'S brilliantly structured fourth collection of poems, *mayflies in amber*, is full of vivid visual images of insects and similar life forms from the beautiful to the grotesque. Not only has Fahey inspected her subject matter closely, she has also researched it.

She combines aesthetics and science to show how *like* and how *unlike* humans are to these other life forms. Moreover, Fahey is aware that there's nothing definitive about her comparisons. As well as relating them to human history, she also depicts the ways in which earlier societies have interpreted some of these amazing creatures. In a book that juxtaposes human transience with the longevity of the 400-million-year-old scorpion, the last poem reiterates the 'living' palaeontology of the mayfly:

Fluted wings at rest –
mazes of crystal veins
sealed in muted sunlight
as if, aeons ago, by amber.

After reading Fahey's exquisite imagery, which

evokes small zeppelins in whirring cellophane (cicadas) and fragments of stained glass (butterflies), it would be possible to read 'Butterflies: A Meditation' as a summary of the poet's delicate poetic process. Possible – but wrong.

The book's second section, called Interiors, describes a cockroach as "Blackly armoured as a dictator's funeral" and voices a smug bedbug's dramatic monologue. Lice are depicted in terms of the occupational and socio-economic categories of their victims.

Fleas are both reactionary and revolutionary. Silverfish hail from another planet. In the third section, called 'The Wider World', the poet relates some "vile" practices among sifafu ants, scale insects, aphids, treehoppers, green lacewings, midges and the praying mantis:

Carnivore, cannibal:
violating laws that
in war and love
we violate, over and over.

She's also a dab hand with the bull ant:

An organism divides into two enemies
no longer able to remember each other.
One stings, one bites. Victory awaits neither:
heads can't win, tails must lose.

The context of violence and historical depth in which these apparently timeless life forms are placed, couldn't be predicted from Fahey's perception of her own artistic process. Moreover, her black humour couldn't be predicted from her butterflies.

Graham Rowlands is an Adelaide poet and reviewer.

Doctors and the Profits of Addiction

MARIAN TURNBULL

Beatrice Faust: *Benzo Junkie* (Viking, \$19.95).

IDIDN'T BRING much sympathy to this book. I'd heard doctors call Valium "the health food of a nation" in the 1970s. How could Beatrice Faust with her political experience, her

shrewdness and independence, have become addicted to a benzodiazepine?

But she had anticipated my attitude. "What defeat could be worse for a fiercely autonomous woman than to succumb to doctor induced drug addiction?" she cries in her preface. She has written *Benzo Junkie* to explore the context of her addiction, to understand why a psychiatrist prescribed Ativan/lorazepam for her anxiety in 1982, when it was known to give rise to dependence, and why when she became ill with unexplained pain, loss of libido, hypersalivation, insomnia and a range of other unpleasant symptoms, she could find no doctor to diagnose her addiction, but encountered denial and hostility. Over a five year period she underwent tests for diabetes, syphilis and AIDS, had a curette, her eyes tested, an endoscopy. At last "the penny dropped", she realised she was addicted to Ativan. She contacted the drug support group, TRANX, and found she was not the only survivor.

"Innocence gives me strength", Faust says. "Benzodiazepine addiction is nothing to be ashamed of. It is not a matter of an addictive personality but of pharmacological insult for which we are not to blame." Armed with this certainty, though still suffering symptoms of addiction, she began a study of the documentary evidence of the research, testing and marketing practices of the drug houses, and of their alliance with the doctors, what she calls "the industrial-medical complex".

Faust argues that "rogue drugs" like thalidomide, DES, and Clioquinol, which have caused disabilities and death, and been the subject of legal action, are not unfortunate exceptions to a generally responsible pattern of drug manufacture and supply. They are part of profit motivated corporate crime. She provides convincing evidence of shoddy testing, suppression of unfavourable research, dishonest advertising and marketing practices, bribery, dumping of banned or discredited drugs, and lobbying to reduce the power of regulatory authorities. George Bush turns up in this context. He held \$180,000 worth of stock in the drug house Ely Lilly and was also a member of the board of directors when he joined the Reagan administration. He initiated a conciliatory policy between the drug houses and the government which resulted in a 66.4 per cent decrease in total FDA

(Food and Drug Administration) law enforcement actions in the first six months of the fiscal year 1982, compared with the interval before the administration took office.

But Faust has not written *Benzo Junkie* as a catalogue of corporate drug crime and its tragic human consequences. She wants action and has made a submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the Prescription and Supply of Drugs. Her book makes a number of useful recommendations, among them greater regulation of advertising, standardised labelling of drugs including generic and family names, a requirement that contributors to journals reveal their source of funding, and a plan to build up the C.S.I.R.O. as a local producer of drugs.

And the doctors who are the go-betweens, who prescribe the drugs to which Beatrice Faust

"They emerge as naive and complacent, manipulated by the drug retailers, the salesmen of the drug companies, content to hide ignorance behind their status and the authority of science."

and many others are addicted? They emerge as naive and complacent, manipulated by the drug retailers, the salesmen of the drug companies, content to hide ignorance behind their status and the authority of science. The alleged doctor-patient relationship, says Faust, "is often a conduit for piping tax dollars around the medical-industrial complex".

Faust has sketched wonderful Dickensian portraits of the doctors she encountered in her search for diagnosis and treatment. Dr Dinkum the woman psychiatrist whose room suggested "the weekend hippie", Dr Minty who walked "as if his arse chewed minties", Fred Manners the consultant with the exquisite manners, Dr Dickhead, Dr Dainty, Dr Blank, and Dr Pain. Like characters in a novel I wanted to know what they would do next.

Doctors are divided into Coans and Cnidians, according to Faust. Coans being the inheritors of the holistic tradition founded by Hippocrates on the island of Cos around 460 BC; and Cnidians of the reductionist tradition from the island of Cnidus. Coans focus on the patient in his/her-

environment, Cnidians on the disease. Coans are interested in health, Cnidians in illth. There are more Cnidians than Coans.

"More than a case history but less than a biography", Faust says of her book. *Benzo Junkie* draws on the private diaries the author wrote during her illness, and if not a biography is nonetheless a very personal story. I found the understated sorrow of her childhood very moving. Beatrice's mother died in childbirth, and she was reared by a father who spoke only to reprove, and a stepmother who liked to issue foolish warnings. "My family had no investment in my life", Faust says. Added to this were the illnesses, asthma, bronchiectasis and scoliosis, which made her reliant on doctors, and must be seen she argues, as the background to her addiction.

Beatrice Faust's prose is a joy to read; energetic, colourful, witty, and never shrinking from calling a spade a bloody shovel. If at times the details of symptoms are repetitive, maybe this is necessary to redress the benzodiazepine sufferer's experience of finding no one who will listen seriously. *Benzo Junkie* is not a happy book. But it is a positive book, imbued with the author's fighting spirit, her determination to be well against all odds, and to get, if not justice, "at least satisfaction". It should prompt us all to ask, "Is my doctor a Cnidian or a Coan?"

Marian Turnbull is a Melbourne herbalist and archivist.

Accidental Poet

CLEMENT SEMMLER

Colin Roderick: *Banjo Paterson; Poet by Accident* (Allen & Unwin, \$39.95).

IN ONE OF THE BEST critical assessments of Paterson's work yet written, Professor Harry Heseltine, in a 1964 *Meanjin* essay, described him as "a poet nearly anonymous". He wrote: "If the first impulse to enshrine Paterson within the national myth arose from what was felt to be his typicality, we in the twentieth century are perhaps more likely to keep him there on account of his anonymity. What we retain from Paterson's literary career is a number of well-

loved poems, not an image of the man who wrote them. It is the poetry rather than the poet which has become legendary."

One puts down Roderick's biography convinced of the rightness of Heseltine's judgement. Roderick has painstakingly amassed an extraordinary amount of detail about Paterson's career – including many pages of family history that give his book a very slow start. Yet in the end we know little more about Paterson the man than we do already. Sportsman and horseman (exuberantly), traveller, journalist, newspaper editor (indifferently), war correspondent (magnificently), station owner (unsuccessfully), sporting and racing-writer (enthusiastically), broadcaster for the infant ABC in the early 1930s, clubman and man-about-town towards the end of his life – for these and other of Paterson's activities Roderick has seemingly turned over every available document and source to chronicle them. At times, as a result, his narrative tends to read like a plodding collection of facts. Yet there still does not emerge a convincing picture of Paterson as a human being – as husband, lover, father, friend.

Part of this is due, of course, as previous biographers have found, to the continuing inaccessibility of family and personal papers – vital elements in constructing a living biography. That Roderick has been able to find out what he has is a tribute to the pertinacity of his researches. The trouble is that facts in themselves do not always yield their meanings easily. Diaries (there are probably some somewhere) at least reflect a person's true reasons for his actions; letters (there must be many) are equally relevant since, as Thomas Jefferson once wrote, they "form the only full and genuine journal of a man's life."

Nevertheless there is much of interest in this biography: the remarkable versatility of Paterson's career; his relationships with his fellow-writers (especially with Miles Franklin, where Roderick has uncovered new material and with Harry 'The Breaker' Morant). It is a sound assessment that Paterson's forte was "a descriptive narrative composed with an eye on the object" – so that his Boer War despatches are among the best things he wrote – as is the emphasis on the excellence of Paterson's political verse satires. However some of his judgements on aspects of Paterson's writing may be

challenged, not least his critical dismissal of 'The Animals that Noah Forgot' – surely among the best children's verse in our literature. Even so, the book remains a valuable addition to the catalogue of writing about our best-known folk poet.

A postscript is necessary. In a television interview in the ABC's Sunday afternoon TV arts program soon after the book was published, the obviously ill-briefed compere, Peter Ross, introduced Roderick as the writer of the "first biography" of Paterson. Roderick did not demur. This was, alas, at best unusual forgetfulness on the part of an acknowledged authority on Australian literature. Roderick would have known well that there have been two previous Paterson biographies (both, indeed, listed in his Select Bibliography), one of which has run to several editions.

Dr Semmler has written extensively on Paterson and has edited four collections of his prose and verse.

Fiction and Accuracy

KEVIN BROPHY

Liam Davison: *Soundings* (University of Queensland Press, 1993, \$16.95).

Thomas Shapcott: *Mona's Gift* (Penguin, 1993, \$19.95).

SOME NOVELS SEEM to claim a certain place or a time as theirs with such intensity and clarity that the time or the place cannot be recalled without the novel's presence making itself felt. *Monkey Grip* claimed North Fitzroy and Melbourne's early 1970s commune culture, *Cloudstreet* recently claimed Perth in the 1950s, Thomas Bernard has claimed a particular seat in the Bordonne Room of the Kunsthistorisches Museum with his book, *Old Masters*, Nicholson Baker has taken the city office worker's lunch hour in *Mezzanine*. And now, Liam Davison has claimed the unlikely and unpromising swamps of Koo-wee-rup in his novel, *Soundings*. The book is a tour de force by a writer who brings mud, silt, floods and swamp into the pores of his prose. It is a distinctive and strange novel.

I used to visit my sister's dairy farm at Koo-

wee-rup. The flat paddocks of the farm petered out into bogs at the edge of the property where stray cows would drown in the mud. The walls of her house dripped with moisture in winter and her children suffered from chest complaints. It was as if the house soaked up rotten water from the mud of the farmland. There was nowhere, really, for water to flow to in such a flat place. I could see that the farm was somehow unhealthy and unstable even though the grass grew richly and the cows gave milk. Now, after reading Liam Davison's long meditation on the ways Europeans have used and shaped the swamps around Koo-wee-rup, I feel I can understand the meaning of this place.

"How is it that a work of fiction can seem to claim a fundamental truth about a place?"

How is it that a work of fiction can seem to claim a fundamental truth about a place? After all, the fiction writer (unlike the historian) takes all care but no responsibility with the facts. Why should I trust Liam Davison's account at all? His book is certainly not a triumph of realism – it is hallucinatory, surreal, disjointed. And if it is judged by the conventions of realist fiction it has severe weaknesses. We don't know, for example, what motivates the central character, Jack Cameron, in his endless photographing of the swamp. The photographs as a device for moving from the past to the present are clumsy. But by the end of *Soundings*, I was convinced that the book had been written, in some important way, at the mercy of this place and its history – at the mercy of some truth we need to know about ourselves and about the land we have come to so recently.

The book touches on the first scientific explorations of Westernport by French explorers, the exploitation of the bay and local Aboriginal women by sealers, the first aborted British attempt at occupying the bay, and the later projects for draining the swamp and developing the land for profit. Jasper Black, one of the drain diggers who lived in a mud hut on the swamp "spoke of the drains his father had dug, and his

father before him, and the network of channels in England – the Inland Waterways System – more extensive than all of the railways laid in Australia. And he told of the drainers from Holland who'd cross the channel to show them how it was done when draining was in your blood – whole tracts of land reclaimed from the sea, swamplands turned into farms – until Nathan Muir could see nothing but drains and the prospects that opened before him. Here was Science put to a practical use."

At the centre of the novel, as real as the swamp itself, is the figure of Anna, who married Jasper Black, went with him to the swamp, bore their son, and lost the child to a flood. This story flickers past us, an immense but also fleeting moment, only one of the shifting stories this land could deliver to us. We kill what we cannot love. We lose what we love.

In the years after Edgar's disappearance, Anna felt her child's absence as a palpable thing that never left her house. Sometimes she would brush against it unexpectedly and start, as if surprised that it could hurt so much from such a gentle touch. Other times she ran to it, calling out her lost son's name. She wrapped her arms around it, knowing that the pain would drive her to distraction, and when she thought she couldn't bear it any more, she pulled it tight and rubbed her flesh against it until her body rocked with sobs. She couldn't help herself. Even when she'd packed his cot away, it didn't go. She couldn't bring herself to use the spot where it had stood but skirted round it as if it was a yawning hole between her husband and herself.

THOUGH *Soundings* is a unique and risky book, it does declare itself in ways that are becoming familiar for readers of modern Australian fiction. At the beginning of the book there is a bibliography of the manuscripts, histories and documents that were consulted in the research for the novel; the novel places historical characters, such as Hovell, into its landscape. Direct quotations from the research sources provide Davison's Jack Cameron with some of the clues to the story he is trying to piece together from photographs, from local monuments, from

ruined homesteads, from a library of an amateur historian, and from the drains themselves (from the swamp-as-text). We meet the same strategy at the beginning of Thomas Shapcott's *Mona's Gift*. Shapcott acknowledges the importance of research into the history of the Australian army's New Guinea campaign in the 1940s, with a bibliography noting his main sources. Quotations from these sources are included in parts of the novel, sometimes introducing a section, at other times constituting a section. (Another recent novel which is based heavily on detailed historical research is Frank Moorhouse's *Grand Days*. Is our fiction becoming more accurate? Where is it best to go to discover what really happened? If Manning Clark's history of Australia reads like a grand novel, do novels now read like careful history?)

As in Davison's book, there is a central character searching through documents and photographs in an attempt to uncover the truth of a story which must, ultimately, be imagined if it is going to be understood. There are letters, diary entries, memories, descriptions of events as they might have happened, or must have happened, sometimes two versions of the same letter. This novel does not make obsessive claims to a particular place, but it does focus on a time in Australia's history when individuals were suddenly transplanted (transported again?) not just into a New Guinea jungle, not just into a war, but into a world of such hatred that to take a prisoner was a traitorous act. It was a world where soldiers believed the enemy would eat them if they were captured. At the same time, in Sydney, there was the life people lived when they knew that soon they too might have to go to the war, or the war might come to them – a life that inevitably seemed trivial and insubstantial to the soldier returning from the jungle where "we are letting the maggots stay in the wounds of the walking wounded – they clean out the gangrenous tissue."

Mona's Gift is a more relaxed, more awkward, and more expansive book than Davison's, but again, like *Soundings*, it is a book with a woman at the centre, and two or three incidents which shape the fall of the characters' lives. Ted and Mona meet at a party and escape to make love together immediately. This is exactly what happened to Jasper and Anna Black in *Soundings*. Is this synchronicity? I can't remember it happen-

ing before in two novels in the same week of my life. After this, there is the correspondence while Ted is in New Guinea, there is his diary which Mona must have stolen from him later, there is hearsay, and there are the gaps the narrator tries to fill. There are newspaper cuttings, the usual leftovers from a life of hoarding. Finally, there is an argument over which film they will go to see one night when he is on leave. The argument is ludicrous but fatal for their relationship. They write about it, they go back over it, but it cannot

"The book's distance from its characters makes them seem both very real in a documentary way, and very silly because they are not skilled or instinctive enough in their writing to bring themselves sympathetically alive."

teach them anything that will save their affair.

The book's distance from its characters makes them seem both very real in a documentary way, and very silly because they are not skilled or instinctive enough in their writing to bring themselves sympathetically alive. While in New Guinea, Ted makes a light plane excursion into the highlands where he meets a tribe who might never have seen white people before. Later he writes: "Yet how possibly confide [to Mona], for instance, this constant gnawing in my mind that my malarial blood has been an agent up in the Highlands to transmit the disease to those magnificent and able-bodied people?" We cannot be sure how real or sincere these words are in the diary when they are not followed up. Is this the reason he returned to New Guinea? But not 'really' knowing these people is part of the program of this book. To 'really' know them would be to invent a particular fantasy about them, or a particular fictional version of them. We are left with the evidence, and what we can make of it. What judgements we make will probably tell us more about ourselves than about Mona or Ted. A large part of the enjoyment in reading this book is in discovering how greedily we readers are always wanting to know more than we can.

Kevin Brophy, a Melbourne poet, novelist and short-story writer, is co-editor of Going Down Swinging.

Poems From 'A Hired Mourner'

CATHERINE BATESON

Fay Zwicky: *Poems 1970–1992* (University of Queensland Press, \$19.95).

FAY ZWICKY'S POETRY chronicles the stories of the inarticulate, whether they be the animals of the Ark, testing their relationship to God, or the last chapter in the lives of the clients of the hospice where the poet visits.

One of the joys of a collected poems, beyond mere bulk – though that is in itself an enormous pleasure – is seeing the changes in the poet's work, the slow shift to assurance and beyond; the first tentative steps past old limitations. Zwicky's *Poems 1970–1992* is no exception though the steps here stride rather than falter and the final poems in this book leave the reader anticipating exciting directions for the future.

In her early work Zwicky assumes many masks, appropriating historical figures such as Emily Dickinson, her own ancestors, classical and biblical mythology, and subverting these slyly to reveal new and complex voices.

In the wonderful poem, 'Emily Dickinson Judges the Bread Division at the Amherst Cattle Show, 1858' the Pastor Jenkins is duped into approving Emily's "draped humility". But there is a price for concealing self and the poet Zwicky makes the poet Dickinson ask, "is't for this/ I'll go, strangling in smiles, to heaven?"

In much of this early work Zwicky's characters – her voices – live secret, interior lives they can communicate only to God or the anonymous reader. Mrs Noah pleads with God to mediate between her and her "incorruptible and good" husband whose impassive trust in destiny is juxtaposed against her urgent doubt. Zwicky builds convincingly from a humorous colloquial beginning of her narrator's address to God: "Lord, the cleaning's nothing./What's a pen or two?" to a psalmic intensity: "Strangers in this ark, this one small 'Yes'/afloat on a vast 'No', your watery negative."

At the heart of this collection is always Zwicky's love of and respect for language. The sequence 'Ark Voices' contains her virtuoso addresses to God by the ark animals. Each distinctive animal voice is given its own form from

the squat sonnets of the hippos to the plaintive ballad of the wolf and the ponderous elephant's prayer. The animals echo Mrs Noah's doubt and reveal their frailties in their one-sided dialogues with God.

God is a major player in Zwicky's work. Religion is a shaping power of personal identity, although God is almost accessible, sometimes even lightly mocked. 'Reckoning' is worth quoting in full as an example of Zwicky at her wicked best:

Whom have We next? (His syntax is perfect). This one is due for what there is called joy.

I alone know
the span of her schooling.
Who else needs to know?
None but I, the Omnipotent.
Under my hat will I keep it
(vernacular master).

Her sullen
green fires will I spring
unburden her airs
allow time to pass
and in My pain's darkness
trample her glass.

The God-as-artist in His lonely omnipotence is reminiscent of Jung's Yahweh in *Answer to Job*. In 'Kaddish', however, Zwicky portrays a fierce God imposing a strict, unloving duty. Zwicky's poems for and about her parents display an ambiguous, difficult love.

Any expression of this, any move to reconciliation with the dying mother in 'Breathing Exercises' is denied by the mother's unyielding silence. A display of emotion would cause an 'embarrassing scene'. The same mother in 'Afloat' sours the child's relationship with her father, casting silence ("Be quiet. Don't disturb your father.") over their shared play.

And yet silence is what the poet says she aspires to, despite these bitter memories. She entertains a fantasy of detachment. When she grows up, she writes, "My voice will be low, steady,/unemphatic, purged of need." This poem in the award-winning collection, *Ask Me*, contrasts with an earlier poem which confesses emphatically, "Under each inert hour of my silence/died a poem, unheeded".

The same dream of silence as a form of grace

is celebrated in 'The Dyeing' from the sequence 'A Tale of the Great Smokies'. Penelope, finding salvation in work, a "tranced discipline", celebrates "A clean unfaltering green./Wordless" as though the pure colour is all that can be trusted. In an earlier poem in the same sequence she reveals the paradox. Speaking of her marriage she says spring was the best season when:

Silenced by joy
the colour, smell and sound
of everything answer
any question I have
ever asked.

Yet in the following stanza she asks:

Why talk of time, children, spring
and a river if not to tell
that once we spoke and
listened to each other.

Detachment *is* fantasy; purged of need the poet admits she would "become the absolute/it's taken me a lifetime to annihilate".

The poet is, as Zwicky states in a televised interview with Peter Ross, "a hired mourner". But in her retelling of the stories of the dying in a hospice Zwicky relinquishes the position of mere observer and each unsentimental, at times laconic, poem reveals the hard learning of the poet's own lessons in charity.

This later work, including poems mourning dead colleagues and friends, shows Zwicky unmasked, released from the distance of myth. The restrained tenderness of early poems is replaced by an expansive love which embraces the past, present everyday life and even death.

To reach this point the poet has had to risk standing naked and this she does in one of the most moving poems in the entire collection. The explosive 'Letting Go', grieves for departing children. The choppy form and repetitions of the poem -

Tell the truth of experience
they say they also
say you must let
go learn to let go
let your children
go

– resolve into a final ordered, poignant stanza:

When you wake
your spine is twisted
like a sea-bird
inspecting the sky,
stripped by lightning.

This is a volume of poems to read and re-read, not only for the crafted joy of their language, the mocking wit and sly iconoclasm but for the intellect at the heart of Zwicky's provocative work.

Catherine Bateson is a writer and reviewer living in Central Victoria. She is poetry editor of Overland Extra.

Women and History in PNG

HELGA M. GRIFFIN

Chilla Bulbeck: *Australian Women in Papua New Guinea. Colonial Passages 1920–1960* (Cambridge University Press Syndicate, \$45.00).

John Dademo Waiko: *A Short History of Papua New Guinea* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne, \$24.95).

CHILLA BULBECK, an academic from Griffith University, scrutinises the experiences of Australian women in Papua and New Guinea, as PNG then was, from the time when coastal areas had been largely 'pacified' to the beginning of moves towards national independence. She chose this period in order to assess, within a relatively controlled time-frame, 'the fifty-year-old myth' perpetrated by male analysts in various parts of the world, that white expatriate women, for a number of reasons, were responsible for institutionalising racism and for engendering its more extreme expressions.

Bulbeck and an associate interviewed nineteen women of that 'colonial passage', mostly, but not all, of Australian background. They had come as wives or as single 'working' women to the Australian colonies during 1920–60. At the heart of her study is a set of letters and informative photographs from Bulbeck's grandmother, Isabel Platten, the strong-minded wife of a once-

poor Methodist missionary. She has woven fragments of these and of the other memories through a panorama of Australian colonial history in PNG which forms the official backdrop to previously little stated female testimony. She also draws heavily on specialised studies by Denoon, Gammage, Gardner, A. Inglis, Langmore, Nelson, Oram and Wolfers.

The PNG colonies were characterised by absurdly rigid rules of behaviour and discriminatory policies which distanced indigenes socially, spatially and politically from their 'mastas'. They underpinned an imported hierarchy of status in which white men were at the apex of the ladder but white women above indigenous men. Bulbeck argues that male-female tensions are ubiquitous and therefore far more pervasive than are tensions created by ethnicity, and therefore 'race', even though the colonial order everywhere was bolstered by theories that justified its existence.

This hierarchical and segmented situation was often complicated by the conflicting aims and perspectives of three major vocational categories of white society which shaped their lives: private enterprise (plantations, trade, mining, shipping); the missions and their associates (divided among themselves into denominations and countries of origin); and government appointees (administrators, educators, health workers, scientific advisers). Women were also influenced by the rivalry between the two colonies and by whether they lived in (the more racist) towns or in the 'bush'. Bulbeck was confirmed in her expectation that World War II, for a number of reasons, limbered up race (and presumably sexual) relations in PNG and that Independence in 1975 altered them irrevocably.

She argues her way, not always clearly, through feminist and other literature on colonialism elsewhere. Frequently, however, one does not know, from the text itself, from what part of the world her examples are drawn. Her expressive language provides layers of meaning ("passage", "destination", "space") but is sometimes loose ("shape", "official") and causes confusion. No quantitative analysis can ever be made of male versus female racist proclivities and Bulbeck's sample remains too small for any valid assessment. The interviews were conducted out of context and from twenty-seven to sixty-seven years after the periods described.

Bulbeck's selection does, however, present some convincing evidence that Australian expatriate women were not solely responsible for racism in our former colony. She aptly queries why it is that in male speculations about the nature of racism, expatriate wives became grotesque scapegoats. This, in spite of the fact that women were not mentioned in most male reports and were often referred to by husbands as "the wife", "missus" or anonymously, if at all, and their skills were usually underestimated (e.g., a hospital matron earned half the wages of a plumber).

Bulbeck's acceptance of provocative feminist assertions is not necessarily helpful or correct. For example, there is her (unquestioning) use of Kniebiehler and Goutalier's definition of colonialism as being "a masculine act: to conquer, to penetrate, to possess, to inseminate", and that the *lands* of the world with racially 'dark' populations were therefore phantasised by male explorers as embodying an essentially female

"After refuting the argument linking white women with racism, she leans to its feminist opposite ..."

persona. After refuting the argument linking white women with racism, she leans to its feminist opposite: that by their 'softer', more interactive participation (e.g., in 'caring' work) across white-male-imposed hierarchies and racial boundaries, women "single-handedly" undermined and destroyed the male "enterprise of Empire".

Bulbeck's presentation sacrifices the forest for the trees and *no convincing* conclusions are reached. Further editorial attention is also needed in the index, from which at least two frequently cited informants are missing.

A DECADE AGO Dr Waiko, with the assent of his ANU supervisors, translated his thesis on the oral traditions of his people into their Binandere language so that it could be read to and validated by his elders. It was a deeply respectful gesture but, as it turned out, not without irony. At a triumphal feast he presented his

bound thesis to his village. Memorably filmed as *Man Without Pigs*, the film's most memorable scene showed Waiko being examined in a different mode. If he was such a success why had he not accumulated pigs, the evidence of a man's achievement? Why was he not reciprocating

"If he was such a success why had he not accumulated pigs, the evidence of a man's achievement?"

pigs in return for their decades of support while he was schooled? Of what use was his learning to them or himself? Waiko left the last question unanswered.

Perhaps when this first history text written by a Papua New Guinean finds its way into local schools, some of Waiko's *wantoks* may achieve some understanding at the hands of their children. An indigenous interpretation of PNG's past has been overdue.

One can assume this conventional, chronologically linear text, subdivided into modules for easy absorption, was dictated by the school market. In addition, it draws on the teaching materials used at the University of PNG which were based on research carried out since it was founded in the late sixties, including the author's own. Its achievement is best measured by comparison with the first national history text for the Forms III and IV syllabuses published by Biskup, Jinks and Nelson in 1968, which provided a rudimentary narrative history under many headings presented from the point of view of those living and working in the Territory of PNG.

About one hundred pages longer, Waiko's text is pitched at an older group of students. His reconstruction of traditional societies is more attuned to national pride. It proudly claims that people at Kuk in the Highlands were the earliest gardeners in the world and inventive users of irrigation about nine thousand years ago. Waiko also makes an elegant linkage between traditional meeting grounds (*arapa* in Binandere) and widespread acceptance of a democratic parliament now. The best parts of his book draw on his own research. The later chapters incorporate

controversial topics, such as the incursions of multinational corporations into village life and the temptation of some politicians to fill their pockets. Waiko's nationalism does not override his commitment to standards of fairness.

Because the text is simplified and its length restricted by market requirements, variations in historical interpretation may have been difficult to accommodate. The modular structure does allow each topic to be studied separately, to be expanded and to be focused more on the actions of persons than on determinism. But it is important for text-book writers to realise that it is the problem-directed historical method which teaches students to *think*. The existing summaries can too easily tempt students to learn by rote. However, a text which gives a stimulating overview can be a handy companion to other challenging teaching materials.

A publisher ought, perhaps, to have insisted on dates and sources for maps, on glossaries of words and abbreviations, and on the use of graphs to simplify complicated statistics. Some key studies have been omitted from the reading list. If Ian Willis on Lae is cited, it is more than appropriate to include Oram on Port Moresby and Oliver on Bougainville.

Helga M. Griffin worked in PNG for some years and is now at the ANU.

Her Own Opinions

PATSY POPPENBEEK

Evelyn Crawford (as told to Chris Walsh): *Over My Tracks; A remarkable life* (Penguin Books, \$16.95).

INDIGNATION IS THE INITIAL response to yet another Aboriginal life story 'as told to' a white, a process which has been criticised repeatedly as yet another example of White Australian imperialism.

However, to say this of *Over My Tracks* is to be just as patronising. Told of the current attitude towards such texts, Evelyn Crawford snapped:

I'm too old to let any white person tell a story for me, and I've got enough sense not to trust just anyone ... We are elders and we are teachers in our own right – we say, people

like that don't know what they're talking about – we shouldn't be compared to younger people and things they do and how they do it. I got my own opinion about what I should do as an Aboriginal person.

According to Crawford, without Walsh there would have been no book, for while Crawford has written children's stories and is an experienced story-teller, she did not want to write about herself. Walsh, scholar, teacher, nun and adventurer (what else would you call someone who blithely heads off into wilderness armed only with her walking stick?), originally met Crawford while researching Aboriginal education. Such interesting material about Crawford's own life emerged that Walsh suggested that Crawford should write it down. Crawford fobbed her off with, "Yeah, I will one day"; and after several years of "nagging" one day Walsh told her, "Right, we're going to do it."

Over My Tracks evolved as it did because a great oral story-teller met a noteworthy story facilitator. Crawford has the story-teller's gift of amazing recall: afterwards, she said she went "too far back in the past and it took me ages to come back". Being where many of the events occurred obviously helped, but so did Walsh's questions and personality. Crawford described it as "like having a strong shoulder to lean on."

To prevent broadcasting anything sacred or too intimate Walsh used two tactics. She switched the tape recorder off when such things were mentioned and told Crawford that if they got to talking about anything which was private and she did not turn the machine off, Crawford should tell her to do so or turn it off herself. Secondly, the tapes were typed out and Crawford read everything, saying what she wanted changed or deleted. The approved version was then signed. Stories by Crawford's children were also added.

The third and final stage involved ordering and selecting the stories. Tales too long or similar were left out, as were details which might identify people such as the bizarre "manager" of the mission. Stories were arranged in chronological order and photographs contributed by various family members. Perhaps the best analogy of the book-making is that of a patchwork quilt, with Crawford weaving and colouring

most of the pieces, Walsh (and the Penguin editors) stitching them together, and various other people donating some patches.

As with a quilt, sometimes the transition from one patch to the next is a little abrupt, but the overall shape is quietly pleasing, and many of the patches are unforgettable. Crawford's life has indeed been a remarkable one. Registered like one of the stock in a station ledger, she has ended up lunching with the Queen: incidentally, grumbling at the food provided and, when Herself commented, "You're a very special person", coolly replying, "We all are, because there's only one of us." She was a child escapee from a mission, a drover (with a baby in her saddle-bag), an artist, and a partner in a long and successful marriage. She successfully raised thirteen children, and in her widowed middle age trained as an Aboriginal Teacher's Assistant, later becoming a TAFE Aboriginal Regional Co-ordinator.

Apart from being imbued with a powerful and salty personality, *Over My Tracks* indicates how vital traditional Aboriginal culture is. Unlike other Aboriginal women who have written their life stories, Crawford was lucky enough to be given an Aboriginal education and the book has fascinating insights into Aboriginal school, marriage customs, values, symbols and medicine – some pieces of the quilt which I would have liked to be larger.

Over My Tracks lacks the well-shaped, spicy, somewhat self-conscious poignancy of *My Place*, and the anger of some Aboriginal fiction; but it does not accept white dominance. Crawford's attitude is probably best expressed when she says:

I hear a lot of remarks about Aboriginal people that make my hair stand on end, but I think, "They don't know about us, so why should I worry, and waste me time tryin' to explain to 'em. They don't want to understand. They can say what they want to say, it's not hurtin' me."

This is a book for those who do want to understand.

Patsy Poppenbeek is a Communication Skills teacher at Melbourne College of Printing and Graphic Arts. Her Masters thesis was on Black Australian stereotypes created by both Aboriginal and white Australians.

Intelligence and Prosperity

FRANK CAIN

Jenny Hocking: *Beyond Terrorism; The Development of the Australian Security State* (Allen & Unwin, \$24.95).

THE RIGHT IN AUSTRALIA, together with their bureaucracies, have long held the conviction that the left is a threat and potentially subversive to the good order and government of the states and of Australia generally. The motif of the socialist tiger stalking the NSW electorates was used by Henry Parkes as a device to win support away from the growing Labor Party in late nineteenth century New South Wales. In protectionist Victoria, the very beneficial tariff, while being perceived as a necessary means of protecting industry from cheaper imports, was also condemned for its encouragement of workers to establish trade unions. The Melbourne establishment and their press friends preached that the tariff led directly to the raising of wages by the artful working class indulging in their collusive and monopolist practices. Many of the economists turned out by learned institutions hold the same view of economic and industrial affairs today, more than a century later. They continue to preach the necessity to break these 'working class monopolistic practices'.

The Great War saw the most significant attempt by the Commonwealth government to

"At Billy Hughes' direction, the Australian Army's military intelligence branch undertook the surveillance of all citizens opposed to the war, conscription, Billy Hughes himself and the government's war policy."

curb what it was considered as the subversive techniques of the Australian left when they began to oppose the conduct of the war. At Billy Hughes' direction, the Australian Army's military intelligence branch undertook the surveillance of all citizens opposed to the war, conscription, Billy Hughes himself and the government's war policy. The members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), who

were the more militant and more outspoken both at public meetings and through their paper, *Direct Action*, were prosecuted and many were jailed. Those not born in Australia were thereafter deported to Chile and Russia. Why Chile? Because a ship from Chile was then sailing from Sydney and Robert Garran, Secretary of the Attorney General's Department (and still held in high esteem by the well endowed Attorney General's Department today) wanted to be quickly rid of this infectious element from Long Bay jail where they were lodged.

At the conclusion of the war, the Commonwealth Government (with Garran and Hughes still in charge) established the Investigation Branch in the Attorney-General's Department to maintain surveillance of the post-war radicals including the nascent Communist Party. Succeeding non-Labor governments of Bruce and Lyons expanded the Crimes Act to help the Investigation Branch continue its work. The private right-wing armies of the 1930s were not watched to any extent by the Investigation Branch nor much by the State police forces either. The war years from 1941 saw a large increase in secret service operations, but they were firmly closed down at the conclusion of the war by the Chifley government.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) was established in 1949 by the Chifley government as a means of persuading the US government that Australia could be trusted with US missile manufacturing secrets. The US had placed an embargo on the transmission of all classified information to Australia in 1948. The long war-time alliance to which that and other Australian governments have so firmly clung had no currency with US officialdom. They seemed to be totally unaware that it had ever existed. This is characteristic of all relationships between small countries like Australia and their large, putative mentors. The establishment of ASIO had no influence on US thinking and the ban remained. But then the Chifley government was tipped out of office and the Menzies government commenced its long reign. ASIO was expanded under Menzies because he believed firmly in the Australian right wing doctrine that the left had always been a subversive threat in Australia. Menzies was also able to translate nicely this well established belief into his own special Cold War rhetoric leading him

to ban the Communist Party in 1951. His policy came unstuck thanks to the intervention of the High Court, Dr Evatt and the Communist Party officials in the leading industrial unions. But for them Menzies would now be being portrayed in our history as a genuine Mussolini figure who incorporated political jailings and witch hunting into our legal system. Hughes was a product of the Sydney Bar, Menzies of the Melbourne Bar. Neither can be judged to be among the better products of those respective institutions.

ASIO expanded under Menzies' patronage and thanks to ASIO the Petrov affair got Menzies re-elected in 1954. But it split the ALP, ended Dr Evatt's political career and made ASIO a firm enemy of the labour movement. The anti-Vietnam War movement gave ASIO a boost in

“ ... its well-suited agents taking photographs of the demonstration crowds raised the ire of those well-heeled folks who were moving to support the ALP in large droves.”

status and, as the movement progressively became more middle-class, its well-suited agents taking photographs of the demonstration crowds raised the ire of those well-heeled folks who were moving to support the ALP in large droves. This gave added impetus to the ALP to make ASIO more accountable and while Whitlam was unable to accomplish this, the Hawke government succeeded by establishing the Inspector General's office to oversee ASIO and appointing a Standing Joint Parliamentary Committee on ASIO.

Jenny Hocking, in *Beyond Terrorism*, discusses the evolution of political surveillance in Australia and marries this history to the development of the various forms of terrorism and counter-terrorism, both of which developed in overseas countries for various complex reasons during the 1980s. As the ALP shifted its policies to accommodate the middle-class voters, the portrayal of its being a subversive force became ludicrous. Officialdom seized on the terrorism of

those years as practised by the PLO, the IRA, the Black Panthers and others as a justification for maintaining and expanding the system of political surveillance then facing the increasing threat of redundancy. The Cold War by then had lost any credibility of being a significant threat to the West. We can now see with its unfortunate passing that it was the Cold War that sustained the prosperity of the West's and Australia's economy. It maintained the West's post-war affluence at a level we and our children will never witness again.

Jenny Hocking discusses the various terrorist scares, mild as they were, that have occurred in Australia such as the Hilton Bombing, the Croatian terrorist attacks and the bombing of Family Court judges. It is a tale of muddle and disorder where new laws were passed and new political surveillance bodies were temporarily established. However, it gives a good account of

events and the author presents the affairs in a framework of political theory and public policy.

It all seems rather old hat now. As Australia slides more deeply into depression and as the abolition of our centuries-old tariff barriers allows the flood of cheap Asian goods to rob our workers of their jobs we can look back to the years of the Cold War, subversion and counter-terrorism with nostalgia. At least we had full employment and the Australian left was still regarded as being a force for change rather than the captive of econocrats. Jenny Hocking could have added a closing chapter describing how the forces of law and order will be used against the protestors and demonstrators when the effects of the 1990s depression really bite hard in the future years.

Frank Cain's book, The Wobblies at War: A History of the IWW and the Great War in Australia, was published in Melbourne in June 1993.

UNTITLED

it can only be once
in your life
that you take the orange train.
we never travel alone.
there is always baggage that is blues
and the stops
which are stops.
you lug your life up
and down
so many steps that you are fatigued.
yet your steps quell the shadows
on behalf of themselves.
your steps which dance pavane
are stone in the long run.
the dream is an absolute,
like pear tree leaves in spring
when they return after the stones dry
and we find that well enough
is like dancing in the meadows
with tough bright girls
whose dresses swirl
with their fingertips' turn.
ah/the grace of sun.
brittle lamplighter of the hour.

SHELTON LEA

Zock the Wondercrok

by Lof0

Zock was hand-raised by Bill, a naturalist doing field work in the bush.



Bill knew that Zock was different. So he read him poetry at night and sung to him arias in Italian & German. Zock soaked it all up.

One day Zock's older relatives

When crocodile hunters came for Zock, he made these signs into the sand: I M I N N O C E N T

No one knew these were the first letters of "I'M INNOCENT". Zock was trussed up and muzzled and taken away.



ate Bill.



Now, if he wanted to live, he had to scramble with ruffians of his race for dead chooks. He hated it and grew thinner.



Look at the ugly thin one! He's kind of cute though

Almost looks like he's dancing! Take a picture.



Zock tried to express his finer nature. But how? His claws could hold no violin. Or a typewriter. Anyhow - how to get such things?

Sometimes at night he tried to sing the music that was in his head. All that poetry. Wisdom too.



Listen to him croak!

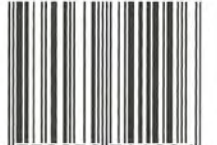
Only his pathetic little dance for a dead chook earned him a small measure of recognition.



HIS STORY ENDS WITHOUT A MORAL. BUT MAYBE IT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER IF YOU THINK YOU GOT TROUBLES.



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